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REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

Holy Communion.

Imprimatur.

✠ HENRICUS EDWARDUS,
Archiep. Westmon.

REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

Holy Communion.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

WITH PREFACE BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER.



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PREFACE.

THIS volume is a valuable addition to our books of devotion. It is in a high degree real and solid. Not only in language, but in the train of thought, it is truthful, and gives utterance to the spiritual acts which are common to persons of a devout life. Devotional works are often far-fetched, so to speak, in two ways: some are imaginative, and remote from our ordinary and healthy experience; others are so elevated and exceptional in the supernatural life, that we cannot make them our own. The present volume is throughout both practical and proximate to our daily needs. It is within the reach of any one who faithfully uses the Holy Sacraments, and makes the presence of our Divine Lord in the tabernacle the centre and home of his heart.

The Author, in the Preface, modestly offers it to us as a remedy against distractions, by connecting "serious thoughts with such prayers as may gently draw the soul entirely to our Lord." He therefore prefixes to the *Meditations* two very beautiful methods of hearing Mass. And no better way, indeed, of excluding the subtle, sudden, impetuous, and harassing importunities of wandering thoughts can be found, than by surrounding the prayers of the Holy Mass with associations which unite us to the Sacred Heart. Many know the penalty they have to pay for associating with sacred words or texts any irrelevant or unworthy sense. Too great care cannot be taken in guarding the mind, especially of the young, from all such intrusions, and in training them early to unite with the whole action of the Holy Mass, and with every thing which surrounds the Blessed Sacrament, a store of devout thoughts and affections. The secret of our distractions in prayer is to be found in our lives. A mighty river carries all before it: the habitual stream of our thoughts breaks in upon our acts of prayer. If our minds were habitually tending to God, then they would

run all the more easily and strongly towards Him in the Holy Mass. If all the day long we could recollect ourselves, and live in the consciousness of His presence, and of His personal relation and love to us, then our ordinary thoughts would cease to be distractions. These simple and beautiful pages can hardly fail to replenish our minds with thoughts and affections which will return upon us as our own in the presence of our Divine Master.

✠ HENRY EDWARD,

Archbishop of Westminster.

Whitsuntide 1869.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

SURROUNDED by continual distractions, we easily allow our thoughts to wander, our hearts to cool towards our Saviour, even when we approach His holy table, where He shows us so much love. It is useful, then, to arouse frequently in our hearts the pure, generous, and fervent sentiments of those virtues which it is our duty always to offer up to Him.

Here, then, are some Reflections, accompanied by short elevations of the mind to God, which may, perhaps, have some power to impress the mind and to inflame the heart.

I have not followed any regular order or method, my object in these Exercises being to connect serious thoughts with such prayers as may gently draw the soul entirely to our Lord, who is Himself the sole object of its aspirations and its love.

The life of Jesus Christ, so admirable in the Gospel, is still more touching as studied in the Holy Eucharist. It may therefore be useful to recall to mind some of the remarkable circumstances of His life, of which the application will be easily made to ourselves. The goodness of our Lord prepares for us in the tabernacle,

together with great benefits, the unspeakable consolation of His presence in the midst of the fatigues, sufferings, and agitations of our daily life.

I know not whether, by means of this essay, I shall cause others to appreciate in the same degree as myself the wise advice and pious counsel, so useful in reforming our minds and hearts, that are to be found scattered throughout the pages of these Exercises. I do not point out the source from which I have obtained them ; that will soon reveal itself to any one who has been for a time fed by the spiritual teaching of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. I believe that I am rendering a service to such souls as enjoy the happiness of frequent Communion, in conveying to them these instructions, for the purpose of aiding them in the work of their sanctification, and assisting them to direct to our Lord a humble and upright will.

Lord Jesus, humbly prostrate before the holy tabernacle, I implore Thee, in the name of all those persons who may read these pages, offered to Thy glory by the hands of Thy Immaculate Mother, to concentrate all our affections in Thyself, that our minds may henceforth form no thought, our lips no word, which may be displeasing to Thee. With Thy Divine hand, trace in indelible characters the memory of the adorable Eucharist in our souls ; inflame us with that sacred fire wherewith Thou art inflamed, and deign to accept our Communions as a perpetual holocaust of love.

Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

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REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

Holy Communion.

DEVOTIONS DURING HOLY MASS.

METHOD OF HEARING MASS, BY WAY OF UNITING OURSELVES TO
THE SPIRIT OF THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST.

THE Mass is the sacrifice of Calvary. It is one and the same sacrifice with that of the Cross; and it is offered every hour of the day throughout the universe. This oblation being permanent, and worthy of the greatness of God, is an acknowledgment of His sovereignty, and a perpetual act of homage to His perfections.

Our Lord offers Himself at this time upon the Altar, as before the Incarnation He offered Himself prospectively with reference to His sacrifice yet to come, and as He now in His glory unceasingly applies to us its blessed fruits. The faithful who are present at Mass offer themselves, in union with Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice in which they immolate their whole being without destroying it, and their blood without shedding it; for the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ requires of us also a spirit of sacrifice. This is the fruit which God expects from it, to redound to His glory and our own benefit.

B

Holy Communion, the true participation in this holy sacrifice, should be an engagement to immolate ourselves for the love of our Saviour, by the spirit of penance, which is the spirit of the Cross. Let us bring with us to the holy table this disposition, which is always pleasing to Him.

It will be found very useful to meditate piously upon certain events which preceded and accompanied the sacrifice consummated upon Calvary, in order thus to enter more intimately into the mind of Christ upon the Altar, and to teach you to pray, to hide yourself, to immolate yourself, with Him. Cease to live unto yourself, that you may be *one* with Him.

At the commencement of Mass.

Make, with reverence, the sign of the cross. Let your thoughts return, and rest upon the abyss of eternity. The Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was self-sufficient, and reigned in the majesty of essential glory and eternal happiness. Adore the Most Blessed Trinity, with profound annihilation of yourself. Behold, then, Jesus Christ, the Word,—“made a Priest for ever,” in the language of St. Paul,—offering to His Father, from “before the beginning of ages,” the sacrifice of Himself. Listen to the words He utters: “My Father, burnt offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require; then said I, Behold I come, to do Thy will, O My God” (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9). Admire the condescension of the Word to the feeble creature who has offended Almighty God. Form in your mind a persevering disposition of obedience and self-immolation. In view of the holiness of God, hate sin above all things, with an effectual hatred—that sin which, in the eternal counsels, necessitated the bloody sacrifice of Calvary. Can you, then, dare to cease for one instant the continual warfare against your foibles and defects, to diminish the constant vigilance required to clear away from your path the very slightest faults? Humble yourself profoundly—entreat Jesus Christ to

apply the merits of His sacrifice to your soul, so that you may enter with greater purity into His holy dispositions.

At the Introit.

Celebrate the entrance of mercy into the world. God has had compassion on the miseries of guilty man; therefore, we have the consoling promise of a Deliverer; and from this promise, hope in the goodness of God springs up in our souls. Turn, with the Patriarchs, your eyes to Jesus Christ. With their firm faith, let your aspirations tend to the blessed moment of His coming. Say, with devotion, "Come, Lord, and in Thy mercy save me. 'I have hoped in God, and He shall deliver me.' Lord, I will hope in Thee for ever, even hoping against hope. Let my confidence in Thy promises be Thy glory. Thou shalt redeem me from mine iniquities."

At the Kyrie.

Earnest and pressing appeals to the Divine mercy from all ages and people. Invoke that mercy with fervour, with profound feeling of your need of the Father's mercy, of the Son's mediation, of the Holy Spirit's descent upon your soul, which will be granted you through Jesus Christ. Repeat with the priest, "Lord, have mercy upon us."

At the Gloria.

Thank and praise God for the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation. Uniting your praises with the celestial songs, recite with gratitude and fervour the hymn of the Angels: "Glory be to God on high; and on earth, peace to men of good will." We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we adore Thee; we glorify Thee; we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; Thou who takest away the sins of the

world, receive our prayers; Thou who sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord; Thou only, O Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

At the Collects.

Unite yourself to the fervour of the first prayer of the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ on the day of Circumcision. Offer up His Blood to God, with the tears of Mary, who felt deeply in her own heart the sorrows of her beloved Son. This precious Blood ascends for you to God; implore with confidence, through its merits, the grace of ever-increasing purity both in your soul and body. Present to God, with the prayers of the priest, all the needs of the Church, your own wants, those of your family, and those of all the persons in whom you are interested.

At the Epistle.

With deep reverence, consider those warnings and instructions which, during so many long ages, were addressed by God to His people, in order to dispose them, by compunction for their sins, and the true spirit of penance, to profit by the blessings which attended the coming of our Lord on earth. Meditate on these words of the holy Precursor: "Do worthy fruits of penance;" and upon those others, which ought to fill you with fear lest you be amongst the number of those souls who know not Jesus Christ: "There is among you One whom you know not." Ask that you may be counted among the little flock of faithful servants who know and love our Saviour; who are docile and obedient to His voice, and to that of the Apostles sent by Him.

At the Gradual.

Join in the eternal Alleluia of the angels and the elect. Revere the greatness, the holiness, of the Lamb,

ever immolated before the throne of God. Repeat with all the prostrate angels in heaven, "Our God is worthy to receive all honour and glory and praise." Resolve within yourself never to refuse Jesus Christ any of that homage and adoration which He has a right to expect from your faith and love.

At the Gospel.

The eternal Word of God resounds throughout the world. Jesus Christ came to show us the way, to reveal to us the truth, to bring to us the life. Rise, to show by your attitude your ready attention. Open the ears of your heart, and be attentive to the adorable instructions of the Divine Master. "What will it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" "If you bring your offering to the altar, and there remember that your brother has any thing against you, leave your offering there; go first and reconcile yourself with your brother, and then return and offer your gift." "If any one strike you on the right cheek, offer him the other." "Give to him that asketh." "Do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who persecute you." "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

At the Credo.

This is the summary of all that you ought to believe and hope for. Repeat it deliberately; beg our Saviour to render, by His grace, your whole life conformable to your belief. "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages: God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin

Mary, and was made man. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. The third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again with glory, to judge both the living and the dead: of whose kingdom there shall be no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who, together with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified; who spake by the prophets. And one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

At the Offertory.

The Victim, chosen from all eternity to be immolated to the Divine Majesty, now offers Himself upon the Altar. Enter into the dispositions of the mind of Jesus Christ, as He was preparing for His Passion,—pure charity, eagerness to suffer for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In returning to Jerusalem, where sufferings and death awaited Him, He walked so quickly that His Apostles could not follow Him, as we are told by the sacred historian. Associate yourself directly with the ends for which Jesus Christ still offers Himself always to God, with the same eagerness and the same zeal for your salvation. First, according to the example of Jesus in the Garden of Olives,—prostrate on the ground before the majesty of His Father, to whom He renders an infinite homage,—abase yourself profoundly, in presence of the Divine perfections whose outraged sanctity requires such a reparation. Secondly, with the priest, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank God for all His benefits, passing rapidly in review before your mental vision the principal graces which He has granted to the world and to yourself. The priest, in an admirable prayer, mentions nearly all of them: benefits of the

order of nature—creation ; of the supernatural order—redemption, and all the graces which flow from it—predestination to the glory of heaven, and, upon earth, intimacy with God, through participation in the Holy Eucharist. Think, also, of many secret graces, known to yourself alone—such as a Christian education, conversion to a greater degree of piety, frequent communion,—so many favours, lights, sollicitations of grace. Oh, how good is God ! Let your heart melt with love—let it overflow with sentiments of gratitude. Thirdly, unite yourself to the sorrow of our Saviour, who was in His Father's sight loaded with the weight of the iniquities of the whole world. Express to Him profound regret for your own sins, as well as for those committed throughout the world. Promise Him that you will avoid, during this day, even the slightest faults, and that you will carefully fly from every occasion of them. Finally, offer up all your necessities, both spiritual and temporal, the needs of the Church, of all those who are dear to you, of all whom you would recommend to God.

Enter into all the particulars ; you are speaking to a Father, whose heart is ever open to all that concerns you. Confide to Him your sorrows, your difficulties, your temptations. Ask of Him the grace of final perseverance, the crowning grace of all.

At the Preface.

The priest here breaks the solemn silence by inviting you to lift up your heart to heaven—*Sursum corda*—to raise it up on high : that is to say, to disengage it from all exterior things, while it ascends to the throne of God, before which Jesus Christ is about to offer Himself. Call upon Him by fervent desires. Approach with the angels, who come in crowds to prostrate themselves around the Altar, and say with adoration, Holy, holy, holy is He who cometh ; Hosanna in the highest.

At the Canon.

After the angelic hymn, which announces the speedy coming of Jesus Christ, recollect yourself profoundly. Jesus Himself will soon descend invisibly upon the Altar. Ask for the disposition of mind which Mary had in the mystery which made God present in her, in order that you may be able to offer to Jesus Christ a pure heart, as a living altar where He may sacrifice Himself. Occupy your mind also with the touching scenes of the Passion. Entreat Mary to admit you to a participation in her love and grief. Think deliberately of the touching manifestations of the love of Jesus on the Cross. Receive from His dying lips forgiveness of your faults, with the hope of heaven. Unite yourself to His last acts of perfect conformity to the will of God. Commit into His hands your soul, your heart, your senses ; as, before His death, He committed Himself into the hands of His Heavenly Father. Ask of Him that you may die to sin and to every thing that displeases Him.

At the Elevation.

At the awful moment of consecration, let every thing in you give place to God, who descends upon the Altar by an act of astonishing obedience, and who descends there only to immolate Himself for you. When the priest elevates the sacred Host, your God is present. Faith presents to you Jesus Christ in the splendour of His glory ; but she also shows Jesus Christ crowned with thorns, nailed to the Cross, with His hands and feet pierced, His Blood shed, and collected in the Chalice. It is thus that He will come *quite close* to you ; and that He will discover to you, with the greatest love, all the secrets of His heart. Thus, from the Altar, as from the Cross, He calls to you—He entreats you to live, to suffer after His example, and even to die for Him.

After the Elevation.

Forget yourself; employ yourself at this moment with nothing save Jesus Christ, present before you, for you. Remain silently attentive, or suffer only some aspirations of love to ascend from your heart to His. If you cannot fix your thoughts, piously revere His sufferings in using the invocations of St. Ignatius :

Soul of Jesus, sanctify me. Heart of Jesus, inflame me. Body of Jesus, save me. Precious Blood of Jesus, inebriate me. Water issuing from the side of Jesus, wash me. Passion of Jesus, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me, hide me within Thy Wounds. Suffer me not to be separated from Thee. Defend me from the malignant enemy. At the hour of my death, call me, and bid me come unto Thee, that with Thy saints I may praise Thee for all eternity. Amen.

At the Memento for the Dead.

As soon as Jesus Christ expired on the Cross, His divine Soul descended to Limbo, in order to console the just ones who were awaiting His coming. This charity instructs us to extend to our relations, to our friends, to all the souls, the captives of Divine justice, the virtue of the precious Blood placed at our disposal on the Altar. Oh, if we fully comprehended the extent of the consolations which we might obtain every day for the souls in purgatory, with what fervour should we not entreat Jesus Christ to apply to them the merits of His sacrifice!

At the Pater.

Pause at each demand in this prayer, but especially at that which relates to the accomplishment of the Divine will; thank Him that you are free to ask Him each day for the food of your soul—"the super-substantial bread" (Matt. vi. 11); and in remembering the incomprehensible love of our Saviour, open your heart to true charity. Pardon all who have offended you, and drown your resentments in the heart of Jesus.

At the Division of the Host.

During the mysterious division of the sacred Host, which appears to cause a mystical death to our Saviour, beg Him to work a complete change in you, and not to suffer your heart to be divided with any earthly object in its affection for Him.

At the Agnus Dei.

Behold our Saviour detached from the Cross, and reposing in the arms of Mary; or, invoke the merits of the Lamb offered for our sins. Entreat Him to have pity on your soul.

At the Communion.

Still behold Jesus Christ sacrificed, waiting until you offer Him in your heart a new sepulchre, in which He desires to repose, as in a sanctuary of love. Penetrated with a sense of your unworthiness, cry with the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word, and my soul shall be healed." If you have the happiness to communicate, renew your faith towards God, who gives Himself to you—your confidence in our Saviour, who permits you thus to profit by the fruits of His death—and your love to a Father who, taking possession of your heart as part of His own property, gives you in exchange His own. Call upon Jesus by the most tender and intimate entreaties.

The Spiritual Communion.

If you have not obtained permission to communicate sacramentally, make a spiritual communion, in order to participate in the virtue of the sacrifice. Add to the feeling of unworthiness, regret for the faults which keep you at a distance from the holy table. Form in your heart a lively desire to receive Jesus Christ; make acts of faith and love, and use the pious sentiments suggested by the author of the *Imitation*: "Lord, I lay upon the

Altar all the sins and all the defects into which I have fallen before Thee and before Thy holy angels, from the hour in which I first sinned until this hour, that Thou mayest burn and consume them all in the fire of Thy love, that Thou mayest blot out all my faults, and reëstablish me in Thy grace, and that, in granting me an entire pardon, Thou mayest give Thyself spiritually to my soul." Come, Lord Jesus; my heart is prepared, my soul burns with desire to possess Thee. "I offer myself to Thee to-day in the simplicity of my heart, in order to become Thy slave for ever. I offer myself to Thee in union with Thy sacrifice, in the presence of the angels who are invisibly present here. Grant me a part in the salutary oblation of Thy most sacred Body." Declare earnestly to our Saviour the sincerity of your love, making use of the words of St. Peter, "Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Repeat to Him that you love Him, and that henceforth you will live only to please Him.

At the Post-Communion.

Thank our Saviour for having given Himself to you, whether you have received Him in His corporal presence, or only by the desires of your soul, in spiritual communion. Entreat Him to let nothing separate you from His grace and His love. The afflicting spectacle of the death of Jesus Christ converted a great number of those who witnessed it; shall His immolation to-day have less effect upon your heart? Will you leave the Altar without being touched, converted, animated with true zeal for your spiritual advancement? Ask our Lord Himself to effect this change in you. "Adorable Victim of my redemption! Thou who hast chosen my heart, to consummate there the sacrifice of Thy eucharistic life, complete in it the sacrifice of this *self*, which is a wall of separation between Thy love and my soul. Permit not that, after having received Thee in spiritual communion, I should still live too humanly; but give

me grace to practise the virtues which Thou wouldst imprint in my heart."

At the Priest's Benediction.

Let your thoughts recur to the day of our Lord's ascension. Bow down humbly to receive the blessing of Jesus Christ ascending to heaven. Entreat Him not to go away without leaving you His Holy Spirit, to sanctify all the actions of the day.

At the last Gospel.

Read with great reverence the Gospel of St. John. It contains the highest mysteries of the faith. The early Christians repeated it upon their knees, and considered the reading of it a salutary remedy for the diseases of both soul and body. Once more beg our Saviour to make His Divine Word the guide and rule of your life.

After Holy Mass.

As you leave the church, think you are descending the mournful hill of Calvary, conveying with you all the blessings obtained by the death of Jesus Christ. Give thanks to God for them in this short prayer: Grant, O Jesus, that the sacrifice of Thyself, offered with so much love for my salvation, may not turn, through my own fault, to the condemnation of my soul. Enlighten my mind, change my heart, regulate my life, and reign as an absolute monarch over my whole being. Grant that I may be the means of making others know and love Thee, and show forth to the world how great is the joy of entire submission to Thy will. Give me grace to seek Thee only in all things, in order so to unite myself to Thee in this world, as I trust to be united to Thee throughout the endless ages of eternity.

ANOTHER METHOD OF HEARING MASS.

PRAYERS DURING THE MASS AT WHICH YOU INTEND TO COMMUNICATE.

As a preparation for Holy Communion, during the time which elapses from your rising in the morning till the hour of Mass, fix your thoughts with devotion upon the humiliation of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist; in remembrance of the profound silence which He has observed in that sacred mystery during eighteen centuries, speak little, avoid all distracting occupations, banish from your mind all useless and frivolous thoughts. The sacrifice of our Saviour commenced at the Incarnation ; there should not, then, be found in our life one single instant in which, with the formal consent of our will, we renounce that spirit of sacrifice which is continually present as our example upon the altar and in the tabernacle. O my God, attract me to this interior retreat in which I desire to dwell with Thee. What wonders may not be wrought in the soul that loves Thee, by the remembrance of the great mysteries of Calvary! Cause me to contemplate them with lively faith, firm hope, and generous love, and shed upon my daily life the influence of these virtues. Put into my heart a desire to offer myself up as a victim with Jesus Christ, thus to enter more completely into the spirit and the truth of His sacrifice. O Lord, the angels could never have thought that Thy love could enchain Thee thus on earth, and that, in the holy tabernacle, Thou wouldst remain ever ready to descend into my heart.

At the beginning of Mass.

Let me imitate in my behaviour the Catholic Church, which evinces so ardent a veneration for the holy sacrifice, remembering these words of St. John Chrysostom: "When Mass commences, you are then no longer upon

earth; you are in heaven, amongst the saints and angels, who adore, with deep reverence, the Lamb without spot, immolated for the sins of the whole world. O my God, I unite my prayers with those of our Saviour Himself. I desire and I ask what He now asks of Thee on the holy altar. All my desires tend to holy union with Him. Profoundly humiliated before Thee, I implore Thee, through the merits of this adorable sacrifice, to grant me grace to perform each day, to the glory of the Heart of Jesus, all the sacrifices which I have promised, —to weep for my sins with more grief, more confidence, and more love; never to commit a fault with deliberate purpose; to persevere in my resolutions, and particularly in the practice of humility, detachment from creatures, and the faithful performance of my duties. Deign also to apply to the souls in purgatory, by the intercession of Thy holy Mother, all the merits and indulgences which, by the help of Thy grace, I may be able to gain in the course of this day.

At the Kyrie.

Lord, have mercy on me; have pity on a soul enlightened by Thy grace to know how much she owes to Thee, how much she has refused to Thee, the benefits which Thou heapest upon her, and the unfaithfulness which obliges her continually to have recourse to Thy mercy. Lord, have pity upon a soul who receives from Thee, in Holy Communion, strength sufficient to make her invincible, yet who would be eternally lost, through her own weakness, should she ever cease for one moment to lean upon Thy infinite goodness. Adorable Jesus, have pity upon this heart, so frequently united by Thee to Thine. Thou art its love, its happiness, its true rest; but its susceptibility leads it into great unfaithfulness, and causes it a continual uneasiness, which makes it unworthy of Thy sacred presence. Preserve it from these sad vicissitudes by an entire detachment from creatures, from itself; and grant that, in every event, I may find

in Thy Divine heart a support against the temptations of love of self.

Until the Gospel.

Prostrate yourself more than ever at the feet of our Saviour; close your senses against all exterior thoughts; occupy yourself solely, strongly, yet sweetly, with thoughts of Holy Communion. Unite yourself to our Saviour, to the Holy Virgin, to the Apostles assembled in the Upper Chamber. Give yourself up to the feelings which the Holy Spirit will form in you—at one moment confusion, regret for your faults; at another, confidence, holy joy, sweet hope. You will find in the Psalms some admirable words, which may profitably occupy your thoughts. Try to recall some of them to your memory; let them be as arrows of fire directed to our Saviour, who is so soon to come to you. Or, instead of this, excite in your heart some feelings of sorrow and of love. I weep, O my Jesus, I weep for the time I have not employed in loving Thee; and my fault is so great, that I ought to shed tears of blood, for I weep because I have not loved Thee as I ought, and as Thou wouldst have me love Thee—because I have committed innumerable sins, and because I am now without any merit, without experience in the practice of humility, mortification, and the other virtues. The soul that loves Thee, O my Jesus, thinks of Thee always, converses with Thee in her heart, speaks of Thee alone, or only according to Thy Spirit, desires in all things the advancement of Thy glory, and has in all her prayers and actions the object of increasing the worship and love due to Thy sacred heart. Do Thou become the rule of all my thoughts, words, and actions, which are all done in the light of Thy Divine regards, now, at this very instant, attentively fixed upon me. The soul that loves Thee, O my Jesus, fears to distress Thee, and, ardently desiring not to displease Thee, flees every vain pleasure, every earthly satisfaction, and seeks her joy and delight in Thee alone. The soul

that loves Thee, O my Jesus, studies to please Thee, to adorn herself with the virtues which are dear to Thee,—with poverty, by detaching herself from all worldly possessions; with humility, by recognising her nothingness in Thy sight; with obedience, by despoiling herself of her self-will, in order to do Thy will alone. I know, my God, that the love wherewith Thou wouldst be loved, consists not in vain desires, and cannot possibly rest in idleness; do Thou, therefore, reign over all my powers and faculties, so as to direct their exercise in all things to Thy greater glory.

At the Offertory.

Follow the intentions of our Saviour in the acts of the priest. He offers the bread and wine: O Jesus, do Thou place my heart and soul upon the Altar, and render them, with Thyself, victims of the good pleasure of God during this day, all the sufferings of which I accept for the glory of Thy sacred heart, knowing well that, by Thy infinite goodness, I shall not suffer alone. When the bread and wine are changed into Thy Body and Blood, vouchsafe to effect in my soul a happy transformation, take away from it the faults which displease Thee, and which I deplore above all my pride, my susceptibility, my hasty and inconsiderate speech, and fill their place with those virtues which are pleasing to Thee, in preparation for Holy Communion.

In order to excite my confidence, I must remember that I am speaking to my God, who with one single word has made the world, and with one single word could make me perfectly holy. Why should I not hope for this word from the mercy of His heart, since my sanctification will be for His greater glory? Is He not almighty? Will He not exercise His power for my happiness, when in this very hour I shall behold His Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine, and He will offer Himself up a Victim for my salvation?

Offer the holy sacrifice with the priest, according to your private intentions. Direct also your intention for your Communion; afterwards you can unite yourself intimately, according to the desire of your heart, to your God, who will quickly come to His Altar. You may also occupy your mind with some of those beautiful and touching words of the Patriarchs and Prophets, which express so well their ardent desires: "Rorate, cœli, desuper; aperiatur terra," &c.

At the Preface.

Sursum corda. My God, Thou callest me; I quit all, I ascend, leaving on earth all the bonds which held me. I am now in the midst of the angels, of the saints. Ah, why can I not remain ever united with them in their actions of praise, of thanksgiving, and of love! O Jesus, reign alone in me, dwell alone in my heart. Let Thy sovereign presence employ my thoughts, attract my desires and affections. Thy kingdom suffices me. Be Thou alone my King, Thou alone my Guide. Possess my heart; O zealous Lover of souls, let it ascend to Thee, my centre, my end.

Ask our Saviour very earnestly to grant you interior freedom; let Him make your heart quite empty, that He may fill it again with His presence and with His Divine Spirit.

At the Canon.

The priest negotiates in silence with our Saviour the spiritual interests of the whole world. He unites himself to the Blessed Virgin, to the Apostles, to the martyrs, and ascends at last to the holy mountain where Jesus is about to immolate Himself. Present to the heart of our Lord, by the hands of Mary, your dearest wishes and prayers.

(Pray for your special intentions.)

At the prayer, *Hanc igitur*, the priest spreads his

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hands over the Chalice, to declare to God that he lays the burden of our sins upon the sacred Host which is now to be immolated. This is a solemn declaration that we desire to die to sin, that we may receive the benefits which flow from the death of a God who suffers in our place. Never forget that Jesus Christ, in applying His merits to your soul, gives you a free discharge from all your guilt. Henceforth let it not burden your conscience any more. Desire ardently to be made a spiritual sacrifice to God, with our Saviour. Destroy in your soul, with sincere hatred, every thing that may be displeasing to Him, and devote yourself to His glory and service, as He devotes Himself for your salvation. In this solemn moment, the priest acknowledges our state of servitude to God. Declare to Him your loving dependence upon His will. You belong to Jesus Christ by baptism, in which He has sealed the new life of your soul with the virtue of His Blood; but you belong to Him much more closely, if you have given yourself to Him more intimately. Very soon the real presence of our Saviour will come to establish you in peace—that peace of God which far surpasses every feeling of joy; that peace of Jesus Christ which leads to eternal life; a peace which proceeds from remission of sins and from the satisfaction made to Divine justice, which is disarmed by the Blood of our Saviour, to which our penitence is united.

The whole spirit of the sacrifice of Jesus is contained in this short prayer.

At the Consecration.

Behold the adorable legacy—worthy of the testament of a God! Here the mind is confounded; words fail to express the impenetrable abyss of the love of our Saviour. We can but abase ourselves, and adore in silence.

Then Jesus Christ Himself assures me of His presence—He speaks alone. This is My Body! this is

My Blood!—the Blood of the new testament. It is finished—heaven is opened—our Lord is with us. I concentrate all the powers of my soul; I fall prostrate; I adore my God, my Good, my Life!

One word of St. John Chrysostom, of which I long to penetrate the height, the depth, the extent, says every thing to my heart: “O my God, Thou art in a marvellous manner my substance; yes, Thou art Emmanuel, God with me; at this very instant, really, personally mine.” Jesus requires this intimate and mysterious union of love.

My Lord and my God, I believe Thy word. I do not behold the accomplishment of the mystery; nevertheless, I firmly believe that, as soon as the priest has spoken, Thou art on the Altar. Increase ever more and more my faith, my hope, my love. O saving Victim, who, in opening the heavens to descend even to us, givest us to behold therein the thrones of glory obtained for us by Thy sacrifice! grant us grace to deserve to sit there, so that, if Thy love brings Thee down to our sad exile, Thy mercy may raise us up to the abode of Thy eternal Majesty.

After the Elevation.

The priest recalls the great mysteries of the Passion, of the Resurrection, of the Ascension of our Blessed Lord; those proofs of love, devotion, and generosity, the merits of which are now to be applied to my soul. The priest collects the fruits of Calvary by the signs of the cross, repeated as many times as there were wounds upon the sacred Body of Jesus. All the blood which flowed from them is given to me! From the adorable wound in His heart flowed forth some drops, which fall upon mine to purify it. The hand of Mary holds these treasures, and offers them to me! My God, my happiness is already very great; but a few minutes more, and it will then be infinitely greater.

After His death, Jesus Christ descended into Limbo.

O my Saviour, following the example Thou hast given me, I bear Thy precious Blood to the holy souls in purgatory; refresh them in those consuming fires, deliver them from their sufferings, condescend to apply to them Thy infinite merits, so that, when they come to the enjoyment of Thy eternal glory, they may assist me in the perils which threaten my soul's salvation. (Pray particularly for the souls you wish to recommend to the Divine mercy.)

My God, I offer Thee all the blood which the holy martyrs have shed in confessing Thy holy name, in order to obtain a gift of strength, patience, and generosity, which may enable me to triumph over all temptations.

The priest closes the magnificent prayers of the Canon with these words: "Through Him, and with Him, and in Him, is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory."

Oh, may I be sanctified through Jesus Christ, who has given me new life upon the Cross! O my God, through Him, bless me with a powerful grace, which shall make me strong in virtue; and grant that, being crucified truly with Him to the world, Thou mayest receive, by His sacrifice of infinite worth, to which I unite myself as a voluntary victim, all honour and glory throughout all ages, even for ever and ever.

After this prayer, the priest elevates at the same time the Body and Blood of our Lord, seeming to say to me, See what God, in the mysterious silence of the Altar, has brought to pass by His power and love! I present to you for adoration Jesus Christ, contained really and actually under each species. O my Jesus, I comprehend Thy goodness; Thou dost here *show* Thyself to me, before Thou dost *give* Thyself to me; so that, in the plenitude of my will, I may consecrate myself entirely to Thee. Oh, if, until this time, I have kept back from Thy love any portion of my heart or my actions, now receive all. Let there be no more reserve or division in

my soul, and may my union with Thee be perfect in this Holy Communion !

At the Pater.

Make the application to yourself, according to the sentiments which prevail in your heart.

Jesus Christ assures me that God, His Father, is mine also. His hand, which has healed my wounds in pardoning my sins, is now preparing for me His Body, as the heavenly manna, the bread of life, which I must often receive with confidence, so that it may be my strength in my pilgrimage, the path of which is thickly strewn with crosses and sorrows, but which ends in eternal glory.

At the "Libera nos."

Every thing leads me to have confidence in our Lord. The voice of the priest implores God to deliver me from all evils, past, present, and to come. He enlists on my side the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin. I implore Thee, O Mary, to grant me the pure impulses of thy soul, and all the love of thy immaculate heart, to supply all defects in my preparation for this Holy Communion.

From the Pater to the Communion.

Recollect yourself more profoundly than ever, and then, with deep humiliation and self-abasement, make these acts of faith. Thou art my Lord and my God. Lord, I believe. Yes, I believe; I would willingly die to bear testimony to this dogma of love.

Act of Humility.—What art Thou, Lord? and what am I? But Thou dost love me; that explains the mystery. Thou lovest me; I confide in Thy love. Thou art my life, my hope, and my salvation.

Act of Love.—But a love which devotes itself, which

sacrifices itself, which reposes in the thought that, having given itself, our Lord willingly accepts the gift.

Before his Communion, the priest three times confesses himself to be a sinner, and unworthy to take the celestial bread. He is astonished that a God should condescend to come to him; nevertheless, he receives Him with feelings of lively gratitude and ardent love.

Thou art preparing the same grace for me, O my Saviour; I humble myself with a profound feeling of my wretchedness, and with immovable confidence in Thy mercy.

The priest's Communion is ended; arise, behold the Lamb of God! Go, filled with joy, with confidence, and with love, to the God who is the Father, the Friend, the Spouse of your soul, the mysterious Vine of which you are a little branch. Give yourself up entirely to be fed and vivified by the Divine sap which He will convey to you.

Holy Communion.

The Angelical Doctor calls the Holy Eucharist the end and perfection of all the Sacraments, because, in uniting us to Him who is our end and our felicity, it includes all the fruits of the other Sacraments. They are only a portion of the treasures of God; in this the plenitude is found. *There* is the gift, *here* is the Giver. By Communion the soul is not merely *united* to God, as in prayer; it is united and *incorporated* with Him in a much closer and more intimate manner. St. Dionysius calls this union "Deifical Communion," because a God here becomes the actual nourishment of man.

If it is proper that the Christian soul should study to render all its actions *perfect*, as the Holy Spirit recommends, then Holy Communion, which is the very highest action in the order of grace, ought to be performed with all the perfection that our nature is capable of. Prepare yourselves with very great care, and never, says Bourdaloue, go to Holy Communion out of custom

or from human respect. Jesus Christ gives His grace with greater abundance when we make a careful preparation, corresponding to the dispositions we should bring to Him. The pious souls who communicate frequently, ought to make this preparation with earnestness, recollection, and all possible fidelity. Frequent Communion, far from making this preparation less necessary, renders it obligatory upon them, because in frequent Communion they are more clearly shown the greatness and holiness of God, who gives Himself to them. A sweet and constant perseverance in all the duties of our state of life is an excellent preparation, if we accept all its fatigues and troubles from love to our Lord, whose coming we expect. Join to this reiterated acts of faith, hope, love, humility, obedience, with exterior and interior mortification. Testify to Jesus Christ your ardent desire to receive Him well. Employ all the powers of your soul in preparing His abode. Make an offering to God of the holy sacrifice at which you are now present, to obtain from Him abundant graces, and a closer correspondence with the ends for which our Lord offers Himself up to His Father.

To these general ends unite some particular ones, according to the different mysteries which the Church is celebrating, according to the feasts of the Blessed Virgin, or of the Saints to whom you have a special devotion. Propose to yourself some personal intentions, such as to teach you to know yourself, to correct some fault, to acquire some particular virtue necessary for your perfection, &c.

Acts for Holy Communion.

Amongst all the actions of our life, there is not one which deserves respect and love more than Communion, or which demands greater fervour on our parts. By Communion, Jesus Christ always works miracles of grace and salvation. Bring to Him, then, a humble and submissive heart, and He will cause those wonders, which

once filled Judea with His fame, to be manifested in you.

Act of Faith.

I believe most undoubtingly, O my Jesus, and here I confess with the most sincere conviction, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, equal to the Father in power and glory, true God and true Man. I believe that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice that Thou didst institute in the Last Supper, and consummate upon Calvary. I believe that, after consecration, Thou art really and substantially present under the species of bread and wine. I believe that the bread is changed into Thy Body, and the wine into Thy Blood, and that there no longer remains any thing but the species or appearances. I believe that Thou art present under both species, with Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, and Thy Divinity. Finally, I believe that Thou art present under each part of the species, when broken or divided. I believe these truths with all my heart, with the Catholic Church, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is infallible. I believe, Lord; but, oh, increase my faith, and grant me grace to shed my blood, if need be, in defence and attestation of the truth of these dogmas.

Act of Hope.

Lord Jesus, I am only dust and ashes; but Thou art the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. Who has ever known the extent of Thy mercies? Dost Thou not call those who are afflicted to have recourse unto Thee, that they may find relief? Hast Thou not been my refuge at all times, Thou who only hast the words of eternal life? Thou alone canst console me in all the tribulations which fill up my life. My soul is lukewarm, miserable, diseased, I confess; but Thou art my salvation. Thou hast said, "It is the sick who need a physician, not those who are in health." If formerly Thou didst cure the infirm, merely by passing by them, ought I not to have full confidence that by coming into

my soul, now to dwell there in the plenitude of Thy Divinity, Thou wilt heal all my spiritual weakness and diseases? Resting, then, upon Thy mercy, I come unto Thee, my Father and my Saviour—I come with the hope that, by Thy grace, this Communion will increase in me faith, hope, and charity, will protect me from all the enemies of my salvation, will put to flight the temptations by which I am surrounded, will diminish my secret pride, and animate me in the practice of good works, especially in the exercise of those virtues in which I am most deficient. This faith reposes in my heart, O Jesus, because Thou art faithful in Thy promises.

Act of Contrition.

It is not against my fellow-creatures that I have offended, O my God. Although I am surrounded with testimonies of Thy love, against Thee only have I sinned. I was not ignorant that all my steps were followed by Thy Divine Eye, but nothing restrained me. My sins excite in me a still more lively regret, since in this Sacrament it is Thy will to render Thyself powerless to avenge them. My confusion and repentance are renewed each time that I enter Thy holy house, to adore Thee; but when I come to receive this heavenly bread, my grief for my past offences is redoubled in my heart. My Father, I will repeat in earnest accents, I have sinned against heaven and against Thee, and am not worthy to be called Thy child. I do not deserve to be treated as a faithful servant; Thou mightst justly reserve Thy heavenly food for those who have never broken Thy law. Yet Thou wilt not reject a contrite heart. I ask pardon for all the sins I have committed since my last confession, and generally for all those I have committed during my whole life. I detest them all, and particularly those which are most opposed to Thy love. Efface also the negligences into which I have too easily fallen since my last Communion. Forgive me, O my God, that I may draw near with confidence to Thy holy table.

Filial Fear.

I feel, O my Jesus, that I am very unworthy to receive Thee, and that I ought rather to keep at a distance from Thy Altar, fearing that I might have some secret sins which would be an obstacle to the graces offered me. Ought I not to fear, lest I should give Thee the kiss of peace to-day, and to-morrow betray Thee? If my soul were not sufficiently purified by contrition, instead of coming to me as to a faithful disciple, wouldst Thou not indignantly turn Thy face away as from a hidden enemy? Ah, Lord, if it were so, I should say to Thee, with St. Peter, "Depart from me, my God, for I am a sinner." But Thou didst receive the penitent Magdalene with pity; Thou didst forgive her sins, because of the greatness of her love; I offer Thee the feelings of her heart when she stood by the Cross, and saw Thy adorable Blood shed for our redemption. The confidence which attracted her to Thee, is not weaker in my soul. Thou didst accept her repentance, which was the beginning of her reparation. I trust that my sins are blotted out, and that, in spite of my unworthiness, Thou wilt not reject me from Thy sacred presence.

Act of Love.

Thou alone knowest, O my Jesus, whether I love Thee truly, and how much I love Thee; yet it appears to me that I desire sincerely to love Thee. I venture, then, to say to Thee, I love Thee, O my Jesus, because Thou hast loved me with an eternal love. I love Thee, because Thou hast given Thy Blood to redeem me, and to open heaven to me. I love Thee, because Thou alone art worthy to be infinitely loved. I love Thee with all the faculties of my soul, and above all things besides. I love Thee, because Thou hast hidden Thy glory and power under the sacramental veils, in order that Thy presence, in becoming more accessible to our weakness, may discover nothing of Thy Divinity, save the power to do us good. Make use, I implore Thee, of this infinite power, to

descend even unto me, that my heart may no longer fear to hear that Divine voice which calls from the tabernacle, "Come to Me." I desire to love Thee, Lord, as much as Thou art beloved by the angels and saints in heaven, as Thou art beloved by Thy Mother, the Blessed Virgin—I desire to love Thee with her immaculate heart; accept, then, the pure and perfect acts of that heart, to supply the defects and coldness of my feelings at the moment of receiving the greatest possible testimony of Thy love for us.

After Communion

Retire from the holy table with modesty and peaceful joy. Remain prostrate in silence at the feet of our Lord. Consider yourself as the tabernacle in which His Divine Person is enclosed. "Know you not that you are the temple of God?" says St. Paul; concentrate all your feeling on Him.

Converse with Jesus simply and affectionately, as you feel drawn to do so. Offer your homage to Him in the sincerity and purity of your faith.

We love, after Communion, to feel Jesus Christ so near to our littleness. There may be something of egotism in this habit of considering our Lord in connection with ourselves. Go out of yourself. Adore Him as God. Consider His perfections, which He renders subservient to your happiness—His greatness, abasing itself to you—His immensity, reduced to the smallest proportions—His power, which in the tabernacle reverses the law of nature, &c. But consider these marvels not so much in order to rejoice in them personally, but rather to glorify His Divine Majesty.

Adoration.

I adore Thee, Lord, who fillest with Thy majesty the heavens and the earth, although it cannot be contained by them. I adore Thee in my heart, where Thou art really present. I adore Thee with the angels who have

accompanied Thee into this poor abode, and who are seized with admiration in beholding this wondrous abasement of Thy sovereign greatness, and fall humbly prostrate before Thee. I join in the adoration of the saints in heaven. I adore Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, Thy Divinity, with the most lively faith and the most profound reverence. I adore Thee, thus annihilated in the plenitude of Thy perfections, and thus united to the most unworthy of Thy creatures. Give me that lively faith which issues from a heart ready to banish all earthly attachments, in order to render to Thee alone all that homage and adoration which is due to Thee in coming thus to take possession of my whole being.

Love.

I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I press Thee to my heart, as Mary did when she was so happy as to carry Thee in her arms, and to surround Thy holy infancy with her tender, loving caresses. I have received a similar favour in Holy Communion. Vouchsafe to grant me such feelings as may console Thee for the forgetfulness and indifference too frequently shown to Thy sacred presence. I love Thee, as the Prodigal Son, when he was converted, loved his father, who received him with such great compassion and tenderness. Thou hast done still more for me, for the Prodigal Son was only invited to sit down at his father's table, but Thou Thyself hast here become my food. I love Thee, O Jesus, and with Magdalene I fall at Thy feet. One glance of Thine prostrated her heart with sorrow and love. Look, then, upon me, my God, and call me by my name, for Thou hast known me from all eternity, and hast predestinated me with gratuitous love to the most precious of all graces. I offer to Thee the feelings of the saints who loved Thee best. Give me grace to render to Thee truly love for love.

Gratitude.

What shall I render to Thee, O Lord, for all the favours Thou hast granted me? I must use the expressions of David: "Let my right hand forget itself if I forget Thee, O my God. Let my tongue adhere to my palate if I ever cease to remember Thy mercies." I have been unfaithful, but I will never be ungrateful. Engrave indelibly in my heart the thought of Thy love, that I may ever return to it with fresh joy. As the Sacrament of Thy adorable Body is a real sacrifice of thanksgiving, I will employ it not only to declare how much I owe to Thy mercy, but also to give Thee thanks for its perpetual institution. I know no other way to correspond with any equality to Thy infinite charity. Faith discovers to me the greatness of the Eucharistic gift; and if I am so happy as to have communicated in a state of grace, can I not then rejoice, offering Thee to Thy Father in satisfaction for my infinite debt to Him? May my guardian angel and the angelic choirs praise Thee in my name! May all the saints supply the imperfections of my acts of thanksgiving, by the adoration they have rendered Thee in their fervent Communions! I would that my aspirations were so many acts of praise and thanksgiving united to those of the elect.

Requests.

O Jesus, when Thou wert ready to leave this earth and to separate from Thy disciples, who were to be left in the world, Thou didst beseech Thy Father for them, after Thou hadst communicated them with Thine own hand. Oh, pray also for me, because I also am left in the world, exposed to a thousand dangers and to the misery of offending Thee. Pray that I may never belong to this world, which is cursed of Thee, but that I may faithfully persevere in serving Thee at any sacrifice. I ask no temporal favours—they would perhaps

to me. I offer Thee my wretchedness and misery ; cover it with the virtues of Thy immaculate Mother, and may it thus serve as a throne for Thy mercy ! I offer Thee, above all, the perfections of Thy holy soul—particularly Thy poverty, Thy obedience, Thy purity, Thy zeal for the salvation of souls ; glorify Thyself with all the glory which has accrued from these virtues to Thy Father. I offer also unto Thee all the transports of love from the holy souls, with all the homage which is, and ever will be, rendered to Thee by all Thy creatures in heaven and on earth. Receive their merits for my benefit, and for those who have recommended themselves to my prayers, ~~we~~ have a right to be remembered by me ; for those who ~~do~~ me good and pray for me ; for those also who have ~~offended~~ me,—in order that we may all, by final perseverance, obtain the blessedness of glorifying Thee eternally.

Conclusion.

Keep a watchful guard throughout the day over your heart, your senses, especially your tongue, that so you may not offend God, but preserve your mind in constant recollection and devotion. It appears that sins committed on the day of Communion are especially displeasing to our Lord, who has really given Himself to us ; we ought, therefore, to withdraw a little from indifferent occupations—such as unnecessary visiting, walks, &c.—in order to give more time to prayer, spiritual reading, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and to a holy familiarity with Jesus Christ. In the course of your days, frequently recall His presence. Renew from time to time the resolutions which you made in your act of thanksgiving, and think of these words of St. Augustine, “ Respect Jesus in your heart.”

ruin my soul ; but I entreat Thee to grant me an upright mind and humble spirit, and a Christian heart. Inspire me with that holy fear which is the commencement of love ; give me true hatred of sin ; and, more than all the rest, give me the necessary strength, that I may be preserved from human respect—from puerile servitude to worldly customs ; give me strength to resist temptations, and the seduction of flattery and worldly pleasures ; give me grace ever to preserve, in the midst of these dangers, the purity and solidity of my faith, true love of religion, and liberty to practise its duties openly ; give me, in short, the will to remain that which Thy will has caused me to become—a true Christian. Thou, Lord, hast taught me, in loving me immensely, how Thou wouldst have me love my friends ; grant that I may love them in Thee and for Thee. Sanctify them in the truth, surround them with Thy mercies and benefits ; drive far away from them all temptations which might endanger their salvation, and give them all the necessary graces for their complete sanctification in the accomplishment of Thy holy will.

Offering.

Having enjoyed the happiness of Communion, I desire henceforth to live for Thee alone, O Jesus ; I entreat Thee to accept the offering which I make to Thee of myself—of all the faculties of my soul, and all the powers of my body ; that I may use them only in a pure and legitimate manner. Render my body, now sanctified by Thy presence, a living sacrifice, by mortification and utter absence of sensuality. I offer my soul as a tabernacle to Thee, my Saviour, who art here the Host and Victim ; and I beseech Thee to dwell in it perpetually by Thy grace. I offer it to Thee, that Thy love may banish thence every particle of affection for sin and voluntary imperfection. I consecrate to Thy glory all my powers of mind and body, all my talents and all my possessions ; in fact, every thing belonging

to me. I offer Thee my wretchedness and misery ; cover it with the virtues of Thy immaculate Mother, and may it thus serve as a throne for Thy mercy ! I offer Thee, above all, the perfections of Thy holy soul—particularly Thy poverty, Thy obedience, Thy purity, Thy zeal for the salvation of souls ; glorify Thyself with all the glory which has accrued from these virtues to Thy Father. I offer also unto Thee all the transports of love from the holy souls, with all the homage which is, and ever will be, rendered to Thee by all Thy creatures in heaven and on earth. Receive their merits for my benefit, and for those who have recommended themselves to my prayers, or have a right to be remembered by me ; for those who do me good and pray for me ; for those also who have offended me,—in order that we may all, by final perseverance, obtain the blessedness of glorifying Thee eternally.

Conclusion.

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FIRST EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE SULAMITESS (Cant. vi. 12).

Preparation.

THE sweetness of love is beautifully expressed in these words—"to love with tenderness;" it is thus a mother loves. The feelings of a father appear to manifest a stronger, but less gentle, love. The heart of Jesus unites in itself this double sentiment of strength and tenderness in His love to us. Nowhere does He show this more wonderfully than in Holy Communion.

Endeavour to conceive some idea of this in meditating on those touching words which Jesus addresses to the pious souls from His retirement in the tabernacle, "Return, return, O Sulamitess; return, return!" Why does He repeat this call four times? Ah! you must enter into the heart of Jesus, if you would penetrate His thought, or comprehend His ardent desire of drawing us near to Him in the Holy Eucharist. Descend into the depth of your heart. Has not this call been heard by you also? In what circumstances? During how long a time? You only know this. Examine yourself, then, as to the fidelity with which you have responded to the ardent desires of the heart of Jesus. If you hear His voice no longer, seek in yourself the cause of the silence which He now keeps. How often, after your repeated faults, has our Lord, with Divine indulgence, recalled you to the holy table?

I. "*Return.*"—*Forgiveness.*

This word "Return" implies that the Sulamitess had been at a distance. Our Lord does not simply say to her, "Come," as to a person already near us, whom we wish to draw still nearer. He says, "Return." This is a word of clemency, of pardon; for her absence indicates

that she has been in fault ; there must, at least, have been indifference—perhaps serious offences—perhaps a long forgetfulness. Perhaps it was a guilty resistance, a voluntary infidelity. But, whatever may have been the greatness, number, or nature of the offences of this soul, the heart of Jesus makes no mention of them. “Only return,” Jesus says to her, “and all shall be forgotten,”—return ; My heart is open to you ;—and if He sees that the unfaithful Sulamitess is driven from Him by fear, He renders His Divine call still more pressing. Often have I heard this internal call ; so sweet, that it powerfully attracted my soul—so peaceful, that it attracted it silently—so secret, that it spoke to my heart alone—so powerful, that I could hardly resist it. And, notwithstanding this, Jesus, in the holy tabernacle, does not speak to me as formerly in the time of His mortal life He used to speak to those who had recourse to Him ; but He looks at me, and His Divine glance penetrates my thoughts, my most secret feelings. In this very instant of my Communion, what does He discover in my heart ? Am I submissive to His operation ? for He only enters into my soul to work upon it efficaciously. The operation of God—quite distinct from that of men, which acts by outward means—is so much more powerful, as it is entirely interior. Holy Communion is the most admirable means by which He acts upon man. Let me, then, be careful to drive away from my soul every thing which can by possibility weaken or destroy it. Nothing escapes the eye of God. Let me, then, separate my thoughts from creatures, and fix them incessantly on Him. If I wish to please Him, I must very carefully correct all my faults, without excepting a SINGLE ONE—I must faithfully expiate my sins by bodily mortification, bear outward trials patiently, and strive to avoid the slightest imperfections. I must fulfil all my duties ; be very careful of temptations, and provide against them, so that they may never take me by surprise ; and I must never neglect the smallest duty

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or obligation. By this fidelity I shall overcome those feelings of extreme sensitiveness, those sudden sallies of self-love, which I have hitherto cherished instead of combating; and, with confidence in the goodness of God, I shall manifest by my actions my repentance and love.

Another cause for self-humiliation: O my Jesus, I often expect to please Thee by some pious action; but when I examine myself in the light of Thy grace, I perceive that I have been seeking my own pleasure rather than Thy glory; a sinful vanity deprives me of the merit of my works. I require light to enable me to discover the tortuous windings of self-love in the folds of my heart, and I require strength to prevent my soul from giving way to discouragement. When vanity leads me astray, I ought to cry with St. Augustine, "Alas, Lord, I was seeking Thee afar off when Thou wast very near to me." I can at any moment find Thee in my eyes, by preserving modesty and purity; on my lips, by humble silence, or by the confession of my sins and Thy greatness; in my memory, by calling to remembrance my misery and Thy mercy; in my mind, by holy thoughts and by meditation upon Thy Divine life; but, more than all, I shall find Thee in my heart, in which I am about to receive Thee—in my heart that loves Thee; and, if it loves Thee, it is impossible that it should not remain for ever united to Thee.

II. "*Return, return.*"—*Confidence.*

This call indicates the joy of our Lord in seeing the return of the soul which He has sought for, and which He calls with the solicitude of the Good Shepherd and the anxious expectation of the father of the Prodigal Son. His heart desires her to return with confidence—not only with humility, full of the remembrance of her faults, of regret for the past; but with a sweet hope of a reception full of tenderness. "*Return, return.*"

This earnest entreaty has a deep meaning, which it

is needful to penetrate. I may be apparently very near to Jesus, while I am in reality at a great distance from Him. My thoughts and my heart are where my treasure is. If I love the world, it keeps possession of my thoughts and affections, and I bring nothing to the tabernacle but a dissipated mind and a dry and barren heart. Our Lord, who sees the depths of my soul, can say to me with truth, "My child, return to your God."

In the tabernacle, Jesus does not only desire to receive our homage; He desires to have our heart, as a place of delight, where He will show forth His power and mercy. But if my heart, open to the attacks of vanity, formally opposes His Spirit, He departs; for the Holy Spirit, who is wisdom and light, loves to dwell in peace and humility, whereas pride produces trouble and darkness. Then, with His heart full of grief, Jesus strives to make me hear His voice, and, fearing that He may not be heard above the tumultuous uproar of My passions, He redoubles His appeal, "Return, return, My daughter." If Jesus implores me so earnestly to *return* to Him, it is because He appreciates the value of my soul. What, then, is the worth of my soul? Sacred things are priceless. But what is there consecrated to God by so many titles as my soul? It is His heritage, His temple. "A soul," says St. Bernard, "is a very great treasure; for Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, who can never be deceived, considers it of more value than His own most precious Blood. When we look at the Cross, it would even seem as if a soul were not worth less than God Himself."

Jesus *came* into the world to save souls, and He *dwells* here in order that they may know Him and love Him better. Why, then, should we fly from Him? why so rarely approach Him? He is not come to punish, but to heal me. What a sweet thought!

That desire which caused the Incarnation is ever ardent in the heart of our Lord. It is for this reason that He desires to apply to me all the fruits of that

mystery ; and when I wander away from Him, I put myself in opposition to the very end of His Incarnation. I make it unavailing to me. Alas! each day, each hour, how many graces, which were offered to me, are lost through my carelessness and malice! Of how many others do I deprive myself through my own want of gratitude! Often I think myself doing well in not abusing the bounties of God, sometimes even in consenting to receive them ; and I forget a duty no less sweet than sacred—that of gratitude to our Blessed Lord, who pardons my offences, who covers me with His grace and mercy, who redeems my life from death, in offering Himself unceasingly for my salvation. O Lord, recall me efficaciously to Thyself. But when Jesus calls me, where shall I go ? Wearied with the vain glitter of the world, turning from the dangerous seduction of its pleasures, I need a shelter and a refuge. The sanctuary shall be the blessed retreat where I will hide myself, for I am stained with sin ; where I will repose sweetly, for Jesus is my protector ; there I shall sleep in peace, for Jesus will watch over me. Ah, Lord, why, in my very infancy, when I was guided by Thy grace and learning to love Thee by the recital of Thy benefits,—why did I not *then* dedicate to Thee the purity of my heart ! Drawn far away from Thee, I have wandered ; but I have not returned. Never permit me to wander from Thee more ; for if I do not abandon Thee during my life, I am certain of possessing Thee throughout eternity.

Jesus recalls me to Himself by another inducement still. Every thing I do from any inspiration but that of grace is lost. Now, He knows that the beauty of my soul in His sight might increase every day, if it were animated by His Divine Spirit, and influenced by His love—it might increase in holiness by practising solid virtues ; it might rise above the world by humility, above the love of riches by poverty, above the pleasures of sense by mortification, and it might triumph over self by holy obedience. My soul may also procure the glory of God

by extending the reign of Divine love in all hearts by means of her prayers and good works. Can I, then, be surprised that Jesus, who is holiness itself, whose heart is burning with zeal for the glory of God, should say to me, "My daughter, return to Me"?

III. "*Return, return, O Sulamitess.*"

Our Lord fears that she may not have been quite sure that the first two invitations were addressed to her; He therefore calls her by her name. He knows her, then; He knows the weakness, perhaps the perversity, of her heart. He has seen her combats, her fears, her doubts, her resolutions, and, with all this, a germ of love which was already springing up in her heart amidst the disturbance of her passions. She drew nearer when she heard the voice of the Lord; but she remained still at a distance from Him, on the threshold of the temple. He wishes her to enter; she will be most welcome: "Return, O Sulamitess." He wishes her to respond to this loving invitation with the ready eagerness of a heart that feels itself beloved, and not with the apprehension of being repelled or coldly received.

It is no longer to the Sulamitess that Jesus addresses this appeal, full of force and sweetness, but *to you*, whom He seeks carefully, expects anxiously—*to you*, whom He desires to rest upon His sacred heart. That you may no longer doubt of His ardent desire, He repeats to you each day from the Altar, with inimitable tenderness, My daughter, I love you. In fact, is there not even in the humiliation of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist a secret but powerful voice, which says, "I love you"? By His patient suffering of all those outrages wherewith His cup was filled to overflowing, does He not say again, "My daughter, My love for you must have been very great, to enable Me to support without weariness so many sufferings"? Has not the hidden presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist a voice to represent to God that Jesus loves you, and desires your salvation? and does

not His silence speak more eloquently than the Divine voice which resounded from the mountain? and is not its language that of the most tender love? Now, then, penetrated with these thoughts, you will learn how you may best, in your turn, assure our Lord of your sincere and devoted love. Let your heart speak.

Act of Thanksgiving.

But where does the Sulamitess find her God—the heart of her Divine Master? On His sacred Altar-throne, where He ever dwells, but especially in Holy Communion, where He gives Himself to her really and substantially.

In considering the incessant labour of Jesus to attract our souls,—the repose He takes in that mysterious abode in which He is enchained by the indefatigable solicitude of His heart,—we may well say, in receiving the Sacred Host, Yes, my God is here; an incomprehensible mystery is accomplished; Jesus Christ is in me—my heart, which is His sanctuary, is overwhelmed by the sacred presence which it contains. After Communion, I may cry, more justly than David, “Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me?” (Ps. xlii. 5.) It is when we are near Jesus that fear departs and sadness is charmed away. Now, then, let me adore Him, love Him, consecrate myself to Him for ever.

I. “*Return, return, O Sulamitess, return.*”—*The Love of our Lord.*

Jesus sees the Sulamitess at His feet; He receives her with touching kindness; He cannot refuse her any favour. After sitting at His table, she ought never again to leave her Divine Master. Fearing that she may have sought near Him only a momentary repose, and that soon, wearied with the silent calm of the tabernacle, her careless heart may return to the abodes of the world, and exchange the pure joys of the Holy

Eucharist for amusements which must soon be drowned in remorse, Jesus, in order to retain her, arouses her attention, hoping that His voice will efficaciously touch her frivolous heart, and attach it irrevocably to His service: "Return, return, O Sulamitess, return." What watchful tenderness, what force, in this triple appeal!

Lord, I have been so like the Sulamitess in her wanderings, that I can easily trace the resemblance to myself in her inconstancy at the moment of her return. No sooner have I received Thee, than my thoughts leave Thee, and wander at the will of my imagination, because my heart is cold and my virtue is weak. The slightest breath overthrows my resolutions—the least restraint revolts me, and makes me desire a liberty which I am certain to abuse. How good Thou art, then, thus to provide against my weakness! It is even greater than I had imagined. I let myself fall into the snare without perceiving the mortal peril that lurks within it for my soul. Perhaps *I love the danger*; but Thy mercy has prepared for me, in the deep wounds of Thy sacred Body, an inaccessible asylum, from which I may behold the tempests rage without fearing any injury. It is to Thee alone, O my Jesus, that I owe this happiness. Thy thought has rested upon me—Thy heart has loved me—Thy far-seeing mercy has conducted me in a providential manner to that great grace of Communion, which I now enjoy with heartfelt thanksgiving. It is not enough to possess our Lord in Holy Communion; we must know how to retain Him and preserve Him in our hearts. We enjoy with much sweetness a treasure which it has cost us much to obtain; thus our Lord desires to render His union with us perpetual. How can we keep Jesus with us? By being courageous and resolved to suffer. Mary began a life overflowing with sorrows the very moment the Incarnation was accomplished. The life of our Lord on earth was one long grief. If you wish to be made conformable to Him, do not hope for exemption from suffering. Jesus finds in

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you many enemies who are opposed to His kingdom; He comes to assist you to combat them. You must, then, live in a state of continual warfare with the world and with yourself. If your soul be light and frivolous, she will betray the love of God, and will give herself up to vanity and the attractions of pleasure; but if your sole object is to please your Divine Master, tear yourself away from the seductions of this world. Say, "I have found Him whom my soul loveth; I hold Him, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). All the joys of this world shall not shake my heart; Jesus Christ shall reign there for ever. I will not abandon Thee, O my God. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38).

To courage, add vigilance. Life is a warfare—watch and prepare your armour. The soul which is founded on holy thoughts becomes invincible. The mind becomes strong in meditating upon the great truths of the faith; it is strengthened to resist the terrors and troubles with which the devil assails our understandings. Let your vigilance be founded upon a humble fear and sweet confidence in the goodness of our Lord. "He that feareth God," says the Prophet, "is not subject to change;" his heart, firm and immovable, will despise the efforts of his enemies.

Unite all the feelings of your heart in a tender, sincere, devoted love; for our Lord loves those who love Him. "Those who, watching diligently, wake early in the morning to seek Me, they shall find Me" (Prov. viii. 17), says Jesus, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father. Yes, I will watch, my God, to preserve Thy Divine presence. I know it is easily lost, even before we discover its departure; for Thy holy Mother, who loved Thee so tenderly, lost Thee in returning from Jerusalem. And yet, with what anxious solicitude did she not keep watch! But in leaving Mary, Thou didst design to give me this great lesson, that whenever we wish to find

Thee, we must seek Thee in the temple,—that is, we must return to the holy tabernacle,—or, rather, we should never leave it; we should leave our hearts there, to be united to Thy heart. When Mary lost Thee, Thou wert not to be found in the worldly assemblies of the city. They did not find Thee amongst Thy relations and friends.

O Jesus, how, then, shall I keep Thee with me in the midst of mine, if affection for them occupies my heart and absorbs my thoughts? Mary, plunged in grief at Thy absence, had great difficulty in finding Thee again. How, then, shall I preserve Thee, if I am careless of Thy glory, indifferent to Thy holy presence, little affected by Thy wondrous love? Lord, it shall not be so with me; my soul desires no consolation here below: I think of Thee—that is sufficient; and the thought of Thee is my delight.

II. “*Return, return, O Sulamitess, return.*”—*Union.*

Here is the most touching expression of our Saviour’s love; who, in this last appeal, appears to summon up all the tenderness of His heart, to subdue completely the soul which has been the object of so many cares. Having assured her that He loves her with an everlasting love, He desires to attract her to Himself by the closest ties, to “plant her,” as the prophet Osee says, “in the place of His love.” This sacred retreat is the heart of Jesus, which we receive in Holy Communion. It is in the Sacred Host, O my God, that, having traversed the space which separates heaven from our nothingness, ascended the mountain of our vices, our sins, and our imperfections,—it is *there* Thou dost remain to wait for us—to invite us to Thy Divine feast of love—to give us a pitying kiss of peace—to place Thy heart in our hands—to descend Thyself into our hearts, repeating to us with heavenly tenderness, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. xxxi. 3). I love Thee more than a mother loves her child, for she can only give it

her heart and her constant solicitude; but I have fed you with My Body and Blood; I have poured out abundantly upon you the benediction of my sacred heart. What can I say, O Jesus, of the ineffable sweetness which Thou dost pour into the soul when it is united to Thee? Oh, at those times when Thy grace has given me to feel the pure joys of Holy Communion, my heart has found them a thousand times sweeter than I should ever be able to express. In this blessed moment when God gives Himself to the soul, He makes her *feel* His presence, and He also gives Himself to her entirely. In this intimate communication, what secret sweetness, what joy unknown to the world, what delightful repose on the heart of Jesus, becomes our portion! But the will of our Lord does not restrict this happiness to the short moments of His sacramental presence, nor to the duration of our act of thanksgiving; He establishes His abode in our soul when He finds it prepared for this Divine union, and seems to forget His greatness and His glory, in the thought of loving us and giving Himself for us.

III. *The Consequences of this Union.*

"We must grow," says St. Peter, "in grace, and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. iii. 18). A soul which is united to Jesus Christ carries His sacred presence away with it. By the effect of His grace, Jesus is every thing to the soul; she sees Him in every thing—she places Him between herself and all other creatures. In the air she breathes, in the bread she eats, in the midst of her daily occupations, Jesus is her centre. She speaks, but Jesus is the object of her thoughts; she labours, but the glory of Jesus is the end of her works; she prays, but the name of Jesus is upon her lips; and her most sweet and constant prayer is summed up in an act of love.

Ah, Lord, how good Thou art thus to descend into the path of my life, not permitting me to take a single

step without meeting Thee on my way! For where does not the Christian soul find Thee? If she looks at the sky, it declares Thy glory; the sea reflects Thy immensity; and if she directs her gaze to the farthest bounds of the horizon, all the countries of the world are Thy work, and manifest Thy power. But I have felt this secret communication of Thyself with greatest tenderness at those seasons when, far from my ordinary abode, a stranger in a strange land, I have found no friend but the Church. Ah! then with what happiness my soul seeks Thy throne of grace upon the Altar, and says to herself, "My God is there." Receive, O Jesus, this cry of faith, as a feeble offering of adoration and love.

Yes, Lord, my eyes ever seek the tabernacle. When I enjoy not Thy presence, no landscape can attract me, no art can charm me; but, afflicted by Thy absence, I descend into my own heart, and the remembrance of my last Communion gives me the hope of the one which is to come. My whole life, O my God, is really comprised between two Communions,—between my Communion of to-day, the happiness of which still fills my heart, and the next Communion, to which I look forward with joyful hope. Lord, the Holy Eucharist is the consolation of my life; and yet how often have I received it without making the preparation which its sanctity requires! And Thou, O my God, infinitely merciful, because Thou art all love, didst incline Thy heart to my ardent prayer. Each day Thou dost direct towards the Holy Eucharist all the efforts of my soul, all the labour of my life.

It is in Communion that we learn to know Thee, O my Jesus, and by Communion we advance with humility in the path of virtue, in which I have still much progress to make. But, "Blessed," says the Prophet, "is the man that trusteth in Thee" (Ps. lxxxiii. 13). Lord, I am surrounded with perils; may Thy presence fill my heart with grace and strength, whereby I may ascend to Thee! I feel the emptiness of creatures, and the dangers of the

world ; and, like the Apostle, " I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). To possess his God, and by death to find himself set free from all change and suffering, was the only desire of St. Paul. The true means of advancement towards God is in the heart. We ascend to God by loving Him more perfectly, by detaching ourselves ever more and more from all created things. I love Thee with my whole heart, O my Jesus, but I can only raise myself up to Thee by *detaching* myself from creatures ; and much secret suffering is implied in this *detachment*. Even our love for Thee in this world is a suffering love, which is fed with tears, and takes shelter at the foot of the Cross.

Conclusion.

Let me thank our Lord for recalling me to Himself, while some sacrifices still remained for me to make ; and let me beg Him to give me grace never to hesitate between duty and pleasure, between the will of God and my own satisfaction.

SECOND EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

" AUDI, FILIA"—" HEARKEN, O DAUGHTER" (Ps. xliv. 11).

Preparation.

OUR Lord makes His voice heard in different ways. He speaks to us by His precepts, by His counsels, by circumstances, by afflictions, by the secret motions of His grace ; but nowhere does He speak to us with more sweetness than from His sacred abode upon our Altars, or after Holy Communion. Let us listen to His words, let us treasure them up, let us put them in practice.

I. "*Audi, filia.*"

To be called by our Lord is a great favour. It is

important that we should hear Him, and respond to Him faithfully. This is the prelude to the Christian life.

My God, Thou alone upon this earth must now say to me, "Hearken, O daughter." Around me silence, solitude, death, have all gathered in their sad harvest. I am alone. A word falls gently from heaven upon my heart, which overflows with bitterness—"Hearken, O daughter." It is not the world that speaks to you now—it is not the voice of love or relationship, neither is it the voice of your passions, that you hear; it is your God, your Saviour, who addresses you. Listen, My daughter, to My words, which overflow with love. Submit to the influences of My grace, strive to calm the agitation of your soul, to conquer your feelings of self-love; never suffer pride to govern your thoughts and words, for "pride goeth before destruction" (Prov. xvi. 18). Forget yourself, raise up your heart to Me, for I require all your love.

From all eternity, O my God, Thou hast chosen me for Thy child. Thou hast noted the hour of my birth; Thy angel, who watched over my cradle, protected all my steps; for, even before I could speak, the voice that might have thrilled my heart by saying to me, "Hearken, O daughter," was stilled for ever in the silence of death. A thousand dangers surrounded my entrance into life. I remember, with thankfulness, by how many merciful interpositions they were averted from my soul.

O my God, Thou alone knowest my sorrows; and Thou didst point out to me the heart which was able to relieve them. Thou alone didst lead me to the priest, who in Thy name pardons my faults, and opens the tabernacle to give me Thyself to be the Lord and Master of my heart. And again, when weary of the world, in which I could nowhere find repose, then Thou didst say, pointing me to solitude, as the natural abode of piety, "Hearken, O daughter; come, with Me, away from the world—leave all; I will be your only heritage. I will give you one who shall be your director in the path

of evangelical counsels ;” and how happy have I been in obeying Thy heavenly voice !

II. “ *Audi, filia.*”

This repeated call of our Lord, is a call to a perfect life ; it is an invitation to follow Him in a more perfect manner. He proposes that you should study His life, in order to make your own conformable to it. Having shown me the marvels of Thy love, O my Jesus, Thou proposest to me Thy life for my imitation and consolation. A child is born in a stable—behold Him there, lying on a little straw ; poverty, cold, the pain of circumcision, have caused Him to shed tears. *Audi, filia.* It is your God ! But what astonishing love in this annihilation, in these humiliations ! What love in the *poverty* displayed at His birth ! Even in this world He gives to those souls who choose this holy poverty for His sake, that delight and recompense in it which is alluded to in the song of the angels, “ Peace to men of good will” (Luke ii. 14), that is, peace to those who refuse nothing to God. At Nazareth, Jesus passed thirty years of solitude. What instruction in His silence, in His profound humility, in His continual daily obedience, His absolute dependence upon Mary, His incessant labours, often crossed by the contemptuous rebuffs of men ! What instruction in this hidden life, the mystery of which the angels alone can comprehend, and which shone with such glorious brightness in heaven ! Let us study attentively, and retain faithfully, that word of our Lord, which is the foundation of this hidden life, “ Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (Matt. xi. 29).

Amongst all the virtues displayed in Nazareth, where, hidden from every eye, buried in profound humility, Thou didst teach me, O Jesus, in what manner I can best sanctify my life, I fix my thoughts more especially on Thy *obedience*. Obedience is repugnant to my nature, Thy sweetness and humility to the pride of my mind ;

and yet, notwithstanding this natural repulsion, my soul is strongly inclined to imitate Thee. Until now, I have been able to bear nothing, to excuse nothing, to forget nothing; and yet, after offending, I have been secure of obtaining forgiveness and oblivion from Thee. O Jesus, make me gentle and humble, especially in the emotions of my soul.

In Thy public life, what patience do I behold! what zeal, what tender forbearance with the imperfections of others, what detachment, what poverty, what self-renunciation, what goodness to every one, what compassion for our weakness and misery, what a spirit of recollection and prayer in the ministry of the Gospel, what forgetfulness of self, after performing the most wonderful miracles! O my Jesus, help me to examine myself. How many defects do I not perceive in my outward conduct, in my relations with those around me, in the good works which I undertake! I am so prone to make myself the centre of every thing which concerns me, instead of referring all to God! Thy whole life is the model of that patient labour, that constant bearing with the infirmities of others, which I ought daily to endeavour to acquire, without expecting any reward in this life. Eternity will recompense me for these passing troubles, which are sanctified by Thy blessing.

When at last, O Jesus, in order to accomplish Thy Father's will and to complete the work of our redemption, Thou wast nailed to the cross, what love appears in Thy forgiveness of Thy cruel persecutors! What tenderness hast Thou not shown in giving us Thy Mother, who has become our Mother also! what resignation and peace, when Thou wast forsaken by Thy Father! what sorrow in the blood which flowed from Thy wounds! And when, in dying for us, Thy love appeared to reach its utmost climax, Thou saidst again, "I leave you, but I do not abandon you; I close My eyes, but I do not lose sight of you; My heart blesses you, it will watch continually over you, and for the comfort of your life it has opened

two fountains of mercy,—the cleansing tears shed in penance, and the Divine Blood of the sacrifice.”

Has not Jesus often addressed to my soul some such language as this? How have I answered Him? And henceforth what will my heart reply?

III. “*Audi, filia.*”

Here is an appeal of a peculiar character, in which Jesus puts our courage and generosity to the test, by those afflictions which purify the soul by detaching it from the world and from itself.

As we advance in life, we do not forget our early sorrows; they awaken again at each new affliction, and form of our life a sad chain of successive griefs. Jesus calls from His Altar-throne, and says to me, “Listen, My daughter; I am with those who love Me in afflictions; nothing can attract Me to you more surely than your sorrows; come to Me, and I will comfort you.”

My God, do Thou be with me in affliction, for without Thee my courage would fail. Thy Humanity, which Thou art about to give me in this Blessed Sacrament, preserves, in its pierced hands and feet, the glorious marks of Thy crucifixion, because Thou wouldst thereby imbue me with its spirit; and in my sweet alliance with Thy sufferings will Thy promise of remaining ever with me be accomplished. Although Thy immensity renders Thee actually present with every creature, although Thou art substantially present in the Holy Eucharist, yet in the day of sorrow Thou givest Thyself to me still more intimately. The more bitter the sorrow, the more powerful will Thy succour be. Ah! St. Paul was right when he counted his happiness to consist in his infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses of every kind, knowing that, in the time of his weakness, the Divine strength would abide more perfectly in him (2 Cor. xii. 10). I will hear Thee attentively, O my Jesus, when Thou dost instruct me in the way of the cross; but I cannot feel the *love* of suffering,

without the gift of Thy grace, which I now most earnestly implore.

IV. "*Audi, filia.*"

By this address, Jesus pours into the soul a sweet unction, when, with patient resignation, we have given up to Him whatever love demands. This is peace in self-sacrifice. Dear Lord, I once thought it an impossible thing to love the Cross, even when kneeling before the Altar, where I behold Thy sacred Blood. Thou hast pitied my spiritual ignorance, and hast instructed me in the blessed fruits of affliction; now that which was hard to my natural feelings, has become sweet to my heart. *Audi, filia*, Thou didst say, on beholding my unwillingness to suffer affliction. Am I not your Creator, your Father? Is not your life at the mercy of My Providence, which is no other than My will? If eternity is a mystery of future happiness or misery, have I not placed at your disposal treasures of grace, which can enable you to obtain this endless happiness, and preserve you from eternal destruction? Call on Me for mercy every day, after the example of St. Mary of Egypt. The Cross is for all others, as it was for Me, the only road to bliss. Oh, learn, then, that the tenderest parent's love on earth is but a weak image of My love for you. I am not insensible to your sorrows. No longer, then, consider yourself alone in the world, and sink not so easily under your trials. Intrust to *Me* the terrible decision of your eternal weal or woe. Your uneasiness seems to reproach Me with coming to you only in order to increase the terrors of the dread account which you must one day give of My graces, whereas, in reality, I open My heart to you as a shelter from the terror of My justice.

O my Saviour and my God, Thy words reveal to me an astonishing and mysterious love; and consolation arises to me even out of the feeling of my weakness. Give me, I pray Thee, a filial love corresponding in

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strength to the motives which should attach me to Thy service. The love of Thee is a better safeguard from sin than fear would be. Make me love Thee, and I shall sin no more. During Thy life on earth, in submission to the will of God, Thou didst assume the weakness of sorrow, Thou didst suffer humiliations and temptations, Thou didst overcome Thy natural aversions, and conquer the instincts of nature, by the exercise of their opposite virtues—the most lowly abasement in the sight of all men, continual labour, with complete indifference as to its success, and patient bearing of injustice even unto death. What, then, are all these mournful remembrances? are they not the different forms Thy love has taken to adapt itself to the measure of my degradation, so as to instruct and encourage me? Yes, Lord, Thy love makes a profound impression upon my soul; but it does so, above all, at the moment when, in Holy Communion, Thou dost sum up all the proofs of Thy love, in order to bestow them at once upon my heart. Behold the secret obstacles which keep me back from true holiness, and hinder this complete union. Help me to rid myself of them, that, according to the measure of my weakness, I may lovingly resign myself to Thy will.

V. "*Audi, filia.*"

This more intimate call of our Lord is a peculiar favour, in which He gives to those who communicate frequently a special enjoyment of the Holy Eucharist. In leaving behind us, on the path of life, those early days in which our Lord initiated us into the first aspirations after holiness, they remain ever enshrined in our memory as a precious remembrance. The first call of God creates deep emotion in every soul. This moment is the dawn of a new life, on which we enter full of hope, leaning upon God, and influenced by a grace which we do not try to resist. Come to the holy table to receive Jesus. Even if His voice does not now create in your soul an impression so *lively* and so *strong* as in the

days in which it first reëchoed in the depths of your heart, its power is in nowise diminished.

Thou knowest, O my God, that, trembling with fear and joy, I arose at Thy secret call, not yet knowing what Thou didst require of me. That Divine influence has little by little detached me from the world, to such a point that every sacrifice at first seemed easy to me. The hope of one Communion was enough to make me eagerly long for the hour when I should offer Thee a sacrifice. Why, then, now that I am frequently admitted to Thy heavenly banquet, do I not seek more earnestly to unite in my soul the spirit of the cross, purity of heart, self-sacrifice, and generosity, to that invincible impulse which attracted me to Thee? Why has not each of my Communions been followed by a complete renunciation of my own will, to follow Thine? O my Lord and my God, the secret of my present lukewarmness is to be found in my weakness and pusillanimity. I am tired of suffering, yet Thou art not weary of loving me. My faith has no longer the vivacity which formerly caused me to fear lest I should come insufficiently prepared to this most august of mysteries. Revive these long-dormant feelings. A little more faith, confidence, and love for Thee would make me generous. Teach me to desire no happiness but that of possessing Thee, and convince me more and more that no happiness even exists apart from Thee, who art the absolute centre of all felicity in heaven and earth.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord profoundly as your Father and your God.

Entreat Him to be Himself your act of thanksgiving before the Divine Majesty. Recommend yourself to His heart—give Him yours.

Fill your heart simply and sweetly with the thought of the love shown to you by Jesus, and of the love which He expects from you in return. Pour out your

soul at His feet in expressions of filial love. He delights in the candour and simplicity of the trustful soul.

What our Lord requires of you is, not sweetness in the *feeling* of love, but the strength, generosity, and devotion of love itself.

Supply the deficiency in your ability to praise God worthily for His great services, by offering Him all the benedictions and praise which have been ever given Him by all the angels from the time of their creation, and by all the blessed in heaven; add also all those which they will offer to Him hereafter, throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Ask our Lord not to go away until He has given you His blessing.

I. *The tender Consideration of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist.*

His glory and power are hidden; He waits in silence for the appointed hour to manifest His love. He comes in the fulness of Himself for our happiness, for our salvation. He does not complain of the indifference, coldness, disdain, even the disgust, with which He is too often received. He comes, asking nothing in return, and He gives Himself always with the same tenderness and abnegation as often as we desire Him. Do you not often experience the consolation?

At this moment, with a more intimate expression of love, Jesus says again, *Audi, filia*, and remember My teaching in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; it is for you that My heart remains ever there. There, for eighteen centuries, I keep silence amidst the most horrible and continued outrages. For your sake My heart abides there, full of sadness in seeing Myself strangely abandoned by those souls which I have enriched with such special graces. For you also I obey, never ceasing to humiliate Myself, to abase Myself, in order to draw you unto Myself. For your sake I send forth from the tabernacle, as it were from another Calvary, a secret

joy in the midst of grief ; and this joy, so sweet as to be an actual foretaste of heaven, I bring to your heart, although I too often receive nothing in return but sadness, bitterness, coldness, indifference, and even absolute resistance to the pressing appeal of My love.

It is true, O my God, Thou art in me to love and to bless. Grant that I may ever prefer Thy glory to all that has hitherto occupied my mind ; that in hearing this sweet word, *Audi, filia*, I may keep silence in my soul, that I may hear Thy voice, that I may become obedient to Thy will. Speak to Thy child, O Lord ; Thou knowest that I am weak rather than unwilling ; and, receiving the impression of Thy love upon my soul, I will endeavour to manifest by my *life* my felicity and gratitude.

II. *The disinterested Zeal of our Lord.*

The dealings of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist exhibit to me all those characteristic features of zeal which ought to appear in a soul that is admitted to the privilege of frequent Communion. He labours for our salvation in a way as gentle as it is active and persevering ; but, in all His actions, what wonderful forgetfulness of self ! His sole object is the glory of God ; no thought of personal interest intrudes. He employs all the Divine industry of His love to attract souls to the practice of virtue, to lead them on to perfection. He leaves to every soul that receives Him *the care of the interests of His glory*, expecting only that their devotedness will make them desire to contribute a little to that glory of which He deprives Himself for their sakes.

Is this my spirit ? Is zeal the soul of all my actions ? Since I have communicated frequently, where are the works which I have done solely from the pure motive of the greater glory of God, despising the opinion of men ? How many souls have I brought back to God ? Nevertheless, our Lord often says to me, *Audi, filia*. Regard in every thing your ultimate end, God, eternity. Give up every thought of self, in the good works which you

undertake. Propose to yourself the intention of My greater glory, and leave to My sacred heart the sweet task of rewarding you according to its good pleasure.

O Jesus, touched with Thy disinterested love, I shall seek occasion to give Thee a little of that glory which it is Thy will to receive from my love here below. In such a circumstance, in such an actual or probable sacrifice, how should I act so as to please Thee? Make me understand and feel that the smallest act of virtue is preferable to any thing I can do for my own personal satisfaction. Teach me how to labour for Thy greater glory, and excite my zeal in increasing my love and gratitude.

III. *Detachment from the Spirit of the World.*

During my act of thanksgiving, Jesus says to me, with still more lively entreaty, "Hearken, My daughter;" contemplate with profound recollection the merciful guidance of My grace, by which I have withdrawn you from the world, to enrich you with numberless blessings in the frequent participation of the Divine Eucharist. In order to comprehend the sacred gift, you must forget the world, you must quit it at least in thought and desire, and aspire after Me with all the powers of your soul. This Sacrament does not contain the whole of Christianity, but it is the most elevated and touching expression of its spirit. Since you have enjoyed its secret sweetness, have you not remarked that, when deprived of Holy Communion, you become sad and solitary? If your imagination sometimes calls up the remembrance of ephemeral pleasures, your heart, soon weary of its wanderings, desires ardently a few crumbs from the eucharistic banquet, and, in the humble confession of her weakness, recovers the joy of My presence, amidst the tears of repentance.

Yes, Lord, my most bitter sorrow is the recollection of my past faults. So long accustomed to the pleasures of vanity, to the indulgence of the most subtle self-love,

I cannot think of them without recalling the incalculable number of graces which have fortified me in danger, and increased the love of virtue in my heart. What I will henceforth desire—what my heart requires—I can find nowhere, save in Holy Communion. I shall ever *find* it there, even if I do not *feel* it, because all pure joy is in Thee.

But why have I so often forgotten Thy benefits ; and then, cast down by the feeling of my unworthiness, have I remained at a distance from Thee, until a fresh appeal of love has brought me back to Thy feet ?

Listen, My daughter (this was Thy gentle call, for the silence of the Sacramental Presence is not disturbed by the interior conversation we hold with our Lord); come near to Me. Go no more to seek satisfaction in the delusions of self-love, to the great peril of your soul. With Me, you possess every thing ; alone, you are weak and ready to perish. United to Me, you have power over My heart, which will bless you, if you forget all that you have loved for itself, and not for Me—all deceitful attractions which keep your soul suspended over the abyss of destruction.

IV. *Self-renunciation.*

It is only in Communion that one thoroughly understands those words of our Lord, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Luke ix. 23). Jesus Christ said this once to all men in His lifetime ; but with how much force does He not repeat it now to the soul in which He takes up His abode ! *Audi, filia* ; you are at liberty to be satisfied with the sweetness of the Holy Eucharist ; or, if you desire to remain with Me always, you may accept with Me the abasements, contradictions, and contempt endured by Me in My public life, with My sufferings upon Calvary. Choose either the repose of contemplation, or the life of active duties. But, if you resolve to follow Me, let it be with the irrevocable determination to forget yourself, to humble yourself, as I humble

Myself, in order to give Myself to thee. To follow Me is to renounce the pleasures, the ambition, the frivolous enjoyments of the world ; it is to renounce all sensual desires—to give up your own will, your judgment, not superficially or hastily, but in a spirit of sincere and generous renunciation.

I am united to our Lord ; but have I said once only, with full determination of heart, Yes, Lord, I renounce every thing for the love of Thee? My heart is prepared to follow Thee, in life and in death. Dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure. Shall I hesitate now? Jesus expects this determination, which His love gives Him a presumptive right to demand. If you refuse it to Him, you will sadden His Divine heart.

Lord, when shall I feel my soul so generously strengthened in Thy service, if not at this happy moment? I will then say to Thee, with the pious author of the *Imitation*, “ Where have I ever been happy without Thee? and where can I be miserable, possessing Thee? I prefer, if such should be Thy will, to feel all the inconveniences of poverty, rather than to be rich without Thee. I would rather live with Thee in obscurity and misery, than possess all the enjoyments of life without Thee. No one can satisfy me but Thee, O my God, who makest every circumstance of my life tend to the advancement of my spiritual welfare.”

V. *Christian Detachment.*

“ Hearken, My daughter; forget thy people and thy father’s house ; for am not I thy Father and thy God ?” (Ps. xliv. 2.) Lord, it is true I cannot be united to Thee, while I still retain an attachment to any earthly creature whatsoever. The mind which is affected by earthly things, loses sight of the immutable Good, not reflecting that our transitory abode will soon be swallowed up in eternity. This thought, well considered, will help me to keep the eyes of my heart fixed upon those eternal abodes, where I shall be united to Thee,

O Lord, for ever. Oh, with what intense joy will my last moments be penetrated, if I once acquire this habit of celestial contemplation ! For, if Thou lovest me so much that Thou dost choose to remain always with me here below, in spite of my sinfulness,—and if Thy presence, though concealed under the species of bread, now conveys to me such heavenly sweetness,—with what entire confidence may I trust to Thy love the destinies of my future life ! If I enjoy such happiness in possessing Thee in the Holy Eucharist, that all the marvels of the world fail to attract me, and seem to me less important than a grain of sand under my feet, how great will be my felicity when I shall contemplate Thee unveiled in the splendour of Thy glory ! The most magnificent spectacles of nature, the playthings of Thy powerful hand, are not worth to me the poorest tabernacle that contains the Blessed Eucharist ! Amidst all the joys of this earth, my heart knows one alone, my God ; it is the moment of Holy Communion. My first thought in awaking, my last on lying down to rest, is the recollection of Thy presence ever dwelling in the midst of us.

Conclusion.

Jesus Christ speaks to your heart, in the first place, by the voice of your conscience ; but perhaps its remonstrances have been little regarded, it is so easily stifled by the voice of the world. He speaks to you by His grace, by providential circumstances which you may perhaps have slighted. Above all, you hear His voice in Holy Communion ; and in it you feel the irresistible attraction wherewith He captivates our souls. Continue to listen to our Lord with docility and simplicity ; you will then acquire lively faith in His real presence—a standard of judging superior to worldly principles—and a secret unction will influence every thing you do.

It is not sufficient only to listen to the voice of Jesus Christ ; you must interrogate Him in your doubts, bring your difficulties to Him to be solved, consult Him on

every occasion of any importance. Be faithful to the secret inspirations of grace. In this manner you will reap more fruit from your Communions, and thus they will best advance your spiritual welfare.

THIRD EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE REFORMATION OF THE HEART.

THE spiritual reformation of a soul is a work blessed by God. This work consists in rendering the will free, by repressing the unruly action of the passions—in emptying yourself, so as to leave ample room for the operation of our Lord; in a word, it is *to conquer oneself* every day. In this daily sacrifice of your own will, Communion is a great resource,—with the graces it bestows upon us, we can find nothing impossible; it gives us arms for the combat which will last till our death. The reward of our victory will be God Himself.

But to obtain this strength, this spirit of self-sacrifice, in Holy Communion, we must first fulfil the precepts of the Gospel. Fidelity to the laws of God, and to His counsels, as far as His will directs,—this is the principle of every virtue. Labour earnestly in this work of self-reformation, that Jesus Christ may be revived in you.

I. *Responding to the Voice of our Lord.*

Among the graces bestowed upon us by God, there is one which is called *preventing grace*. This grace is to the sinner a light cast upon the dark places of conscience, causing remorse. To the Christian soul it is a clearer view of her infidelities, and of the perfections to which God designs to elevate her. He thus condescends to solicit us to repentance and to a more ardent love.

The soul that communicates frequently, receives this

grace, not in order to free her from the sin she has renounced, but to assist her in her interior strivings after holiness, in the correction of her faults, in the wise direction of her character, and the whole course of her life. Before you go to receive our Lord, follow the advice of St. Paul (1 Cor. xi. 28), "Let a man prove himself"—sound the depths of his soul. Let him ask himself whether, since his last Communion, he has laboured with earnest desire to make himself less unworthy of becoming the living sanctuary of Jesus Christ, striving earnestly to effect in himself a thorough reform in such and such points. Now you will find it easy to reflect upon the manner in which you have fulfilled your obligations, your promises to God, and obeyed the influence of His grace; and you will be able to ascertain the *success* of your efforts, or their *failure* to advance your spiritual progress. Make this examination carefully. In the Blessed Sacrament, with Divine tenderness, our Lord always exerts this preventing grace. As in former times, with a word, with a glance, He comes to ask for my fidelity, my love, not waiting until I call upon Him. He comes to meet me, to bring me the joy of His presence, as soon as I repent of my offences. We should value this interior solicitation very highly; we should respond to it gladly and willingly; it is one of the first steps to sincere conversion. At one time, an influence of Divine grace took possession of my heart; I saw the perils of the world, the emptiness of its pleasures, and, considering the importance of my eternal salvation, I understood more plainly the love wherewith Jesus loved me, and the necessity of corresponding to it faithfully. Then I ought to be so much the more obedient to Thy grace, O Lord, as Thy mercy has been more wonderful in my regard. I desire to become Thy possession; and yet, until now, *self* is at the centre of the heart in which Thou alone shouldst reign. Convert me by one glance, or by one word from Thy mouth. "The word which could create the world out of nothing," said St. Thomas, "can

it not change the things that *are* into what they *were* not? For it is not more astonishing to give *existence* to a thing than to change its nature." Therefore, canst Thou not change my defective nature, and give my soul the virtues she requires? As nothing is impossible with Thee, I implore Thee to renew Thy image in my soul.

II. *We must study our Defects with Sincerity.*

Many souls are affected by various faults, which keep them in a state of languor in the service of God. Search out those that may remain in you, such as deficiency in self-knowledge, want of charity in your intercourse with your neighbour, want of regularity in the discharge of religious duties, a spirit of self-seeking in our good actions. These faults are very common, because we do not enter into ourselves frequently, and are apt to avoid a strict examination of conscience. Even David exclaimed, "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord" (Ps. xviii. 13); that is to say, cleanse me from those that are unknown to me, or that I have caused others to commit. The want of charity may be seen by exterior marks. If you habitually wish to hear your actions praised, and to bring into notice any thing blamable in the conduct of others, or if you frequently vex your neighbour by your words, by unkind speeches or slight imputations upon his character, you offend against this virtue. If you disdain the sweetness of the hidden manna, to seek the pleasures or the business of this world; if your mind, always buried in earthly things, does not raise itself to God, from whom they proceed,—you are not serving Him in spirit and in truth. In short, if, in the good works you undertake, you are hindered by the difficulties, or rebuffed by the injustice or the ingratitude of men, you are thinking of your own interests more than of God's glory, and you are leaving incomplete the important work of your sanctification.

Another danger to be avoided is the habit of making small complaints about our position in life, complaints of our daily annoyances. We may safely open our hearts to a friend of whom we are sure; but we must not weakly expose all the angry feelings excited in us by a slight contradiction. Let there be even some little secret troubles which you will only tell to our Lord, which you will reserve for His ear alone. All your friends can never say any thing that will do you so much good as one look towards the tabernacle. Does not Jesus merit all your confidence? Admire His mercy; He gives you in Holy Communion a remedy for all your miseries and defects. He enlightens your understanding, that you may know Him; rectifies your will, and influences your heart towards Him, in prayer. He softens the hard acerbities of character in the relations of society and of family life, and confirms the soul in its search for the true Good.

The penetrating rays of Thy light, O my Lord, discover not alone my faults, and their motives, but even the deeply rooted *cause* of the evil. Thou takest account of the very smallest circumstances. Thou dost appreciate the intentions which render our actions good or defective; permit me not to deceive myself on these points. Interior strife is necessary for our spiritual advancement. It is in silent combat, in unknown victories, that the soul becomes detached, sanctified, and finds its love and happiness in Thy sacred heart. I can never, O my Jesus, tear myself too completely from sin, which withers every thing by its touch—never sufficiently sacrifice all my desires and wishes to the amazing perpetuity of Thy love in the Holy Eucharist; it speaks to me with irresistible force of the necessity of loving unreservedly the God who was born and lived only in order to love us at the price of the most heroic sacrifices. Make me submissive to the influence of Thy grace, and add to this grace the inestimable gift of Thy Holy Spirit, to rule and direct my life.

III. *Repentance for past Sins.*

Sin, as a pious author observes, brought loss and ruin in three ways into our spiritual existence: into our *character*, by making it unequal to the accomplishment of sacrifices; into our *passions*, in drawing them away from their primitive submission to the will of God; into our *happiness*, which exists only in order and peace. Sin destroys order, and drives away peace. Alas! how often we remain hanging over the brink of the abyss, yet desiring to approach the true Good towards whom we painfully aspire! When first awaking to the new life, we feel a terror seize us at the thought of dying to past things—we dread to feel the sword of mortification cutting asunder these two lives; our reason stands firm, but our will remains doubtful. Nothing proves more thoroughly the utter corruption of our nature, and how grievously it has wandered from its original rectitude, than this repugnance to duty, this necessity we are under of doing *violence* to ourselves, in order to keep straight in the path of life.

Ask of our Lord a solid compunction for all the faults of your life, and feelings corresponding to the greatness of your predestination. Resolve to go on straight to God, to follow freely the dictates of conscience.

Make me feel how miserable I have been since, in wandering from Thee, O Jesus, dissipation has scattered my affections amidst a crowd of objects. Oh, how evident, then, was my poverty, how empty my heart! for Thou wert not then in me,—Thou, whom to possess is my only desire! Abandon me not, my God. Thou didst create me when I had no existence; Thou didst redeem me when I was lost; Thou didst descend into the tomb, that Thou mightest give me life. I had sold myself into slavery; Thy Blood was the price of my redemption. Thou hast dissipated my ignorance, and gently reproved my unfaithfulness. Thy consolations have revived my courage and sustained my good will.

These are a few of Thy benefits. I should find it sweet to talk of them always, to think of them unceasingly; but it is still more consoling to thank Thee for them, when I have my mind fixed upon the consideration of my sins. Display to me the goodness with which Thou dost become our Mediator in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, that Thou mightest enable me to offer in Thy Person to Thy Father a perfect satisfaction for all my offences. Forgive me, according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

IV. *Humility of Mind.*

When we have seen our faults, we are able to do ourselves justice—this is *humility*. Study these words of astonishing profundity, not only when you are preparing for Communion, but retain them in your mind, so that they may form the basis of your conduct. “Love to be nothing, and to be counted as nothing.” To love is to will. You must, then, remain in your nothingness, and be contented when others leave you in it. Then all vain agitations about worldly things will leave you, and you will no longer even feel uneasiness in not being able to do any thing for God. Distrust this eager desire to do good; it is full of self-love and impatient desire to be something. Oh, how much better it is to live noiselessly in patience and humility, saying to yourself with St. Francis, “I am only what I am really in Thy sight; being nothing before Thee, I am then nothing in the sight of men”!

Accept freely all the little humiliations which present themselves; if they are revolting to our minds, so much the better: it is because our minds are full of pride, and this pride is a great obstacle to the grace of God. “When God prepares great favours for a soul,” says St. Gregory the Great, “He precedes them by humiliations; because, if He granted her graces only, she would be puffed up with pride; and if He sent her humiliations only, she would be tempted to despair. But God mercifully

mingles celestial sweetnesses with these humiliations, that the soul may profit by both." Humility springs from a lively faith, from a true knowledge of our Lord and of ourselves. At the feet of Jesus Christ, how little I am! Why, communicating so often as I do, am I not yet convinced of my nothingness? Why, in my nearness to this God, who in the upper room abased Himself to wash the Apostles' feet, do I not learn humility? Why do I give way more to self-love in proportion as time weighs me down with the burden of years? Can I possibly be vain of outward gifts, when they will escape me in a few moments? Do I not even now see that sad veil descending upon me, the last shroud which must envelop every creature? Why, in my intercourse with my fellow-creatures, does not humility produce in me that forgetfulness, that secret self-distrust, mingled with respect for others, which is the proper characteristic of true self-abnegation?

O Jesus, if I had meditated closely upon Thy humility in the Holy Eucharist, the practice of that virtue would not be so difficult. Instead of puffing myself up with self-esteem, I should seek occasion of being re-proved for my faults. Having my eyes open to all the advantages which I suppose myself to possess, I am displeased when others ignore them, and I am impatient when my imperfections, which I am far too little acquainted with, rise to the surface of my disposition. Make me truly desirous of this grace of humility; make me labour earnestly to correct my pride. Receive my prayers for those who are devoted to my best interests, and who, more zealous for Thy glory than I have been, desire earnestly that I may attain to true perfection.

V. *Motives of Confidence in God.*

Our Lord has already done great things in your favour. The greatest is your vocation to perfection, having chosen you out of the midst of so many others who hardly ever think of their salvation. Place your

confidence, then, in Him; for this grace, says the Venerable Louis of Granada, "is the root and germ of special graces." He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it (Phil. i. 6). Who can support and console you with more sweetness than Jesus Christ? He alone loves you so tenderly as to foresee the confession of your difficulties, to question your heart as to the cause of its sorrow, to descend into the impenetrable privacy of your miseries, contenting Himself with a look, a sigh, when, overwhelmed with bitterness, you can no longer utter a prayer. He is your best friend. Desire with your whole heart the happy instant of Communion, in which you may repose in Him the tenderest confidence, not forgetting that the Blessed Virgin, by these words, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John ii. 5), indicates docility as the foundation of a sweet confidence in her Divine Son.

O Jesus, in Thy presence I am never alone; this is, indeed, a sweet motive of confidence. There are sorrows in life, and I have felt them, which admit of no earthly consolation. Communion has softened those sorrows. It is thus from Thee alone that I have received comfort. Every day the solitude of my life increases, it even reaches my inmost soul. It is only in Holy Communion that I have courage to look my life steadily in the face. It is, then, from Thee alone that I obtain encouragement. It is good for me to recall this truth, in order to sustain my efforts, which Thou wilt now come to sanctify and bless. In Thy presence I shall be consoled for the absence of all other consolations. Thy presence will give sweetness to the bitter trials by which Thou dost sanctify my life.

Act of Thanksgiving.

After receiving our Lord, remain some time respectfully silent with admiration and gratitude—prostrate at His feet. Listen to Him as He speaks to you, or express your utter inability to acknowledge His favours.

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Offer Him a docile heart, which gives itself up to be restored and guided by His hand, whose power will penetrate to the very marrow of your bones.

In remembering your illusions and your errors, place yourself entirely in the hands of our Lord, that He may *re-make* you. Say to Him with earnest entreaty, Come, Lord, renew my soul. Beg Him to teach you that the first principle of true spiritual conversion is a determination to lay the foundation of your life in sacrifice.

I. Adoration and Supplication.

What a wonderful mystery is this in which God is substantially present, and is yet so completely hidden from our eyes!

Jesus Christ is truly a "hidden God" (Isa. xlv. 15). My senses perceive nothing, nevertheless my heart feels a powerful operation independent of external things; it begins the life of the angels, a life of light and love. This operation attracts me to virtue by an inexplicable force, whose powerful influence makes the sacrifices of this life easy to me.

Lord, show me Thy designs; grant that I may accomplish them with fidelity for Thy glory, without thinking of myself; and even should I be called to sacrifice my dearest wishes, should I be called to undergo humiliations and sufferings, dispose of me according to Thy will, and let every one of my efforts and sorrows ascend to Thee as an act of love. Thou dost enter into me with all Thy virtues—purity, humility, obedience, poverty, and patience. These virtues, enclosed in Thy sacramental life, ought to be revealed in mine. In sanctifying my soul, they should sanctify my actions; for Thy life in us is a continual exercise of the evangelical virtues. By that Divine Host which so intimately cements our union, be Thou in my heart the principle of my sincere conversion. May Thy love purify me, as the living coal from the altar purified with its celestial

ardour the Prophet's lips (Isa. vi. 6, 7), so that no voluntary imperfection may remain in me any longer. In my too susceptible heart, do Thou create an abode of love, into which neither resentment, nor bitterness, nor self-interest may ever penetrate, and from which may be shed over all my actions an influence which shall render them supernatural, so that I may be able to repeat with St. Paul, "It is no more I that live, but Christ who liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20).

II. *Resignation in Suffering.*

A time may come when life is composed of nothing but sadness, pain, and uneasiness; but when you place the Blessed Sacrament between your soul and the world, when, before sending you forth to undergo the trials of the day, our Lord Himself comes to break the shock of the trial, can you complain? Armed with the Holy Eucharist, present to the world the insurmountable rampart of a soul invincible in Jesus Christ. Live in security, never ceasing to give Him thanks, never forgetting your weakness, and not dreading too much your sorrows, which are sweetened to you by Divine love.

I acknowledge now, O Lord, that trials are precious favours; they are special graces which make saints. I have misused them, forgetting, in the sorrows which weighed down my life, the sanctity they are intended to produce. Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me in the time of my youth, the age of pleasures, that Thou mightest show me their emptiness. Thou hast reduced me to loneliness, to severe sufferings. Thou hast permitted regrets and temptations to assail my soul; what effect have these tribulations had upon my interior perfection? am I more recollected, humble, patient, more constant in penitential exercises? I have done very little for Thee, my God, with so many aids to my spiritual advancement. What should I have done, if the world had surrounded me with her attractions?—if the charms of conversation, dress, or pleasure had filled

my leisure hours? Thy mercy is leading me in rough paths; but I bless Thee, with the Prophet, for those humiliations which have taught me to keep Thy law (Ps. cxix. 71, 155). Thou hast made use of sorrow to bring back my heart to the better path, and to disperse the cloud which prevented my prayer from ascending to Thy throne. This cloud was my indifference, it was blindness, almost even forgetfulness. Ah, how ungrateful was I in my sorrow, when, instead of blessing the hand that lovingly tried me, I regretted the benefits which sprung from such great sorrows, when I refused to drink of the cup of Thy grace, because it was necessary to taste of its bitterness before enjoying its sweetness! O Jesus, I will no longer cling to the too natural desire of enjoying happiness here below. I know that virtue can never remain unrewarded; but, remembering that the favours which Thou dost reserve in this world for those that love Thee consist of trials and crosses, in which it is Thy good pleasure to make them victorious, my sole ambition shall be to satisfy Thee. Like St. Francis de Sales, I shall find my happiness in serving Thee in the desert, without manna, without water, without any consolation, except that I am under Thy guidance, and that I am suffering for Thee. Thanks to Thy goodness, I am seldom deprived of this heavenly manna; and although, from my weakness, I do not find in it the Divine sweetness which others do, I would gather it up with joy, were it even as bitter as the cross of which St. Paul extols the excellence to me, that I may enjoy with him this salutary food.

God cannot prolong your trials, unless it be with the special design of leading you into the path of perfection, from whence greater glory will redound to *Him*—to *you*, more fruit. The only thing to be done is to offer your sufferings to Jesus Christ, and to place yourself at His disposal, to suffer them humbly with Him. "It is Jesus alone," says Fénelon, "who knows how to distribute to every man his cross."

III. *Self-renunciation in our Daily Life.*

It is natural to man to love himself ; and if confined within proper limits, this love is legitimate,—it is even to a certain extent the principle of a more elevated feeling ; for if man did not love himself, he would neither desire earnestly to be loved of God, nor would he feel an instinctive need of rising to greatness, nor ambition to reach the glory which he was created to enjoy.

In the course of the day, I will ask my inmost soul, Have I been labouring for God, or is the yoke of duties heavy to me, when I do not find my self-love gratified in them? Does my conduct redound to the glory of God, or are my motives selfish and personal? To what objects are my thoughts generally directed?—to God? to myself? to any other creature? Confess this frankly.

My God, Thou hast filled my cup with gall and bitterness, and my life is made up of painful duties. Every day I shed sad tears, my grief is profound. Nevertheless, a ray of light shoots athwart my tears; for every day Thy heart blesses me, when it rests upon mine. By the incomprehensible greatness of Thy mercy, I leave Thy holy table without regret, without fear of leaving Thee. I bear Thee in my heart; and my life, so desolate outwardly, flows on in Thy presence, as at an uninterrupted festival, a sweet anticipation of heaven, between the remembrance of yesterday's Communion, and the hope of that which is shortly to come.

Such great favours ought to detach me from myself, and strengthen me for great sacrifices. Alas! seeing that I am so far from this true detachment, I cannot understand, O Jesus, what it is that attaches Thee to me, since I receive with so much coldness Thy precious gifts—since I am so little devoted to Thy love, and still cast back sometimes a longing glance upon the affections of this world. Oh, forgive me that I am so absorbed in this narrow sphere. Destroy every feeling of my heart, every desire of my soul, that tends too much to earthly

things, by constant perseverance in doing good. Enable me to recall practically the words of the saint, "I found God in the place where I had lost sight of myself."

At the feet of our Lord, let me ask myself whether, in such and such circumstances which frequently occur, I ought not to forget myself, *lose sight of myself*, by a generous effort, instead of seeking to occupy myself incessantly with myself, indulging those sad thoughts from which I find it so difficult to emerge. The slightest shock to my affections or self-love is sufficient to cause feelings which wound my conscience, and are contrary to the law of charity. It matters little if I am offended, provided that I do not offend God, or cause others to offend Him.

IV. *Motives to encourage the Weak.*

The Christian life is a succession of combats and sufferings, it is strewn with sorrows and pains even to the threshold of the tomb,—defeats mingled with victories. You tremble. You say,—Must we, then, always suffer? Yes, but this combat is a fruitful field, in which each defeat produces repentance, or each victory brings forth virtues. You must resolve bravely to undertake this warfare, in which the soul is strengthened in the habit of victory.

O Lord, although my wretchedness is extreme, I will not be discouraged. By Thy permission, some trace of weakness has always remained in Thy saints on earth; the courage shown by them in supporting their temptations, encourages me not to sink in despair at the sight of my faults. I ought to aspire to perfection, for Thy sake, O Jesus, but without uneasiness, distress, or bitterness. Thou hast forearmed me with Thy graces, for Thou knowest that I am but a fragile reed, liable to be overthrown by a passing breath. Thou demandest my heart, and Thou art not amazed at its inconstancy and insensibility. Do Thou soften it; pour into it, as often

as I suffer, a drop of that holy unction which Thou dost freely give to all faithful souls.

V. Motives for Thankfulness.

The course of years, in rendering us more mature, gives us a better understanding of past events, which shows them in an entirely new light; a glance cast upon the past days of your life, will present you with the astonishing retrospect of the immeasurable favours you have received from God.

Never can I thank Thee sufficiently, O my God, for renewing my life so frequently in Holy Communion. Oh, if, looking back, I consider the years that are past, by how many sorrows are they not engraved upon my memory! But the light of Thy grace beams brightly upon this stream of trials. In every affliction Thy hand has dried my tears, by holding forth for my adoration, in the Holy Eucharist, the Source of all love, in whose presence sorrow fades away. A multitude of souls have already entered into heaven with far less assistance than has been granted to me. What a subject for fear and thankfulness!

I will cherish the memory of Thy mercies, as a child loves to dwell upon the memory of its parents' love; but do Thou arouse in my heart that powerful attraction which drew me in my youth to the foot of Thy Altar, which sweetly retained me there almost unconsciously. Do Thou break the last ties which bind me still to the world, in order that henceforth, free to live to Thee alone, I may choose Thee henceforth for my only heritage. It was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament that I was drawn by Thy grace to bid the world farewell. It was not, however, without casting back to it a tearful glance, full of regret for its ephemeral joys. How ungrateful I was, O my Jesus, and how humbled I am at the remembrance of that day! I did not then know that Thou hadst chosen me to erect in my soul a sanctuary, which is not the effect of one Communion, but that of

the daily labour of a lifetime. I did not then know that, separated from the world by this special choice of Thy sacred heart, this separation would be to me, in after years, the sweetest remembrance of my life, and my most comforting hope in the hour of death.

VI. *Motives for avoiding the smallest Faults.*

When you think you have only committed a *small* fault, is it, then, nothing to wound Jesus Christ in the tenderness of His heart? "Remember," says St. Augustine, "that the largest rivers are only an accumulation of drops of water, and yet whole tracts of country have been desolated by them." There are certain graces which God only bestows once; and when, by our own faults, we destroy in our souls the love and light of virtue, we are not sure that we shall hereafter obtain the desire to recover that heavenly light. Fear those trifling faults which you commit with your eyes open, into which you are apt to fall without much scruple, for which you make little expiation; such as vain or useless thoughts, a light word, an action begun without directing your intention to God,—in short, those thousand imperfections which are an obstacle to the entire reformation of the heart, and which we are yet too apt to regard as *little things*. Faithfulness in these small things is a precious act of thanksgiving after Communion. When you find it difficult to stifle a resentment, to forget an unkind action, "Forgive," says St. Augustine, "remembering Jesus crucified by your hands. Listen to His words in His agony, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke xxiii. 34). Keep your heart directed to the prayer of our Lord, if you would have Him indulgent to your faults,—for if you do not forgive, you render that prayer ineffectual on your behalf; I will say more,—God will obliterate you from His heart: whereas, if you readily forget the offences of others, fear not to repeat with confidence, 'Forgive me my offences, O Lord, as I forgive for the love of Thee.' Do not let slip any opportunity

of doing actions which you can only do during this short life; for when we shall have become equal to the angels of God, it will then be useless to say to our Lord that we forgive, for all offences will then have disappeared."

O Jesus, grant me such a disposition of heart as may unite me to Thee for ever. My years are increasing, the days of my youth have passed into forgetfulness; what would now remain of the life which Thou hast granted me, if my pilgrimage, the days of which are few and evil, be not marked by acts of thanksgiving, worthy of the grace of Holy Communion? Blessed be Thy name, for revealing to me the necessity, the beauty, of a life consecrated to Thy glory. If I am not able to do great things for Thee, at least let my actions be pure, and animated by great love.

Conclusion.

The means and fruit of the reform of the heart consist in the wisdom and tranquillity of soul with which we contemplate the occurrences of life; in the uprightness of the motives which govern the judgments, determinations, and actions of which our life is composed. When our soul rests upon the holy will of God, Jesus Christ takes up His abode in our midst by His grace. Not only is wisdom necessary in choosing the means of our salvation, useful in regulating our conduct prudently, important for our perfection, but it is especially necessary to enable us to preserve the fruits of Holy Communion, that we may not offer to our Lord a distracted heart, a mind tossed up and down at the will of our imagination, which is always ready to present things in an aspect calculated to disturb or sadden it.

Let us labour earnestly to acquire this heavenly wisdom.

FOURTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

HOLY FEAR.

Preparation.

"FEAR," says Holy Scripture, "is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10),—that is, *filial* fear, which is inseparable from the true love of God,—fear which causes us to work out our salvation with humility and trembling, according to this word: "No man knoweth whether he deserves love or hatred" (Ecc. ix. 1). But there is another kind of fear, which, arising from the too bitter remembrance of our sins, despairs of our human strength, and, distrusting the Divine mercy, seems to reckon very little on its support; this fear is inspired by pride, and we must banish it from our souls, as an obstacle to the grace of God, because it closes up the heart in Holy Communion, and makes the soul, thus overwhelmed with her own weakness, incapable of offering generous sacrifices, or of practising solid virtues. We must not nourish this fear with such kinds of reading or meditation as are likely to increase it, for it is much more likely to retard than to promote our spiritual advancement.

I. *We should open our Souls to a salutary Fear of the Holiness of Jesus Christ, tempered by the sweet Consideration of His Mercy.*

Fear is not always, as some imagine, the effect of a bad conscience; it is a supernatural feeling, a protection of the purity of the soul. In the time of our youth, God makes use of it to arrest the impulse of the passions, to counterbalance the attraction of dangerous objects, to preserve us from sin. In later years, He uses it as a restraint in times of violent temptation, and as a preventive of that lukewarmness which retards our progress in virtue.

In contemplating our Lord, whom you are about to receive, let your soul be penetrated with this salutary fear, and let it inspire in you a holy compunction. O my Jesus, there is no greater wretchedness than to know my duties, to love them through Thy grace, and yet to perform them imperfectly; I feel within me an opposition to virtue, which causes me to do the evil that I would not, and to omit the good I desire to do. I act with such precipitation, on a thousand occasions, that I do not think of directing my intentions, my actions; I follow continually the promptings of my self-will, which entices me to commit many sins. Lord, I acknowledge that I should be justly punished, wert Thou to withdraw the sweetness of Thy consolations, deprive me of all facility of self-recollection in Thy presence, and leave me to the mad dissipation of my mind, which, in time of prayer, is often taken up by earthly things, when it should be raised to Thee. My heart, which is not filled with Thy love, is disturbed and divided, when it ought to be possessed by Thee alone. My will suffers from this internal warfare; but it is necessary for the humiliation of my self-love. My conscience, which allows me to perform the holiest actions almost without reflection, as it were by habit, ought to be covered with confusion, in feeling that I have been so far from rendering Thee the worship of those who adore Thee in spirit and in truth.

O my God, let me no longer remain in so dangerous a condition; and, although my insensibility is so great, that I confess I deserve to be left in it until my death, have pity upon me according to the greatness of Thy mercy.

II. *Humility the Foundation of Filial Fear.*

“No man knoweth whether he deserves love or hatred” (Ecc. ix. 1). This uncertainty increases the fear with which we have been inspired by the contemplation of the Divine holiness, into the presence of which we are brought in Holy Communion. The only means of set-

ting your conscience at rest, in this important matter, is to satisfy yourself of your good will. God only demands our will; if yours is upright, and directed to Him, you may henceforth lawfully hope in His mercy.

Perhaps, at the bottom of your heart, you feel that you deserve some reproach from God, for some cowardice, negligence, or frequent resistance in such and such particulars, of which the grace of God inwardly prompts your heart to make the sacrifice. These acts of unfaithfulness terrify you at the time of Communion, because you have not the courage to vanquish yourself completely. Enter into the feelings of the priest at the foot of the Altar when he begins the Holy Sacrifice. He fears to approach the thrice-holy God, because he feels himself to be a sinner; but, as he is not willing to depart from the Fountain of life and peace, he humiliates himself on account of his faults.

I throw myself at Thy feet, O my Jesus, confessing all my sins to Thee. Their recital is long and humiliating, but the sense of all my wretchedness does not drive me away from Thee. I am a sinner: pardon me. May Thy love preserve me from ever falling back into sin! may the wandering of my mind be involuntary! may the disturbances of my soul no longer offend Thee! may I no longer, O my God, be so negligent in my preparation for Holy Communion! I have often omitted to receive it by my own fault, not from a sentiment of humility, but from a fear of making an unprofitable Communion, in refusing to render the sacrifices which Thy love demanded of me, or from having voluntarily committed certain faults which are displeasing in Thy sight. I desire to confess all my miseries, trusting that this sincere confession may draw down on me the effect of Thy mercy. Complete the work Thou hast begun in me,—make me to live according to the light of my conscience; I regret bitterly that I did not follow it when Thou didst first enlighten me.

III. *Fear tempered by Confidence.*

Why do you fear Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, where He is all sweetness and goodness, when, at the least alarm, the instinct of your soul prompts you to call upon God for help? However, God does not reveal Himself to us directly. He first presents to us the immense mercies of His redemption, to anticipate the terrible impression of His justice. And yet you fear to throw yourself into the bosom of your Mediator! If it is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God, Jesus alone can save you from the awful exercise of His justice.

Why should I fear Him who has granted me so many graces, who has preserved me or withdrawn me from sin? Why should I fear our Blessed Saviour, who breathes into me the desire to give myself fully to Him, whom I love better than myself, and desire to love with my latest breath? Lord, give me grace to desire with ardour whatever is agreeable to Thee, to seek it out prudently, and to perform it exactly. Grant me docility of heart to listen to those who instruct me in Thy name, intelligence to understand them, strength to perform my duty, fidelity in little things, the grace of perfect submission to Thy will, in the condition in which Thou hast placed me. Grant that I may discover whatever may be the exterior or interior difficulties in so doing. Sanctify me by the intimate union which is established between Thyself and my soul in Holy Communion; and, again, grant that the remembrance of Thee may be preserved in my heart by faith, nourished by holy hope, and perfected by love.

IV. *Servile Fear banished.*

You must never be afraid of our Lord, even after you have committed faults. Too much fear hinders prayer, which is the soul of our union with Him; it closes up the heart as much as confidence in God expands it. The fearful soul does not pray; how, then, can she

love? Listen to Jesus saying to you, "Come to Me, My child—to Me, thy *God*, it is true, but also thy *Saviour*. Fear not; I am merciful and powerful; My love is greater than thy sin."

Lord, thou seest my fears, my passions, like an impetuous torrent, have laid waste my soul; temptations disturb it; I have no longer courage to resist them; the Eye of God, the Thrice-Holy, seems to turn away from me. "What fearest thou," says Jesus again; "have I not placed the sand as a bound to the sea? The waves will rise, but they will break and be dispersed upon the shore. Do I not raise up those who fall? Am I not your daily bread? You will find Me in the hour of affliction. Fear not; I will put My love in your heart as a burning dart, and I will take revenge for your past forgetfulness of Me by loading you with numberless benefits. Have I not already been lavish in My gifts? Arise, My daughter, come to the sanctuary: I have prepared for you all the treasures of My priceless Blood, and the rich gifts of My love. What more can I do to excite your confidence? Has my merciful Eye ever wandered from you since the day on which your heart was converted by the operation of My grace? Fear not past offences; did I not, in the Garden of Olives, weep for your faults, that I might blot them out for ever by My tears? Did I not groan over your dispositions to evil? and have I not followed all your steps, to preserve you from deplorable falls?

O Jesus, all my desires and resolutions will be useless, unless Thou dost help me to put them in practice; but Thou wilt refuse nothing to him who leans upon Thy arm. The graces necessary for my due preparation will not fail me, when Thou givest me more than I could have dared to ask, in calling me to Thy holy table. The entire conviction of my own inability to do any good thing by my own unassisted efforts, shall work in my mind a sweet persuasion that Thy Divine goodness will work these changes in me, to the glory of Thy name.

V. Encouragement to Confidence.

Fear, unless closely allied to love, may, at the utmost, help the soul to keep in the path of God's precepts; it may save the soul, but it will never lead it on to saintly heroism. It does not make the yoke of the Lord easy. It compares its own strength with its duty, finds it very small, and diminishes its duties in proportion. It allows too much dominion to self-love, which makes it, although supernatural in principle, natural in its application, by bringing great truths into collision with personal interests.

Let the sight of your present weakness encourage you to pray, to entreat our Divine Lord to heal you, in giving you His pure, life-giving Body. Holy Communion cannot be sterile in the soul. The operations of this Sacrament are powerful in proportion to its elevation above our highest thoughts. Lay open all your wants to Jesus Christ, as to a present and almighty God, with a firm hope of participating in the merits of His sacrifice.

Fear will again take possession of my soul, when I hear the Prophet, inspired by the Holy Ghost, celebrate in this manner the perfections of God: "Thy justice is as the mountains of God; Thy truth reacheth unto heaven" (Ps. xxxv. 6). The Divine justice is not higher than the mountains, because we can reckon up our offences against it, and the punishment due to those offences; but the mercy of God, reaching to the highest heavens, is incalculable, immense, inexhaustible. Yes, however multiplied my faults,—however great the expiation they deserve,—Thy mercy will ever outweigh them and their guilt. This mercy is not circumscribed; for a single drop of the Blood of our Lord contains all its treasures. Each day this Blood is shed for me in the Holy Sacrifice, and its merits are applied to me.

"There is no greater love than this," sayest Thou,

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the Blood of the new testament. This
 sacrament is offered—our Father who art
 all the powers of heaven and earth,
 God, my God, my life!

And St. John Chrysostom, of whom I have
 the thought, the word, the deed, was
 in my heart: "O my God, Thou art a
 Father, my Father: yes, I am at the
 table with thee; at this very moment, truly
 present." Jesus requires this intimate and
 personal love.

After the Eucharist.
 Jesus reveals the great mysteries of the Eucharist,
 the consecration, of the elements of our bread
 and wine, of love, devotion, and gratitude, the
 sacraments are now to be applied to my soul. The
 sacrament of Grace by the signs of the
 bread and wine, as there were wounds
 on the Body of Jesus. All the blood which
 flows from His heart and side drops, which all
 the faithful receive. The blood of Mary, who
 is already my mother, and a few moments ago
 she was the mother of Jesus.

My Eucharist,
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O my Jesus, "that a man should lay down his life for his friend." Since I see Thee every day in the state of death upon the Altar, this is, then, an effect of Thy love. Drive away from me all fear and all distrust, when I hear Thy minister say to me : "Behold the Lamb of God ; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." Mine will, then, be taken away. In-flame me with the Divine fire of love ; so that, if I cannot comprehend the mystery, I may feel, at least, how unworthy I am of Thy love, and how great is my happiness in being loved by Thee, notwithstanding my unworthiness.

VI. *Holy Desires.*

Come, Lord Jesus, come ! It is Thy desire to unite Thyself to me ; and, it is too true, my heart does not correspond to Thy love ; it remains cold, frozen in Thy holy presence, or distracted, from a habit of dissipation. How often hast Thou not brought me peace ! and I have rejected it, to give way to fear, or to dangerous pre-occupations of mind. Thou hast desired me to choose, O my Jesus, between the reign of Thy love, and the dominion of my own self-love ; between the favours of Thy heart, and slavery to my passions ; between Holy Communion and the devil, to whose perfidious suggestions I too often lend an ear. I am confounded, O my good Master, for having so little understood the necessities of my soul. I should not dare to approach Thee, but that Thou hast said : "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden ;" and, not to leave me in doubt of Thy assistance, Thou dost add, "and I will comfort thee." Oh, if my infidelities had not caused me to wander from Thee, I should find life in Thy presence and in Thy love ; but if my weakness leads me astray, my faith and my desire bring me back to Thy feet. Yes, Lord ; if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me. My wretchedness is great,—I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter into my soul ; but Thy goodness reassures

me. I approach with confidence ; say but one word, and my soul will be sanctified.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Our Lord is come to visit you ; He is in you. Adore the Divine Guest who has taken possession of your heart. Abandon yourself to Him. Converse with Him of your love, of His goodness, of your regrets, of your wants.

If you are afraid of His greatness and power, He Himself will reassure you. Listen to Him with faith and confidence.

I. "*It is I; fear not.*"

Our Lord seeks at first to convince you of His presence, because fear obscures the eyes of the soul, and prevents it from acknowledging its God. Our Lord does not choose to be unknown to our heart when He comes to visit it.

I listen with joy, O my Jesus, to these consoling words of Thy sympathising heart, touched with the deep abyss of wretchedness into which Thou art come. I no longer hesitate to confide entirely in Thee, when I hear Thee say : " My child, it is I ; it is thy God, thy Father ; fear not. I come not as a judge, but as a friend." I adore Thee ; and I no longer fear Thy majesty. I love Thee ; and I do not fear to love Thee. I humiliate myself profoundly at the sight of Thy infinite purity ; but I do not fear Thy Divine regard, which rests upon me only for my good. I acknowledge that Thy greatness is far above every existing thing ; but I no longer fear Thee when I behold Thee descending into my nothingness, to unite me to Thee. I feel that I ought to set myself below every creature ; and nevertheless, O my God, I am not afraid to press Thee to my heart. I contemplate, with calmness, the troubles and anguish which my life may have in store for me. I fear them not, O Jesus ; Thou wilt bear

them with me. I resign myself to sufferings, crosses, isolation, dryness, to be forgotten by the whole world. I fear not ; for wretched must be the soul which Thy heart suffices not.

II. *"It is I; fear not."*

Lord, when I am adoring Thee in my heart, I cannot forget my weakness and my faults; their remembrance pursues me like a restless dream. Thou seest my shame at the sight of Thy holiness, before which the angels are afraid, and veil their faces with their wings ; but, with a delicate and loving consideration, Thou dost endeavour to excite in my soul a sweeter feeling. "Fear not," Thou dost say ; "I am the Lamb of God, whose Blood was shed for the salvation of the world. Fear not ; behold My heart, which disarmed the Divine justice, irritated by thy resistance ; My heart, which has sighed over thy long wanderings ; My heart, that has prayed for thee that thy faith fail not ; My heart, whose Divine flames ascended to the throne of God as a holocaust of love ; My eyes, which have shed so many tears over thee ; My feet, which have hastened to meet thee when thou didst seem to hesitate in thy return ; My hands, which have so often blessed thee, and heaped graces upon thee ; My Blood, in which I have cleansed thy baptismal robe, which was soiled with sin, that thou mightest enter into the celestial banquet-room where I shall inebriate thee with My love. Yes ; it is I, Jesus, thy Saviour. If thou art still afraid, throw thyself into My bosom, and I will carry thee as a mother carries her child in her arms."

Lord Jesus, as long as I am near Thee, I have nothing more to fear ; neither from my sins, which are forgiven, nor from the future, in which I shall be sustained by Thy grace. I have nothing to fear but my own timidity, which prevents me from giving myself up to Thee. Dissipate my fears in the midst of so many benefits, which I owe to the excess of Thy love, and to

the merits of Thy precious Blood. Blessed be Thy name for the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, which communicates to me a part of Thy life, that it may render mine all heavenly. I ask not of Thee the joy of angels; I ask only their confidence and their love. Blessed be Thy name that Thou hast called me to share with them a blessed eternity, notwithstanding my offences against the Divine Majesty, which have so wonderfully been atoned for upon the Altar and upon the Cross.

III. *"It is I; be not afraid."*

Repeat this sweet word often to my soul, O my God ! I am never weary of hearing it ; for if Thy holiness makes me afraid, Thy love consoles me. Yes, I will love Thee, and I will never fear Thee more. Thou hast bound me to Thee with bonds of love, and hast said : "Dwell in My love." Ah, Lord ! after so many years lost in absence from Thee, how can I ever please Thee enough ?

I have quitted the world in order to follow Thee ; I have left all ; I fear nothing. Thou art the Gate of heaven ; Thou wilt open to me Thy kingdom.

Seeing that on this earth Thou hadst not where to lay Thy head, I am detached from the good things of this world ; I will fear nothing ; Thou wilt enrich my poverty.

Thou hast wept for Jerusalem, for the death of Thy friend, for the ingratitude of souls who will not acknowledge Thee ; I will fear nothing in the sorrows which surround me ; Thou wilt be my Comforter.

I have powerful enemies, who wage continual war against me ; my pride leads me into new falls ; every thing within and without seems to take up arms against me. I fear not, O Jesus ; Thou hast overcome the world ; I will conquer by Thy holy Name.

Prostrate at Thy feet, like the Prodigal Son, I have implored the bread that my famished soul was in need of, and Thou didst reply : Fear no more ; I am truly

thy Father : receive the pledge of My love. And then Thou gavest me Thy heart, to be the soul of my life, and my only treasure.

Sometimes my confidence grows weak ; the combat seems long, and the issue uncertain. I obey regretfully, and humiliations are wearisome to my natural mind. Seeing my weakness, Thou repeatest to my timid soul : Fear not to be humbled for My love ; it is I that demand it of thee—I, who am meek and humble of heart : but My humiliations on Calvary have taken nothing from the power and glory of My majesty. Fear nothing ; I will cover you with My wounds, and will make you invisible. Place, then, your confidence entirely in Me ; My love shall save you. Lord, it is true ; Thou dost enter my house with a gentle warning, such as Thou didst once give to Zaccheus. Thou hast taken possession of all the powers of my soul. I have enjoyed the great happiness of dwelling near Thee ; I might thus have lived tranquil and happy. Thou knowest all ; and hast seen me fall into fresh faults after Thou hadst instructed me by Thy precepts, and fed me with Thy sacred Body and Blood. This remembrance renews my sorrow ; it shows me my great ingratitude, and makes me fear lest heaven should be closed against me on account of my sins : but, with a kindness the remembrance of which my heart still cherishes, Thou gavest to my soul the kiss of peace. My tears dried up when I heard Thee say again : My child, it is I ; fear not ; I will be thy Strength and thy Courage. Lord Jesus, often repeat to me these words ; no longer be Thou to me a thought of terror. Thou knowest that I love Thee, and that, conquering my weakness, my desire is to love and serve Thee always.

IV. "*Fear not.*"

These were the first words that the angel, who was sent to announce the resurrection of Jesus, addressed to the pious women who came to embalm the body of our

Blessed Saviour : Fear no more ; Jesus is risen again ; He lives for us, He lives for me. It was not enough for Thee to say formerly that we must drive away fear, or even to cause Thy angels to repeat the consoling words. Thou dost console me also by Thy ministers. I have often heard encouraging words, O my Jesus, and I still fear ; 'Thou dost see me full of fear, kneeling at Thy holy table, and trembling before the adorable Host, which the priest presents to me. Fear not, he said ; behold your God, who approaches you full of kindness and condescension. Had I not, just before, heard these words ?—I shed upon your soul the Blood of Jesus Christ ; you are pure : have confidence in Him. Even this assurance, alas, is not always enough for me ; and my restless spirit returns, even in Thy presence, to secret fears, which afflict Thee, O my God. But fear no more, my soul ; with the pious women at the sepulchre, I will listen with trembling joy to these celestial words, "Fear not." Jesus is present in the tabernacle ; His heart, filled with love, reposes there ; He permits you to contemplate Him with peaceful adoration—nay, even more, to carry Him away in your heart. O Jesus, I will come very near to Thee, and respectfully kiss Thy sacred feet ; my mind shall no longer leave Thee, to return to vain apprehensions. After having expressed my gratitude for Thy love, I will carry away some part of Thy sacramental life, to animate my own.

V. *Confidence.*

Lord Jesus, Thy love is wounded by an exaggerated fear. It was not in vain that, long centuries before Thy coming, God declared that it was with reluctance He raised His hand to inflict punishment. "When the Lord strikes, it is not from His heart," says Jeremiah ; it is not that He forgets his mercy, but it is to warn us that He is ready to forgive. My trials are either a merciful chastisement, or a proof of love, which brings me closer to the Cross. If, under these circumstances,

my soul is attentive to Thy dealings, it will always discover a mercy hidden amidst the grief, some cause for thanksgiving in the midst of tears. I have, indeed, much reason to love Thee more than to fear Thee, O my God ; Thy graces increase with my years. The longer I live, the less time remains to be dedicated to Thy service. I ought to profit by every instant ; the value of time augments each hour,—for the sands of my life are fast running out, and it will be too late for me to strive to acquire Thy love when I am sinking into the tomb.

VI. *The Soul sustained by Hope.*

Thou, Lord, in Holy Communion, hast communicated to me Thy Godhead, which raises my hopes to heaven ; and Thy Humanity, which teaches me the love of suffering and humiliations. Ah, I must repeat it, my increasing years, my maladies, seem to announce to me that my end draws near ; death hovers over me ; but I am not afraid. United closely to Thee, I may say to my God : “ I have often communicated ; behold Jesus in my heart. Touched with His love and sufferings, I have endeavoured to make my life an imitation of His, in its conformity to the Divine will. The hour of my death will be that of my deliverance ; I await my Saviour : I love Him, and I fear Him no longer.” Yes, I shall venture to say to Thee : “ Judge me not, Lord ; it is not a weak and degraded creature that presents himself before Thee, it is the image of Thy Divine Son : behold my feet, my hands, my heart ; recognise in them the wounds of Jesus. In Him I ask for a share in Thy glory, for it has been purchased for me with the price of His most precious Blood, shed upon Calvary, and infused into me in Holy Communion. ‘ Thy promises are without repentance ’ (Rom. xi. 29). Save me by His merits. O Jesus, grant that, by the help of Thy grace, Thy holy angels may recognise in me this Divine likeness ; and may I, when death approaches, hear those blessed words, which have often welcomed

me to Thy holy Altar : 'This is My beloved child, in whom I have placed My delights ; enter into eternal joys.'"

Conclusion.

A sure means of expelling fear from your soul is to engrave deeply upon it these words of St. Gregory : "Let your thoughts be chaste ; let all your actions be thoroughly and efficaciously performed ; be reserved in speech, tenderly compassionate to your neighbour in his misfortunes, given to prayer, watchful over your own heart, and faithful in preserving the presence of Jesus Christ, whom you have received in Holy Communion."

FIFTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF LIFE.

Preparation.

At certain periods of our lives, sorrow seems to take up her abode amongst us, breaks our dearest ties, makes a void in our affections, and warns us of the speedy conclusion of our pilgrimage here below. Jesus Christ then shows Himself as the tender Father, Friend, and Comforter of our souls. But it is especially in Holy Communion that He delights to become our Support, our Centre, and permits us to pour our tears and sadness together into His sacred heart. Let us, then, consider our sorrows in the light of faith, and, under the impression of His love, let us lay them all at His sacred feet.

1. Let us learn Resignation from Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives.

One of the most painful moments of our lives is the positive expectation of some acute sorrow. This habitual anticipation of our inevitable affliction is almost more

difficult to be borne with submission than the blow itself, because the grace necessary to bear the trial is not yet given. We ought, then, to turn away our thoughts from these anticipated sorrows—we should shut them up in the tabernacle, or consider with faith our Lord in the Garden of Olives. He also was then fully expecting great sorrow and pain ; for the Cross arose before Him, naked, terrible, surrounded by humiliations, contempt, exhaustion, which were to continue unrelieved till death. This Cross is also presented to you, but it issues from the heart of Jesus. It is accompanied by His grace, invested with His strength, covered with His precious Blood : and, more, He gives *Himself* to you to carry it with you. Does not the Sacred Host sustain the whole world ? When you are so near our Lord Jesus Christ, when He is about to enter into your heart in Holy Communion, will you then refuse to repeat His prayer : My Father, let Thy will, not Mine, be done ? No ; because then the voice of His love cannot fail to exert its Divine influence upon your heart.

Another very painful moment is that which succeeds the agonising blow which we have been long expecting. We have summoned up all our strength to receive it, and this effort has exhausted it. A moral prostration replaces our former energy, a sort of insensibility to every thing that is not *our sorrow* takes possession of our faculties. It is then, believe me, that the goodness of our Lord receives us with the greatest tenderness. Fear not when, crushed with sorrows, you come to Him, sad and silent, or even, perhaps, complaining of His severity. Do not restrain the expression of your complaints ; make them in a filial spirit. Never keep away from Holy Communion because you feel yourself incapable of prayer, or of fitting preparation ; do not avail yourself of such pretexts for absenting yourself from the holy table. Resignation in suffering includes all this preparation.

Try, before you go to Holy Communion, to repeat, at

least with your lips, the prayer of St. Jane Chantal, whose resignation was tried by so severe a proof. "Lord Jesus," she said, with her heart torn with grief, as she knelt before the bleeding body of her husband, "may Thy holy will be done this day, and every day of my life, without *if's*, without *but's*, in my father, in my mother, in my children, and even in the husband whom Thou hast given me !"

Believe that Jesus will receive in His heart this prayer, impregnated with the blood of your soul ; and that such an act of self-abandonment is the best and most complete preparation you can possibly bring to Holy Communion.

I submit myself, O my God, to Thy good pleasure, which is worked upon me ; or rather, feeling my will shudder at seeing the sacrifice accepted, I offer Thee the resignation of Jesus, my Saviour, in the Garden—His sadness, His fear of suffering, the deep agony of His holy Soul. How it consoles me to behold in Him all those feelings which make so powerful an impression upon my poor nature ! My weakness is so great, that I can no longer meditate upon the sufferings of our Lord during that terrible night ; but, O my God, mercifully receive my desires ; I accept my sufferings as coming from Thee ; I offer them to Thee, in union with the agony of Thy Divine Son, for Thy glory, and the expiation of my sins ; and I declare that, with the help of Thy grace, I will resign myself as long as Thou shalt see fit. I invoke the help of Thy martyrs, who have shed their blood for the honour of Thy name ; and especially I ask the prayers of those saints who have loved Thee most tenderly in all the afflictions of this earthly life.

II. "*Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.*"

Martha contented herself with informing Jesus of the sickness of His friend, without even asking Him to restore him to health. How touching is this simple

recourse to our Lord ! How much faith, how much confidence, appears in these few short words ! It is in this spirit of self-abandonment that I should turn to Jesus in every event of my life. Lord, she whom Thou lovest is sick, weak, tempted, sad, discouraged—her sorrows have overwhelmed her. Ah, our Lord is no longer at a distance from me, as He then was from the house of Lazarus ; He dwells in the tabernacle, that He may be ever ready to hear and help me.

You must in this way repose in His heart an intimate confidence respecting every thing that concerns you, especially as regards your fear of approaching Him in the midst of your troubles. Do not hesitate to confess to Him all your faults. Lord, the soul whom Thou lovest is ready to take offence, anxious, careless in performing her duties, full of self-love, wanting in the spirit of sacrifice.

But observe this important point : let the thought of your sufferings and of your faults be ever connected in your mind with the love of our Blessed Lord for you. When you are expressing your confidence in Him, always begin by making this act of faith in His love : “ *She whom Thou lovest,*” &c. ; and then add just what you would say to your best friend in the most intimate outpourings of your heart.

Let your cry of fear or of sorrow ascend to Him—say to Jesus : My Saviour, I come to Thee with the most complete abandonment of self, with the conviction that Thou lovest me, and that I love Thee, although I cannot express it. I shall hardly be able to bear my sorrows, unless the hope of testifying my love to Thee by my silent resignation enables me to sustain my courage. The cross, whose weight exceeds my poor strength, is yet a proof of Thy mercy. Faith forbids me to regard the accidents which are inseparable from our lives as misfortunes. “ Trial produces patience, and patience hope,” says the Apostle.

At each sacrifice completed, my soul climbs one step

of the invisible ladder which conducts us from earth to heaven; but more especially in Holy Communion I feel a consolation in laying at Thy feet my present sacrifice, in using it as a means by which I may approach Thee with increased purity of heart.

As often as I come to expose to Thee the sad story of my wants, Thou art always ready to hear my complaints. Not only dost Thou listen to me, but Thou dost even anticipate the painful account of my sorrows. In the world, who ever dreams of inquiring into the secret sufferings of my heart, that he may encourage it to brave the trials of my life? Thou alone wilt aid me to receive them with fortitude, to bear them without too much bitterness; and, more than this even, O my Jesus, Thou makest me regard this trial as a blessing, as a gift from heaven. Near Thee,—far from considering it as a chastisement, or as a sign that I am forgotten by God,—I learn to love it as a source of blessing, and as one of the means of my eternal salvation.

III. *“Let us go to him.”*

In afflictions, we are apt frequently, perhaps continually, to dwell upon those sorrows which fill our cup to overflowing; and this generally weakens, and in some sense paralyses, our soul, so as to unfit it for the service of God. Instead of endeavouring to raise to God the overwhelming load which weighs down our heart, that He may bear it instead of us, we draw it closer, we seem, if I may so express myself, to wish to assimilate the sorrow into the very substance of our nature. If we desire to find strength, and to maintain peace in our souls, we must forget ourselves, and fix our eyes on our Blessed Lord. Consider the afflictions which were measured out to Him in the course of each day, perhaps even of each hour, of His mortal life,—from His birth to His grave, the poverty, humiliations, calumnies, and insults, the contempt, the mortal sufferings, which He endured for you personally. Having seen all this, will you still

dare to give the name of trials and afflictions to the accidental circumstances of your life? Call them by the name which faith applies to them, the acts of the adorable will of God.

But it is especially when making your preparation for Holy Communion that you ought to consider with calmness, but with attention, the sufferings of Jesus Christ; and think with what great love He will give Himself to you when He sees in you some resemblance to His crucified state. Immediately your will consents to the cross, notwithstanding the inevitable necessity of submitting to it, our Lord blesses this necessity as if it were your own voluntary determination. He receives it with all its thorns as an act of love to Him, and He prepares to reward you for it.

You are a child of Jesus crucified. "Is it astonishing," says St. Francis of Sales, "that you should participate in His Cross and in His crown? It is by the Cross we advance towards a blessed eternity. Repose your thoughts and your confidence in God; He will take care of you this day, and to-morrow also, if you are destined to behold another day. Why should you so strive to foresee the future consequences of the present affliction, when perhaps they will never be realised, or will perhaps be modified by circumstances impossible to be foreseen, and known to God alone?"

In these afflictions, Jesus is putting your love for Him to the proof. It is not, then, a severe act of justice, for He loves you. After having suffered so much for you, has He not a right to demand that you should also suffer for Him? Say to Him, with an entirely submissive and loving heart, "Thy will be done." This disposition of soul will obtain for you the fruit of a good Communion.

Look at the tabernacle. There proceeds from it a power which is able to appease the agonies of grief. Jesus in the tabernacle is the Lord who strengthens in the time of affliction.

My God, I have remembered this word which Thou hast spoken : "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Faith consoles me with this thought, that our tears have been fertilised at the foot of the Cross by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and that my sadness, which weeps, becomes, by the resignation of my will to God, a sacrifice which pleads. I cannot escape this trial; but supplications more powerful than my own ascend to Thy throne, and they cause it to turn to my advantage.

My will accepts it, and leads me to Thy feet; but, in my inmost heart, the excess of my suffering causes me to oppose a certain amount of resistance to this act of self-resignation. Then Thy heart always condescends to console me. "Let us go to him!" Thou didst say after the death of Lazarus, when all hope seemed lost, and the house of Thy friend was covered with the shadow of death. Every time that I approach Thy holy table, Thy Divine heart utters the same sweet words, "Let us go to him." Thou sayest to the angels that surround the tabernacle, "Let us go to bring her hope and consolation; let us nourish her with My Body and Blood, to strengthen her soul and revive her courage." O Jesus, can I any longer seek human consolation? can I murmur at the loss of it? No, my God; I have until now forgotten that Thou dost never separate Thy interests from mine; that although Thou mightest have enjoyed, without strife or combat, Thy own felicity, which was Thine in virtue of Thy Divinity, Thou dost sacrifice it in order to procure my happiness. I will never, then, prefer my interests to Thine, nor my repose to Thy glory. I must suffer before I can obtain it. I will not refuse the means by which Thou hast chosen to secure my eternal happiness. I have heard Thee say that "Thou desirest with a great desire to come to me." This word, which is the expression of Thy ardent love, touches my heart; and I hasten to reply: "Lord, grant that my desire to go to Thee may be equal to

Thine; and if, before I can be worthy to do so, I must still drink the chalice of sorrow, I consent; I only ask for the necessary firmness which may enable me to sustain the combat courageously until the end of my life.

IV. "*Let us go to him.*"

It is now *my* heart that pronounces this word. Thou hast sought me even when I fled from Thee, O my Jesus, when it seemed as if my sadness would extinguish my love. Wilt Thou fly from me, now that I seek for Thee and long for Thee? Forgive me for having wished my sorrows to come to an end without also desiring that Thy will, not mine, might be done. Forgive me for having understood so little the secrets of the Cross, for having even *feared* to comprehend them. O Lord, assist me to conquer the natural repugnances of a heart which Thou hast broken, and which is still only receiving these merciful severities from Thy love. In approaching Thee, I ask neither to be set free from my trials, nor even from my repugnances; I implore Thee to take full possession of my soul, and to strengthen it in the Spirit of Truth, which ascends to Thee, in detaching itself from all earthly things. Enable me to love this life of sacrifice, which vanquishes my passions and my predominant self-love. Since Thou didst not disdain the timid offering of the widow in the Gospel, accept the altar prepared for Thee in my heart; do Thou there immolate the victim that gives herself unreservedly to Thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord, who is really present in your heart. Remain for some time in profound recollection.

The Communion follows the Elevation, in which Jesus appears, as it were, upon Calvary. By a mystery full of consolation, He comes to you only as a Sacrifice and Victim. This is because the love of Jesus crucified is most sure and perfect, as also it is for the suffering

and resigned soul that our Lord reserves His favours. If He has taken away the happiness you once enjoyed on earth, it is because He wishes you to find happiness in Him alone, and desires to be more to you than all other things.

Pray to Jesus Christ to give you the grace to make an act of eternal union with His will, which shall not be changed, whatever may be your sorrows, and however long they may last.

Jesus Christ bore in His heart at first, and afterwards in His members, all the sorrows which oppress you. He cannot discharge you from the obligation of fulfilling the designs of God ; He therefore comes to accomplish them with you.

Accept your sufferings, in the hope of thereby showing your gratitude to Him. Now, in your turn, listen to our Lord in your heart. He is a Father, a Friend ; nothing that concerns you is unknown to His tenderness and love. He urges you to make all your sorrows known to Him.

I. *"My child, why art thou sad?"*

Lord, at this moment, in which I enjoy the happiness of being united to Thee, my lips are mute ; my faith alone comprehends Thy happiness, and recognises Thy presence. My heart ought to overflow with joyous thanksgiving ; for art Thou not the God of that heaven of peace and unalterable felicity, of which Thou dost sometimes bring a foretaste to the pure in heart ? In Thee I possess more than heaven, and yet I sigh unsatisfied. Look at this poor, suffering heart, and Thou wilt see what bitterness possesses it, what sadness oppresses it. Around me is the silence of desolation, of friends departed never to return. Of all those whom Thou hast given me, my God, how many remain ? Separation from so many beloved ones,—this is the cause of my tears. My thoughts, instead of being fixed on Thee, return involuntarily to them, nor can I turn them away.

Nevertheless, I resign myself to Thy will ; I bless it in the midst of my sufferings ; and, in the excess of my affliction, I turn to Thee, I call Thee to my aid. But, my God, who dost not despise the suffering heart, Thou hast said by Thy Prophet, "I will be with thee in the day of sorrow." This day has arrived for me, and will end only with my life. Assist me, then, O Jesus, according to Thy mercy. St. Augustine well understood this feeling when he said : "I have not the courage to condemn this sadness of the soul." It seemed to him that Thou dost sympathise with this weakness, without excusing it. He surmised that, though Thou dost not defend it, Thou dost not forbid it. In fact, how canst Thou fail to pity the souls that suffer sadness ? Surely, Thy power and Thy love will combine to relieve their sufferings ; for do I not see Thee standing by the grave of Lazarus, groaning with sorrow and shedding tears, which caused the witnesses of this touching scene to exclaim : "Behold how He loved him !" The love of Thy heart conquered death, and rescued from its arms the man who had the happiness to be called Thy friend. Thou dost not love me less than Lazarus ; and if it is not now Thy will to set aside the laws of nature, and to manifest Thy love in miracles, yet show me Thy power by effecting the subjugation of my will to Thine.

II. "*Weep not.*"

This word issued from Thy lips, O Jesus, when, during Thy earthly sojourn, the sight of a great sorrow was brought before Thee. These words show Thy readiness to confer benefits upon us. "Weep not," Thou saidst, in the house of him who brought before Thee the inanimate body of his beloved daughter ; and eventually the all-powerful contact of Thy hand restored her to his paternal affection. "Weep not," were Thy words to a desolate widow, when Thou didst stop the funeral-procession of her only child, from whom she could withdraw neither her eyes nor her heart.

Dry up your tears; here is the support of your old age, and the joy of your life.

This mother, whose tears and prayers were thus rewarded, obtained even more than she had asked for. O my Lord, Thou didst change cruel sorrows into unexpected joys by Thy wonderful miracles. Thou didst grant a temporary and, perhaps, very short consolation to those hearts whose faith in Thy Divinity was weak, who could not conceal their grief even under the shadow of the tabernacle, nor repose it in Thy heart after Communion; but to mine Thou givest less *evident*, but more *sure*, consolations,—greater to the eye of faith,—in taking my beloved ones out of the misery of this short life, to inebriate them with endless joys in Thy presence in heaven. Thou hast taken them out of this transitory existence; but Thou hast granted to their souls the sight of Thy glory. Lord Jesus, raise my heart to heaven, towards those regions in which is clearly displayed that sovereign magnificence which all my loved and regretted ones are now, I trust, enjoying. Far from desiring their return, I give Thee thanks for their deliverance from sin, and from bodily pain and sorrow, and for so mercifully rewarding them for the good works they have done by the help of Thy grace. I bless Thee for assuring their salvation at the price of a few years of suffering. Let me then, O my Jesus, acknowledge, by my courageous resignation, the glory into which they are entered; and, since they cannot enjoy it whilst they are near to me on earth, I consent to this painful separation, giving Thee thanks for their predestination to eternal glory.

III. "*Weep not.*"

Notwithstanding the excess of Thy sufferings, O my Jesus, Thou didst address these words, on Thy path to Calvary, to some faithful souls bitterly afflicted at the sight of Thy agony, that their courage might be sustained by supernatural insight into the cause of Thy griefs.

Deeply affected by the remembrances they recall, I will say with St. Bernard : " I have sinned ; I have done evil in Thy sight, O Lord ; my soul is grieved, but not discouraged ; I fix my eyes upon Thy Wounds, and the sight of them strengthens me." It is just that I should be afflicted, for I am a sinner ; and even if I had not offended Thee, have not many of my kindred done so ? My heart prompts me to become responsible for them. Give them back, in Thy mercy, the reward of the sufferings I am enduring ; and if they have nothing more to expiate, I shall accept these sad events in union with Thy Passion, that I may suffer with Mary, that I may offer myself with her to the justice and love of my God.

Lord Jesus, now that I possess Thee, I venture, pressing Thee to my heart, to say with St. Paul, " What shall separate me from Thy love ?" Not this trial, for I accept it as a gift from Thy hand ; not my sadness of spirit, for I unite it to Thine in the Garden of Olives ; not my isolation, for I submit to it in union with Thy betrayal and desertion by Thy disciples ; not the sufferings of my heart, for I enclose them in the agonised heart of Mary at the foot of Thy Cross. Lord, *nothing*, then, shall separate me from Thy love ; for how great soever my grief may be, I shall always know that Thou hast suffered far more for me. By the help of Thy grace, I shall overcome every trial for Him who has loved me even unto death. It is impossible that the sad and suffering Jesus should desert a humble, suffering soul, that has taken shelter in His bosom. Let this truth be your encouragement when you are abandoned by all earthly joys.

IV. "*Weep not.*"

Friendship is rare in the world, and its resources are powerless to console us in the sorrows of life. We can seldom make our most intimate friend the confidant of our sufferings, without soon fatiguing him by the con-

tinual recital of our inconsolable grief. It is Thy friendship alone, O Jesus, whose goodness is never weary of hearing me, whose ever-compassionate kindness is always easy of access. It almost seems as if Thou wast more devoted to us now in the Holy Eucharist than Thou wast formerly in Thy sojourn upon earth.

At Nazareth, Thou wast hardly known, save by Mary and Joseph. In Thy public life, Thou didst heal, in passing by, the afflicted ones that had recourse to Thee. In the tabernacle, Thou art visible only to the angels; but in Holy Communion Thou dost multiply Thyself, in order to give Thyself tenderly to every one, to console us *all* with the utmost efficacy.

In this moment, when my heart possesses Thee, I contemplate Thee with the eyes of faith; I can freely express my love and sorrow to Thee, my Lord and my God. How often hast Thou said: Weep not; consider My love and tenderness! I love you, My child, because you are the image of My Father; I love you, because you are the temple of the Holy Ghost; I love in you the price of My Blood; your salvation is the fruit of My sorrows, and your happiness is My reward. If a mother loves with special tenderness the child who, in coming into the world, has nearly cost her her life, how much greater must be My love for you, since I have sacrificed My life to redeem your soul! Have confidence, then,—believe in My love; one day you will know the secret of its apparent severity, and you will bless Me throughout the endless ages of eternity for the tears which you have shed to-day. A little more suffering, and then endless joys, an immense weight of glory, which you will share with those who have entered into happiness before you.

Lord, too many souls suffer without loving Thee; glorify Thyself in *my* sufferings, according to Thy will, —I do not even venture to say, “Call me!” I do not desire the end of my tears, of my sufferings, if Thou canst thereby be glorified.

V. Hope and Consolation.

Fear no more your sorrows. The night of trial has gathered round you, but "The night seems to us like clear day when Jesus is with us," says St. Francis of Sales. Repeat with the disciples at Emmaus, "Abide with us, Lord, for it is evening." Our Lord loves these entreaties of the soul that fears to lose Him. Say again with David: "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

O dear Jesus, I understand Thy love better now. Hitherto I have murmured because I had lost those I love, because I was deprived of those worldly possessions which give some earthly happiness: I thought I was alone; but one look towards the tabernacle where Thou dost abide for me, one glance at the Sacred Host in which Thou dost descend into my soul, at the Cross where Thy Hands and Feet were nailed and torn, is sufficient to show me my ingratitude. In every place Thou dost surround me with proofs of Thy love; can I, then, any longer say that I am not loved? Have I ever received from those friends whose loss I weep so bitterly, such proofs of disinterested love? Was it once only, O Jesus, that Thou didst shed Thy Blood for me? Ah! the voice of Thy Blood calls to me every day from the Altar in accents of tenderness and love. Thy heart opens again to shed it upon mine, and to repeat by Thy continual sacrifice: "My child, who can love you so tenderly as I? Will you still refuse to give Me your love, or will you bring Me a heart cold and full of sad regrets? Return to Me; My heart is ever pitiful; you will find in it the remembrance of those beloved ones who are blessing you and expecting you in heaven."

VI. Love for God in Time of Trial.

O Jesus, I love Thee! This cry, issuing from my grateful lips, is the summing up of my thanksgiving. Although my love for Thee seems, as it were, crucified by the nails and thorns which pierce and agonise

my heart, I summon up its remaining strength to offer to Thee the only aspiration which it is capable of voluntarily forming. The flame which consumed the burning bush, seen by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, ascended amongst thorns. I trust Thou wilt enable my love to ascend ever more ardently towards Thee, though now it is weak, and stifled, as it were, by the thorns of grief; and since Thou didst not leave the Cross, nor lay down Thy terrible crown, until Thy death, I will gladly suffer with Thee until that day arrives when Thou shalt receive me, O Lord,—not to call me to a severe judgment, but to admit me into the abodes of eternal bliss.

Conclusion.

Resignation does not only consist in accepting the trials ordered for us by Providence, but in a loving acquiescence in the will of God in the midst of the most bitter sacrifices and sorrows. It is then that the soul offers herself up, of her own free will, to receive the strokes which God sees fit to inflict upon her. Make acts of love in opposition to the rebellious feelings of nature; make these acts more tender, more profound, more fervent, in proportion to the deep affliction of your heart. Yield to the solicitations of Jesus, who loves, in the time of your greatest affliction, to receive proofs of your confidence in Him, and your entire abandonment to His will. If we are not able to desire earnestly, after His example, a baptism of blood, at least we may consecrate to Him our sorrow, and offer it up at the foot of the Cross. The sacrifice which is most pleasing in His sight is that which He asks of you.

Implore of God that He will pronounce in times of suffering and grief, as well as in daily trials, that *Fiat* which called Jesus down to earth, and which can make your soul participate in the holy sentiments of our Blessed Lady, when you approach the holy table. This *Fiat*, if it becomes habitual in your mouth, will

cause the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in you also.

The dark clouds of sadness have enveloped your soul. "Then is the time," says St. Francis of Sales, "to make the anchor of your soul fast *above* on the shores of heaven ;" but if you have not strength enough for this, fix it in the heart of Jesus after Communion, that your will may be made strong to resist the waves of tribulation.

Our Lord counts your sorrows. He has purchased with His Blood the patience and strength which you require to overcome them. Ask Him to give you a firm will and determination to apply these graces to the shortcomings of your own will.

Let us put the lives of our dearest earthly friends at the *mercy* of God, since He placed the life of His dearly beloved Son at the *mercy of our sins*. Let us be willing even to sacrifice their lives to the glory of God, since He has given that of His Son to procure our glory.

Remember that the friendships commenced in this world under the eye of God are continued in His heart, notwithstanding their apparent rupture, and that they will all be reunited in heaven, never more to be destroyed ; and since true friendship thinks not of its own wishes in comparison with those of the person beloved, believe that they, whose loss you weep so bitterly, would implore you to calm your sorrow by the consideration of their eternal happiness.

SIXTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

HOW TO BEAR INTERIOR TRIALS PATIENTLY.

Preparation.

THE most certain sign that we can possibly have in this world of possessing the grace of God, is not the *feeling* of His love (says Father Quadrupani, from whom I have borrowed some of the following passages), but the resolution never to consent to any sin, either great or small; and this resolution may be found firmly fixed in a heart which is nevertheless much troubled with dryness.

Interior trials are not always chastisements for our unfaithfulness. Our Lord may feed us with the bread of afflictions at the holy table, and attach our souls to the Cross, when He feeds them with His sacred Flesh. To *suffer* with Jesus Christ is much better than to *enjoy* Jesus Christ. Be well assured of this truth.

Some pious souls may find the following prayers useful, when, before Communion, they are overwhelmed either habitually or accidentally with interior trials. They will understand how the will alone, without the help of feeling, is capable of performing acts of every Christian virtue, by humility, faith, confidence, and resignation, in the absence of present *feelings* of faith, contrition, hope, and love.

Acts of Submission.

It is out of obedience, O my God, that I venture to approach Thy holy table. Thy tender invitation would not have been sufficient; for, in the distress of my soul, I am not able to judge how far it is addressed to me. My wretchedness and infirmity are my best titles to Thy heavenly feast; but the wedding-garment can never be dispensed with; and when, after raising my eyes to Thee,

I consider *myself*, I doubt, I hesitate, I tremble. For if I turn away, I am departing from life; and if I approach unworthily, from a sinner, I become a criminal,—I commit the crime of sacrilege. But Thy merciful wisdom, O my God, in providing for our wants, has foreseen all our weaknesses; it has prepared for us a remedy against presumption and against despair. If it is not Thy will that, in the full certainty of Thy favour, we should advance with the full assurance of the Pharisee, and say with him, "I will approach the Altar of the Lord, because I am just in His sight," Thou dost not, however, desire that the Sacrament of Thy love should become a *torture* to us, or, as it were, an inevitable *snare*. I come, O my God, on the authority of the voice that has called me; I obey in the midst of the clouds which encompass me; I follow readily the guide whom Thou hast given me to conduct me to Thee. I approach Thy holy table, not requiring any other assurance of my innocence than those words from his mouth, or, rather, which proceed from Thine, "*You may go to Holy Communion!*" I accept, O my Jesus, as a needful trial, that privation of light and feeling, that coldness and distraction, which frequently accompany me into Thy sacred presence, at a time when all the faculties of my soul ought to be overwhelmed and confounded in one feeling of gratitude and adoration. Faith, hope, and charity seem to be banished from my heart, but I know that Thou dost not withdraw these virtues when we do not willingly renounce them; and, by the help of Thy grace, my will shall *never* renounce them,—it shall hold fast to them for ever.

Act of Faith.

Amidst the doubts which cross my imagination, O my God, I have not forgotten the bright light of faith which Thou didst cause to shine in my soul in former days of happiness and mercy, that the precious remembrance of those days might be a refuge to my soul in the hour of temptation. I believe firmly, O Jesus, that Thou art

true God and true Man; that Thou hast, with the Father and Holy Spirit, one and the same essence, majesty, and power. I believe, with a lively faith, that Thou dost give me, in the Holy Eucharist, the same adorable Body which Thou didst take in the womb of Mary. I believe that Thou art really and substantially present on this Altar. I repeat before God and man, with ineffable consolation, this testimony of my faith in Thy holy word, "This is My Body, this is My Blood."

Ah, Lord, to how many infidels is this mystery of love unknown! how many heretics or bad Christians deny or blaspheme it! Receive, at least, the most profound worship which my whole being is able to render to Thy abasement in the Holy Eucharist. I believe, O my God, that I am about to receive Thy Soul and Divinity, together with Thy sacred Body. I adore this mystery, which, by my reason, is incomprehensible; I desire thereby to honour Thy supreme greatness by the sacrifice of my intelligence, by subduing my senses to the dominion of submissive faith.

Act of Hope.

Vague fears seem to be more powerful than hope in my soul; but I know, O Jesus, that although Thou art the great and terrible God, before whom the Cherubin veil their faces with their wings,—the just and penetrating God, whose eye can discover a stain in the purest heart,—Thou willest in this place to be only the Victim, whose Blood takes away the sins of the world,—the Good Shepherd, who goes after the lost sheep, and brings it back to the fold upon his shoulders, without even reproaching it with having wandered from his care,—the Divine Mediator, who comes unto us to be our Saviour, rather than our Judge. I know this, O my God, and I firmly hope in Thy mercy.

Act of Contrition.

I feel neither hatred nor horror for those sins which

the world does not consider deserving of shame or contempt. I feel no sensible sorrow for those sins which I have committed ; but, by the help of Thy grace, my will is firmly resolved never more to offend Thee. It has turned away from sin because it is displeasing to Thee, because all evil is strongly opposed to Thy perfect sanctity. I believe, then, in my own contrition, O my God, because I believe in Thy promises ; because, if Thou dost not always grant us the consolation of *feeling* contrition, Thou wilt never refuse its justifying virtue to any soul that humbly implores it. I venture to think that I have humbly implored it at Thy hand. Lord Jesus, Thy heart is an ocean of goodness ; cast down one glance of compassion on my soul ; have pity on me because of the greatness of my sins. I prostrate myself in Thy presence ; I humiliate myself profoundly at the recollection of my ingratitude. I detest all my sins, but particularly those which have wounded Thy love in the most Holy Eucharist. Forgive me, my God, once more, and do Thou purify my heart, that I may be able with confidence to approach Thy holy table.

Act of Humility.

I have a very great desire to receive Thee, O my Jesus ; but, considering my iniquities, I ought rather to turn away from Thy holy Altar. I come before Thee as the repentant Magdalene, as the Prodigal Son. My place is at Thy feet with the greatest sinners. Like the charitable Samaritan, Thou didst raise me up, Thou didst bind up my wounds, and Thou didst pay my ransom, leaving me afterwards to the care of Thy holy angels, and of Thy ministers, who have conducted me to Thy sanctuary.

I am unworthy to raise my eyes with St. John to Thy sacred heart, which is the centre of attraction to all pure souls. I do not deserve to kiss Thy sacred hands, lifted up to bless innocent souls, nor do I deserve to hear Thy voice. One glance of Thine was enough

to penetrate the soul of the unfaithful disciple with compunction; and, since I have been insensible to Thy greatest favours, I will prostrate myself amongst the last of those who approach Thy holy table.

Act of Love.

I am frozen with insensibility and coldness; but I know that I love Thee, O my God, because my will prefers Thy service to every earthly joy,—because Thy grace is the only object of my desires,—because I suffer so much in not being able to feel any love for Thee.

I will then venture to say, “O my Jesus, I love Thee in the Holy Eucharist, the perpetual monument of Thy sufferings and death; I love Thee for Thy condescension in granting me, by this real union with Thy invisible presence, a compensation for the delay of our eternal union with Thee. I love Thee, Price of the redemption of my soul,—I love Thee more than I have ever loved Thee; but my love is still so weak, that I offer unto Thee all the acts of love Thy Mother made Thee, while she had the blessedness of possessing Thee on earth.

Act of Desire.

Thou knowest, O my God, I do not despise this Sacrament, which I receive, nevertheless, with so much insensibility; for, though I find no enjoyment or consolation in it, I would have all, and make any sacrifice that I may approach it often. I can then believe with truth that I ardently desire the happiness of living united to Thee. I desire ardently to receive Thee, Eternal Word, who givest Thyself to me as my Saviour and Redeemer. I desire Thee, O ineffable Treasure, whom God has committed into our keeping as the Ransom of sinners. I desire Thee, O Jesus, Eternal Wisdom, without whom I could never walk in the road which leadeth unto life. I desire Thee, Uncreated

Light, that I may know the will of God, and accomplish it faithfully. I desire Thee, O Jesus, Divine Mediator, full of zeal for my salvation; give me the same zeal for the interests of Thy glory. The saints desired ardently to contemplate Thee, but they never dared to aspire to that intimate union with Thee which is daily offered to me, notwithstanding my unworthiness. I desire Thee, O Jesus, notwithstanding my coldness, my misery, my defects; I desire to adore Thee as my God, to serve Thee as my Master, and to consecrate to Thee every moment of my life.

How we should ask for inward Peace.

Our Lord showed St. Catherine of Bologna that a Communion made in the midst of trials borne with patience and resignation is infinitely more meritorious than a Communion made in peace and calmness.

When your soul is agitated by trials or temptations, the Rock of Calvary offers you an asylum which the storms of this world can never shake; but if passion arouses in your heart a tempest which threatens to swallow you up, then, feeling your weakness, draw near to the tabernacle, and hear these words from the lips of our Blessed Lord, "Peace be with you." Receive this peace without desiring the feeling and enjoyment of it.

Lord, bring me that peace of Thy presence which the world knows not, which it can never receive, for Thou only givest this peace by Thy Spirit; and Thou hast said, "The world cannot receive My Spirit" Awful words! which make me fear to place myself under the dominion of a spirit contrary to Thine, when I follow my own will, instead of obeying my superiors. Far from raising any obstacle to the peace which Thou art willing to grant me, I will drive away all anxiety from my mind; so that, in thus abandoning myself to Thee, I may deserve to possess the peace which Thou art willing to bestow upon my soul.

Motives of Confidence.

If too much uneasiness and apprehension still keeps you at a distance from the holy table, hear how St. Ambrose applies these words of Scripture to the Holy Eucharist: "All those who shall turn away from it shall perish." To turn away is death, to receive it is life eternal. Those who eat this heavenly bread with the necessary dispositions, cannot die; for how can he perish, whose food is Life itself? Dwell upon these thoughts.

If these encouragements are not sufficient, and if the sight of Calvary and of the tabernacle cannot inspire you with confidence, then follow Jesus Christ to heaven. From His throne of glory, He bows down the splendour of His Humanity before the majesty of His Father, and beseeches Him to make you a partaker in the fruits of His death. My Father, says our Blessed Saviour, behold My wounds; give Me souls, give Me souls for My reward: give Me this soul, for which I have laboured, wept, suffered; it belongs to Me. I have written it on my hands and in my heart. Oh, how our Lord loves your soul! To comprehend His love, remember that He thought of it throughout endless ages; and when He dwelt on earth, He was employed in securing your salvation. From His abode in heaven, His eye follows you; from the tabernacle, He calls you.

And even though some secret uneasiness may still remain in your soul, yet go courageously to the holy table. "Do not look at yourself," says Bossuet; "go without knowing whether you are living or dead, were you even at the gate of hell, as the holy Soul of Jesus once was; receive His sacred Body in such a manner as it shall please Him to give it to you." Hesitate not; obediently hope against hope. The voice which commands you to communicate, is the voice of our Lord Himself.

Lord, I bring Thee my heart, with all its troubles and anxieties; dissipate them, that so my soul may be penetrated with the flames of Thy love. Give Thyself to me, for I love Thee; and if my love is insufficient, make me to love Thee more. I know that I do not deserve to receive Holy Communion; but I am still more certain of this, namely, that neither without me nor within me can any happiness exist for me, save in Thee: outward distractions cannot give me peace. Come, Lord, come to bless and to comfort my soul by Thy sacred presence.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord with a profound feeling of your own unworthiness and wretchedness. Say to Him with confidence, "I come to Thee, O Lord, in the state in which Thou hast placed me. I fear, for I know not what to say to Thee. My heart can no longer feel. Thou art present here, and yet I think I am alone. Thou speakest, perhaps, and I do not hear Thee.

Or, instead of this, say calmly to our Lord, "Speak, O Jesus, speak to this heart of ice, that knows not even how to reply. It will, however, always love Thee; and its only hope in existence is to live and die for thee." Humble yourself at the feet of our Lord for your insensibility, but calmly, without disturbance of mind. Prostrate yourself at His sacred feet with Magdalene, and throw yourself into His arms with filial affection.

Say to Him with St. Gertrude, "Have pity on me, O Lord,—Thou, to whom nothing is impossible, unless that Thou shouldst *not* have pity upon sinners." Ask our Blessed Lord to give you grace to pronounce over all the troubles of your life that *Fiat* which united Him so intimately with the Blessed Virgin, and summoned Him into her virginal bosom.

Act of Adoration.

O my Jesus, I adore Thee profoundly in my soul,

which is not, indeed, full of fervour ; but which, nevertheless, concentrates her whole desires upon Thee. I adore Thee with fear and humility. I value Thy holy will, which permits me to remain in this state of interior dryness, above even the enjoyment of Thy presence ; and I am resolved to sacrifice every thing to this blessed will. Faith suffices me, for art not Thou within me ? If all these sacrifices, summed up in the Sacred Host, astonish my reason, they have much more effect upon my heart, and they cause it to sink under the effort of gratitude. Ah, Lord, can there be in existence an act of homage which I would refuse to Thee,—an act of adoration which I would not willingly render to Thy Divine Majesty ?

Union with our Lord.

Your employment after Holy Communion ought to be the same as that of our Lord Himself, during the time of His dwelling within you. First, He offers Himself to His Father ; offer yourself up unreservedly with Him. Secondly, He receives any thing we give Him ; offer Him your coldness, your insensibility, and accept them again with calmness and resignation. Thirdly, He suffers on our part every thing that can offend His holiness and love. Devote yourself cheerfully to make any sacrifice for Him. Consent to every suffering, to those *which will be the most powerful in putting your nature to death.*

By this condition of patience, suffering, bearing, self-sacrifice, strengthen your comforting union with our Lord. Ah ! if you truly wished it, you might prolong it during your whole life. But to form a clearer idea of this interior occupation, think that in your heart our Lord is still offering Himself to His Father for you. Touched with compassion, He covers your want of merit with His holocaust, and presents to Him your faith and confidence in the time of trial. "Jesus never loses the mercy by virtue of which He is accustomed to save

our souls." The proof of this is to be found in the entire donation which He makes of Himself to you in this Sacrament.

Look well at this Divine example ; unite yourself to Jesus humbled ; then your abasement will be more worthy of the majesty of God. Offer yourself up interiorly and exteriorly, in your mind, your heart, your will. Destroy every prejudice in your soul, by an act of conformity with Jesus Christ, without seeking the enjoyments and illuminations of grace.

Our Communion is always good, when we bring to it a generous disposition to do violence to ourselves, to carry our cross, and to give to God the proofs of our fidelity which He requires of us.

Open your heart to Jesus, and remember that He will never be weary of hearing you ; pour out your prayers, your sighs, and your tears at His feet.

Act of Gratitude.

My Lord, I ought to be very grateful to Thee, that Thou didst not cause me to live in the time which preceded the Incarnation,—that I was not reduced, in expectation of my Redeemer, to repeat, while ignorant of His name, "My God, send *Him* who is to come." More highly favoured than the just men under the old law, I know Thy sweet name of Saviour, Thy presence in the Holy Eucharist, and even Thy love in Holy Communion. Shall not so many motives for thanksgiving expand my heart, and will not my tongue find one word of thanks and love?

O Jesus, let my silence speak to Thee. Behold, in my inability to celebrate Thy mercies, a true and eloquent expression of my gratitude. I will not pray to Thee, O my God, in order to obtain sensible enjoyments, not even for the gift of Thy spiritual graces ; what I implore from Thy grace is, to keep my will raised up to Thee, and not to suffer it to fall and wander again at the impulse of my passions.

Desire of Virtue.

When Jesus Christ is in your heart by Holy Communion, be very desirous to accomplish His holy will by love; accept, if He requires it, the most afflicting interior trials. Present to Him all your infirmities, that He may diminish them; the tried soul requires strength and courage, rather than consolation.

O Jesus, infinitely good, I know that Thou dost desire to load me with Thy favours; I come before Thee like that poor blind man who was sighing for light. "Lord, grant that I may receive my sight," I will say with him. Grant that I may recognise and love Thee by the light of faith, that I may adore Thee really present in me, and may contemplate Thee with tender and respectful love; that I may both see and faithfully accomplish Thy Divine will in my soul; that I may see clearly all the sacrifices which Thou demandest of me, so that I may not refuse Thee a single one: the works of charity Thou requirest of me, that I may practise them with joy and self-abnegation,—the poverty of my soul, that I may humble myself and acknowledge my own nothingness,—my sins, that I may weep for them with sincere contrition,—the virtues which I am deficient in, that I may solicit them with fervour; that I may see the operation of Thy mercy upon my soul, notwithstanding my resistance and ingratitude, so that I may confide in it without any reserve,—and the crosses which Thou dost intend for me, that I may carry them after Thee courageously. Grant, O Jesus, that I may see myself, in order to know, to hate, and to humble myself, that I may regard all created things, not with my bodily eyes, out of vain curiosity, but with the eyes of my soul, to admire the marvels of Thy hand, and to make use of them with respect and reserve, as things *lent* to us only for a time. And, lastly, grant that after this life I may clearly see the adorable Unity of Thy Divine essence, in the Trinity of Persons.

Act of Offering.

Besides, you must give yourself up entirely, that Jesus may do with you according to His will. Place yourself at the disposal of His sacred heart, as He places Himself at yours. It is then sweet to the soul to be able to say with truth, "My dear Jesus, dispose of me entirely, absolutely, as I am able by Thy bounty to dispose of Thee.

Thy charity strongly urges me to return Thee love for love. The more we love Thee, the more we wish to love Thee. Since Thou hast given Thyself to me, it is only just that I should, without delay, consecrate myself to Thee. Accept the offering of my senses, now sanctified by Thy presence, that I may henceforward only use them in a pure and holy manner. Render my body a living sacrifice, by cutting off sensuality,—make my heart a tabernacle in which Thy grace may constantly abide; I offer it to Thee, that it may continually fear and love Thee; and may that holy fear banish from my soul every lingering attachment to sin and voluntary imperfections. I submit myself entirely to Thy holy will; I accept all that Thy Providence has ordained for me, and for all those whom I love.

I ask of Thee neither life nor death, sickness nor health, riches nor poverty. May Thy will, O Lord, not mine, be accomplished in all things!

Act of Love.

Love augments in the heart in proportion to its resignation in sorrow, but this love is not sensibly felt; for if it were so, suffering could not exist. The love of God, felt and enjoyed, is almost heaven. Love proved by trial is pure and humble. Aspire to the love of Jesus crucified. If you feel your mind distracted during the precious time allotted for your act of thanksgiving, say, "My Jesus, I know neither what I am, nor what I am saying; but after Thou hast offered to Thy Father all

that Thou art, all that Thou hast effected in my soul, let my nothingness hide itself under Thy operation. My sadness so presses upon my heart, O my God, that this aspiration towards Thee, so natural to the soul that loves Thee, has become, as it were, impossible. Wrapt up in self, I have no more impulse towards any thing that is good, for love and life seem to be extinguished together in my heart." Ah, Lord, I should not suffer so much, if, retired in my humble abode, I could say incessantly: "My God, I love Thee." I should not suffer from the annoyances of my life, if my heart could ascend continually to Thee in accents of love. Yes, I confess it, it is because I do not think of Thee enough, that my heart falls into this state of coldness and insensibility. And yet Thou art my only good; and in loving Thee, I shall find repose in the midst of the anxieties of my life.

Generous Resignation.

Receive whatever our Lord gives you, as He accepts every thing that comes from you. He accepts whatever you say to Him, or give Him: your love, whether it be weak or ardent; your thoughts, whether they ascend to heaven, or grovel upon earth; the earnest outpourings of your heart, or a sigh of contrition,—in a word, He condescends to become your Slave and your Victim.

In Holy Communion, Jesus Christ teaches you to receive with respect and love all the operations of His grace, not to resist them, to become supple in His hands, like soft wax, which will take any shape or form. You will sometimes be terrified by the thought of His judgments; for although it is then a time of love and union, yet it is as the Judge, and not as the Spouse of the soul, that He acts at these times. Let your mind be penetrated with these thoughts, moderated by confidence in God.

You may also determine to suffer humbly whatever Jesus Christ imposes upon you, as He also suffers from you. Think how frequently you have wounded Him

by the coldness of your soul, which is without love, without zeal, without any desire to unite itself to His heart. He bears the extravagance of your mind, and its multiplied distractions. He suffers from the manner in which you divide your affections with creatures, after having vowed eternal fidelity to Him at the foot of the Cross. Does not our Lord suffer all this from you?

O my Saviour, couldst Thou show more love towards me than in depriving Thy sacred Body of the legitimate glory which it should enjoy, by virtue of its union with the Divinity, and by sacrificing it for me upon the Cross? How much ought I not to love Thee, when I behold Thee dwelling upon the Altar, solely in order to give Thyself to me! Why can I not willingly renounce all the joys of this world, and suffer gladly for the love of Thee? I prefer, O Lord, to be crucified with Thee upon Calvary, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of this world; and yet I only ask for sufferings in so far as they may be the means of glorifying Thee and of sanctifying me, the only means of following Thee *more closely*, and of showing Thee my utmost love. I thank Thee for all my afflictions, whether they reach me directly from Thy hand, or through the intervention of creatures. I commend especially to Thy mercy those persons who are the instruments of them, and beseech Thee to grant them the fulness of Thy grace. I beseech Thee that they may not, in causing me those trials, offend in any respect Thy Divine Majesty. I am determined, by Thy grace, always to receive these crosses with gratitude, and to consider them as assurances of my predestination.

Conclusion.

If our Lord appears to have entirely abandoned you, bear this trial with patience and humility. Do not be astonished or terrified if you feel, during your act of thanksgiving, troubles, anxieties, interior trials. Jesus communicated with His disciples, and after supper He was "*troubled in spirit*" (John xiii. 21). Abandon

yourself entirely to our Lord; leave Him to act in you in trouble and abandonment, if such is His will. Let your only care be to remain submissive to His direction, even without sensibly feeling it.

SEVENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Preparation.

“CHRISTIANITY has sanctified the ashes of the dead,” a pious and illustrious orator observes; “the waters of baptism have given to our ashes the value of a holy thing, and the Church has appointed for them a last Benediction.” “Jesus Christ,” says St. Bernard, “has attached to death three things, which make the thought of it our treasure and our hope: it ends our labours, our sufferings, our fears; it opens to us a new life of blessedness and glory; and it unites to this the assurance that we shall be in possession of God for all eternity.”

Thus, then, it is not difficult for a pious soul to abandon herself into the hands of God at this supreme moment, and to offer her death beforehand to our Lord, in union with His own. Enter courageously at this moment into the consideration of these three thoughts:

1. Death is a sacrifice to the sovereign dominion of God. You have sinned; it is just that you should become a victim consecrated to His glory, which tends each day towards its full consummation.

2. It is necessary to discharge our debts; therefore, accept the penalty imposed upon you by the Divine justice of God.

3. Death having become a favour granted from the love of the heart of Jesus, receive it with an act of

thanksgiving. Yes, my Father, you should say, I accept as a favour all that comes from Thy hand. I will suffer willingly, because such is Thy good pleasure; grant me strength to persevere in these dispositions until my death.

If your nature shudders at the aspect of death, and if your soul is alarmed at the mysterious obscurity which environs our passage to eternity, remember that Jesus Christ has given us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of regeneration and life, as a pledge and earnest of our immortality. Have a firm confidence, then, in His promises. Do not fear death, for death tears asunder the veil which covers the face of God.

I. Commend your Soul into the Hands of our Lord.

O Jesus, who dost penetrate the most secret folds of my heart, enlighten it, so that, before approaching Thee perhaps for the last time on earth, I may sorrow for all my sins with perfect contrition. I place them again at the foot of the Cross, that they may be covered with Thy precious Blood. I adore all the interior motions of Thy holy Soul; I consecrate myself to Thy agonising heart. I place myself entirely in Thy hands, O my God, offering to Thee the adorable dispositions of my Saviour upon the Cross, to supply my own want of devotion. I repeat with Him the last sentence which fell from His dying lips for our consolation: "My Father"—a word of love—a word of love to be especially treasured up at the moment when I possess Thee truly in the Sacred Host. "I commend"—confidence and resignation. I reserve nothing, my God; all comes from Thee, all is Thine; take back all. I do not only abandon them because I must, but I give all back willingly and heartily. "My spirit"—that is to say, my soul, my heart, and my life,—consequently, my most intimate being,—and as to all exterior gifts, I restore every thing Thou hast given me. "Into Thy hands," pierced by love, full of mercy, and able to blot out all the sins of the world; now, O

my Jesus, I put myself aside, as if I were dead. I will no longer think of my faults, nor of the pains of death, nor of the punishment which I have deserved, nor of the state which awaits me in eternity; Thy will, Thy love, Thy presence, shall occupy *all* my thoughts. And when for the last time my hands shall be clasped in eternal prayer, then, Lord, graciously hear those which shall be addressed to Thee on my behalf.

II. *Desire to see God.*

My God, show Thyself to the soul that seeks Thee uprightly; condescend even to mine, which desires the happiness of being perfectly united to Thee. "Too late have I loved Thee." May this regret not be to me a remorse. Overcome with sadness in this land of exile, it is not surprising that I should lift my eyes to heaven; for here below, save in Holy Communion, I seek Thee, and I find Thee not; I love Thee, and I behold Thee not; I acknowledge Thee in all Thy works, and, notwithstanding this, Thy presence is hidden from me. Raise the veil, O my God, and my soul will be transported with gratitude. My faith raises this veil at the holy tabernacle; but this is not enough for me; I desire to see Thee without having the fear of losing Thee. Thou givest a precious testimony of love to Thy faithful servants, when Thou dost visit them at their last hour, because Thou givest it at a time when friends are needed most, and yet most rarely found.

. Friendships which stand the test of death are rare. Few friendships come from heaven, few return thither; friendship is the first possession a dying man loses with his life. Thou, my Lord, dost unite Thyself so closely to us, that death, which breaks the closest ties, cannot separate us from Thee. Dissipate, by Thy presence, my fears of death; elevate my soul to the sweetest hopes. If I fear death, I will nevertheless suffer dutifully that which Thou didst suffer for the love of me,

and I will arouse my courage by the hope of possessing eternal happiness in heaven.

III. *Motives for banishing the Fear of Death.*

Let the vain fear of death prepare us for the only kind of fear that is profitable. Will it be possible for you not to fear God, when He says, "If you sin, I will abandon you"? But still you should fear Him only with that pure and chaste fear of which it is written, that it shall endure for ages of ages. At this hour, which even for the just man is terrible, Thou wilt do for me, O Jesus, that which Thou didst perform for Thy disciples when Thou wast about to leave the world. Thou didst give Thyself to them, when they were prepared to fly from Thee like cowards. Thou wast in the midst of their hearts even when they were departing from Thee, for Thy love could not consent to a separation. Thou, then, wilt be with me when my nature shall be ready to fail. Thou wilt grant me grace to suffer with holy firmness the painful agony of death; Thou wilt soften for me the horrors of death; and when I shall behold its approach, I will not fear, for Thou wilt be there to make the last combat easy, and to provide me with a safeguard against its dangers. Fill me then, O Lord, with Thy Spirit, and with some portion of that courage which led Thee to be nailed to the Cross for my salvation.

IV. *Filial Confidence.*

Commend, then, your soul with unbounded confidence into the hands of our Lord, even when you feel nothing but sadness, terror, interior desolation; being persuaded, with St. Gertrude, that Jesus will give us, in the hour of death, consolation for every thing that we may have done for Him without consolation during our lives. The death which separates the soul from the body is but a shadow of death. "That is true death, which separates the soul from God," says St. Gregory. This death

makes even the saints tremble. Lord, I shall not fear when I shall be encompassed by the shades of death, because in a very short time I shall be with Thee. In the bosom of Thy Mother, Thou wast a fountain of love; in the crib of Bethlehem, a fountain of joy; in the Garden of Olives, a fountain of tears; on the Cross, a fountain of blood and of merits; in heaven, a fountain of glory; but in the Blessed Sacrament, Thou art a fountain of life. Oh, how comforting is this thought to my soul, which has communicated so frequently, and which now, perhaps for the last time, goes up to receive the Divine Host! I will go to the holy table with confidence, and I will say, "Behold my God, who is Himself heaven!" A veil only separates me from the blessed ones,—a moment longer, and it will fall. I return to the fountain of life and eternal happiness.

V. *We should offer up our Communion as if it were to be our last.*

Enter into the feelings of the venerable Bishop who composed this prayer:

Thou hast said, O my Saviour, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi. 55). Give me this celestial food, which preserves from eternal death. Before my death, may I be provided with Thy precious Body and Blood! May I be able to say, like the holy Simeon, "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen, and my heart received, the first cause of my life and of my eternal salvation"!

Nevertheless, O Lord, if Thou dost ordain that I should be deprived of this consolation, I adore the disposal of Thy Providence; but let this not take place as a punishment for my sins, nor by the effect of Thy justice, nor by my own negligence, nor through the false sensibility of those who will surround me, but may it be the

effect of an incomprehensible mystery of Thy love, to which, by anticipation, I submit. Deign, O my God, to receive my present Communion for that which I desire to make in my last moments; I offer it to Thee at this present time, in the form of Viaticum. I unite this Communion to the one which Thy disciples made on the evening before Thy death. I unite it to those of all the holy souls who have the happiness of communicating this day. Why have not I the same dispositions of mind, the same fervour, as they had? Do thou prepare my heart to receive Thee, and come to establish Thine undivided empire there.

O my Jesus, I beseech Thee to be my Viaticum for my passage to eternity. Come and feed me with Thy adorable Body, for the purification and sanctification of mine; come to inebriate me with the Blood which Thy great love didst cause Thee to shed for me, even to its last drop, upon the tree of the Cross; and, since this precious Blood is miraculously reproduced in the Holy Eucharist, communicate it to me, that it may become the germ of my resurrection and my immortality.

VI.

Until the moment of your Communion, cease not to draw our Lord to yourself by constant fervent desires, by acts of love which ascend like flames from your heart unto the holy tabernacle, or by some words taken from the Psalms: "Create in me a pure heart, O my God," that more wondrous thing than the creation of a world.

Redemption flows abundantly from Thy heart; may I receive it fully, by the help of Thy grace. Come to me by Thy Holy Spirit, and may He renew me fully.

Lord, she whom Thou lovest is sick; do Thou come and heal her.

Behold the Divine Spouse! what happiness to receive Him and to go to meet Him! Thou, O Lord, hast called

me, not to Thy awful judgment, but to receive grace, peace, joy, and love from Thy invisible presence.

My soul is like a barren land, dried up for want of water; come, and it shall live. Teach me to bear my cross, to love it, to die on it with Thee.

I die every day; I arise and go to my Father. I have sinned, I am not worthy; but I love Thee: have pity on me. O my God, how sweet it is to sacrifice my life to Thee! Come and receive it, O my Jesus, and bless my latest sigh.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord with respect, confidence, and humility. If you find it hard to invoke Him by the titles of Father, of Spouse, of Saviour, at the moment when you fear Him as your Judge; take refuge in His heart. Hide yourself in the wound in His side, which has long been your sweetest place of refuge.

Ah! if you are united to this adorable heart, it will not be difficult to die there. Where could you find a more comforting assurance of salvation?

Ask of our Lord, that your life may be a *continued* act of love, and your last sigh an act of perfect love.

Accept death, and the terrible event which must follow it, with perfect confidence, saying with St. Francis, "I shall be judged by Him whom I love." Carefully close and seal up the tomb of your heart, place a guard over all your senses, that Jesus may not leave it.

I. Entire Resignation of ourselves into the Hands of our Lord.

Your soul is God's kingdom. In every Communion you make, Jesus Christ takes possession of it. Death, far from interrupting, will render this union perpetual. Repeat to Him again with love, "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my soul."

O my Saviour, I adore Thee in my heart; I cast myself at Thy feet in profound self-abasement. I offer

and consecrate to Thee, more than ever, the exercise of the faculties of my soul; efface all earthly things from my memory, let me remember them only in Thee. Apply my intelligence to the Divine truths which Thou wilt soon vouchsafe to discover to me without veil or cloud. I give Thee my will, to desire with Thee all that Thou wouldst ordain for Thy glory and my salvation.

II. *Confirmation of this Resignation.*

Make the offer of yourself generously, without reserve, to our Lord. If the courage to make some sacrifice of your secret wishes, to which grace prompts you, has hitherto been wanting, make it at this moment to the adorable heart of your Saviour.

I am Thine, then, O my Jesus ; Thy love has consummated this mysterious union. But is it as complete on my part ? On Thy side, all is love ; but on mine, is it all sacrifice, immolation, without reserve ? Is there nothing remaining in my soul that may cool Thy love to me ? Thou hast said : " He that receiveth Me, hath everlasting life " (John vi. 55) ; but in order to receive this plenitude of life, I must empty myself of the things of this world ; then Thy presence will leave an ineffaceable impression there. With this hope, I have communicated in form of Viaticum, as a preparation for my journey to eternity. Without Thee, O Jesus, death is full of terrors ; but with Thee, it is the way to eternal life. In entering into my heart, then, Thou hast said truly, " I will break your league with death ; and your covenant with the tomb shall exist no more " (Is. xxviii. 15).

III. *Assurance of its Completeness.*

I will say, with Thy holy martyr St. Stephen, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." From Thy throne in heaven, Thou didst await the martyr, who aspired to join Thee there ; and Thou didst watch over his last combat. Present my soul to Thy Father, and sustain it

in my last struggle. "It is consummated" (John xix. 30). I no longer possess any thing. I have given Thee every thing. I have offered Thee all I have and am. Thou art my treasure. All is consummated for me. Thy mercy has forgiven me all my sins—it has attracted me by the infinite sweetness of the holy tabernacle. Time will soon come to an end; temptations will pass away; sin will be effaced from my soul; I shall be for ever with Thee. Keep me unto my last sigh. I desire to consider myself as dead to every thing that is not Thee—to communicate with such dispositions of mind as would be suitable to the last action of my life, without forgetting that each day of Communion is a festival to a pious soul. In communicating frequently, my life, during many years, has become, notwithstanding many and bitter griefs, a perpetual solemnity, which causes me, in some degree, to share in eternal joys. I owe this happiness to Thee, my Jesus. It is the only happiness I desire, and yet it has been watered by my tears; but how great has been the joy it has procured for me! and how can I sufficiently thank the tenderness of Thy heart, which has vouchsafed me this consolation!

IV. *Self-abandonment to God, in union with the Blessed Virgin.*

At the close of our Lord's earthly existence, Mary abandoned to His love the care of her future life, without troubling herself about the fate which was reserved for her, without any ambition save that of seeing the veil withdrawn which separated her from her Son and from her God.

Let us apply this thought to the love of our Lord. He has fixed Himself permanently upon the holy Altar, so that I may never be separated from Him here below. It would, then, be deep ingratitude, from which I pray God to preserve me, were I ever to doubt His intention of uniting me eternally to His sacred heart. At this precious time, I have many reasons to hope; faith

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 joy it has procured for me! and
 I thank the tenderness of Thine
 hand for this consolation!

*To God in union with the Blessed
 Virgin.*

Our Lord's earthly existence, Mary
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assures me that it is an inestimable happiness to die under the protection of Jesus and Mary—to take refuge in the Wounds of our Blessed Lord, that sweet refuge from the arm of Divine justice.

“My God, Thou hast given me life; Thou art pleased to take it away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job i. 21). If I am called to quit the possessions Thou hast given me, they are a deposit from which I have long been detached in heart; it is just that I should restore them unto Thee when Thou dost demand them. If my children are left orphans, it is because I am no longer necessary to them; they belong to Thee, more than to me: do Thou take care of them. If I must suffer great pain, my body is a sacrifice of expiation, which I beseech Thee to accept in union with the crucifixion of our Lord. If I must die, the God who summons me is my Father as well as my Master; I confide myself to His mercy. If the thought of the judgment to come causes me to tremble with fear, may I not present to Thee the numerous Communion which I have had the happiness to make? may I not place all these Sacred Hosts, pledges of infinite love, between Thy justice and my guilty soul, and thus expect from Thy merciful heart, together with forgiveness, the reward due, not to my merits,—for I have none,—but to Thy goodness alone?

O Jesus, I am here, on the threshold of eternity; I have no hope of succour if Thou desertest me; but in my heart I bear the Bread of life, immortal food! My heart contains, under sacred veils, the richest treasure in heaven and earth, or, rather, heaven itself. I hope, then, to possess this infinite good, to enjoy the eternal contemplation of its majestic beauty.

V. Our Lord's Blessing requested in the Hour of Death.

How many acts of thanksgiving do I not owe Thee, O my Jesus, for the inestimable gift of Thy Body, Thy Blood! Give a salutary benediction to my soul; forget

my past ingratitude; form in me a principle of a new life, devoted to Thy love and service; confirm the holy thoughts and resolutions with which Thy grace has inspired me during my examination into the state of my conscience. I know, O my God, that if I still enjoy the blessedness of loving Thee, of feeding upon Thy adorable Body and Blood, and finding therein a commencement of celestial bliss, I owe it all to Thy mercy alone. Thy love is a safeguard against the fear of Thy justice—drive far from me whatever might expose me to its severity. Deign to bless my last hour, with all its accompanying circumstances. I love Thee, O my Saviour, I love Thee; this is the cry of my heart: may it be heard by Thy heart, especially at my last hour.

VI. *Renewal of our Baptismal Vows.*

To renew our baptismal vows is to bind ourselves by a free, decisive act to the service of Jesus Christ, to engage ourselves to live according to the laws of God and the perfection of the Gospel. Weigh the greatness and the holiness of the duties which you thus voluntarily accept.

At the foot of the Cross, on which Thou didst suffer and die for me, O my Jesus,—before the tabernacle, from whence Thy Divine glance proceeds, and rests upon my soul,—before Thy sacred heart, now present in me,—I renew my promises, and vow, by the help of Thy grace, to pass my life in the faithful discharge of the solemn engagements of my baptism.

I promise, O my God, to live in retirement, forgetting the world and all its vanities—to love retreat, prayer, and silence—to mortify my senses, to persevere in labour and penance, in so far as I am permitted—to detach myself from exterior objects—to serve Thee faithfully, by humiliation of spirit and the courageous practice of humility, by obedience, and entire self-abandonment into the hands of him who is clothed with Thy authority and aided by Thy Spirit to guide me in the path of per-

fection, by confidence in his directions, by charity, and the practice of those works of zeal which tend to spread the knowledge and love of Thy sacred heart, to which I especially consecrate my life. Deign, O Lord, to influence me with Thy love; may it consume my heart! may Thy holy Mother bear it to the throne of Thy Majesty! Grant me, by the merits of her intercession and that of St. Joseph, to persevere, with inviolable and life-long fidelity, in the path of mercy which Thou hast prepared for my sanctification.

VII. *Resignation unto Death.*

The consecration made by Jesus Christ of His whole being to God, corresponded to the knowledge which He had of the Divine perfections,—that is to say, it was entire, perfect, constant. You have, as a Christian, renewed the consecration of your whole being to God; but you owe to Him, besides, persevering fidelity, to correspond to the special enlightenment which His grace has accorded you. Promise Him this.

My God, I adore Thy infinite goodness, the immovable foundation of my hope. I see not, in the whole course of my life, a single work done with the purity of intention, the devotedness, which Thou hast a right to expect. But I commend into Thy hands my whole existence, up to my latest sigh,—my soul, my spirit, my body, my salvation, and my will. I place Thy precious Blood, Thy holy Death, Thy adorable Wounds, and especially the wound in Thy heart, between the Divine justice and my sins. I will live thus in the faith, the hope, and the love of my crucified Saviour, as long as it shall please God to prolong my life in this world.

Conclusion.

The Christian soul ought to die daily to the world and to herself, so as to live only unto God. Let the thought of your death, the uncertain time of its arrival,

the necessity of living in a state of constant preparation for it,—let these thoughts confirm you in your determination to lead a new life, sanctified by good works. There must be no longer in your life any intervals unoccupied by the love of God. And if you think it will be difficult to love God *alone* and *always*, raise your thoughts to heaven, where the love of God will employ your whole being throughout eternity. Will it not be sweet to enter even now into some participation of the felicity enjoyed by the blessed in heaven?

The foundation of all the blessings we seek for on earth is *life*. It is only after we have employed it all for God that we can quit it without regret. Our life in this world may be summed up under three heads: to be born, to suffer, to die. Jesus Christ, in submitting to this, altered our state; for, with Him, we shall be born again; and we shall rise again, strengthened by our sufferings, to obtain everlasting life.

EIGHTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

RELIGIOUS VOWS.

Preparation.

“RELIGIOUS vows,” says a pious author, “are the nails which attach the soul to the Cross, and guard the integrity of conscience from contact with the world. They form a contract of close alliance with Jesus Christ.” How happy you are in having obtained this great favour! Fulfil its sacred duties faithfully; they are light and sweet to the fervent soul. Our Lord, in the Blessed Sacrament, is the model of the religious soul. In the Blessed Sacrament, He begins, continues, and completes in her His Divine likeness; or He at least inspires her

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with a desire to attain perfection. Study our Lord with care and love, in order to form yourself to the virtues of your vocation—poverty, obedience, and chastity.

I. *Poverty.*

Jesus Christ created upon earth the greatness and grandeur of poverty. He made it Divine, when He left it to us as the heritage of His Incarnation. When He was born, there came into existence an incomprehensible alliance between His holy Humanity and poverty, in virtue of which He chose the latter as His inseparable companion throughout life. First, then, consider with deep reverence the state to which He reduced Himself in His mortal life, that He might approach us closely.

First, He was deprived of every earthly possession and comfort. Our Lord had neither lands, nor gold, nor silver ; He never used valuable furniture ; He lived by alms. Secondly, He was deprived of all support in this world ; He had neither family, nor friends, nor authority to defend Him from the persecutions of His enemies ; He exposed Himself singly to all their fury, and yet was never weary of doing good. Thirdly, He was entirely stripped of Himself—the most sublime degree of perfection. In becoming Man, He laid aside every appearance of His perfections, and put on our weakness ; He submitted to be acted on by the elements, by creatures, by demons, in a manner depriving Himself of strength to resist them.

Consider the poverty of Jesus on the Cross. There, separated from every person and from every thing, dying while deserted by His Father, He becomes to us the model of perfect deprivation of all things. Now, examine yourself ; consider whether, in your heart,—into which Jesus will shortly descend,—there is any attachment which makes you the possessor of any thing contrary to His will, and entreat our Lord in this moment to disengage you from all family connections, from

friends, from outward comforts, intellectual gifts of any kind whatsoever, which may be inconsistent with the spirit of your vow—to maintain the spirit of entire abnegation of your mind, of your judgment, of your will. Having been devoted to the service of God at first by baptism, you have since engaged yourself to follow Jesus Christ in poverty. Love poverty in practice, that, in receiving our Lord, you may enjoy the beatitude which He promised to those who practise this virtue.

O Jesus, what profound instruction I derive from the contemplation of Thy life ! In order to imitate it, I will renounce the care of my own ease and comfort. I will no more desire human affection ; I will no longer seek, either in the exercise of my talents or in my labour, the enjoyment of a puerile intellectual vanity. If Thou hast given me liberal gifts, to Thy name be the praise ; if I have received little, may Thy name still be blessed and glorified ! If I were to fear the loss of *any thing*, or to regret worldly possessions, this would be a mark of *want of detachment*. I should not then be able to say with truth, “ Lord, Thou art my treasure,”—words which are the glory, the happiness, of the soul of a true religious,—which are able to compensate her for all her sacrifices. Oh, grant me grace to say each day, with sincerity, I have, and I desire to have, only Jesus Christ.

II. *The Poverty of the Tabernacle.*

The poverty which surrounded the human life of our Lord was of short duration, and, because of our weakness, it was not sufficient to convince mankind of the grandeur and holiness of this state ; and now, impassible in His glory, Jesus Christ can no longer feel the natural effects of *privation* ; but that He may attract us freely to choose the same part upon earth as He did, He still dwells in the state of poverty amongst us, in the Holy Eucharist. It is voluntary poverty, chosen out of love—absolute poverty. He deprives Himself of every thing, even to the appearance of existence, and does not

so much as retain His liberty of action. Permanent poverty, without interruption ; generous poverty,—He gives all that He has, in giving Himself. His open heart, His pierced hands, can no longer keep back any grace. But, in order to receive them, your heart must be empty of creatures—free from any voluntary attachment to sin and imperfection. “The perfect soul,” says St. Jerome, “has nothing but Jesus Christ ; or, if it have any thing beside, it is not yet perfect.” Enter deeply into these thoughts ; nourish your soul with them, knowing that the heart of Jesus is an inexhaustible fountain of grace.

O Jesus, Thou didst leave Thy Father’s bosom, abandoning, for our redemption, Thy glory, Thy majesty, Thy eternal repose. To inhabit the tabernacle, Thou didst again quit heaven, Thy Father, Mary, the angels, even the appearance of Thy Humanity ; accomplishing, in an admirable manner, that counsel of the Gospel, “If Thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven” (Matt., xix. 21). Thy Father has put all things into Thy hands, says St. John, and Thou dost use them only to teach me voluntary detachment from creatures. Thou art deprived of every thing in the tabernacle, even as Thou wert formerly upon earth ; and yet every thing is Thine ! Thou art the model of the religious soul. When I consider that Thou dost exchange the courts of heaven for the narrow space of the ciborium, that my heart may be to Thee in the place of all riches, this consideration inspires me with an ardent desire to lead a life of real and actual poverty. I can never thank Thee enough for granting me a vocation to this life of holy poverty. Never hast Thou shown me more favour than in thus calling me to receive the heritage of Thy mortal life. I renew to Thee my vow of poverty, including in it, for its greater perfection, all that I am and every thing that I possess. Permit me not to exercise any of the rights of property, nor to preserve any attachment to trifles. Come, then,

O Jesus, and say no more that Thou hast not where to lay Thy head, for my heart is Thine. It is true that I am not worthy to receive Thee ; but my unworthiness does not repel Thee—it only enhances the glory of Thy love.

III. *The Obedience of our Lord.*

“Obedience,” says St. Augustine, “is the greatest of virtues; it is the mother and guardian of the other virtues.” St. Gregory adds, “It opens the soul to admit all virtues, because it produces their fruits.” It is possible that we may not find it difficult to give up all our possessions, but it is impossible that we should find it easy to give up ourselves. Thus the Holy Spirit says, “Obedience is better than sacrifice” (1 Kings xv. 22). The measure of the love of Jesus Christ towards His Father was that of His obedience. His whole life was one uninterrupted act of obedience. God will measure your love by the extent of your obedience. In the practice of this virtue, the religious soul gives up her own will and her liberty, which are her only personal possessions. Our Lord will not be outdone in generosity.

Learn to love obedience in meditating upon that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold Him at Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth; does He not go from one place to another in submissive obedience to His Father? During thirty years, what wonderful docility does He not show to His Mother's voice, to her slightest sign, though even she was only a creature! When the awful hour of the Passion arrived, “Arise,” said He to His disciples, “let us go hence.” He rendered obedience to a heathen judge—to the soldiers who loaded His hands with chains, who commanded Him to take off or put on His vestments, that they might inflict upon Him new sufferings. He suffered Himself to be bound to the pillar of flagellation. On Calvary, when He stretched Himself upon the Cross, when He tasted the vinegar and gall, He still obeyed, and death was the consummation of His obedi-

ence. In sight of this picture, how can I hesitate to submit my will to those who stand in the place of God to me? When a painful sacrifice is required of me, let me recall the last cry of our Lord: "My Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46), and, like Him, let me resign myself to the sacrifice, were it even unto death. If I desire to serve God only as seems right to me, I show but little love for Him, and I shall have to bear the entire responsibility of my actions in His sight.

What will become of me, should He show me judgment without mercy? If I fail in this fundamental virtue of the religious life, how shall I respond to the privileged graces of my vocation? Is not this vocation my present happiness, as it will also be my glory in heaven?

I adore Thy Divine obedience, O my Jesus; lead me by such ways as Thou shalt please, govern me by whomsoever Thou shalt choose. I will obey the least indication of Thy will; enable me to do, to suffer, to accept, and to quit all things with perfect indifference, and do Thou accept the perpetual sacrifice of a life which shall henceforth be entirely deprived of all self-will.

IV. *Obedience of our Blessed Lord in the Holy Eucharist.*

When our Blessed Lord was upon the earth, He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," says the Apostle (Phil. ii. 8). In the holy tabernacle, He becomes obedient unto the consummation of the world. He renders immediate, universal obedience to every priest who pronounces the words of consecration: a *free* and voluntary obedience which exposes His adorable Person to the outrages of perverse humanity; an *entire* obedience, without referring to the virtue of the priest. During so many centuries, no interruption has ever occurred to this humble subordination, which, because of His love to us, is more dear to Him than His glory. Jesus Christ has solemnly engaged Himself to continue this

great subjection of Himself, not in order to repair the insults offered to His Divine Majesty, but to console our exile, by filling up the interval which separates earth from heaven, to which He again ascended after His death. Out of love for you, He prefers His obedience upon the Altar to the exercise of His sovereign power. Will you not, then, promptly and lovingly obey?

O my Jesus, I will treasure up in my heart this sweet and earnest instruction. I am more touched by it than by the remembrance of Thy submission at Nazareth. I offer to Thee my vow of obedience, renewing to Thee the sacrifice of my will. Receive my soul with all its faculties, my body with all its senses, my thoughts, my desires, the sighs and the pulsations of my heart, all the days, hours, moments of my life, that they may all yield a perfect submission to Thy will in all things.

V. *Chastity.*

"Chastity," says St. John Climacus, "is a participation of the angelic nature." "It gives us beforehand, and in a certain way," St. Bernard adds, "a foretaste of the life of heaven." "The chaste soul aspires to the likeness of God," the Holy Spirit informs us; and this grace of chastity unites the religious soul to her heavenly Lord and Spouse.

Esteem highly the wondrous grace of this Divine alliance; but understand that the vow of chastity, which is its bond of celestial union, imposes upon you the happy necessity of practising a great number of virtues which act as guardians of its perfect purity—as, *watchfulness* over our thoughts, because "Every action," says St. Augustine, "takes its rise in the thoughts;" *humility*, for St. Paul tells us, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12); *modesty* and *watchful guard over our senses*,—for the religious soul should make a covenant with her eyes, and, forgetting earthly things, behold Jesus Christ alone.

Lord, in the Immaculate Host, Thy Humanity is united to Thy Divine Majesty. In this wonderfully pure, great, and hidden union, Thou dost make known to me the model of my union with Thee. I declare that, desiring to please Thee, I will aspire to perfection in my vocation, I will strive to attain angelic purity, I will place my affections on Thee alone, and will love none but Thee. O my God, I renew and confirm at Thy feet my vow of chastity. Deign to receive me as Thy spouse, and to forgive my negligences in the practice of Thy love.

O Jesus, Thou knowest my desire of serving Thee with the purest intentions, of never deliberately committing any, even the slightest, sin or imperfection. Make my life a continual act of resignation and of love, so that it may proceed to perfection in Thy sight, according to the favours which Thy goodness has conferred upon me. "Fear not to approach the Altar; you are expected and desired." Go joyously to Jesus Christ, who permits you, His spouse, to approach Him with tender and familiar love.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Your Lord, your Spouse, has given Himself to you. Adore the august Victim, immolated for you. Behold our Lord receiving your vows into His sacred heart, and make Him a promise of unchangeable fidelity.

Feed upon Jesus. In becoming incorporated into His life, who was so poor, you will receive the spirit of poverty. His virginal body will communicate to you His spirit of chastity. When you have partaken of this Victim of love, you will obtain His spirit of obedience, who, out of obedience, offered Himself a sacrifice for your salvation, and rendered a perfect submission to all those persons who, in this world, stood to Him in the place of His Father. Love your Divine Spouse, and unite yourself closely to Him, so that this union may complete

what grace has already commenced in you. Thank our Lord for the signal graces of the religious state. This is a mark of predestination, and a pledge of love, the extent of which you will never fully comprehend until you enter upon a happy eternity. Oh, if you knew the blessings prepared for you in return for your sacrifices!

Raise your thoughts from the Eucharistic union with our Blessed Lord, and from the religious alliance with Him into which you have entered, to the marriage-feast which your Divine Spouse will celebrate with His Church in heaven. Ask our Lord to confer on you the graces of purity and humility, the most essential characteristics of the religious soul. Ask also for a continual increase of faith, hope, charity, poverty, obedience, prudence, piety, patience, mortification, and, above all, the love of your vocation.

I. How to imitate the Poverty of Jesus Christ.

In the Holy Eucharist, our Lord is even poorer than He was in the manger. Poor and simple shepherds were the recipients of the first benediction which attended His birth. Will He not give still more precious blessings in Holy Communion to the soul that has detached herself from all earthly things for His sake?

"Consider," says Bossuet, in speaking to religious, "whether you have this spirit of perfect poverty, whether you no longer *even desire* any earthly possessions." This will give you a right to share in the liberality of our Lord; for poverty gives you a legitimate claim by which you may approach Him.

O my Jesus, when I behold Thee in my heart in this state of poverty, I am overcome with love and admiration. There is, in Thy utter poverty, a grandeur, a sweet and profound charm, which enchants my soul. When wilt Thou give me that unchangeable peace which belongs to those who have left all for Thee? When

shall I be set free from every earthly tie, that I may be united to Thee alone? When shall I be enabled to say, with an outburst of gratitude, My God and my Father, my God and my all, be Thou alone my peace and happiness throughout eternity? Having contemplated Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the humility of the tabernacle, I understand the happiness of a soul that voluntarily deprives herself of every thing for Thy sake ; she can gladly close her eyes to all created things, for her heart, united to Thine, is blessed with more than the kingdom of heaven, which is promised to the poor in spirit as their heritage.

II. *The Spirit of Poverty reviewed.*

“Poverty,” says Bossuet, “consists in not only detaching oneself from all earthly possessions, from all useless and superfluous objects, but still more it subsists in the most secret soul, by cutting off all desires and affections which tend to earthly things. The true spirit of poverty does not permit you to dwell upon any earthly thing for *your own satisfaction* ; it withstands every strange affection which is not centred in God, that the heart may be filled with the love of its Divine Spouse.” “Blessed are the poor,” Thou saidst, O my Jesus, when Thou wast instructing the world in the way that leadeth to salvation. No words could be more consoling at the commencement of my religious course, and the echo still resounds in my heart. I shall never regret, O Lord, my eternal consecration to Thee. When Thou calledst me to a religious life, Thou knewest my weakness and my faults ; I believe that Thou wilt overrule even these to Thy greater glory. Limit and restrain my desires, so that, becoming truly poor in spirit, separate from the world, which would separate me from Thee, I may love the privations of my holy state.

III. *The Spirit of Poverty courageously embraced.*

Notwithstanding the great number and diversity of the sacrifices required of us in the religious life, our Lord sometimes withdraws His consolations also, in order that, being entirely detached from creatures and disengaged from self, the soul may be free to aspire to Him. "Then, in reality, there is no barrier between Jesus Christ and the soul," says Bossuet, "except this *little wall* of our mortal life." All the rest falls, fades away by degrees, wasting until the wall itself is destroyed. We acquire the understanding of this truth at the expense of suffering, but it is a great grace. We must be detached even from spiritual favours, for the graces of God are His *gifts*, and not our *own possessions*. We should receive them humbly, be prepared to lose them quickly, and not suffer ourselves to be depressed in their absence. It sometimes happens that we appropriate these favours in such a way that the good done by their means seems as if it were the effect of our own efforts. "In order to prevent this appropriation, God deprives us of the power of practising certain virtues easily," says le Père Lallemand, "that we may be humbled by the feeling of our poverty; and thus He causes us to enter into the spirit of the real nakedness of the soul to which the Holy Spirit promises so many rich gifts and favours."

We must not attach ourselves too strongly to Holy Communion, although it is the sole consolation of the religious who follow Jesus in the path of holy poverty and entire abnegation. We must be ready to give it up, if obedience demands it of us, if sickness prevents us from receiving it, if unforeseen circumstances call us away,—in short, we must abandon ourselves to our Lord in complete poverty, and confirm ourselves in sincere relinquishment of all things whatsoever, even of the consolations of His presence.

Lord, whatever I possess with affection, whatever I

desire with eagerness, occupies my mind, agitates my soul; employs my thoughts, and deprives me of peace; I can no longer pray, my heart grows cold to Thee, my mind is disturbed, and I abuse many graces by this species of voluntary infidelity. O my Jesus, teach me to resign every thing of which Thou didst deprive Thyself when on earth; such riches will only serve to make me poor in Thy sight. Inspire me with sincere contempt for all those things which Thou hast despised here below, and detach me even from the desire of Thy consolations.

IV. *The Obedience of our Lord imitated.*

For our greater consolation, Jesus placed the perfection of His life in *obedience*, because this virtue is the true perfection of sacrifice and of love. It is by the practice of this virtue that my life will be thoroughly imbued with the religious spirit. Our Lord's submissiveness, and His desire of glorifying His Father, reduced Him to His state of suffering upon the Cross. God may, then, require of me an act of obedience which will be painful to nature. Yes, and I must obey Him, even as Jesus Christ obeyed unto death; and besides, in this continued act of obedience, I shall have given every thing to God,—my liberty, my will, my life. Can I hesitate to do so, when I owe the gift of Holy Communion to the perpetual obedience of Jesus Christ? I must remember that, in my religious consecration, I committed myself soul and body into His hands, that He might dispose of me according to His good pleasure. Let me not be terrified; His Divine operation is always inspired by love. Let me confide myself, abandon myself, to it. Oh, no; I will not oppose myself to God. The whole universe is subject to Him, even creatures without intelligence. In heaven, the angels do *not look into* His commandments; they make no distinction in obeying the orders which are given them; they fly to the cradle of the child born

under a roof of straw, as gladly as to that of one who reposes in a palace. Their glory is to obey.

"My sheep hear My voice," Thou hast said, O my Jesus; Thou speakest, then, but once to the obedient soul, who never obliges Thee to repeat a command. And yet I listen to the most touching solicitations without considering it my duty to obey. From the time of one Communion to another, how I hesitate, calculate, and delay! Lord Jesus, I bless Thy law of obedience; I should be too ungrateful were I to complain of the chain which is daily tinged with Thy Blood. Henceforth, Thou mayest say of Thy handmaid as Thou didst of David, "At the hearing of the ear they have obeyed Me" (Ps. xvii. 45).

V. *Prompt and regular Obedience.*

Your obedience ought not to be exterior and temporary only; it should be perpetual, always the same, accompanied by submission of the heart, the mind, and the will; for what is the value of a forced obedience, or of an obedience of limited duration? Let your obedience, let the subjection of your will, be perfect. Take that sword which St. Paul speaks of, that two-edged sword which divideth the soul and spirit, which cuts off all reasoning, subdues the will and the judgment. Our Lord requires of you *perfect* obedience, for it is the only means of arriving at that perfection to which you ought incessantly to aspire. Act supernaturally, and you will acquire great merits.

To obey your rule cheerfully,—this is what duty requires of you. In the voice of your superiors, think you hear the voice of our Lord; obedience will then become easy. To your superiors He says, "He that heareth you, heareth Me" (Luke x. 16); to obey them with readiness is to love Jesus Christ practically, to sacrifice yourself to Him. You ought especially after Communion to multiply your acts of love, by your acts of obedience uniting your heart to your Master's will. "We

shall not require to expiate our sins after death," says St. Gregory, "if in our lives we have offered ourselves up to God as victims."

When obedience becomes a burden to you, ask yourself, Do I wish to leave off loving our Lord? Oh, no; I love my good Master, and I will love Him in life and in death. Could I refuse Him any sacrifice that He personally demanded of me? No, I would make it willingly for the love of Him. Ought I to leave to Him the choice of my actions, or reserve it to myself? Lord, you will reply, make this choice Thyself, according as it shall be for Thy greater glory. I will not refuse to make these sacrifices, though they are painful to my self-love; rather considering them as thorns detached from Thy crown, I will suffer them to be buried in my heart. Keep these thoughts to sustain your courage on those occasions when natural repugnances make themselves painfully felt. Understand that, if "obedience," according to the word of St. John Climacus, "is the sepulchre of the will," your heart is a tomb in which Jesus buries Himself, that your obedience may be indeed perfect.

Try to live so that you may be able every evening to assure our Lord that you have sincerely realised the oblation that you now make to Him of your own will.

VI. *Practice of Chastity.*

Chastity requires you to separate yourself entirely from all sensual pleasures, and in general to renounce the satisfaction of the exterior senses, that you may resemble the angels in the purity of your thoughts and actions. This purity of mind and body will not tolerate the slightest over-ardent affection. There must be *nothing* between Jesus Christ and the soul, no separation between the husband and the spouse, so that their union may be complete.

O my Jesus, the vow of chastity, that first bond of the immortal alliance which Thou wilt contract with me

in heaven, is dearer to me than life. Thou art truly mine to all eternity. This union, commenced by grace, is confirmed and drawn closer by Holy Communion. A deep feeling of joy and truth leads me to add, "And I am Thine." The examples of Thy life, Thy virtues, encourage me to live according to the spirit of my holy vows. Thou alone canst sustain the aspirations of my soul towards purity, but it is Thy will to grant this precious gift in answer to earnest supplications; deign, then, to accept my humble prayer.

VII. *The Consequences of Religious Consecration.*

Firstly. A perpetual alliance with Jesus Christ, who hath Himself said, in receiving your vows, "I take thee as a spouse for ever." "A faithful spouse," says St. Bernard, "regards nothing but Jesus, her Spouse. She longs after Him with all the powers of her soul; she makes known to Him all her secrets, and has no fear of any thing, except losing Him." These words give you a direction for your act of thanksgiving, and also an habitual rule of conduct towards our Lord.

Secondly. A life of purity, which begins the life of heaven upon earth. The soul consecrated irrevocably to Jesus Christ, strives to free itself from the dominion of the senses; the Bread of angels is intended to make her life quite heavenly, and worthy of the Spouse who has received her vows.

Thirdly. Ineffable consolation in the love which our Lord bears to the pure soul. As the inestimable privilege of the Divine Maternity was given to a Virgin, our Lord reserves great graces to bestow on perfect purity.

Fourthly. The spirit of devotion and sacrifice is strengthened; for in disengaging the heart, it leaves it at liberty to consecrate all its activity to God and to good works. She who has no spouse but our Lord, "thinketh on the things of our Lord," says St. Paul, "that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. vii. 34).

Ask of our Lord the spirit of self-sacrifice, so conformable to your vocation. The chastity of the *senses* obliges us to deprive ourselves even of *permitted* pleasures, that we may not run the risk of exceeding their limits. The chastity of the *heart* excludes every lively and intense affection, even if it be legitimate. The chastity of the *imagination* forbids even the passing thought of any dangerous object. Lord Jesus, keep ever in my remembrance that glorious title of Thy spouse, which Thou hast granted me. Close my mind to every thought, my lips to every word, my heart to every feeling, which does not accord with perfect chastity. Make me so watchful that I may never inflict the slightest wound upon this holy chastity.

O my Divine Spouse, preserve in Thy heart the promise which I made at Thy sacred feet, of living in poverty, chastity, and obedience. I come before Thee as a victim prepared for sacrifice; I am ready, like St. Paul, to die to every thing for the glory of God. I will die every day to my feelings, my opinions, my desires, my will, and I promise to be ever faithful to Thee. Accept my oblation, and make it perpetual.

Conclusion.

When a soul is inflamed by the love of God, she offers herself in sacrifice to His glory, realising by her desires and efforts the holocaust of the religious life; for, according to St. Gregory, "the religious really immolates himself in offering to God, by his vows and prayers, all that he has, all that he knows, all that he can do." Our Lord reigns without obstacle in the heart that is solitary and poor. Offer to Him a generous will; He will dispose of it according to His own designs, and He will make you feel more support and consolation under the rule you have embraced, than in the enjoyment of the most complete liberty. Remember the strict obligations you are under of keeping your vows. Recollect the safety and merit of the religious life,

the peace it brings, and the glory it will prepare for you in heaven.

NINTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PERPETUITY OF OUR BLESSED LORD'S LOVE.

Preparation.

THE institution of the Holy Eucharist was the crowning act of mercy and love in the life of our Lord. This last act perpetuated all the benefits which He brought into the world. Communion realises the consoling promise made by Him in ascending into heaven, that He would abide ever with us, until He should call us to share His glory in a blessed eternity. The Holy Eucharist even gives us, according to St. John, a part in the blessedness of heaven, bringing down amongst us the holy city where the saints and angels reign with God (Apoc. xxi. 10).

I. Offering our Communion.

My God, in union with Jesus Christ, my Saviour, I offer Thee this Communion, to Thy greater glory, in thanksgiving for all Thy benefits, and in acknowledgment of the paternal love which they manifest to me. O Jesus, Victim of my wretchedness and of Thy love to me, my soul appeals to Thee with the most lively desire and with sincere repentance; deign to descend into my heart, and to make me aspire to Thy Divine life. Receiving Thee in the act of that sacrifice, which is identical with that once offered upon the Cross, by which all our losses were repaired, I implore Thee to show me the excellence and glory of that sacrifice; purify me still more by Thy infinite merits; invest me with such dispositions as may unite me intimately to Thee. Give me

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that peace which, according to St. Augustine, "is the order of the soul, preserved without confusion, and kept without disturbance." Accept my Communion, according to Thy present intentions in coming to me,—refuse me not those graces which are necessary to my state, and especially the most decisive of all, final perseverance at the hour of death.

II. *Review of our Wretchedness, and the wonderful Love of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Lord Jesus, I cannot present myself at Thy holy table without humiliating myself again for my many offences against Thee. Alas ! I have often sinned out of weakness, but often also from malice ; and the inclination of my mind to follow my own will, instead of my duty, has led me into great offences. I have sinned at all the periods of my life, in my family relationships, in the fulfilment of the necessary duties of my state, in the trials and vicissitudes which I have not submitted to with resignation. I have been wanting in courage in time of temptation, in prudence and wisdom in my actions, in mortification in the use of my senses. I have sinned by making a bad use of my time, by frivolous, perhaps even dangerous, conversations, by inconsiderate actions and dissipated pleasures, by unnecessary expenditure in the gratification of my vanity, by useless or dangerous reading. My exercises of piety and good works have been mingled with self-love and ostentation, or have been idly abandoned too soon. How many graces have I lost, how much interior light wilfully extinguished, how many good feelings stifled, and how much useful advice despised ! How many virtuous examples have I not laughed at or condemned ! how many pious works have I not omitted ! " Iniquity has laid hold upon me, and I bear the fetters of sin." And yet I belong to the Author of all sanctity ; the Just above all others is my Redeemer and my Model, and I am entitled to a share in the Communion of Saints. Ah, Lord, this is because Thy love has ren-

dered perpetual the life-giving day of Thy death. Calvary is erected every where, and the abundant fountain of Thy Blood flows ever mercifully on my soul. I find in the Holy Mass all the benefits of Thy Passion, so that in very truth Thou art ever immolated for my salvation. If my sins are annihilated under the words of sacramental absolution as quickly as a spark is extinguished in the waves, will not my soul, bathed in Thy Blood in the Holy Sacrifice, be fully cleansed from all her sins? Will she not, on leaving the holy table, recover some trace of her primal innocence, and no longer retain the least stain of the sins which have defiled her? The love of Thy sacred heart is a fire which cleanses me from all impure alloy, and thus enables me to proclaim, by my actions, Thy everlasting title to my fidelity. "Forgiveness for my soul," I will then cry with St. Augustine, "forgiveness for my miseries, my iniquities, so that I may never again willingly fall into a sin for which Thou hast pardoned me." Sustain my weakness, soothe my sufferings, give me a heart to love Thee, a soul to fear Thee, a mind to comprehend Thee. Grant me the faculty always to discern clearly between good and evil, and may my intention ever be upright and pure! I implore Thee, O my Jesus, to grant me the remission of all my sins; and whenever I invoke Thy clemency, may I obtain it to my eternal salvation!

III. *The Intercession of the Blessed Virgin implored.*

Mary was the first to receive and possess our Lord. Before His descent upon the Altar in the hands of the priest, Jesus had taken life in the bosom of Mary. The manger of Bethlehem was the first sanctuary in which her most pure hands laid the God of the Holy Eucharist to rest. Ask her that you may be able to love our Lord as devoutly as she loved Him, and that you may receive Him with the respect with which she surrounded the Divine Child, whom she called her Son, and whom she revered as her God.

O Mary, teach me to love Jesus Christ. I am called to partake of the happiness which thou didst enjoy in possessing Him; obtain for me, that I may enjoy it with the purest dispositions of mind. Do thou offer my heart to our Lord—it is the purchase of His Blood; disdain it not—it is His temple; suffer it not to be invaded by sin and other imperfections, which may sully its purity. It is the kingdom that Jesus has won—permit not any other sovereign to take possession of His conquest; it is the throne where He desires to reign—adorn it, and make it worthy of His Majesty. Finally, ask thy Divine Son to lay in my heart, by this Communion, the foundations of an unchangeable love.

IV. *A Spirit of Self-sacrifice necessary in order to approach the Holy Table worthily.*

Holy Communion, which terminates the oblation of the sacrifice of the Cross continued on the Altar, points out that this unbloody mystery contains motives for suffering, and also for suffering voluntarily, for the love of our Lord. This love, perpetually immolated, calls upon us to immolate ourselves also. “Jesus suffered because He willed to suffer.” But He was at liberty *not* to will it. Even if the law of expiation were not so stringent upon us all as it is, yet our love and gratitude would still point to it as a duty. Life is full of sufferings; what folly to murmur at them, and not, at least, to make a merit of accepting them, because of their indispensable necessity! Do not neglect any opportunity of offering, as your preparation for Communion, the sufferings and trials incident to your state in life, or the thousand little incidental circumstances with which our Lord pierces your heart, in order to make it remember that it must rely on Him alone.

Make your mortification consist in the captivity of the senses—subject them to a modest recollectedness, which will prevent all dissipation of mind, and diminish the difficulty you sometimes experience in lifting your

heart to God. Moderate your natural vivacity by accustoming yourself to act with a certain slowness, or at least not without some reflection. Combat vague uneasiness by repeated acts of confidence in God. Instead of yielding to apathy and idleness, determine never to exceed a fixed time in the performance of all your daily duties. O my Jesus, we must seek at the foot of the Cross, but especially in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the secret of suffering for Thee with more love and more perfection. Be Thyself the centre of the desires of my heart; may it no longer be carried away captive by every passing feeling. With my affections firmly fixed upon Him who has suffered so much for me, I will no longer complain of the sacrifices I am called upon to make; I will no longer be uneasy for the future. I will overcome my sorrow by the hope of contributing something to Thy glory, and tranquilly expect in death some portion of the blessedness which followed Thine.

V. Ardent Love for our Blessed Lord, and Desire of possessing Him.

In Holy Communion, Jesus Christ will receive in you a mystical death, which is the consummation of His sacrifice, continued to the glory of God and our salvation. But will He find your heart resplendent with Divine grace? for His glorious Humanity seeks to find or to leave some reflection of its splendour. What an afflicting contrast will be presented to the sight of the angels, if Jesus, descending into your heart, finds it full of unruly passions, governed by self-will and pride, the seat of a thousand voluntary imperfections! The strength of His love surmounts all the obstacles which your defects oppose to His sanctity, and, passing over the infinite interval which separates Him from your nothingness, He raises you up to Himself. You should then desire ardently that He may work a holy transformation in you. *Be not satisfied until your prayer has*

been answered. At this moment, fill your heart entirely with holy and ardent desires for His coming, and apply all the faculties of your mind to the business of immediate preparation for Him.

How many mysteries of love are silently accomplished for me upon the Altar! The heart of Jesus is never weary of repeating them; they neither exhaust its tenderness nor its power. In the Incarnation, God showed His great love for the world; but in Holy Communion, Jesus manifests a love to me which surpasses all understanding. Yes, Lord, I am silent in amazement. I adore, and I receive, without comprehending, these wonderful mysteries. God, who is infinitely powerful, unites Himself to me, joining the two extremes of holiness and abjection. He says to me, "Ask freely; all that I have is thine;" and, without fear of wearying the inexhaustible goodness of our Lord, I approach with joy the throne of His Majesty.

Behold, O my God, that ungrateful child whom Thou hast loved so much. In return, I love Thee more than I love myself, because, in coming to redeem me, and to open to me the gates of heaven, Thou hast loved me more than Thou didst love Thyself. I love Thee; and yet, as I cannot love Thee as much as I desire to do, and am urged by the love my heart desires to feel, I would say to Thee, with St. Augustine, "Lord, I love only Thee, and whatever Thou desirest me to love for Thee. I desire, I regard Thee alone; I enjoy none but Thee, and will repose only on Thee, so that I may never be separated from Thee." When I behold Thee in the silence of the tabernacle, amidst outrages which wound and regrets which distress Thee, I am overcome with admiration and love. There is in Thy silence a grandeur, a sweet and persuasive eloquence, which enchants my soul. Shall I ever again be tempted to nourish resentment, or the remembrance of an injury? The sight of Thy poverty will make me blush at my own luxury and sensuality. All those things of which Thou

didst deprive Thyself would only tend to impoverish those who set their hearts upon them. Let Thy example, then, instruct me to put them all aside, and to combat my pride. Oh, that the happy moment may quickly arrive, when I shall be truly detached from myself, wholly united to Thee—when I shall exclaim, in an outburst of love and gratitude, My God and my Father, my God and my all, be Thou my peace in the Holy Eucharist, until Thou shalt take me to enjoy the everlasting blessedness of Thy presence in heaven !

Act of Thanksgiving.

Our Lord, in the beauty of His glorious Humanity, is present; His heart rests on yours, His Divinity resides in you in its glory and its perfections. The Blessed Sacrament is the cloud which veils His splendour; but it does not hide His love, nor the rich showers of His grace.

Adore Him profoundly: what grace, what happiness ! Attach yourself to Jesus irrevocably. Repose with perfect confidence on His fidelity, which will remain firm when all earthly things fail you.

Listen submissively to our Lord, to His complaints, His reproaches, His words full of sweetness; sometimes respect His silence, and search in yourself for its cause.

Offer, for the general intention which you propose to yourself in this Communion, the adoration, homage, and acts of love of all the angelic hierarchies; the prayers, good works, sacrifices, and dolours of the Blessed Virgin, of the Apostles, martyrs, and all the elect.

I. *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."*

Is not this word the first Thou dost address to me, O Jesus, from Thy abode in the tabernacle, under the sacramental veils ? Thy perpetual abode in the Holy Eucharist recalls to my mind that infinite love which, from all eternity, desired to give itself to me. The Blessed Sacrament is, therefore, in our present existence,

the means and end of our substantial union with Thee. It is a pure, holy, stainless offering, most agreeable to Thy Divine Majesty; an offering which, after ascending by sacrifice to the throne of God, descends again even to my nothingness. O Jesus, Thou comest without a pause from heaven to me.

Consider these thoughts devoutly and earnestly.

Even before His death, our Lord, by the institution of the Holy Eucharist, had chosen your heart to be His sepulchre, and prepared for you His sacred Body, clothed with immortality. If He were to leave you this sacred gift in perfect union, it would be heaven begun on earth. He gives it, but withdraws it again. In the tabernacle alone is His abode perpetual. He is on the Altar ever immolated, and ever living to bless us. "See, My daughter," He says, "with what marvels My goodness surrounds you. Speak freely, express all your thoughts; am I not almighty to hear and answer your desires?" Lord Jesus, a feeling of faith, of reverence, makes me unable to enjoy Thy presence so much as I could wish; for I fear that the homage and respect I render Thee is not sufficiently profound. I adore Thee, I love Thee; my love drives out all other thoughts. United to Thee, my joy is great, for my heart desires but Thee. Communion is the soul of my life. When I have communicated, my act of thanksgiving becomes a new act of desire. Ah, Lord, if the thought of giving Thyself to me occupied Thy Divine heart from all eternity, can there be a single instant of my life in which I do not ardently desire the Holy Eucharist? To await Thee, to receive Thee,—this is my life.

"Give us this day our bread;" this is the prayer Thou didst put into our mouths, after placing it in our hearts; and shortly after, to increase our desire for this heavenly food, Thou dost assure us that this bread is Thy flesh. My soul, therefore, created for the perfection of love—my soul, O Lord, craving after Thy presence—concentrates upon Thee all the thoughts of

her heart. From the early morning light, I sigh for Thee; and when I have the blessedness of possessing Thee, my thoughts rest on Thee alone. I desire nothing more; heaven is within my heart.

II. "*Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*" (Matt. xxviii. 26).

Our Lord, in ascending to His glorious abode in heaven, pauses to give us this consoling assurance. What happiness to have been born after the Incarnation! O my Jesus, since the blessed day when from Thy lips those Divine words issued, "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," Thy eucharistic life is the property of Thy whole Church. Ages roll by, generations pass away, but in all Thou art to be found in the tabernacle and upon the Altar. Few indeed have seen Thee in the time of Thy mortal life; some few have heard Thy words, many received benefits from Thee without knowing Thee. And I, so many hundreds of years after the Incarnation, now enjoy the happiness of conversing with Thee, of receiving favours from Thy sacred hands, and even of possessing Thee in the Holy Eucharist. Not content with coming to me as a passing guest, as in the Holy Sacrifice and Holy Communion, Thou remainest ever near me in the tabernacle. May I not think, in seeing myself so highly favoured, that Thou lovest me more than those to whom this Divine Sacrament is unknown? may I not even think that Thou lovest me as much as Thou hast loved all other men together, since Thou dost give Thyself to me alone as much as to all these combined? Besides, Thou hast appointed me to be the inheritor of Thy heart, and, leaving to me in the Holy Eucharist the testament of Thy love, Thou dost delegate to me the sweet task of revealing in my holy life, to the utmost of my power, the mystery of Thy union with my soul. What a blessing!—my whole life is but too short to meditate upon it sufficiently.

O Jesus, Thou art the only consolation of my life; I

often weep before Thee, and yet I am not sad ; the tears that I shed at Thy feet are far preferable to all the joys of the world. I weep for sorrow at offending Thee, and from the fear of seeing Thee offended by those whom I love ; I weep to find in myself so many imperfections, which wound Thy love ; I weep because I am too accessible to feelings of earthly affection, and so cold to the interests of Thy glory. But however great may be my wretchedness, Thou art my Life, my Guide, my ever-gentle Master, my loving Shepherd ; and my confidence is confirmed and strengthened in Thy perpetual love.

III. "*I am thy Protector, and thy exceeding great Reward*" (Gen. xv. 1).

In the beginning of the world, God promised to give Himself to us. But, not contented with a promise which had reference only to eternity, He gave us even in this life His Divine Son—Another, and yet Himself. In Communion, Jesus is our beatitude begun.

It is true, Lord, Thou givest me *too much*, in giving me Thyself, for I am unworthy of so much happiness. But I venture to add, Thou wouldst give me *too little* in giving me any thing but Thyself; for every thing Thou couldst give me, without the gift of Thyself, would be too little for the satisfaction of Thy love, and also insufficient to fill my heart.

Thy glory, like Thy person, veiled in me under the sacramental presence, brings me the assurance of my future glory, in order to encourage me to fulfil Thy laws and Thy counsels. Thou givest me again Thy Spirit of light and truth, in order to render the understanding and practice of Thy precepts more easy to me. But if Thy mercy raises me up to the enjoyment of the most elevated hopes, it also descends with me into the particulars of the smallest things which concern me. There is not a single thought or affection in my heart which Thou dost not attentively consider ; my best actions are known to Thee ; Thou hast even counted the

number of the hairs of my head. At this very moment Thou dost search my most secret thoughts. Turn away Thine eyes from my unworthiness. O Jesus, at this thought I am overcome with fear; vouchsafe to sustain my weakness, lest it should sink before the presence of Thy greatness.

IV. *Why does Jesus Christ dwell upon Earth?*

"He is come," says the Prophet Isaiah (lxi. 1), "to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, and to preach a release to the captives; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn, and to give them the oil of joy for mourning." In the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Christ perpetuates His admirable ministry amongst us. Has He not attracted to Himself all those who are poor by voluntary choice, and caused their name to be honourable in His sight? "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. v. 5). "Come unto Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you," He said. Each day of our lives is marked by His mercies; who can approach the Altar without feeling the tenderness of His heart? Oh, is it not in the sanctuary that our tears are dried, and our deepest sadness changed to joy? Yes, it is for me that Jesus abides really, personally, in the tabernacle, for me that He dwells there by night and day; He gives me perpetually His thoughts, His love; I am the direct object of His most tender feelings; His solicitude is concentrated upon my interests, without being for one instant turned away from His other creatures. From whom on earth have I received so much? In whose heart am I the sole and absorbing thought? In whom shall I find such constant and perfect sympathy? Who will so affectionately occupy himself with my interests? No one! And yet I make no commensurate return to our Lord; not to speak of the habitual tendency of my thoughts and feelings, is Jesus, at this moment, the exclusive object of my thoughts, during my act of thanksgiving? Has no

ohs weep before Thee, and yet with every moment
 that I shed at Thy feet are forgiven. Turn away
 of the world. I weep for myself, Jesus, at this
 from the fear of seeing Thee unable to sustain
 love; I weep to find in myself the presence
 which wound Thy love; I weep to

able to feelings of earthly affections
 interests of Thy glory. But how can I
 weaknesses, Thou art my (John 1:1),
 gentle Master, my loving Shepherd, my heart, and
 comforted and strengthened in Thy love, my

III. "I am thy Father, and thou art my Son."
 In the Holy Spirit (See the admirable

In the beginning of the world, the Holy Spirit
 Himself was. But, at our entrance, and came
 but release only to eternal death? "Blessed
 be the Virgin Mary—blessed be the Holy Spirit—
 Communion, Jesus is our brother, and I will receive

It is true, Lord, Thou great God, I will receive
 me myself for I am unworthy to stand without
 But I venture to say, Thou wilt not be so
 giving me any thing but Thyself, and our deepest
 could give me, without the gift of Thyself, and
 little for the addition of Thyself, for me that
 dost will my heart.

Thy glory, like Thy person, is perfect
 sacramental peace, brings me into perfect
 from glory, in order to enter into Thy
 love and Thy union. Thou art the Holy Spirit
 spirit of light and truth, in order to enter into
 standing and practice of Thy precepts.
 But if Thy mercy rises me up to Thy
 most desired hope, it also descends to my
 particulars of the smaller things of Thy love.
 There is not a single thought or affection of mine
 which Thou dost not secretly observe, and
 time are known to Thee; Thou hast a sensitive
 of everything?

every moment
 2. Turn away
 Jesus, at this
 safe to sustain
 the presence of

in Earth?

in (Lm. 1), "to
 heart, and to
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 Come unto Me,
 and I will refresh
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 hat Jesus abides
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 one! And yet I
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earthly thing divided them with Him, or perhaps even exclusively absorbed them? Is my heart on fire with His love? Does no earthly affection reign there besides my God? Examine, with the help of our Lord, into all the particulars of your daily actions, that you may sanctify them more fully to the glory of His name. For Thee, O my Jesus, I will perform all my actions, even to the very last. After Holy Communion, Thou dost not disdain the smallest sacrifice offered in thanksgiving. Thou dost not so much regard the *gift*, as the affection of the heart that makes the offering to Thee. Jacob in his dream perceived Thy supreme majesty at the summit of a mysterious ladder, which reached from earth to heaven; a multitude of angels were ascending and descending upon it. On awakening, full of astonishment and fear, he arose, took some oil, and poured it on the stone which he erected for an altar. What a trifling sacrifice in commemoration of so great an event! Lord, Thou dost no longer make use of a ladder to unite earth to heaven; the tabernacle is the centre where Thy majesty conceals itself, where Thy love reposes amongst us. If monuments were now required to preserve the memory of the mercies which have issued from this sanctuary, how could I, poor, weak creature that I am, declare to future ages Thy unspeakable mercy? And what comparison can be made between the favours granted to me at Thy holy table, and those which Thou didst confer on Thy patriarch Jacob? He was permitted to behold Thee for an instant at an almost infinite distance; but, for me, not only do I perceive Thee, but I am really united to Thy Divine Majesty, before which angels veil their faces and adore. What shall I do, then, O my Jesus, to show my gratitude for so great a gift? I will continually remember Thy sacred presence; this is the secret of sanctity. I will offer up to Thy glory all the actions of my daily life, and I will venture, in uniting them to the merits of Thy sufferings, to offer Thee this humble testimony of my gratitude.

V. *True Love produces perfect Union.*

When we communicate holily, we place Jesus Christ in our inmost heart of hearts, and we receive His Spirit with His life. The just men of old participated only in the grace of God, but I have partaken of His grace, His love, even of His Divine substance! What influence will it exercise upon my life? If I really love Jesus Christ, I shall not be satisfied with *receiving*, I shall *give* to Him in my turn. At the holy table we learn to impose upon ourselves *sacrifices* for the God whom we love.

Lord Jesus, after a good and holy Communion, I ought to manifest Thy life in mine. Alas! I dare not think that Thou couldst recognise any of Thy works in those so imperfectly performed by me. I have perhaps attempted to imitate Thy poverty, or, by the help of Thy grace, I have had sufficient courage to endure my wretchedness, and to refuse some satisfaction to my body; but what progress have I made in suffering humiliations? where are my efforts to acquire humility? The world and my self-love fill me with desires of being respected and admired; my vanity easily persuades me that I am superior to other people; my whole being rises in indignation when I receive a reproach or reproof, and I am sad and depressed when the course of events, or my own weakness, causes me to be depreciated, or set below the level of my companions. Ah, Lord, I know little of true humility; the world has still too much hold upon my soul; I still long for pleasures. Art Thou not, then, sufficient for me? I desire to love Thee, and confess my offences against Thee. Give me grace to comprehend these words, left us by a saint: "Let me consider, with serious attention, Jesus Christ and the world." Of these two distinct objects, the first, which shall be my eternal reward, raises me up to the enjoyment of perfect love; the other, which will cast me down to the lowest depths of misery, is not worthy that

I should sacrifice to it my happy eternity, nor even the pure joy of a single Communion.

Conclusion.

Remember that Jesus, in quitting His Apostles, left them, as a heritage, labour, suffering, and tears; and you ought not to desire a better fate than that of the best friends of our Lord. The spirit of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is still the same in our respect. He has placed Himself in the tabernacle in a state of humiliation, of annihilation, and of death. It is not in order that we may always enjoy the continual sensible blessing of His presence that He does this; but He becomes to us our Hope, our Strength, our Life. Let us, then, seek less for consolation in Holy Communion, than for grace to have our hearts filled with love to our Lord, and for strength to suffer courageously for His greater glory, which must always be our ultimate aim.

Examine into the nature of the motives which lead you to the holy table. Does not a secret self-seeking mingle with them, a desire for sensible consolation? Discourage this feeling, which is not sufficiently pure or free from self-love. It is a weakness which you must endeavour to surmount. Being raised up in Holy Communion to a supernatural insight into heavenly things, descend not from this eminence; but let it serve as a standing-point to enable you to serve God more effectually.

TENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

CELESTIAL GIFTS.

Preparation.

IN the Holy Eucharist, Jesus Christ gives us without reserve, together with all His merits, His Body, His Soul, His Heart, His Mind, His Divinity, in all its glory. Meditate upon the greatness, the holiness, and also upon the object, of these precious gifts, in order to have part in the advantages communicated to those who receive them into a pure heart.

I. *"If thou knowest the heavenly gift, My child, this gift is the virtue of My wounds."*

Thou dost speak these words secretly to the soul that enters into Thy sanctuary, O Jesus. How often hast Thou not pronounced them in vain, when I came with a distracted mind, a heart agitated and disturbed by so many passions, that it hardly contained one thought of adoration, regret, or love! "My child," then saidst Thou to my soul, "if you knew that you were about to receive the forgiveness of your sins, consolation for your sorrows, support in your weakness, peace in troubles and anxiety, and complete remission of all your errors and ingratitude, could you be so indifferent? This gift, full of so many graces,—it is the gift of Myself, your God, who loves you, and who ardently desires your salvation.

Yes, my Saviour; I believe that all these tender feelings towards me are united in Thy merciful heart. Until now, I have been weak, cowardly, selfish; but Thy grace has shown me the excellence, the sweetness of that gift, which angels adore, while it stoops to solicit my love. What more magnificent, more precious gift can I possibly desire than the sacrifice of Thyself? I

come to receive this sacred gift, my Jesus ; but one glance at my unworthiness would prevent me from accepting it, if Thou hadst not already granted me complete forgiveness. I am guilty of a great abuse of Thy graces ; for, notwithstanding the bright light of faith which illumines my conscience, I have *often* committed voluntary offences against Thee ; but Thy Blood is a salutary stream, which restores the innocence of my soul. Having renounced my sins, I must next forget and detest the world. "If any man love the world," the Apostle tells us, "the charity of the Father is not in him." Sheltered in Thy sacred wounds from the temptations which so often threatened to lead me astray, I shall find strength to quit the deceitful paths of vanity and pleasure, to enter courageously upon the path pointed out in the Gospel ; for "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Thee, is not worthy of Thee" (Matt. x. 38). In remembrance of those whom I loved in the world, and for their salvation, I will make a sacrifice of my dearest ties ; I will continually give up myself ever more and more, that I may taste the fulness of Thy gift ; I will bear patiently the wounds inflicted upon my heart ; and, in proportion to its entire separation from every thing that is not Thee alone, will be its close and intimate union with Thyself.

Prepare me by penitence and recollection to receive this great gift. From the moment that Thy grace enlightens the soul, O my Jesus, she feels the necessity of separating herself from every thing that can be a barrier between herself and Thee. When should I feel the greatest desire to be separate from the world, if not in the happy moment when I aspire to the blessedness of receiving Thee ? Thou dost not delight in noise and agitation. As a saint has expressed it : "Thou dost only *pass through* the dissipated soul, because the peace, the purity, and the virtues in which Thou takest delight are kept and guarded in *retirement*." O my Jesus, grant me grace no more to employ myself in worldly affairs,

except in so far as it is necessary to do so in order to fulfil my duties and to accomplish Thy holy will. When Thy heavenly Father offered to Thee the thorns, the nails, and the Cross, Thou didst accept them all. I accept also from Thy heart all the trials and sorrows which weigh down my life ; it suffices me to know that Thou hast chosen them ; I gladly resign myself to Thy will.

II. *“If thou knewest the heavenly gift, My daughter, this gift is My love.”*

O Jesus, teach me in Holy Communion how great Thy love for me has been. Teach me to repose in Thee in all the circumstances of my life, to have no disquietude as to the morrow : the reason for this confidence shall be my confidence in Thy love. The Holy Eucharist, which veils Thee from my eyes, is not heaven, but yet it is not earth ; it is the most precious of those graces which console and sanctify our pilgrimage. I require both faith and love to approach Thee under these veils ; but when I possess Thee, I no longer require any thing but love. I desire ardently this heavenly Bread, my only food. Give me grace to conform all my actions to my faith, and to animate them by interior acts of every virtue ; especially of hope sustained by prayer, of charity accompanied by submission, of fervour, and of resignation to the Divine will. These are the proofs of love which Thou dost expect to find in my heart when Thou dost fill it with the real, though secret, joy of Thy presence. When at a distance from Thee, my soul dwells in an immense void : for, if she cannot measure the extent of Thy perfections, her faculties inform her that nothing short of the Infinite can fill her with peace.

III. *The Cross a Mystery which the World is ignorant of.*—"If thou knewest the heavenly gift, 'My daughter, this gift is My Cross.'"

Who are they that seek for and appreciate Thy Cross, O Lord? are they not those who adore Thee in spirit and in truth, whose number upon earth is so small? I should have been ignorant of the value of this inestimable gift, if Thou hadst not made it known to me. Recall to my mind the ardent desire Thou hadst of suffering. Recall to me Thy Passion, if Thou wouldst encourage me to follow Thy steps. Thou hast sacrificed all for me, O my Saviour; and wouldst Thou not reproach me with cowardice, were I to shrink from the life of crucifixion which was Thy portion on earth? I cannot forget that this Thy life of suffering began in the manger at Bethlehem, and that it ended upon the Cross of Calvary. Suffering is an infallible mark of Thy love, but my nature dreads it. My God, the remembrance of Thy mercies requires me to accept submissively the bitter cup which Thy providence appoints. I will not refuse the cross which Thy hand has blessed before placing it upon my heart. I abandon myself with confiding and filial resignation to Thy will, which decrees this suffering to me.

IV. *"If thou knewest the celestial gift, My daughter, this gift is My heart."*

The last gift we receive from the hand of a dear friend is an embodiment of sweet and tender remembrances, and our affections are strongly fixed upon it. Thus, then, O Jesus, having given to the world Thy person in the Holy Eucharist, and Thy life upon the Cross, Thou hast left us Thy heart laid open with the lance as a last pledge of love. There was, then, more love in the gift of Thy heart than in the others which Thou hadst already bestowed upon us.

In giving me Thy heart, Thou didst include in it all

Thy treasures. In Holy Communion I first began to enjoy them ; from that time I forgot the world, and my eyes were irresistibly attracted to the tabernacle.

In giving me Thy heart, Thou didst make it my refuge. The soul that is penitent, and humbled on account of her faults, is received into it with tender kindness, and Thou dost encourage her to correct the imperfections which she is apt to fall into from weakness. To console me in my troubles, and to strengthen my hopes, leave me ever Thy heart, always so sweet and gentle, that nothing else on earth can approach it, nor recompense us for its absence.

In giving me Thy heart, Thou dost desire to make me live with its life ; to create the closest relations between Thyself and my soul ; to unite me to Thyself in thoughts, desires, and affections,—according to Thy word : “ He that receiveth Me, shall live by Me” (John vi. 58). O my Jesus, throughout my life I have vainly sought for a friendship entirely pure and holy, worthy to be blessed by Thy heart ; it was Thy will that all my affections should be centred in Thee ; Thou hast, then, loved me very much, since Thou hast obliged me to preserve all my affections for Thee alone. How dear to my heart would be the friend that should sympathise in all my sorrows, be afflicted in all my griefs ! But dost Thou not say to me in the Holy Eucharist : “ Pour thy sorrows into My bosom, for I alone can console thee with Divine tenderness” ?

In the moment, so soon to arrive, when Thou wilt give me Thy heart, vouchsafe to grant the ardent prayer which I address to Thee, with the disciples at Emmaus : “ Abide with me, Lord ; depart from me no more.” I implore from Thy love the crowning grace of final perseverance ; I will ask for it at every Communion, and till my latest breath. Come, O my Jesus, and dwell with Thine humble handmaid, until the day in which Thou shalt recall her to be united eternally to Thy Divine heart.

V. "*If thou knewest the heavenly gift, My daughter, this gift is Myself.*"

Yes, I believe it ; I am going to receive my Saviour and my God,—my God, the Source of all power and greatness ; my Saviour, by whose wounds I am healed. If the sight only of those wounds drew from Thomas, with a cry of love and joy, the confession of Thy Divinity, with what feelings should I be inspired by the happiness of actually possessing Thee ! I do not touch Thy wounds as the Apostle did, but I will carry them in my heart ; and, with a faith not less lively than his, I will exclaim : " My Lord and my God ! I believe that Thou art here present in the Blessed Sacrament. I believe it with a calm and constant conviction, which could not be instilled into me by any force of reasoning, or by the natural powers or desires of my heart."

I will then say, in a spirit of profound humility and penance, with great sorrow for my faults : " My Lord and my God ! I am not worthy to receive Thee ; before Thee lie open the pages of that awful book wherein all my actions are inscribed ; and in that long catalogue how many sins have I to deplore ! But Thou art the Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world ; may *my* sins be blotted out in Thy most precious Blood !

My Lord and my God ! I shall soon exclaim before the Sacred Host ; for it will bring to my heart the mystery of Thy celestial gifts, which are overflowing with forgiveness and love.

" My Lord and my God !" —these words, of which the sense is impenetrable to the worldly or dissipated soul, can only be comprehended by the soul that *loves*. I shall never be weary of repeating them during my life. I will say to all eternity : " Come, my Lord and my God !"

Act of Thanksgiving.

Remain for some time in silence and profound abasement before God, and as it were in an ecstasy of

admiration. This is the God of heaven; let me adore and fall down before Him.

After this, naturally succeeds the feeling of your own nothingness. You must rejoice that you are nothing, but give yourself freely—offer your nothingness; let it conduce to the glory of God.

Unite yourself to the praises of the saints and angels in heaven; heaven itself is opened to give us the God of the Eucharist. Bless and praise Him for such a wonderful favour. *Deus meus et omnia!*—"My God and my all!" Enjoy the fulness of Divine grace.

Then follows the act of thanksgiving: *Quid retribuam?*—"What shall I give?" All that I have, and myself wholly. Behold, in the simplicity of my heart, I come to offer all that I possess.

It is better to exhaust one feeling, than to pass several over superficially in seeking to increase their number. But you must always thank our Lord for the great blessing of the Incarnation; for His precious gift of grace, which is the fruit of His Blood; for the institution of the Holy Eucharist. Thank Him for causing you to know Him, while such an immense number of souls know Him not.

After this, ask with confidence for special graces. Enter into particulars with Jesus. Since the source of every perfect gift is in Him, what could He refuse you, when He has given you Himself? Here you require great confidence. Lay open your most secret wants; ask for personal graces—courage, zeal, final perseverance; and first of all ask Him, with redoubled earnestness, that you may love Him ardently, solely, during the remainder of your life. Finally, like the disciples, you must say to Him, *Mane nobiscum*—"Remain with us."

I. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist: the Body of Christ.*

Formerly, the priest, in presenting the Sacred Host, only pronounced these words: "THE BODY OF JESUS

CHRIST." But how many things are contained in this expression!—all the benefits of the Incarnation, all the merits of the Cross, all the love of the Holy Eucharist. This word recalls at once the profound abasement of our Lord—His sufferings, His perpetual oblation. It is like making an engagement to suffer, to mortify our senses, to be urged by love to enter the path of reparation. Jesus Christ loses the very appearance of life in the Sacred Host, that He may teach you to destroy your self-love by a spirit of interior detachment, which will leave no principle of life remaining in your sensual nature. O Jesus, when Thou dost condescend to enter into my soul, I believe, I hope, and I love. When I reflect on the gift which I receive, I could desire to reiterate these acts as often as I draw my breath. Rejoicing in the possession of a favour unknown to the world, it is sweet to me to repeat how much I love Thee. Increase Thy love in me, so that it may surpass every other feeling. Notwithstanding the trials with which my life is thickly strewn, I prefer the gift of Thy sacred Body to every other consolation. Thou knowest, O my God, that it is not in Thy gifts, but in Thyself, that my soul rejoices. When I have communicated, I have nothing more to fear, or to desire—my Beloved is mine, and I am His.

In giving Thyself to me, in a state of such profound abasement, Thou dost teach me humility and self-abnegation. O Jesus, give me grace always to think lowly of myself: I wish to resign all pride of intellect and worldly pretensions. I will follow Thee in the path of suffering and contempt, if such be Thy good pleasure; *loving to be nothing*, or to be counted in the number of those few souls who are secretly crucified with Thee.

Thou dost choose to appear upon the Altar in a state of apparent death, in order to present to me a picture of complete detachment: I ask for grace to die each day to every thing that I ought to resign for Thy sake, and to live in a state of complete interior separation from every

thing I still possess. At the hour of Thy death, Thou wast deprived of every thing but Thy crown of thorns, which Thou didst reserve in order to suffer still more; and to continue, even to the tomb, the mortification of Thy sacred members. Do Thou then destroy in me, by degrees, the spirit of the world, which is hateful to Thee, by uniting me for ever more closely to Thyself.

II. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist : the Blood of Jesus Christ.*

This adorable Blood, which is contained in the Sacred Host, recalls, in a peculiar manner, the death of our Lord, which was the supreme effort of His love; and our sins, which *caused* it. Holy Communion should accomplish in us a kind of death, which is deprived of all its terrors by the presence of Jesus. Upon the Cross, His human nature was immolated by sorrow, and His Soul, by His Father's forsaking Him; thus forming a double sacrifice, to which we must direct our hearts with lively gratitude,—for the Holy Eucharist is a Divine testimony and promise that we shall never be forsaken like our Blessed Lord.

What a consolation to think that you are in possession of the price which you cost Almighty God! Consider this thought deeply—it will fill you with love to our Lord. Present to God the Blood of His Divine Son, and, with your will fully determined to the sacrifice, say with St. Paul, “I die daily”—that is to say, *with Jesus Christ*. Accept, O my God, this sacrifice, this renunciation, this act of mortification; take my life—I am Thy victim: and as the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ was the consummation of His sacrifice, so a courageous determination in the practice of mortification will consummate your own. In this consists the practical adoration of the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist : Celestial Glory.*

After Holy Communion, we are generally too happy to think of Jesus in His sufferings—it is more natural to consider Him in His consolations. The glory of God is no longer a stranger on earth, since it has shone upon the Holy Eucharist. Jesus has given Himself to you in the splendour of His Divinity, which is veiled in the Sacred Host. He has deposited within your soul the germ of that Divinity, which shall develop itself when it shall be disengaged from all earthly bonds. In the depths of your heart He seems to say : “ Will you still cling to the dust and ashes of the world, which passes away ? If you knew the gift of God, you would lose all taste for created things, and your soul would give itself entirely to God, who comes to reveal to you the nothingness of the world.”

O Lord, my natural weakness could not raise itself to the contemplation of Thy beauty ; but, enlightened by faith, which is a ray of Thy Divine Majesty, I venture to lift my eyes unto Thee ; and yet, remembering that when Thou wast on earth Thou hadst not where to lay Thy head, this extreme poverty of Thine affects me more than the contemplation of Thy glory. Permit me not to regard earthly possessions with the least affection ; but, considering them as a trust deposited in my hands, for which Thou wilt call me to a severe account hereafter, I will use them for myself with moderation, but will bestow them liberally upon the poor.

I bless Thee, O my God, for giving Thyself to me with such magnificence. I am not less grateful to Thee than if Thou hadst opened heaven to my sight. I have it already in Thee, and I am sure that I shall never lose it, except by my own fault. Happy in the possession of Thee, I only desire to possess Thee always ; for St. Augustine tells me that “ Thou givest Thyself in order to give Thyself more fully.” If, then, I receive Thee with so much fulness in this the extremity of my misery, what

will it be when my Communion is multiplied, and when Thou shalt finally appear in all the splendour of Thy Divinity ?

IV. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist : the Graces of Jesus.*

You trust your life to the word of a man whose talents or knowledge inspire you with esteem and confidence ; and will you not, then, abandon yourself without reserve, for time and eternity, to Jesus, who shed His last tear upon the Cross for your salvation, and gives you the last drop of His heart's Blood ?

My God, Thy pierced heart speaks eloquently to my soul, and teaches it that Thou dost still desire to be united to it in sorrow, mortification, and patience. This union with our souls, begun upon the Cross, is continued in our hearts ; in which, by Thy grace, it grows and increases in the midst of trials and sufferings. Yes, Lord, according to the designs of Thy providence, strike my heart—it is thine : may Thy will be accomplished, not mine. I know that sacrifice is a participation in Thy Passion ; make it, then, habitual to me in the midst of the sorrows of my life. I should grieve Thy Divine heart if I became unfaithful to my act of thanksgiving after this Communion, since it is still Thyself, O my God, who comest to me under the veil of the Cross, as Thou comest also under the appearance of the Sacred Host.

Thou dost behold the number of my wounds, Thy Divine glance penetrates their depths ; Thou alone, most powerful Physician, canst apply to them an effectual remedy : and even if I have still much to suffer in order to recover the purity of my soul, spare me not, I beseech Thee. My nature trembles in offering up this prayer ; but when the blessing of Thy presence enlightens the abyss of my wretchedness, can I fear when I behold its profundity diminishing ? No, Lord ; act for me, since I am not capable of making a courageous

effort: the unction of Thy grace will support my courage, and Thou wilt conquer my cowardice and my opposition.

V. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist: its Consolations.*

Jesus Christ has given Himself to you that He may fill up the void of your soul—whether it be that death has made it the grave of all your earthly hopes, or that the sorrows inseparable from our pilgrimage here below have pierced you with their agonising darts. When suffering from loneliness, be careful not to let your mind fall back upon itself, so as to find the chief interest of life in selfish considerations, to the prejudice of true charity.

I grieve over past events: I dread the future, which is in the hands of God, and which my weak intelligence can never foresee or alter. The sad reflections of my mind, and its feeble conceptions of the great truth of Eternity (which would convey to it a consolation superior to any to be derived from created things), lead me to forget that this earth is an abode of tears. The thought of heaven gave such strength to a mother, whose heroic courage is praised in the Holy Scriptures, that she endured to see all her children put to death before her face. When her six eldest sons had been cruelly tortured and executed, turning to the youngest, she encouraged him to die with his brother-martyrs, using these words, worthy of the spirit of Christianity, which was not yet revealed: "My son, look up to heaven."

And I, Lord, who have received more than heaven in Holy Communion, shall I not find, in this Divine gift, strength to sustain the battle of life, and to undergo its sad trials and separations with courage and generosity? Thou dost say to my heart, as once to the widow of Nain: "Weep not." Without restoring my loved ones, Thou dost dry my tears, and Thy mercy assures me of their eternal happiness. I trust their salvation to Thy sacred heart. I place them in that fountain

of immortality. United to Thee, my Jesus, can I ever again complain of the sacrifices Thou dost require of me, or say they are too painful? No, Lord; Thou hast bruised my heart; but I love Thee more than any thing. I will frequently review this act of love, because nature is always prone to fall back into her old faults, and to place limits to her resignation to Thy holy will. And my sufferings are so great, that sometimes my courage fails me. Grant that I may find true consolation in seeking Thy glory; and that, in proposing it as the aim and end of all my actions, I may apply to other suffering souls the merits attached to my works by Thy grace.

VI. *The Gifts of the Holy Eucharist: the Love of our Lord.*

In Holy Communion, His treasures are opened to you; do not fear to draw from them with confidence: but never forget that Jesus bestows His gifts upon us in proportion to the capacity of our hearts. If He finds them closed up by earthly affections, or entangled in a crowd of secret attachments to the things of the world; He will only communicate Himself with reserve, or, as it were, parsimoniously. He feels Himself fettered in this abode, where His operation is circumscribed. We must be very careful to banish all voluntary imperfections, and to free ourselves courageously from *every thing* that can displease Him. Oh, what rich treasures are lost by the soul that is unfaithful to grace! Amassing worthless trifles, she neglects the precious gifts of the Holy Eucharist; whereas, if Jesus found her prepared to receive His favours, He would fill her to overflowing with His graces. Enter into the spirit of our Lord's charity, and, by your fervent prayers, obtain for others a share in the blessings which He so richly bestows upon you. My hope is in Thee, O my God. Thou dost save all those who implore Thy compassion. I beseech Thee for the souls of all those who are dear to me, for those who have need of conversion, that they may be moved

by effectual grace, and may lead truly Christian lives, or attain to such a death as is precious in Thy sight. Thou art within me, with Thy hands filled with graces, and Thou art ready to bestow them on every suppliant. I present to Thee not only the necessities of my own soul, but I solicit with confidence the blessings necessary for all those for whom I ought to pray. Assist the Church efficaciously, in the person of its visible Head, its Bishops, its clergy; protect all Christian missions, and grant that all the erring nations may be brought back to the true faith. I recommend especially to Thy Divine heart the intention which I proposed to myself in this Communion; vouchsafe to bless it, and grant that it may serve for the accomplishment of the designs of Thy greater glory.

Conclusion.

Reflect upon the excellence of the union which is effected between our Lord and your soul in Holy Communion. It is the greatest and most perfect union possible, for Jesus compares it to that which exists between His Father and Himself. Examine and sound the depths of this word: "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). It is not an accidental union, but a continued union, with God, that we receive in Holy Communion; for this word of our Lord indicates much more than a mere development of graces—it means the cause and the production of life in you. Jesus Christ is, then, really, in the Holy Eucharist, the Principle, the Rule, the Model of your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions. He is, in a word, the Centre of your life. But to render this union complete, you must coöperate in it, and Jesus Christ must be the object of your thoughts, of your desires, and of your affections. Then only you will be able to add with the Apostle: "Jesus Christ is my life." What immense consolation this thought gives to the soul that duly comprehends and enjoys it!

ELEVENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE BREAD OF THE DESERT.

Preparation.

LEARN to gather up carefully the smallest facts in the sacred books. "A few words from Holy Scripture contain a profound meaning," says St. John Chrysostom. Even one word, well understood, is often enough to reform and direct our life. Apply the following words to the reception of the Holy Eucharist. You will see the Prophet Elias, submissive to the will of God, flying from the anger of an irreligious queen; and, in the wilds of the desert, Providence becomes his guide, and an angel supplies him with nourishment. The world is this desert, and the Holy Eucharist is the sacred manna which sustains and guides the Christian in his pilgrimage.

I. *The Fatigue of the Journey.*—"Lord, it is enough; take now my soul."

This bitter complaint, too common among souls still weak in virtue, resounded unanswered in the desert. The Prophet, thinking himself abandoned, asked for death to relieve him from his sufferings. Could he have fallen into this state of discouragement if he had known the Holy Eucharist?

As the days and years of our life pass by, the void around us increases; to the heart's affections nothing replies save indifference, forgetfulness, and death. Soon weary of that sad journey called life, we heave a mournful sigh, with an instinctive, involuntary impulse, which God does not reprove; but one glance towards the tabernacle restores to the soul her strength, to the mind her confidence. We are never deserted. The Divine

intimacy formed between Jesus and the soul in Holy Communion takes away the bitterness from the sense of isolation. Have I not felt this a thousand times?

My soul, O Lord, is always a wanderer here below, because sin, like a terrible enemy, pursues her ever from place to place. My days are solitary in the world, and, as if from the desert, my complaints ascend to Thy heart. "I have looked around me, but there was no one; I have sought, but found no comforter." Cast down and sad, I had no sooner called upon Thy name, than Thou didst descend into this path of my life, and Thy words, "Behold thy Saviour!" revived my joy and my courage. I adore Thee at the Altar, under the veil which conceals Thee from my eyes; but come again to me, and come continually; Thy presence will satisfy all my desires.

II. *Providence in the Desert.*

Meditate upon the manner in which God nourished Elias during his flight, and you will find it an admirable storehouse of reflections suitable to your preparation for Holy Communion.

As long as the Prophet is not at a great distance from the world, God sometimes feeds him by means of birds, which bring him bread and meat—common articles of food, which represent the first graces accorded to a sinner. At another time, it is a poor widow who has only a handful of meal and a little oil remaining: this is a figure of the soul withered by the corrupting breath of the world, which has dried up the fountains of grace within her, and suffers her only to draw a feeble life even from Holy Communion. It is not until the moment when, completely separated from creatures, Elias abandons himself entirely to the direction of God, that heaven opens, "an angel descends," touches him, to arouse and restore his worn-out courage, and offers him a loaf of bread baked on the ashes. Mysterious image of the Holy Eucharist, which operates only in proportion to

the degree of detachment from the world to which the soul has attained !

Lord, I acknowledge with thankfulness that, during the whole course of my life, I have received the most touching proofs of Thy kindness. For many years my passions supplied me with coarse and unsatisfying pleasures ; then, feeling, by the help of Thy grace, the vileness of this unworthy food, my soul, like a poor, desolate widow, deprived by sin of her celestial Spouse, turned towards heaven, which at first seemed deaf to her cries, and lived for many days upon the bread of affliction and the solitary oil of repentance. But at last—oh, consoling remembrance !—the tabernacle was opened, and the Bread of celestial life, superior to any earthly aliment, was presented to me. Again I come to implore this heavenly Bread ; never can I cease to desire it, never can I weary of receiving it.

III. *Providence as displayed towards ourselves.*

The visible protection which was extended by God at different times to the Prophet, displays in a wonderful manner His tender love to those souls who resign themselves to His care and leading. Hardly any person, in reviewing his past life, can fail to recognise, by certain marks known perhaps to himself alone, this ever-beneficent operation, whose unlooked-for aid sets at nought all our calculations, calms our uneasiness, and shows us practically that God provides for our wants with universal liberality.

Let us, then, be penetrated with the deepest gratitude for such a grace, too soon forgotten. Be on your guard against distrust in perils and temptations. Review, with a lively feeling of thankfulness, the dealings of Providence with us. By how many hidden ways, full of sweetness, has it attracted me, kept me back from sin, preserved me from a thousand dangers, and at length attached me firmly to Jesus Christ!

O Jesus, I am a barren land, that will yield no fruit

without Thy benediction ; if there is any thing good in me, Thou hast planted it there ; if I do a little good, the will to do it is inspired by Thee. Thou dost prevent me always by Thy grace, without the help of which I should pass my life in avoiding labour and mortification, and in seeking repose. "There is not in the whole world a sin which I am not capable of committing," said St. Austin. Therefore, to avoid these dangers, I attach myself humbly to Thee. I resign myself wholly to Thy good Providence, and, cutting off every thing that might hinder my progress in the path of life, I implore Thee to give me, in this Communion, grace to enable me to follow in Thy steps. Consider my wants, bestow upon me Thy Spirit, to sanctify my sorrows, and enable me to practise all virtues. Hear the voice of my desires ; I sigh for the happiness of receiving Thee.

IV. *The Appearance of the Angel.*

An angel approached the sleeping Prophet: an image of the peaceful soul, disengaged from the interests of the world, and confiding blindly, as it were, in God. To this privileged soul, Jesus Christ does not content Himself with sending human aid, nor even the care of angels : He comes Himself to her assistance. At all times she can say with David : "My God, Thou hast remembered me, and Thou dost never leave those who love Thee." I can by these marks recognise the dealings of God with my soul ; but have I lost sight of all earthly interests, and resigned myself wholly into the hands of our Lord ? Examine yourself quietly on this head.

My God, whenever the priest elevates the Sacred Host at the Altar, is it not still Thyself, who, descending miraculously in the morning of my days, and seeing a cloud of sadness upon my brow, dost whisper gently : "Be consoled, My child ; I hear the sighs of the broken and repentant heart, which obeys My voice : My love shall never fail thee ; as a mother consoleth her child, so will I console thee" ? And these tender words are accom-

panied by acts of paternal kindness, which I remember with deep affection. I will not distract myself by seeking to forget my sorrow ; I will no longer be solicitous about temporal things ; but I will raise my eyes to Thy sacred heart, which ever watches over me, and whose help is ever ready when I call.

V. *The Viaticum.*

Exhausted by fatigue, the Prophet received from the angel a loaf baked on the ashes ; he eat it ; but when his hunger was appeased, he fell asleep again : for this earthly food did not bring to his heart the Divine strength—the real and substantial presence of his God. He hardly thanked the angelic messenger, and possibly neglected the remains of the celestial gift.

Such is the soul that contents itself with an outward divorce from the world ; she proceeds with a certain regularity of conduct towards heaven, but she only offers the husk and shell of her will to Jesus Christ. She appears to practise certain virtues, but her interior life is in a slumber resembling that of death.

Such, also, are the Communions of a soul which does not courageously do battle with her passions. We cannot become virtuous unless we have an energetic determination to conquer ourselves. All our passions must be sacrificed when we seek Jesus. Self-sacrifice then becomes our first duty. But this entire self-abnegation is just as rare amongst those persons who flatter themselves that they are seeking perfection, as great passions are common in the world.

Ought I not to be afraid of resembling those persons spoken of in the *Imitation*, who resign themselves at first to God, but, at the first temptation they encounter, return to themselves, and make no further advance in virtue ? My soul, if it avoids the battle, as they do, will acquire no merits for eternity. Lord, it will profit me nothing to separate myself from the world, if I weary of interior combat and strife. My love of ease is ruining

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me. Always negligent in the work of my salvation, every one of my actions displays the lukewarmness and the apathy of my mind. My self-love is in despair at the sight of the necessity of resigning my own will. Arouse my faith, fill me with fear and confusion in beholding my daily forgetfulness of the promises I made on first entering Thy service. Had I not received a special grace from Thee, O my God, my understanding would not have known Thee, my heart would not have loved Thee,—for Thou Thyself dost work all Thy works in us: “Of myself I can do nothing.” When I approach the holy table, make me to resign myself entirely into Thy hands. May the sacrifice be perpetual; and, casting away every earthly possession, may I die to myself, that I may live to Thee alone!

VI. *The Return of the Angel.*

“Arise, and eat,” the angel said, when he returned and aroused Elias. How many impressions are made by Divine grace upon the soul, before she can be rendered capable of approaching Jesus Christ with true purity of heart! An especially precious grace is that which is granted to us in our youth, when God calls the soul either by the secret grace of purity, or by the attractions of Holy Communion. But she does not always reply to this first appeal; then the Divine enlightenment of grace discovers to her, one by one, the illusions of the world, to detach her from pride and sensuality, and to attract her to a more perfect life in the sight of God.

This time—oh, happy thought!—was that of the awakening of my soul. I was aroused to feel its supernatural life; I heard the voice of our Lord, who said to me: Arise quickly, give up your old habits, shake off the chain that binds you. In the midst of the tears of repentance, I comprehended the necessity of combating the pleasures of vanity by modesty, of egotism by charity, of vain complacency by humility. I soon enjoyed the

blessedness of the Eucharistic feast. Can I ever forget the brightness that then arose upon my soul?

The victory is not yet gained, O my Jesus; my courage would long ago have failed me in the long and weary battle, hadst not Thou pressed me tenderly to repair my strength by eating of that sacred Bread which makes us conquerors in the strife with sin and weakness. I must have constant recourse to Thee, or I shall be vanquished. When my soul is cleansed and purified by Thy most precious Blood, with what sweet confidence shall I not approach the Bread of life! Then, kissing Thy sacred feet, bathing Thy pierced hands with tears of joy, I arise to approach Thy table. Lord Jesus, complete in this Communion, by the love of Thy sacred heart, the work commenced by Thy mercy.

VII. *The Journey in the Desert.*

The angel reminded the Prophet that he had not reached the end of his journey, and that he ought to recruit his strength for the way: "You have still very far to go."

This long journey, which we all have to make, is to eternity. Its duration is uncertain; the path is unknown to me; but its termination is God, the object of my faith, my hope, and my love. Eternity! the impenetrable abyss towards which my heart still aspires, guided by the torch of faith!

My strength would fail me, O Jesus, if I were deprived of hope; if Thou didst not, with Thine own hand, smooth this path of trial to my weary soul. But the hope of Holy Communion, one glance towards the tabernacle, suffices to restore my courage. I see before me the path to heaven, stained with Thy Blood; but my weak spirit trembles at the sight of the thorns with which it is strewn: therefore I hang back, my faith fails, I am overcome by the difficulties of the way. Notwithstanding this weakness, O Lord, forgetting the past, looking forward to that which is to come, I seek, with

St. Augustine, fascinated with Thy beauty, that eternal felicity which the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, which the heart of man is not able to conceive; and, constrained by the attraction of Divine love, I open my heart to Thy sacred presence,—and when it enters into my soul, I am at rest, I receive some foretaste of future beatitude.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Let me contemplate Jesus Christ in me with adoring respect and love, and strive to worship Him with as much reverence as do the angels who surround Him; and in the midst of my fervent gratitude for His sacred presence, let me remember how far I am from that purity which the saints have brought to His holy table.

Let me forget all the affairs of the world, every created being; for what earthly business is comparable in importance to the duty of thanking and praising Jesus for all His mercies? Finally, I will say with St. Paul, Henceforward, who shall separate me from the love of our Lord? Who shall hold me back in the path to perfection? Who shall restrain my will?

I. The Fruits of this heavenly Bread.

Strengthened by this food, Elias walked forty days and forty nights without stopping. These simple words express the fruits of one good Communion.

1. Holy Communion nourishes the soul. "Thou feedest the poor," said the Prophet-king, meaning the meek and humble souls who are admitted to the chaste delights of the Holy Eucharist. Elias, being really poor, was fed with miraculous bread, which was only a figure of the true heavenly Bread. In retiring to the desert, he left all to seek after God. Am I ready to sacrifice every thing for Jesus Christ?

I seldom enjoy consolations, I suffer from painful desolation, because my soul receives the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ with a mixture of desires and regrets

totally unworthy of occupying her at such a time. Every thing ought to give way to Jesus Christ. Let me implore Him that my heart may not be like the sacred vessels, which always contain Him, and yet are never united to Him.

2. Holy Communion strengthens the soul. If the bread given by the angel sustained the Prophet during his long journey, what strength ought I not to receive from the Body of Jesus Christ! This strength should enable me to follow Him every day without weariness, fear, or discouragement. It will give me that calmness without which we cannot walk securely. My hope shall be sustained by the constant sight of God. In Him I shall find whatever I can wish for, expect, or love.

3. Holy Communion makes our perseverance certain, through humility. The mysterious bread of the desert "was baked upon the ashes."

O my Jesus, Thy beauty is hidden in the tabernacle under the form of bread ; Thy power, under apparent annihilation ; Thy grandeur, under the littleness of the sacramental veils ; and Thy glory is concealed in my inmost heart. In my turn, I will now hide my life under the shadow of Thy mercies. Blessed be Thy holy name for the faith by which I am enabled to believe Thy words, for the hope by which I contemplate the eternal blessedness of heaven, for the charity with which Thy sacred presence influences my heart. Yes, my God, I adore and love Thee. When shall I know the happiness of satisfying myself fully at Thy holy table ? When shall my long-exiled soul be able to aspire continually to heaven, without seeking any repose here below ? Lord, hasten that moment, strengthen my failing steps, and grant me true and lively gratitude for all Thy benefits.

II. The other Effects of this celestial Bread.

With what great confidence and resignation did Elias direct his steps to the holy mountain, to which he was summoned by the Divine will! He never considered himself; he thought neither of the past nor of the future, nor of the dangers he might possibly be exposed to during his complete isolation in the desert. He sees only God, he listens only to His voice, and goes ever forward. What an example of trust in God's providence! After Holy Communion, can we possibly find it hard to imitate it? In that fatiguing journey which is to end in heaven, I may say with the Apostle, "I know in whom I have trusted." I will follow Him without a pause until that day when He shall bid me sit down in the place of His repose. I shall not travel alone; Jesus Christ in me shall gently direct all my steps. Leaning upon Him, I sigh, and mournfully repeat: "How long is my exile? Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly away to my repose in the bosom of my God?" O my Jesus, I desire that my feelings during my act of thanksgiving may be occupied exclusively with Thee. Let no other thought, no frivolous ideas, enter into my mind. I will no longer be an egotist, or give myself to Thee with reservation; but, confiding my whole being into Thy hands, walking circumspectly through the world, as if I were walking over quicksands which might at any moment open and swallow me up, I will look steadfastly towards heaven; thither, to the hour of my death, shall all my thoughts and affections be directed. Grant that I may attain to the summit of that heavenly mountain where Thou dost reign in eternal glory. The reward Thou hast prepared for me in those heavenly abodes surpasses all my desires, and it is more than worthy of my most ardent endeavours.

III. *Conversation with our Lord.*

God speaks first, and the Prophet listens attentively to His voice: "What dost thou here, Elias?" Meditate upon this simple interrogation in the presence of Jesus Christ. Has not Jesus often spoken to me? How many pious aspirations and lively solicitations of grace have I not received from Him after Holy Communion! What dost thou here? He says to me. Having fed you with My own Body and Blood, where are your feelings of adoration and love? What are you doing for My glory, or to gain souls to Me? Where are your resolutions and good works? If I look back upon my past life, our Lord may still say to me: What have you done up to this time to advance your own salvation—to avoid falling into sin—to escape such a danger, or such an occasion? What virtues have you practised? By what efforts and by what prayers have you prepared for this Holy Communion? O Lord, I am humbled and ashamed in Thy presence; I have not a word to answer; I am wretched and miserable; but I trust in Thy mercy, ever ready to grant me blessings—in Thy mercy, which inspires me with the desire to seek Thee, and which also conducts me to Thy feet. I can do nothing, it is true; but I hope for salvation through Thy free and gratuitous mercy. A stranger and a pilgrim in this world, I pitch the tent which shelters my indigence under the shadow of Thy tabernacle. The life to come is my only true life; I receive thankfully from Thy hand the privations, sorrows, and tribulations of my exile here below, and I accept them as so many gifts of Thy love. When my weakness sinks under the load, I will make my complaints to Thee alone; and my chief desire is that Thy will should be accomplished in all things. For many years I have served Thee without fervour of devotion; but I consecrate to Thee this day, which has been sanctified by Thy presence, and with it all the days and years which it may please

Thee hereafter to grant me in this mortal life. I know that man does not live by bread alone, but by Thy word. I dedicate to Thee my freedom, my powers, my desires; I implore Thee to teach me how to be silent; that I may hear Thy voice—to humble myself, that my confidence in Thee may be increased and strengthened; and how to bear the yoke of Thy commandments, in conformity to the designs of Thy glory.

IV. *More Conversation with our Lord.*

Listen to the answer of Elias: "I am burning with zeal for Thee, O Lord my God." These words, pronounced before the institution of the Holy Eucharist, were spoken with reference to the Christian soul offering up her thanksgiving after Holy Communion. They express the feelings of a generous soul which is penetrated and subdued with a sense of the goodness of God. My lips have repeated this cry; but my actions, alas! have too often disavowed it. Ever occupied with the thought of our salvation, Jesus Christ speaks to us from the Altar, where this zealous Lover of souls is all too seldom sought by His people. "The harvest indeed is great; but the labourers are few." This loving complaint shall awaken me from the sleep of self-love and carelessness. Who should burn with zeal for the salvation of men, if not that soul into which the Blood of Jesus Christ is infused—that Blood which was shed for our salvation? "The glory of man," says St. Bernard, "consists in this, that the Eternal Word conceived so great a desire for our salvation." Now, in partaking of this desire, we unite ourselves with the object of the Incarnation—we glorify God with Jesus Christ. Can there possibly be any thing more desirable in this world than to labour for the glory of God, whose great love for souls cannot annihilate the rigour of His justice? I could not propose to myself a more noble aim, a greater object in life, than that for which our Lord has striven during eighteen centuries. To aid me in this effort, He gives

me, in the Holy Eucharist, all that He is, and every thing He has received. "I have given them the glory which Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 22), He said to His Father. Surrounded by the glory of Jesus Christ Himself, shall I not desire earnestly to continue His work? and can I leave Him to deplore my inaction and want of energy?

O my Jesus, who dost in Holy Communion condescend to come down even to me in Thy glory, I will strive ardently to advance Thy glory amongst men. I can do nothing; but I will offer up to Thee, for their salvation, my tears, my greatest sufferings. Happy shall I be if Thou permittest me to suffer with Thee: it shall be my glory in the sight of Thy holy angels. By my sufferings, united to the merits of Thy Cross and Passion, I give more glory to God than I can by any other action.

If the glory of Jesus consisted in the sacrifice of Himself to His Father's will, and in His continuance of this immolation upon the Altar and in my heart, my glory must consist in immolating myself with Jesus, in completing in my own person His marvellous sacrifice, and in rendering again to Him the glory which He gives to me. Surely every worldly thought must be effaced from my mind during my act of thanksgiving, if it be absorbed in such a consideration as this!

V. *The Generosity of God.*

Jesus desires to leave me some precious grace as the fruit of His union with my soul. Like Elias to his disciple, He says to me: "Ask Me whatever thou wilt, that I may grant it before I depart from thee." If the Prophet, who was only a man, set no limit to the requests of the friend whom he desired to console in his absence, our Lord, who is infinitely powerful, will set no bounds to His favours, if I solicit them with simplicity and confidence. In receiving my prayers, Jesus will not exclaim with the Prophet, who felt his

want of strength in himself, "You have asked a hard thing." Nothing is impossible to the goodness and mercy of our Lord. Oh, what happiness is ours, to serve a Master who is almighty, who sets no limits to His liberality but our own desires, and who says to me daily, with the same generosity, "Ask what thou wilt, and I will grant it thee"! If I obtain little, it is because I desire little, or that I ask feebly; for the charity of Jesus is as unchangeable as His Divinity. I need never fear that my prayers for the conversion of sinners can offend our Lord, or that my entreaties, however reiterated, could weary the Divine tenderness and patience of His sacred heart.

VI. *Confiding Prayer.*

"Lord, may a double portion of thy spirit rest on me!"

This double spirit, solicited with a boldness which might at first sight appear excessive, was the gift of prophecy and of performing miracles. It was granted, accompanied by a trifling condition. The disciple's persevering love and fidelity was the secret by which he obtained this great power. Such delicate fidelity touches the heart of Jesus. His fatherly regard follows with love and approbation the patient and persevering efforts of the soul that seeks Him. Lord, as I fear to lose Thee, and cannot hope to preserve Thy presence always, I will imitate this fervent disciple, grieving over the loss of his Master. I beseech Thee to grant me also a double spirit. Thy Spirit is infinite; and the capacity of my mind is limited. Not being intended to shine exteriorly, I beg of Thee to leave me the spirit of humility, to abase me in my own eyes; and the spirit of zeal, to animate me to good works, without exalting me in my own sight or that of others. I do not easily forget my past good deeds, and, instead of regarding them as gratuitous favours received from Thee, I imagine that I have performed some service that merits a reward. I blush

for myself, O my God; and, notwithstanding this, when I call my past life to remembrance, have I never said or thought, "I have done such a thing for Thee, O Jesus, and Thou hast not rewarded me"? Oh, when shall I love Thee with a generous love! When shall I serve Thee in a disinterested manner, solely with a view to Thy glory! May my present resolution bring forth fruit in my future life!

VII. *The Fruits of Holy Communion.*

The petition of Eliseus was granted at the moment in which a whirlwind of fire carried away his master from his side; for he did not lose sight of Elias when he was carried up into heaven. In losing his master, he received his spirit. If I keep my thoughts and my heart steadfastly fixed upon Jesus, I shall preserve His Divine spirit of grace and charity, and I shall employ it in doing good in my own immediate sphere of action.

O Jesus, withdraw not Thyself from me, for all things without tend to separate me from Thee: distractions assail me even in retirement, and cause me to lose Thy favours by turning away from Thee the eyes of my soul. Eliseus took up the mantle of his master, and preserved it carefully; but I, Lord, have more than Thy vestment, for I possess Thy heart. Leave me this precious gift, so that, in this short moment which I pass near to Thee, and which perchance may be my last, it may bestow upon me the double spirit of lowliness and generous devotion—a celestial heritage, which I devoutly implore as the fruit of this Communion.

Conclusion.

He who communicates frequently should keep a strict watch over himself. The account he will have to render will be more severe in proportion to the amount of the favours and proofs of love he will have received. Far from seeking after pleasures, he ought carefully to avoid all dissipation, and whatever may bring him into

too frequent intercourse with the world. He should live like an angel of God, ever attentive to the eternal Eye that beholds him, and to whom must one day be rendered a strict account of his thoughts, words, and actions. Dwelling always in God's sight, could he be otherwise than recollected in prayer, exact in the fulfilment of duties, faithful in the practice of humility, patience, gentleness, detachment from the world? Can he easily be betrayed into lukewarmness, or rest in a state of sin? Let me consider whether these virtues, or the opposite faults, are depicted in my conduct; and let me make sincere and practical resolutions on these heads, subject to the advice of my director.

TWELFTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE TABERNACLE.

Preparation.

THE universe contains within itself so many wonderful and admirable things, that it appears to be the sanctuary of the power of God. The earth, which is the abode of the Holy Eucharist, would appear a kind of terrestrial paradise, if we were capable of appreciating that precious treasure. The tabernacle of our churches is its abiding-place—it is, in very truth, the throne of God, and the privileged place of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Tabernacle under the Old Law.

In former days, when Moses had constructed the ark of the covenant, God exhorted all Israel to contribute towards it by voluntary offerings, forbidding any gift to

be made by constraint. His intention in so doing was, that His people might testify their love to Him by their willingness to contribute of their worldly possessions. We all know how they responded to the Divine appeal. The tabernacle was not the *abode* of the Divinity, it was only the place in which He deigned to appear from time to time ; and yet, with what riches and splendour was it not surrounded ! With what reverential fear did not the people approach its sacred precincts !

The Church has erected magnificent structures to surround with glory and beauty the Bread of which the Son of God has said, " This is My Body." What rich attire and ornaments of virtue do you bring with you to Holy Communion, in which you are made the living throne of the God of heaven and earth ?

Lord, Thou hast surrounded my life with Thy gifts and mercies, attaching to them this obligation only—the duty of praise and thanksgiving. Above all things, Thou dost desire me to give Thee myself. I can withhold this gift,—but in doing so I should commit a great injustice, for nothing is more truly Thine than my whole being—it is Thy conquest—Thou didst redeem it, after creating it also, by Thy almighty power. But how imperfect is this gift ! Is there, at this very moment, in my heart some secret victim which I am endeavouring to withhold from the flames of Thy love ? Ah, Lord, take all, burn all, and deign to come Thyself into this living tabernacle, formed in Thine image, placed in the centre of Thy creation, as it were the masterpiece of all the works formed by Thy mercy and Thy power, and enrich it with the ornaments of Thy grace.

II. *The Tabernacle of the New Law.*

Long ages ago, the Word of God assumed our human nature. He took our weakness upon Him. He dwelt among us. But this was too little to satisfy His heart : before His death should arrive, He wished to draw us closer still. Listen to His last desire : " Come, My

children ; sit down at My table with Me." "Take ye all and eat of it," He said, in giving us a mysterious food ; "*this is My Body*." And afterwards He added these words : "Behold, I am with you all days, even till the consummation of the world." Then it was that the sanctuary arose, His dwelling-place here below. In asking of us an asylum upon earth, does not our dear Lord desire one still closer to us, even an abode in our hearts ?

Thus, then, the tabernacle in our churches is the last link in the chain which binds the whole creation fast to the throne of God. It does not contain, like the ark of the covenant, the perishable records of the past mercies of God ; but it really encloses the living God—the Creator of heaven and earth. Wonderful and ineffable truth, which thrills every truly Catholic heart ! My human intelligence and imagination combined could never, in their highest flights, have conceived the idea of power and love like this. After having said all that my mind can suggest on this subject, I feel that I have said nothing in comparison of what still remains to be told ; and yet what loneliness and silence surround the tabernacle—that throne of grace, in which the majesty of greatness is effaced by love, and which is yet the abode of the greatest beauty and the greatest perfection that God can produce—THE HOLY HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST !

If He should measure our faith and love by the ornaments we lavish upon this blessed abode, might He not conclude, alas ! that those virtues did not exist in our hearts at all ? When we think of the outrages He patiently submits to endure, can we dare to believe in the presence of the God of armies, in whose presence the Cherubin tremble and adore—before whom Moses, too, was overcome with fear, and covered his face reverently with a veil ? The faith of the Patriarchs, and their fervent desires, will one day rise up in judgment against us. Their desires had no centre upon earth ; but I can

repose my thoughts and my heart upon the tabernacle, in which abides my God ! His love will not suffer me to repeat the complaint of the Prophet, " O my God, wherefore art Thou far from me ?"

And still my soul does not burn for Him with that ardent love which consumed the just men of the old law, in expectation of their Saviour coming. Shall I, then, value the *possession* of a benefit less than its *promise* ? I am always permitted to enjoy Thy presence in the sacred tabernacle, and these Patriarchs only asked for the momentary appearance of a Redeemer. Where is my faith, and where my love ?

O my Jesus, I have been sad sometimes at the cloud which encompasses Thy majesty ; but, oh, how I love the obscure abode in which Thy presence makes itself known ! I am not always near Thee ; and my thoughts, without wandering away into regions unknown to our weak understandings, can find Thee with certainty on this earth. I adore Thee under the sacramental veils, surrounded by the angels, whom I love above all the faithful, because they alone, since the institution of the Holy Eucharist, have not ceased to pay it perpetual homage and adoration. Like them, I desire never to leave Thee, and I would share in their veneration and love.

III. *The Door of the Tabernacle.*

I see around the tabernacle but few of the attendants in the court of heaven ; few prostrate themselves before this throne of love. Few come to speak to Jesus Christ ; few desire His glance to rest upon them ; few invoke His mercy. And, notwithstanding this, since Jesus Christ still continues to reside amongst us, there must be *some* souls who desire to receive Him. " Open your heart," He says, " and I will fill it." Nothing is more capable of reviving our love than the sight of the tabernacle—of that *little door*, through which our Lord issues with so much love to give Himself to us in Holy Communion.

If you communicate frequently and holily, your soul will shine with the rays of Divine grace. The more frequently you approach the Fountain of light, the more brightly will your soul shine with its reflected rays. Purity ought to shine brilliantly around the tabernacle of God.

Think of Jesus, and He will think of you. Make the knowledge of His greatness increase in you, and you will grow in His love. Follow His inspirations, and He will fill you with light. Watch at the door of the tabernacle, and He will show Himself to you. If you are so happy as to be seeking Him sincerely, you will find Him.

Lord Jesus, by men too soon forgotten and too little known, "I stand at the door and knock," aspiring to the blessedness of receiving Thee. Love is the burden which sweetly retains me before the tabernacle, *amor meus, pondus meum*. I desire, with St. Augustine, to contemplate Thy beauty; and Thou concealest Thy face from me, that my love may become stronger and more powerful by the greater exercise of faith. Together with my prayers, Thou dost expect me to coöperate with Thee, by labour and sacrifice, to extend Thy worship in this world. And since Thy love finds consolation for our ingratitude in redoubling Thy goodness and favours to us, I will never approach the tabernacle without joining my poor efforts to that impulse of Divine grace which draws the souls of men to the threshold of Thy throne of mercy.

IV. *The living Tabernacle of Jesus Christ.*

The material tabernacle, around which the angels adore the Holy Eucharist, is the image of that which our Lord wishes to build for Himself in my heart. Jealous of His undivided dominion there, He said, long ages before my birth, "My child, give Me thy heart," not choosing that the smallest interval should elapse between my first dawn of reason and the gift of myself to Him. If I inquire why Jesus Christ sets so much value

on a gift so infinitely small, I am answered, that it is because He was able to create heaven and earth with a single word ; but that, in order to obtain my love, it was necessary that He should suffer and combat, even to the shedding of His Blood. Can I any longer wonder that He desires to retain a possession so dearly purchased, so hardly won ?

The object of Jesus Christ, in obtaining possession of my heart, is to sanctify it. In fact, is not sanctity the *passion* of every soul in which our Lord takes up His abode ? and does not every soul which has become the living tabernacle of Jesus Christ seek to encourage and sustain this noble passion, at the expense of all the rest, by mortifying every earthly desire ?

Do I behold in myself the altar of the Lord, the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit, *a place of sacrifice*, an altar upon which the incense of continual prayer is appointed to ascend before the Divine Majesty ? Do I consider this altar with respect, fearing to profane it by dissipation ? Have I not, on the contrary, reckoned up an alarming number of faults which have defiled it ? Do not my prayers, wanting in fervency, too often ascend to heaven like a smoke without perfume ? Having a possession so valuable, so desirable, to our Lord as my heart, my fidelity to Him must always consist in preserving it pure and intact for Him alone.

O my Jesus, does my heart appear to Thee as a holy place, of which Thy Spirit is the light and the life ? Oh, if it is not so now, grant that it may quickly become so. The thought of receiving Thee into my heart increases my desires and my love. The Cross is the sacred fuel which shall maintain the flame of my love in perpetual activity. May the contact of Thy Divine heart cause it to burn ever more and more brightly ! May I have no soul, or spirit, or thought, or affection, or intention, or desire, save for the most Blessed Sacrament ; and may my aspirations and prayers ascend continually before the tabernacle !

V. *The Call to the Tabernacle.*

To be called by Jesus!—what happiness! But where does He desire me to go? Is it simply to appear in His presence with His courtiers? How graciously soever He receives me there, He proposes something more than this: He invites me to sit down at His table. It is not, then, I who invite my God to partake of the cup of my misery—it is God who summons me to the sacred feast of eternal life; and such is the happiness with which He surrounds me, that the shadow of the eucharistic veils appears to be dissipated in Communion, so transparent are they rendered by faith and love. “Come to Me,” He says. If He did not love you, He would not seek to bring you nearer to Himself, to listen attentively to your prayers, to authorise your confidence by a benevolent familiarity. Come, then, to Jesus, and He will give Himself to you; for the bread He will give you is His Flesh, and the eucharistic wine is His precious Blood. Engrave deeply in your heart the likeness of His virtues, and He will engrave your name on His sacred heart.

O my Jesus, I hear Thy gentle call, and I desire to follow Thee all my life long, until I enter into Thy glory. Speak Thou the word which shall decide my happiness. Come, and after that nothing will be difficult to me; it will neither be hard to leave this world, nor to deprive myself of all that I possess, nor to renounce my dearest affections, nor to embrace a life which is poor, humble, hidden, full of bitterness; because every thing is easy to those who believe in Thy word, and trust in Thee. Listen to my humble supplication, and may the sweetness of *Thy* Divine heart make an impression upon *mine*!

VI. *The Emmanuel of the Tabernacle.*

Jesus Christ in His mortal life was ours. Jesus Christ in His immortality is ours still. In the taber-

nacle we have the pledge of these precious possessions. He is immortal, and He bears the marks and characteristics not only of His mortality, but also of death itself. He gives Himself to us in this state, in order that we may comprehend that every thing He has merited by His death, and all that He possesses in His immortality, is our heritage. Make your Communion under the influence of this thought. The necessary disposition of mind to receive in a worthy manner the Divine Emmanuel, is the desire to correspond to the gift of Himself. But in what manner must we correspond to it? By purity and love. If I had the love of God in my heart, it would not be empty nor divided. It would be no longer empty, for God would fill it; it would be no longer divided, because, like St. Paul, I should have one feeling only—the love of JESUS CHRIST. I love Thee, O God, who art ever with me; I love Thee with all the love of which I have too long deprived Thee. Having loved, in creatures, perishable things, instead of the beauty they derive from Thee, I love Thee now in that which is eternal, that is to say, in Thy perfections, which my heart and mind enjoy above all things. I love Thy entrancing beauty, of which a ray shines forth in the tabernacle. In Thy holy Humanity, appears our future beauty, and the glory with which it will be hereafter crowned. But how I love the bitterness of the Holy Eucharist, and its humble obscurity! There we behold the wisdom, goodness, and tenderness of Thy sacred heart, not only in a figure or heavenly remembrance, but in a sweet and present reality, which I am about to receive in my heart.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Forget all created things; heaven is opened, and God the Father casts down a glance of love upon the Body, the Blood, the Soul, and the Divinity of His Son, which He beholds in you.

Adore your Saviour and your God, in the company

of the angels and the saints. Close the door of your heart, which has now become the tabernacle of your Beloved. Converse with Him in this little retreat—nowhere else can you enjoy peace so profound.

I. *The Repose of the Holy Eucharist.*

It is no longer from the world that Jesus demands an asylum, it is from you. He dwells in heaven, and, as once in the womb of Mary, He dwells in your heart, without being separated from His Father. "He is made flesh" to redeem your soul. He becomes the Sacred Host, to nourish it; and yet He dwells in the bosom of God, to be the delight of angels. Jesus is in the centre of your soul, says St. Theresa; but *perhaps you are not there*. Have you experienced the blessed truth, that one moment passed with Him in the adorable Sacrament is far preferable to long years of worldly pleasures? This day it is you that receive *Him*; but at some other time, perhaps very soon, *He* will receive *you* into the eternal tabernacle, and will give you to enjoy in *Him* the repose which He now takes in *you*. *There*, in the bosom of God, are peace and joy unchangeable—*here*, the Holy Eucharist gives us a foretaste of joy, accompanied by labour and trial; in heaven, an eternal abode, with perpetual repose—here, in the tent of our pilgrimage, a fleeting consolation only: and yet, after Holy Communion, we can hardly speak of faith,—the shadow has hardly any existence; the Divine light shines upon us, and excites our desires, as the thought of Jerusalem caused the exiled Jews to sigh and weep in a foreign land.

I behold my God in heaven, in the tabernacle, in my inmost heart; the certainty of His presence strengthens my hopes of everlasting bliss.

My soul, restless and eager like a caged bird, always looks forward to the morrow, in the hope of attaining rest. But there is no repose save in Thee, O Jesus. What activity does Thy love display in the midst of per-

fect rest! A word from Thee was sufficient to create the world out of nothing; another sufficed to unite earth and heaven in the Holy Eucharist. If, then, one word was sufficient to unite, by a mysterious force, two extremes so far distant from each other, is it not because this word was the expression of Thy power and love? Here below, all the separate parts of our being are united closely together by the force of cohesion which they derive from Thee: an admirable figure of the union formed between Thy holiness and my misery by Holy Communion, and of the peace of which it is the centre. Oh, may I never lose the Divine influence of this precious union, in the hurry of worldly affairs, which too frequently distract my soul, and take me away from Thee!

II. *The Mediation of Jesus Christ in the Tabernacle.*

You have arrived, perhaps, at a period of your life in which you are no longer called upon to choose between the pleasures of time and the path of eternal life, but only to submit patiently to present trial, while expecting the realisation of your hopes of eternal bliss. Sorrow, under some form or other, has touched your soul, your heart, your spirit—in a word, it overshadows your whole existence. You are, then, most specially called by Jesus to the repose of the tabernacle. Holy Communion will bring you a truce to your sorrows, with sure hope, if not consolation. The heart of Jesus will become the mediator between heaven and your conscience. His operation may be unperceived amidst the storm of your passions, or the hurry of worldly business; but you will easily learn to recognise it when aided by the light of grace. How wonderful is His power! Listen to Bossuet; he says, "In order that a heart may be in a condition to advance my cause with God, it is necessary that its greatness should bring it near to the majesty of God, and its love draw it down to us." "For if its greatness," says a pious author, "did not enable it to approach God, it could not draw

from the Fountain of all graces; and if its kindness did not bring it down to us, no benefit would flow to us from its influence. Greatness, then, is the hand which receives; kindness, the hand which gives.

Lord Jesus, I am very far from Thee, through my own fault; and yet Thy wonderful goodness never wearies in traversing the distance which separates me from Thy greatness. I do not bear within me those characters of light and life which should initiate me in some degree into this mystery of love. Fill my heart with hope and courage. I am not created for a little happiness, but for the possession of a complete felicity. Enable me to profit by this ineffable gift, which unites Thy precious Blood to mine, Thy heart to mine, Thy holiness to my misery. Thy life will bring with it truth, liberty, and love into my soul. It is, then, impossible that I should hope or ask too much; for I bear within me, in the fragile earthen vessel of my body, uncreated Perfection, which has descended so low in order to raise me up to heaven: so that I can imagine nothing too great or too beautiful when I think of it, nor any happiness too great for me in eternity.

III. *The Devotedness of Jesus in the Tabernacle.*

True self-devotion consists in giving oneself to another person; consequently, it is to forget oneself entirely, in order to watch with constant care over the interests of the persons beloved; it is to foresee or turn aside the dangers which threaten them, to appropriate their sorrows,—in a word, to consecrate one's whole life to the happiness of another.

Consider each of these characteristics; and in studying the heart of Jesus in heaven, on earth, and in the tabernacle, you will find them all united in a degree quite beyond human comprehension. From all eternity He said to His Father, "Behold I come" for man's salvation. He thought of you long ages ago; He has never forgotten you, in spite of your ingratitude, your frequent

falls. When He dwelt on earth, His life was consecrated to your instruction, to preparing the means of your sanctification. In the Upper Chamber, it was still for you that, in consecrating His adorable Body, He said : "Do this for a commemoration of Me." You know whether His eucharistic presence has failed even for a single day since its institution. On Calvary, He died for our sins ; and, as you offend continually, He expiates your sins continually upon the Altar. He cannot immolate Himself more, but He perpetuates His sacrifice ; He extends its benefits to you ; He renders it present to your sight ; He incessantly applies to you the merits of His sufferings.

Is it possible to conceive of a self-devotion more complete, more universal, more tender, and more efficacious ?

Lord, my life would not be long enough to enumerate all the proofs of Thy self-devotion. I give Thee thanks for Thy goodness, for Thou art the foundation of my joy and my salvation. My heart has been defiled and wounded by the strife of the stormy passions of my youth ; but now, like a wanderer returned from long and weary travels, it awakes to peace and happiness at the tabernacle, the centre of light and love. May every fresh effort that I make bring me nearer to Thee, and separate me eternally from those souls who blindly live for themselves alone ! Thy light and Thy grace are ready to descend upon all ; but who will receive them ? Alas ! I am often ready to hesitate between the world and the tabernacle, only because the latter is surmounted by Thy Cross. I ask Thee, as the fruit of this Communion, that Thou wouldst sustain me in my efforts to recover my right to heaven, by transforming myself into Thy likeness, and that I may, in my turn, assist by my prayers and zeal in the work of redemption. Yes, Lord ; united to Thee, I accept the Christian life,—that is to say, self-devotion in its fullest extent,—as it is exhibited to me on Calvary and in the Holy Eucharist. Make

Thou my life a perpetual sacrifice, to which Thy grace may respond by a succession of benefits in this life, and at last by a crown of glory in heaven.

IV. *The Language of Jesus Christ in the Tabernacle.*

After the Last Supper, Jesus conversed with His disciples. Never had He spoken more divinely; never had He used more tender language.

The accent of His voice in the tabernacle is no less persuasive, and His most secret language is perhaps also the most touching. It is sweet indeed to converse with our Lord after Communion, because our thoughts meet and rest upon His love.

“What matters it, when you are with Jesus Christ, whether He speaks to you from amongst flowers or thorns, provided that He *speaks?*” says St. Francis de Sales. His voice is heard only in the desert, in silence, and in the absence of creatures. Sorrow creates this desert, and Holy Communion fills it up. How many souls hear the voice of our Lord, sigh vainly in their chains, but make no effort to shake off the attractions of pleasure and sensuality, in order to reply to it! Thou hast long, O my Jesus, been speaking to me by the sorrows of my life; but Thy accent, full of tenderness and love, softened the severity of this language. Trials are necessary for my sanctification. Whatever may occur, I determine to bear my daily trials courageously. Since my heart is the altar on which the sacrifice of Thy love must be accomplished, it shall also become, if such is Thy good pleasure, the altar on which shall be completed the sacrifice of my own will. O Jesus, who has had more experience than I have had of the tender care which Thou dost bestow upon the afflicted soul? Like the Prophet, I have stretched out my arms to Thee all the night long, and I have not been deceived. The night is the time which we pass at a distance from the tabernacle, removed from the sweet influence of Thy paternal smile. But shall I add: “My soul has refused all con-

solation; I have sought Thy love alone"? Have I not, on the contrary, to confess to Thee my desire to seek some consolation from creatures? And yet Thou dost console me frequently; Thou art my strength and my consolation in the Holy Eucharist. Look down upon me in Thy mercy, and may Thy Divine inspiration fill my soul with courage, humility, and goodness, and conform me ever more and more to Thy likeness!

V. *Our Lord's Life of Love in the Tabernacle.*

Love is the necessary condition of life. No soul can live unless it is in some degree united to God. But our Lord in Holy Communion is our *true life*. The soul increases in growth by especial graces. Love expands the soul, that it may receive an increase of life. The Holy Eucharist enlarges our being, that we may become capable of eternal life. It is consoling to love our Lord practically, for "Charity," says St. Peter, "covereth a multitude of sins." Sweeter still is the consolation of living for Him—of loving Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. If the life of the soul is infinitely more precious than that of the body, I must strive earnestly to maintain it: consequently, I must have a very ardent desire of Holy Communion, which makes me live by Jesus Christ. If I communicate worthily, it is impossible that His life should not increase in me. Formerly, the Israelites considered it a special privilege to be permitted to pitch their tents as close as possible to the ark of the covenant. Let me aspire with earnestness, not to dwell near a material temple, but to set up the tabernacle of our Lord in the centre of my life—to lose my own life in that of Jesus Christ, mysteriously united to my being. I can take fire from a lighted torch as often as I will, without in the least diminishing its light. Thus also in Holy Communion I continually imbibe fresh life from the heart of Jesus, without diminishing the living flame. Life in this world is a continual separation: each day I bid adieu to

a happier one that has gone; every one of my footsteps towards the future is a painful detachment from the past. The present would seem to me a hopeless void, were it not for the sun of the Holy Eucharist, which comes to dissipate the clouds of sorrow from my heart. I rest near our Lord, enjoying the repose of my sweet union with Him, and looking forward to the time when nothing shall separate me from Him for ever.

Grant, O Lord Jesus, that I may experience the truth of those words of the Prophet: "They shall be refreshed in dwelling under his shadow; they shall eat of the purest wheat" (Osee xiv. 7).

Feed me often with Thyself, O true Bread of life, and never banish me from the vivifying shade of the tabernacle. Thy love shall be manifest in my life by miracles of sacrifice—the victory of the Holy Eucharist over self-love. Thou hast given me Thy holy angels to guard my short existence on earth, but Thou alone dost nourish and sustain my soul, Thou alone canst expiate my sins, and make satisfaction for my frequent ingratitude and abuse of Thy benefits. I have eagerly pursued the objects of my desires; I have sought them anxiously,—but I have never been satisfied; for even the realisation of earthly wishes can never fill the heart. Communion alone can confer upon us a perfect life, by satisfying all our desires. I have received Holy Communion; but even this blessedness will pass away: and, with Thy departure, my peril returns. O my Jesus, my heart must be changed in order to change my life. Grant, then, that the rays of Thy grace may ever shine brightly in my heart, that I may retain more fruit from this Communion than a mere remembrance of Thy love, and a feeling of sorrow for my negligence. Give me such fervour as may retain Thee in my soul. May Thy presence reign in my soul, and cause her to feel the consummation of her happiness in the consummation of her love!

VI. *The Sufferings of Jesus in the Tabernacle.*

If the love of Jesus receives a sweet consolation from our love, His heart also suffers a mystical grief, which exceeds all other grief, from the desolation of His sacramental life. Ask your heart, which, amongst all the varied sufferings it is called upon to endure, is at once the bitterest and the hardest to bear patiently? Is it not isolation and loneliness? And when this isolation is caused by a forcible separation from those whom we love, when our union with them is hopelessly destroyed, does this not cause us a grief of the most bitter and inconsolable nature? Such, then, is the perpetual suffering of the heart of Jesus in the tabernacle. In fact, He has united Himself to our souls by the strongest possible feelings, even Divine love; by the closest alliance, that of sanctifying grace; and, with a great number of souls, He has further entered into the most perfect union of all, that of Holy Communion. It is in the intimacy of the Holy Eucharist that He really becomes the Spouse of the Christian soul. How often does He see this holy alliance broken and profaned, and the soul, unfaithful to the sacred contract of His love, departing from Him without regret! Who can tell the sorrow of our Blessed Saviour's heart? This sorrow has lasted every day, every instant, during eighteen centuries. How much has your life contributed to this cup of bitterness and desolation? What consolation are you giving Him at this moment? Answer with sincerity. How many weeks, months, perhaps even years, has not our Lord called you, waited for you, invited you, to participate more frequently in the heavenly banquet! How often have you passed the threshold of His temple with an indifferent, distracted mind, not giving one thought to His sacred presence, or rendering Him the homage of your heart! And yet His tender glance was fixed attentively upon you, followed you continually, and His heart, overflowing with love, sighed and mourned over your sad forgetfulness. You are the

spouse of our Lord: has not His Blood sealed the contract which cemented this Divine union ?

O Jesus, permit me to believe that there still lives on earth one heart which thinks of Thee, one which forgets not all Thy benefits ; and the love with which Thou hast inspired it, is the sure token and guarantee that it will never henceforth forget Thee. While too many pass the threshold of the sanctuary, ignorant of the God who dwells there, of that Divine heart which seems to entreat from them a passing glance, a loving thought, I esteem myself happy that Thou hast shown me the light of the star of the tabernacle, and that Thou hast condescended, as Thou once did to the disciples at Emmaus, to open to me the meaning of the Holy Eucharist. Thou hast opened it in order to pour upon me the treasures of Thy grace, by Thy tender love and pity to dry the tears shed in solitude, and to make my soul a partaker in Thy sacrifice, by the communication of Thy own life. In thus resembling Thee, I shall find my heart overflowing with gratitude for this Thy incomparable self-devotion. I will endeavour to console Thy sadness by my zealous affection ; and, if I cannot prevent Thy suffering, I also will suffer at Thy side.

Conclusion.

If you were really faithful to grace, your union with our Lord in Holy Communion would be a commencement of heavenly felicity. Even for saints, heaven is not now on earth ; for here below, the purest soul can only perceive her God through the eucharistic veils: but she can always approach the tabernacle, and preserve an ardent and constant love of her Blessed Lord. Let yours be thus invariable.

THIRTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

SEEKING OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Preparation.

THERE are in every soul two attractions, or distinct desires. One of these comes from God, with the sentiment of our former greatness; this is aspiration after virtue. The other expends itself upon surrounding objects, with the intention of enjoying them *personally*; this is the aspiration of self-love. The first, by the influence of grace, elevates us towards God; the other, by the indulgence of the natural feelings, abases us towards created things, or absorbs us in self-love. Hence there arises either strife between these two attractions, or a too common mixture of love for God and desire of earthly things. This is the cause of the state of trouble and confusion which we frequently find in ourselves. Jesus Christ will assist us to conquer these efforts of nature, that His grace may reign in us alone.

I. Seeking Jesus Christ with the Spirit of Faith.

HAVE I ever seriously reflected on the act of faith which I repeat so often before Holy Communion? I believe, O my Jesus, that I am going to receive Thee. "To believe simply in Jesus Christ," says St. Augustine, "is to communicate;" for it implies that we adhere to Him by faith, and are incorporated with Him by love. But with what faith do I regard this real union with our Lord? Take care that you do not accustom yourself to recite formulas of prayer without entering into the spirit of them.

My God, wilt Thou not fill me with a lively, sweet, and penetrating light, with those darts of flame which excite our love? Thy goodness has prepared sublime gifts for me, which I can lose by my faults alone. To

know Thee, O Jesus, is my greatest desire, and I cannot love Thee unless I know Thee ; and how can I receive Thee worthily, if I neither know nor love Thee ? Thou demandest my heart, though Thou well knowest its inconstancy and hardness. Soften it, O Lord, by a clearer view of Thy beauty, by a more lively feeling of Thy love. The time of Communion draws near ; oh, prepare me for this solemn moment. O Lord, shall it come when I am not thinking of my happiness ? Wilt Thou descend upon the Altar, and wilt Thou not first fix the regards of my soul upon Thee ? Thou callest me by Thy Cross, and by the adorable Eucharist. May they both sustain in me the life of faith and the practice of good works, that my union with Thee may be rendered more intimate and complete !

II. *Seeking Jesus Christ with Detachment.*

We endeavour instinctively to charm those who live around us, forgetting that Jesus, in the tabernacle, is the Centre of the universe, the essential Centre to which every soul ought incessantly to bring the gifts she has received, whether they be natural or supernatural. Renounce these desires of occupying some place in the thoughts and hearts of creatures. Complain no more of their indifference ; for our Lord, with a Divine jealousy, requires you to seek after Him alone, and He forbids you to extend your affections in any great degree to those around you. Remain hidden in the secret place of His heart, and carry the thoughts and feelings which you desire to communicate to His ear only. The affection you bestow upon yourself, or on any creature out of God, is stolen from Him. The whole labour of the spiritual life is caused by this double attraction of Jesus Christ and of ourselves ; the one can only gain ground at the expense of the other. It is in this incessant warfare—where the soul, weary of the combat, must, as Bossuet says, draw life and breath from the wounded Side of Jesus Christ—that we must seek the Divine Consoler.

If I examine the nature of my desires, I shall, in fact, acknowledge that the objects of my ambition are like grains of dust driven about by the wind, or drops of water soon to be dried up by a burning sun; and that, in the pursuit of these *nothings*, I am wearing out my intellectual powers. The law of God forbids me to fix my heart upon terrestrial things. But am I free from all inquietude about those events which might possibly deprive me of my little possessions? Am I ready to give up to my neighbour, in his necessities, the small provision I have made for my own future needs? Am I forming no projects of surrounding myself with splendour or comfort,—for providing against the possibility of some future privation or discomfort? Am I not seeking unnecessary ease or luxury? The freedom of the heart, so necessary for us if we wish to approach our Lord, consists in the cutting off all desires of earthly things. Do I possess this liberty? “You are dead,” the Apostle said to the Colossians, in explaining to them that they ought to bury in the waters of baptism their inclinations, their desires, their habits, their ambition, and to render their life a continual preparation for eternity. O my Jesus, I desire to die to every thing that separates me from Thee; for the Christian soul should make no difference between her preparation for Communion and her preparation for eternity: both lead to Thee; only the latter brings me to Thee, never again to depart from Thee. These words, “Be ye always ready,” are now heard from the tabernacle in tones of tender love, of sweet invitation to my heart. I will respond to them, with a salutary fear of Thy holiness, as to the call which shall one day burst like a thunder-clap upon the universe. Grant me grace that I may be always ready to communicate, and ready also to die. Come, O Jesus; “The farewells are spoken,” I would say, with St. Francis de Sales. I desire to receive from Thy hand the last stroke which shall complete my sacrifice, the stroke which shall add to

my soul one more feature of resemblance to Thy Divine image.

III. *Cutting off whatever keeps us at a distance from our Lord.*

I must examine myself seriously as to my inclination for worldly pleasures, which is always very strong in a soul that thinks little of the presence of God, and is little affected by the consideration of that Divine beauty which we are commanded to love with our whole heart. The constant satisfaction of our senses makes a wall of separation between Jesus Christ and the soul. Then we are compelled to say to our Lord, with St. Augustine, "No bond separates me from Thee, and yet I am far from Thee. Thou art very near to me, and yet I am distracted by earthly things. Which will gain the victory?" You will gain it in Holy Communion, if you say, with Jeremias, Lord, I have forgotten Thee during innumerable days; but it is over: I take refuge in Thy mercy—an impenetrable and safe asylum. Another obstacle to complete union with our Lord is pride, which has such power over our weakness, that it effects the ruin, and even digs the grave, of the soul. Humility is so repugnant to the nature of man, that he could only learn it from the mouth of God Himself. Are you ignorant of this sublime knowledge? Confess your vanity, your presumption, your haughtiness, your independence,—which are the detestable fruits of pride, appearing in every action of your life. Consider this seriously. How frequently do you criticise your superiors, pass judgment upon their actions, disapprove of their projects, discuss their opinions! What authority you wish to exercise over your equals!—exactng from them respect, consideration; assuming superiority over them, in respect of education or acquirements; engrossing the conversation with accounts of your affairs, your successes, sometimes of your good actions. Do you never irritate any one by contempt, raillery, or malicious words? And if

your pretensions to superiority have met with any reverse, have you broken off on this account some connection which would have been profitable to you? or, on the other hand, have you given way to sadness and discouragement? It is true, Lord, I must still make many and earnest efforts, before my soul can be brought into that state of "meeting with God" of which the Prophet speaks—that meeting which is so delightful at the holy table. Ah! I entreat that I may be ready, out of love to Thee, to make the sacrifice of every thing that is displeasing to Thee; for Thou art my life, O my Jesus. Before the Blessed Sacrament, I renounce every thing, save Thee alone.

IV. *Seeking Jesus Christ with Humility.*

Faults voluntarily committed would be an obstacle to frequent Communion, unless after each commission of them we return promptly and humbly to our Lord. Do not aim at being free from temptation; only resolve never to consent to it. You will always be subject to faults and weaknesses: do not take pleasure in them; do not love your defects, but complain of them lovingly to our Lord. After the commission of a fault, humble yourself before Him, and ask courageously that this may be the last triumph that the world shall gain over your heart.

Discourage in yourself all uneasy and over-anxious considerations as to your sensibility, all excessive sadness after a fall, all doubts as to your fitness for frequent Communion. When you are conscious of interior rebellion, of repugnances and disgust, let humility make amends for all. "Throw yourself then at the very lowest foot of the Cross," says St. Francis de Sales; it will be impossible for you not to feel humbled at the sight of the God of glory thus humiliated and despised for you. Look at Him, kiss His sacred feet, and let His grace act upon your heart. It will do wonders there, unless you impede its operation by resting too

much upon your own efforts. Raise your sighs and your groans to Him ; entreat Him to sanctify the temple which He will shortly visit. He alone is able to reconstruct the edifice which you have destroyed. He alone can raise up what you have cast down. Cry to God for help from your very heart, which has offended Him, and which must therefore sue to Him for mercy and forgiveness.

After having recourse to God with true humility, prepare yourself calmly for Communion, and think that our Lord is pleased with you. He does not require you to be perfect, but only to strive with hearty good will to become so. Never lose sight of your main object—striving after perfection.

O Lord my God, as I know not whether this Communion may not be the last of my life, it is necessary to make up for the years that have been lost, to restrain my wandering mind, which outrages Thy goodness, and causes me to stray from the path of holiness. I place upon the altar of my heart, to serve as the wood to consume the sacrifice of myself, all the days and years of my life, so grievously wasted in unfaithfulness and sin. Do Thou consume with the flame of Thy love all the inutilities of my past life, and grant that I may live henceforth in a manner worthy of Thee.

V. Seeking Jesus Christ with Perseverance.

In order to strengthen still further your resolution to lead a truly pious life, reflect upon these solid and weighty reasons to excite us to fidelity in the service of God. "The life of your body is your soul," says St. Augustine ; "the life of your soul is God." Your soul is a simple, indivisible being ; it can therefore never be annihilated. Its acts partake of the qualities of its immortal nature. The thought formed in your mind is a creation of your soul, which she is unable to destroy or annihilate. An action once produced is no longer your own ; it instantly becomes part of eternity, and is, according to its good or evil nature, inscribed in the book

of life, to serve either for your reward or condemnation. Every word you pronounce may have an influence upon the eternal welfare of yourself or others. In a single day, how many acts issue from your soul!—thoughts, words, actions, flow on in an uninterrupted stream, and fall into the vast ocean of eternity, whence they can never be recalled. Oh, solemn truth, and worthy to be investigated in the presence of Jesus Christ! Since God, who is your first cause and your last end, is infinitely holy, your actions ought to reflect in some degree that holiness to which you are called. Cut off, as far as possible, all those actions which are sinful or imperfect. Discourage all thoughts which are not of God or for God. Say to yourself, when you commence an action, "*It is for eternity.*" By this reflection, how many faults may be at once suppressed! Add to this, at the present moment: My Communion will abide eternally for the glory of God and my own happiness, if I come to it with holy dispositions; otherwise, it will be the subject of endless regret to me in the future. What an alternative! Let this thought assist you to redouble your fervour and devotion.

Some saints have said that no practice is more fitted to sanctify us than the continual remembrance of the presence of God; and it is in order to render this easy to me, O my Jesus, that Thou dost descend upon the Altar in the Holy Eucharist. What consolation my soul derives from the thought of walking all my life long in the light of Thy real presence! My actions are every moment tending towards eternity; even the prayer I am offering up at this moment is no longer my own; and my Communion will also immediately be absorbed in eternity. Oh, what grandeur is impressed on all my actions by this eternal seal! Sanctify me by Thy presence, by Thy compassionate glance, O Lord Jesus; for in Holy Communion is revealed to me the truth of those words of St. Augustine, "Too covetous is the soul to which God suffices not."

VI. Holy Longing for the Coming of Jesus Christ.

Promised from the commencement of the world, our Lord was ardently longed for during a course of ages; shall He, then, be less earnestly desired by faithful souls, when He dwells upon earth for their salvation? And yet, in the tabernacle, Jesus Christ is to the greater number of people "an unknown God." Have I not, also, long been ignorant of Him? And yet, if I compare the gentle laws of the eucharistic reign with the laws of fear given to the people of God in former ages, how great is my happiness in thus living under the merciful rule of the heart of Jesus! O my Jesus, I desire Thee as Thou wast desired by the patriarchs and just men of old. My heart calls upon Thee, as Thou wert invoked by the prayers of Thy people during all those ages which preceded Thy birth. I offer Thee the desires of all the martyrs who shed their blood for the glory of Thy name—the desires of the solitaries in the desert, who were so completely disengaged from all earthly things—of the virgins who renounced, for the sake of Thy love, all other affections—of the poor, who await from Thy hand their daily bread—of the many afflicted ones, whose sole consolation is in Thee—of the sick, whom no earthly skill can heal, and who look for help to Thee alone—of the loving souls who find nothing but deception in the world—of the pure hearts who tremble at the sight of the torrent of passions which rage around them. O Jesus, I long for Thee as St. Joseph did,—above all, as Mary longed for Thee. I desire Thee with the fervour of her holy soul, with the love of her virginal heart. Come, and my desires will be fulfilled.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore Jesus in your heart. Mary possessed Him in her bosom in a passible, mortal condition; and you possess Him, immortal, glorious!

Close your eyes to all created things; regard Jesus in you, love Him, press Him to your heart in this union—the closest possible after the Incarnation. This is to share in Mary's happiness—this is the Incarnation continued in your heart.

What are earthly things to you? Our Lord Jesus Christ is yours. If you preserve His sacramental presence for a short time only, yet sacramental grace leaves you a reflection of His glory, a commencement of heavenly beatitude. What further troubles can the rebuffs of men or their insults cause you now? A part of the invisible glory of Jesus remains with you, and points to the hope of enjoying His presence unveiled in everlasting glory.

I. The Temple of Jesus Christ.

By Holy Communion our Lord dwells in your soul, and by means of your soul He animates your whole body. You may say with truth, "I am the living temple of God." But if you know by faith that Jesus Christ has really descended into this temple, are you certain that you have entered it with Him? Has your mind been recollected in the contemplation of the marvels which are being wrought in you? God has displayed His power, not with a view of deceiving your senses, but of captivating them—not in order to drive your reason to revolt, but to bring it into submission, to increase your faith, in hiding Himself in the very centre of your being. He leaves no place for your thoughts. The Holy Eucharist is an abyss, the depth of which can never be sounded either by angels or men. Say now, with St. John Chrysostom, when he held in his hands the Body of Jesus Christ, "My soul, let us leave this earth—let us depart to the abodes of glory." Yes, it is true; the earth trembles, and is amazed at such a prodigy; and yet it is for us alone that God has performed it. It is for you that our Lord manifests this great love. His heart alone was able to conceive such

wondrous affection. You are the temple in which all these wonders are enclosed. O Jesus, I adore Thee in myself as Thou art in heaven. This favour would be too fleeting, if we had not still the consolation of remaining always sanctuaries of Thy love. Thy Divine Person, though ever hidden, is nevertheless continually revealed by its works. If the visible world announces, as David said, Thy wisdom, Thy goodness, Thy power, it is yet an immense veil, which the unaided eye of man could never penetrate. In the Holy Eucharist, Thou art invisible to our human eyes, but my heart finds Thee there, and it is assured that this adorable mystery really contains Thee; this secret, though impenetrable to sense, is not so to my love, which discovers the hidden things of my faith.

By how very few souls is Thy Majesty adored in the visible temple of the universe! by how few even in the sanctuary of our churches! And in the living temple, where the incense of prayer should continually ascend, where the holocaust of sacrifice should be offered perpetually, there is only silence and solitude! neither flames nor incense illumine it, or perfume it. Ah, Lord, how often from that Altar, where I behold Thee in a state of nothingness and death, dost Thou enter my heart, where a new sacrifice and a fresh immolation await Thee! Thou dost come to speak to me, to feed me, to console me; and if my wandering mind is not there to receive Thee, Thou dost await her return, to pardon and console her. O my God, what a mystery of love—love past understanding! My heart must, then, be very dear to Thee, since Thou art willing to perform so many miracles in order to obtain full possession of it.

II. *Living for Jesus Christ.*

Our Lord, on leaving this world, bequeathed us, in His eucharistic life, a new means of supporting our own. "As I live by My Father," said He, "so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me" (John vi. 58). The life

of the Father and the Son becomes the cause and model of your life after Holy Communion. One of the holy fathers of the Church has observed, that God promised long life to those that observed the Old Law. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ promises life eternal, and even His own life, to those who dwell with Him. Could the happiness of centuries bear comparison with *one day* of the life of Jesus Christ? What joy to be permitted to feed your soul with the Divine substance, to be inebriated with the adorable Blood, which bestows upon us eternal life! But this heavenly life does not become developed in us, without weakening that worldly existence which is the fruit of self-love and the indulgence of the senses. Herein consists the *labour* of the sacramental life. The life of our Lord in us is commenced by preliminaries of death, because nature and grace are in such direct opposition, that they cannot exist together. If the hope of eternal life fills you with joy, seek it at the fountain-head. Oppose those inclinations to evil, which the two-edged sword of Divine love will destroy by little and little. Resign yourself to the operation of that sacred fire with which the heart of Jesus was consumed; it will regulate your thoughts, inflame your affections, and subject all your actions to the Divine influence which, according to the Apostle, "dwells corporally in you" in Holy Communion.

O Lord my God, give me strength to sacrifice my natural life; substitute the operation of Thy love for that of my self-love and sensitive feelings; may I never quit Thy holy table without casting into Thy heart, which is burning with love for me, some of my worldly customs, some thoughts or words of vanity, sensibility, impatience, levity, or curiosity. O my Jesus, exterminate all these enemies of Thy dominion in my heart, so that, after my Communion, my life may offer to Thee all her actions sanctified by Thine own Divine life.

III. *Loving God by the Heart of Jesus Christ.*

After the Incarnation, which is the greatest of all the wonderful works of God, there is nothing more admirable than the Holy Eucharist. By Jesus alone can God be worthily loved,—that is to say, loved with an affection which is incapable either of increase or diminution. We cannot attempt to express its grandeur or purity, we can only be silent and adore. But when I venture to think that, in Holy Communion, I may love God with that love wherewith Jesus Himself loves His Father, that I may love Him with the same feelings, shall I hesitate to make this love my own? Love is the life of the soul. If I love my God, I shall live; Jesus gave Himself up to His Father's good pleasure. There is no interruption between knowing God, loving Him, and giving Him my heart. He produced all these acts from the very instant of His conception in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, not only in His own name, but in ours also. And yet, since the first dawn of reason in my soul, I have seen myself enveloped in darkness and misery, and drawn down continually to the things of earth. Ah, it is surely time to break these bonds, and to raise my heart far above the world.

To love God, then, is to give up to Him promptly, with joy, whatever His love enjoins; it is to desire that He should ask us to give Him more. Have I thus loved God? How have I profited by the infinite tenderness of our Lord, which offers me, in His sacred heart, all those feelings which are most capable of drawing down upon me the benediction of God, and which burns with so much love only that He may communicate that same love to me? O Lord my God, the heart of Thy Divine Son was peaceful and happy amidst the sufferings which Thy love inflicted upon it, or disposed it willingly to accept. I will remember, after this Communion, that Christian perfection—that is to say, perfect union with Thy Divine will—is an edifice which can

only be constructed in the heart of Jesus ; I will lay no other foundation for my works. And since love has no limits, render mine firm, immovable, stronger than death, that the waters of tribulation may never extinguish it, nor the mighty waves of temptation submerge it.

IV. *Submitting ourselves to God with Jesus Christ.*

God disowns those who follow their own will. Now, the will of God imposes upon us the sacrifice of our self-love. Jesus did not follow His own will, He submitted it to His Father's even unto death. Mary did not seek the gratification of her own will, but, constraining her natural inclination, she offered her most beloved Son to the bitter death of the Cross. She did not behold the glory of Jesus upon Mount Thabor, but she partook of His shame and suffering on Calvary, and there she made the sacrifice of her own will to the will of the Eternal Father.

Give to God whatever He requires of you, whether He demands it in His own person or by His ministers. It is certain that a soul is dear to Him, when He requires of it many and great sacrifices. Be not terrified at the long continuance of your trials, since this is the sign of the love which God bears towards you. Above all, you must resign to Him your judgment, your liberty, your ease and comfort, and the choice of your actions. Be quite indifferent as to the esteem or contempt, the remembrance or forgetfulness, of men. "Our love to God is not perfect," says St. Bridget, "unless the soul keeps back nothing from Him ;" the least degree of humility, patience, and resignation, is worth incomparably more than all the rest.

Consider attentively the holy will of God in the heart of our Lord, which you now possess ; then engrave it deeply upon all your actions during the day. If at times your soul is oppressed by sadness, if you feel the heavy weight of loneliness and grief, if regrets and

longings agitate your soul,—oh, then think that you are not alone ; Jesus Christ is with you always ; He never loses sight of you for one instant. In the course of past centuries, Jesus already thought of you, cared for you. During His mortal life, His thoughts sought your soul, to apply to it the merits of His most precious Blood. Is not this wonderful love? What may you not think and hope for, when you think of the tabernacle and of heaven?

O my God, I ought not only to consent in a slavish spirit to the accomplishment of Thy will, nor should I subject my actions to Thee, while I withhold the affections of my heart ; I acquiesce freely and fully in Thy good pleasure, sure that it must be infinitely perfect ; I accept it with that good will to which the angels promised peace from heaven ; with that good will with which St. Paul was inspired by Thy grace, when, on his way to Damascus, he exclaimed, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ” I accept it with that good will which was the first feeling of Jesus Christ, when, on His entrance into the world, He said to Thee, “ Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Deign to make clearly known to me in what Thy present will consists, that I may gladly submit to it under all circumstances whatever. The most complete exercise of my liberty must consist in the most thorough submission to Thy sovereign will.

Conclusion.

In these words, “ If any man will come after Me, let him *deny* himself,” Jesus Christ seems to reduce the whole science of perfection to the simple practice of self-renunciation. May we not also reduce all the fruits of the Holy Eucharist to charity, which is the fulfilling of the law? If, then, you have found our Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, manifest in your outward conduct His spirit of gentleness and meekness, in adapting your behaviour to this rule given by St. Paul: “ Each one

not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's" (Phil. ii. 4). In order to do nothing for your own private satisfaction, to consider only what will be useful and edifying to your neighbour, remember frequently these words of the same Apostle: "Jesus Christ did not please Himself:" thus declaring war with egotism and self-love. But the virtue which most powerfully contributes to settle your spiritual advancement upon a solid basis, is patience with your own faults; this prevents discouragement and disgust. Ask, then, for perseverance, according to the request of St. Paul, "That God would grant you to be strengthened by His Spirit with might in the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts" (Eph. iii. 17), to sustain you in your combats, and console you in your sorrows. Return often to receive fresh supplies of this strength at the holy table; you will find, as the Prophet did, that one day (and even one instant) passed in the house of the Lord, is preferable to a thousand days passed in the world. Only the soul that is constantly united to our Lord, acquires the experience of these words of St. Augustine, "We ourselves make time, we are ourselves our own time." For such a soul, time, which to some is a sad chain of sorrows, gently flows on in the sweetness of a holy joy in the midst of trials. Far from wishing to shorten its duration, she blesses every moment marked by the Cross, and never loses sight of these Divine words, "Seek, and you shall find." Seek Jesus Christ, then, and you will most certainly find Him.

FOURTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

UNITING OURSELVES TO THE DISPOSITIONS OF THE SAINTS IN RECEIVING JESUS CHRIST.

Preparation.

ONE of the greatest mysteries of Christianity is the holy alliance that our Blessed Lord contracts with us, and the secret manner of His coming to us in Holy Communion. It appears to me that it has pleased the Holy Spirit to deposit in the Gospel some beautiful examples of the sentiments we ought to offer to Jesus Christ; and the first of these is in that place in which is related the visit which the Blessed Virgin paid to her cousin Elizabeth. Study it attentively in its smallest particulars.

I.

The first impulse which moved St. Elizabeth, on the approach of her God, concealed in the Blessed Virgin's womb, was to conceive a great and august idea of His majesty. This is the self-abasement of a soul who considers herself unworthy of Holy Communion. Humility is the first principle of a good preparation.

Open your mind at first to a religious fear, which tends to keep us away from the holy table, by the view of our insignificance in the sight of God. This was the feeling of Elizabeth, when, divinely enlightened to perceive the presence of her God in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, she exclaimed, in humble confusion, "And whence is this great happiness to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" She admires the dignity which has been conferred upon Mary; she is astonished at her condescension, at her affectionate forethought. Humble yourself with this pious woman. Could you ever have imagined the greatness of God, who gives

Himself to you, or *why* He thus comes to visit you with such astonishing goodness? This grace is more especially *grace*, because there is nothing on your part to merit or attract. Nothing in you can be deserving of such great happiness. Present, therefore, to Jesus Christ a heart submissive to His guiding hand, and sincerely confess your own weakness and unworthiness.

Further still, in imitation of St. Elizabeth, engrave deep reverence and humility in your inmost heart. But it will be necessary to consider the *cause* of her profound humility. At first it is occasioned by the thought of the wonderful greatness of our Blessed Lord, who comes to visit her, and that there is nothing in her to attract or return His goodness and favours. This is a powerful inducement to serve God with holy fear, and to approach Him with trembling. For what indigence can be comparable to ours? Having nothing of our own by nature, still less by acquisition, we have no right whatever to approach Jesus Christ, or to receive Him. And as sin has placed us at a still greater distance from Him than we were originally, nothing remains for us but to show our reverence for His greatness by the acknowledgment of our insignificance, and to honour His goodness and mercy by the confession of our utter unworthiness.

O my Jesus, I joyfully acknowledge Thy superabundant mercy. I was a sinner, and Thou didst convert me; I was buried in the darkness of the world, and Thou didst show me the light of life. Thou didst remember me when I had fled away from Thee. Thou didst call me to Thyself when I deserved Thy vengeance, and Thou didst pursue me when I seemed deaf to Thy sacred voice. And now Thou dost still inspire me with sincere contempt of the world, and desire to advance in the path of perfection. I did not deserve this heavenly call, nor the favours which accompanied it; but may I now use them all to Thy greater glory, by the help of Thy Divine grace!

II.

The second feeling of a soul animated by lively faith ought to be a desire to draw near with confidence, stimulated by a holy longing to hasten to Jesus Christ. You may recognise this feeling in the leaping of John the Baptist in his mother's womb. This is the eagerness of a soul that hungers after the presence of Jesus, and is also secretly attracted by Him.

It is a very consoling truth, that no feeling of humility, nor even any state of the soul, should ever prevent us from desiring the presence of our Blessed Saviour. Many passages in the Gospel prove this doctrine.

Since Jesus Christ, urged by His ardent love, comes to us, let us hasten eagerly to meet Him. Jesus is our Love and our Hope, our Strength and our Crown, our Life and our Salvation. His affection for us never grows cold. His heart is always tender, His love as efficacious as it is ever fruitful in graces. He even precedes His Precursor, by inspiring Mary to visit Elizabeth. Jesus precedes us also ; His grace, which is entirely gratuitous, extends throughout our lives : only it is increased, and its effects are multiplied, when we coöperate with it.

If you desire to live conformably to the grace of God, do not delay to imitate the eager haste to receive it displayed by John and his mother. Humility was the foundation of their confidence ; let it be the ground of yours also. Let your soul expand itself in holy transports, in ardent longing to receive Holy Communion ; for it is not sufficient to humble and abase yourself. "Jesus Christ," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "*desires to be desired*." We confer an obligation upon Him by accepting His gifts ; and the more frequently we ask, the more willing is He to give. If He gives freely in answer to our prayer, He will certainly give the preference to that petition which asks Him to give *Himself*. The Divine nature can neither increase nor diminish its infinite fulness ; and the only thing which it needs, if I

may venture to repeat the words of Bossuet, is, that we should come and receive from its fulness that life of which it is the inexhaustible fountain. We cannot do a greater injury to Jesus Christ than by not desiring to receive Him. The holy transports of John in his mother's bosom are a sweet image of the fervour and ardent desires of the soul in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. If this blessed child endeavoured to break the bonds which confined him, if he seemed to demand permission to advance to meet Jesus, with the same holy eagerness you ought to divorce yourself from whatever separates you from His presence, that you may receive Him with the greatest possible purity. Happy is the soul that longs for Him, for to her He gives Himself entirely.

Address yourself to the holy Precursor, that you may learn from his example to desire Jesus Christ with ardent and holy love. As his mission was to prepare the way of the Lord, he will inspire you with fervour to make a pious preparation for Him; and as the universe seemed at first to refuse the light which the Messiah brought into the world, the purity of its sweet splendour was reflected upon St. John, and the Divine fire cleansed and purified his fallen nature. If before his birth he felt such extreme joy in the presence of Jesus; if, in his complete helplessness, he did not fail to manifest this joy,—how great should be the rapture with which you, in the full possession of the powers of your mind and body, should contemplate your Lord in the Blessed Sacrament! Jesus Christ is your only good; He is present for you upon the holy Altar; He is going to give Himself, in His own true and proper substance, to you. If you are not permitted to behold Him upon His throne, at least embrace His sacred feet in the consoling intimacy of Holy Communion. Take, then, with reverential joy, His sacred Body and Blood. Have no thought for any thing but Him; for, to desire Him aright, you must desire nothing else but Him.

III.

The way in which our Lord prevented St. John with His grace, recalls His merciful operations on our souls.

At the holy table, Jesus visits me as He once visited His Precursor. He brings with Him every kind of grace to enrich my life. Is not Holy Communion the daily visit of our Lord to our souls ?

John dwelt in the obscurity of his mother's womb, and I was in the darkness of sin—I neither saw Jesus nor heard Him. When I least expected Him, He came to me ; and, by graces gentle yet strong, He drew to Himself my poor heart, which was in a state of drowsiness, almost of insensibility. I discovered at the same time how great a share Mary has taken in my conversion. The charity of Mary, who was hastening to visit Elizabeth, was the cause of our Lord's close approach to His Precursor; and, if Jesus affected the soul of a child in such a powerful manner, was not this miracle wrought by the voice of Mary ? Thus, then, O my *Mother*, this touching and tender title is thine by right. In thee my misery finds its most powerful advocate. Speak for me to the heart of Jesus. I will say to thee, with St. Bernard, "My petitions can never be rejected, when thou dost deign to present them to His Divine Majesty." Study the behaviour of St. John, in after years, to our Blessed Lord. He was preaching penance ; Jesus presented Himself to be baptised by Him. "Shall I baptise Thee, Lord?" said the holy Precursor. "I ought to be baptised by Thee ; and comest Thou to me ?" But Jesus insisted, and John obeyed without hesitation. He beheld with astonishment, but without undue disturbance of mind, his God kneeling at his feet. Entirely occupied by anxiety to perform His will, having acknowledged his unworthiness, he baptised Him, having his heart filled to overflowing with admiration, respect, and love, but still remaining calm and recollected in spirit.

Jesus calls you to His holy table. He commands you to approach Him in this Sacrament of love; you have been commanded to do so, in His name, by the lips of His minister. How often, yielding to vain apprehension, have you not refused to obey! Imitate the humility and simplicity of St. John; humble yourself deeply because of your unworthiness, but receive your Divine Master into a heart filled with the deepest reverence and love.

Lord, I present myself at Thy holy table, because Thou hast commanded me to come. May my obedience to Thy minister, the uprightness of my intentions, my desire to participate in the holy dispositions of Thy Precursor, supply all that is deficient in my devotion. May my unworthiness, my coldness, the sense of which humiliates me so deeply, serve to enhance the glory of Thy infinite mercy, which never manifests itself with more splendour than in this Sacrament of Thy love. May Thy Holy Spirit enlighten my mind, and prepare my heart to enter into this ineffable union with Thee in the Holy Eucharist.

IV.

Consider once more some of those events recorded in the Gospel, which are calculated to assist us in making a fervent Communion, by the consideration of the manner in which those persons behaved who had the happiness of receiving our Blessed Lord into their houses, or of drawing near to Him during His mortal life. Zaccheus received Jesus into his house, at a time when he least expected such an honour; he received Him with the greatest possible respect and affection; he treated Him with simplicity and openness. Although taken by surprise, he gave Him such entertainment as his means allowed him, without disturbing his own joy or that of his other guests by over-eagerness or anxiety. Nevertheless, as soon as our Lord had taken possession of his abode, he immediately stripped himself of all the wealth

he had unjustly acquired, he deprived himself of all superfluity and luxury. He understood the great truth that, where Jesus Christ reigns, the passions must be subdued and yield entirely to His will.

Open your heart to Jesus with simplicity, as Zaccheus opened to Him his house. Prepare yourself to make any sacrifice that He may expect from you; and esteem yourself happy if He requires much at your hands.

St. Peter, being fully persuaded that nothing was hidden from His Divine Master, also received Jesus into his house, without giving himself any uneasiness about its poverty, and the absence of many things which would have been necessary in order to give Him a suitable reception. Far from distressing himself on this account, or fearing that our Lord would be offended at it, St. Peter presented to Him his mother-in-law, who was sick, and entreated Him to heal her.

Maintain a peaceful confidence, in the midst of your poverty and wretchedness; and present your spiritual infirmities *one by one* to our Blessed Lord, beseeching Him to condescend to deliver you from them.

The two sisters in the Gospel were favoured with a visit from the good Master. Martha, eager to receive Him honourably, served Him with too much anxiety and activity; she was reproved for it. Mary received Him with more humility than eagerness, with more repose than ardour; having her soul seated at the feet of Jesus, as well as her body, she listened to the words of life which issued from the adorable lips of our Lord, and did not herself speak one word: she was highly praised.

The silence of the heart is also a prayer, a preparation. The soul, prostrate and humbled at the feet of Jesus, whom she beholds upon the Altar, whom she awaits with profound concentration of all her faculties, is far more acceptable than the soul that repeats acts and prayers with uneasy and anxious agitation, fearing

to bring imperfect dispositions of heart to our Lord. Alone with Him, alone, listen with Magdalene to the words He speaks to your heart.

The Son of God goes to visit the Centurion; He walks quickly, for they have sent to hasten His arrival. The Centurion comes to meet Him, and says, "Lord, hasten not; I do not merit such a favour; I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed; for I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

This deep feeling of our own unworthiness, joined to an unshaken faith and firm confidence, is a disposition of mind which is very pleasing to our Lord. You ought to excite this feeling in your heart; and when some distressing thought disturbs it, repeat with calmness and humility, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter into my soul; but speak only one word, and Thou wilt make it pure.

If you could behold the inner life of these great examples of virtue, you would see nothing but candour, humility, and feelings of love flowing from their hearts, as if from fountains of grace, according to the measure of their gifts of faith, and of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them. Imitate them without adding your own false fervour.

Communicate without being too anxious to obtain that vivacity of feeling which does not depend upon yourself, and which God does not value so highly as the graces of humility, simplicity, peace, confidence, and watchfulness over your progress in the spiritual life. Communicate, although it may seem as if you had nothing to offer to Jesus Christ but a cold and barren heart, and a spirit involved in clouds and darkness. Remember that the darkness can give praise to God as well as the light, and that we may with confidence pre-

sent ourselves to God and enter His sanctuary, notwithstanding that dryness of spirit which He often makes use of to manifest His glory.

Lord Jesus, I find in Thy life of humility the secret of all sanctity. To love Thee, to unite myself to Thee, is all my desire; and yet I dread humility, which is the appointed means of this sacred union. Have pity on my weakness and ignorance, and, since humility is the parent of sanctity, grant that this grace may be as dear to me as Thy love.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Our Lord gives Himself to you. It is not sufficient that the Word should become incarnate; He must also be born. This is the fruit of a pious act of thanksgiving. Ask our Lord, annihilated in you, to increase your lowliness and littleness, that you may resemble Him more closely.

Raise your soul from its abasement up to the heart of Jesus, resting upon His goodness, His infinite merits, His precious Blood, His sacrifice, His perpetual intercession with His Father on your behalf.

I.

After Holy Communion, gratefully acknowledge the presence of Jesus Christ, which rests upon your soul in a secret and incomprehensible manner. Follow the accomplishment of the great work of God in the soul of the Blessed Virgin, in order to enter, in some feeble degree, into the holy dispositions of her mind; for what can be a greater work than to receive our Lord Jesus Christ?

Listen to the enchanting voice of the Blessed Virgin, as she celebrates the greatness and mercies of God; she displays the peaceful joy with which a pure and loving soul is filled in the contemplation of her God, and in the grateful acknowledgment of His mercy; she describes the chaste joys of the heavenly peace, which caused her to exclaim, "My soul doth magnify the Lord." What

does magnifying God mean? "It means," says Bossuet, "to aggrandise God," that is, to set Him above all we are able to imagine, high above all greatness. "If you think that God is infinite, eternal, immense, elevate Him higher still, raise Him above all elevation." This is the way in which the Blessed Virgin exalts the Lord, and in this manner you also should exalt Him in your heart; set Him at the very summit of all your thoughts and affections, and place Him at such a height that no earthly thing shall henceforth dare to distract your thoughts from the contemplation of His greatness.

"And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Her soul is at peace, it possesses Jesus Christ; this is the cause of her happiness and of yours also. Enjoy it peacefully, enter into her feelings, meditating upon them with holy joy.

The first cause of Mary's joy was the sight of the favour which God had bestowed upon her: "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid." She does not say that He hath regarded His handmaid, but the *humility* of His handmaid. She is completely penetrated with the feeling of her own nothingness. There is a glance of love and mercy which God often casts upon sinful and penitent souls, to encourage them and attract them to Himself. But then there is also an aspect of favour and benevolence, a glance of defence and protection, divine, loving, and tender; it was this regard of God, fixed upon her, that transported Mary with joy and gratitude.

Has He not cast upon you also a glance of special favour? Has He not cast His eyes down to a lower depth than the abyss of nothingness, even to the abyss of your sins, from which He has delivered you, and purified your soul? This purity, restored to you by His grace, is the cause of the peace of your soul. Has He not cast upon you a glance of *electing* love? He has chosen you out of millions of creatures, from the remotest ages, in order to call you in a special

manner to Himself; a glance of protecting love, which averts the dangers and evils that threaten you; a glance of providential care, which supplies all your wants, and satisfies your soul with the chaste delights of the Holy Eucharist. Now that you are assured of this Divine regard, what could you wish for more? How could you find more certain peace than by resting in its vivifying light? Your only fear should be to lose its influence, out of undue eagerness to be or appear to be something in the eyes of the world or in your own, whereas you ought to desire to appear only as you really are in the sight of God, and to act as much as He desires, and no more.

This is the effect of God's tender regard. "He hath done great things for me," continues Mary. God worked great things for you when He set you free from the corruption of sin, and destroyed the empire of the world in you, by pouring out upon you the treasures of His love.

Celebrate, then, with Mary, the favours of God, and give Him thanks and praise for His protection. Say, with a sure and certain conviction, "If God be with me, who can be against me?" Jesus Christ is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? This confidence is natural to the soul that is continually nourished by the Holy Eucharist, and it is founded upon the peace of Jesus Christ, hidden in His heart. Jesus is driven from the world, as He was formerly from His own country; but He seeks refuge in a few chosen souls, and pours out His benefits upon them. O my Saviour, I adore Thee in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, but I adore Thee still more tenderly in my heart, in which Thou dost repose by this Divine Sacrament. Why cannot I offer Thee the feelings of Thy Blessed Mother? O Mary, obtain for me a spark of love for Jesus, and some of the graces with which He enriched Thy holy maternity.

II.

Enter still more fully into the joy of Mary's soul after the Incarnation. She rejoiced in the triumph of God over the world. She did not consider it as still to come, but rather as being already completed. She saw the world conquered, overthrown, and God victorious, through Jesus Christ : "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart, He hath put down the mighty from their seat."

Then, as you rest with Mary in the bosom of the most high God, having Jesus in your heart as she had, cast a glance upon the world. How little it is, considered in the light of eternity! and in what a totally different aspect does it now appear, compared to the time when it dazzled you with the delusive splendour of its vanities and pleasures! It is because the celestial light reverses the position of worldly things; it casts down the pride, the vain grandeur, of this world, and lifts up the simple and humble heart. "He hath exalted the humble."

Learn from Jesus Christ to understand this strange opposition between God and the world. All that God exalts, the world delights in casting down; all that the world esteems, God delights to confound. In short, God favours those who are humble, poor, modest, sincere; and the world admires those who are bold, enterprising, proud, and deceitful. This combat will last till the end of time. This is the soul that God exalts,—the soul that is humble and unknown, that passes her life without complaining of any one, submissive to all, forgetful of herself. The judgment of God is superior to that of men, and His promises are of far more value than the gifts of the world. Enter seriously into the nature of Mary's thoughts, and endeavour, like her, to place no value upon the vain judgments of men. Consider deeply the commandments of Jesus Christ, study His counsels; you will see that in all your actions, even the best, you

are at an infinite distance from perfection, and that you hardly even accomplish the *letter* of His precepts. It is in studying the Divine law, and the example of Jesus, that you will discover the depths of your corruption, and the defects of all your actions, and also that you will not find *one* of them free from imperfection. O Mary, perhaps thou dost behold me devoid of love and devotion in the reception of the most adorable Eucharist. Revive my faith in this holy action; offer thy feelings to our Lord, to supply the defects of mine; and grant that, by means of my fidelity to thee, I may become the living proof of thy influence over the heart of thy Divine Son.

III.

Another cause of Mary's joy was the accomplishment of the promises of God. She felt in her bosom, closely united to her, her Saviour, her God. What sweetness, what delight, in this perfect union, enjoyed on earth, and expecting its full consummation in heaven! From a humble distance, you also may aspire to the pure joy, the chaste delights, of the love of our Blessed Lord. Is He not entirely yours? Is He not in you also? Appropriate some of the feelings of Ruth, and say, "No, Lord, think not that I can ever leave Thee; I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest;" having resolved to unite my heart closely to Thine, I will love Thee both in life and death. Thy will shall be mine also, for Thou art my God. I take heaven to witness that even death shall never separate me from Thee; and when the time shall come to leave this world, Thy paternal arms shall be the place of my blessed repose.

In the abodes of eternal happiness, those Divine promises, sung by Mary with such firm and certain hope, will receive their full accomplishment,—that is to say, in the land of the living, and in light everlasting.

Who will grant me, O Lord, to enjoy that sublime happiness, which is ever the same, which arises from a

calm and peaceful soul; which springs, not from the indulgence of the passions, but from a quiet perseverance in duty; not from an uneasy and restless fervour, but from a clear and upright conscience? It will be given me in the wise exercise of my liberty, in submission to Thy Providence, amidst all the accidents of life; "For," says Tertullian, "Thou hast, as it were, emancipated us by the gift of liberty, not so as to render us independent, but that we may render a voluntary obedience." In full and complete submission to Thy will, I shall find a stable peace, which nothing shall ever be able to disturb.

IV.

The source of the sublime thanksgiving which Mary uttered, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was the love which inflamed her heart. "The heart of Mary," says a venerable Bishop of Lausanne, "was inspired with two feelings; she rendered to her Son the love she owed to God, and she offered to God the love she felt for her Son." Nature and grace concurred in her to strengthen her feelings of love and reverence. There is no feeling in nature more tender or more strong than maternal love. There is nothing more powerful than love inspired by grace.

Holy Communion has conveyed to your soul something more than an impression of grace,—it is a kind of effusion from the heart of God. After this mysterious communication, of which the real presence of Jesus is the source and origin, do you venture to say you cannot love in return? And if Mary believed that she could never love her Son and her God sufficiently, can you imagine that, in giving *half* your heart, you are making any adequate return for the love which the Holy Eucharist abundantly pours into your soul? Lord Jesus, may the flame of Thy love burn ever more brightly in my heart! Would that each pulsation of my heart might be an act of love to Thee, and that I might praise Thee with every breath

I draw! Would that I were all love, and could live less to myself than to Thee!

V.

After Mary had brought the Saviour into the world, she shrouded her life in silence and in love. This fact is recorded in the Gospels for a special purpose. Study the lesson when you are making your act of thanksgiving after Communion.

Our Lord, in uniting Himself so intimately to me, desires also to unite me as closely to His Spirit. May it please God never to allow me to receive in a natural manner only my Blessed Lord, who gives Himself to me in order to become the eternal food of my soul. He desires a spiritual union with me, and this union will be so much the more intimate, as I am drawn nearer to Him by the abundance of the graces conferred upon me in the Holy Eucharist. If, then, my tongue is sanctified by the Body of Jesus, it ought to speak none but pure and holy words. As the thought which arises in our mind suggests the words of our mouth, so my mind ought to retain the intimate possession of Jesus, and I shall not then find it difficult to be silent, and to preserve the remembrance of His love in the depths of my heart.

How happy should I be, O Lord, could I feel the sentiments which Mary felt after the accomplishment of the marvels of the Incarnation! I possess that God, to whom every faculty of her soul was attractive and delightful,—her faith, her humility, her purity; whereas in me every thing appears repulsive, so utterly unworthy am I to receive so great a favour. An angel has not announced to me Thy merciful regard, but I have been assured of it by Thine own mouth, and Thou hast summoned me to Thy holy table. How can I any longer contain my thankful utterances of joy and gratitude?

O my Jesus, I will not suffer my thoughts to be turned away from the contemplation of Thy great mercy.

I desire to preserve the graces Thou hast conferred upon me, and to ascend upon them, as it were, to a more perfect union with Thee. Grant that my mind may no more be distracted by the things of the world, and may I humbly delight in the heavenly union with my Lord !

Conclusion.

Mary lifted up her voice for the sole purpose of celebrating the mercies of the Lord in the joy and gladness of her soul. At all other times she listened, she observed, she meditated, she was silent. Learn from her that the fruit of silence is peace. In order to maintain this peace of the presence of Jesus Christ, think (1stly), That the Lord sees you; (2dly), Being assured of His unchangeable support, never allow yourself to be dazzled by the world ; when it tempts you, tell it that it is overthrown, and that you are awaiting future glory ; (3dly), If the time seems long and weary, and your courage fails, consider the faithfulness of the promises of God. Abraham waited two thousand years for their accomplishment, but you are on the point of realising those which have been made to you. Jesus is at the door. There is between you and Him, says Bossuet, only a *little wall*, which is our mortal life.

FIFTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

UNION WITH THE HEART OF JESUS.

Preparation.

RENEW all your fervour in making your preparation for Holy Communion; and when you receive our Lord, cast into His heart all your doubts, afflictions, anxieties, and

bitter griefs. Never suffer an unforeseen trial, a sudden shock, which may have troubled your mind, to keep you from the holy table. Offer your sufferings to our Blessed Saviour. Approach with confidence, because you feel that you are weak and ready to fall again under the dominion of your natural feelings.

Oh, how much the Lord loves the soul that flies to seek its refuge in His heart, and employs, in the trials and temptations of life, all the energy of her will to conquer herself!

Will not one act of holy faith in the blessedness of possessing our God be sufficient to cure the wounds which self-love has inflicted in your heart? Faith can surely have little power over your soul, if one Communion is not sufficient to reward you amply for the most painful sacrifices. Come, then, to the heart of Jesus; it is always easy of access, for it is ever open to us—we are so certain of His love, that we can even in a certain sense say that we are enclosed within it. Love places its beloved objects in its heart as their natural abiding-place. The Holy Scriptures, to excite our confidence, relate that God has “graven us in His hands.” How much more ought we to hope in Jesus Christ, if we fix our abode in His heart, never more to quit it! St. John Chrysostom says, that we must “imagine in Holy Communion that we approach our lips to the sacred wound in the side of Jesus Christ, to taste His precious Blood, and participate in all the merits of His sufferings.”

I.

Approach the heart of Jesus in the spirit of *faith*. It is the heart of your Saviour, of your God, that you are going to receive. What a favour! what graces will accrue to you from this Divine union!

O Jesus, I believe with a firm and sincere faith that I am going to receive Thee, and I am no longer envious of those who lived with Thee in Thy mortal life. The

time of Thy abode on earth being limited, the Incarnation received its final completion in Holy Communion. Without Communion, my existence is not complete in the designs of God. This union is the fruit of Thy love. Will eternity be long enough for the manifestation of my gratitude? Thou, my God, dwellest in me! I have, then, found grace in Thine eyes, not because of my merits, for I have nothing in me but wretchedness, but because of Thy ineffable mercies.

II.

Approach the heart of Jesus in a spirit of *penance*, that your sins may be blotted out and pardoned. Say to Him with humility and contrition, O God, infinitely pure, permit me to seek in Thy heart the cure for all my sorrows. O sacred heart, moved with infinite sorrow for the sins of mankind, inspire me with the deepest grief for those which I have committed. I am extremely sorry to have caused Thee such bitter sadness in the Garden of Olives. O most holy heart, to which the slightest stain of sin is infinitely repugnant, imprint in my heart a sincere hatred of my slightest offences. O most penitent heart, who didst pay the ransom of our captive souls, enable me to break all my bonds, to combat my bad habits, to mortify my senses, to repair, by repentance, the injury I have done by my sins to the glory of God.

III.

Approach our Lord in a spirit of *recollection*. Retire from the noise of the world and the anxieties of business, and repose with the Beloved Disciple on your Master's heart; you will then learn all those virtues which it is necessary you should practise.

Before Thou didst communicate Thyself to Thine Apostles, O my Jesus, Thou didst conduct them to the Upper Chamber, far from the noise and commotion of the world. Come to impose silence on my passions, to

calm my imagination, to enable me to govern myself completely. Thou didst choose to assemble Thy dear disciples in the night, thus declaring to me Thy love for repose and solitude, and also that by quietness and recollection my soul should best be fitted for the reception of Thy Divine influence. Make me completely detached from myself, separated from all creatures. I will resist no longer; my will is Thine. My only happiness henceforth shall be in faithfully obeying the operations of Thy grace, and imposing silence upon my own nature and passions.

IV.

Come to the heart of Jesus in the spirit of *confidence* and entire resignation, that your griefs, sorrows, disgusts, and annoyances may all be blotted out by His sweet and tender kindness. I cannot confide too fully in Thee, O Jesus. When I feel all my earthly help and comfort failing me, I will reckon more fully upon Thy Divine protection, and I will repose in peaceful confidence upon Thy Divine heart. "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity upon the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget Thee" (Is. xlix. 15). Canst Thou forget me, when Thou dost show forth Thy mercy permanently in the tabernacle? My hope is in Thee, O Jesus, infinitely good; and what have I to fear, since I love Thee, and desire to love Thee still more perfectly? Nevertheless, my sins deserve chastisement; Thy justice continually puts me in fear; I will endeavour not to subject myself to its terrors. Oh, how happy should I be, if before my death I could wipe out all my stains! I fear Thee, O my God, but I love Thee even more than I fear Thee. I fear lest I should be separated from Thee at my death, and, having enjoyed one glimpse of Thy beauty, should be instantly driven from Thy presence. Satisfy Thy justice by punishing me in this life. Thy Cross shall sustain my confidence; and in contemplating Thy sacred heart,

I shall look for salvation from its mercy and its love. "Thy mercy, O Lord," said the Prophet, "is more than life." My soul would be lost if it ceased for one moment to confide in Thee, O my Jesus. Grant that I may now begin to love Thee, and to fear myself; to place all my hope in Thee, and to distrust myself; to lean no longer upon creatures, who may be separated from me by circumstances, and who see me in trouble or grief without thinking of giving me any assistance. I have deserved this bitter disappointment, for I have relied too much upon them. Their behaviour to me is a grace which causes me to fall back upon Thy help alone.

V.

Come in the spirit of *humility* to confess your miseries to the heart of Jesus, with those sentiments of confusion and repentance which justified the Publican in the eyes of our Blessed Lord.

O my Jesus, I know and I feel that I am much more wretched than I have ever thought myself, and that I am consequently most unworthy, not only of frequent Communion, but even of receiving Holy Communion at all. Nevertheless, my God, if I am absolutely unworthy of receiving Thee, and if I am always to remain so, whatever I may do, this is a proof that Thou dost not require me to be worthy, to be holy, but that Thou dost mercifully accept an unworthy sinner, who repents and loves Thee—a poor deserted one, whose only hope is in Thee—a poor invalid, who is almost incurable, but who still looks to the Divine Physician for healing—an afflicted creature, whose all-powerful Comforter Thou art. O my Saviour, whose adorable heart I have so often grieved by my sins, let me never communicate without thoroughly detesting them—hastening to Thee, notwithstanding, with ardent affection; for Thou didst come into the world to save sinners, and dost therefore strongly desire my eternal salvation.

VI.

Come to the heart of Jesus in the spirit of *self-sacrifice* and immolation. This is the state in which He chose to show you His love. From the holy Altar, where He has offered Himself a Victim, He comes to give Himself to you.

O my Saviour, have I ever reflected deeply upon the perpetuity of Thy sacrifice in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? What do I learn from it, if not to immolate myself for Thee, to sacrifice without reserve all that is displeasing to Thee, and to render myself truly a victim of Thy sacred heart? From the Cross to the Altar, the sacrifice has never ceased! And when Thou didst commend Thy Soul into the hands of Thy Father, leaving Thy Body to the tomb, Thou hadst nothing more to give, save Thy Cross—a heritage of blood, of love, and of glory! Oh, in the moment when I receive Thee, by the merits of this painful Cross, I entreat Thee to give it to me, when Thou dost quit me, as a consolation in Thine absence. I entreat that I may be nailed upon it by Divine love. May the Cross keep alive my love and my repentance! The repugnance of my nature does not diminish the merits of the offering. Accept, as a living sacrifice, my good will, which offers itself to Thee, without yielding to discouragement under difficulties, without complaining of its sufferings—for complaint is the voice of self-love, which avoids self-sacrifice. If I did not communicate so often, I could not so perfectly comprehend the necessity of sacrificing myself to Thy glory.

I bless Thee, O heart of Jesus, for mercifully obliging me to show my gratitude and my fidelity. But as I have to sustain an interior combat to prevent my heart from growing hard and bitter in my sufferings, or being overcome by sadness, enable me to receive all events in the spirit of sweet submission, knowing that the “sufferings of this life are not worthy to be com-

pared to the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

VII.

Come to the heart of Jesus in the spirit of *ferveur*, to recompense Him for the outrages He receives in the Sacrament of His love, and to learn how to practise all virtues.

O my Jesus, prepare me to receive Thee; do Thou excite in my heart a love full of tenderness and gratitude for so magnificent a gift. Speak to me; may Thy voice captivate all the powers of my soul and all my bodily senses! Before my Communion, I have no offering to present to Thy Father but Thy heart, which is about to become my food. But what could I unite to such an offering as this? Deign to add to my desire to receive Thee, all unworthy as I am, the dispositions of the saints in approaching Thy holy table—the faith of Peter, the contrition of Magdalene, the love of the Beloved Disciple, the zeal of St. Paul. Graciously accept the dispositions of Thy holy Mother—her spotless purity, the love of her immaculate heart. I offer Thee the adoration of angels, their profound reverence and fear. My heart, drawn powerfully towards Thee, sighs for the moment when it shall be perfectly united to Thee.

O Jesus, my hope, Thy Divine heart is my sweetest thought in life; but it is crossed by so many distractions, so much dissipation of mind! At least in this moment I ought to think of nothing but the happiness of receiving Thee,—I ought to sink in the abyss of the contemplation of this desired and expected moment. Consume, annihilate my imperfections and my sins in the fire of Thy love, and come to the soul which desires to be Thine without reserve.

Approach our Lord with a will prepared for all kinds of sufferings, afflictions, and tribulations,—for His love; this is the heritage here below of privileged souls, who desire ardently to glorify God with their own sub-

stance. Approach the holy table with the humble confidence of St. John, and repose upon the heart of Jesus all the cares of your life. This favour, which the Beloved Disciple enjoyed only once, is granted to you in every Communion.

Act of Thanksgiving.

At the moment of Holy Communion, in silent adoration, annihilate yourself, concentrate all the faculties of your soul in this thought—God in me! Unite all your senses in profoundest recollection; let the adorable Blood of Jesus be *imbibed*, so to speak, by your soul, in this sacred union, that it may purify and fertilise it. The fruit of this interior action will be to give you more power over yourself, over your imagination, your self-love, and your susceptibility. Thank our Lord for the precious gift of His Body, His Soul, His Blood, His Divinity, and, above all, of His heart, with which He has loved you so much.

I. Union with the Heart of God.

Behold Jesus pointing to His heart, and saying to you, Here is My heart,—seek not for it in heaven, nor on Calvary, nor even in the tabernacle; behold, it is here—in yourself, for you alone—all its love is yours! MY HEART—not the heart of a creature, but the heart of your God, of your Father, of your Saviour, of your best Friend: I give it in exchange for yours, which I desire to make completely Mine, and to imprint in it the marks of My love—MY HEART, wounded by the sins of men, but wounded still more grievously by your unfaithfulness, by your secret resistance of My grace—MY HEART, in which the wound ever remains, as a perpetual witness of the *excess* of My love for you. Give yourself up to the feelings with which these thoughts will inspire you.

Let us pursue them still further. The heart of our Lord, the richest treasure possessed by heaven, is yours!

It is opened by the lance. "Through the wounds of the body," says St. Bernard, "we can discover the bottom of the heart;" how, then, through so large and deep a wound, could we fail to see the generous and tender heart of Jesus Christ? All the blood which it contained was shed to teach you, by this Divine effusion, that love manifests itself more by actions than by sentiments. Your life ought to be a kind of expansion of the charity of the heart of Jesus. Return frequently to the consideration of the love which He manifests to you, and of the personal proofs you have received of it.

II. *Union with the Heart of my King.*

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee," said the Prophet Zacharias (ix. 9). Upon all kings there falls a ray of glory from the majesty of God. They are an image of Him in their universal power of doing good to the people under their dominion. Never was power more legitimately or more mercifully exercised than by Jesus Christ. He is King in virtue of His natural right. He is especially so in virtue of His love, and the benefits He has conferred upon us. Where does He display greater clemency, sweetness, and love, than in the Most Holy Eucharist? O heart of my sovereign Lord, my faith contemplates Thee with admiration. A secret emotion of fear takes possession of me, notwithstanding the sweetness of Thy Majesty; for, quitting the magnificence of Thy celestial courts, Thou dost appear to me crowned with thorns, which signify the dominion of the most humble virtues. O my almighty King, who didst lay the foundations of the world in the void of nothingness, I adore Thee; I consecrate to Thee all that I am, all that I have—my liberty, my memory, my thoughts, my labours, and my affections. Direct my steps towards Thy eternal kingdom, where Thy saints enjoy a peace which cannot be comprehended by our senses,—where the life which comes from Thy heart flows everlastingly into them. Alas! I have indeed done little to obtain

this celestial heritage ; but Thou knowest that I love Thee with a reverential love. May Thy kingdom come ! “ Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff, they have comforted me ” (Ps. xxii. 45). I submit to Thy dominion, which is established in humiliation and suffering. I choose to be cast down by Thee, rather than to be honoured by the world ; I accept the events ordered by Thy wise and merciful Providence, declaring to Thee, O my King, that my will is to follow Thee as closely as possible, wherever Thou shalt lead me,—imitating Thy patience in sufferings, and Thy courage in supporting adversities and trials. I will even embrace a life of poverty and mortification, if my doing so shall be pleasing to Thee and conducive to Thy glory.

III. *Union with the Heart of my Saviour.*

Behold Jesus Christ displaying His heart as it was upon the Cross. With what sweetness does He not say, Come to Me, you that suffer and are burdened, and I will refresh you ! But forget not that My heart, which loves you, contains the spirit which inspired Me to undertake the work of man's salvation—the spirit of poverty, of humility, of suffering, and of peace. Again, remember all My actions since the day on which I offered Myself to My Father to work out your redemption. O my Jesus, I will engrave Thy words deeply in my heart, and I will place Thy sweet name of Saviour in my thoughts and on my lips as a prayer of love. Thy self-abasement in the Incarnation is prodigious ; but in descending into my inmost heart, Thou hast descended into an abyss of nothingness. In the Incarnation, Thou didst unite thyself to our humanity,—in the Holy Eucharist, Thou art altered to the appearance only of bread. In that Thou didst assume the appearance of a slave, but in this Thou dost enter into the very heart of a sinner. In that Thou didst descend

once only into Mary, at the holy Altar Thou dost descend every hour, every moment. From Thy tabernacle, Thou dost behold me bewildered with ignorance and uncertainty,—Thou seekest me, notwithstanding my sinfulness ; when I answer not, Thy voice still repeats that consoling invitation, “Come to Me, all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

Behold me, Lord, at Thy feet ; dispose of me according to Thy will ; I resist no longer : for Thou art all-attractive to me,—the beauty of Thy holy Humanity, Thy sorrows, Thy wounded heart, Thy pierced hands, Thy head crowned with thorns, the torrents of blood that flowed from all Thy limbs. If Thou dost no longer shed Thy blood upon earth, Thou dost shed it in my heart. If Thou dost no longer suffer, Thou dost apply to me the fruit of Thy sufferings. If Thou diest no more, Thou dost offer for me Thy death as a sacrifice. And Thou dost give me always—to revive my courage, to confirm my confidence—Thy heart, Thy Body, Thy sacred wounds, and Thine infinite merits.

IV. *The Complaint of Jesus Christ.*

“Behold that heart which has loved men so tenderly, and is yet so little loved by them.” The heart of Jesus is a refuge which is ever open, but few souls enter there. The cause of this too frequent aversion is, that the door of this Divine heart is also a wound. Many people are afraid of wounds, of sufferings. We cannot enter into this Divine heart without sharing in some degree in its sufferings. His Blood flows ; it must be mixed with ours. We must be emptied of ourselves by humility and abnegation, before we are able to taste the joys of Divine love. O my Jesus, from Thy Cross, from the tabernacle, at Holy Communion, I have long heard Thee repeat those touching words : Behold My heart ; it is thine ; I give it thee to be the peace, the consolation, of thy life. But this precious gift cannot

remain inactive. Love is a flame ; it consumes every thing that approaches it. I must no longer live for myself, for by constant self-immolation alone can I respond to the greatness of Thy love. Enclosed in the Holy Eucharist, Thy heart must be the principle, the centre, the end and object of all my actions. It is content, as in the time of Thy mortal life, with the most complete poverty ; it asks of me nothing but my love. I will not refuse Thee my love, O Blessed Lord ; I will be obedient ; Thou shalt reign over me ; I will love only Thee, and such things as Thou shalt desire me to love in Thee. I will breathe only in Thee ; I will desire only Thee ; I will look at Thee alone. No more repose but in Thee ; no more joy without Thee ! Dispose me to perform such works as may be agreeable to Thy heart,—I shall purify them in acting under the influence of Thy hand, without fearing to spend myself and be spent in Thy service.

V. The Solicitations of Jesus Christ.

“I entreat you to perform some action, in order to console My heart.”

Ah, how much those words affect me, my Jesus ! What can such a wretched creature as I do to console Thee ?

In hearing Thy heart abase itself so far as to speak to me in the language of prayer, I feel a natural repugnance. But can I hesitate ? Speak, O my God, Thou who dost penetrate the most secret recesses of my heart ; dispose of all that I have, of my whole being. I am prepared for all, I am ready to do all Thou askest of me. I accept voluntarily, for my whole life, the sacrifices demanded of me by Thy love. May every Communion be a fresh contract entered into between Thy heart and mine, to insure to Thee the full and perfect possession of it !

Question yourself, in order to discover whether some sacrifice has not been long since demanded of you ;

whether you are not neglecting some secret inspiration of God ; whether there is not some work of charity or zeal in which you coöperate with coldness or unwillingness,—some act of virtue which you cannot make up your mind to accomplish. Be generous ; refuse nothing to God.

VI. *Venerate the Wound in the Heart of Jesus.*

“ One of the soldiers,” St. John relates, “ *opened* the Side of Jesus.” He made use of this word purposely, not saying that he *wounded* the Side of Jesus, but that he *OPENED* it, in order to enlarge the gate of eternal life ; “and immediately there came out blood and water” (John xix. 4). From this wound, we receive the Sacraments of the Church, without which we cannot obtain eternal life. The water was shed to purify our souls by the tears of penance, the blood to redeem and nourish them.

Do not be satisfied with fixing your mind upon the *sight* of this wound,—apply your *heart* to it ; enter deep into this Divine Side, and dwell in Jesus more than in yourself. His sufferings will affect you with something more than compassion ; for the feeling produced by the pains and sorrows of others is not without a mixture of love. If you love Jesus, you will sympathise with Him in His sufferings ; and if your compassion is lively, it will inflame your heart with still greater love.

Thou couldst never have been wounded by the lance, O my Jesus, had not Thy heart been first wounded by love. Having borne every other suffering, it yielded to its tenderness for me. Shall my heart,—which is so ready to sink under the slightest pain, which gives way to the most trifling attacks upon its self-love,—shall it yet be hard and impenetrable to Thy love for me ? If it will not suffer itself to be wounded by Thy heavenly darts, let it at least allow itself to be healed by them. It cannot be healed, unless it loves Thee ; and if it loves

Thee, can it behold with indifference the wound in Thy sacred heart?

VII. "*I sleep, but My heart waketh.*"

In the bosom of Mary, O my Jesus, it seemed as if Thou didst repose there for her alone; yet Thy heart was already preparing all the benefits of Thy mortal life, all the sufferings of Thy Passion, all the merits of Thy Blood, all the treasures of the Holy Eucharist.

In the holy tabernacle, Thy repose seems to be inaccessible; but, nevertheless, Thy heart, knowing how painful obedience is to my independent spirit, still watches, in order to be able to practise this virtue at the first word of the priest. Poverty and humility are revolting to my natural pride: Thy heart watches in the tabernacle, that I may there behold the Almighty hidden under the sacramental species: this is a Divine lesson of poverty and humility. Thy heart watches all night for my coming; when I arrive, it regards me with love. In the blessed moment of Communion, it descends joyfully into my heart. When I have received it, I retire filled with confidence,—I fear nothing; temptations may assail me, trials overwhelm me, the coldness and neglect of friends may fill me with bitterness, labour may fatigue me, sufferings overthrow and shake my whole being; but I do not fear,—Jesus *sleeps* in my heart, and His heart *watches* over me. He knows my difficulties, my sadness; He counts the sacrifices I make for Him; He watches over my feelings, to regulate them; over my faults, that He may aid me to conquer them; over my best actions, that He may sanctify them; over my whole life, that He may unite it to His own.

Ah, Lord, how ardently I love Thee! with what an overwhelming, sovereign affection! Penetrated with gratitude for cares so constant and so tender, I beseech Thee to suffer me in my turn to say, with unbounded confidence in Thy most sacred heart, "O my Jesus,

united to Thee, I rest in peace ; my heart will wake to bless Thee, and love Thee all the days of my life."

Conclusion.

Seek refuge in the heart of our Lord, which is our place of true repose. Enter it by means of the immaculate heart of Mary. Then try to remain in it from one Communion to another; and let nothing draw you forth from that place of refuge. In times of consolation, you will be there to enjoy it with Him,—in your weakness, to find in Him a sure support,—in suffering, to suffer like Him,—in your troubles and agitations, as well as in your times of darkness and trial, to find in Him your light, your anchor, your life.

When the soul has given herself up completely to the heart of Jesus, she reposes there in peace, as long as she does not wilfully retire from that Divine asylum; because, as the Sacred Scriptures inform us, God has established her in a firm hope, which shall never be shaken. Learn this by sweet experience.

SIXTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST FORMED IN US.

Preparation.

Our true life is in our Lord; He came into this world, He dwells in our tabernacles, only in order to give Himself to us more abundantly. He Himself said: "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life" (John vi. 55). Now, life is entire and complete only as it fills all the powers of the soul and

the bodily senses. Therefore, if we live by Jesus Christ, He must fill all our faculties, both exterior and interior. Holy Communion assists us to retrace in ourselves the admirable characteristics of His life,—humility, love, self-sacrifice, and zeal.

Let us submit ourselves to Jesus Christ, that He may accomplish His work in us ; let us endeavour to show forth in ourselves the features of His holy life—His spirit, His virtue, His self-devotion. Is it difficult to offer up to Him our wills, our actions,—in a word, our whole being,—for time and for eternity?

I. We must study the Life of Jesus Christ, that He may be formed in us.

Let us pass in review before us the life and actions of Jesus Christ, and the feelings of His heart during His mortal existence.

In His childhood, His humility in patiently suffering that state of abjection ; the simplicity of His relations with His holy Mother ; His patience in submitting to a long banishment from His country ; His love of shame and contempt. I may humble myself with Jesus, abjure the world, accept contradictions patiently ; but I shall not be able to become a CHILD like Him, unless He gives me grace to manifest in my soul the purity, the gentleness, and the docility of childhood, which virtues dispose us to receive still greater graces from God.

If we consider Him as amongst the crowd of people who followed Him, who wearied Him with ever-recurring importunities, we shall see that our Blessed Lord, ever patient, ever charitable, listened kindly to the desires of all, granted their requests,—“went about doing good,”—and consoled Himself for the ingratitude of the greater number of those who received His benefits, only by preparing to shower new favours upon them.

Towards the Pharisees and sinners, who misrepresented His intentions, criticised His actions, pursued Him with calumny and hatred, our Lord showed Himself

ever patient and gentle, striving to enlighten their minds. Forgetting their malice, He approached them with familiarity, so as even to take His meals in their houses,—suffering with joy their insults to His Divine power and heavenly doctrine, that He might convert *a few*, or place *one only* in the number of His Apostles.

If we consider Him in His conduct towards His enemies,—whom He loved and received with kindness, in the person of Judas consenting even to the profanation of the Most Holy Eucharist, by the first sacrilegious Communion, received from His own hand,—we find Him giving over His Divine Humanity into the power of His enemies ; and when they desire to call down the vengeance of God upon their guilty heads, our Lord, even from His Cross deprecating the Divine justice, excused and blessed them, saying: “My Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Let these considerations be deeply impressed upon your mind, let them influence all your actions, that so the image of our Blessed Lord may in some degree be reproduced in you.

O Jesus, a short reflection upon Thy life instructs me in the truth that poverty, humiliation, and sorrow followed Thee even until death, and yet that they have never been able to diminish the sweetness, patience, and self-devotion of Thy most sacred heart. The world cannot consider without a shudder Thy painful progress from Bethlehem to Calvary, and the lukewarm soul turns away her thoughts from those places where Thou hast manifested Thy love for us in such a wonderful manner. I adore these mysteries, I contemplate, I love them ; desiring, by the help of Thy grace, to honour them in my life and practice. And when I raise my eyes towards Thy tabernacle,—when I contemplate, in a new and still more touching mystery of love, the poverty, humility, and silence of Thy eucharistic life,—I feel a more generous spirit take possession of me, and I desire to deprive myself of every superfluity, that I

may offer them to Thee with reverential homage in every Communion.

II. *The Obstacles to the Life of Jesus Christ destroyed in us.*

Our Blessed Lord's design in coming to you is to attach you more closely to Himself; it is to transform you, for His Father's glory, into a new creature, by the attraction of those virtues which tend to mortify your evil nature. Holy Communion will effect this change by degrees, as it acts upon your *mind*, in disabusing it of its natural opinions, and demonstrating to it the truth of the Divine maxims of the Gospel; as it affects your *heart*, by fixing its affections on Jesus Christ, and thereby rendering them heavenly and spiritual in their nature.

In examining myself, I find that a very great obstacle to this supernatural life consists in the disorder of my thoughts, which are so opposed in their nature to the spirit of Jesus Christ. How shameful, after so many Communions, to find myself still subject to such dissipation of mind, such wandering thoughts! Thoughts of vanity: I imagine that I am possessed of talents which I really have not; I wish to be *something*, although I deserve nothing but shame and oblivion. Have I not often taken pride in the advantages attached by Divine Providence to my worldly position, as if they were due to my own merits? I must even be very careful that my vanity is not stimulated by the very elevation of my feelings in Holy Communion. Thoughts of intolerance to others: every thing in their words or actions is displeasing to me; while I fail to perceive that their feelings towards me are influenced only by charity. Thoughts of attachment to the trifles which I possess; desiring to procure for myself those which I see elsewhere. Thoughts of angry annoyance: when others contradict me, or seem to fail in respect or consideration towards me, I give myself up to sadness and discour-

agement, thereby plainly showing the pride of my heart. Frivolous thoughts: my too active imagination wanders into every place and time, without reflecting upon the *seriousness* of life. Inconstant thoughts: I am changeable in my projects, in my friendships, without regarding the indifference of persons, or the trouble their remembrance causes me.

Lord Jesus, I behold at once Thy sorrow at the sight of my faults, and Thy patience in bearing with them; Thy gentleness, and my secret resistance. I know not whether Thy mercy or my offences are the greatest in this retrospection. But in considering the depths of my wretchedness,—less profound, nevertheless, than my confidence in Thee,—I humbly venture to glorify Thy mercy, which displays this abyss of misery for my humiliation. I humiliate myself, then, with feelings more of love than of fear; do Thou assist me to regain the mastery over myself, to calm the tumult of my mind,—too seldom recollected in Thy sacred presence. I desire that it may henceforth be affected, not by the world, nor by the senses, nor by my passions, but by Thy Spirit alone, to whom I relinquish the empire of my soul.

III. *The Life of Jesus Christ formed in us by the daily Practice of His Virtues.*

In the Holy Eucharist, our Lord perpetuates, in your respect, the exercise of the virtues of His mortal life; He is always ready to forgive you, to lavish His benefits upon you.

Consider how He has acted towards you on such and such an occasion,—after such and such a fault,—after such and such an infidelity, into which, perhaps, you are still continually falling. What astonishing patience and mercy has He not displayed to you, and for your admiration alone! In the tabernacle, Jesus is present in your combats, He foresees your weakness and your falls; but He lays aside, out of pure love, the almighty power which formed the world, and He meets your

coldness and occasional irreverence with the unalterable majesty of silence and of peace. Your conversations ought to be the echo of the words He uttered during His mortal life; He spoke seldom, but always with modesty, reserve, and gentle charity. There should be no cowardice or effeminacy in your actions; perform all your duties with zeal and punctuality, knowing that the reward is promised, not to the *importance* of the works executed, but to the *manner* in which they are performed. Exclude entirely from your behaviour, even from the sound of your voice, all that bitterness, impatience, and harshness, which betray the action of the passions.

O my Jesus, in beholding Thy merciful condescension to my weakness and to the necessities of our souls,—when I see that Thou dost employ Thy whole life in bestowing graces upon us, while they rarely think of Thee, and seldom testify their gratitude,—will it be hard for me to obey Thy Divine command, to choose the lowest place, to consider myself as the servant of the poor and sick, and even to feel myself under obligations to those whom I have been able by Thy grace to benefit in any way, desiring that they should forget my services, or only regard me as the humble instrument of Thy Providence? In the hours of silence and meditation of which my life is now composed,—resigned entirely to Thy will, desiring nothing which Thou dost take away from me, detached from all earthly things, and resting only in profound recollection of mind before Thy holy Altar,—I will pursue the only aim and end of the Christian soul, detachment from all on earth, attachment to Thee alone.

IV. *The Life of Jesus Christ formed in us by faithful Coöperation with His Designs.*

All the actions of our Blessed Lord on earth were directed by a principle of grace. The Spirit of God was, as it were, the *soul* of His Soul. “I do nothing of My-

self," He said; "My Father, who dwelleth in Me, He doeth every thing with Me." How easy it is for us to reproduce this Divine union! I am going to Communion; Jesus Christ will be in me: can I not *think* with Him, *speak* according to His spirit, *act* under the influence of His grace? I must never go before Him, but await and follow His Divine leading and attraction. I must, therefore, suspend and mortify my natural activity in my *actions*, and in the *time* and *manner* of performing them.

I must apply myself diligently to all my duties and occupations, not only performing those which suit my tastes, but those which are most conformable to the will of God; and I must be ready to interrupt them, to quit them, according to the course of providential circumstances by which that Divine will is manifested to me: in a word, my only object in them must be to serve as an instrument in the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ, remaining indifferent and passive in His hand.

Three prerogatives are attached to this fidelity: (1), The Holy Spirit directs and guides the soul, not by fear, but by love; He leads it to employ itself freely, with joy, in the service of God. (2), The Holy Spirit prays in the soul "with unspeakable groanings" (Rom. viii. 26), with that ardent supplication which addresses itself to God as to a Father. (3), The Holy Spirit supplies the ignorance of the soul, and instructs her in that "love of Jesus Christ which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. iii. 19), which St. Paul desired for his converts.

He teaches her to know Him better, and to serve Him ever more faithfully. Under the influence of this Divine Spirit, the soul acts in perfect union with our Blessed Lord, coöperates in His designs, and achieves the work of her perfection.

O my Jesus, having spent Thy life on earth in perfect union with the will of Thy Father, Thou didst leave me, as if by legacy, that Divine virtue of obedience

which I find it so difficult to practise. Nevertheless, Thou dost still continue, in order to instruct me in it more fully, Thy life of outward obedience and self-immolation. Make me submissive and docile to Thy heavenly grace ; grant that I may faithfully repress the sensuality and pride of my evil nature, and that I may humbly submit to all Thy designs for my further sanctification.

V. The Life of Jesus Christ formed in us by the Practice of His Love.

The love of God is the life of our hearts ; let us derive that Divine love from its source in the Holy Eucharist.

Our Lord exercises a direct influence upon our souls ; but this mysterious influence acts only in virtue of our submission to its operation ; and it tends to produce perfect union with Him. St. John of the Cross thus explains this union : " It is," he says, " the resemblance which the will of man contracts with the will of Jesus Christ, so that the soul wills all that God wills, and rejects every thing that is not conformable to His will."

Desire, then, that life of love and union which receives its perfect increase in Holy Communion. O Jesus, I know that Thou art ever ready to pour down the fulness of Thy love upon those who ask it ; deign, then, to grant it to me. Sanctity is the fruit of repeated, energetic acts of love. If Thou dost refuse nothing to those who refuse nothing to Thee, then even slight voluntary infidelities would deprive me of the effects of Thy liberality. I ardently desire a great communication of Thy love. May I love Thee so much, that, for Thy sake, I may ever shun the commission of the smallest fault ; and may Thy name, O adorable Jesus, reign supreme in my heart for ever !

VI. *The Life of Jesus Christ formed in us by the Fervour of our Desires.*

In order that Jesus Christ may possess you fully, you must aspire after Him with all the powers of your soul : but, that this aspiration may ascend directly to Him, it must work in you a complete *void* for all that is not God ; for, without this, your aspirations will be directed to the objects which ordinarily occupy your thoughts. St. Peter teaches us how to do this : “ Offer spiritual victims ;” that is to say, the sacrifice of the heart. Prayer disposes us to make this sacrifice ; prayer also prepares us for Holy Communion ; and Jesus Christ Himself becomes the soul of our prayers.

O most sweet Jesus, I now desire to receive Thee with reverence and devotion, in order to merit Thy blessing. But when I consider Thy grandeur and my lowliness, I tremble and am confused in my own mind. I come before Thee poor and empty, beseeching Thy grace, imploring Thy mercy.

Lord, graciously receive my desire to give Thee that infinite homage which is due to Thy unspeakable greatness. Why can I not be so inflamed by Thy Divine presence, so transformed into Thee, that I may become one spirit with Thee, by the grace of intimate union, and by the effusion of ardent love ?

Lord, I desire to receive Thee with the utmost tenderness of which my heart is capable, as Thou wert received by the multitude of saints who were so dear to Thee on account of their pure life and fervent piety.

O my God, my only Good, I desire to receive Thee with all those sentiments of piety, respect, and love which inflamed the hearts of the greatest saints ; and, although my feelings are not so worthy as theirs, I still offer them unto Thee, hoping that they may be acceptable in Thy sight. Yes, my God, every thing that a pious soul can conceive or desire for Thy glory, I offer it to Thee with profound reverence.

Lord, I desire to receive Thee with as much fervour and zeal for Thy glory, with as much gratitude, love, and faith, as Thou wert desired and received by Thy Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, when the Angel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, and she replied with humility : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it done unto me according to Thy word."

O Jesus, Thou who art goodness and sweetness itself, grant to the poorest of Thy servants to feel, at least from time to time, some spark of charity, in order that my faith may be strengthened, that my hope may be increased, and that Thy Divine love, once kindled in my heart, may never more be extinguished.

It is in Thy power to give me this grace ; deign to admit me amongst the number of those souls who serve Thee with fervour of devotion. Amen.

Act of Thanksgiving.

When you possess our Lord, at once, by a lively faith, cast yourself down, and humble yourself profoundly in His presence. Could we ever descend to such a depth as that to which His love has brought Him down for our sakes ?

My God, is it Thou indeed ?—and who am I ?

Abase yourself ; annihilate yourself before the grandeur of these marvels that Divine love has effected in you.

The Almighty God has become *Emmanuel*, God with you—entirely yours.

Pay respectful, but tender and grateful, homage to the august Trinity : to the Father, who is giving you His beloved Son ; to the Word, closely united to you by the gift of His sacred Humanity ; to the Spirit of Love, who has formed the sacred Body that you have just received.

And then be silent ; pause—contemplate—admire—enjoy.

Afterwards, listen to our Lord ; He will often reprove

your soul ; He will, perhaps, humble it ; but only in order to lead it on, by degrees, to perfection.

Entreat Jesus to grant you such grace that all the actions of His life may become, as it were, naturalised in you.

I. *The Life of Jesus Christ in our Faculties.*

Regard our Blessed Lord in your heart, as on a throne of mercy ; and so condescending as to accept and receive.

You may then gently, and without any violence, bring your *memory* to His feet, and implore Him to cleanse it from the remembrance of earthly things, of resentments, of all useless or vain thoughts, and to fill it with the constant remembrance of God, of His greatness, of His mercy to us. Pause and review with grateful acknowledgment the particular graces you have received. St. Teresa says that, in testifying but little gratitude for God's benefits, we dry up the stream of His liberality, which should flow over our soul.

Passing on to your *understanding*, offer it up in homage to the Eternal Word, to Jesus, our Truth, our Wisdom. Implore Him to drive away from it all errors, all false reasonings ; to illuminate it with the splendour of faith, and to engrave upon it all the teaching of the Gospel. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill it with His gifts (mention especially those of which you stand in most pressing need).

Offer your *will* to our Lord. Entreat Him to strengthen it in virtue, to unite it always closely to His.

Offer to Jesus Christ all your senses : your *eyes*, that He may make them so clear and penetrating as to see God in all things and in all creatures, and that He may close them to sin, and to all occasions of offending Him ;

Your *ears*, that, being sealed to the enticing speeches of the world, they may be opened to the voice of God

alone, and to the concert of all created things that bless Him, sing His praises, and lead us to love Him above all things ;

Your sense of *smell*, that it may perceive in all places the perfume of the virtues of our Lord ;

Your sense of *taste*, that it may enjoy nothing, save with Him and for Him ;

Your sense of *touch*, that in all your actions, in every step you take, you may observe strict circumspection, modesty, and reserve.

This practice will place you in direct connection with Jesus Christ ; before you are aware of it, He will be formed in you. The first requisite for our advance in perfection is that we should come into contact with our Blessed Lord in every possible manner. Then the soul begins a new life, a life *hidden*, but *Divine*, which is preserved and which increases only in complete interior solitude, and is lost if it comes into contact with the world ; for the author of the *Imitation* says : “ As often as I have been amongst men, I have returned less a man.” May you not add, As often as I have mixed with the world, I have lost one degree of union with Jesus Christ, and consequently one degree of resemblance to His life ?

Lord, my Communion have up to this time been, as it were, only a kind of truce with the world ; I have not combated its habits, its mode of thought, that I might be invested with Thine, that my life might be formed after Thy Divine example. Thou desirest that I should live by Thy love, and that all my powers should be filled with Thy sacred presence. If I think of Thee, O my God, I shall love Thee ; and if I love Thee, I shall live by Thy love. The thought of Thee is the safeguard of truth and purity ; it is the school of humility and sweetness. Grant me grace to remember Thee continually, to bless Thee for ever and ever, in all sincerity and with my whole heart.

II. *The Life of Jesus Christ manifested in our interior Feelings.*

One desire, one sentiment only, filled the heart of Jesus: the love of His Father. To accomplish His will, to promote His glory,—with such objects only did His Divine heart accord.

He had neither fear, nor sorrow, nor joy, nor hope, save in God alone. He neither listened to His natural feelings nor to His repugnances, when they interfered with His transports of love to God. How shall my heart acquire the like feelings, that it may find its consolation in suffering for God, in the humiliations imposed upon it by God, in works worthy of the glory of God? Alas, during whole days I am unable to resign myself to the troubles of life, to the loss or to the absence of a friend, and I am little affected by the thought of the glory which, through these sacrifices, may accrue to God. I require all my faith to enable me to bear the burden of life, or to desire that the will of God may be accomplished. Has Jesus Christ, then, the first place in my heart? Is He its sole possessor?

O my Jesus, I confess with shame that I have begun too late to love Thee, and perhaps it is doubtful whether I have even begun to love Thee in sincerity at all. If I had only once entered far into Thy heart, as the *Imitation* teaches,—if I had once begun to taste Thy ardent love,—I should no longer think of my pleasures and my pains; I should rather rejoice in crosses and contradictions, because the love of Thee teaches a man to despise himself. I beseech Thee to calm my vivacity, to rectify and elevate my imperfect desires, and to drown all my repugnances and sorrows in Thy heart. Be Thou eternally the centre of all my motions. May I be everywhere and always a stranger to transitory things, lest I should be drawn away by them to irreparable ruin.

III. *The Life of Jesus Christ manifested in our exterior Actions.*

In approaching our Blessed Lord, I show that I desire the grace of perfect union with Him. Will this union be complete if, in my ordinary life, I exclude our Lord from my habitual daily actions? How, then, can I associate Him with these, unless it be by the greatest possible purity? Let me, then, observe, first, vigilance over my words: "The Anointed is the spirit of our mouth," said the Prophet Jeremias. Does it not appear as if he said this with reference to the soul that bears really within her the Body of Jesus Christ, and therefore must necessarily preserve a lively impression of Himself? Every one of my words ought to be the breath of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. I forget too quickly the happiness of Holy Communion, the great thoughts of faith with which it inspires the soul. I lose sight of that sacramental union, so frequently renewed, which fulfils that other word of prophecy, "We said that we dwelt under His shadow" (Sam. iv.); and as the substance is every where accompanied by its shadow, so I dwell under the shadow of Jesus Christ, who by His Spirit influences my life.

If this truth, so well calculated to excite my joy and gratitude, is the masterpiece of the goodness of God, then my actions ought also to be faithful *works of love*, worthy of being performed under the *shadow* of Jesus Christ. Let me consider well whether these thoughts imprint a corresponding character of special holiness on the employment of my days. Let me consider to what a pitch of greatness it would be possible to elevate my life. May I be very careful not to fall through voluntary unfaithfulness, and may I henceforth neither act, nor speak, nor think, nor even draw my breath, except for the love of God, and in His holy service!

IV. *The Life of Self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ reproduced in us.*

Let us consider these thoughts deeply and attentively. What was the prevailing practice of Jesus Christ during His life on earth? What is His permanent condition in the Holy Eucharist? After Holy Communion, what influence does He exercise over my heart? His life, whether considered as a whole or in detail, was formerly a perpetual sacrifice. His eucharistic life reproduces the same sacrifice with a perfection which surpasses all understanding, and this sacrifice is consummated in my heart in Holy Communion. If I love our Lord, my life will tend to His state of sacrifice by habitual determination, and I shall permit myself to be sacrificed by the hand of God in whatever way, and to whatever extent, He pleases. My life will be a sort of perpetual preparation for death,—for death is only the consummation of our *last* sacrifice.

Lord Jesus, it is in order to teach me to live in this state of death, that Thou dost immolate Thyself unceasingly in the Sacrament of Thy love. From Thy death upon Calvary until the day of eternal judgment, Thou wilt remain a constant sacrifice and immolation in the sight of Thy Father and of the world; and can I still refuse to offer unceasingly to Thee all my actions and sufferings? can I still hesitate to erect the *living* Cross of Calvary in my heart? Oh, no, my Jesus; in thus granting me to participate, by my life, in Thy sacrifice, Thou dost, to the eye of faith, confer on me a special grace, a peculiar blessing, a true consolation, which can be only effaced by undue contact with the world. I receive, with true thankfulness of heart, the chalice of sorrow presented by Thy hand; and if, in order to follow Thee still more closely, I am called to lacerate my heart with the thorns which strew the road to Calvary, I will think myself happy in being permitted to mingle my blood with Thine, and in offering up to Thee my tears, my sorrows, as a holocaust of love.

V. The Life of our Lord maintained in us by the Exercise of Zeal.

Jesus has given Himself to you in order to advance the glory of His Father, that He may continue, by your means, the labours of His mortal life. We must give ourselves, and all that we have, to the service of others, and render them disinterested assistance, from the sole motive of love to God and desire to please Him. This done, the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding (Phil. iv. 7), shall possess your mind and heart; you will pass into the enjoyment of that liberty which is the glory of the children of God.

I have prepared a lamp for my Christ; it is written in the Sacred Scripture. By this lamp is meant your life; see, then, that, by its works, it may always appear in the sight of the world as a living light, shining to the glory of God. This thought should be your guide in all the good works you undertake, or in which you are associated.

I am not perfectly free to select any good works which may appear to suggest themselves to me; there is some special employment which I am destined by God to perform, and which He will endow me with peculiar grace to accomplish. I must endeavour to find out the will of God in this respect, and to perform it with a view to His Divine glory alone, without any reference to myself, without being discouraged by the faults of others, or by the obstacles and annoyances I may be called upon to encounter. If I were tempted to abandon this providential calling, on account of its difficulties and trials, and to seek out one which God does not require of me, I should not *escape* my cross; I should probably find a still heavier one in my self-chosen path, without receiving the needful grace to enable me to bear it; I should find contradictions still more painful, though different in their nature: and in thus gratifying my own will at the expense of the will of God, I should obtain

less consolation, and, at the same time, less success ; I should lose the merit of a generous action, and the secret blessing of God, whose love to me, being of a supremely disinterested nature, requires from me, in return, a complete detachment from selfish considerations.

Lord, forgive my inconstancy, and the variableness of my intentions ; it is true that I desire to please Thee, and to contribute to Thy glory, by *such and such* works that I perform ; but the opposition of men, and my own indecision, quickly disconcert my good intentions. I acknowledge that, in renouncing some good work which I have commenced, because of the interference of others, and taking up another which seems to be more under my own control, I am seeking the satisfaction of my own self-love, and preferring my own ease to Thy glory. Thou dost not act towards me in this manner when Thou dost grant me rich graces, notwithstanding my frequent unfaithfulness. May the remembrance of Thy mercy encourage me to persevere in good works, and to hope for a special blessing upon that one in particular which offers me the smallest natural consolation !

VI. *Some practical Observations.*

It is very easy to make rules for our act of thanksgiving, but we ought rather to be careful to allow our souls great liberty in this respect. The Holy Spirit breatheth where and when He will. Generally, it is better to follow faithfully the inward attraction of our souls. When your heart makes no suggestions to you in Holy Communion, you must not be astonished. The fountain is not dried up ; but our Lord is pleased to close it at this moment, because He wishes us to seek for it. In these moments of dryness, cast yourself in silence at the feet of Jesus, recollect yourself with deep humility, or employ yourself in the consideration of some of the titles of our Lord, which may be connected with Holy Communion, in the spirit of thanksgiving and prayer,

having recourse to Him as your Brother, Friend, Father, Consoler, Life, and Light.

Do not forget, however, that this dryness of spirit, especially in Holy Communion, often arises from the preoccupation of our minds with ourselves and the things of this world ; it is often caused by some passion which keeps the soul under its subjection, or by leading a slothful life, devoid of energy in God's service ; sometimes, also, by allowing ourselves to fall into little, ordinary faults and imperfections, which prevent us from perceiving the Divine sweetness of our Lord.

Pray earnestly to Jesus Christ to give you, by His Holy Spirit, an increase of strength in your inner life, that you may be rooted in charity, and may be enabled to render your life a continuation of His sacred life on earth.

Lord Jesus, I beseech Thee to preserve and increase in me the spirit of Thy life, which Thou dost love to shed forth in our souls as the fruit of Holy Communion. By this Divine life will the kingdom of God be established in me, that kingdom which Thou dost teach us to ask for every day. May Thy love sanctify my heart, govern all my actions, and effect in my soul a marvelous transformation !

Conclusion.

Frequently cast a glance at the Divine person of our Lord ; and, as the Word directed all the movements of the members of His sacred Body with the greatest possible perfection, so the same Word, entering into you in Holy Communion, will regulate and direct, not only the interior powers of your soul, but also the exterior actions of your whole body, if you entreat Him earnestly to do so. Ask Him for grace to approach as closely as possible to the manner in which He performed all His actions, and to become, by the holiness of your life, an expression and image of His Divine Humanity.

SEVENTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE COMING OF OUR LORD.

Preparation.

"LIFT up thine eyes, for thy Light is come," says the Prophet Isaias, "and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee. While the darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people, the Son of God shall arise upon thee as the dawn of day, and the brightness of His glory shall be seen upon thee. The people shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord" (Isaias lx. 1-3). And the coming of the Saviour, of which the Prophet speaks, will teach us "the work of the glory of God." Study this work with confidence and love.*

I. *"The Word was made flesh."*

Where does the Word of God repose, now that He is come down to sojourn upon earth? The Angel of the Lord will point out to you the place of His abode. In the most lowly part of the poor and humble city of Bethlehem, "You shall find an Infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger" (Luke ii. 12). Ages have come and gone since then, and still, throughout the course of centuries, all nations have adored their God in that mysterious cradle. But between heaven and Bethlehem, between the infinite perfection of God and our extreme misery, there is still a central point

* The following Exercises are either taken from the life of our Lord, or are founded upon some of His discourses, because it seems useful in Holy Communion to recall to mind the admirable example He has left us.

It will be easy for the pious soul to consider all the Gospel, and even religion itself, with reference to the Holy Eucharist, which is the *centre* of the whole system.

which unites these extremes in another humiliation, another littleness; for Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, is always hidden and always annihilated, even as He was at His birth. How opposed is my conduct to the lessons taught me by the Manger and the Eucharist! The essence of humility is in submission and dependence: can I, then, nourish in my mind feelings in opposition to the law of God? During my whole life, I have frequently performed actions of which I could foresee neither the dangers nor the consequences. I have adopted worldly and selfish principles of action, and even such as were contrary to reason; I have formed rash and hasty judgments; I have considered my feelings, and the actions of others, with regard to my own vanity or prejudice, rather than according to their worth or demerit. Is it surprising that I have gone astray? I have refused to follow the example set before me by those who are possessed of true humility; I have, perhaps, even felt contempt for them, and placed my confidence in the deceitful promises of the world. What a sad and humiliating retrospect!

O Jesus, henceforth I will strive to honour Thy profound abasement by the exercise of the deepest humility, and, casting myself aside, to confess, before the Crib of Bethlehem, my utter incapacity to render due reverence to this wonderful mystery. I promised Thee in Holy Communion, O my Jesus, to reform the whole course of my life; but shortly afterwards, I fell back into inconstancy and unfaithfulness; I no longer perform my actions with the single view of Thy glory, and I suffer pride to fill my heart with vain and selfish desires. I beseech Thee to grant that, in beholding Thy humility at Bethlehem and in the tabernacle, I may be drawn to practise that Divine virtue in my life and conversation.

II. *The Coming of Jesus Christ to Bethlehem.*

It was not without a special design that the Son of

God, in entering into this world, chose to take the very *lowest place*; for can any thing be more wretched than a stable? Man, by his pride, destroyed that habit of loving intercourse which, in his days of innocence, he had been accustomed to maintain with God. Jesus restored this intercourse by means of His humiliation. In abasing Himself, the Word restored to fallen man his former greatness, and opened once more to him the path to heaven. "Listen," says Isaiah; "the Lord has spoken." He first preaches to us by the humble Crib of Bethlehem, and He next addresses us in these amazing words: "Blessed are they that suffer! Blessed are the poor! He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." But the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle to utter an oracle more surprising still: "Jesus Christ humbled Himself," he says; "*for which cause also* God hath exalted Him" (Phil. xi. 9). He assigns to humility the privilege of serving as the foundation of the glory of Jesus. The soul that has not understood some part of this Divine mystery will not be able to comprehend the secret of the true greatness of our Blessed Lord. It is only by stooping to the practice of the most humble virtues, and by hiding ourselves and all our actions from the sight of the world, that we can hope to aspire to God.

O Divine Child, in Thy presence I confess and lament my self-love. A saint has told us that it is possible to commit even a hundred acts of self-love in one morning. Humbly confessing my pride, my ignorance, and my weakness, I will strive earnestly to acquire that treasure of humility which is fully dispensed by Thy blessed hand. Shall I receive Thee, O Jesus, without understanding Thy objects in becoming Man for us, without enjoying the happiness of humbling myself after Thy example? When wilt Thou inspire me with ardent love for Thy sacred Infancy, and with a *passion* for self-abasement?

III. *The mysterious Coming of Jesus Christ upon the Altar.*

Upon the Altar, all the wonderful and gracious works of the Incarnation are renewed. The life of Jesus Christ was, as it were, a solemn Mass, which began in the Crib at Bethlehem, and was completed upon Calvary, after the Consecration had taken place in the Upper Chamber. May I not think, in like manner, that this holy sacrifice, continued amongst us, receives its consummation in our hearts in Holy Communion?

I will no longer envy those happy shepherds who were permitted to adore the Holy Child ; I behold Him upon the Altar, confined within still smaller bounds than when He lay before them in the Crib. But as, when God made known to them His holy will, they left all and hastened to Bethlehem, so I will suffer nothing to occupy my thoughts before Communion, save the blessedness of receiving my Lord. I will lay aside every thought of business, all worldly affairs, and my heart shall ardently sigh for the hour of the Holy Sacrifice. Nowhere can I be so near to heaven as before the Holy Altar ; nowhere else can I come into such frequent intercourse with the blessed spirits of heaven. The Angel soon quitted the shepherds, and they were left alone ; but I come to my Saviour, blessed in the happy certainty that He will never leave me. I shall soon possess Him whose humble messengers the angels were ; I shall be united to the God who became weak and humble only in order to excite my love.

If the angels are filled with fear and reverence in the presence of our Lord, with what profound humility must I not approach Him ! What shall I say to the King of heaven, who is about to be born in my soul, who permits me to bear Him away in my heart ?

O my Jesus, Thy greatness and power are evident upon the Altar to the eyes of my faith, but they appear

to me in a still more touching manner in Holy Communion, when I behold Thee in a state of greater abasement than even in the swaddling-clothes of Thine Infancy, accepting, in order to dwell in me, a humiliation visible to the eyes of the whole world. Thou dost not now come to save me : Thy birth in the stable at Bethlehem was sufficient for my *salvation* ; Thou art come to seek for my heart, to deposit in it the pledge of the eternal heritage which I shall receive from Thee, if I maintain my faith and hope unto the end. Love is the support of these virtues ; and as nothing inspires our hearts with greater tenderness than the sight of helpless infancy, Thou dost invest Thyself with its most touching graces, in order to render my love more sweet and confiding.

IV. *The Coming of our Lord in my Heart by His Love and Mercy.*

As the time of His birth drew near, our Lord desired still more earnestly to manifest Himself to the world. So, as the precious moment of Communion approaches more closely, still more tenderly does Jesus invite you to come to Him. The world offered Him a *Manger*, which He accepted because He was burning with desire to partake of our wretchedness. He also chose the *lowest* place, when He desired to enter into your heart ; enter, then, fully into all the designs of God's Providence in your regard, whether He places you in a *high* or *low* position ; it matters little, provided that His hand conducts you, and that He abides there with you. Offer Him your heart, as a cradle wherein He may repose, and clothe Him with the acts of virtue which you perform, as with spiritual swaddling-clothes. Let love and hope reign in your heart.

O my Jesus, in Thy Divine glance, in the accent of Thy voice, in all Thy actions, Thy intense love for us is hinted at rather than fully expressed. Thy silence in the Crib at Bethlehem is the sweetest manifestation of Thy love. Now, O Lord, I feel that I am beloved,

and I desire to love in return ; but I also see that it is necessary to descend even to the stable, that we may learn to know the God of the Eucharist. The Crib of Bethlehem was the commencement of Thy reparation for the sins of men ; it was the prelude to the great sacrifice on Calvary. O my Saviour, I will always be holy and little in the sight of men, if thereby I may approach nearer to Thee. I beseech Thee to enlarge my littleness, in which Thou art about to dwell in Thy Divinity.

V. The Joy experienced by the faithful Soul in the Coming of our Lord.

“The Word was made flesh,” St. John says. More than this, at the Altar He becomes a Victim. In giving you Jesus Christ, God admits you to a share in His eternal occupation of contemplating His Divine Son. Can there be any favour comparable to this, or can God Himself raise you to a higher dignity ?

If humility is necessary to enable us to behold the secret majesty of the Crib at Bethlehem, mortification is especially so for those who would taste its secret sweetness. Jesus does not dwell in the soul that is cowardly and vacillating in God's service, nor in the soul that has not the courage to travel to Bethlehem in the cold winter's night,—that is to say, the soul that does not dwell in the constant practice of recollection, silence, vigilance, and abstinence from worldly vanities and pleasures. More than this, we must be poor, before we can receive the hidden riches of poverty. The world has this treasure in the midst of it, without being aware of it. Oh, the incomprehensible misery of not knowing Jesus Christ ! How few hearts are able to find Him in the tabernacle !—because very few watch strictly over themselves, and prayerfully await the time of His coming upon the Altar ; few listen to the voice of the angels who summon the faithful to admire with them the wonderful works of the Lord.

Enter with purity, simplicity, joy, and love into the stable where dwells the living Sacrifice. The heart of the Infant God brings us close to heaven.

I hear the song of the angels, O my God ; give me grace to come to Thee, as did those happy shepherds who were called by Thee. I shall not find the Infant at Bethlehem visibly present at the holy table, but I shall be nourished by His sacred Flesh and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament. I shall be able to say of the tabernacle, as St. Bernard said of Bethlehem, that it is also a "House of Bread," where Jesus offers us, in His own person, the Bread of Angels.

I hear St. Paul invite the faithful to rejoice with holy joy before the Altar, "for the Lord is nigh." This invitation makes me very happy, O my Jesus ; for I desire nothing so much as to receive Thee ; and I pray that I may not lose Thy immense graces, through my vain and wandering thoughts. Deign to descend into my heart, where I will ever praise and bless Him whose power invisibly fills these abodes with glory and majesty.

VI. *The Desire of Mary to behold our Blessed Lord.*

How great was Mary's desire to behold the Divine Child, so ardently longed for by the patriarchs and prophets ! Partake in her desires, as you are privileged to partake in her happiness ; desire to possess our Lord, as the Holy Virgin possessed Him in her bosom, in her arms. Desire to behold Him with the eyes of faith, as she beheld Him in the stable, subject to all the infirmity and suffering of our mortal nature. Offer humbly to God your ardent desire to extend to all nations, to all people, the knowledge of the Messias.

To supply the defects of my preparation for Holy Communion, I offer Thee, O Jesus, the faith, humility, and love of Thy holy Mother, at the moment of Thy birth. Look at her immaculate heart, that loved Thee so tenderly ; receive, as for me, the profound adoration

it offers to Thee; sanctify my heart, into which Thou art about to descend, even as Thou didst sanctify the heart of Thy most holy Mother, that it may become an abode well pleasing unto Thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

The Divine Child is in your heart. Adore Him with a most profound feeling of His perfections both as God and man.

"Steal from Him one of His little tears, to cleanse and perfume your heart," says St. Francis of Sales.

Suffer Him to fill all your faculties, so that He may be present, not in your heart only, but in each one of the powers of your soul and body.

Make your understanding an altar consecrated to the Incarnate Word, and sanctify His image by humility and simplicity.

Enter into the secret thoughts of the heart of God, of which Jesus Christ is the incomprehensible mystery, hidden during all the ages that preceded His birth.

With what profusion of light is not this mystery now revealed to your heart!

In Holy Communion, God grants to you a participation in His paternal prerogatives, by permitting you to find in His Divine Son the *centre* of all your thoughts, affections, and desires.

I. "*Behold your God!*" (Isaias iv. 9.)

Contemplate in yourself, united in a mysterious alliance, "Jesus, God and man: that is to say, strength and weakness; majesty and abjection; Jesus reposing in swaddling-clothes in His Crib, yet shining with Divine glory; He is born in a stable, angels proclaim His birth, kings adore Him, the world rejects Him, and the heavens point out His resting-place by a brilliant star." As God, He sustains the universe by His almighty power,—but, as a feeble Child, He is borne in the arms of His Mother; as God, He is the splendour of the

saints, and yet He is born in obscurity; as God, He is the Author of all knowledge, and yet He is silent. In the Blessed Sacrament, all these wonders are more marvellous still; and, in your heart, are they not still more affecting?

In the stable, the angels behold with reverential awe the hypostatic union of the Word with human nature, so inferior to their own. They are witnesses of the union which Jesus Christ now contracts with you; it excites their astonishment and admiration—they would be envious of it, if envy could enter heaven.

O my Jesus, as Thou art one with the Divinity by unity of essence, one with our nature by Thy Humanity, unite me also with Thy holy Childhood, by that true littleness which is the fruit of humility.

O my God, I fall prostrate and adore! I should not dare to consecrate myself to Thee; but, since Thou didst not disdain to come down into the stable, and afterwards to enter into me in Holy Communion, I beseech Thee to abide still in this poor heart, for it is Thine, and it loves Thee. I accept, together with the graces brought into my heart by Thee, the first condition which Thy gracious coming imposes upon me; that is to say, voluntary abasement of my mind. By this voluntary abasement, I shall acknowledge Thy annihilation, and render Thee fitting thanks for it.

II. "*A Child is born unto you.*"

These words were not spoken to the great, the noble, the wise men of this world. The Angel addressed them to the poor and humble shepherds, thereby giving a fresh proof of the love of poverty and humility so divinely exhibited in the birth of our Saviour.

Consider whether Jesus is born in your soul. Do you love poverty? Are your thoughts humble? If these sacred characteristics are impressed upon your mind, Mary will intrust her beloved Son to you, and will suffer you to carry Him in your heart.

It was not, then, enough, O my Jesus, to come and dwell amongst us ; with still more wonderful love, Thou didst desire that my heart should become the cradle in which Thou shouldst undergo a new birth, and recall to my remembrance Thy tears, Thy Infancy, Thy sufferings, the cold and nakedness of Thy first abode. Oh, how dear to me, Lord, are all these characteristics of Thy holy Infancy ! but how poorly does my life reflect them ! Love of self is ruining me. Grant that, by the daily exercise of self-abnegation, I may become flexible without weakness, meekly submissive to my superiors, and may my actions be ever in harmony with Thy holy example !

III. *He is your Model.*

Our Lord chose a stable rather than a palace, because, in the sight of God, a stable is better than a palace : this is an incontestable fact. His humility and poverty in the Crib at Bethlehem enlightened the world with a ray of heavenly light. How many virtues were revealed in this Divine advent ! This Child, so weak and frail in appearance, speaks, by His whole being, in tones of instruction to our souls ; His very silence speaks. Jesus could not deprive Himself of His Divine essence ; but He left His eternal throne in heaven, and came into this world, having given up every thing, even all that He has bestowed upon us. From the severest cold of winter, He is hardly protected by a few swaddling-clothes, a little straw. He will grow up amidst poverty and privations, and His life will terminate in a condition of utter deprivation and destitution, in the midst of which the majesty of His virtues will shine even more brightly than ever before.

I behold poverty so complete, so absolute, and yet this is my God ! For my sake, He has renounced His home and country, even the cradle which the poorest child is permitted to enjoy : in Him I see nothing but nakedness, privation, entire destitution. Oh, may my

heart comprehend the suffering hidden in these words ! may I be able to love this suffering for the love of Jesus !

Poverty and destitution : these are the treasures opened to us at the crib of Bethlehem, and in Holy Communion. This is the standard displayed by the pilgrims on the path to heaven : it is from the stable that Jesus issues to point out the direct road thither.

From the stable He calls me to place the spirit of voluntary poverty in my heart by the side of humility ; and when that Child, now become my Guide, entreats me with tears, and extends His arms as if He desired me to receive Him in my own,—I am conquered ; and, pressing Him reverentially to my heart, I feel, with thankful joy, His love gain an easy victory over the attractions and sensuality of the world.

My God, do Thou dispose of all that I possess, for I am Thine. May Thy poverty be my treasure ; may it imprint the seal of Thy birth upon my heart ! I embrace, freely and willingly, the share of suffering and sacrifice which may be imposed upon me in the ordinary course of events ; I will also impose privations upon myself, and, in imitation of Thy Divine example, I will retrench all superfluity in my expenses, that I may be able to do more good to those who resemble Thee.

IV. *He is your Saviour.*

Every thing in the stable is mean and obscure, that so the incontestable truth, that the world is saved and transformed only by the almighty power of God, may be more clearly manifested. The Infant Jesus, lying in the Crib of Bethlehem, attracts both shepherds and kings to Himself, by His Divine virtue alone. Let us not deprive Him of His simple swaddling-clothes ; for, between the cradle and the Cross, His love will resume them again in the Holy Eucharist.

“ The Crib,” says Bossuet, “ originated the holy table. Our Blessed Saviour chose to be adored in the

one, and received by the faithful at the other. All in this little Child is love. Love shines in His tearful glance, but brighter still does it appear in the Holy Eucharist, where He makes Himself still more poor and little for our sakes. In the Crib, He had His Mother's tenderness; in the tabernacle, He seeks for mine. Has it not often failed Him there?"

O my Jesus, the sight of Thy engaging childhood was, in itself, a great happiness; to possess Thee is a far greater one, which produces in my soul a secret confidence, a sweet familiarity. I venture to kiss Thy sacred feet, where the place of the nails, which shall pierce them through, seems to be already indicated. I adore Thee in the Crib, the symbol of Thy humility, and I implore Thee to grant me the blessings which it brought upon the earth; but, above all, I adore Thee in the Divine Sacrament, which Thou didst establish in order to continue in our hearts the marvels of Thy first advent. Thy love, in the Blessed Sacrament, appears most tender and most incomprehensible; deign to impart to mine a character of devotedness and humility.

V. *He is your King.*

In beholding the cradle of Jesus, His original majesty is easily to be divined, and no one can approach it without feeling the attraction of something far above this world, without experiencing an emotion of pure and tender joy, a Divine influence which leaves a most profound impression upon the heart. Never suppose that the weakness of Jesus is powerless. He is King in the stable as surely as in heaven, and extends over the universe the sceptre of His Divinity. The crib is His throne, poverty His riches, His first sorrows are the signs of His strength and power. He teaches us that He has come down amongst us, not in order to array Himself with human splendour and greatness, but rather to tread them under His feet; and of all earthly signs of

royalty, He accepted none but a crown of thorns. Born to suffer, He died to reign.

Lord, if Thou hadst remained in heaven, who could ever have ascended to Thy throne? and if Thou hadst come down to earth surrounded by clouds and lightnings, who could ever have dared to approach Thee? But now, following Thy footsteps along the path of humility, fleeing from worldly esteem, I shall find grace to seek, with ardent prayer, the sacred possession which was known to Thee alone; I shall acquire the virtue which enables man to triumph over the love of himself. Unite me as closely to Thy humility as Thou art united to Thy Father, and grant that I may think and feel like Thee. Grant me strength to wage perpetual war with self-love, to disdain all created things; and, carried away by Thy love, may I be enabled to rise entirely above this mortal life! By this generous impulse, may my soul be disengaged from all human possessions, and wholly detached from every thing that has not received a blessing from the Holy Child!

VI. *Behold your Saviour: "I come," said He, "to bring fire upon the earth."*

In the stable, Jesus glorified His Father in His humiliation, and already concerted with Him the plan of man's redemption, which had been in contemplation from all eternity. He thought then of me, and spoke to His Father of my salvation. In order to continue His mission among men, let me, as far as possible, direct all my conversation to the interest of God and of souls. Let there be no bitterness in my speech; since I bear in my heart its Master, whose voice was so full of sweetness and power, some portion of His strength and unction should be expressed in my conversation, so as to attract the hearts of men to holiness and virtue.

Where can I obtain, O my Jesus, this zeal for the salvation of souls, if it be not near Thy humble Crib, where Thy Divine heart first beat with burning aspira-

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EXERCISE FOR HOLY COM- MUNION.

THE LIFE OF JESUS.

Preparation.

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deeper or more profound influence,
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And why does its secret influ-
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tions of love? As I hear Thee say to Thy Father, with the profoundly earnest accents of love long repressed in its outward manifestation, "Behold, O my God, I come to save their souls," then I also offer to Thee, O Lord, this ardent zeal for souls even in my poor heart, where Thou hast too often taken the humiliating repose of the Manger. I feel that it is enkindled by that sacred fire which Thou didst bring into the world, and that it springs from my earnest desire to repair my past coldness and indifference to Holy Communion, my sad want of gratitude for so sweet a favour. This incessant desire consumes my life; and finding nothing in myself which is able to satisfy it, I desire, O my Jesus, that a multitude of souls may open their eyes to that great light with which Thy coming enlightened the world, and that Thou mayest be glorified in their faith and love.

Lord, my heart is not insensible to the wonderful mystery of Thy birth. Often at Thy feet I shed tears full of sweetness, when Thou dost animate me to unite my prayers and exertions to Thy constant efforts to enkindle the light of faith in the souls of men. Make me thoroughly comprehend that Thy habitual presence in the pious soul ought to be, as it were, a focus of grace and love, so that she may communicate to others the zeal which Thou dost excite in her, and the benediction with which Thou dost reward her humblest efforts.

Conclusion.

God glorified the advent of our Blessed Lord in three distinct ways: by His power and miracles, by the sanctity of His life and death, by the Holy Spirit which He sent down after the resurrection. In elevating our nature to its supreme height, by uniting His Humanity to the Divinity, Jesus predestined it to poverty, humility, and to the Cross,—the very lowest degree of abasement. The predestination of the holy Humanity of our Blessed Lord is the example of mine. If I am amongst

the number of the elect, I must be predestined to a life of labour and suffering. There is then for me, as well as for Jesus Christ, a double predestination,—a predestination to *glory*, which is the **END**, and to the *Cross*, which is the **MEANS**.

The first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is accomplished: I am receiving its blessed fruits of mercy; but every day I draw nearer to His second coming to me, for which I ought to be making preparation. If I receive continually in Holy Communion the necessary graces, I shall be enabled to reproduce, in my poor and humble degree, the virtues of the birth of our Blessed Lord; and if I meekly receive His lessons of poverty, humility, and love, Jesus will become my Brother, my Friend, my Example, and I shall no longer fear Him as my Judge. If I imitate Him faithfully, God will be faithful in rewarding me; for I have a guarantee for His fidelity in my present union with His Son.

EIGHTEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS.

Preparation.

AMONGST all the actions of which our life is composed, there is not one more complete, and at the same time more hidden, than Holy Communion. Not one marks our existence with a sweeter or more profound influence, not one leads us more powerfully to hide our life from the eyes of the world. And why does its secret influence tend thus to envelop in mystery the course of our existence? It is because Jesus Christ buries Himself

in our hearts in Holy Communion, and thus extends the mystery of His life over all our actions.

I. *Jesus at Nazareth.*

When Jesus appeared on earth, it was in the shades of night, on the straw of the Crib, in a poor, neglected stable. As He grew up, under the care of Mary and Joseph, he was still unknown. The house at Nazareth hid His Divine person, as it were, under a thick veil. Having attained to the age at which the powers of the mind and body are developed, Jesus still preferred the practice of submission to the exercise of His power. Ever an obedient Son, He piously obeyed His Mother's commands; He constantly rendered to God due homage by His prayers and His continual recollection of mind. He accomplished His mission in teaching us to practise silence, humility, and self-renunciation, in all the ordinary relations of life. Let me ever seek to attach my memory, my intelligence, my will, firmly to Jesus; to preserve in my heart, like Mary, the grateful remembrance of all the wonderful things that He has done for me, and to review them with feelings of adoration and love; to meditate upon His constancy in the practice of virtue, and His spirit of abnegation, which never deserted Him for an instant.

Lord Jesus, profoundly touched by the example of Thy life at Nazareth, I love to think of that humble abode, where so many virtues flourished unknown to the world, where they were hidden from all eyes by such amazing humility. Grant that my life, being, even as Thine was, divided between prayer and works of duty and charity, may thus become an habitual preparation for Holy Communion. Every position in life imposes certain duties upon us, which may be sanctified by Thy example; they impose upon my soul the necessity of an internal effort, but which I cannot make without Thy assistance.

II. *The hidden laborious Life of Jesus.*

Our Blessed Lord, who was to leave us in His Passion the model of every kind of suffering, included also in His *hidden* life every description of painful and laborious work, by which He could humiliate His human nature; but, in order not to discourage us by so elevated an example, He lived, as to His outward life, in an ordinary manner.

In Joseph's humble workshop, He paid the debt of our idleness by His continual laborious industry; submitting patiently to the numberless requirements of persons who scornfully employed the humblest artisans, He bore perhaps their unjust reproaches, and received a hardly earned pittance from their unwilling hands.

Compare the perfection of all the faculties of the Lord Jesus with the manner in which He spent His time, humbly employing every hour of the day in manual labour. Must He not, then, have suffered a living death in all the faculties of His mind, in the light of His glorious intelligence? What a lesson for us!

But I must pause here. This Divine picture appears to me complete; God could not give me a more perfect example for my instruction, nor inspire me with a more fervent love of poverty, of labour, and of annihilation of self. Nothing can be more noble, more Divine, than this! If I was not born in poverty, it was because God did not think me worthy to bear such a close resemblance to His Divine Son. His penitent life expiated the forbidden pleasures in which I have been accustomed to indulge; His fatigues, my idleness and self-indulgence. In His long prayers and night watches, and in His frugal meals, He expiated my sensuality. In His frequent fastings, He remembered my delicacy and love of ease, and He laboured for my salvation; while I, perhaps, am thinking only how to pursue the path to destruction. O my Jesus, forgive me. Henceforth, with the help of Thy grace, I will perform due penance for

my sins; it shall be of such a nature as to rule my senses, passions, and conversations, to cut off all occasions of sin, to mortify my self-will and attachment to my own opinion, and to teach me to accept contradictions patiently. There is no danger in performing this kind of penance, for it is difficult to go too far in it: fallen nature fears it too much; but, by Thy grace, I shall be enabled to persevere.

III. *The Humility of Jesus of Nazareth.*

This virtue seems more profoundly exercised in His hidden life at Nazareth than even at His birth. "Jesus Christ suffered then the double humiliation of being hidden from the world, and being known to the poor and lowly," says Bossuet. "He thus reproves our pride, which prefers complete obscurity to a life of mediocrity." Consider the teaching which results from this extreme humility. Our Blessed Lord resembled the poor in His way of living, and spent long years amongst them. This was because their condition presents fewer elements of natural corruption, and more direct means of working out that expiation which He came on earth to accomplish. Their condition being characterised by simplicity, labour, and obedience, preserves them from presumption and from the extravagances of vanity; neither pomp nor ostentation is to be found in it. Our Lord, in His hidden life, proclaims aloud that He desires to find in us, not so much penetration and intellectual culture, as docility and humility,—virtues proper to upright souls, which are little in their own eyes, and submissive in all things to the Divine will.

It is painful, O my God, to immolate ourselves in silence, to die to ourselves, without hoping to occupy any place in the memory of men. How happy should I be, could I penetrate the secrets Thou dost unfold to the humble souls that approach Thy holy table! There Thou dost instruct us how to attack our self-love in its most secret strongholds; to desire, instead of gratifying

it, to live to Thee alone. Grant me innocence, heartfelt peace ; teach me the science of humility, which, says the Prophet, is " the road of life." That science, O my God, will lead me straight to Thee.

IV. *The Beauty of the hidden Life of Jesus.*

The hidden life leads us to an interior separation from all finite things, and prepares the abode of God in the soul by grace and Holy Communion ; it also beautifies this abode in His sight.

This hidden life is the guardian of purity, the bridle of sensuality, the school of order, sorrow, labour, and simplicity ; it is the path of perfection.

The Holy Spirit says that, in the privacy of Nazareth, " Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and in grace with God and men." What a revelation is contained in these words ! and what wonderful virtues,—hidden, indeed, here below, but admired in heaven by the holy angels !

It is true, Lord, no human eye beheld that unspeakable mystery, no hand has ever yet raised the veil which hid the brightness of Thy most lovely life ; but in the tabernacle equal perfections are revealed, together with a manifestation still more wonderful of humility, mercy, and love. Every day, from the glory of Thy Father Thou dost descend upon the Altar at the utterance of one priestly word ; never dost Thou weary of Thy prodigious self-abasement. And can I still shrink from this hidden life ? O Jesus, give me, I beseech Thee, in Holy Communion, what I can never find in myself. If my strength is feeble for good, because of my fallen nature, do Thou increase ever more and more Thy grace in my soul—not such grace as was granted to those of Thy saints who were called to the performance of great and heroic actions, but the grace possessed by so many souls who were hidden from the world, known to Thee alone, and destined to a silent and noiseless sanctification, and to an unknown life passed in doing good.

V. The hidden Life of Jesus in our Souls.

The contemplation of the hidden life of our Lord ought to be sufficient in itself to attach us closely to those virtues which He practised during thirty years ; but it is no longer for us a remembrance only. Jesus still continues the works He practised then, and multiplies them in His tender love for our souls. If His person is invisible in the tabernacle, it is clearly seen in His actions. In Holy Communion, the soul possesses God as its Example and Guide.

The operation of Jesus Christ upon my inmost soul pursues me every where. I find it in the remorse that weighs upon me, in the sorrow that purifies me, in the holy inspirations that excite my love and fervour. Have I not felt a Divine ardour, such as the disciples at Emmaus experienced while Jesus was speaking to them ? Does He not open the eyes of my understanding to discern His will ? Though invisible to my bodily senses, He still speaks from the tabernacle. If I listen attentively to His heavenly speech, shall I not find Him as quickly as the disciples did, who lost Him again even in the act of recognising Him ?

O Jesus, since Thou dost still dwell in the Holy Eucharist, the misery of those unhappy souls who depart from Thee in this Blessed Sacrament does not deprive any one of the power of approaching it, because it is offered to all. The multitude of those who receive it with fruit, shows plainly that it depends upon myself to obtain its blessings. Interpose Thy sacred presence between the world and my soul, that it may hide from her the sight of all things earthly, lest I should be tempted to waste my affections upon them ; and when, in my necessary employments and occupations among outward things, I begin to take pleasure in them for their own sake, then recall me to Thyself, concentrate my inward vision upon Thee alone, and may the dwelling-place of my heart be ever at Thy sacred feet !

VI. *The hidden Life embraced by the Soul.*

As Jesus Christ, that He may approach more closely to the soul, daily changes His glory into the lowliness of the Blessed Sacrament, so the truly humble soul "aspires to descend," out of love for Jesus Christ, in whom she contemplates humility carried to its utmost limits : if, then, you are free to choose, show your love to Him by selecting a humble and hidden life.

"The pious soul profits by silence and repose," says the *Imitation* ; she grows strong in humility. Far from the tumult of the world, separated from all that can make a barrier between herself and God, she aspires to a degree of holy familiarity with Him. She comprehends these words of the *Imitation*, "It is better to remain hidden while working out our salvation, than to work miracles while we are neglecting ourselves." If you wish to derive any real benefit from your learning and knowledge, take pleasure in remaining unknown, and in being counted as nothing in the world.

O my Jesus, my heart longs earnestly to be united to Thee. Where can I find Thee more frequently or more certainly than in retirement and obscurity ? I will enter with my whole soul into the silence of Nazareth. The hidden life has been Thy chosen mode of existence for eighteen centuries in the Holy Eucharist, and yet I am afraid to imitate it ! Duty, which is a continual sacrifice, will now become easy to me, since Thou dost so frequently become my food in the Holy Eucharist. I shall express to Thee alone the comfort I derive from Thy sacred presence,—and yet I will not make my heart a winding-sheet in which to hide Thee from every eye ; rather, blotting out my own self in the exercise of charity, I will present Thee to the world as living invisibly in me. The contradiction and ingratitude of men shall not affright me ; I will bear it in silence, for Thy love. Lord Jesus, withdraw me from vanity, that, forgetting the world, and detached from all earthly

things, I may live to Thee alone. When I behold Thee, for my instruction, persevering in the hidden life of the tabernacle, and still drawing me into closer union with Thyself, my heart bursts forth with a song of love and thanksgiving, and aspires ardently to that obscurity which shall preserve this heavenly fervour in my soul.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord, like the angels, with reverence and love. They endeavour to supply, by their adoring homage paid to the Sacred Host, the loss which His Majesty appears to suffer through His kindness and love to you. Jesus listens to the heart into which He has just descended. Speak to Him with humble confidence ; unite yourself with His feelings of submission and humility when He was hidden in the holy house of Nazareth.

Jesus, who loved the workshop of St. Joseph, desires that you should endeavour to conform your manner of life to the true Christian standard of simplicity and modesty.

I. Jesus hidden in the Tabernacle.

Our Lord could not wait till the end of our lives before revealing Himself to us. He gives Himself, in order that we may not be unacquainted with Him. He hides Himself, in order to reserve the contemplation of His glory for our life in heaven.

What astonishing love is displayed in the thought which retains Jesus in the tabernacle ! The impenetrable mystery in which His Majesty is shrouded, teaches us to reserve for the eye of God alone the secret of our virtues and good works.

Remembering, O Lord, that the memory of man is often faithless, Thou dost live in a hidden manner in the Sacred Host, so as to perpetuate the touching spectacle presented in Nazareth. There, docile to the voice of the priest, Thou dost ever obey, Thou dost offer up

incessant prayer; there Thy heart overflows with love for us; there Thy hand blesses those who insult as well as those who adore Thee; there Thou dost suspend the thunderbolt of Thy wrath,—and the storm, designed to terrify the sinner, sheds refreshing showers upon the tender plant in which Thou delightest. How many tears are shed under the shadow of the tabernacle! there every mercy is dispensed to us; no gift is ever refused; the love which fixes Thy abode amongst us veils Thy glory, O Jesus; but the holy table reveals to me a glimpse of the sweetness of heaven. The certain way to attain this happiness is the accomplishment of Thy will; always invisible, yet ever near me, Thou dost aid me to embrace it. If I am not able to contemplate Thee, yet I hear Thy voice uttering a cry of love, to waken us from the sleep of egotism, which makes us blind and deaf to every thing unconnected with our own self-interest. I will unite my voice with Thy Divine accents, which bring down the grace of forgiveness upon earth.

O my Jesus, it seemed as if in the Cross thy love had found its most complete manifestation; but it is not so: for Thy generous heart gives greater blessings still in Holy Communion, which I now approach in order to receive Thee. I seek Thee no more in Bethlehem, nor even on the Cross. “My heart,” says St. Bernard, “is now the cradle in which Thou dost repose, the desert where Thou dost pray, the sea which Thou calmest with a word, the Upper Room where Thou dost take the Paschal feast with me, the tomb into which Thou dost descend, never to leave me more. Nowhere art Thou so completely hidden as in my heart, and nowhere do I adore Thee with greater love.”

II. *The hidden Life.*

In the presence of a hidden God, resolve to practise humility; united to Jesus, ever immolated for your sake, practise silence, and possess your soul in charity in the

midst of trials. United so closely to the God who knew not where to lay His head, you should have great esteem for poverty, and the sacrifices which it imposes upon you. Permitted to receive His adorable Blood, watch closely over all your words and senses, that you may imbibe the holiness of His life: if you find the task hard, and feel your courage fail, has not the Blessed Sacrament inspired the weakness of your nature with a strength that is Divine? Jesus hides this strength under the cloak of your misery, because you must never forget that He is able to withdraw it from you by the slightest exercise of His power, and that you are sustained by His mercy alone. Suffer not the presence of your Saviour in you to be unfruitful.

In every state and condition of life, it is possible to imitate Thee, O my God. If Thy grace assist me, even the lowest position cannot prevent me from edifying my neighbour by the purity and regularity of my behaviour, or from making the best use of my time by employing it for the benefit of Thy poor. In the Holy Eucharist, Thou dost ever labour to procure my salvation, and to assist me in aspiring to Thee: that which Thou dost perform out of love to me, I will do to others from motives of duty and gratitude.

III. *The hidden Life a Means of spiritual Progress.*

Jesus lived only thirty-three years upon earth, and of these He passed thirty in obscurity. During this long space of time, by not a single word or act did He reveal to the world His majesty and glory: His mercy formed, for my instruction and salvation, that wonderful union of greatness and humility.

Two conditions are necessary, in order to develop the virtues of the hidden life: we must love obscurity, and avoid all idleness in mind, soul, and body. The soul that is idle or dissipated lays up no treasure for eternity. Be careful not to seek repose in your retirement, and never to undertake the work of your sanctifi-

cation in a spirit of self-love ; such a work would not be that real advancement in holiness which David so justly calls the "progress of the heart." That progress consists in regulating our whole behaviour with prudence ; in wisely esteeming all things at their proper value, according to their relation to time or eternity ; in speaking with discretion ; and in striving to reach the full maturity of reason, guided by faith. Such was the progress of the heart of Jesus. Labour filled up every instant of His hidden life,—not only labour undertaken as a salutary recreation, but that hard, fatiguing work which men perform to gain their living : His bread was watered by the sweat of toil. In this state of humble dependence, He edified all around Him by His wonderful modesty and patience. The Gospel adds, that "He grew in wisdom and age, and in grace with God and men." Thus our progress depends not so much upon the nature of our actions, as upon the interior spirit by which they are animated.

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that true progress in virtue consists neither in spiritual joy nor in human consolations, but in our humble acceptance of the duties and trials of our daily life. I may think of Thy state in the Holy Eucharist, as of Thy Passion, that, if there had been any means of testifying more love to me, or of granting me more favours, Thou wouldst have embraced it : therefore I also, to show my love to Thee, will cheerfully bear, as emanating from Thy Divine will, the most painful duties which my condition imposes upon me.

IV. *Obstacles to the hidden Life.*

The greatest obstacle of all is pride, which, according to the profound wisdom of Ecclesiastes, is nothing less than apostasy—that is to say, refusing to give obedience to God. If you admit pride into your soul, you exclude love and obedience to our Lord ; and in loving yourself, who are but nothing, you expend the best and

noblest powers of your soul upon emptiness and vanity. Consequently, you degrade yourself, and fall away to a great distance from God. Every movement of which Divine love is not the principle tends in that direction.

Study your heart attentively, in the presence of our Lord ; follow its most secret motions ; acknowledge that you never pass a single day without committing some act of pride, without taking pleasure in some secret feeling of vanity. Even Holy Communion itself, instead of inspiring you with the most profound sentiments of humility, may perhaps suggest something of a vain complacency to your mind. Shall the Holy Eucharist serve as food for your pride, when the gifts of God augmented the humility of the saints ? The first fruit of your union with Jesus Christ ought to be regret for your pride, as you behold it in the light of Divine grace.

Lord, pride is deeply rooted in my soul. Hardly have I entered on the path of virtue, than I imagine that I am already far advanced in it, and begin to compare myself with others. Show me my mistake ; grant that I may perceive the imperfection of the good that I have accomplished, and, still more, my inability to complete what remains to be done. My works of charity, if deprived of Divine grace, so far from increasing the life of my soul, will rather diminish it ; for, as Bossuet tells us, " they are only external to us," and, like an outward vestment, they add nothing to my merits. I confess, O my Jesus, that, notwithstanding my ignorance, I frequently desire to appear wise ; recall me, I pray Thee, to the practice of silence and humility. I thank Thee for placing me in an obscure position, which saves me from many dangers ; our falls are dangerous in proportion to the abundance of favours which Thou dost bestow upon us. Save me, I pray Thee, from such a fall, O Lord !

V. The Difficulties of the hidden Life.

The hidden life would offer celestial sweetness to the soul, if it were able to enjoy it peaceably; but, on earth, it is ever the hour of warfare; we bear within us the germ of evil inclinations, which we must strive to extirpate. This strife, patiently persevered in, leads us to perfection, and sanctity consists in performing all our ordinary actions perfectly. St. Ignatius, in an expression of most concise energy, discloses to us the secret of attaining to great sanctity: "Instead," he says, "of endeavouring to *ascend* to a superior degree of virtue, strive earnestly to perfect yourself in your own." Let us apply this lesson to ourselves whenever, through self-love, we accept with impatience the position in which God places us, and also when our heart feels an attraction towards something to which it has no legitimate right to aspire, when our present life weighs heavily upon us, or when the remembrances of the past, no less than apprehensions for the future, darkly overshadow our days with clouds of bitterness and sorrow. An over-active imagination is an obstacle to peace in the hidden life. Do not put much confidence in that species of continual labour by which we exhaust our strength in gracious projects, while we are wanting in ordinary courage and activity in our common duties. Repress the activity which seeks to expend itself in exterior efforts, and causes you to waste your strength in actions which do not at all tend to the advancement of your spiritual welfare.

The silence of the hidden life is painful to self-love. It is difficult to renounce all hope of shining in this world, and yet obscurity is often a means of obtaining for the soul many special graces. Consider if God has appointed that your life should remain involved in silence and obscurity; so great is our vanity, that we would sometimes rather be criticised than entirely forgotten by the world.

Let me not deceive myself as to my own thoughts,

my desire to be esteemed and valued. I must interrogate myself in the presence of our Lord, with the full persuasion that, unless I can free myself from the dominion of self-love, my soul cannot be entirely His.

O Jesus, who, by an incomprehensible mystery, didst not suffer that any of the Jews should confess Thy Divinity, when Thou wert in the humble house of Nazareth, permit not my soul to be blind to Thy presence in the Holy Eucharist. Dissipate the clouds of worldliness which have gathered over my understanding. Thy gifts to me are complete, but I have made no adequate return for them. I have dispersed them, or rather rendered them useless, by corresponding to them so ill. Lord, notwithstanding my unfaithfulness to grace, which I bitterly deplore, I calm my great uneasiness by reflecting rather on Thy love than on the severity of Thy judgments. Bless the resolution which I now make, of striving to imitate Thy hidden life, in so far as my position will allow me. I desire ardently that this day, and after each Communion, I may bring with me from Thy holy table more love than imperfections, fewer faults than acts of virtue ; and that, passing from the recollection of favours bestowed upon me this day to that which I hope to receive on the next, I may be ever occupied and absorbed in God.

Conclusion.

In the womb of Mary, and at Bethlehem, Jesus was in the full possession of all the faculties of mature age ; notwithstanding this, He lived in a manner so hidden, that His very name was unknown upon earth. " The world knew Him not," says St. John. At Nazareth, His existence was equally unknown.

Such ought to be your life after Holy Communion, so hidden in Jesus Christ that He alone may behold the virtues you endeavour to practise, and so completely unknown to the world that you have no longer any existence in its eyes. In this humble obscurity and

immolation of your own nature, offer yourself to the Lord, and, according to the assurance which He gave the Prophet Isaias, "His will shall be in accordance with your own." When can the will of Jesus be so completely in accordance with your own as in this moment, when, entering into the closest union with Him, your very life is absorbed in His?

NINETEENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE DWELLING-PLACE OF OUR LORD.

Preparation.

Two disciples of St. John, hearing the holy Precursor speak of Jesus in these words, "Behold the Lamb of God," followed Him. Our Lord, turning round, questioned them, and said, "What seek ye?" They said to Him, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Jesus said to them, "Come and see." How much touching instruction is contained in this short recital!

I. "*What seek ye?*"

To what a number of distracted, dissipated souls, ignorant of the most important truths, are these words addressed! What is the object of their efforts, their ambition, their life? And what are *you* seeking every day?

In this present moment of preparation for Holy Communion, if Jesus were to address these words to me, should I be able with truth to say that I am seeking Him, and Him alone? Am I more occupied with thoughts of His glory than with the desire of my own consolation? Should I not be filled with confusion,

if, seeing my distractions in prayer, He were to say to me, My child, your thoughts are wandering elsewhere. Is it your God that you are seeking here? Are you seeking to advance your soul in true piety, to obtain the grace of a closer union with My meek and humble heart?

Happy shall I be, O my Jesus, when I seek Thee in the narrow way of humility, mortification, and patience. I have never yet feared to seek Thee in the Holy Eucharist, to taste the sweetness of that Sacrament of love. I love its consolations; but I fear the labours, the abasement, of the little house at Nazareth.

Nevertheless, my God, I am seeking Thee in sincerity; my soul in the early morning aspires to Thee, and, forgetting earthly things, says, with the pious author of the *Imitation*, "Who will give me to find Thee alone, to open my whole heart to Thee, to enjoy Thee, as my soul desireth; that no one may henceforth despise me, nor any thing created move or regard me; but that Thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and a friend to be entertained with a friend!" I desire to be entirely united to Thee, to withdraw my heart from the affection of creatures, and to learn more and more, through Holy Communion, to enjoy heavenly things. Pause and consider piously the sentiments expressed by these words.

II. "*Master, where dwellest Thou?*"

When grace begins to move the soul, the first desire with which it inspires her is to seek Jesus Christ; the second, to attach herself to Him permanently. The disciples had followed Jesus Christ in the world; they now desired to see Him in His private abode. These simple words will tell you how highly you have been favoured; for, from your earliest childhood, the house of Jesus Christ was open to you, and never, at any period of your existence, were you refused admittance to His sanctuary. Come and enjoy its sacred pleasures; He

is Himself sufficient ; He alone is the repose, the peace, and the consolation of those who seek Him with an upright heart.

Lord, it is one of the permanent effects of Thy wonderful mercy, that it is no longer possible for us to seek Thine abode. Thy sanctuary cannot be unknown to the faithful soul. Can a daughter not know her father's house, or a wife that of her husband? Every day my eyes contemplate "the place of Thy love," as it is called by the Prophet Osee. One or two days spent by the Apostles in Thy little house at Nazareth was sufficient to attach them to Thee for ever; and for me it is enough to behold the Altar where Thou dost daily offer Thyself up in sacrifice. Have the words which Thou dost address to me from the tabernacle engaged me irrevocably in Thy service? If my soul were really animated by a lively faith, then I should never more leave Thee; at all hours of the day penetrating in thought and in desire to Thy sanctuary, I might enjoy Thy Divine converse, sharing in the favour Thou didst bestow upon Thy disciples: they entered at eventide into Thy house; and "that marvellous night," says St. John Chrysostom, "filled them with such wondrous light, that they were able henceforth to attract other souls to follow Thee with them."

O my Jesus, Thou art truly my Beloved, chosen above ten thousand (Cant. v. 10), in whom my soul desires to dwell all the days of my life. Thou art my Peace,—in Thee is found true rest; out of Thee, all is labour, pain, infinite misery. Nowhere can there be found more misery than in me; but, after all my wanderings, confidence still brings me back to Thee.

III. "*Come and see.*"

What simplicity and affability are displayed in this invitation! Jesus Christ invites you, without waiting until you come to ask Him. How does your heart reply?

Jesus says to me, as once to the happy disciples whom He invited to His house, "Come." But, Lord, where wilt Thou have me to go? To Bethlehem, to honour the poverty of Thy birth by spending a humble life of outward privation? No; Thou hast placed me in an independent and honourable position in the world. To the desert, to live in solitary recollection, silence, and separation from creatures? No; Thou hast left me in the world, that I might sanctify myself there by the practice of virtue. To Calvary, to offer Thee great sufferings, endured in a life of penitence and mortification? No; Thou permittest me to use Thy gifts with gratitude, with sobriety always, but still with such freedom as suits my condition in life. It is to Thy Altar that Thou dost call me, O my Jesus, to feed me with Thy Flesh and Blood, to unite me most closely with Thyself. Since I cannot always remain near Thee, in the holy tabernacle, Thou permittest me to bring Thee away with me in my heart from Thy holy table; for it is in me that Thy kingdom shall be established, according to Thy word, "The kingdom of heaven is within you" (Luke xvii. 21). In Communion that mysterious kingdom is begun, which shall be finally consummated in heaven.

In Thy mortal life, O Lord, Thou hadst but one fleeting abode. In the holy tabernacle, it is limited to the duration of time. But I behold in heaven that eternal dwelling-place which Thou hast prepared for me. What conditions dost Thou attach to its possession? "If any one love Me," Thou saidst, "he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make our abode with him." Consoling expectation, which finds its accomplishment even here! In Holy Communion, *I* am thine abode; I enjoy already the true possession of my God. O my Jesus, deprive me, if Thou wilt, of every earthly good, for the expiation of my sins; but never deprive me, I beseech Thee, of Thy sweet presence in the most Holy Eucharist.

IV. *"Come and see."*

What did our Blessed Lord show to the disciples who followed Him? One of the poorest houses in Nazareth, completely destitute of every thing that I have been accustomed to consider as amongst the necessities of life.

Jesus desires me to accustom myself to His poverty, to love it in my heart. He has voluntarily chosen the poverty of the tabernacle; and to please Him, I ought to disengage myself from all earthly things. When I enter a very poor sanctuary, I adore with reverence our Lord hidden in the Sacred Host; and, considering the glory which surrounds the throne of the Incarnate Word in heaven, I admire, I revere on the Altar, the lowliness of the holy Victim. Why should I not likewise manifest my love to my Lord, when He hides Himself in the abodes of extreme poverty? I will seek Him amongst the poor; I will employ myself in doing them good. "In this sick man, whose existence seems but a shadow, I will behold the temple," says St. John Chrysostom, "where Jesus is to be adored." The hand of the poor man is the altar upon which I will lay my sacrifice, when I deprive myself of some pleasure in order to feed and clothe Jesus Christ in His suffering members. That Word, "who has taken my nature, hides Himself beneath this tattered clothing, to receive the alms I give to that poor beggar."

Lord Jesus, the faith that beholds Thy presence in the tabernacle, perceives Thee also in the persons of the poor; and the great secret of true charity is to honour Thy presence under both these veils. Ah! grant that my love may be so lively and so tender as to lead me to seek Thee in the abodes of the poor, to render such service as may be acceptable to Thee in this Thy state of renewed weakness and poverty. Let me never forget that Thou didst "empty" Thyself, taking the "form of a servant;" then shall I indeed be ashamed to foster in

myself that vanity which is the most convincing proof of my original corruption. Grant that I may never profane Thy gifts by ascribing their merit to myself.

V. "*Come and see.*"

Our Lord desires to show me the poor home in which He spent so many years in laborious occupations, that He may thereby excite my love to make a pleasing abode for Him in my heart. But what care is demanded of me in the construction of this spiritual edifice, in which I hope to place my God ! If, after hearing these words, I continue to work idly, often intermitting my efforts, and perhaps often demolishing the work I had just with difficulty completed, how guilty shall I be ! May I not say, with the feelings of the Prophet-king, "I will not come into the habitation of my house, nor go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, until I build in my heart a dwelling-place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the mighty God of Israel" ? (Ps. cxxxiii. 3, 4.) By this dwelling-place is intended an assemblage of virtues ; and because I love Thee, O my Jesus, I will do violence to the repugnances of my nature, I will eagerly embrace every opportunity of mortifying it, that so I may manifest more clearly my love to Thee.

VI. "*Come and see.*"

Never was so powerful an appeal made to man, as that which was addressed to us by our Lord from His Cross on Calvary ; but never was so *sweet* a call heard as that which issues from the Most Holy Eucharist. From the tabernacle Jesus still calls, Come and see ; I do not now invite you to visit the house of a stranger, I call you to enter into an intimate union with Myself. Come ; you are My temple, in which I love to dwell, until My love shall consummate, in eternity, that other glorious union to which you are permitted to aspire. Now see whether this temple is worthy of My Divine Majesty ;

remembering, that always and in all places you are, by baptismal grace, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. Be careful not to profane it; avoid not only serious faults, but the very slightest stain, lest I should abandon it to destruction! Your soul is the work of God; let your heart be soft and yielding as wax in His hands, so as to retain the form which He imprints upon it. Preserve that docility, lest you become hardened, and lose the graces impressed upon you by His sacred hand.

My heart—this is the abode that Jesus desires to occupy. His love was not satisfied with possessing it in eternity; He comes to share with me the short pilgrimage of my mortal life. How wretched would be our exile here on earth, were it not for the Blessed Sacrament! To mitigate the troubles of my sad life, by giving Himself to me, is the aim of my Blessed Lord; and to accomplish this end, no sacrifice seems hard to Him. Holy Communion is the climax of His humility, as it is also the full satisfaction of His love. To enter into the closest union with me,—this is His only desire. The homage and pomp with which the Church surrounds His sanctuary affects Him little. He, who is Himself the beauty of angelic worlds, desires only to annihilate Himself for me. What can the vain pomp and lustre of the ornaments of this world do for me? How can human praise and glory affect me any more, when, for my sake, Jesus disdains the triumphs of heaven? Lord, I beseech Thee to root out of my heart all thoughts of self, all resentment, secret bitterness of feeling, rash judgment, jealousy, contempt,—this constant self-seeking and self-pleasing. May Thy paternal hand purify me; may it wound, in order to heal me more surely! I feel that my best efforts will be unfruitful, unless Thou dost Thyself form in me an abode worthy to receive Thee. But, above all things, never permit me to oppose any resistance to Thy Divine operation. Lord, give to Thy child a docile and submissive heart; attract me by Thy sweet and efficacious grace.

Thou art ever gentle to us, remembering that in the beginning the heart of man was created free, and that it can only be gained by love. It is for this that Thou dost speak so sweetly in the Gospel, and that Thou dost sum up all the ineffable sweetness of Thy whole life in the Most Holy Eucharist, only to impress it the more deeply upon our hearts.

In coming to me, Thou concealest Thyself under humble appearances, O my Jesus, and Thou dost lose even these in entering into my heart. I must, then, love to dwell with Thee in silence and retirement, to be counted as nothing, hoping for no glory save the happiness of a glance from Thee.

Adore our Lord invisibly present in you. Nothing escapes His notice,—not one thought of your heart, not a sigh, not a single glance.

Act of Thanksgiving.

The kings of the earth are at home wherever they condescend to remain for a time. Those whom they honour with a visit, resign to them immediately their authority and their rights. Leave to Jesus the absolute mastery over your soul.

Acquiesce lovingly in His Divine will.

Remain, like Mary, collected, silent, absorbed in love, at the feet of Jesus Christ, hanging on His words and looks.

Listen, as He says to you, "Abide in Me;" "Rest in My love;" and reply, that it would be impossible for you to live, deprived of His grace and love.

Ask of Him that His presence may ever be your only joy, and His absence your only cause of sadness.

I. The Dwelling-place of our Lord is my Heart.

When our Blessed Lord takes up His abode in the soul, He drives out of it all terrestrial things; He desires that, casting away all thought and care for the *nothings* of this world, her thoughts should be directed

to God alone, her actions worthy to be regarded by angels, her words always pure, and her conversation in heaven.

Would it be difficult for me, had I a lively faith, to think continually of Jesus, who has now become the Divine Guest of my heart, and observes all its inclinations, to ascertain if He indeed reigns there with undisputed sway? Our Lord, in taking up His abode in my heart, has placed Himself in the very centre of my life, for the purpose of giving a celestial impulse to my whole existence. Have I faithfully submitted to His Divine influence, and obeyed His heavenly inspirations? Am I wont in all my conversations to have His sacred name continually upon my lips, to perform all my actions for His glory? One who is frequently admitted to the privilege of Holy Communion, should often consider that his best and noblest inducement to the constant practice of virtue and holiness is the desire of doing all for the love of Jesus alone.

Virtue consists in the constant effort to accomplish our duty. Nothing is so acceptable to our Lord as our courageous exertions in His service. Let me examine myself seriously. Have I this good will? Is my virtue genuine? Have I formed it by the steady performance of my duty, and strengthened it by constant efforts to conquer my natural defects of character? Let me endeavour to continue the practice of virtue with the purest intentions, to avoid the wilful commission of any fault whatever, and to be very careful to make amends for those into which I fall involuntarily. Let me observe this watchfulness and fidelity, as a sure means of enabling me to make a good Communion. Jesus seeks the pure heart. If He seeks it, it must be because He loves it. If He loves it, He will remain in it for ever.

O my good Master, I beseech Thee to form that pure heart within me, in which Thy presence shall ever reign. I adore Thee, now really present within me.

O my Jesus, Thy love grants me this favour, Thy will perpetuates its effects.

I adore and praise Thee with the angels, who share in my happiness and my thanksgiving.

The dwelling-place which Thou hast chosen is poor, confined, full of imperfections ; but I beseech Thee, regard only the sincerity of my intentions, and my ardent desire to render it more worthy of Thy sacred presence.

II. *The favoured Dwelling-place of our Lord.*

The suffering heart is the abode Jesus loves the best. There He beholds the sorrowful image of His crucifixion, and unites Himself to it as to another self. Suffering, no less than love, is a chain by which God binds us fast to His side. It is, perhaps, even a stronger chain than love, because hope is more necessary to it. God, who is at once the object of our desires, and the end to which we aspire, places hope in the inmost recesses of the suffering heart, like the rainbow in the midst of the storm, to bear witness that we shall not be for ever submerged by the tribulations and trials of life. If our hearts are compelled to submit to justly deserved afflictions, it is still our Father's hand that inflicts chastisement, only to console us afterwards with the greater tenderness. Have we not all felt, in the midst of our bitterest grief, a stream of sweet consolation flowing into our hearts from the hand of God Himself, at the very instant when comfort seemed impossible ? In all our trials, God beholds with complacency our increasing resemblance to Jesus crucified, and the labour which accomplishes in us those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ ; for by suffering we are made partakers of the Passion of our Lord, we participate abundantly in the merits of the Cross. In Sacramental Communion, God gives to me, and the gift which I receive is Himself. In suffering, which is a communion in His sorrow, it is I who give to God, and He receives

a gift of my own substance. My whole being is now sacrificed with Jesus ; my will consents, and takes up the sword which is to immolate my evil nature. In this state of suffering, the behaviour proper to the Christian soul consists in resigning herself completely into the hands of God a thousand times a day, that the work of sanctification may be fully accomplished in her. I will offer up my sufferings to God as a living sacrifice. All the offerings made to Him upon the altar at Jerusalem were sacred in His sight. Thus, when, cast down and overwhelmed with suffering, we offer ourselves fully to God, He regards us as victims, whose sacrifice is pleasing to Him, and our hearts as the sanctuary in which this oblation is offered.

Yes, I confess, O my Jesus, Thy most severe chastisements are inflicted by a loving and paternal hand. I have seen the ravages committed by death ; and in the desolation around me, my grief has been so excessive, that I could hardly hope to live : and even then—must I confess it?—I was afraid to feel my grief diminish ; I could not bear to lose the living memory of past times which had been so dear to me, until Thou didst take pity on me, and didst come and pour consolation into my soul, in the same measure as Thou hadst before afflicted it. I will now willingly make the sacrifice of every thing to Thy love.

III. *The Tabernacle the visible Dwelling-place of our Blessed Lord.*

Our holy religion is a centre of love, of which the tabernacle is the focus. In this perpetual abode of Jesus upon earth, an idea is contained which I have, perhaps, never as yet comprehended in its full extent of tenderness and love. Jesus dwells in my soul by His grace, in my heart by Holy Communion ; but I may lose His grace, and His sacramental presence within me is of very short duration ; and yet He does not depart. How does He, then, still remain with us ? His love has

pitched His tabernacle amongst us, as a tent which is not heaven, and yet is no longer earth, whence He can always share in our trials, visit our hearts, heal our wounds, and prepare, when the combat is ended, a place of repose for our souls in the bosom of God. This temporary abode, where Jesus dwells, reminds me that I have no permanent abode here on earth ; it is an oasis in the desert, where I am permitted to rest in the shade, and where I receive strength to enable me to pursue my journey to the end. Wholly occupied with our interests, Jesus seeks only to conduct our souls in safety to His eternal abode. Alas ! it is through our fault alone that His desires are too often ineffectual, his designs so often fail. Man, ever occupied by material interests, greedy after honours and pleasures, has little hesitation in placing the barrier of wilful sin between himself and the path which leads to the tabernacle and to heaven. What suffering does it not cause the heart of Jesus when a soul, for whom He has laid down His life, loses grace, gives up the purchase of His Blood to the devil, and rushes fearlessly into the midst of eternal misery ! In the sight of God, he is dead. Like a phantom which assumes the appearance of a living man, such a soul loses even the remembrance of its original dignity, and the light which it still retains is not sufficient to enable it to perceive the depth from which it has fallen, to which it has sunk. Then, from His abode in the tabernacle, Jesus endeavours to save it from utter ruin. Preventing grace surrounds that soul, and, by arousing remorse, strives to excite a feeling of repentance, which shall bring it back freely to God. Ah ! if it approaches the tabernacle, it will be saved ; for no one can do so without experiencing a secret impression of the heart, which recognises and renders homage to the secret presence of God.

Do I well understand Thy object, O my Jesus, in thus choosing a dwelling-place here below ? Do I cooperate in Thy designs ? When I come to the tabernacle

to obtain fresh courage for the strife, do I not often indulge a desire for solitude and rest?—whereas, Thou art never weary of labouring for our happiness. An earthly sovereign often forbids his subjects to enter his palace; but I am permitted freely to approach the Lord of Hosts, am never harshly received. The Jews placed upon the sepulchre, where the sacred Body lay, a seal, which rendered access to it impossible. But from the tabernacle we are never repulsed, when with humble desire we make our earnest appeal to the ever-fervent love of Thy sacred heart.

I bless Thee, O my God, when that wondrous word is pronounced which draws Thee down upon the Altar in the hands of the priest. How fervently do I thank Thee for not only suffering me to witness daily this miracle of love, but for calling me to share in the benefits of the tabernacle, when, like so many others, I might have been for ever ignorant of them! To declare my gratitude to Thee, I will borrow the words of St. Augustine: “What man grants to another man to hear these words? what angel to an angel? what angel to a man?” This favour can only be granted by Thee, O my God. Thee must we seek; at Thy heart must we knock; and when Thou dost open heaven to give Thyself to us, it is still by Thee that I must render thanks, and by Thee that I shall henceforth live, no longer by hope, but by love.

IV. *The eternal Dwelling-place of our Lord.*

The aspirations of the Christian soul tend towards heaven, which is opened to us in Holy Communion. I am then nearer to heaven than to Calvary, and I am permitted to fix the eye of faith upon the glory which Jesus Christ has prepared for me. Does my soul, like that of the Prophet, burn with longing to behold the tabernacle of the Lord, and does it pine away in expectation of the day when they shall be opened to its ardent gaze? Thou hast revealed to me, in the Holy

Eucharist, the way to reach Thy invisible abode, O my Jesus. It is so sweet to possess Thee here below, that it seems almost too bold to aspire to higher favours; yet, after the short interval of life, I hope to receive from Thy mercy the everlasting happiness which Thou didst thus solicit for me: "My Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me." Thy prayer, accompanied by the promise, "I go to prepare a place for you," strengthens my hope. Hope is one of the powers of the heart; it lifts it up to God; but if we confine our hope to the narrow limits of the visible world, it becomes sterile and powerless. To deprive the heart of hope, is to deprive it of motion and life. For this reason, Lord, Thou hast been pleased to ordain that all the consolations of religion should tend to fortify this virtue, and nothing does this more sweetly and effectually than the hope of heaven, and the consolations of the Holy Eucharist.

Great thoughts expand and elevate the soul. What can be higher than heaven, or greater than the Holy Eucharist? O Jesus, can I ever, in fixing my hopes on heaven, where Thou art reigning in glory, turn away my thoughts from the Holy Eucharist, where Thou art the foretaste of my eternal beatitude? Ah! when I endeavour to form some idea of the depth of the love which retains Thee in the midst of us, I see that it must have grieved Thee to doubt my love. Since Thou hast traced upon my soul an image of Thyself, who art infinite, her powers aspire to something beyond this world; the universe is then a prison to her, in which she feels confined and fettered; and, led by faith, she finds in the Holy Eucharist a powerful means to ascend, as it were, on eagle's wings to heaven, to God. Lord, Thou art the eternal object of all the desires of my soul, and the centre of its ardent thirst for happiness; therefore, adoring Thy love, which from all eternity predestined me to bliss, I lose sight of these terrestrial regions, which disappear even as a grain of sand is swallowed up in the ocean.

Faith raises my thoughts to heaven, where I shall behold Thee at the right hand of Thy Father. There shall I enjoy Thy love without fear of ever losing it ; I shall taste the fulness of Thy grace. There Thou dost prepare for me an eternal dwelling-place. By my sins I have deserved, O my God, that this abode should be placed at a very great distance from Thee ; but, with fervent repentance, I will strive to bring it nearer to Thy sacred heart. Grant me three graces, to enable me to finish my pilgrimage. Give me Thy Divine Son, as my Master and Guide in the path to heaven. Grant that He may feed me every day with that bread of life which deifies our souls. Grant that, divesting me of the old man, He may clothe me with heavenly virtues ; for, when filled with Thy grace, I am certain to be acceptable to Thee ; nourished with Thy sacred Blood, I hope to arrive at the blessedness of Thy love.

Conclusion.

Learn to abide in God, even when you are called to a life of outward activity. If you cease from prayer in order to labour or converse with men, never separate yourself from our Lord. Perform all your actions without losing His sacred presence ; and when you have ended your work, return to Him. Our Lord, after saying, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world," immediately added, "Again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John vi. 28).

TWENTIETH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE HEM OF OUR LORD'S GARMENT.

Preparation.

"WHITHERSOEVER our Lord entered," says St. Mark, "they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment ; and as many as touched Him were made whole."

Before Holy Communion, meditate, in faith, humility, and confidence, upon this simple but admirable recital of the charity of our Lord, who, knowing all things, granted the desires of all these people before they could make their humble requests, and with compassionate kindness healed their diseases, rewarding their faith and humility by astonishing miracles.

I. The Spirit of Faith displayed by these sick People.

As soon as they heard of the arrival of Jesus, they invoked His presence, they believed in His Divine Person.

Faith is in us the principle of Divine love ; it is the star which precedes the rising of the sun of grace, which dissipates the darkness that overshadows our understandings, and calls every virtue into life. But in the tabernacle the love of our Blessed Lord has made the exercise of our faith so sweet, that there is almost more consolation than merit in it.

"By faith," says St. Paul, "Abel offered unto God an acceptable sacrifice of his most precious possessions." Faith inundated the earth with the blood of martyrs. I have the same faith ; but what are my works ? Alas ! my passions lead me to occupy myself exclusively with the world or my own interests, and leave a very small corner of my heart to be taken up with zeal for the glory

of God. I complain of my sufferings, not considering what is to be the end of my life-long trials. The martyrs rejoiced to shed their blood for Jesus Christ. How far removed are my feelings from theirs!

Faith opens to us the treasures of Divine grace. It gives us Jesus Christ Himself, who is the Fountain of grace. Now, if God Himself dwells in my heart as a pledge to insure the faithful accomplishment of His promises, what happiness to be permitted to look up to heaven as the heritage already won by my faithfulness! What can now disturb the soul that rests in peace upon the word of God?

Faith surrounds me on every side with the power and love of God, as with a rampart which defends me against all my enemies. It places in my hands the promises of Jesus Christ, who said, "If you had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this mountain, Be thou rooted up, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should obey you." Having experienced the Divine assistance in every period of my life, can I any longer be charmed by the vanities of this world, or enslaved by its laws? "May God preserve me," said a martyr, "from any other kind of ambition, save that of obtaining the kingdom of heaven!" Is there a single advantage in any acquisition here below which could be compared for one instant with the happiness of Holy Communion? How good is God in granting me this favour so often, when there are so many others far more deserving of it! It is sweet to believe in Thy Divinity, O Jesus, and to repeat that act so comforting to the Christian soul. I believe in the power and goodness of my God. I hardly need to exercise my faith in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, so vividly do I feel Thy presence there. But if my soul were so unhappy as to lose the light of Thy grace, if I were to lose the last ray of hope,—ah! I should still never cease to repeat, I hope and I love, because I believe.

II. *The Conviction of their own Weakness.*

They only hoped for their cure through the goodness and mercy of our Lord; therefore, from all parts of the country they thronged into the streets of the town, that they might see Him pass by. And Jesus, the Divine Guest in that land of faith, passed through them with pitiful compassion. If our Blessed Lord responded readily to the desires of those who looked only for bodily health, simply because they were humble, and felt their need of His almighty power, how great will be His mercy and kindness to me, if I humbly represent to Him the deep needs of my soul! By sin I am cast down to the lowest abyss of nothingness; I have wandered far away from God, and lost myself amid the miserable deceptions of vanity and pleasure. How vile do I appear in the pure light of His holiness! How greatly I stand in need of mercy! The Holy Eucharist confers its benefits under the veil of silence and obscurity; but this only enhances their sweetness to the loving soul that receives them. As the moment of Holy Communion approaches, let me renew my fervour, and receive the Sacred Host with profound recollection of spirit. Prostrate at the feet of Jesus,—feeling, as these poor infirm people felt, my utter inability to make a fitting preparation for Holy Communion,—I will say, with the pious author of the *Imitation*, “Behold, I come before Thee to receive a share in Thy grace and benediction, and to be filled with joy in the sacred banquet which Thou hast prepared for the poor in the abundance of Thy sweetness, O God of mercy.” I now desire to receive Thee with reverence and devotion; my heart burns with desire of being united to Thee. Give Thyself to me; that will satisfy me; for I find in Thee every thing that I can possibly desire. There is no true consolation, save in Thee alone; I cannot exist without Thee, nor can I live without this heavenly food.

III. *The respectful Delicacy of the Sick.*

They only requested permission to touch the hem of our Lord's garment. They knew that other people had asked Jesus to come to them, and to work miracles for them. They were too timid to think of aspiring to this distinction. They did not even dare to speak to Him. They begged for leave to touch His garment, believing that from His sacred robe some Divine virtue would descend upon their infirmity.

O Jesus, if I had never received Holy Communion, I should consider it a great favour to be permitted to touch Thy garment, and I should envy the favour shown to these happy people; but ever since that day, so dear to my heart, when, as a little child, I first approached Thy Altar, how often have I thought of Thee, often desired Thy sacred presence, often dared to tell Thee of my love, often—with too little reverence, perhaps—gazed long upon the Sacred Host! and never have I lost sight of the Blessed Sacrament, without feeling in my heart the void which we experience in visiting the deserted abode of an absent friend. How should I now feel, if I were not permitted to receive Thee! and how sad, if in the morning I only obtained permission to touch the hem of Thy garment! Ah, Lord, I cannot bear to think of it. Thy mercy has, perhaps, made me too presuming: but, no; Thy love invites me to respond freely to Thy love, and to possess Thee joyfully.

The circumstances which accompanied this event rendered it still more touching. During the preceding day, Thou hadst healed a crowd of sick people, instructed an immense multitude, fed five thousand men in the desert, and afterwards spent the first watch of the night in prayer. Then Thou didst walk upon the water, coming to the help of Thy Apostle in the storm; and at Thy presence the wind ceased. Then, landing at Genesareth at the dawn of day, Thou didst come to the relief of those poor afflicted ones; never pausing to rest or to

refresh Thyself, save in the exercise of Thy most gentle charity. All Thy works were begun and ended with prayer, and the Divine seal of humility was impressed upon them all. And yet, O Lord, at the hour when Thou hadst already worked so many miracles, I am hardly aroused from sleep, and dread the slightest change of temperature, when I pay my visit to Thee. Can I wonder that I obtain so little merit, when I employ my time so miserably? I spend my days in idleness, while Thou, O my God, dost pray, watch, and labour for me. In the desert, on the mountain-top, on the raging sea,—every where, love burns in Thy heart; and even the sight of my indifference cannot chill Thy ardent charity.

IV. *Their Eagerness to come; their Reliance upon the Power of our Lord.*

They waited in the street until Jesus should pass by. They did not attempt to excite His compassion otherwise than by the sight of their infirmities. Happy in being permitted to approach His Divine Person, this favour was enough for them—they requested *nothing more*.

Lord, these poor sick people were so eager to see Thee pass by, that they were not afraid of cold or darkness, nor hesitated, even in their suffering state, to wait long hours exposed to the keen morning air. How humbled should I be for the coldness and indifference with which I await the moment of Holy Communion, and for the dissipation of my mind during the adorable Sacrifice! Does not this conduct seem as if I supposed that Thy sacred Body was possessed of no more virtue than the hem of Thy garment? But if I were to keep at a distance, or to approach Thee rarely, I should then give Thee cause to say once more, “I looked for one to take pity upon Me, but there was no man; neither found I any to comfort me.” And yet, when I hasten to the church, it is not now in uncertainty of Thy coming, or

as hoping only to contemplate Thee for an instant. I do not go there expecting to touch the hem of Thy garment for the cure of some corporal malady. I know that I shall find Thee in the holy tabernacle, ever ready to listen to me, to feed me with Thy adorable Body, to sacrifice Thyself upon the Altar, to communicate Thy life to me.

If, like so many souls who go astray at the commencement of their lives, I had been left in ignorance of Thy love, I should be less culpable. Those poor souls, sleeping the sleep of ignorance, pass the threshold of Thy temple, perhaps not knowing, certainly never thinking, that they are only separated by a wall from that blessed place where their God is still made flesh, still offers Himself up for their salvation; so seldom do they come to participate in the benefits of this august Sacrifice! And their hearts, wandering from the paths of peace, waste their affections upon fleeting earthly pleasures, never knowing the holy affections inspired by Thy love in the Blessed Sacrament. Nevertheless, it is there that Thou art our life, O my Jesus. Our hearts sink and die without Thee. Thou art our light; elsewhere all is darkness. I approach, to receive from Thee light, grace, and life.

Prepare me to receive this grace, O my God, by the interior renewing of my mind, that I may consider this great mystery with deeper and more reverential attention. Grant that I may have an efficacious view of Thy adorable presence, and that, as we have upon the Altar, "before our eyes," Jesus crucified amongst us, Jesus living in the tabernacle, the light of that consoling truth may direct my life, and preserve me from the fearful misfortune of hearing at the last day that terrible word, "I do not know you."

V. *Their secret Desire of our Lord's Mercies.*

These sick people asked for nothing; but when Jesus saw that they were prevented by timidity from making

their requests, He gave them more than they could either have asked or expected. He perceived, hidden under their outward infirmity, which excited His compassion, secret maladies still more dangerous. His paternal hand applies a prompt remedy to the sufferings of the soul.

Never be afraid to pour into the tender heart of Jesus the secret of your hidden sufferings. There may be some bitter remembrance, some faults, which you would wish to bury in impenetrable darkness ; but bring them to the heart of Jesus, and your remorse will become a grace, and penitence a sweet consolation. His tenderness will forestall your contrite and filial confession, His hand will heal the hidden wound of your soul, He will cleanse it in His Blood, He will dry your repentant tears ; and soon, at the holy Altar, entering your heart, He will again call you His beloved child.

Lord, in my past life I see many sad faults, grievous wanderings, and some bitter sorrows. I once found it difficult to confess all these to Thee. I said, at first. Whither shall I go ? If I ascend to heaven, Thy holiness will terrify me ; if I come down to earth, the heavy load of sins will overwhelm my soul. But Thou didst take pity upon my misery, and Thy glance of mercy, awakening my conscience, brought peace, together with repentance, into my soul. O my Jesus, I will praise Thy name ; I will bless Thy love, which has conferred such benefits upon me ; if in sorrow and fear I am ever again tempted to say, " To whom shall I go ?"—ah ! seeing Thy sacred heart, which I am now about to receive, I shall no longer hesitate to take refuge in that Divine asylum.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Profound, loving, peaceful adoration. You are not only permitted to touch the robe of Jesus Christ : you possess His heart ; Jesus Himself is in you ; He beholds you, He loves you. Do not torment yourself with anxiety about informing our Lord of your love

and desire to please Him. The silence of the soul speaks to Him.

Abandon yourself with full confidence into His hands. Let this trust in Him supply the place of all acts and forms of devotion.

Think of the influence which our Lord exercised during His whole life over the sick; cast yourself entirely upon His power and love; give yourself up to Him.

Lord, in the eyes of Thy Prophet Isaias, the skirts of Thy garment filled the temple of Solomon. How, then, can my heart contain Thy Divine Majesty? The wonders of Thy love are multiplied in proportion to my littleness.

I. *Our Lord arrives at Genesareth early in the Morning.*
—*His loving Condescension in granting our Requests.*

On the holy Altar, as formerly on the mountain, Jesus has watched all night, praying for me, expecting me. His heart never sleeps; attentive to my prayers, He offers Himself at the dawn of day, to purify and enrich my soul with the fruits of His Blood.

Lord, if Thy heavenly eye rests upon me all night, blessing my repose, my first waking thoughts in the morning are directed to Thee, and ascend to Thy throne in acts of thanksgiving and love. But now, concentrating all the feelings of my heart upon Thee, prostrate and silent, I adore Thee. I could not venture to believe that Thou hadst really condescended to enter into this humble abode, if Thou didst not require of me this act of faith, in Thy boundless mercy and love.

Thou art altogether mine. Thy invisible love sustains my visible being, in which it reveals itself. And when Thy sacramental presence leaves me, Thy grace will still remain to attest the liberality of Thy heart. Why cannot I behold Thee every day, blessing and sanctifying all my faculties by Thy passage through my heart? I would spend my life in this sacred abode, if

Thou wouldst give me permission. Old age can never chill my heart, so long as I am permitted to renew my youth, and inflame my feelings at the fire of Thy love. Enkindle in my heart, O Lord, I beseech Thee, that heavenly flame, that it may quench those earthly fires of passion, which dispute the empire of my heart with Thee, and which I am unable to extinguish by my own efforts. Can any thing be more noble and touching than to behold Thee thus hidden in my heart, and offering Thyself, in the Sacred Host, as the prize which is to be the reward of my victory over my own rebellious passions ?

II. They were permitted to touch the Lord's Garment.

The Sacred Host is a vestment of love beneath which Jesus hides His glory, that He may permit us to approach it freely,—still more, that we may be united to Him, without fear of His Majesty.

Jesus has not presented me with the hem of His garment ; He has given me Himself, whole and undivided. In former times, He freely granted the eager desires of the sick. In coming to *me*, He testifies still more condescending love and confidence ; and in this union with Himself, Jesus Christ permits no moral or physical suffering to affect me, without first affecting His sacred heart.

In the beauty of Thy material works here below, O Lord, there shines a reflection of Thy glory and greatness, which irresistibly attracts my soul ; what wonder, then, if fallen man, in his misery, drinking the bitter cup of sorrow to the dregs, lifts his eyes to Thee, and sighs for deliverance from his sufferings ? As to myself, full of deformity, faults, and spiritual defects, I am irresistibly impelled to make them all known to Thy sacred heart. My pride, fostered by my worldly education, had reached a prodigious height, which even the great examples of Bethlehem and Calvary were insufficient to combat successfully. Carried away by the deceitful

prestige of vanity, the only means by which my soul can recover any part of her primeval greatness is by drinking deeply of the spirit of true Christian humility. If I nourish my pride, instead of combating it by true humility, I shall be like those of whom the Prophet Joel speaks as sleeping upon the verge of an abyss.

O my Jesus, Thou hast not effaced from the Gospel those great lessons which were intended for the instruction of all succeeding ages; they still live in the humility of the Holy Eucharist. The illusions which have deceived me will pass away, the corrupting breath of pride will vanish, the reality of my actions will alone remain to accuse me in the hour of death, unless I learn to realise practically, in my daily life, those Divine words, "Learn of Me, that I am meek and humble of heart."

III. "*And they were healed.*"

Numerous miracles resulted from the faith and humility of those poor sick people.

How is it that, although we so frequently touch the sacred Body of our Lord, we still retain so many spiritual infirmities? If He saw, in our hearts, a real desire to be delivered from them, would He not heal us? Thy presence fills the universe, my Jesus; it rules all ages; is it not, then, able to heal, to purify my mind and my heart? It is true that my soul, though possessing Thee often, is far from enjoying perfect health; but in what an abyss of misery should I be plunged, if I were not to approach Thee frequently! I do very little to please Thee. I confess, with shame, that my virtues are few; but I should do even less, if I remained at a distance from Thee.

Truly, the power of the Cross shines resplendent in the conversion of the world to Christianity; but what power is it which draws us away from a life of pleasure and enjoyment, and enables us to embrace joyfully the privations, poverty, and sufferings involved in following the evangelical counsels, which impose upon us a life

more painful than death, if it be not the secret power of the Blessed Sacrament? I admire the faith of the martyrs, in offering up their lives for Thee; but the faith of the soul that dwells in the world, without seeking any love save that of the Holy Eucharist, without any care save that of sacrificing herself to Thee, O my Jesus,—this faith and love seem to me still more admirable, still dearer to Thy sacred heart; for such a life is in a manner consumed by slow degrees, together with Thine. It is this faith which I now implore Thee to grant me; increase it by all the graces conferred in this Communion; and, when I shall attain the prize which Thou dost offer to me at the end of my labours, it will still be Thine own gifts in me which Thou wilt reward with the crown of victory.

IV. *The Blessings conferred upon us by the Presence of our Lord.*

Who can tell the wonders which the love of Jesus Christ works in us during the intimacy of Holy Communion? This is the secret of the pious soul; she alone knows its marvels and enjoys its sweetness.

Express your gratitude to Jesus Christ, but ask Him, above all, that it may be ever warm and deep.

How many souls, who have never received these benefits which Thou dost so richly bestow upon me, seek after Thee incessantly, O my Jesus! while I am sometimes weary of passing one quarter of an hour at Thy feet in thanksgiving. The angels, who surround Thy tabernacle in profound adoration, do not find eternity too long to repeat their songs of love and praise; and I, whom Thou hast freed from all earthly bonds, to draw those closer which bind me to Thee,—I can hardly form a pious thought in Thy presence; and yet I love Thee,—I cannot but believe it. When I am amongst those who rarely pronounce Thy name, Thou knowest my secret sufferings, and how my soul clings to Thee, saying, "Leave me not, O Lord!" Why cannot I now

repeat this prayer in Thy sacred presence ? I am wanting in gratitude to Thee, O Lord, when I enjoy Thy gifts as if they were my personal property ; when I am vain of them ; when I turn away from the consideration of my faults, or repress some holy inspiration which leads me to amendment : or, perhaps, I show my ingratitude by my proud regret for having suffered certain defects of character to appear on such and such an occasion. I ought to consider all these opportunities of self-immolation as great favours accorded to me. If I am angry at receiving a gentle reproof, or some salutary advice, does not this plainly show, O my Jesus, that virtue is disagreeable to me, or that Thy grace is wearisome ? I ought to show forth Thy love in my whole behaviour ; but first I must have it ever present in my thoughts. Silence or forgetfulness is the tomb of a favour, but affectionate remembrance is its faithful guardian : gratitude, which is the sweet memory of the heart, shall cause mine to utter continual praises to Thine infinite goodness.

I cannot receive such great favours without manifesting in my actions some spark of that Divine charity which has found its resting-place in my heart. The earth restores a hundredfold the grain intrusted to it ; in like manner should I spread the sacred fire kindled in my heart by Holy Communion. Thou, O Lord, dost acquire every day new claims upon my gratitude and upon my generosity also ; for there is not a single moment of my life in which I am not united to Thee by Thy grace and enriched by Thy gifts, nor is there one in which I am not bound to love Thee with my whole heart, and more than all things.

I bless Thee, O my God, for granting to me, as to St. Augustine, an unquiet heart, which can find no repose save in Thee ; but, I beseech Thee, keep alive in me this secret inquietude, that I may ever aspire to purity, and provide, by strict vigilance, against the temptations which might lead me to offend Thee. Thou

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seest my difficulties ; support me in the last strife between my wavering will and the operations of Thy grace, and may Thy grace be ever victorious !

My whole life, O Lord, has been a succession of follies, dissipation, and misspent time ; but, as St. Austin says, "Thy hand has collected me together in Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator between Thy unity and the multitude of my miseries, that, rallying all the powers of my nature, long scattered at the will of my old vanities, I may follow Thy one, adorable, and indivisible Majesty, without remembering that which no longer is, without distrusting Thy merciful care for the time to come."

Conclusion.

Fear not to make your infirmities known to our Lord, or to tell Him all your miseries, with full trust in His mercy ; He already knows them all. He knows that His presence is the *life* of your soul, His virtues the robe in which it should be clothed : but learn to wait calmly and patiently for the time when it will be His good pleasure to grant the mercies you desire.

TWENTY-FIRST EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

SOME WORDS OF JESUS CHRIST ON THE SUBJECT OF
THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

Preparation.

AFTER the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, our Lord having retired to Capernaum, the Jews, who had quitted Him on the previous evening, returned to the mountain to seek Him ; and not finding Him, they

went back to Capernaum. Jesus Christ took occasion, from their eagerness to follow Him, to speak to them of the heavenly food which He intended to give us. He first answered their various questions.

I. "*What shall we do,*" said they, "*that we may work the works of God?*" (John vi. 28.)

Let me, before Holy Communion, propose to myself this question, which the Jews seemed to address to our Lord, with a sincere desire of glorifying God. What shall I do for Jesus, who is about to give Himself to me to-day? should be my first waking thought. It is not necessary here to enter into the details of such actions as may be pleasing to Him. I need only consult my memory. How do I behave when I receive one of my friends? Let me renew the fervour which His love demands of me; let me go to Him with sincere joy and affection, so as to respond in some degree to His ardent desire to communicate Himself to me.

The Holy Eucharist is the greatest work of God; but, apart from Holy Communion, which is the aim and end of this Sacrament, am I not present every day at the essential action of Christianity—the most holy sacrifice of the Mass? Still further, I unite myself in this action with the priest, who, in the name and with the power of Jesus Christ, performs it for the salvation of all men. What ought to be my feelings during this tremendous action? They should be those of St. Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" During Holy Mass, when Jesus descends upon the Altar at the voice of the priest, let me resign myself with entire submission and obedience to the will of God, and let me persevere in this resignation, which will always be required of me, whether I am called to receive consolation or affliction at the hands of God.

But, to proceed to particulars which are more calculated to instruct me: let me ask, What will our Lord do for me in Holy Communion? In a few mo-

ments I shall open my heart, and He will give me His Flesh, His Blood, His Divinity; such is the work of God upon me. Let me, on my part, bring to it a lively faith, the praises of a heart filled with gratitude, humility, and the submissiveness of true penitence. Lord, enable me to make this effectual preparation, by which my heart will be more closely united to Thee.

Our Lord will not be contented with barren feelings; He desires that we should perform certain actions, to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion. As God required the Israelites to rise before daylight, in order to collect the manna, so, says the Wise Man, "We must prevent the rising of the sun, and be ready very early in the morning, to adore our God and receive His blessing." Holy Communion ought to be our first and principal thought on awaking. We must then rise and dress with promptitude and modesty. Meditate profoundly upon the Divine Sacrament; send forth fervent aspirations to our Blessed Lord: in a word, we must be filled with tender devotion, not allowing worldly affairs to dissipate our minds, and tarnish the piety of our first actions. The world absorbs a large portion of our lives; is it not fitting that Jesus Christ should claim at least the earliest moments of the days which still remain to us?

Let us remember, in Holy Communion, that Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist under the figures of bread and wine, with the design of leaving us a perpetual representation of His Passion. The grains of wheat are ground and kneaded, when made into bread; the wine flows from the grape, when crushed in the wine-press; thus was the Body of Jesus broken by the blows inflicted upon Him in His Passion,—trodden under foot and pressed in such a cruel manner, that the Blood poured from the wounds which covered His sacred Body.

In the same way, it is our Lord's will that, in participating sacramentally in this sacred Victim, I should

recall to mind all the torments and reproaches which He endured ; feeding my mind with the bitter sufferings of His Passion, and bringing a broken heart, a sincere repentance, to His sacred feet. He desires also that I should accept humiliations, consenting even to be trodden under foot with Him, if such should be His holy will. Let me, then, enter into these feelings at the time of the elevation, when Jesus Christ is truly immolated upon the Altar. In this manner may the work of God be accomplished in me.

II. *"What dost Thou work ?"*

In the mouth of those Jews whom Jesus Christ had so wonderfully healed, whom He had also fed miraculously in the desert, these words manifest the deepest ingratitude. But if my mouth has never pronounced them, have I not often indulged, with equal ingratitude, some similar thought, when I have come to the Holy Sacrifice with a distracted mind, a cold heart, a wandering imagination ? has not my irreverent manner, even, often seemed to say to Jesus, "What miracle dost Thou perform upon the Altar ?"

O my Saviour, too frequently have I seemed to be ignorant of Thy wonders, to forget Thy benefits. I have seen them performed without regarding them ; and even the sight of the holy Altar, where Thy Body and Blood declare to me the reality of Thy sacrifice, has not recalled my wandering heart and imagination. Lord, on considering my past life, can I say, What miracle dost Thou for me ? Is not my whole life a miraculous tissue of mercy and goodness ? The Holy Eucharist, that perpetual prodigy of love,—has it not marked my life by frequent Communions ? It would be easier to ask Thee what it is Thou hast *not* done for me. Let me, then, examine and see whether I am not more guilty still than those unbelieving Jews. Have I never addressed a similar question to Jesus, when, in a spirit of discouragement, I have looked back upon the sacrifices of my past life,

and reckoned them up one by one, forgetting that Thy grace alone gave me power to accomplish them. By a mute interrogation, I accused Him of forgetfulness : And Thou, Lord, what doest Thou for me, who have borne so much for Thee? How painful to the heart of Jesus must be this secret complaint, which I would not dare to avow ! How it must close His gracious hand, which is ever ready to confer benefits upon my ungrateful soul ! Well, every time that I suffer my heart to nourish feelings of fear and distrust, my behaviour is equivalent to this unjust language of the Jews. Let me see my fault, and never more forget to combat these feelings of sadness and dread of God, by acts of full and implicit confidence in the tender and loving heart of our Lord.

III. "*The Bread which I will give for the life of the world is My Flesh.*"

These distinct words of our Lord contain two promises, magnificent in their results, both of which He fulfilled before the end of His life. After the Last Supper, He instituted that Holy Sacrament, in which He gives us His Flesh and Blood. Even *His* almighty power could not leave us greater proofs of His love, for He has given us Himself until the consummation of ages. He has devoted His sacred Body as a Victim to the Cross, and by the sacrifice of Himself restored our life. Behold, then, the *Sacrificial* Bread, offered upon Calvary to the justice of God ; and the *Eucharistic* Bread, prepared for the life of our souls until the end of time.

O my Saviour, who, under a few simple words, hast hidden such touching mysteries, I adore Thee, and I beseech Thee to revive my faith in the adorable Eucharist. These words offended the people who heard them ; and, without thinking of the wonders they had already witnessed, they refused to believe that the promise could be fulfilled even by means of another miracle.

They did not distrust their own judgment ; they thought it degrading to submit to the authority of Thy word. Blinded by pride, they departed from the Eternal Truth, and lost themselves by following the guidance of their own understandings. A fearful example, O Jesus, meant to teach me to believe Thy word with a simple and docile faith ! Thou wast grieved to behold these proud men departing from Thee, and disbelieving Thy heavenly doctrine ; but, so far from lessening the force of Thy words, out of deference to their senseless wisdom, Thou didst confirm them with an oath to Thine Apostles. How happy am I in having been chosen, not only to hear this promise, but to enjoy the fruits of its accomplishment !

Every day Thou givest me Thy sacred Flesh as my food at the holy Altar. I believe firmly that Thou art present, true God and true Man, in this Most Holy Sacrament ; and that every soul that receives Thee worthily, receives the fruit of eternal life. Faith, firm and immovable, draws me to Thy sacred feet ; hope, constant and sustained by ardent love, retains me there for ever.

IV. "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.*"

In what part of me, O Jesus, hast Thou prepared for Thyself a sanctuary worthy of Thy Majesty ? I will say, when I approach Thy holy table. It is in my heart. If the pure heart alone can *see* Thee, then much more must mine be pure in order to *possess* Thee. But my heart can never be pure, unless Thou dost purify it, O infinite Purity. And Thou dost purify no hearts save those in which Thou dost take up Thy abode,—those hearts which Thy wisdom has predestined before the beginning of the world, in the inaccessible depths of Thy just judgments, without regard to their merits. Thou dost call them out of the midst of the world ; but Thou dost not act thus to all : "the others do not come." I belong, then, to Thee, O Jesus, since I am permitted to enjoy the happiness of possessing Thee

frequently. This hope confirms me in a sweet joy, a tender confidence, which I beseech Thee never to suffer me to lose.

Meditate attentively upon the following words ; their connection with the preceding ones will reveal to us the secret of salvation : "*Because*," adds our Lord (mark well the connection), "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). Most surely, if Jesus, our God and our Master, came down from heaven only to practise obedience, then none of us can be free from the same obligation. In this case, our obedience to the Divine laws and to the good pleasure of God will be the *measure* of our sanctity, the *degree* of our resemblance to Jesus Christ. Let me, then, endeavour to submit all my aims and desires to the infallible rule of all virtue—the will of God. Let me love to be constantly dependent upon His Providence. Let me live without uneasiness for the future,—provide nothing. Jesus is my all. Such ought to be the secret feelings of the soul that often communicates

What a favour it is to belong to Thee, O Lord ! With what feelings of gratitude, of humble dependence, ought I not to receive Thee ! Thy amazing goodness causes even my sins to coöperate in the work of my salvation. I fall, through weakness, without receiving any wound, because Thou dost immediately raise me up again by repentance. Thus I come to Thee, O Jesus, to profit by Thy gift, and to enjoy Thy secret banquet, which Thou hast prepared for the poor in Thy wonderful grace and mercy. "In Thee I find all that I can and all that I ought to desire. Thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my happiness and my glory." Fill, then, this day with joy the soul of Thy servant, "because I have aspired to Thee with my whole heart. I desire now to receive Thee with reverence and devotion. I wish to open my heart to Thee, to merit Thy blessing, and a place amongst the number

of Thine elect. My soul burns with desire to receive Thy sacred Body, my heart longs to be united to Thee. Give Thyself to me, and I shall be satisfied ; for out of Thee nothing can comfort me. I cannot dwell without Thee, nor can I live without receiving Thy heavenly visit. Come, Lord Jesus" (*Imitation*).

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord. Aspire to His love. By Holy Communion, He impresses on your soul the seal of His Divinity and His Humanity. This is the mark of the union you contract with Him in receiving His Body and Blood. What a favour is this, to be permitted to become, under the impression of grace, the blessed image of Jesus, and consequently the object of the complacency of God the Father,—to live closely united to the Saviour! What shall I give to the Lord for all the benefits He has bestowed upon me?

Let your heart pour itself forth freely into the heart of Jesus.

I. "*I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven.*"

"Lord," I may say with St. Bonaventure, "having received such delicious Bread, suffer not my heart ever to desire any other thing. How, if it has once been nourished with this exquisite food, can it ever again seek its satisfaction in vanity? I cannot wonder enough at my own insensibility when my heart is not ravished with joy in partaking of this celestial Bread. O sweetest Jesus, be Thou alone my food, my substance. May I sigh only after Thee! May I love only Thee! May I hunger only for the Bread of Life! What can be more pure and sweet than Thee? Thy presence brings more to my soul than any earthly joy, even some portion of celestial blessedness. If Thy Word alone is able to feed our souls, what shall be our happiness when we taste the Divine sweetness or

Thy Flesh and of Thy Blood! O Eternal Word, who nourishest our souls with Thine own substance, how can my heart fail to be affected at the thought only of Thy wonderful love? Why does it not produce in me complete forgetfulness of all creatures? Thy presence ought to be so delightful to me, that I should forget all earthly things,—forget myself even in Thee. Lord Jesus, be Thou every day the living and substantial Bread of my soul,—an ever-present food; let there be, in this respect, for my soul neither *yesterday* nor *to-morrow*, but one perpetual TO-DAY. Do Thou live in my heart, and may my heart live in Thee! may my love and eagerness reciprocate Thine! and may Thy love, acting in me with powerful grace, unite us in this moment, never to be separated, until that time arrives when I shall obtain the clear vision of Thy Divine Essence!"

II. "*He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.*"

What a consoling promise is contained in these words! Our Blessed Lord assures us that the soul that communicates worthily, participates to some extent in His nature, in His life, and in His virtues, and becomes *one* with Him. He will enter into its thoughts, its intentions; He will give it His wisdom, His enlightenment, and the clear intelligence of His mind, and He will direct it by His Spirit. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." Is it from this point of view that I have understood these words of our Lord, which bear the impress of such profound love? If I reflect upon the meaning of these words, "*shall live by me,*" I shall see that Jesus Christ intends to render Himself the cause of all the pious works which we perform after Holy Communion. He is doubtless their first cause, by the operations of His grace; but He associates Himself specially in them, because He is now become the

centre of the thoughts, desires, and affections of the soul. This is one of the sweetest consolations of Holy Communion.

The fruits of this life of intimate union with Jesus Christ are very precious to the faithful soul. Our Blessed Lord, in the Incarnation, united His Divinity very closely with our nature. We must not be surprised if we see Him perform works far beyond the reach of our natural powers. Holy Communion will work something similar in me. Jesus Christ will keep me more closely attached to Himself; He will teach me to divest myself of my faults, to grow in virtues, especially in the imitation of His poverty, His humility, His obedience. I shall no longer love Jesus with that essential love, which may certainly be called charity, but which is feeble as a spark, disturbed by the tempests of the imagination, and easily extinguished in the darkness of temptation. The love which is inspired by Jesus living in us, is full of light, strength, generosity, and grandeur; it impresses upon our whole behaviour and conduct an impulse of faith and fervour, which changes the human life into a supernatural existence. Such is the state at which the soul arrives that receives in the Holy Eucharist this life, which is animated by Jesus Christ.

Little voluntary faults are great obstacles to that hidden life. Let us avoid them carefully, and, when we have fallen into them through weakness, expiate them as soon as possible by some penance suited at once to correct us and make amends for them. Let us be especially careful not to fall into faults opposed to the spirit of charity. Our Lord chose bread and wine, which are formed of many small particles mixed together, to constitute the eucharistic species, to show that He only unites Himself to souls which are linked together by the grace of charity. As the wheat and grapes cannot be consecrated until they are changed into bread and wine, so our Lord will not unite Himself to my soul, nor change me into Himself, so as to make me live by His

life, if the spirit of division and uncharitable resentment reigns in my heart. The best way to destroy this great obstacle is to crush my self-love in the wine-press of humility, and to bear ill-treatment with gentleness, regarding it as the instrument by which my soul must be prepared to receive the virtues of the Holy Eucharist.

O Jesus, bless me, and grant that I may bring no voluntary hindrance to Thy union with me, and that Thy Divine love may be increased in my heart by this Communion.

III. "*He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.*"

The first fruit of Holy Communion is to make us live by the life of our Lord; the second is to prolong this life in us, until the third brings us to life eternal. If Jesus dwells in me, it is impossible that I should not live supernaturally; and if this supernatural life continues in me, it is certain to receive its full consummation in heaven.

This thought alone should suffice, O Jesus, to attach me to the Holy Eucharist. But I feel that my desire to love Thee is more intense than my hope of happiness. What a favour to be permitted to dwell in Thee, never more to seek for any place of repose elsewhere! It is especially after Holy Communion that I may venture to say, with more truth and tenderness than the Prophet-king, "The sparrow shall find a nest, and the swallow a place where she may lay her young; Thy heart, O my King and my God, shall henceforth be my abode." Ah, Lord, how long shall I fear to be banished from it for my sins? In heaven alone shall I no longer be afraid of being separated from Thee.

Lord, in promising solemnly to dwell in the soul that has communicated, Thou hast promised to express Thy life in hers. How can I make my life resemble Thine? I have none of those virtues which Thou dost exhibit upon the Altar: Thy humility hides Thy glory under

the appearance of a little bread ; Thy obedience is prompt and attentive to the voice of the priest ; Thy gentleness bears our daily insults ; Thy charity brings Thee down upon the Altar, to effect the most wonderful work of mercy ; Thy constancy makes Thee remain in the Blessed Sacrament even to the end of the world, and no sacrilege has power to drive Thee away ; and a thousand other virtues, which I cannot here enumerate. Let me pause, and piously meditate upon these admirable virtues ; let me request our Lord to grant them to me as the fruit of Holy Communion.

O Jesus, who didst not disdain to preserve upon Thy glorious Body the marks of all Thy wounds, I humbly entreat Thee to grant me, by the wounds of Thy sacred feet, humility and gentleness ; by those on Thy hands, obedience and constancy in doing good ; and by that in Thy heart, sincere charity.

IV. "*Moses gave you not bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven.*"

In former times, O Lord, Thou didst grant to Thy people the food of angels, the bread which came down from heaven. This bread was altered in its taste according to the wishes of those who received it, so great was Thy tenderness towards Thy children. This bread had the appearance of snow, yet it could endure the heat of the fire without melting away. This was to teach me, O Jesus, that love and purity will preserve Thy presence in my heart, unless my frivolity or coldness cause me to lose it quickly, as the manna melted away like snow in the rays of the sun. The Holy Eucharist contains all things necessary for us. Does it not accommodate itself to the extremes of weakness ? Under the appearance of the species of bread and wine, the Holy Eucharist confers upon the soul a thousand different graces, which God bestows by its means, according to the interior disposition of the recipient. Thus, when I communicate with the purpose of obtaining the virtues of

obedience and humility, God gives me the taste of these virtues, by diminishing the difficulty I find in practising them.

Finally, every morning, some people gathered *more* manna, and others *less*. Here we have an admirable picture of Holy Communion ; every one receives in proportion to the dispositions he brings to the holy table. In general, we find there a secret happiness, which surpasses all earthly joys.

Lord, it is true Thou givest abundantly, for I receive Thee frequently ; but I have gained little fruit and few virtues from so great a number of Communions. Thou art always rich and great in the dispensation of Thy gifts ; I am always poor and insignificant in the reception of Thy benefits, notwithstanding the profusion of Thy blessings bestowed upon me. I implore Thee, by the virtue of this celestial manna, to make me little in my own eyes, but to enrich me with Thy graces. Grant that, since Thy bounty satisfies so many millions of angels in heaven, and just men upon earth, it may also satisfy my soul so abundantly, that I may live henceforth only in Thee and for Thee.

V. "*Lord, give me always this Bread.*"

Having purchased our souls at the price of continual labours and of His bloody sweat, our Lord, on the evening before His death, prepared for us a sovereign remedy against every ill that could befall us—the Bread of His sacred Body. As long as the Israelites were fed by the manna (which was a figure of, and preparation for, the Holy Eucharist), there was no sickness amongst them. The heavenly bread, which is also given every day for the food of our souls, has a far greater power to preserve our life than was possessed by the food given in the desert. O my Jesus, if by Thy goodness I am permitted to receive this sacred Bread without any labour or trouble, suffer me not ever to come to ask it from Thee without having deserved it by my labour, or by

some act of self-denial and mortification. Grant me grace before Holy Communion to subject my heart to a process similar to that applied to the manna by the Israelites. They ground it into flour, and kneaded it, before they baked it into bread. Do Thou vouchsafe to break my heart by compunction for my sins, mortify my self-love and my senses, purify my soul in the fire of Thy love, so that I may die to myself, and become one spirit with Thee.

O Jesus, who dost open Thine hand, and dispense to Thine elect an ineffable aliment, give me now some crumbs of that celestial Bread. Under the influence of Thy inspirations, pious souls take this Bread of life, in order to be still more closely identified with Thy love. Wretched, indeed, is the soul that does not hunger for Thee, O my God; it resembles a country parched by long drought. To live without loving Thee is to dry up in our souls the fountain of all life,—or, rather, to refuse to consecrate our life to Thee is to die. Grant me to partake in Thy promise, “He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” Grant that my soul, being raised up by Thy grace in the waters of penance, may arrive at everlasting life, when the time shall come which Thou hast assigned for the conclusion of my life on earth.

Conclusion.

The secret of preserving in ourselves that life which is communicated to us by the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, is to sanctify by a pure and upright intention our very smallest actions, and in general all those things which are in their nature indifferent. St. Theresa and St. Francis de Sales employed their natural sensibility in loving God more ardently; St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius also sanctified their whole nature, by devoting to the greater glory of God all that love of the beautiful, that desire of earthly distinctions, which had

impelled them to vanity. Recall gently to the service of God all the tendencies of your heart and mind, instead of employing them for your own pleasure and satisfaction. Every thing that cannot thus be sanctified, or else at once banished from our heart, must be crushed, mortified, enchained, and destroyed by degrees,—for pride dies only with our death; but the life of Jesus Christ is strengthened and established more firmly in us by every victory we gain.

TWENTY-SECOND EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE BLIND MAN OF BETHSAIDA (Mark viii. 22).

Preparation.

OUR corporal infirmities are the consequences of our original fall, which rendered our bodies liable to suffering and death. Of all the evils by which humanity is assailed, blindness is that which excites the greatest compassion; it makes us, as it were, the slaves of every one around us,—thus presenting a faithful image of the state to which our souls are reduced by sin. But, to the Christian, the night of suffering is the dawn of hope; and it is, in fact, a school in which we are taught to grow in holiness by the hand of God Himself; for, “As gold is purified in the fire,” says the Ecclesiastes, “so is the soul purified in the furnace of affliction.”

I. “*They brought a blind man to Jesus.*”

The first thing that strikes us in this recital is the docility of the blind man of Bethsaida: he suffered himself to be led to our Lord.

Look at the blind man, who suddenly finds himself in

an unknown country, knowing neither whence he comes, nor whither he goes ; he walks undecided, trembling, holding fast by the arm of his guide. "I cannot go any farther," he says ; "you are leading me astray. I am afraid of falling." "No," replies the guide ; "trust entirely to me ; I will lead you to your journey's end." And if, consulting only the instinctive fear which possesses him, the blind man still permits some lingering distrust to remain in his mind, will he not be wrong in refusing to follow his guide, who can distinctly see the road along which they are travelling together ? In the spiritual life, I ought, like this blind man, to resign myself with entire confidence to the guide of my soul : if he points me to Holy Communion as the means of arriving at a blessed eternity, I shall not hesitate to approach the holy table frequently. The priest is not a human guide—he is more than the angel that watches over the perilous journey of my life ; it is really Jesus Christ, in his person, who forgives my sins, and then opens to me the treasures of the Holy Eucharist. Let me, then, listen humbly to his voice ; and when, troubled instinctively at the darkness of my mind, afraid of my own unworthiness, not finding in my soul the dispositions requisite for a worthy participation in this most august of mysteries, I think it will but seal my condemnation to approach the holy table, then let me trust implicitly to the Divine authority of my spiritual guide when he says to me, "You cannot see ; but have confidence : I see for you. Go on ; you are in the right road ; be not afraid, for I will not let you sink into the abyss : 'Go in peace.' " Having listened with true faith to the voice of Jesus Christ Himself in the tribunal of penance, I will sit down peacefully at the sacred banquet ; and, if I am submissive and obedient, I shall escape every hidden snare.

I will suffer myself to be conducted to Jesus Christ, "who is able," says St. Paul, "to do all things more abundantly than we can desire or understand" (Ephes.

iii. 20). I will approach Him, that He may show forth His mercy to me ; for if I am afraid, and keep at a distance from Him, I shall not receive its blessed effects.

How great is my happiness, O my God, in being permitted to hear Thy voice with certainty, and to be sure that, in communicating, I am obeying Thy express commands ! I should be as foolish as a blind man who refused to be guided in his passage through a foreign country, were I to resist the voice of the guide who leads me to Thee. Incapable of directing my steps aright, I will confidently obey Thy wise direction. Forgive me for listening too often to the promptings of my own self-love, and following its false lights ; of how many graces have I not deprived myself by omitting to communicate more frequently, through hesitation and distrust !

II. *“ And they besought Him that He would touch him.”*

The hope of an immediate miracle suggested this prayer to those who were leading the blind man to Jesus. They accomplished the precepts of fraternal charity towards this unfortunate man by endeavouring, in every way, to attract the compassion of our Blessed Saviour to him. In the exercise of this sincere charity, the weakness of the soul disappears, the disorderly movements of our passions are calmed and appeased. A noble spirit is never proud of the good which he has done to others. “ Charity,” says St. Paul, “ is patient and kind.” The heart into which Jesus frequently enters in Holy Communion ought especially to be adorned with this virtue. Consider, then, if your feelings are animated by charity and zeal, and free your mind from every contrary impression.

O my Jesus, grant me the grace of pure charity, which never considers its personal interests ; and when Thou hast enabled me to perform some acts of this Divine virtue, make me humble and modest, that I may

not attribute to my own efforts the success which is due to Thy grace alone. In Holy Communion, I shall receive in my heart the source of all charity ; and if Thou dost call me to shed it forth abundantly upon my afflicted neighbour, I will gladly obey Thy sacred call.

III. *"Jesus took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town."*

Jesus took the blind man by the hand, with the same humility which He displayed when He took our nature upon Him at the Incarnation. He directed his steps, without constraining his freedom.

This man, instead of bringing forward a number of reasons for refusing to follow Jesus, obeyed Him in silent acquiescence. God offers us the means of salvation, leaving us at full liberty to accept or reject them. He does not constrain our will : "The exercise of force," says St. John Chrysostom, "has never yet converted any one." We acquire the experience of the usefulness of direction, by the practice of constant docility to the hand that guides us in the name of God. The fruit of this self-abandonment is complete peace and serenity of soul.

Jesus led the blind man out of the town, to teach us that we must fly from all occasions of sin, if we wish to overcome temptation. When we are at a distance from those places where pleasure displays all her attractions, His grace exerts a free and powerful influence upon the heart ; and at no other time can it be more necessary for us to go out of ourselves in this manner, than when we are preparing for Holy Communion. One sigh, one tear, can open heaven to our souls ; one wilful sin has power to plunge them into the abyss of condemnation. My will is set between two extremes ; I am at liberty to choose *Jesus* for my Guide, or else, blindly wilful, to fix my thoughts upon a created being. I am free to enter into a close union with Jesus, or to resist my con-

science, and remain at an immense distance from Him. What a blessing thus freely to resign my liberty in the true spirit of faith, submitting joyfully to the direction of my God !

Lord, I commit myself gladly into Thy hands ; do Thou guide my trembling steps towards the tabernacle. Grant me to feel, in this Communion, the full effects of Thy mercy and goodness.

IV. "*He put spittle upon his eyes.*"

This action of our Blessed Lord is mysterious ; it seems to indicate that the eyes of the soul are closed more frequently by sin than by ignorance. They must first be cleansed from the defilement which renders them incapable of receiving light : involved in the night of sin, the soul, deprived of all support, is lost in a fearful void. She becomes to herself a fatal abode, in which she is imprisoned without hope of escape.

Perhaps, before my last Communion, some defects which, though not easily perceived, were none the less real, attracted too little of my attention ; for even if my soul is not guilty of great transgressions, I have always some faults and weaknesses to confess and expiate. I must examine and condemn myself, without giving way to self-deception. I must humble myself for my faults, not keeping silence like the blind man of Bethsaida, whose indifference caused his cure to be so difficult and so long delayed.

The saliva of our Lord is also emblematical of the wisdom with which His presence inspires us. If, each time that I receive Holy Communion, I were to cut off one of my imperfections, to conquer a foolish fancy, to renounce some bad habit, to make the sacrifice of some frivolous luxury, my soul, growing daily in love and wisdom, would become an abode more worthy of our Blessed Lord.

O Lord, let me not be amongst the number of those who, closing their eyes to the heavenly light, behold

neither Thy mercies nor the proofs of Thy love. Suffer me not ever to regard with indifference the Sacred Host, or to consider it a common thing. Notwithstanding the shadows in which this Divine mystery veils itself from human eyes, I will never presume to receive it until I have adored it with profound and humble reverence.

V. *“And, laying His hands upon him, He asked him if he saw any thing.”*

Every thing in the person of our Divine Lord is possessed of a salutary virtue ; His hands, His words, His glance, convey healing to the soul. Before He proceeded to heal the blind man, it was His purpose, in asking “if he could see any thing,” to make him comprehend and feel his misfortune, and humbly confess his infirmity and weakness.

In the same way, before our Blessed Lord grants us forgiveness of our sins, or the blessing of some special graces, He causes us to feel our miseries deeply, and to deplore them bitterly, that we may not afterwards be puffed up by the gifts He bestows upon us. Men seldom realise the full value of a possession till they have lost it. Sickness discovers to us the value of health ; the recollection of blessings which we have forfeited, causes us to desire more ardently those which Jesus has promised us. The experience of reverses is ever the best teacher. God reveals to us the value and greatness of His gifts, by withdrawing them from time to time. He manifests His power in suffering, and, to the afflicted heart, He discovers the secret of prayer: however great our sorrow may be, let us never cease to have recourse to Jesus.

My God, I am preparing to receive a favour far greater than the imposition of Thy hands. When I enjoy the happiness of possessing Thee, enable me by Thy grace to listen to Thy voice with submissive docility. I have not always seen that Thy will demanded from my heart certain sacrifices of gentleness and moderation ;

from my reason, some victory over an angry or resentful feeling : and yet nothing is more certain than the duty of forgiveness, and nothing more dangerous than the indulgence of the slightest feeling of ill-will or revenge.

Lord, may these reflections, assisted by prayer, teach me to gain an interior victory over such feelings, for which I shall find an abundant recompense in Holy Communion !

VI. *“ The man looked, and said, I see men as it were trees walking.”*

We often take a confused and obscure view of objects, which causes them to appear altogether different from what they are in reality ; our minds are full of illusions, which we mistake for truths. Few people know themselves ; and I may venture to say that our self-love is quick to deceive us, and ingenious in concealing our faults from us. It was our Lord's will that the blind man should proclaim his infirmity aloud ; join in his humble confession.

Self-examination will discover to me many illusions as to my own faults, which I do not believe to be so great as they really are—as to my sins, of which the number and guilt are far greater than I am willing to suppose—as to my good qualities, which I imagine to be greater than they really are—as to my virtues, which are visible to my own eyes alone—as to my pleasures, which are less real than I imagine—as to the judgments of the world, which are evidently false and erroneous—as to afflictions, which seem to me sad and hurtful—as to the maxims of Jesus Christ, which I have not taken for the rule of my life. Another illusion has perhaps deceived me into the belief that, in my sufferings, I am the instrument of some secret designs of God's Providence, whereas it would be much nearer the truth to consider them as a just expiation for my sins. Alas, how many illusions have I to deplore ! My sins deserve these punishments, which mercifully forestall the chas-

tisements of the life to come. I do not sufficiently consider this.

How far am I from *seeing* myself clearly as I really am, but still more from seeing what I *ought* to be, and measuring the interval between these two extremes in the sight of God, who is sovereign Truth ! Still further am I from taking a clear view of all the obstacles within me and without, which oppose themselves to the acquirement of true self-knowledge.

“Know,” said Solomon, “that you walk in the midst of snares.” These words, according to St. John Chrysostom, have a deep and instructive meaning. They do not mean only, “Consider the snares with which your path is strewn ;” but, “Learn that there are hidden snares which you do not see.” We must study the devices of Satan with great care and circumspection ; for he frequently covers the sins which he would lead us to commit with the tempting flowers of pleasure. Alas, how often have his false lures deceived us ! Like the blind man, our imperfect sight perceived an unfaithful image of the truth. The devil hides, under the mask of some puerile satisfaction, the danger of sin and death. Never be satisfied with the first aspect of pleasure, but examine if some danger be not concealed beneath its specious appearance, and avoid it. Listen to our Lord, who says to your soul in secret : “What attracts you in that event, in that assembly ?”—wishing to undeceive you, if in your blindness you do not suspect the danger which lies in wait for your soul. “You are walking in the midst of snares.” They are not *beside* you, but at your feet, sometimes even in yourself ; for to us every thing is temptation. Distrust your own intentions, and your too hasty judgments ; make sure, first of all, that they are wise, but above all that they are good. O my Jesus, while I deplore the gross ignorance into which the greater number of men are plunged, and the thick clouds which obscure their vision, I desire to obtain a clearer view of my own duties. Be Thou my faithful

and sure Guide, to save me from wandering too far away from the bright paths of truth. Suffer me not, in preferring the shadows of created beings to Thee, to overlook the powerful efforts of Thy grace to keep me in the path of virtue. May my heart be set free from creatures, and raised to Thee ; and may it always oppose the motions of self-will, which incline to the love of earthly things ! Give me in this Communion a distinct view of Thy true and heavenly wisdom.

VII. "*Jesus again laid His hands upon his eyes.*"

Our Lord permitted the infirmity of this man to resist awhile the power of His Divine hand, in order to show us the danger of following the impulse of our own nature, which is ever blind and insensible to the operations of grace, and even leads us to resist them openly. Jesus Christ once more placed His hand upon those closed eyes, to make His *operation*, from which all light and life is derived, more clearly felt. There is not a single soul that can escape the holy tutelage of grace. Sooner or later, grace creates within us either remorse for past sins, or desire for true good. No soul can form itself alone. Its virtues are but the fruit of the inspirations by means of which Jesus Christ leads and governs it. Our Lord shows us again His earnest and intense solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the soul, which is a thousand times more precious in His eyes than the body. Have confidence, then, in the condescending kindness of His heart. The charity which consumes Him in the holy tabernacle is like an immense ocean, whose waters are pure and calm as the unruffled bosom of a lake. If you meet the efforts of our Blessed Lord to instruct and lead you by perfect docility to His inspirations, then cease to fear. Your inclination to evil, deep-seated as it may be, has bounds ; but His goodness and mercy have none. Your sins are, to the goodness of God, as a drop of water to the ocean, with this difference, that the ocean is confined within certain

limits, but the goodness of God is infinite. Fear not to confess all your weakness and your falls to Him who has undertaken the Divine mission of applying to them a heavenly remedy. Make the avowal of them all to Him, with humble sincerity; but, above all, make them known to our Lord: His hand will heal you. Say to Him with true repentance, mingled with confidence and love, "I thank Thee, O my Jesus, for that Thou didst condescend to effect my cure with Thy own hands. By Thy mercy, I have learned to know Thee, and also to know myself. If I have been taught to know Thee, it is Thou alone that hast enlightened me. Come and finish the work which Thy love has begun. Give Thyself to me, for the glory of Thy name; and whenever I speak of Thee, think of Thee, or remember Thy great mercies, permit me to offer myself up, a living sacrifice, in expiation and thanksgiving, with full resignation to Thy holy will.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord; rejoice in the presence of your Divine Master. Let not the sense of your own poverty diminish any thing of the joy which you ought to feel at this heavenly feast. Grace is here offered to all, without distinction of persons. You now possess your Saviour; He is the all-powerful physician: have full confidence in Him.

I. "*He began to see.*"

Those words indicate that his cure was effected by slow degrees, although Jesus did not apparently meet with any resistance on the part of the blind man. The night does not instantly fold her wings and flee away at the approach of the morning light. I must not be surprised, then, if my Communion do not instantaneously destroy my faults and miseries. Jesus permits them to remain for a time, that I may feel more deeply my

own weakness, and my constant need of His sacred presence.

At one time, an illusion fell from my eyes ; I was depending too much upon the assistance of men, upon their affection : that frail support vanished. "It is good, O Lord, that I have been humiliated," says the Prophet-king. Afflictions are fitted to humble our souls. God is pleased to manifest His mercy in the trials He sends us, and to hear and grant our prayers in them with especial liberality. "My grace is sufficient for thee," He said to St. Paul ; "for My power is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9). The more fully we declare our own miseries to our Lord, with humility and submission, the more fully He is pleased to enrich us with grace, to enable us at least to bear them with patience.

Lord, I will no more yield to my secret inclination to shrink from the remembrance of my faults ; they shall henceforth serve as occasions of more thankfully admiring Thy power, of blessing Thy goodness, and, above all, of loving Thee more ardently. The greater the number of wounds Thou dost heal in my heart, the greater is the manifestation of Thy love. It is sweet to think that my heart is so deeply indebted to Thee for innumerable favours.

II. *"At last he was restored, so that he saw all things clearly."*

The shades of darkness, which hid from him the magnificence of the material universe, were dispersed. There remained not a single flaw in the sight of the blind man ; for to God all things are possible. He was able to contemplate God incarnate ! What a consolation would have been wanting to his life, had Jesus refused to perform the miracle ! The more gradual the cure of the blind man had been, the greater was his joy at the full restoration of his sight. The cause of this is not unknown to me ; light often nourishes love, and for that

reason it is that I am so happy when I behold the Sacred Host. The graces of God, especially those given in Holy Communion, always cause joy to the soul: but this partly springs from charity, which cannot find a resting-place in our souls, if the prosperity or happiness of our neighbour is less dear to us than our own. Now, we can never arrive at that point of perfection in which the happiness of others makes us completely happy; unless the charity of the heart of Jesus reigns in our souls above every other feeling.

Lord, grant me a pure heart, that I may have a clear view of the vanity of perishable things, and may feel the blessedness of living under the sweet law of Thy love. Interior joy is not one of the necessary conditions of life. When happiness is mingled with our existence, it is as a gratuitous gift, intended to lead our thoughts to the happiness of heaven. What love is shown by Thee, O my Jesus, in thus entering into the smallest particulars of my life! If I were not in existence, nothing would be wanting to *Thy* felicity; but *my happiness* is centred in Thee alone. All seek for happiness, but few know where to find it. Oh, never permit me to pursue it in vain; never suffer me to turn aside from the blessed end to which grace will conduct me, even into Thy presence, O my God.

III. "*Jesus sent him back to his house.*"

By this order, our Lord directs us to hide from the world the favours He grants us, that we may the better preserve the remembrance of them.

In solitude, the soul perceives more clearly the motives of its actions, and the sense of eternal truths. In solitude, gratitude is more keenly felt and longer preserved. Silence is the safeguard of virtue; but there is neither silence nor solitude when we *listen to ourselves*, or when our imagination is unrestrained. See if Jesus Christ finds you often alone and silent.

Lord, perhaps I have been afraid that Thy gifts in

me should be unknown, or I have selfishly regretted that I had not received greater ones. Alas, my imagination is an evil counsellor. Thou hast opened mine eyes; my illusions are dispelled. It is a great grace to live in retirement, to be informed of my defects, to be reproached for my imperfections and weaknesses, and even to be despised and slighted by men. Formerly, I desired to enter the world, to be distinguished from the common herd, to meet those with whom I could enjoy a free intercourse of thought; though nothing can be more opposed than this to the interior worship which should be paid to Thee by the soul of the frequent communicant. This would be placing *my personal interest* on an equality with *Thine*, O my Jesus; it would be an interference with the rights of Divine love. O vain ambition, which has filled my heart with misery and bitterness!—I have forgotten that true happiness consists in *desiring to be forgotten*, and in loving Thee alone. If Thy love retained full possession of my heart, it would not be embittered by the injustice of men, and it would be no longer discontented and complaining.

Let me clearly see this truth, consider it deeply, make it the rule of my conduct. Let me hope to receive, in Holy Communion, grace sufficient to preserve me from failing in my resolution to *forget myself*, and to consent, for God's sake, to be *entirely forgotten*.

IV. "*Tell no man what has happened to thee.*"

By these words our Lord puts a restraint upon the light use of the tongue.

Let me not give way to that inclination to evil speaking which is so deeply rooted in our nature. Let me strive to overcome it; and who should do so, if not the soul fed with the Body of Jesus Christ? The lips which His Divine Body has touched, should never open to give utterance to any words save those of meekness and charity.

The fruit of all Divine graces, and especially that of Holy Communion, ought to be a profound humility. This is also the disposition most necessary to enable us to receive them more abundantly. Such is the value of spiritual gifts, that they are increased only as the heart is prepared to receive them. The poor and the rich have the same title to partake of the adorable Eucharist, and it presents the same advantages to both ; but the poor man often obtains a greater share of them, because he comes in a spirit of greater confidence and simplicity. Living far from worldly pomp and pleasure ; free from the ties of society, which absorb so much of the time of worldly persons ; leading a calm and laborious life,—he comes to Jesus Christ with greater faith, love, and purity. Know well your own poverty, and He will give you to taste of the precious fruits of His presence. Feel your own wants and wretchedness, and show them all to Him with full confidence.

Let me put in practice, in my own conduct, the counsel of silence. How many Divine words might be spoken by our Lord ! and yet He keeps perpetual silence in the Sacred Host. Let me not give utterance to every thing that occurs to my mind, even when it appears that it would be good and useful to say it, that so I may gain the mastery over myself, and give up something from a desire to imitate the silence of the tabernacle.

O my Jesus, have I well understood Thy meaning in sending the blind man back to his own home ? Was it Thy intention to leave him at full liberty to indulge his gratitude for Thy bounty ? or didst Thou seek to conceal this amazing miracle by his absence ? Grant me grace in the shadow of the sanctuary to meditate intently upon the grandeur of Thy love and Thy humiliation. Silence is well suited to temper the agitation of my thoughts, and save me the regret expressed by the pious author of the *Imitation* : “ I would that many a time I had kept silence, and not been in company.” I entreat Thee that no voluntary fault may oblige Thee

to withdraw from me the graces attached to Holy Communion.

V. "*Tell no man what has happened to thee.*"

Our Lord advises us to keep His graces secret. After Holy Communion, do not go into society; avoid useless words, which cause dissipation of mind. Nothing is more favourable to Divine communications than the silence of the soul. God takes pleasure in bestowing benefits and graces upon us; but His grace performs all its operations silently. Jesus immolates Himself in silence, to the glory of His Father, upon the altar of my heart. This marvel is accomplished every time that I communicate. In immolating myself with Jesus, I shall render to God the glory which He gives to Him; and I shall render Him so much the more glory in proportion as I seek little at the hands of men. Surely the most eager desire of *appearing somebody* must be completely quenched by the consideration of this truth.

Lord Jesus, I will no more complain of things contrary to my inclinations; but do Thou suffer my heart to vent its love in a great cry, which shall ascend to the throne of Thy mercy: "My God, my Love, Thou art all mine, and I am entirely Thine; make me to grow in love, that I may learn how sweet it is to love Thee, and to consume myself in Thy love. May I be inflamed with that Divine love! may I be raised above myself by holy fervour! may I follow Thee, O my Beloved, though strength and voice fail me to praise Thee worthily! may I love Thee more than myself! may I love Thee for Thyself alone! and may I love, in Thee, all those whom Thou lovest!" Grant me an interior spirit of recollection and of fidelity to Thy grace; and may the recollection of Thy presence be the continual occupation of my mind, the sovereign employment to which all else must ever give place!

Conclusion.

At the beginning of each day, let me interrogate my thoughts. Do I desire equally the glory of God, and the Cross, the penalty of my sins? Do I desire to participate in the love of my Saviour, and to bear the infirmities of humanity with the aid of Holy Communion? Whatever the conditions of my existence may be, let me ever glorify God by faith and submission, by the purity of my intention, by my detachment from creatures, and by the new life which should be the fruit of my participation in the Holy Eucharist!

TWENTY-THIRD EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

Preparation.

In the holy tabernacle, our Lord awaits you, as formerly, by the well of Jacob, He waited for the woman of Samaria. He is still ready to dispense to you His infinite merits, whenever you come to draw from this abyss of graces. He is saddened, perhaps, by your long delays, wearied by your resistance to His inspirations. If you knew who it is that waits for you with such tender mercy, and what those great gifts are that He has prepared for you, you would no longer defer your return to Him.

I. "*Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat down on the well.*"

Meditate attentively on these words, for each of them contains a treasure of mercy.

"Jesus being wearied with His journey." He had,

then, travelled a great distance. It is a long way, in fact, from heaven to earth. Ever occupied with the care of our lost souls, He never desists from His merciful search after them. As the Word, He is the mighty and strong God ; but as Man, He is weak and accessible to fatigue like ourselves.

“ He sat down.” Does not this indicate, on His part, as much patience as tenderness ? Nothing we can do, can discourage the heart of Jesus. He is never weary of our delays or of our resistance. He is determined never to shrink from any possible means of converting us ; He waits only for a favourable opportunity. Leaving the sinner in the midst of his noisy pleasures and amusements, where His presence would be useless and unwelcome, He waits till that rebellious soul becomes calmer, and more capable of listening to Him. O repose of Jesus, how active thou art ! How shamefully have I abused Thy patience, O my God !

What is Jesus waiting for here ? He is waiting for a guilty woman, for one who is even a great sinner. Seeking to gain a soul, He forgets the world which He has come to instruct. In His mind, every thing seems to give way to the salvation of a single soul. Have I the same respect and care for mine ?

“ Sitting on Jacob’s well.” This celebrated well was very deep, and it had never dried up. Our Lord could hardly have chosen a more perfect figure of the tabernacle, that profound abyss of love, whence so many graces, like precious fountains, have been dispersed over the world. These streams flow incessantly—they flow for you.

O my Jesus, in the silence of the sanctuary, Thou dost not now wait for the woman of Samaria to come and quench, with a little water, that mysterious thirst which consumes Thee ; but Thou art expecting me at the holy table, to manifest to me the gift of God. Grant, I beseech Thee, that I may ever faithfully respond to this gracious invitation, and that my heart may detach

itself from every attraction save that of Thy sacred presence.

II. *"About the sixth hour, there cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water."*

The day was just declining, when the woman of Samaria met with Jesus. It was late also in her life, of which probably more than half had been spent at a distance from God. She had no time to lose. Every moment is precious to us, for in each one we may be advancing towards heaven ; but the hour of grace, of that grace which transforms the soul, was even then striking for her. Lest *you* should lose that special grace, neglect none that are offered to you.

This circumstance shows at once how much more favoured you are by God than was the woman of Samaria. God has been known to you ever since you were able to lisp His name ; the first act of your childish hands was to carry to your lips the crucifix, which your pious mother taught you to love as a Divine image, a sacred object. You had hardly entered upon life, when, in your first Communion, our Blessed Lord Himself came to take possession of your soul. Then, in tones which vibrated in His sacred heart, you cried, "My God, I love Thee." Is not this love far greater than that simple knowledge of God which only exacts our reverence? What enlightenment have you not since received ! All your days have been days of grace. Never was that grace slow in coming to you. Call up the remembrances of your past life, in order to give more strength and fervour to your gratitude ; but when you consider your *present* life, how should your heart be inflamed with love ! Every day of your life, how short a time elapses between the hour of your waking and that of the Holy Sacrifice, in which Jesus descends from heaven to bless you ! How eagerly He issues from the tabernacle to manifest His tenderness to you, to communicate His life to you ! What prevents you from receiving all its

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effects? Do you rise and go to the holy table with eagerness equal to that of our Blessed Lord?

III. "*Jesus saith to her, Give me to drink.*"

A marvellous grace surprised this woman, not in the exercise of prayer or good works, but in one of the most ordinary actions of life. If Jesus holds His peace, she will draw her water, and return, ignorant alike of the grace she leaves behind her, and of the blessedness that awaits her. If He speaks, the soul of the sinner will be filled more quickly with the purifying stream of grace than the pitcher in her hand with water from the fountain. This fact shows us, on the one hand, that we can do nothing without Jesus; and, on the other, how our most ordinary actions, performed in union with Him, may become the means of our sanctification.

You should not regard the commonest occupations, proper to your condition in life, as any obstacle to Holy Communion; the eye of Jesus will not disdain your long journeys, your fatiguing employments, your humble labours. They may all serve as preparations to receive Him well.

Our Blessed Lord solicits from the woman of Samaria a trifling service, which appears to be only a pretext for opening a conversation with her. Except for the sake of charity, what connection could there be between God and a woman who was ignorant, light-minded, and sensual, who looked disdainfully at Him? How much delicacy is displayed in this thought of our Lord! Before He reveals Himself to this soul, He commences its renovation, by leading it to perform a good action, that it may be less alarmed when it comes into contact with the Divinity. He desires to convert the sinner, not to drive her to despair. Charity is the bond of union between His heart and the guilty soul: "Give me to drink," said He to her. He asks only for a little water, because no act of virtue is insignificant in His sight. If sometimes, at the moment in which you ap-

proach Holy Communion, your conscience, saddened by the remembrance of your sins, even though they are forgiven, fears to meet Jesus, and is even inclined to turn away from the holy table, perform some act of love, some alms-deed, and by this act you will find your hope revived, and your desires inflamed.

Jesus still acts in the same way with regard to us; He asks a *little*, that He may give *much*: "He endeavours," says St. Augustine, "to enter our souls upon their weakest side." He requires one to give Him the tears of repentance; another, a little humility, or patience, or detachment from sensual pleasures,—a little compassion and activity in the service of the poor and sick. Your spiritual advancement is so near the heart of Jesus, that He has undoubtedly demanded of you also the sacrifice of some imperfection; make this sacrifice promptly. Ah, in what a deplorable condition must that soul be, from whom Jesus Christ no longer demands any sacrifice! Give, give quickly, that He may immediately ask for something more. Happy is the soul from which He asks much, and asks often.

Perhaps I am too fond of pleasure; I am enchained by sensuality. I wish to amend my life, but I am far from deserving that Jesus should work this change in me. Nevertheless, by the voice of His poor, He claims some service from me. Consoling thought!—charity, which brought Him down so low, will raise me up even to His sacred heart. When I have listened to the expression of His gratitude by the mouth of His poor, I shall venture to sit down at His table with mingled joy and humility, and to say to Him, My thirsty soul sighs after the living water of Thy grace, O Lord; wash it, purify it in the fountain of Thy mercy. I hope in Thee, for Thou hast extended Thine hand to me, and I have not refused to relieve Thy necessities.

IV. "*Give Me to drink.*"

Let us pause again at these words. As Jesus is the Fountain of living water, why did He make this request, unless it was to reveal to us, by that burning thirst which resulted from His hurried journey, His long search for our souls, His desire to reunite the bands of love, long since broken by sin! In fact, St. Augustine says, that burning thirst which our Lord felt was rather the thirst of the heart than of the lips. Our Lord always takes the first step towards us, and draws us, sometimes by the inspirations of His grace, at other times by providential circumstances. Has He not often presented to me some act of charity, which He desired me to perform, in order to recall my attention to Him? And have I never refused Him any thing?

In the Holy Eucharist, several motives cause the heart of Jesus this ardent thirst: our afflictions, of which He comes to fix the duration; the labours of His life, of which He now desires to receive the fruits, oblige Him to sit down beside this fount of mercy, that He may wait there for the whole Church, says St. John Chrysostom; also His wounds, which have drained all the blood from his sacred Body. I have conquered by My Cross, He says; but what avails this victory, if I die again in each of your souls? Listen to this complaint of His heart. If you have given any cause for it, hasten at once, and frequently, to quench the thirst with which He is consumed for your salvation.

V. "*If thou didst know the gift of God.*"

It is necessary to communicate often, if we would seize the difference of accent in which Jesus speaks these words from the well of Jacob and from the tabernacle. In speaking to the Samaritan woman, who is in no way connected with Him, He uses those words to excite her curiosity; but in speaking to you, He seems as if He intended to exalt the dignity of the eucharistic gift, only

in order to give you a glimpse of those still greater ones which He has prepared for you in heaven. In *you*, they excite a new feeling towards God, whom you already know and love ; to *her*, they are the attraction of the unknown. Observe this difference, and understand how great a privilege is hereby granted you.

Jesus Christ addresses to us the same words in different ways. Have we not all, when we have committed a sin, experienced a certain feeling, which aroused our attention ? If you knew that you were about to offend Me, to wound My heart, says Jesus, then I am sure you would draw back. Have we always listened to this interior appeal ? Before Holy Communion, a lively feeling takes possession of the soul, when it hears the voice of our Lord, " If thou knewest the gift I bring to you ! This gift is MYSELF." Ah, what sweet joy would then take possession of your heart ! But does not your heart vibrate with more lively affection towards the things of this world ? I seem also to hear in these heavenly words an accent of sadness, as it were a sort of complaint, which escapes from the heart of Jesus in beholding a multitude of souls who blaspheme and are ignorant of this gift of God. How many of these, when they enter the church, look vaguely at the tabernacle, without thinking of their hidden God, and go forth again without discerning the heavenly gift offered to them, in their eagerness after ephemeral pleasures ! Oh, if you have neglected Jesus Christ in the secret attraction of His grace, or in this adorable Sacrament, is it not your indifference or blindness that has caused these complaints of His sacred heart ?

VI. "*Lord, give me this water.*"

Jesus Christ had offered to this woman a mysterious and spiritual water ; she knew not whence it came, she did not even understand its nature ; but she obeyed the movements of grace, which led her to desire it.

Admire the gradual progress of light in this soul,

which had been obscured by ignorance and sin. Jesus shows infinite delicacy in seconding these advances. He mercifully reveals her past guilt, before He grants her the salutary waters of repentance.

This sacred fountain was never unknown to you. The water of sacramental grace is dispensed to you at the tribunal of penance ; but another still more precious fountain is at this moment about to be opened for you. The Blood of Jesus Christ will be given to you, contained in the adorable vessel of His most sacred Body ; and as you feed your soul, you may quench its thirst in the fountain of living waters, which are also those of Divine love. Redouble, then, your fervour, that so you may be satisfied and inebriated with heavenly delights. Cry, with the woman of Samaria, "Lord, give me this water." A glance of love is sufficient to open heaven to us ; by prayer, our conversation is placed above ; but when, kneeling at the holy table, we are about to receive this sacred food, God Himself descends into our hearts.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord profoundly. Tell Him all your love, uniting the timidity of reverential fear to the confidence of the soul that is powerfully attracted by her God.

The first care of a pious soul should be to offer herself entirely to our Lord, and to constitute Him the sole Master of her heart.

Ask Him to give you a spirit of zeal regulated by prudence, that you may advance His glory in your intercourse with the world.

The Padre Alvarez said, that the moments which follow Holy Communion are the most precious of our lives ; use them faithfully, for our Lord might say to you, as once to His disciples, "Me you have not always."

I. "*I know that the Messias cometh.*"

After Holy Communion, meditate for a short time upon these words.

Make a comparison between the expectation of the promised Saviour, and the certainty that He has already come; between hoping for the fruits of His mission, and actually receiving them; still further, between expecting Him and possessing Him. For now the promises are fulfilled, the possession of Jesus Christ is your present happiness. Your faith is now only an act of gratitude; your life ought to be a continual act of love, to which you must now join a fervent act of thanksgiving.

The hope of receiving a precious grace is not always sufficient to determine our wills to the practice of virtue. Some souls well understand the miserable uneasiness into which an upright conscience falls, when it first discovers a duty which is not quite evident; this uncertainty puts us to torture. You are happy in being free from these anxieties; you have within you the uncreated light, and at the voice of prayer it will shine forth and enlighten your soul. Listen to the wise and gentle voice in your heart, which instructs without wounding, reproves without bitterness, and consoles at the same time that it corrects. Ask Jesus Christ to counsel and direct you.

O Jesus, how happy am I in knowing that Thou art within me! no longer am I reduced to a vague faith and an uncertain hope. My heart is so filled with Thee, that it has no room left for the world, or for any other attraction out of Thee; and as Thy love for me attained the highest possible limits, so may all earthly affection yield to my love for Thee.

II. "*I am He who am speaking to thee.*"

These words were less sweet to the ear of the woman of Samaria than to her inmost heart, which was sud-

denly enlightened by grace, and enabled to recognise, under the veil of humanity, THE SELF-EXISTENT GOD. She believed in the Messias, and she loved Him ; she adored her God, who had made Himself known to her ; and at the same moment that light flooded her mind, her heart was filled with hope and love.

It is no longer under the appearance of an unexpected stranger that Jesus manifests Himself to you,—His Humanity disappears under the veil which hides the person of Jesus Christ,—but the Divine rays that issue from the Sacred Host shine with brilliant splendour to the eyes of your faith ; and the majesty of God—which says, in a tone of inimitable tenderness, My child, it is *I* who speak to thee—is revealed to you by His favours even more than by the voice of His love.

O my Jesus, it is not now with a confused idea of Thy Divinity that I listen to these sweet words. Under the operation of Divine grace, my heart has comprehended Thy love ; and in the contemplation of this most beautiful of mysteries I find the chief joy of my life, as its manifestation will complete my happiness in eternity.

III. *“ Go, call thy husband, and come hither.”*

Attend, O Christian women, for it is to you that our Blessed Lord now addresses Himself from His sacred Altar-throne. Of all the Divine words which have been preserved to us in the Gospels, none are more fitted for your personal application than these. Jesus Christ designs to teach you that the happiness we enjoy in Holy Communion is not intended for our personal satisfaction only, but that our zeal for others should be enkindled at that sacred fire. When you depart from the holy table, you should become apostles, you should bear to others the charity of God, who dwells in you. Begin, then, by presenting to our Lord, one by one, the souls that are most dear to you ; and whisper an ardent prayer into the ear of His sacred heart, which shall have power to bring down effectual grace upon all your beloved ones.

But let not your apostolate be confined to prayer alone. Consider the infinite pains taken by Jesus Christ to enlighten and convert the woman of Samaria. Try to imitate the zeal of your Divine Master in its ingenious delicacy, and be content to set earthly things aside for a while, giving your whole attention to the interests of eternity. The marriage-union, into which you have entered in the presence of our Lord, was not intended to be confined to the short term of this mortal life; it has received the Divine benediction, by which it is consecrated for eternity; it is your part to communicate to others the grace which has been granted to you.

Nothing is hidden from our Lord. If He sees that your soul is too exclusively occupied by material things, by human ambition, will not that be an obstacle to the full effusion of His grace upon your family?

“And return hither.” Obey this tender and gentle command, and bring all those that are dear to you to our Blessed Lord. Ah, He loves to see many faithful souls pressing around Him at His table. Do not return alone, but bring back with you to our Lord the husband whom He charges you to call. Jesus Christ did not remain long waiting for the inhabitants of Samaria at the well. Hasten, then, lest, after He has waited long, He should pass away, and return no more.

Lord Jesus, grant me grace to neglect no possible means of winning souls to Thee. May Thy love raise me above all worldly cares,—may it be the soul of all my thoughts, of all my actions! and grant me grace to attract others to Thy service, by setting them the example of abnegation, patience, and humility.

IV. “*The woman left her water-pot, and went her way into the city.*”

The Evangelist remarks, not without mystery, with some hidden meaning,—as St. Augustine and several

other Fathers observe,—that the woman of Samaria left her water-pot at the feet of Jesus Christ.

The pitcher which she thus abandoned was a figure of her past life, filled with the sensual pleasures which she then renounced for ever.

She came sinful and impure to the Fountain of mercy, and she returned home chaste and purified. St. Ambrose adds, “She did not now carry a pitcher in her hand, but the grace of God in her heart.” Delivered from the burden of her sins, she was enriched with the treasures of holiness.

“Our Blessed Lord,” says Origen, “held out no hope of earthly happiness, to detach her from her past life ; it was sufficient for Him to cast a spark of Divine love into her heart. Oh, how powerful is the love of God ! resist it not ; suffer Jesus to inflame your heart, shed the tears of repentance at His feet, make the sacrifice of some outward object to Him, and He will fill your heart with His love.” To that sacred flame, repentance adds special fervour. “It is in the fervent soul,” as Padre Ventura observes, “that the wonders of the spirit of penance are only the wonders of love. Penance contests the palm of zeal with innocence. And how graceful does this zeal appear in a pious woman, how attractive it becomes, and what an influence for good does it exert upon all that come within its reach ! Women are never so great and noble as when they make use of all their charms and talents to bring back souls to God.”

Pause once more, and consider one of the events recorded in the Gospel. When the Apostles had provided for their material wants, they hastened back to Jesus,—they passed as little time in the town as they possibly could. Follow their example, and that of the angels, who, obeying the Divine commands with pious promptitude, return quickly to surround the throne of God. Pious souls on earth are the angels of the Eucharist ; spending in their worldly duties no more time than is absolutely necessary for their due performance, their

hearts dwell ever in the presence of Jesus Christ, and they return as frequently as possible to adore Him on His throne of love.

O Jesus, grant that my heart may become obedient to Thy voice, as was that of the woman of Samaria.

V. *"She said to them, Is not this the Christ?"*

As the woman of Samaria departed on her errand of charity, our Lord blessed her efforts ; and ere long the inhabitants of her native city hastened to acknowledge the Messiah, and to hail Him as their King. When, with tears of joy, you leave the holy table, bearing Jesus Christ in your heart, do you not feel your soul overflow with desire to manifest your gratitude ? are you satisfied with spending a few moments in adoring and thanking our Lord ? Do you not feel that He is urging you to express your sense of His love and goodness in your actions ? The whole life of the Christian ought to be a continual confession of the Divinity of our Lord,—manifesting to the world, by wisdom, prudence, consideration, and charity, the zeal which animates the soul when it has received its God. If the woman of Samaria, after conversing only a few moments with our Lord, was able to say to the Samaritans with such full conviction of faith, which they quickly shared, "Is not this the Christ?" then your conversation after Holy Communion should be such as shall cause all around you to say, She is a true Christian.

VI. *"He has told me all whatsoever I have done."*

When the soul has freely and willingly given herself to God, the work of her sanctification is not then completed ; it is still necessary to remove the hindrances to perfect union with our Lord. One of the principal of these obstacles is the want of purity and humility of heart.

Humility is the first mark of our return to God. The woman of Samaria was full of self-distrust, said St. John Chrysostom, and her zeal to make Christ known

to her fellow-citizens was equal to the simplicity of the means she employed. She did not bring forward the sublime revelation which had been made to her of our Lord's Divinity,—she spoke only of His knowledge of her past offences, and kept back her own opinion of His greatness. Her crowning virtue was humility. And how effectual was her zeal ! The city was moved ; all the inhabitants hastened to Jacob's well, and entreated Jesus to remain with them. After Holy Communion, let us try to show how much reverence, confidence, and love are due to Jesus dwelling in us. If, like this woman, we have been led astray by self-love or worldly affections, let us not be cast down. Let us never be contented, so long as our souls remain in this sad condition, but strive earnestly to attain the height of virtue and holiness.

O Jesus, I am in one sense more guilty than the woman of Samaria ; having received more light, I have abused Thy graces more. But if my offences have been great, I pray Thee to render my confession sincere, and to pour upon my soul some drops of that living water, after drinking which I shall thirst no more for ever.

VII. *"We know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."*

If you seek to know the principle of this act of faith, which was thus publicly made by the Samaritans, you will find that the sweet charity of Jesus Christ alone explains the irresistible influence which He exerts over our hearts.

And now that I have tasted the sweetness of Jesus at the fountain-head, has it conquered my self-will and overcome my coldness ? I know far better than the Samaritans did the wonders of humility and majesty, of patience and love, which are hidden in the tabernacle with the sacred Humanity of our Lord. And as these people were never weary of contemplating our Blessed Saviour, of listening to Him and adoring Him in trans-

ports of pure and thankful joy, have they not left me a beautiful model for my act of thanksgiving? The Samaritans were permitted only to behold our Lord, but I press Him to my heart; they believed that Jesus Christ would save the world, but I know that He has redeemed me; they hoped for His speedy return, while I shall only lose Him on earth to possess Him unveiled for ever in heaven.

O Jesus, inflame my heart with Thy love, and, by the aid of this heavenly light, may I confess Thee before men, both in word and deed! May that sacred flame purify my intentions, animate all my affections, and may all my actions be directed by its heavenly influence! May I never break the chain of love which unites me to Thee, the last link of which is the grace of final perseverance! Make me increasingly attentive to the accents of Thy afflicted heart, that I may ever labour more ardently to augment the spread of Thy knowledge and love through all the earth.

Conclusion.

Before you finish your act of thanksgiving, determine that, in future, when you go to Holy Communion, you will perform some painful act of self-denial, and some act of charity or zeal. This will be at once a penance for your sins and an offering which you can lay at the feet of our Lord.



TWENTY-FOURTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PRAYER OF THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

Preparation.

MEDITATE attentively upon her affecting history, as recorded in the Gospel. The feelings of this woman, who was so great in faith, so humble in mind, and so ardent in prayer, are an excellent guide for us in preparing for Holy Communion.

I. The Woman of Canaan comes to meet Jesus.

A woman of high rank, coming from the land of Sidon, addresses our Lord. I am also a stranger here below; my heart, an unknown guest in the world, has no home but heaven. Why should I attach myself to shadows, which leave no trace upon the dust, where they delude my sight for a while, and quickly disappear? There is but one place where the pious soul never feels herself a stranger; it is the tabernacle. The house of God is her home, and her place is prepared for her there.

This woman was actually plunged in the darkness of paganism; notwithstanding this, God sent light and grace into her soul. As soon as she heard of the Saviour, she left her native land to come to Him. What a lesson for me! I know our Lord, and not by faith alone, for I know Him by His gifts, by His special mercies and favours. Have I, like this stranger, left the world, to go straight to God? If I have not done so, my soul cannot have full liberty in making her desires known to Him. Whenever I am preparing to receive Holy Communion, or to approach God in prayer, I will follow the example of this woman, who was actuated by so ardent a desire for the health of her beloved child. I will

turn away my thoughts and desires from all outward things, and especially from the world within me ; from the crowds of vain thoughts, which, like the waves of a troubled sea, distract my mind and my imagination : I must recollect myself, I must make silence in my soul.

This woman had a bitter grief in the depths of her heart ; her daughter was possessed by an evil spirit ; she was subjected to great peril, and was in danger of death. Turning from all human aid, she sought in Jesus succour and consolation in her grief. How merciful God has been in placing the secret of prayer in the bosom of affliction !

In my troubles, which are too frequently caused by some shock to my self-love, I do not act in this spirit of faith. Absorbed in self, I bring to our Lord a distracted mind and a discouraged heart ; my confidence is weakened, and my love extinguished : and yet I have already a thousand times experienced His compassionate love. Jesus alone has always a consoling word upon His lips, and a life-giving balm in His hand.

My God, why is my soul reserved and distrustful in prayer, when she ought to be full of faith and confidence ? Do I not know that my heart is an altar, on which the sacrifice of suffering must be offered daily ? To render this sacrifice meritorious, it is only necessary that it should be united to the sufferings of Thy Son ; and this condition is both a merciful gift and a consolation.

II. *The Woman of Canaan came to Jesus alone, and without Fear.*

She did not think of proclaiming her name or rank ; her thoughts were entirely occupied with the object of her desires, with the prayer she was about to make to Jesus. Shall I not also endeavour to be disengaged from all creatures ? shall I not fix my whole soul upon the thought of our Lord whom I am about to receive ?

She joins a crowd of humble petitioners ; she is penetrated with the highest idea of the power of our Lord, forgetting that she is quite unknown to Him, that she has no special claim to His attention. I have still less right to approach Thee, O Lord. Often, alas, have I come to Thee without love or fervour, and yet Thou hast never sent me empty away. Thy goodness emboldens me ; but my confidence ought to be inseparably joined with reverential fear. I must not forget that I am going to the Almighty God, in whose sight I am but dust and ashes. She fell at the feet of Jesus ; she made the air resound with her prayer ; she made use of no plea save her daughter's sickness, and her confidence in the Divine Master to whom she made her application : " Son of David," she exclaimed, " have pity on me !"

This affecting exclamation was prompted by the feeling that the cure of her child would be a personal benefit to herself ; her heart spoke even more than her voice. Health is the least of the blessings that a pious mother ought to ask for her children ; she has under her charge souls sent from heaven, ignorant of life ; and her chief aim should be, not so much to promote their earthly happiness, as to teach them the shortness of life, and the duties which it imposes upon them ; and also to direct their thoughts to their primeval greatness, which they must strive to regain by a life of virtue.

The soul that is devoted to the heart of Jesus regards the interests of its Divine Master as identical with its own ; it rejoices in every thing that brings glory to Him, and is grieved to see Him outraged ; it forgets itself in labouring to procure His glory. Have I acquired this zeal ? and do I feel the indifference and the sins that afflict our Blessed Lord more deeply than my own sufferings, seeking to console His sacred heart, rather than to obtain its consolations for myself ?

III. *The first Answer of our Blessed Lord.*

Jesus, at first, only replied by silence to the humble prayer of the woman of Canaan. He seemed as if He neither saw nor heard her; but, when urged by His disciples to listen to the woman, He replied, "I am not sent to you." These words seem harsh, coming from the mouth of Him who is Truth itself. By what motive could they have been dictated? The soul of this stranger, born in the darkness of paganism, had become the sport of the demon she adored. What a fearful transformation must Jesus have beheld in this soul! how grievously was it turned aside from the first end for which it was created in the image of God!—the soul, which is called by Tertullian "the shadow of the Soul of God, the breath of His Spirit, the most noble creation of His Word; the soul, whose grandeur is eternity,—her perfection, sanctity,—her beatitude, a participation of the Divinity." These words express His intense suffering in regarding those benighted people, upon whom the Sun of Justice had never shone, because Jesus passed by them in secret, refusing them the exercise of His evangelical ministry, which they were not able to receive.

Lord, if it be Thy will to keep silence, in answer to my constant prayer, I will not be discouraged. Thy ears are ever open to the cry of our sorrow, says the Prophet. When I think that Thou dost not disdain even the fragile flower that opens to the early morning light, and vanishes at the approach of evening, can I doubt the paternal tenderness with which Thou dost watch over my soul? Thy watchful eye follows me every where; Thy heart, in the holy tabernacle, is ever occupied with the care of my salvation. My prayers will be heard, if I seek Thy glory sincerely, if I persevere with confidence in my humble expectations.

IV. The Constancy of the Woman of Canaan.

Though this woman was received with indifference, even with apparent scorn, she persevered in her petition, without suffering herself to be discouraged. The grace of God animated her soul, so that she was ready to do a holy violence to the heart of Jesus. Her confidence was not shaken even by the harsh answer she received. Coming still closer to our Blessed Lord, having followed Him for a long time patiently, she fell at His feet and adored Him. Coming still nearer to the Divine Master, she cried with yet more pressing entreaty, "Son of David, have mercy on me; Lord, help me." This repeated prayer of an afflicted mother is, as it were, an act of faith,—of respectful boldness, issuing from a heart that is devoted to the heart of our Lord, and will assuredly gain His ear.

Lord, that grace of faith, given freely by Thee to Thine elect, was granted to me under circumstances which should excite my deepest thankfulness. Hardly had my eyes opened to the light of day, when the grace of baptism renewed my right to Thy love; and this was but a prelude to the tender cares which Thou didst lavish upon my soul. Being made, from my birth, a member of Thy holy Church, I received a grace far more precious than life,—a grace which the idolatrous nations have never yet enjoyed.

If, then, my prayers are not answered, it is because they are wanting in that faith which causes our petitions to ascend to God,—because my mind is wandering amongst earthly things, instead of approaching Thee with true humility and confidence,—because I do not exclaim with ardent love, My God, I love Thee!—have mercy upon me. This should not be so, when Jesus is ever near me in the holy tabernacle,—when the still greater gift of Holy Communion is granted me every day,—when He never refuses me a look of tender love, and has never yet said to me, "I was not sent to you."

What love I owe Thee, O Lord ! and yet, how sinful have I been ! Like this stranger, I have idolised creatures and myself ; I have thus deserved a just reproof. Yet, instead of repulsing me, Thou dost call me to receive Thy gifts. " My child," Thou sayest, " I love you,—I am ever watching over you ; I only ask of you one sigh after your Father in heaven." O sweet demand !—to which my heart replies with joy, Since Thou hast called me, O Lord, come first to me,—receive my soul into Thy protection.

V. *Her Humility.*

Jesus humbled this woman, in order to try her constancy ; and when the Apostles besought Him to send her away, He replied, " It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs." And, as if He wished to escape from any further importunities, He entered into a house. How harsh an answer to her humble prayer ! If the poor stranger had taken offence at this apparent contempt, and had gone away,—if she had ceased her tears and supplications, without making one more effort to move the inexplicable insensibility of our Lord,—she would not have obtained her request, her daughter would have remained under the power of the demon, and the Divine light of faith would never have been kindled in her heart,—she would never have adored Jesus as her God and Saviour. She would have had to deplore to all eternity the fatal consequences of having yielded to the impulse of pride and self-love. Reflect, at the feet of our Lord, upon the terrible consequences of indulging even in an apparently justifiable resentment.

How many graces may I not have already forfeited, through my readiness to yield to the first impressions of sensitive pride and self-love ! What treasures of mercy may I not have closed, which were ready to enrich my soul ! When I am called upon to make some sacrifice to our Lord, from which my soul instinctively

shrinks, I often hesitate, not remembering that this courageous effort is necessary to bring me into the path of perfection, or to confirm me in it, if I have already advanced a little way therein. How fatal may be the consequences to my soul, if, through my own weakness, I forfeit the smallest graces!

Thy purpose in repulsing this woman, O my Jesus, was only to prepare her for special mercies,—to open to her more tenderly Thy compassionate heart. Thou didst hide Thyself from her importunity, but Thou art never weary of mine; and though Thou dost permit us to increase our merits by seeking Thee, Thou dost never withhold the promised joy of Thy presence from those who seek Thee faithfully.

VI. *Her Confidence.*

The woman of Canaan followed our Lord into the house to which He had retired. Her confidence increased in proportion to the humiliations she received, says St. Augustine. This was because, in approaching our Lord, she had divined the merciful intentions of His heart. With a touching humility, which gave redoubled force to her earnest prayer, she replied to the severe words of our Lord by turning them into a fresh appeal for mercy: "Yea, Lord, but the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." This admirable reply, which could only have been inspired by a noble and generous mind, contains many useful lessons: Firstly, It shows that the soul which is faithful to the inspirations of grace accepts every sacrifice and resigns itself to every humiliation. Is this my disposition? Secondly, The presence of Jesus Christ gives us courage to overcome our own nature, and to stifle our feelings of resentment and ill-will. Have I derived this strength from my Communion? Thirdly, The soul that studies the humility of Jesus Christ detests a worldly spirit, and labours to root out every thought and feeling that is infected with it. Have I commenced this neces-

sary labour? Fourthly, Let us never be discouraged either by our own faults, or even when we seem to derive little fruit from our prayers, but let us overcome all these obstacles to follow Jesus. Do I seek Him with humility and confidence at the holy table? Fifthly, Let me persevere meekly in the path which has been traced out for me by Providence, not looking back, not suffering myself to be discouraged, but waiting patiently for the hour of grace. In times of dryness and desolation, I will rest tranquilly at the feet of Jesus; and if He hide Himself longer than usual, I will seek Him more fervently. Do I wait thus patiently, until it shall please God to answer my prayers?

Lord, I will retain Thy teaching in my heart. But while I admire the behaviour of the woman of Canaan, I feel more than ever Thy mercy and goodness to my soul. What favours have I not received from Thy hand! And what have I received, that I have not polluted? Never dost Thou leave the tabernacle,—never hast Thou refused me the gift of Thy grace, or the still more precious gift of the Most Holy Eucharist. And, far from despairing to receive Thee with the ardent desire which was felt by that tender mother for the healing of her only child, I sometimes turn away from that sacred banquet, instead of hastening to it, like a beloved child who is invited to his father's table. I have disdained this celestial food, and have stooped to gather up a little dust of the earth; for such, and no more, are the vain pleasures of the world, and the satisfaction I endeavour to find in the gratification of my own desires. Instead of thankfully accepting every sacrifice which may unite me more closely to Thee, O my Jesus, I despise and reject the little humiliations by which Thou dost test my love. I deserve to be excluded from Thy sacred banquet. Too happy should I be, were I suffered to gather up some crumbs, when Thy faithful servants drink abundantly from the fountains of Thy love.

Notwithstanding my unworthiness, O Lord, I feel an ardent desire for the Holy Eucharist. It is the channel of all the blessings I receive, and it alone has been the consolation of my hours of sadness. How earnestly should the soul implore the restoration of this great blessing, when it has been denied her for a season! There is no happiness in life to be compared with that which we enjoy in Holy Communion. Thou alone, O my God, art my soul's most ardent desire; my sweetest remembrances relate to Thee. Thou art my hope in the early morning; Thou art my last thought when I sink to rest at night.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Precious moment, in which our Lord descends from the Altar, touches your lips, and is buried in your heart!

Adore Him—declare your faith and love; or let your soul lie humbly prostrate at the feet of Jesus, considering your nothingness and His Majesty—His beauty united to your degradation.

I. “*O woman, great is thy faith!*”

Our Lord seems to express two feelings in this exclamation: one being *surprise* at finding so much confidence in His power shown in a land of idolaters; the other, *admiration* at the constancy of this woman. “Jesus Christ humiliated her only to exalt her,” says St. Peter Chrysologus. Jesus delayed the performance of this miracle, because it was His purpose to extend its operation to the soul as well as to the body; and also because He designed to reveal to us the influence which our actions exert over His Divine heart, and that *patience* and humility are sure means of inclining Him to grant our petitions.

My heart no sooner desired Jesus, than He came to me. I now possess him. But has He yet addressed these consoling words to me: “My child, great is thy faith”? Alas, His silence rather seems to reproach me

for the absence of that virtue which is able to obtain such wonders from His almighty hand. Does He behold me prostrate in humble adoration at His feet, forgetting the whole world for Him, absorbing all my faculties in the thought of His adorable presence ?

If the Angels who surround me at the time of my Communion were to speak to my soul, they would express their astonishment at its indifference to that august mystery, and would point to its inexplicable coldness as an eclipse in the Divine brightness with which my heart should be filled.

Lord, I humbly confess that in me Thou wilt not find that faith which can remove mountains, although far greater wonders are effected daily at Thy Altar than are involved in any such overthrow of the natural order of things ; but, at least, I sincerely desire to obtain that faith. Surely the consideration of the love with which the whole course of my past life has been so abundantly marked, and which still bears me on to heaven, should revive and strengthen this faith in me !

O my Jesus, the humility and perseverance of that prayer were prompted by human feelings : maternal love brought this woman of Canaan to Thy feet, and retained her there with immovable constancy. Should not my gratitude to Thee be a far stronger cause to keep me ever devoted to Thy service ? Shall I feel less love for Thee than was manifested by this poor stranger to her daughter ? Shall I be less solicitous for Thy glory, surrounded as I am by proofs of Thy most tender love ? No, Lord ; in gratitude for Thy goodness, which ever enriches me with heavenly blessings, I beseech Thee to accept my resolve never more to communicate without renewing my fervent love and faith in this adorable Sacrament. Bless the resolution which I now take—henceforth so to govern all my thoughts, words, and actions, that in each one of them I may feel that I am making fitting preparation for Holy Communion. During my act of thanksgiving, I will not try to deceive

myself by using some book of pious forms, which does not really express the feelings of my soul ; but, uniting myself interiorly to Thy Divine presence, I will wait in silence and humility until it shall be Thy pleasure to speak to my heart.

II. "*Be it done to thee as thou wilt.*"

During the whole of His public life, Jesus only once made use of these remarkable words in granting the miracle which was requested of Him. "Be it done to thee as thou wilt," He said to that woman. No condition, no limit, was placed to her desires. The wonderful cure thus granted shows that humble and fervent prayer can overcome all obstacles, and can conquer even God Himself. Besides her victory over the resistance of our Lord, the woman of Canaan obtained a grace for herself which she had not even dreamed of—the revelation of the God whom she was henceforth to worship.

If we obtain little, it is because we ask little, and with little earnestness and faith. We are, perhaps, afraid to speak freely ; or we confine our desires to our own personal wants, forgetting that the Fountain of all graces is ours, and that He is able, in answer to prayers, to shed abundant blessings upon the whole world. You have, perhaps, long been soliciting for those whom you love a grace far more important than the cure of the body. Be constant, indefatigable in its pursuit. If Jesus resists you to-day, you will obtain all your requests to-morrow. If this year has passed without relief, the next will, doubtless, be more favourable ; for Jesus, even when apparently most insensible to your prayers, keeps account of all your tears. You will receive abundantly, according to the time you have employed in making your requests. O mother, your heart's desires will be more than fulfilled !

Take courage ; wrestle with Jesus Christ present in your soul. He loves that holy violence of faith and

confidence—He wishes to be conquered. Continue to importune Him ; and, by a prodigy of constancy, obtain a miracle of grace. Oblige Jesus Christ to discover to you His heart, and to say to you with love and admiration : “ O woman, great is thy faith ! I can resist thee no longer. Go, and receive according to thy desires for this life and for eternity.”

Why should we think only of our own wants, when so many souls around us are sleeping the sleep of death ? Shall we bring with us to the foot of the Altar, where Jesus immolates Himself for all, and desires to give Himself to all, that cold egotism which ought to be utterly unknown to the soul that often partakes of the Holy Eucharist ? Can egotism dare to reveal itself at the foot of the Cross, before the chalice into which the Blood of Jesus Christ flows daily for the salvation of our souls ?

The Holy Eucharist, which is the focus in which all the rays of Divine love meet and are concentrated, is the only remedy for our egotism,—which it banishes by making our hearts the living tabernacles of Jesus. A pious soul cannot be selfish. Our Divine Lord Himself, the model of sweet and constant charity, in communicating frequently to our souls His sacramental life, which is all love, associates them with His own thoughts and actions, and thus enables them to spread abroad its salutary effects. In this manner we are urged by charity to succour the suffering members of Jesus Christ, in order thus to reveal to them, in the still greater evils which exist in their souls, that supreme misery which the world strives to shroud in impenetrable darkness, but which pierces through all disguise, and manifests itself in all its sad reality to the faith of a Christian. Every Christian can and ought to combat this evil by prayer. In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the God of the Eucharist inspires us with that charity which animates Himself, and fills our hearts with a *passion for doing good*. Few souls are animated

by that Divine passion which inspired those words of Jesus : *Desiderio desideravi*—"With desire I have desired." These desires of perfect love directed all His actions, while He dwelt on earth to the glory of His Father and our salvation.

Give me those desires, O my Jesus, when I behold the sins which afflict Thy Divine heart, by bringing down upon sinners the thunders of God's eternal justice. Arrest these souls upon their downward course, which leads to the abyss of destruction. Strike me, O Lord ; but spare those blighted images of Thy supreme beauty. Extinguish the too ardent flame of human passions, which, diverted from their proper object, take up an attitude of persevering antagonism against God. Send down on earth the fire of Thy love. When, in returning from the holy table, my love mounts up like an ardent flame to heaven, its reflection extends to my actions ; but if, no longer nourished by frequent Communion, that heavenly flame is extinguished, my heart, becoming like a cold hearth-stone where ashes alone remain, it will soon incline again to evil, and its imperfections will lead it to wander far away from God, who is its true centre.

III. "*Be it done to thee as thou wilt.*"

Recollect yourself, and listen to Jesus pronouncing in your heart these consoling words, which should excite in you no less gratitude than confidence.

O Lord, once only in my life I asked Thee with earnest entreaty for a personal favour. Thou didst grant my prayer with even more love than Thou didst show to that poor stranger : Go as often as thou wilt, My daughter,—go every day to the holy table ; and those blessed words, which I hardly dared to hope for, associated my life with the Divine Eucharist. Why does not this favour, of which I am so unworthy, inspire me with a holy boldness to represent to Thee the necessities of the Church ? Is it for my sake alone, my God,

that Thou daily placest so great a treasure in a receptacle so unworthy? Is it not, on the contrary, that I may receive Thee in the name of those who forget Thee?—in the name of those who know Thee not?—in the name of those who, having once loved Thee, now forget or blaspheme Thee?—in the name of all suffering souls? My heart is not vast enough to contain Thy infinite love, which overflows on all sides, and floods the earth with wondrous and magnificent graces; but, by my prayers, I may be the means of aiding some souls to participate in the spiritual advantages which flow from mutual love.

IV. *Reflections upon the Prayer of the Woman of Canaan.*

In considering how our Lord, after repeated refusals, at length granted her request, let us reflect upon her prayer, that we may make our own resemble it. She prayed *during only one day*, it is true, but with that earnest importunity which, like an arrow's flight, cleaves the skies. Let us, then, never cease to offer up our humble prayers; they will be granted, even though it may seem as if heaven were closed against us. Let us knock, without being weary, at the heart of Jesus; it opens easily, since it was pierced for us. Love renders Him attentive to our desires. He does not limit the exercise of His almighty power, when our prayers, like an ardent outcry of entreaty, ascend to the throne of His mercy. If He *seems* to hesitate, it is because our prayer does not sufficiently seek His glory; it is that we may learn to attach more value to His favours, that we may thank Him more joyfully, that we may retain a more profound remembrance of His benefits, that we may learn to rise above the sphere of our private, personal interests, and abandon ourselves entirely to His hand; or that, by feeling more deeply the miseries of this world, we may understand that the sorrows of our mortal life can be healed by Him alone.

Thus, then, O my God, according to Thy will, I will spare neither my time nor my efforts to bring back to Thee all those wandering souls who, neglecting the work of their salvation, "*love themselves less than the devil thinks they deserve*;" and "who forget," says St. Theresa, "that they have but *one* life, *one* soul, of which heaven is the rightful heritage." In the trials of my soul, I will never lose sight of this truth, that Thy chief desire is to heal me as often as I receive a wound; and, following Thy Divine example, in dividing the time granted me here below between the short sufferings of life and the works which advance my salvation, I will fix my eyes upon the crown of glory which shall reward them both.

Conclusion.

To prevent your faith from failing under temptations, be ever faithful to the voice of your conscience, and to the direction of your spiritual father, who stands to you in the place of God.

Then be calm; and when your mind is involved in obscurity and distress, simply make an act of faith, resigning yourself entirely to the authority of God. The spirit of prayer, filial confidence, and peaceful expectation, will soon restore to you Divine light and peace.

TWENTY-FIFTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD.

Preparation.

IN meditating upon this important event in the life of our Blessed Lord, observe, first, the *time* of His Transfiguration—it was in the midst of His public ministry; and the Gospel informs us that it was six days after He

had preached the duty of self-renunciation, exhorted every one to take up his cross, and promised that some of those then present should see Him coming in His glory. The Transfiguration of our Lord is, as it were, the explanation of the promises made to those who should follow Jesus Christ faithfully in the narrow path of self-renunciation ; and the encouragements prepared for those who should courageously embrace the Cross, which occupied the mind of our Lord even in the splendour of His glory upon Mount Tabor.

I. "*Jesus chose three of His Apostles, Peter, James, and John.*"

They were to be the witnesses of His glory ; they alone were privileged afterwards to watch with Jesus during His bitter agony in the Garden.

The choice of these three Apostles may signify the desire of our Lord to attach to Himself the powers of my soul, in order to fill my *memory* with the remembrance of His holy Humanity ; to enlighten my *understanding* with the splendour of truth, and instruct it by means of the words of life ; to determine my *will* to love Him supremely, after having known Him in His beauty.

It also represents the virtues with which my soul ought to be adorned, in approaching the holy table. I should approach it under the guidance of a lively faith, sustained by the hope of heaven, and animated by charity. Let me, then, make frequent acts of those virtues, in order to prepare myself for Holy Communion. "The theological virtues," says St. John of the Cross, "bring to perfection the faculties of the soul, of which they are, in a manner, the crowning point. The grace that invites me to follow our Lord is a special gift from the heart of God. To be called by Jesus ! what a Divine vocation ! This vocation is yours ; if He did not love you, He would not have chosen you. He calls you to Calvary, that you may suffer with Him. He calls you to heaven, that you may enjoy with Him. He

calls you especially to the holy table, that you may receive the grace of sanctification.

This choice of predilection is a great grace. He grants one more precious still to your heart, which often becomes the sanctuary where He deigns to dwell. But Jesus, who communicates Himself so liberally to all who receive Him in Holy Communion, grants His favours to very few, because few aspire to the perfection of virtue, and lead truly mortified lives. Fervour is the principle of the rarest graces. Ask our Lord to make you grow in virtue, and to give you grace to follow Him wherever He desires to conduct you.

Lord, formerly I did not always listen to Thy call; but now I am ready to perform all Thy will.

II. "*He bringeth them up into a high mountain, apart.*"

When Jesus attracts a soul into the path of perfection, the first step she takes therein is the practice of a pious *recollectedness*. Recollectedness does not consist in remaining immovable in the presence of God. No; it is the Christian life in action, with Jesus Christ in the heart, and His life before our eyes. Fénelon says admirably: "The thought of God makes us wise—not by suggesting abstruse reflections, but, on the contrary, by destroying the unquiet imaginations of human wisdom. When you no longer act with ardour and vivacity, you will be wise, without self-conceit; you will become simple, peaceable, retiring, accommodating yourself easily to different characters, not assuming any special peculiarities, but conforming yourself to those whom you desire to edify. Let nothing deter you; suit yourself to all capacities, and bring yourself down to the level of the lowest minds. Do not speak to others out of your own fulness, but according to their needs; suffer yourself to be reprovèd and corrected; above all, know when to be silent, and how to say to your neighbour no more than he is capable of receiving. Recollectedness diminishes the difficulty of prayer, banishes the illusions

of self-love, preserves us from being occupied with ourselves, establishes us in liberty ; it is a sweet captivity of the senses, to which we are at first unwilling to submit, but from which we cannot free ourselves, unless we also depart from Jesus. We must withdraw from the world, in order to attain to true union with God.

Shall I speak to my God—I, who am but dust and ashes ? No, Lord ; speak Thou to me,—or Thy hand-maid will listen to those who speak to her in Thy name. Look favourably upon me, and cast out all vain esteem of myself, by means of the consideration of my own nothingness. I have gone astray through an excessive love of myself. Thy love delivers me freely from infinite woes. Thou hast led me into a retired place, to speak to my heart. My consolation in solitude will consist in the absence of all human consolation ; it is sufficient for me to bless eternally Thy sacred heart, from which I have received so many favours.

III. *“ Into a high mountain.”*

Jesus does not content Himself with leading His disciples apart from the world and from creatures, but He raises them above the world. “ Where did I find Thee, O my God ? ” says St. Augustine. “ Was it not in Thyself, and above me ? ” And as, on ascending a high mountain, we perceive a more extensive horizon, so, in proportion as we overcome our nature, the empire of the soul is extended ; in approaching more closely to God, she obtains a deeper insight into truth ; she sees her faults in a new light, and discovers fresh defects which she had never before observed.

Our Lord took His disciples to the summit of the mountain, that so their prayer might be made in silence and disengagement from the business and affections of the world, because God only reveals Himself to us in proportion to our progress in detachment.

Whenever people speak of separation, it seems to me that they use harsh language ; and yet, does not Jesus

Christ separate Himself from every thing when He descends upon the Altar, where He veils His glory,—when, for my sake, He leaves His repose in heaven? Our trials and our temptations increase as we advance further in the spiritual life. One victory gained, or one obstacle overcome, is a step towards the summit of perfection; but still, as we ascend higher, we find fresh dangers and stumbling-blocks in our path. The difficulties increase in proportion to the graces which God has granted to us; He expects more from those who approach Him more closely. Did not those Apostles who accompanied Jesus to Mount Thabor feel more fatigue than those who awaited His return in the plain?

The courage which sustains our souls in their difficult ascent of the mountain of virtue, has its principal source in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It receives new strength every morning from that perpetual fountain. There, far removed from earthly things, the heart, filled with the presence of God, aspires to Him by fervent prayer, so that, in the moment of Holy Communion, the Humanity of Jesus may appear to it in all its glory.

Happy is the soul that is strengthened by Thy love, O my God, to combat perseveringly, uncomplainingly; that is clothed with the armour of recollectedness and confidence; and thus ascends, with courageous determination, seconded by grace, to the happy termination of her labours, where Jesus awaits her, to transform her into His own likeness, and to unite her for ever to Himself.

IV. *“And whilst He prayed, He was transfigured before them.”*

Prayer is the proper element of the Christian soul; it separates it from the world and from itself. St. Augustine assures us that by the path of prayer we shall be able to ascend the skies, and to arrive at the throne of the Most High. At the very least, it is the means of enlightening our hearts and minds with purer light. It

is not a small success to be enabled to render ourselves complete masters of our imaginations ; but we can always escape from distractions of mind arising from self-love by making the sacrifice of them to God. Is not the wisdom of God most worthy of admiration, inasmuch as He never requires of us more than we are able to give ? The practice of interior mortification produces peace, and disposes the soul to receive the graces of God. One of those mortifications which is best fitted to prepare us for Communion is faithfulness in the performance of our duties.

Although the yoke is painful to our independence, there is, in the feeling of duties well accomplished for God, a charm which never fades, and a felicity superior to any human enjoyment.

The design of our Lord in transfiguring Himself before the Apostles was, to reveal to them a ray of the glory which He destines for those who, by the mortification of their senses, purify and elevate their minds. My love for our Lord should increase and become more perfect with each Communion ; and by continually contemplating Him in my heart, I should be transformed into His image,—thus commencing the work which death will complete by the separation of my soul and body. Then, as if covered with a pall, all creatures will fade from my eyes, leaving me alone in the presence of my God.

V. *“ His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow.”*

In showing to His Apostles His natural glory, Jesus invested hope with a halo of splendour ; for, in so doing, He made manifest the glory that we shall hereafter possess in Him as members of His mystical Body.

O my Saviour, under the veils of the Holy Eucharist, “ Thou comest to me in the splendour of the glory with which Thy Father has rewarded Thy labours.” “ Thou art,” says Origen, “ the Sun of Justice, arising with the day-spring of grace upon our hearts,”

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when we have the blessedness of possessing Thee in Holy Communion. Lord, my faith beholds in heaven, crowning all the works of Thy mercy, Thy Divine countenance, one glance of which is able to scatter the hosts of sin and evil ; but, in a few moments, I shall behold in my inmost heart something greater even than heaven, greater than the Apostles saw who perceived Thy Divinity : "For," says St. Augustine, "since Thy greatness is illimitable, O my God, Thy immensity unbounded, and Thy felicity immeasurable, the grace which Thou dost confer upon me in coming into my heart is, like Thyself, illimitable ; and the eternal beatitude of which it is the pledge will be unbounded also. My soul, notwithstanding its present insignificance, is already capable of receiving these gifts in their fulness ; it will, therefore, be able to contemplate them for ever in the bosom of Thy eternal Majesty."

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore the Humanity of our Lord in His majestic and Divine beauty.

Contemplate His Head, crowned with glory ; His shining Countenance ; the bright Wounds of His Feet, His Hands, and His Side ; His Body, more resplendent than the sun.

Say to yourself, with great joy : "My Beloved is more beautiful than all the children of men !" This glory and beauty belong to my Spouse. I admire, I love Him ; even more, I possess Him ; He is my riches, my treasure. God has given Him to me, and no creature upon earth can take Him away from me.

Let your heart flow gently into that of our Lord ; or, listen to Him as he speaks to you of the *excess* of His love.

I.

Apply to the soul that has made a good Communion the particulars of the Transfiguration recorded in the Gospel.

The soul that is thus united to our Lord shines with Divine life and grace in the sight of the angels, and also receives a great increase of faith; her heart is inflamed with Divine love; her garments—that is to say, her works—are purified by the Blood of Jesus Christ from all admixture of human elements. In that most blessed union, she comprehends the *secrets* of the Cross, the sufferings of which she loves.

Jesus Christ is in me. When I behold His infinite beauty enclosed in my heart,—ah! can I set any bounds to my gratitude and love? Jesus Christ appears to me still more wonderful in the obscurity of the Holy Eucharist than on the throne of His glory. He is infinitely good every where.

O my Beloved, the delight of my soul, may heaven and earth be silent before Thee, because they have no beauty save that which they receive from Thee, which can never be compared with Thy Divine beauty! Give me a just idea of Thy greatness, Thy abasement, Thy perfections, and Thy sufferings,—of Thy power and humiliations,—that so the knowledge of Thy glories may increase my love. I thank Thee for having granted to my heart some foretaste of the pure joys of Thy presence, and for preparing for me, at the holy table, a still greater happiness than that which was enjoyed by the Apostles who beheld Thy glory on Mount Thabor.

II. *“And there appeared to them Elias, with Moses.”*

Jesus Christ chose Moses and Elias to take part in His Transfiguration, because the one had manifested great zeal for the glory of God before a great people, and the other had attained to sanctity by prayer and retirement. They were themselves “clothed with majesty,” to show us the pleasure God takes in glorifying His elect.

Moses and Elias do not appear upon the Altar where Jesus Christ descends; but the angels accompany you

to the holy table. Prostrate before the God of the Holy Eucharist, they thank and praise Him in your name, and adore the marks of His wounds. Reverence them also in spirit, with tenderness and gratitude.

Lord Jesus, how much kindness and delicacy didst Thou not display in calling Thy faithful servants to join Thee on Mount Thabor! It is not Thy will to enjoy Thy glory alone; it seems to have no value in Thine eyes, unless we all partake of it. Thou dost show me Thy glory for a moment, concealing it again quickly, lest I should become too much attached to it. But I possess more than the sight of Thy majesty; I possess Thy sweet and majestic beauty, without fearing that I shall ever again lose it completely. My soul feels Thy beneficial influence, whenever I communicate. I have no cause to envy the Apostles and Prophets,—Thy love is manifested to me with equal liberality, and with even greater tenderness, in descending to the level of my unworthiness.

III. *“And they conversed with Him of the sufferings that should be accomplished in Him.”*

On Mount Thabor, our Lord conversed with Moses and Elias of the excess of His future sufferings, to prove to us that our salvation occupies all His thoughts, even when He has entered into His glory. He pays little attention to the glory which surrounds Him, because all bright things are fleeting upon earth; but His great esteem for sufferings, His eagerness to declare that He was about to shed His Blood, should teach you to forget yourself and all personal interests, and to make your sacrifices willingly in what concerns the greater glory of God. Your love for Him will never appear so great as in sufferings voluntarily and cheerfully accepted.

It was our Lord's pleasure not to manifest His glory without speaking also of His sufferings, in order to convince you that He will receive in heaven an ineffable reward for all His sorrows. He still preserves the same love for you that led Him to the Cross. You will, then,

best testify your sense of His love by leading a crucified life ; and thus, also, you are certain of obtaining a part in His glory.

It is easy, O my God, to love Thee in prosperity ; but it requires great courage to prefer that one terrible Cross to the glories and delights of Thabor, and to say, with a saint : " Give me Thy Cross, O Jesus ; for I cannot live without sorrow, since Thou hast so loved Thy sufferings. The consolation of my life shall be to suffer for Thee." I cannot naturally love suffering, but I accept it, as the means of giving greater glory to God.

IV. *" Lord, it is good for us to be here."*

This exclamation of the Apostles depicts the happiness we find in Holy Communion, and reveals to us the sweetness and joy which are to be found in quitting vain pleasures, and enjoying familiar conversation with our Blessed Lord.

The soul, being created for God, is naturally overwhelmed with joy when she is permitted to receive Him. She would wish to roll the sands of time backwards, as it were, and so to prolong those precious moments. And I, too, have exclaimed, in pressing Jesus to my heart : " It is good to be here,"—desiring also to forget the realities of life, which destroy too quickly those feelings of celestial happiness.

St. Peter had certainly been praying at first upon Mount Thabor, but he had at length yielded to sleep, induced by fatigue, and the lateness of the hour. The brilliant majesty of his Divine Master drove from his eyes the sleep which had oppressed them during his vigil and prayer.

Have I not often, in like manner, grown weary of mortification, and thus lost many graces by the distractions and lukewarmness which rendered my soul so heavy and lifeless in prayer ? Then God, out of His pure and undeserved mercy, suddenly aroused it from sleep. Let me learn to receive all spiritual consolations

with humility, and not to appropriate them to myself; they are a passing gift of God's munificence, intended to soften the rigours of our exile. We must never talk about them; they are God's secret, and not our own. We must not think too much about ourselves, or we shall be in danger of acquiring a habit of vanity and self-complacency. When we are permitted to enjoy these Divine favours, we must be prepared to lose them again, and to suffer patiently the dryness by which they may be succeeded. Jesus, having appointed Holy Communion as the means of our transformation into His Divine likeness, it will also give us strength to mount the hill of Calvary, where we shall again find Him waiting to pardon us and to cleanse our hearts in His precious Blood.

After Holy Communion, our Lord does not grant us a long time to enjoy the consolations of His presence. At first He reveals Himself, and we say, with the spouse in the Canticles: "I hold Him, and I will not let Him go." But soon He vanishes out of our sight, leaving the Cross with us as a remembrance of His visit. Regard with equal love and adoration all His dealings with your soul; the trials which He sends you deprive you of the sweetness, but never of the strength, of His love.

O Jesus, grant me grace to receive Thy consolations with gratitude, and not to desire them too ardently. Deprive me not of them altogether, lest I should become unfaithful, if my patience were exercised by trials beyond my strength.

V. "*Let us make here three tabernacles.*"

"O Peter," says St. Augustine, "you then desire a place of repose! No; come down from the mountain, go to thy daily labour, keep charity in thy heart, and thou shalt attain a happy eternity." And you, O soul, favoured by Jesus Christ, rest not in the repose of your act of thanksgiving; descend from the sanctuary pre-

pared for the battle, swift in good works, strong in your devoted love for Jesus Christ. In beholding the glory of Jesus, St. Peter was so transported, that he knew not what he said ; he had hardly tasted the cup of celestial sweetness, and already his soul was ravished above all earthly things. He yielded to the surpassing charm of a happiness which was not of earth. Although it is but a passing guest here below, God allows us to taste of it sufficiently to know its sweetness, but too rarely to enjoy it with security.

The Apostle was the interpreter of those souls who seek to enjoy themselves here below. He had forgotten, in speaking thus, that happiness is not the natural condition of man, who, since the Fall, is doomed to lead a life of suffering upon earth. The Evangelist, therefore, remarks intentionally that he "knew not what he said." Virtue alone gives peace and happiness to the heart. "Peace is the tranquillity of order," said St. Thomas. It is neither joy nor happiness ; it is a mystery, the secret of which is known to God alone. No one has power to deprive us of that sacred gift ; and when, in the name of Jesus Christ, the priest says to me, "Go in peace," he gives me something less than happiness, but he leaves me that tranquillity upon which the martyrs founded the sacrifice of their lives. Nowhere is this peace given to me with more sweetness than in Holy Communion ; and when I lose it, by drinking the troubled waters of the world, it is in the heart of Jesus that I seek to recover the treasure.

O my God, permit me to offer Thee three tabernacles, in which Thy love shall repose. Deign to take up Thine abode in my memory, by a continual remembrance of Thy sufferings ; in my understanding, by enlightening my mind to comprehend their depth and significance ; in my will, by exciting it to courageous determination to suffer with Thee. Take full possession of these three powers, which Thou hast formed for Thyself alone : dwell in them, not temporarily, as in a

tabernacle, but until the hour when Thou wilt open to us a happy eternity:

VI. "*This is My beloved Son.*"

Lord, the presence of Jesus is the most tender proof of Thy paternal love ; but by what marks shall it be seen that I am indeed Thy beloved child ? I cannot perform wonderful miracles for Thy glory, such as I behold in the life of my Lord ; but in my secret heart I can practise continually a thousand little virtues, unknown to others, done with the intention of pleasing Thee. These humble and hidden virtues appertain specially to the soul of the frequent communicant. An effort of love is necessary to strive continually with our natural dispositions ; to bear with serenity little everyday trials ; to accept with resignation those severer griefs that wring our hearts, as well as the smaller annoyances of family life, and disappointments arising from unforeseen circumstances ; to pass over indulgently some disrespect or act of forgetfulness, when fully aware that our own faults would not meet with such ready forgiveness from others ; to cover the defects of my neighbour ; to repress the utterance of some well-deserved reproach ; to practise a great docility of mind, by never disputing the opinions of others, and adopting their ideas by preference, even when they do not appear in any way superior to our own ; to pay humble deference to the slightest wishes of those with whom we live, without taking our own into consideration ; to show such an active solicitude, that we may seem to have always as much time to oblige others as if we had no occupation of our own ; to provide generously for the wants and the happiness of others, without expecting a return of gratitude ; to repress all feelings of impatience with our equals, all complaints of our inferiors, all irritation on account of some slight injustice ; to stifle an angry retort ; to overcome a slight resentment ; to calm our excited feelings in the consideration of an act of unkind-

ness ; to return with a cheerful countenance, an air of eager interest, even when our heart is deeply wounded ; and, what is most painful of all to our self-love, never to let others see that we observe their faults, especially when we are personally annoyed by them. Such is the painful effort so dear to the heart of Jesus. It is a combat entered into in the sight of God between our natural dispositions and the sincere love of virtue. It is a labour which is most acceptable to our heavenly Father ; and in beholding us thus courageously employed, He says to the angels, " This is My beloved child." May I be so faithful in the practice of the lesser virtues, that I may receive this title from Jesus whenever I approach His holy table !

VII. "*Jesus appeared alone.*"

The vision of Mount Thabor lasted a short time ; so also the real and substantial presence of Jesus Christ does not remain long in my heart. The prospect of Calvary still remained with the Apostles ; so, after Holy Communion, my daily portion consists of labour and the Cross. Jesus remained with them, to encourage them, as His grace still remains to comfort me. But if we would fully enjoy this consolation of faith and love, we must see Jesus *only* in every thing and every where. Our Lord also intended to teach me that, even when all earthly resources and human consolations shall fail, He will still remain to supply the place of all worldly things, and never more to leave me until death.

Lord Jesus, in the void and loneliness of my life, I have often thus experienced Thy consoling tenderness ; but when all those on whom my earthly hopes were fixed disappeared from my side, my eyes were not then directed to Thee alone. I still retained regrets, desires that had not Thee for their object. Forgive me ! for if I am solitary upon earth, Thou dost also dwell alone in the tabernacle, to share my sorrows ; I can never forget that Thou art there alone, for my sake alone.

Conclusion.

Take up your abode firmly in Jesus Christ. Make yourself three tabernacles: one in His feet, that you may follow Him faithfully, without straying from His path of sorrows leading to the Cross; another in His hands, that all your works may be sanctified, in directing them, through His Spirit, to the glory of God; the third in His heart, that you may behold and love Him alone.

TWENTY-SIXTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE.

Preparation.

THE Evangelist proposes to us, in the behaviour of Mary Magdalene towards our Lord, a model for the dispositions which we ought to bring with us to the holy table; especially when we have to lament some particular fault, or some more than ordinary state of negligence and dissipation.

Let me, then, imitate Mary Magdalene in her humble return to Jesus.

I. She sought Jesus with eager Haste.

A sudden light shines in the eyes of Mary Magdalene, a pure flame is enkindled in her heart; weary, troubled in mind, the luxury that surrounds her seems to accuse her before the throne of God. An inward voice speaks to her soul, and, powerfully moved by its gentle impulse, she does not even wait until Jesus returns home. Casting aside all considerations of human

respect, she hastens to the house of the Pharisee, in which our Blessed Lord was an invited guest. Behold in the holy ardour of Mary Magdalene an especial influence of Divine grace, which, while it leads her to the house of Simon, still leaves her in full possession of her free will and reasoning faculties. It urges you also ; but do you thus faithfully obey ? Henceforth, O my Jesus, my first waking thought, the first aspiration of my heart, shall be directed towards the tabernacle. I will faithfully follow the light of my conscience, walking in the path of self-sacrifice which Thou dost summon me to tread. All sacrifices are great to me, because of my weakness ; but they are small indeed in the sight of Thy supreme Majesty : yet, since Thou dost so lovingly come to me, I will deposit them with joyful eagerness at Thy sacred feet.

II. *She approaches our Lord closely.*

How many things may we find to admire in her actions !—First, Great faith in the Divinity of Jesus ; she was penetrated with deep reverence for the person of our Blessed Lord, and suffered no other thought to intrude upon her mind, and divert it from the contemplation of His grace. I come also firmly believing that He is my almighty God and my Divine Master. Second, A sweet and firm confidence, avoiding, by the humility of her behaviour, every appearance of fear or temerity. She seems aware that she has no occasion to explain the reason of her coming ; Jesus will understand the motive which prompts her. With what great confidence should my heart be filled, when Jesus suffers me to approach the tabernacle, where He looks at me, and hears all my prayers before a single word has passed my lips !

And now she is at His feet ! It is a meeting of sinfulness and mercy, of repentance and forgiveness : a meeting which takes place every day at the holy table.

O Jesus, I implore Thy mercy to give me the dispo-

sitions necessary for Holy Communion. The abode into which I am about to receive Thee has often been soiled with sin ; but Thou canst purify it. It is small and unworthy of Thy Majesty ; but when Thou dost deign to occupy it, Thou wilt enlarge and adorn it. It is in ruins ; but Thou wilt restore it. It is not, then, because I believe that I have made a fitting preparation, that I venture to approach Thee ; it is only because Thy goodness will supply all my defects, without considering my unworthiness.

III. "*She fell at His feet.*"

Falling at the feet of Jesus, Mary Magdalene dares not now lift up that head which was once so proud and haughty. Indifferent to every thing but Jesus, she forgets the other guests, even the whole world. Observe her humility ; she keeps in the background. That humble posture is, as it were, the touching confession of her crimes, and of her sincere resolution to expiate them—of her repentance, and her desire to obtain forgiveness.

Let us follow Mary Magdalene to the feet of Jesus ; for it is there that an all-powerful virtue will restore strength and freedom to our hearts, as well as to hers.

I also will humble myself profoundly, O Lord, but with true confidence, before Thine infinite sanctity ; knowing that if I humiliate myself in all things, and in the sight of all the world, I shall find grace in Thy sight. Long since has the world, in a manner, vanished from my eyes ; but still in the midst of my heart remains a world of passions, of natural feelings and impulses, over which I have not yet gained the victory, and which often harass me by their continual rebellion.

I have great need of Thy holy presence, O my good Master, to enable me to overcome my enemies ; and yet, like Magdalene, I am unworthy to lift my eyes unto Thee. How shall I obtain courage to do so, unless it

be from the assurance that my misery will only insure me a still more tender reception !

IV. *"And washed them with her tears."*

This was the testimony of her repentance which proceeded from her tender heart. Perfect repentance is as bitter as remorse, but it is also as sweet as love itself. Magdalene detested the guilty use which she had made of her senses, and hoped that our Blessed Lord would purify her completely. Does not that soul, whose sorrow obtains for her the grace of shedding tears at the feet of our Lord, feel that in His presence "even sorrow has its joy, and tears bring consolation"? (St. Augustine.)

She kissed His feet. This action expressed her earnest and fervent supplication, her readiness for self-sacrifice, and her ardent inclination to true penance.

O Lord Jesus, Magdalene, full of vanity and selfishness, felt her heart moved within her, as she kissed Thy feet with deep affection and reverence. And shall I not also be affected when I behold them pierced with nails, and thus prepared to shed their healing virtue upon my soul? If by her tears she obtained the grace of true conversion, wilt Thou not cause mine also to flow abundantly, that I may thus be disposed to receive still greater favours? Her heart was filled with love and grief; mine also sighs, but its aspirations are not so fervent as hers. Alas, how ashamed I feel, when I compare my lukewarmness with the holy dispositions of Magdalene! I, too, have sinned; but how weak is my repentance! My soul is always full of defects,—appears as if it still remained in the valley of the shadow of death. Thy voice, O my Saviour, is still as powerful as ever to recall sinners from the gulf of destruction: it is Thy voice that has raised me up from sin, and made me a partaker in the true life of the Holy Eucharist.

V. "*She wiped them with her hair.*"

Magdalene, vanquished and led captive (says Bos-suet), laid down her arms at the feet of her Conqueror, —her precious perfumes, her beautiful hair; she renounced those fatal victories which riveted her chains. She joined to her repentance a firm will to immolate to our Lord, by acts of exterior penance, every thing that had been the means of leading her into sin. She gave herself up entirely, in so doing,—desiring nothing, henceforth, but to appease the anger of God, and to obtain the glance of mercy which she so ardently desired, without daring to consider herself worthy of it.

It is a mark of true penitence when we not only hate our sins, but desire forgiveness in a spirit of complete submission to the justice of God. Magdalene was not yet *sure* of receiving forgiveness, but she already offered up to God the instruments of her transgressions. Severe acts of penance are very painful to our senses, but they cause marvellous joy to the conscience of the sinner.

And I, who am permitted to pass straight from the tribunal of mercy to the holy table, ought I not to manifest in all my actions a spirit of true humility and penitence, since I offend my God daily?—and the saints supposed that their sins could only be expiated by penances which were commensurate with their lives.

Each day, also, God forgives me, by uniting the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ to the small satisfaction which I am able to make for my sins. When I look at the Altar, I cannot but remember that Jesus, though He might have redeemed me gratuitously, yet *chose the Cross*, as the Apostles bear testimony. And even if it were possible for me to be saved without penance, I would still pray God to preserve me from a life which would not be sanctified by union with the sufferings of Calvary.

Thou didst suffer Mary Magdalene to touch Thee, O my Jesus, that she might be purified; for the touch of

a sinner could never pollute Thine infinite purity. Thou dost permit me, in like manner, to approach Thy holy table with all my faults and imperfections, that they may be effaced by contact with Thy adorable person.

VI. *Notwithstanding the Murmurs of the Pharisees, our Lord suffered Mary Magdalene to sigh and weep at His Feet.*

The indulgence shown by our Blessed Lord to this guilty soul, instructs me to overcome my first impressions,—not to give way to prompt resentment; and it also leads me to consider that perhaps at the very moment in which I am indulging in the bitter remembrance of some fancied slight or injury, God has already pardoned the repenting sinner who offended me. If I do not show mercy and forgiveness to him, I shall not receive from Jesus that word of tenderness which He addressed to Mary Magdalene: “Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee.”

I will remember that it was Thy gentle sweetness which attracted to Thee this precious soul, whose love became unbounded after that indulgent reception. It is, then, by gentleness, O my Jesus, that I must make manifest to the world my union with Thy Divine heart. Happy shall I be, if I am enabled to preserve a continual gentle calmness in all the trials of my life!

VII. *The Perseverance of Mary Magdalene.*

Consider her tears, her fervour, her humble and sincere repentance at the feet of Jesus, her entire detachment from creatures, her silent but reverential love. In this appears the all-powerful influence of grace over an upright will. Jesus had not yet looked at Magdalene,—He had not appeared to notice her; she persevered courageously in an attitude of humble and loving expectation. Ah, it is not with this appearance of rigour that Thou dost treat me, O my God, although I am far from equalling her generous affection. Thou dost entreat my

heart to be faithful to Thy love,—the peril incurred by disobeying Thee is evident. Thou dost recall to my memory the remembrance of past sins which have been pardoned, and the prodigious number of graces that I have received. How frequently I have opposed to Thy Divine call an insensibility, a resistance, which afflicted Thy heart! If I am not yet lost, is not this the effect of Thy mercy alone? How is it, Lord, that I am so weak, so full of failings? Thou art always with me, but I am not always with Thee; and often, even in the very moment of Communion, my mind is distracted with vain thoughts.

I confess my faults to Thee, but I do not correct them. I receive Thy sacred Body, and I do not listen to Thy voice. I am constantly falling into sin. I am encompassed with a crowd of imperfections which hardly give me a moment's uneasiness,—*perhaps I still retain some affection for them*; for if I really detested my faults, I should heartily endeavour to free myself from them. I cannot be fully united to Thee, unless I resolve to sacrifice them all. Thy bountiful hands will be closed to me, unless every obstacle to Thy love, every cause of future unfaithfulness, is destroyed in me.

Mary Magdalene has not yet spoken, O my Jesus, and already her sins are forgiven her. But she is still anxious and uneasy; whereas, I have no sooner made a sincere confession of all my sins at Thy sacred feet, than Thy word of mercy forbids me to be doubtful and uneasy,—obliges me to believe that, my baptismal robes—once defiled by sin—being now cleansed in Thy Blood, I have only to sit down at the heavenly banquet. Often I can say nothing to Thee,—no thought occurs to my mind; nevertheless, my heart loves Thee, and deeply feels Thy love. I will not be too sorrowful, since Thou dost prefer the feelings of the heart to the most tender words that I could utter.

VIII. *Mary Magdalene pours the precious Ointment upon the Head of our Lord.*

This action signifies the fervour of her silent prayer, which mounted up like a light cloud of incense to the throne of God.

In imitation of her fervour, and with still more ardent zeal, I ought to bear to the heart of Jesus my aspirations of ardent love, founded upon the knowledge of the precious gift I am about to receive.

This action also signifies the sighs and groans of a soul that hungers for the Bread of heaven. If I really know Jesus Christ, I shall be eagerly desirous to receive Him.

It is also the testimony of that reverential adoration which should precede the oblation of ourselves,—for we must give *all* to Jesus.

O Lord, receive me; I desire to give myself unto Thee without reserve. Come Thou, and take absolute possession of my whole being, to reign in it for ever.

Let me humble myself profoundly in the presence of the Divine Majesty. Let me drive away every earthly thought, and concentrate all the powers of my soul and body in an act of profound adoration.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Prostrate yourself; adore Jesus present in you; perfume His hands and His feet. Entreat Him to tell you what perfumes He desires you to bring.

Accustom yourself to know His voice when He calls you.

Rest near Jesus, and with Him. Endeavour more than ever to unite yourself to the feelings of Magdalene after her conversion. The Gospel, notwithstanding its wonderful conciseness on the subject of this illustrious penitent, will furnish you with a model for a fervent act of thanksgiving, and will show you how to preserve an

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intimate union with our Lord in all the different events of your life.

Magdalene found salvation at the feet of our Blessed Saviour, and she never more abandoned Him. Henceforth united more closely in heart and soul to Jesus than even to herself, her whole life was consecrated to Him. Henceforward, she could never more leave the Beloved of her soul.

If Jesus was preaching, Magdalene listened attentively to His heavenly words. If He reposed under a friendly roof, she was to be found again at His feet, her heart sitting there as well as her body. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, Mary was there rejoicing; when Jesus ascended the mountain of Calvary, Magdalene followed Him, drowned in grief. He was crucified,—Magdalene was there, at Mary's side, shedding tears at the foot of the Cross. When He was buried, she brought perfumes and spices to His tomb. After His resurrection, she sought for His Body with such anguish of mind, that she could not attend to the message of the angels; when, at a word from Jesus, she fell prostrate at His feet, she wished to kiss them in her transports of joy and love. When Jesus ascended into heaven, Magdalene, resigning her rank and riches, which she had long before abjured in heart, retired into a desert, proving to the astonished world the truth of these words of the Wise Man: "Divine love is stronger than death." She gave to Jesus her whole life, even to its latest sigh, her thoughts, her tears, her silence, her poverty, the austerity of her life, her isolation, and her ardent love, which transformed her frail nature into a life of angelic purity.

I. *As soon as Magdalene had received Forgiveness of her Sins, she departed in Peace.*

What a change in Magdalene! The world had vanished from her eyes! When we possess Jesus, His love, His mercies, then solitude and silence are no

longer wearisome to us. One word or one look from Jesus is sufficient for the pious soul.

The heart is the abode in which the Majesty of God desires to establish His kingdom. As long as our hearts do not belong to God, they live upon themselves, or upon creatures; if the heart is in the world, we are in the world; if it returns to God, we belong to God also. Even God respects the freedom of our affections, and stays His sovereign power upon the threshold of the will. It is for this reason that Jesus received so tenderly the gift of the heart of Magdalene, which gift she never resumed.

Ah, Lord, one word from Thee was enough to conquer the heart of a frivolous woman! And can *I* say that I am affected, changed, converted? Can I even say that I am alone with Thee? Dost Thou not behold in my heart human feelings, preoccupations, thoughts, sentiments, of which Thou art neither the centre nor the moving power? And if I suffer myself to be carried away by the natural impetuosity of my passions, can I hope to be arrested on the very brink of the gulf of destruction?

Sustained by Thy grace, I aspire to Thee, and my thoughts ascend without difficulty to Thy heart; but when my self-love weighs me down, I am left to my own strength, and my soul, deprived of Thy secret presence, languishes,—for if I possess Thee not, I die.

II. *She sought to be alone.*

Immediately that the love of our Lord gained possession of the heart of Magdalene, she lost all her taste for worldly things, and only attended to them from necessity. Like the Prophet, she might have said, "My soul refuses comfort; the remembrance of God is her only joy." Are the things of this life a heavy burden to me after Holy Communion? or, rather, do I not plead them as an excuse for leaving the church, and absorbing myself in worldly business, when I find it difficult

to raise my thoughts to heaven, and converse with Thee in prayer? When shall I be able to say with the pious author of the *Imitation*, "O Jesus, Brightness of eternal glory, Comfort of the pilgrim soul, with Thee is my mouth without voice, and my silence speaketh to Thee." How long doth my Lord delay to come? Let Him come to me, His poor servant, and make me joyful. Let Him stretch forth His hand, and deliver me, wretched, from all anguish. Come, oh, come; for without Thee I can never have one joyful day or hour; Thou art my joy, and without Thee my table is empty. Let others seek what else they please, instead of Thee; but nothing else meanwhile doth or shall please me, but Thee, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation. "Thou art an ocean of majesty and glory, in whom are all that are both good and perfect, and always have been, and always shall be; and therefore all is too little and insufficient, whatever Thou bestowest on me, that is not Thyself, and whatever Thou revealest to me concerning Thyself, or promisest, as long as I see not Thee, nor fully possess Thee; because, indeed, my heart cannot truly rest, nor be entirely contented, until it rest in Thee, and transcend every gift and every creature. I will not hold my peace, nor will I cease to pray, till Thy grace return, and Thou sayest interiorly to me, 'Behold, here I am; behold, I come to thee, because thou hast called Me'" (*Imitation*, book iii. ch. xxi.).

III. *She was unknown to the World.*

While Magdalene mingled with the world, and sought its frivolous pleasures, she was known to every one. But now that she is united to Jesus, adores Him as her God, and serves Him as her Master, she leads a humble and hidden life amongst men.

Thus should I spend my life: God has loved and chosen me to be united to Him in Holy Communion. What is the world to me? Jesus is my helper. I have communicated,—I possess Him; I desire nothing so much

as to communicate again. May my life, O my Jesus, be entirely devoted to Thee ; may it pass quietly away, spent in the peaceful endeavour to lead others to know and love Thee ; and when, weary with labour, I sigh for the sweetness of repose, may I ever seek it in Thy sacramental presence,—in the pure joy of the Holy Eucharist !

IV. *Her zealous Activity.*

St. Magdalene followed our Lord in the course of His ministry for the purpose of rendering Him respectful service, and providing for His wants. Her feelings towards her Divine Master were similar to those which St. Ambrose has expressed with so much sweetness in the following words :

“ O good Jesus, how sweet Thou art to the heart that thinks of Thee and loves Thee ! I know not, and I cannot understand, why my heart finds more sweetness in the contemplation of Thy Humanity than in the beauty of the Eternal Word—in the sight of Thy humility at Bethlehem than in that of Thine infinite greatness. It is sweeter to behold Thee thus born of a Virgin Mother than to contemplate Thee from all eternity in the bosom of Thy Father, in the midst of the glories of heaven ; sweeter to behold Thee humbled in the form of a servant than to recognise Thee in the form of God ; more touching to see Thee expiring upon the Cross of Calvary than reigning over the angels in heaven ; sweeter to contemplate Thee subjecting Thyself to creatures than raised above them all ; more consoling to behold Thee suffering as a man than performing the works of God. Finally, it is sweeter to possess Thee as the Redeemer of those who were about to perish than to behold Thee creating the world and all its inhabitants out of nothing.”

V. She hid the Graces she had received in Silence and Obscurity.

It was especially in silence that Magdalene contemplated the wonderful goodness and mercy which had been shown to her by our Lord,—not troubling herself about the judgments passed upon her by the world, or even by her own friends and neighbours. But, in the midst of this silence, what joy filled her inmost soul! how often did she not shed burning tears of repentance and love! And, under her apparent indifference to exterior objects, did she not conceal a whole world of heavenly desires, fervent prayers, and generous sacrifices?

Such should also be the fruit of the Holy Eucharist in my soul, if, like Magdalene, approaching our Blessed Lord in the silence of my soul, I were to be fully contented with His glance of love and mercy, without thinking of myself; and if, caring little for the vain judgments of men, I were to keep the secret of my life hidden alone with Jesus.

But, O my God, it is not thus with me. Long habits of carelessness and dissipation have closed my mind to serious thoughts. Self-love is still the ruling power in my heart. How much self-seeking and personal feeling is mixed up with the good works which I undertake! how much annoyance and discouragement do I exhibit at the slightest contradiction or mischance! how many tears do I shed over my secret annoyances! And I forget that by my self-love I peril the salvation of my soul, that death will shortly come to deprive me of the opportunity of acquiring new merits. I forget that, if I die to myself, I shall live to Thee, O Jesus, who art more than all the world beside; and that, if I offer up to Thee my trials or my dearest affections, Thy love will repay me a hundredfold for all that I have given up for Thee. I know well, unfaithful as I have been, that if one day or one hour passed in the presence of the

Blessed Sacrament is worth more than long years spent in worldly pleasures, a single Communion must be a thousand times superior to all the earthly consolations that my heart can desire or conceive.

VI. *Her Courage in Affliction.*

At the hour when our Lord was expiring, we find Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross. In the midst of the sorrow with which her heart was torn at that awful moment, she then first comprehended the eternal love with which God had loved her soul. She understood, at length, the mystery of her reconciliation with Him, prepared from all eternity, commenced at the Incarnation, cemented at that very moment by our Blessed Saviour's Blood. She beheld, in the wounds of His adorable Body, the immense expiation which was demanded by the justice of God for our sins; she reckoned her own sins amongst the number.

What were Thy thoughts, O my God, on thus beholding at Thy bleeding feet Thy faithful handmaid, who was still attached to Thee by gratitude and love? Thou didst not then cast upon her a glance of compassion, as in that day when she first bathed Thy sacred feet with the tears of repentance. Looking from Thy Cross for those upon whom, in the course of Thy mortal life, Thou hadst heaped Thy favours and benefits, and looking for them in *vain*, Thou didst cast a mournful glance upon the faithful Magdalene, whose tears still fell upon Thy sacred feet; and Thou didst then pour out upon her the effusion of Thine infinite merits, extending them in her to all those souls who should hereafter imitate her fervent love and penitence.

O Lord, like Magdalene, I have devoted my life to Thee; but from heaven and from the tabernacle, at the time of the Holy Sacrifice, Thou dost seek my heart in vain—it avoids the Cross; and Thine eye seeks mine, but does not find it. And yet, to Magdalene, who was so faithful to Thee upon the Cross, the Holy Eucharist

was still unknown ! Thou hadst not yet revealed to her that mystery of love ; and her soul, though purified by Thy Blood, was not yet fortified by that heavenly Bread first broken for us in the Upper Chamber.

To me, O my Jesus, have been revealed all the marvellous works of Thy mercy, from the eternal decree of the Incarnation, even to the consummation of Thy life upon the Cross ; where, then, are the proofs of my gratitude for these wondrous mercies ? I am admitted to the most tender effusion of Thy love in Holy Communion : but where is my generosity, where is my courage to endure the Cross ? Thou comest to me daily at the door of the tabernacle, to nourish me with Thy adorable Body ; and I still dread the slightest pain, and resist the least mortification of my self-will. I desire most ardently to receive Holy Communion, because I love Thee ; but I do *not* desire more suffering, for my love is still too imperfect to enjoy the bitterness of the Cross. From the tribunal of penance Thou dost conduct me to the eucharistic banquet, where I hear Thee say : " My child, can I do greater things for you than this ? I give you My Blood, My life, My person ; and the only recompense I ask of you for all My gifts, My toils, My sufferings, is that I may reign sole monarch of your soul, and dwell in you in mutual love."

Remain silent ; let your heart alone reply to our Lord.

VII. *Consolation mingled with Trial and Grief.*

Our Lord, after His resurrection, appeared to Magdalene. At first, she did not recognise Him. Jesus must make Himself known ; He must make His presence felt.

" Mary !" He said. Magdalene heard His heavenly voice ; with one word she also expressed her adoration, her love, her happiness. " Master !" she replied. The feelings of joy in her soul are inseparable from those of her humility and repentance ; she threw herself at the

feet of Jesus, and attempted to kiss them. But our Lord, to show how much He expected from a love so strong, so humble, and so generous, repulsed her. "Touch Me not," He said; although, ever since her conversion, Magdalene had never quitted Him, either during His evangelical ministry, or even upon Calvary. In the time of His sufferings, Jesus had not refused to accept the testimony of her heroic love. Had she not stood at the foot of the Cross when He breathed His last sigh? Had she not then assisted at His entombment? Even at that moment in which the Apostles were still buried in sleep, she alone anticipated the morning light, in her eager anxiety to embalm the body of her Divine Master. She sought for Him with that devoted ardour which can be inspired only by intense love. At length she beheld Him living, and hoped once more to enjoy at His feet the happiness of hearing His sacred words; but Jesus repressed her transports of joy: "Touch Me not." Always resigned and faithful, Magdalene obeyed that Divine voice, which touched her inmost soul. Not permitting herself to utter an expression of regret, or indulging any desire save that of fulfilling the will of her God, she silently awaited His commands.

I have resembled Magdalene in her frivolous tastes and idle habits, in her love for luxury and worldly pleasures, which, perhaps, even yet retain some hold upon my heart; but I have not imitated her in her repentance and self-forgetfulness. And yet Jesus does not treat me with apparent rigour, as He treated that faithful lover of His heart. So far from refusing the expressions of my love, it is His desire that, immediately after the commission of my faults, sometimes in spite of my faults, I should receive Him with confidence; and never yet has He said to me at His holy table, "Touch Me not." On the contrary, He freely permits me to press Him to my heart.

VIII. *The Reward of her Generosity.*

Jesus appointed Magdalene to become the zealous proclaimer of the favours of the kingdom of grace, and, as the Fathers beautifully express it, "the Apostle of the Apostles," by these admirable words: "Go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (John xx. 17). Jesus thus assures us of our reconciliation to God. Henceforth He associates us with that Divine fraternity formed by His Incarnation, and with the eternal rewards He obtained by His death. Let us have a firm hope: His wounds have effaced our sins, and overcome the death which was in store for us; and the immortality of His glorious Body displays to us the blessed destiny which is offered to all who remain faithful unto death.

Magdalene treasured in her heart the words of her Divine Master, and hastened, with the promptitude and fervour of love, to perform the work which our Lord had assigned to her. Associate yourself with Jesus Christ in labouring for the conversion of the world. Do not be contented with making your work prayer; you must also make your prayer work. Strive to procure for your works the merit either of innocence or of penitence. You will thus invisibly exercise a true apostolate, which, as St. Denis the Areopagite teaches, is THE MOST DIVINE OF ALL DIVINE ACTIONS.

From the holy table I shall proceed to the accomplishment of my duties, to the works of zeal to which I may be directed by my superiors; and I will not suffer the least interval to elapse between knowing the will of God, and labouring to make my life conformable to it.

Conclusion.

We may receive very deep instruction from those four occasions on which Magdalene is shown to us by the Evangelists at the feet of our Lord.

The *first* time, we see her in the house of Simon; she

is weeping for her sins, and receiving forgiveness from our Lord. This teaches repentance, penance, preparation for Holy Communion. We see her *again*,* prostrate at the foot of the Cross; this is patient suffering, devoted affection, love even unto death. These are the *fruits* of Holy Communion.

Finally, we behold Magdalene casting herself at the feet of Jesus risen, desiring to kiss them, but not permitted to do so; and going to make known the news of His resurrection. This represents the practice of renunciation, obedience, and the humble acceptance of all the dealings of God to us in every event of our lives. This is the gift of ourselves entirely to God, without any reservation.

TWENTY-SEVENTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

SOME WORDS FROM THE DISCOURSE OF JESUS CHRIST AFTER THE LAST SUPPER.

Preparation.

THE Last Supper! What touching recollections does this word reveal to my mind! What affecting thoughts does it suggest to my heart! We recall the solemn hour when Jesus, High-Priest of the New Law, consecrated the Holy Eucharist, in which, a Victim of love, He gave Himself to His astonished disciples. Let me endeavour to meditate piously upon the words of Jesus Christ on this occasion. The last expressions of His

* The second time, she is represented sitting at the feet of Jesus, in the repose of peaceful love: this is the act of thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

dying tenderness will manifest His intentions in instituting this mystery of love.

I. "*Little children, yet a little while I am with you*"
(John xiii. 33).

When a dying father desires to express once more his love and tenderness to his children, he gives them his benediction, which remains with them as a last out-pouring of his love. Jesus, having now reached the close of His life on earth, was not satisfied with invoking the blessing of God upon His beloved Apostles,—He also gave them His adorable Body ; He invested them with power to perform the act of consecration. And, as if that mysterious legacy, which perpetuates His life upon earth, was not enough to satisfy His tenderness, He confirmed it with a most touching expression of love. It is no longer a master, it is not even a friend, that speaks ; the paternal heart declares itself : " My little children," He says, " I am with you."

The thought of an approaching separation appears sadly in these last words, as if to prepare them gently for the foreseen sorrow of His death.

How often, after Holy Communion, have I heard these sweet words, " My beloved daughter!" If the distractions of my mind stifled the Divine sound of the voice of Jesus, He sought to revive my attention by gently assuring me of His presence : " I am with you." Why this warning, Lord ? art Thou not ever with us since Thy love created the Holy Eucharist ? Thy departure is, then, impossible ; what cause of absence dost Thou seem to fear ? Ah, our sins, our passions, form a deep gulf between the love of Jesus and our souls ! Are these words the presentiment or the remembrance of a fatal separation ? Do they not reveal to me the sadness of our Lord at my frequent acts of unfaithfulness, which cause Him to depart from me ? " I am with you," He says to me ; " but will you preserve My presence ? The enemy will too soon drive Me away from

your heart. It is not I that leave you ; it is you that depart from Me ; for have I not always assured you of My love ?”

O my Father, I cast myself at Thy feet ; my soul is filled with the deepest sentiments of filial love : I implore Thee to grant me a permanent blessing. If I know well how greatly Thou hast loved me,—ah, suffer me to say it !—I know also how much I love Thee.

II. *“ A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you.”*

Jesus has aroused the attention of His disciples by His tender expressions of love. What is He now going to say ? “ I give you a new commandment.” This commandment was thus promulgated immediately after the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and contains a summary of the spirit of that Sacrament : “ Love each other, as I have loved you ;”—fraternal charity, that sweet bond formed from the heart of Jesus, the sun and centre of the law of grace. Our Lord has left to me, as the last effusion of His love, an obligation of loving the souls for whom He perpetuates His life. How deeply should I study the feelings of my own mind, after having received this new law from the mouth of Jesus Christ !

After He had spoken these words, Jesus was silent,—thus limiting to this single precept the whole system of His law, and teaching us to reduce the practice of perfection to the exercise of charity.

Lord, I fix my eyes upon Thy sacred heart, in which it is Thy will that I should find the rule and model of true charity. Thou hast loved me freely ; Thou bestowest Thy benefits liberally, without expecting any return ; Thou dost labour in the work of my sanctification, and Thou art not repelled nor discouraged by my ingratitude. Do I love my neighbour in this manner ?

I weep, O my God,—I weep for the coldness with which I have too often received Thy sacred words. The

flame of charity is extinguished in my heart ; revive it by a spark from the perpetual fire of Thine eternal love : and, by Thy grace, may my life henceforth become the living expression of that wondrous love !

III. *"Let not your heart be troubled : you believe in God ; believe also in Me."*

From the commencement of the Last Supper, the language of our Blessed Lord had been so solemn, the events that had occurred so mysterious, that the Apostles were beginning to feel terrified at the power of our Saviour ; Jesus therefore resumed His discourse by these consoling words : " Let not your heart be troubled ;" neither by My absence, nor by the surprising things you have witnessed, nor by the violence with which you will shortly see Me treated. A few moments since, I made you partakers of My Blood ; it is now the hour in which, for your salvation, it will really flow abundantly from My wounds upon the earth, as a healing dew of mercy and compassion.

Jesus foresaw the terror they would feel at the cruelties which would be practised upon Him, and, finally, at His death ; He strove, therefore, to revive their faith : " You believe in God," He said ; " believe also in Me," —for I am equal to My Father. I am returning to Him, and henceforth He will call you also to Himself. Be not troubled, then.

In times of great affliction, raise your soul to our Lord, by considerations of faith, by acts of confidence, which will be doubly meritorious as exerted in the midst of trials. O Jesus, trouble often takes possession of my soul, in the absence of any sufficient cause. Banish it, and leave me in the enjoyment of a peaceful confidence in Thy words, however astonishing they may be to my unassisted reason. Thou dost not only reassure Thy disciples by these words ; Thou dost console me also. Let me, then, in all trials whatsoever, have full faith and confidence in him who directs me, in Thy name, to be

calm and peaceful. I believe and I hope, O Lord ; for, to confirm by degrees that confidence which Thou dost so love to instil into my soul, Thou dost say still further, " Believe in Me ;" for, " if it were not so, I would have told you." Thy heart has no secrets from me, O Lord. Ah, I will henceforth hide nothing from Thee, nor from him who represents Thy authority to me in Thy Church on earth.

IV. *" I go to prepare a place for you."*

After the gift of the Holy Eucharist, will not the promise of heaven be sufficient to make me accept with gladness all the trials and sorrows of this life? I am only a pilgrim upon earth ; why, then, should I endeavour to make it my dwelling-place?

Lord, if I were to suffer the loss of all earthly things, —relations, friends, fortune, and country,—still, Holy Communion and my place in Thy heavenly kingdom would remain ; this is my sure and certain hope. My name has been written in the book of life, traced in the Blood which flowed from Thy wounds ; no one, save myself, has power to efface it : and Thy grace will evermore preserve me from using that fatal power to effect my own destruction. There is, then, nothing to fear : my sins will be washed away in Thy most precious Blood ; and, at my last hour, Thou wilt receive me into Thy celestial abode.

V. *" I will come again, and will take you to Myself."*

How anxiously our Blessed Lord endeavours to dissipate the trouble and sadness of His Apostles ! He promises that He will return to them, and will take them with Him to a place where they shall never more be separated from their good Master. This sweet promise concerns me also. Lord, Thou dost return daily, full of grace and mercy, upon the Altar ; but ere long Thou wilt return in all the splendour of Thy glory. Thou wilt not come to judge me with severity, but to

call me to Thyself. I live in the hope of that happy time.

Even our most painful trials are, in fact, visits from our Blessed Lord ; but they are *secret* visits, intended to purify, to sanctify us, and to prepare us for that final manifestation in which will appear all the fulness and wonders of His love.

VI. "*I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.*"

We cannot approach God, save through Jesus Christ. At the Incarnation, He left His Father's bosom, in order to come into the world, and teach us all truth. He is Himself the true Light, the Eternal Word, that has enlightened the world. His holy doctrine, confirmed by His example, sealed with His Blood, is the rule which we must follow in the path of salvation.

By His death, He opened to us the kingdom of heaven, and He is also Himself the Way which leads us to it.

And as we require three things to enable us to attain to God,—a powerful attraction, a perfect example, and a sure and certain way,—so Jesus Christ presents to us, in His own person, the attraction which leads us to the heart of God, the example which manifests to us the rule of all perfection, and the way by which we must arrive at the possession of God,—that is to say, a way of renunciation, since He gave up every thing ; a way of labour, since He spent His life in instructing us by word and example ; of immolation, as He sacrificed Himself for our redemption ; a way of union and of love in the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus Christ is at once the Beginning, the Way, and the immortal End, which we must strive to gain ; but, above all, in Holy Communion, He is the *Life* of our souls.

In this narrow way, our Blessed Lord will be our Guide and our Light, and will vivify us by His adorable Body and Blood.

Let us, then, have courage ; this laborious way extends from the tabernacle to heaven. The Holy Eucharist will quicken and perfect the germ of immortality which He has deposited in us.

VII. *“ So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me ? ”*

Listen with grief to this complaint of the heart of Jesus : “ So long a time have I called you,” He says, “ so long a time have I given Myself to you, so long a time have you entered into the close intimacy of My eucharistic life, and you do not know Me ! You know not My life, for you do not imitate it ; nor My love, or it would affect you more ; nor My heart, which is ever open to you with inexhaustible charity, for you still seem to doubt its kindness, its devoted love, and its tender mercy ! ”

Our Blessed Lord comes to us in Holy Communion, as He did to His Apostles at the Last Supper ; He comes to nourish, to console, and to load us with benefits ; and if I do not express my love to Him, He departs as a stranger who is unknown to me, and whom I do not wish to see again !

O Lord, I do not regard Thee with the eyes of faith ; it is for that reason that I do not yet know Thee with that ardent contemplation which leaves, after Holy Communion, so Divine an impression upon the soul. When will the time arrive in which Thou wilt admit me to that more intimate and perfect understanding of Thy thoughts, of Thy beauty, and wilt manifest Thyself in me uninterruptedly, without the least diminution of Thy grace and light ?

I ardently desire and hope for that blessed moment, which will be the beginning of my eternal happiness.

VIII. *“ If you shall ask any thing in My Name, that will I do.”*

Our Lord, who had displayed His almighty power

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to His Apostles, here seems to reserve a still more wonderful manifestation of it, in order to gratify their desires after He should have returned into the bosom of His Father. He sets no bounds to the power of prayer. In these words, our Lord shows that He expects us to repose in Him unlimited confidence. Oh, how magnificent is the liberality of my God ! And why should I still be poor, when Thou dost so ardently desire to enrich me ? Lord, Thou hast promised to work in me, and for me, all that is necessary for my salvation, provided that I undertake all these works *in Thy name*,—that is to say, that my intention is pure and according to Thy will. Thou hast not made a single exception, because Thou wouldst thus increase my desires and my confidence ; and in this manner Thou dost signify that my interests are the same as Thine, and that my happiness is Thy glory. What is the nature, what are the objects, of the requests which I make to God ? have I not sought my own satisfaction, rather than the glory of the name of Jesus Christ ? Let me not, then, be surprised if my requests have not been granted. By His mediation, all things are possible to those whose intentions are upright and pure. Let me gladly be convinced of this truth ; my salvation then is easy. All the graces which I need will be granted me, if I ask them with confidence in the name of my crucified Saviour.

IX. "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*"

Our Lord not only suffers me to possess in this world the grace of love for Him, but He gives me also the consolation of knowing that I love Him, and even of knowing the degree of my love. "If you love Me," He says, "keep My commandments." This is the essential mark which characterises a sincere love for Him.

"And he that loveth Me," Jesus concludes, "shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him," What favours are here at-

tached to the simple and easy accomplishment of the commandments!—the love of God and of Jesus during our lives, and the blessed vision of God throughout eternity.

We are not to indulge in vain speculations respecting spiritual things : faithful observance of the laws of God, —this is the proof of love that our Lord accepts, and to which He has promised a magnificent reward. How great will be Thy mercies, O Lord, towards the soul that, desiring to prove her love to Thee more plainly, joins to the faithful observance of Thy commandments the practice of the evangelical counsels, and follows Thee in the narrow road of self-renunciation, poverty, and humility ! Next to the happiness of following in Thy footsteps, my greatest joy will be to know that Thy merciful goodness never forgets a desire, or even a thought of love ; that it attaches to the practice of obedience, mortification, humility, and suffering, a secret unction which is sweeter to the soul than any earthly joy.

X. *“ I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever.”*

Our Lord required but few things of His Apostles, and, forgetting nothing that could excite their courage, He held forth to them a promise of increased and multiplied rewards. But as our wills are not greatly stimulated by a vague and undefined hope, He adds to this the actual and immediate promise of the Spirit of consolation, to comfort them for the loss of His presence, and to help them to keep His commandments.

Consider the preceding words of Jesus Christ : “ Keep My commandments.” The duty is laid down in these three words, and here are the promises :

Firstly, His love for those who continue faithful : “ I will love him.”

Secondly, His Father's love : “ And My Father will love him.”

Thirdly, The vision of God : " I will manifest Myself to him." Not to our curious desires, but to our ardent love.

Fourthly, The assurance of His all-powerful mediation : " I will ask the Father for you ;" and My prayers are always granted.

Fifthly, The gift of the Holy Spirit : " He shall give you another Paraclete."

Sixthly, His perpetual possession : " He shall abide with you for ever." You shall never lose Him, unless by your own fault.

Seventhly, His enlightenment : " The Spirit of Truth." He will drive out of your minds all the illusions of the world and the senses.

Eighthly, A special privilege, the grace of predestination, which the world cannot receive,—for few only love Jesus Christ.

These words will explain to you at once the greatness of the grace of predestination, and the misery of yielding to a spirit which may deprive us of it.

This Divine Spirit, granted to the prayer of our Lord, will be given to you, not for a time, but for ever, if you are faithful to Jesus Christ.

XI. "*The Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive.*"

These are terrible words. If I have the spirit of the world, I cannot then receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What is the reason of this complete exclusion ? It is that the world does not believe in virtue, because it is resolved not to practise it ; and that, in all things, it consults only its own interest and pleasure : it lives by sense ; and the Holy Spirit imparts a spiritual life, which is fatal to sense. The world, which is the enemy of God, is in His eyes less than nothing, for that is subject to His will. How much I have loved the world, sacrificing the best interests of my soul to its accursed spirit ! for this reason it is that I have received so little share

in the Spirit of Truth. Our Lord does not say that the world *will* not receive the Spirit of Truth, but that it *cannot*,—it is absolutely unable to do so. What madness in me not to set seriously to work to destroy in myself that worldly spirit, the declared enemy of the Spirit of Jesus Christ!

Let me carefully examine the tendency of the spirit which inspires my soul. If it leads me to forgetfulness of self, to the mortification of sense, to avoidance of vanity, and all that ministers to my self-love, it is then the Spirit of Jesus Christ, which He imparts to us in the Communion of His adorable Body and Blood. This Spirit is firm, stable, constant, because it is true.

Truth is, like God, unchangeable: but if I am fickle, variable, undecided in doing good, easily swayed by outward impressions, my spirit is contaminated by the breath of the world,—I am incapable of either receiving or retaining the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, let us earnestly implore Jesus Christ to give us His Spirit, that *abides*,—not the spirit of the world, that *passeth away*, and which derives its origin from error, or from that which has no existence.

XII. “*You shall know Him, because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you.*”

In what manner were these words of Jesus Christ accomplished? We can recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul by the peace which He sheds abroad in us, and by His secret unction, which leads us on to virtue; but that peace is not always visibly felt by us, and we are often deprived of that interior unction without therefore always losing the presence of the Holy Spirit. The mark by which we may recognise in ourselves the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit is the stability of His inspirations,—that power which brings into existence the virtues of the Christian life; for this operation is not a transitory impulse to goodness, followed by a speedy return to our evil habits. Virtue is the reign

of order in the soul ; it is not *impeccability*, but it confirms our will in a serious resolve of never voluntarily or deliberately committing a single mortal or venial sin. This resolution is produced by the Divine influence of the Holy Spirit upon the soul.

O my Jesus, grant me Thy sanctifying Spirit, to protect and preserve in my soul this life of grace. His presence will be to me not a consolation only, but a powerful means of preserving me in the life of holiness.

XIII. "*I will not leave you orphans ; I will come to you.*"

Our Lord was sorrowful at leaving His disciples. He felt the affliction into which they would be plunged by His absence, the terrible void which would be caused in their minds by His death. His love overflowed in the utterance of words of paternal tenderness, which stir the heart to its very lowest depths.

Before His separation from His Apostles, He desired to convince them that He was satisfied of the truth of their filial love. "You look upon Me as your Father : I will not leave you orphans," he says ; "I will come to you."

Every soul that has renounced all worldly thoughts and affections would lose far more than life in losing Jesus : He therefore returns to her truly in Holy Communion.

Lord, I have no longer any attachment to earthly things. Grant that I may love Thee with that *exclusive* love which cannot live without Thee ; that *tender* love which brings Thee down from heaven to dwell in the tabernacle ; that *powerful* love which urges Thee to say to me, after Holy Communion, "I am indeed your Father. I leave you not : I will return to you." A father does not abandon his child,—he cannot cease to provide for its wants, nor can he forget the ties of blood. I will not be afraid to speak and act towards Thee in the spirit of holy freedom and confidence.

XIV. *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you."*

The presence of Jesus Christ confers peace upon the soul. When grace has taken full possession of all our faculties, then God, as the Psalmist says, reigns in the *midst* of us, and His throne shall never be moved. Peace is the greatest possible blessing which we can receive on earth. Jesus Christ tenderly left it to His Apostles. It is the fruit of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and of the first Communion given by our Lord Himself.

When you draw near the holy table, He repeats to you with tender sweetness, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." I cannot now remain always with you, but you may retain My peace, which is no other than My Spirit. To suffer our minds to be disturbed and agitated by the influence of our passions is a mark of want of courage and humility. In fact, most of our troubles and disquietudes arise from pride or from secret ambition. To preserve the peace of Jesus Christ, we must be humble, or at least must be sincerely endeavouring to become so. The moment which our Saviour chose to confer it upon us was also that in which the powers of hell, leagued with His enemies, stirred up the most furious persecution against Him. There is very great instruction for us in this; it teaches us that we may preserve this peace in the midst of the trials which embitter our existence. The gifts of God are not illusory; what Jesus promises, that He also gives. It is for us to receive and preserve those graces which flow from His lips and from His heart. "O Jesus, give me Thy peace, which surpasseth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7),—that peace which Thou hast promised to men of good will; preserve it also in my soul, or I shall quickly lose it. Abide in the very centre of my being, and thence govern and direct all the faculties of my soul, and settle them in abiding calmness and peace.

Leave to me, as Thou didst to Thy disciples, a peace *begun*,—for it will attain perfection only in heaven. We must continually pursue after it, as long as we are upon earth; and where can I seek it, unless it be in Thy sacred heart, in Holy Communion?

XV. "*You are pure (clean). Abide in Me, and I in you.*"

When we are making our thanksgiving, after receiving Holy Communion, Jesus looks complacently at our hearts, which are purified by the tears of repentance and by His Blood, and He loves us. In order to put us on our guard against the danger of losing our recovered purity, "Abide in Me," He says, "and I in you." You have need of Me, that I may communicate My grace to you, and preserve it in you. To abide in Jesus Christ is to strive to resemble Him in the purity of our lives. Let us love and keep His Divine law; we shall then become like unto Jesus Christ, who fulfilled His Father's will, becoming obedient even unto death.

"O my Jesus, abide in me from the time of one Communion to another. May my present act of thanksgiving be a preparation for receiving Thee again! Thy presence, which is the object of my love, is also the subject of my hope; and as I should quickly lose it by falling into sin, I implore Thee to preserve me from that dreadful calamity."

XVI. "*I am the Vine; you are the branches.*"

These words perfectly explain the thought of our Lord in saying, "Abide in Me, and I in you." They present to us, under the visible image of a vine, the effects of our union with Him in the Holy Eucharist.

This figure implies: Firstly, That we partake of the same nature; for what union can be closer than that of the vine and its branches?

Secondly, It proceeds so far as to form but one

being ; for the stem and the branches form one and the same tree.

Thirdly, As the sap extends from the root to flow into all the branches, thus the influence of the life of Jesus Christ animates our whole being. His Body and His Blood is the mysterious sap which sustains and enlivens all the powers of our soul.

If Jesus Christ is our Stem, then the substance of the Divinity is in us ; the gifts of the Holy Spirit are granted to us, and the fruits of grace which they produce belong to us. Let us thankfully receive all these good gifts in the Holy Eucharist, in which, according to the desire of Jesus Christ, we find the full accomplishment of these Divine words, " He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." Our Lord, after showing us the immense value of the privilege granted us in Holy Communion, brings us back to the consideration of our insignificance and abasement by adding, " For without Me you can do nothing."

What is the meaning of these words? We find it in the preceding comparison : as the vine requires constant care, without which it cannot produce its fruit, so is the work of our Lord necessary in the soul. How many faults to eradicate, how many bad thoughts to be rooted out, and frivolous actions to be swept away, like dead and useless leaves ! Not only must all that is wicked and dangerous in us be destroyed, but also the excessive activity of good desires, which consume the strength of the soul, unless they are promptly reduced to action.

How immense is our need of this holy union ! As the branch must certainly perish if it is separated from the tree, so also the soul, if detached from Jesus Christ by mortal sin, will become a *withered* branch. But if it remains united to Jesus Christ, it will bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

The thoughts of that mysterious union fill me with joy and confidence ; and in the consideration of it I am

inspired with salutary fear lest I should be deprived by wilful sin of the happiness of enjoying its precious benefits.

XVII. "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you.*"

These words contain a certain and profound meaning. To abide in Jesus Christ, we must begin by *going out* of ourselves. Detachment—to renounce *myself*, to put Jesus Christ and His interests above every thing. Stability—a dwelling-place means a certain fixed abode, where we live securely and permanently. What is this abode? It is the heart of Jesus Christ. We enter His heart by detachment; we remain in it by humble recollectedness, by ready obedience to His holy inspirations. Our abode in Him is confirmed by humility and constant dependence upon His Spirit, because the natural tendency of our minds inclines us to revert to our own ideas, and to the petty interests of egotism and vanity. Then, "You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." Behold the efficaciousness of prayer, when we are united to Jesus Christ, attentive to His words. We may present all our desires to God, with full confidence that He will graciously hear our petitions, provided that we ask for nothing which can withdraw us from that holy union, and from a perfect conformity to His Divine will.

Convince me deeply, O my Jesus, of my personal helplessness, and of my need of constant humble recourse to Thy mercy. Thy repeated promises prove Thine inexhaustible charity. Do Thou inspire me with that spirit of adoption whereby we say, "Abba, Father,"—a petition most acceptable to Thy heart. That I may abide in Thee, and keep Thy word, I will live at the foot of the Cross, accepting in Thy name, and united to Thy sufferings, the unnumbered trials which mark my life. I will love that crucified state, that my inclina-

tions may be entirely conformed to the law of Thy pure love.

XVIII. "*In this is My Father glorified, that you bring forth very much fruit.*"

Holy Communion deposits in our souls a germ of life, of which humility is the fertilising principle. Humility develops the good works which we undertake for the glory of God,—it detaches us from those exterior things in which we are apt to seek satisfaction, forgetting that God expects us to glorify Him after Holy Communion by making our works, as it were, supply the place of a continued act of thanksgiving.

If, out of love, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has courage to humiliate Himself perpetually, shall not I be willing to renounce, out of gratitude and love, all those earthly pleasures that shine brightly for an instant, but cast a still deeper darkness upon my life when they are so quickly extinguished? I will, then, bid adieu for ever, O my Jesus, to every thing that I have hitherto loved too well,—that is to say, to my reputation, to my pleasures, and to every thing, even spiritual blessings, of which I have not made a holy use. Develop in me that humility which will make me fruitful in good works, to the greater glory of Thy Father.

XIX. "*As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love.*"

Meditate, with humility, fear, and joy, upon the profound meaning of these words of Jesus Christ. He is really in you, by Communion, as He was in the midst of His disciples; and in declaring His love to them, He declares it to you also. That same substantial, infinite love which unites Him with the Father, He pours out upon you: "As my Father hath loved Me, so I love you." What connection can possibly exist between the eternal love borne by Jesus Christ to the Thrice-Holy

God, and that which He bears to a poor little creature? Nevertheless, that incomprehensible connection does exist, as He Himself assures us. The untold love of God, and of Jesus Christ His Son, rests upon me! Is not this thought sufficient to furnish me with matter for long acts of thanksgiving?

Having ascended even to the throne of God in order to demonstrate to you the nature of His love, our Lord encourages you to make every possible effort to preserve it. "Abide in My love;" be very careful not to lose My grace: love Me as much as you can love any thing, because love is satisfied with nothing but a return of love. "Abide in My love," He repeats again and again, so ardently does He desire our union with Him. In what manner was Jesus loved by God, at the time when He proposed to His disciples the love of the Father, as the image of the love felt by Him for us? It was not with a weak and timid love, which contents itself with tender but barren expressions of affection. God loved His Son, and our Lord felt that He was beloved by Him, at the very instant in which He was about to fulfil that eternal decree which devoted Him to death,—at the instant when the Cross was being prepared for Him by the stubborn hands of His enemies. In the very midst of trials most painful to nature, I will, then, believe that our Lord loves me with that same substantial and eternal love with which He is loved by His Father. Jesus Christ suffered and was obedient even unto death, even when it appeared as if the love of God had forsaken Him. In assisting me to bear my cross patiently, even to the latest hour of my life, our Lord manifests to me a still greater love than by filling my soul with consolations, or lightening my fiercest sufferings; because He thus enables me to acquire more merits, to give greater glory to God, and to arrive at a high degree of eternal union with Him.

In this manner, faith explains to me the love of God. Let me, then, *abide* in the love of our Lord, notwith-

standing the trials, the temptations, the sufferings of every kind which harass our life ; and that I may be able to execute this pious design, let me purify my heart to a still greater degree, by detaching it from every thing that is not Jesus.

Lord, I love Thee, and I desire to believe in my love for Thee. I could not, surely, be so ungrateful as to refuse to give Thee my heart, after that Thou hast given me Thy Blood upon the Cross, Thyself in Holy Communion ! Grant that I may *abide* in Thy love, by strength and constancy in tribulations ; and let nothing be able to shake my firm determination to bear them all courageously.

XX. “ *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you.*”

The Apostles should have been filled with joy for many reasons. Our Lord, after uniting Himself to them in the touching mystery of the Holy Eucharist, had assured them of the love borne to them by His Father and Himself. His Divine peace rested upon them. Jesus Christ sought to elevate their souls, and to impress upon them that Divine love gives us real joy, even in the midst of sorrow. This pure joy is independent of time, place, and of events ; because it dwells in the superior part of the soul, which is inaccessible to creatures, and reserved for God. That joy can subsist, at the same time, with most lively sufferings. If I have never experienced this myself, it has been proved by the constancy of the martyrs.

Lord, grant me grace to endeavour sincerely to please Thee. I shall find in fidelity and uprightness the elements of that true peace and joy which can only be tasted in Thy service.

XXI. “ *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*”

What a sublime lesson is conveyed in these short

words ! Our Lord declares that His approaching death will be the greatest proof of the love which He has expressed in such a touching manner. Having laid down this principle, he proceeds to demonstrate it by examples: His words exhibit still more plainly the disinterestedness of the love of Jesus. Were we His *friends*, when He immolated Himself for us ? Alas, we were sinners ; I also, under *such* and *such* circumstances, have crucified Him by mortal sin. Perhaps my hands are not free from the stain of blood. Nevertheless, He loves me, and He dies to wash away my sins. And "the love of Jesus Christ," as St. Paul tells us, "appeareth more glorious in that He laid down His life for His *enemies*." I have been an enemy of Jesus Christ ; nevertheless, He loved me, and He loves me still !

It follows, then, by a necessary consequence, that, if I love Jesus Christ, I shall be ready to suffer and to die for Him. But as He does not require me to make the sacrifice of my life, I must prove my love to Him by contending with my own evil nature ; and I must make an interior sacrifice of the kind that will cost me most : far less can I refuse Him any part of my earthly possessions, to be employed in works of charity.

Lord, my sacrifice shall be complete. If Thou didst manifest to me such an excess of love, when I was in a state of mortal enmity with Thee, oh, Thy heart will surely love me more, now that I am reconciled to Thee through Thy grace. And though I am utterly unable to manifest an equal love to Thee, I will declare, notwithstanding, with the Apostle, that neither "affliction, nor violence, nor present evils, nor death, nor life, nor heaven, nor hell, nor any other creature whatsoever, shall be able to separate me from Thee."

XXII. "*You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you.*"

Our Lord seeing that we cannot venture to believe ourselves His *friends*, when we consider our sins, He

hastens to declare the conditions upon which we may appropriate this precious title : " You are My friends, if you do the things which I command you." What delicate feeling is shown in this by our Lord ! He knows that obedience is a painful yoke, and therefore, to make it more tolerable, He attaches the rights of friendship to the performance of the duties which He prescribes.

How shameful is it for me, my Jesus, to love so little that virtue of obedience which is, in Thy sight, the measure of our love ! Grant that henceforward my sole ambition may be to obtain Thy friendship, and my only law Thy will.

XXIII. "*I have chosen you out of the world.*"

Our Lord addresses Himself visibly to me. From all eternity His love was fixed upon me, His regard rested upon me ; in the long succession of created beings, He sought for every one of the souls whom He predestinated by the gratuitous choice of His goodness. Never shall I be able sufficiently to testify my gratitude to Him for having placed me among the number.

Lord, I shall never forget that Thou hast chosen me to know and love Thee. I will not forget that, out of thine incomprehensible love, Thou didst withdraw me from the world, and grant me Thy richest blessings, at the very moment in which I was wandering farthest away from Thee. Repeat to my soul that Thou hast chosen me, that I belong to Thee by ties of sacred love, that I neither sought Thee nor desired Thee, and that my folly is so great, that even Thy very gifts have been food for vanity and pride.

Thou hast granted me a special part in the Holy Eucharist, and Thou dost always prevent me, notwithstanding my ingratitude and negligence ; and if I persevere in Thy service, it is still Thou who dost inspire me with the desire of doing so. Can I ever testify my gratitude sufficiently ?

XXIV. "*The servant is not greater than his master.*"

How consoling in my sorrows to lift my eyes to Jesus Christ, contradicted, despised, crucified ! His glory shines from the depth of humiliations, and the Cross is also the centre from which I derive strength and patience. When I contemplate Calvary, I feel that I must be prepared for sufferings ; but let me not fear them,—for the grace of God will always accompany them. I will sustain my courage by regarding the tabernacle, or the glory of Jesus after His resurrection. Let me never desire fewer trials than God sees fit to appoint for my eternal welfare ; they are forming the blessed image of the love of God in me, and the Father of heaven looks down complacently upon the likeness of His Son.

May my sufferings, O Jesus, be a testimony of my love to Thee ! Thou hast confirmed Thy love to me by the shedding of Thy Blood. I gratefully kiss the crucifix, which reminds me of Thy sufferings. Grant me grace, O my Saviour, to suffer for Thee with some equality of love.

XXV. "*These things I have told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them.*"

When we possess Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, let us not be in too great haste to speak to Him, without thinking that He also desires to be heard in our hearts. His interior words are full of peace and sweetness. We should recollect ourselves, in order to receive them, and, above all, to retain them. Our Lord desires to engrave them in ineffaceable characters in our inmost souls. Let me remember after Communion the words of our Lord, thus regarding Him as ever present within me, and let me keep my heart closely and faithfully attached to His admirable person ; for Divine love is a skilful master, and the soul derives more wisdom from its instructions

in the science of salvation, than it could obtain in any human school of learning.

O Jesus, detach my imagination and my mind from all outward things; let me no more expend myself in distractions, in business, in visits, in thoughts and anxieties, which fill my soul with uneasiness and distress. Teach me to be silent during my act of thanksgiving, and to listen to Thy words with reverential love.

XXVI. "*And now I go to Him that sent Me.*"

By what heavenly delicacy are these words of our Lord inspired! He began by convincing His Apostles of His love; He filled them with peace and joy; and He delays the announcement of His departure, until their hearts were less oppressed by their feelings of sorrow. And now I go away, He seems to say. I have so loaded you with blessings, that now you can do without Me; my presence is no longer necessary to you. He spoke of His absence as a necessary event, in order to diminish, as far as possible, the sorrow that they would shortly feel.

O Jesus, how wonderful is the study of Thy sacred heart! What a happiness to penetrate its Divine feelings! I entreat Thee never to withdraw Thyself from me, for Thou knowest that I could not endure Thine absence.

XXVII. "*Because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.*"

The disciples' love was not exempt from selfishness; they were too sorrowful at the departure of our Lord; not considering the glory which awaited Him on the threshold of the tomb, not rejoicing at His return to His Father. Does my heart bear a more generous love to Jesus? Alas, it is divided by many feelings which too often cause my tears to flow for earthly sorrows only.

However, the reproof of our Lord is gentle; He only points out their error to the Apostles, and immediately proceeds to encourage them to hopefulness.

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O my Jesus, I often offend Thee, and Thou dost never reproach me ; although I have obstinately persisted in sin, and multiplied my faults by the very expectation of receiving ready forgiveness. Grant that I may henceforth return to Thee with sincere penitence after my falls, my forgetfulness, my indifference ; hoping to receive forgiveness from Thy merciful goodness.

XXVIII. "*It is expedient to you that I go.*"

We are not destined to enjoy perpetual happiness upon earth. The Apostles could not enjoy it, even when they were near our Lord. The joy of living with Him was quickly followed by the sorrow of separation. They attested their lively grief at the prospect of this parting by a profound silence. How compassionate is Jesus ! He speaks of His departure as an event which would be advantageous to His beloved Apostles : "*It is expedient to you that I go.*" If My absence were not necessary for you, I should remain.

In fact, it is not good for us to receive nothing but consolations ; privations purify and strengthen the soul. When I am deprived of the sensible feeling of the presence of our Lord, let me seek Him all the more fervently. He hides Himself to show me my weakness, and to make me more humble when I am again permitted to receive His spiritual favours.

"*It is expedient to you that I go,*" Jesus says to me ; that I should withdraw from you My sensible presence. Learn to serve Me without consolation, to eat with patience the bitter bread of tribulation, contenting yourself with the hopes held out to you by faith.

This subtraction of grace is a painful trial ; strengthen yourself to bear it by reviving the spirit of grace in your soul. Then the apparent absence of Jesus, like His separation from the Apostles, will be a fertile source of grace.

Attach yourself to Him for HIMSELF. Listen still more submissively to His inspirations, when He withdraws His sensible presence from your soul. Never lose

confidence. Adore His secret dealings with you, whether He seems to refuse you His presence, or to try your constancy by withholding it for a time.

XXIX. *"If I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you ; but if I go, I will send Him to you."*

Jesus Christ recalls to us the order of the counsels of the Divine Wisdom : " If I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you ;" that is to say, without My death, the justice of My Father will remain unsatisfied, His glory will have received no reparation, you will not be rehabilitated in My Blood, and consequently the Holy Spirit, who is to reconcile the world with My Father, the Spirit of truth, of consolation, and of adoption, whom I have promised you, " will not come to you ; but if," by death, " I go away," I shall accomplish the designs of My Father ; and when I am sitting at His right hand, you shall receive the Holy Ghost in My name.

What an adorable mystery is unveiled in these words of Jesus Christ ! O my Jesus, send me Thy Spirit of light, of wisdom, and of truth, that He may renew my heart, and fill it with His precious gifts.

XXX. *"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now ; but when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth."*

Our Lord was prevented, by several reasons, from explaining Himself more plainly ; the still carnal mind of His Apostles could not rise to the level of the truths which the Holy Spirit taught them in after times ; their understandings, obscured by grief, their souls, weighed down by sadness, were incapable of comprehending the Divine instructions of the Lord. They had not yet practically understood the meaning of the evangelical counsels.

Admire the gentleness and the wisdom of Jesus.

Observe how sweetly and wisely our Blessed Lord deals with the weakness of His Apostles, dissipating their ignorance by degrees, discovering to them, little by

little, the mysteries of His love, to encourage them to overcome their pusillanimity. He is satisfied with a sincere attachment to His person, and a sincere will to obey Him.

Lord Jesus, how would my ignorance have been enlightened by Thy Divine grace, had I not lost so much by my failure in courage and generosity ! Thou hast borne with me mercifully, waited patiently, raised me up compassionately after falling.

I implore Thee not to refuse me Thy holy inspirations, and to grant that they may work out my advancement in the spiritual life.

XXXI. *" You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice ; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy ; and your joy no man shall take from you."*

Joy springs from inward peace. In order to be happy, we must seek our happiness in imperishable things. The love of God is the essential happiness which no man can take away from us. If you love God, if you really desire that His kingdom may come, you will be made a partaker of that heartfelt joy which never passes away. Our life is thickly strewn with crosses and trials, which often cause us bitter tears. We often shed tears from unworthy motives. We ought to feel the most lively regret for having offended God ; but no other cause of grief should have power to touch us so deeply. Let us not fear to do violence to ourselves. Let us never envy that worldly happiness which seems so bright and captivating. All felicity is ephemeral that is not based upon virtue, and at the first breath of adversity it disappears utterly and irretrievably. Happy is the soul that is solidly established in the true faith ! she passes through life unmoved in the midst of storms ; each day that passes by brings her nearer to heaven, where sorrows and sadness fade away, where the joy and peace of God will surround her on all sides.

That happy destiny is mine, O Jesus ; no one, Thou

Thyself hast said, can deprive me of the joy that I shall taste in the bosom of God. Let me be fully persuaded that no sacrifice I can make here below, no tears or renunciations, will be too much to purchase that endless happiness.

XXXII. "*Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My name; ask, and you shall receive.*"

If we ask for little, or for things which will not advance our salvation, it is not that prayer in the name of Jesus Christ which has so much power over the heart of God. Our Saviour says, *Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My name, because you did not desire the kingdom and glory of God.* To ask truly, is to pray in union with Jesus Christ, to conform our own intentions to His, to have unbounded confidence in His infinite merits, strengthened by the conviction that God will refuse no request that is made in the name of His beloved Son.

When can my prayers be made more efficaciously than at the time of Holy Communion, when my requests ascend to God in union with the Blood, the Wounds, the love, and the perfections of the holy Humanity of our most beloved Saviour? Have I not a full assurance that my prayers will be granted, when the powerful and compassionate prayer of Jesus Christ Himself ascends for me to God the Father? Therefore, all the blessings which I daily receive are the fruit of the prayers of Jesus Christ, which are most powerful to advance my best interests. Let me, then, cheerfully accept my sorrows, and bless the hand which crowns my brow with a few thorns, by means of which I am enabled to expiate my sins so easily. Numerous as they are, they will be all forgiven, if I ask God to blot them out in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the consoling promise attached to our Blessed Saviour's name.

I may have a firm hope, then, O my Jesus. My prayers ascend to heaven through Thy hands, and grace descends to me through Thy heart. I ask that I may

sooner die than offend Thee willingly, that I may have grace to love Thee always, and to order my whole life to Thy greater glory.

XXXIII. "*Behold the hour cometh, and is now come, that you shall leave Me alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*"

Jesus foresaw that His Apostles would forsake Him during His Passion, and flee away ; but He desired to encourage thereby the soul that is destitute of all earthly support, of all human consolation, and whose desolation is so complete, that even God appears to have withdrawn Himself from her. Ah, in those moments of anguish, when we seem to be forsaken by all, and even hope itself seems to flee from us, then, by an act of faith, we must ascend even to the throne of God, and, falling prostrate in a deep sense of our own unworthiness, we must repeat courageously : " I am abandoned by all, and yet I am not alone. In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, and I shall not be confounded. One who communicates daily is never alone ; for, with a certainty of faith far stronger than can be given by the testimony of the senses, he clasps Jesus Christ to his heart, and says with confidence, " I hold Him, and I will never let Him go."

Thy mercy, O my Jesus, has saved me from such desolation as this ; but if the guilt of distrust or doubt should ever yawn at my feet,—ah, then, casting myself into Thy heart, I will repeat with confidence, " Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

XXXIV. "*In the world you shall have distress ; but have confidence : I have overcome the world.*"

Our Blessed Lord thus forewarned His Apostles against the depression into which we are often thrown by the greater trials of life. " The servant is not above His Master," He had formerly said to them, when He announced that He should be forsaken and abandoned by them. He adds, In your turn, you shall have afflic-

tion in the world ; you shall taste, like Me, the bitterness of the gall and the desolation of the Cross ; but take courage : I shall be with you. My presence may not always be felt by you, but you shall ever have grace to bear the cross. Even if God should seem to abandon you, still hope against hope, and, in the deep abyss which seems to swallow you up, your confidence will give greater glory to God, and your crown will become the more brilliant. United to Me, you shall be triumphant over sufferings ; for I have already conquered all your enemies.

This faith in the words of Jesus Christ is the secret of preserving interior peace, under privation of sensible consolations. By lifting your eyes to heaven, or to the tabernacle, you will be enabled to overcome the agonies of nature, the distress of the inferior part of the soul, if you remember these words of Jesus Christ : " Have confidence : I have overcome the world." Then await, in peaceful silence, the fulfilment of the unfailing promises of our Blessed Lord.

May this firm confidence be mine, O Lord, in all the trials and temptations which wage war upon my soul ! Resting upon the words of Thy minister, who bids me, in Thy name, " Fear not," I will repose, like the Prophet Jonas, in the midst of the angry waves, expecting the end of my tribulations with firm and certain hope.

XXXV. *The Prayer of Jesus Christ : " My Father, I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given Me, because they are Thine."*

Our Blessed Lord does not pray for the world, whose maxims are contrary to truth, to charity, to humility, and to peace. What a misfortune to be excluded from the prayer of Jesus Christ ! I have long taken the ideas of the world as the rule of my thoughts, judgment, and behaviour. Have I, then, been excluded from the prayer of Jesus, from the immense charity

which inflamed His sacred heart, while His lips poured forth a most fervent prayer to His beloved Father for His disciples? How sad is this uncertainty! Jesus Christ will not pray for me, unless I really belong to Him. Let me, then, rest upon Him alone. Let me never seek a secret support in any other thing, nor any satisfaction in my own works, in my understanding, or in my capacity; let me go out of myself, to rest solely on Jesus Christ.

O my Jesus, unite me to Thyself in heart and spirit; cause me to hate the spirit of the world, which Thou didst overcome, and which Thou didst exclude wholly from Thy prayers.

XXXVI. "*Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be ONE, as We also are.*"

The preludes to the prayer of our Lord are now ended; do not lose sight of them, but meditate upon the great solemnity with which he addressed Himself to God.

He first raised His eyes to heaven, to show that His spirit was about to soar above this world. To dispose the heart of His Father to grant His petition, He reminded Him of all that He had undertaken, in order to manifest Him to men; and then, assured that His prayer would always be heard, He proceeds with profound recollectedness to pray for us: "*Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me.*" It seems that we must be exposed to many dangers, and surrounded by numerous enemies, resolved upon our destruction; since Jesus Christ asks only of His Father, as the reward of the labours of His whole life, terminating in a painful and bloody death, that He would KEEP us; that is to say, that He would surround us with paternal care, preserve in us the seed of His Divine Word, the gifts of the Holy Eucharist, and sanctifying grace, the fruit of His own Blood,—"*that they may be ONE, as*

We also are." The thought of love always inspires our Blessed Lord to utter a desire for *unity*, for the consummation of charity in the hearts of all men. Strive with an upright will to attain full perfection in this virtue, and strive all the more courageously because this height of charity is elevated so far above our weakness and imperfection; the only way to ascend that glorious height is by the path of humiliation. We must abase ourselves to the level of our own nothingness, humiliating ourselves profoundly in the sight of God.

XXXVII. "*I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.*"

Jesus Christ Himself placed His disciples in the world; He sent them into it to perform a special mission; and, as He expressly asks His Father not to withdraw them from it, it must have been because it is possible to be saved *in* the world. Yes; for every one whom Jesus Christ leaves in the world is sent there to fulfil a mission, and it is his duty to glorify God by all his actions. Special grace accompanies them.

Do I understand the meaning of our Blessed Lord in these words? Have I fully comprehended and fulfilled the mission of edification and charity which He assigns me in the world? Have I implored Him to keep me from the evil with which the world is filled to overflowing, from the snares and pitfalls with which it abounds, and from the vices hidden under specious appearances? How many graces are demanded by those simple words of Jesus, "Keep them from evil"! Let us repeat with our Lord, let us say again and again every day of our lives, "Deliver us from evil." Let us ask Him that we may be *in* the world, without being of the world, without contracting its defects, without imbibing its spirit; that we may avoid its pleasures, which are so many ambushes laid to entrap unwary virtue.

My Jesus, from one Communion to another, keep me

from evil ; preserve unstained this poor abode into which Thou dost condescend to enter ; and may I have no part in the world, nor the world in me.

XXXVIII. "*Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept, and none of them is lost.*"

These words were pronounced for the faithful Apostles, by whom Jesus was surrounded. But may I not apply them in a manner consoling to myself, in considering the merciful protection extended to me by our Lord ? He has preserved my soul and my life by a thousand providential interpositions. He has bestowed on me the richest gifts of grace, and He has placed me in the path of perfection ; retaining me in it in spite of my own evil nature, which contends so violently against virtue. Does He not, by His Sacraments, preserve me in sanctifying grace ? The Holy Eucharist deposits in my soul the germ of a blessed immortality, and is the pledge that I shall never perish in that terrible death by which the soul is eternally separated from God.

Lord, Thou wilt never lose any of those who are written in Thy sacred heart ; keep me, then, ever there in safety, and thus shall I be delivered from the dreadful enemy.

XXXIX. "*Sanctify them in truth.*"

This solemn prayer contains in itself the virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is addressed by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to His Father, when He is in my heart after Holy Communion. It is as if He said to Him : I have taken her nature, her sins, that Thou mightest invest her with My justice and holiness. I offer Myself for her, that so the truth of My sacrifice may abide in her soul, and that, in union with Me, she may be able to consummate the sacrifice of herself entirely to Thy glory.

Lord Jesus, what a happiness is it to hear Thee offer up this prayer for me !—"Sanctify her in the truth."

It teaches me to what point of separation from creatures and from myself it is necessary to arrive, in order to be truly sanctified. My God, what then will remain of me, if the truth alone must dwell in me, and if all that is false, impure, mingled with human motives and feelings, must be completely rooted out? These are high and difficult words, for they imply the complete crucifixion of the inner man.

Ah, Lord, in communicating, I desire by Thy grace to be enabled to crucify myself, to purify myself from all alloy, to aspire to the attainment of that complete purity in Thy sight which can never be fully attained in this life. Pray for me, that the sacred fire of Thy love may purify the inmost recesses of my heart.

XL. *"And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who, through their word, shall believe in Me."*

His prayer no longer concerns the Apostles, nor their successors; it is for all the children of the Church. Jesus Christ, in offering it up, had me directly in view. What a happiness to behold my Saviour occupied by the thought of my salvation, during the last hours of His mortal life! He asked for me the grace of that blessed *unity* in God which He had already requested for His Apostles. What stress does our Lord lay upon the grace of charity! It is, if I may so express myself, the soul of His heart.

Do I sincerely esteem and love this virtue? Is it the special characteristic of my whole conduct? Alas, have my resentments, my rash judgments, rendered this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ unfruitful to my soul? Holy Communion ought to give me one spirit, one heart with Him, and also with my fellow-Christians.

O my God, arouse, I beseech Thee, in my soul that true spirit of charity which, by the assistance of Thy grace, animated the hearts of the early Christians. Preserve that Divine unity in Thy Church, that so we may

live in the same faith, the same spirit, and the same love, even until death.

XLI. *"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one."*

The heart of Jesus Christ takes pleasure in the thought of His union with us in Holy Communion. "I in them, and Thou in Me," He says to His Father. What an admirable connection is effected between God and ourselves by the Holy Eucharist! Our Lord wishes to conduct and guide me by His Spirit, to renew my whole nature by His grace, and to nourish me with His adorable Body. Does He really dwell in me, or does He only repose temporarily in me in Holy Communion?

The Holy Eucharist gives me freely all that Jesus Christ received from His Father, and all that He took from us in the Incarnation, so great is the love which urges Him to bestow His rich gifts upon me. Alas, I communicate, but I am not clothed with Jesus, nor with His Spirit. How long have I been deprived of these favours, through my own fault alone! Lord Jesus, who dost extend even to me the paternal love of Thy Father, I am ready to die with shame and regret because I have not fulfilled the obligations which this Divine love has imposed upon me. I am ashamed of my ignorance of the precept of charity which is contained in these words, "that they may be made perfect in one." If Thy love, then, is extended to all men, that it may draw them all into perfect union with Thee, my charity, like Thine, should expand itself upon all those whom Thou dost bear so tenderly in Thy heart. Patient bearing of the infirmities of others, compassion, self-devotedness,—such are the virtues to which I aspire, to which all my desires and hopes are directed.

XLII. "*Father, I will that, where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me ; that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me.*"

While Jesus Christ, as Mediator, solicited the grace necessary for our salvation from His Father, He employed the language of prayer ; but when He speaks of the revelation of His glory, which will be also the commencement of our eternal beatitude, He manifests His sovereign will—"I WILL." It would be impossible for Him to declare more expressly His intention of sharing with us His eternal glory. Thus, then, the adorable, immutable, efficacious *will* of the August Trinity, of the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit,—this Divine will is none other than to consummate and perfect our happiness for ever in heaven. Listen to Jesus Christ, God Himself, speaking to God His Father : "I will that, where I am," in heaven, in Thy bosom, "they whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me." No more separation ! To dwell with Jesus, never to lose Him more ! O sweet hope, which fills my heart with joy ! It is not now to be with Him only by grace, by Holy Communion, that we are privileged : it is that we shall enter, never more to leave it, into the consummation of His eternal love. It was with this intention and desire that Jesus said absolutely, and in the exercise of His Divine will, "I will that they may see My glory. They have adored My Cross, they have received it, and borne it with Me. I will reward them with My glory." Such was the purport of the last prayer uttered by Jesus upon earth,—it was the last cry of love which issued from His Divine heart. It was the consoling revelation of His almighty, absolute, persevering *will* to accomplish our salvation. Preserve this blessed remembrance with faith and confidence,—it is the testament of your Father, the promise of your Spouse, the unchangeable desire of your Saviour, the eternal intention of your God.

Conclusion.

Read and read again with your heart these Divine words of Jesus Christ,—they are full of love. Never seek to obtain the consolation contained in them without remembering that He desired to derive consolation Himself from the institution of the Holy Eucharist. It is from you that He expects to receive it. Let it be your task to soften to His sacred heart the bitter sufferings of His Passion, which is prolonged in the tabernacle by the souls who still outrage Him in this Blessed Sacrament of love.

TWENTY-EIGHTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

AMONGST the various considerations which we may make use of when we are about to receive our Lord, one of the most useful is to recall in detail the several sufferings of His Passion, and to consider with what excess of love He devoted Himself for us to the death of the Cross; for one of the chief reasons for which He instituted the Sacrament of His Body and Blood was that we might have His Passion ever present to our minds. "As often," says the Apostle, "as you shall eat this bread and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord till He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). St. Bonaventure advises us to meditate upon one of the mysteries of the Passion as often as we go to Holy Communion.

I. The Cross and the Holy Eucharist.

Amongst all the number of the Apostles who were present at the Last Supper, and were communicated by

the hand of our Blessed Lord, one only reposed familiarly upon His Heart,—and that one was also to be found at the foot of the Cross, receiving the last words and the last sigh of our Blessed Lord. From the Upper Room he followed his Divine Master to Calvary. Communion initiated him into the secrets of crucified love, and the death of Jesus Christ revealed to him the treasures of the Holy Eucharist.

Let us examine this mysterious connection between the Cross and the tabernacle. Jesus is to be found every where in company with the Cross. There is no earthly suffering which His Divine regard cannot sympathise with and soften.

There is more sweetness in the Holy Eucharist than there is bitterness in the Cross. To make us partakers of the incomprehensible benefits of the Holy Eucharist, no less a sacrifice was required than the death of our Divine Saviour. If, then, in the designs of God, these two grand mysteries are so closely connected, let us not divide them in our thoughts,—let us prepare ourselves for Communion by meditating upon the sufferings of Jesus ; there is no better means of exciting in our hearts a lively repentance for our sins, and of bringing us in a spirit of loving confidence to His sacred feet.

On Calvary, Jesus offers you His Cross ; but, in the tabernacle, He opens to you His heart. Though bitter to nature, the Cross is the sign and pledge of our salvation ; but from His heart there flows a sweet and powerful unction, which enables us to bear it unflinchingly. If you are weeping for the loss of a relation, a friend, perhaps the being dearest to your heart, Jesus crucified will give you His Mother to console you, and will strengthen you from the Altar with the celestial stream of His most precious Blood.

Perhaps you have loved the pleasures of this world, —your soul is polluted by contact with its voluptuous enjoyments ; come, then, to weep over your unfaithful-

ness at the foot of the Cross ; but ere long Jesus, in Holy Communion, will bid you repose upon His heart.

Or you are doubtful of the road which it is your duty to follow,—several untried paths seem to open before you, and you know not which to choose. Stretch out your hands in supplication to Jesus in the holy tabernacle, and a light will quickly spring forth to illumine your path ; Jesus crucified will Himself be your guide.

In all your sorrows, and whenever you have fallen into sin, prostrate yourself before the holy Altar, or at the foot of the Cross. It is there that God, unceasingly offended by the ingratitude of His creatures, is appeased by the sacrifice of His Divine Son.

On Calvary, O my God, I behold in Thy Cross the sign of Thy reconciliation with the world ; but my heart craves a sweeter pledge of Thy mercy ; and this pledge Thou hast given me in the Holy Eucharist, where Thou dost offer Thyself to Thy Father as a peace-offering, to obtain His mercy for sinners.

How consoling, O my Jesus, to find there also the permanent assurance of Thy love ! Ah, if the remembrance of my sins, which is inseparable from Thy Passion, affects me so deeply, and penetrates me with such a salutary fear of Thy justice, the thought of Holy Communion, which I am about to receive, drives away all my fear, and my soul is comforted and encouraged by this sweet and joyful hope.

II. *Our Sins considered with reference to the Cross and the Tabernacle.*

Sin, voluntarily committed, is able to wound the heart of Jesus more than all the torments of Calvary could agonise His Body. When I consult my conscience, I can imagine that my sins have mortally wounded Jesus Christ. Amongst the crowd of wounds with which His sacred Body is bruised and torn, I can recognise those which my sins have caused to my soul.

Can I ever again commit sin? but especially can I ever love it again?

O my Jesus, when I behold Thee laden with Thy Cross, and painfully ascending the mountain of Calvary, I feel overwhelmed with fear and sorrow in the remembrance of my sins, which delivered Thee over to Thy mortal enemies; but in beholding Thee immolated upon the Altar, as once upon the Cross, for the expiation of the same sins, I feel that they also inspire me with bitter grief; and since Thy love has offered me a certain means of recovering grace, in the virtue of that adorable Sacrament, I come with humility and confidence, and implore Thee to apply to my soul the infinite merits of Thy Passion.

III. *That we should offer up ourselves a living Sacrifice in contemplation of the Cross and of Holy Communion.*

God did not consider the sufferings of Mary too great, since they were endured at the foot of the Cross, and with the mournful consolation of being a partaker in the Passion of her Divine Son. Never approach the holy table until you have prepared for it by some act of mortification, were it even so painful as to unite you to the Body of Jesus Christ by the nails and thorns.

God has led me to feel a sweet consolation in the close connection which exists between the Passion and the Holy Eucharist. My nature is terrified by the bitter sufferings of crucifixion, by the bloody furrows which my sins have traced upon the sacred Body of Jesus. Sufferings exhaust me; sometimes I can no longer endure them, when my heart is afflicted; and yet I could never suffer too much in order to prepare myself for such a blessing as Holy Communion.

Yes, I confess it, O my God, the sight of my Saviour crucified speaks to me only of sorrows, of renouncing my own will in sacrifice, of resignation in trials, of patience in bodily and spiritual sufferings; but from the tabernacle I hear these consoling words, "Come

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unto Me, all ye that suffer, and I will refresh you." O Jesus, dispose my soul to a communion of sacrifices; teach it to suffer with sweetness and with peace, in silence and in love.

IV. *Contemplate the Desolation of the Cross and of the Tabernacle.*

The sorrow which our Lord felt most sensibly during His Passion was the complete abandonment which He experienced on the part of His Father and on that of men, for He manifested His sufferings under it by a loud cry. Harken to that sole complaint to which He gave utterance upon the Cross: "My God, My God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He knew not the motive of this abandonment, and He asked His Father to declare it to Him. But might He not now from the tabernacle give utterance to a very similar complaint?

The suffering that I feel most acutely is also the want of sympathy in my sufferings, that I am compelled to taste the bitterness of sorrow alone, and nowhere to meet a friendly glance, or a heart capable of entering into my feelings. Ah, how frequently has this distressing experience assailed my soul, and embittered my life! But ought I to complain, when I hear from the tabernacle these words, which still escape from the afflicted heart of Jesus?—"I waited for some to have pity on Me, but there was no man; neither found I any to comfort Me."

Yes, it is too true. How many years hast Thou waited, O my King and my Divine Master, how often has the echo of that mournful complaint struck vainly upon my heart, whilst my mind, dissipated and pre-occupied by the vanities of the world, was not able to hear it! And Thou, my God, ever patient, because Thou art eternal,—Thou returnest with the same mercy to arouse my soul, when it is intoxicated with pleasure, by displaying to it Thy profound sadness. Oh, how sweet is Thy voice! and Thy heart, how tender its love!

how sweetly has it forgiven my long forgetfulness ! But now I will no longer murmur when I am called to suffer in my turn, for never yet have I called upon Thee for help in vain. I call upon Thee, and from the tabernacle, the dwelling-place of the Blessed Sacrament, Thy hand wipes away my tears, whilst it leaves me the merit and the consolation of shedding them at Thy feet.

V. The Cross and the Holy Eucharist our Strength.

When I feel myself losing courage, and ready to abandon the fatiguing labour of walking in the path of virtue, Jesus extends His hand to me from the Altar ; and if I resist Him, He shows me how bitter His Passion was rendered to Him by the ingratitude of the Jews, whom He had loaded with favours, by the sufferings which He endured upon the Cross, and by death, which was revolting to His innocent nature ; but that its bitterness was still further increased by His foreknowledge of my cowardice and ingratitude.

When I descend into the depths of my own heart, how much secret unfaithfulness have I to deplore ! How many secret victims have I not withheld from the sacrifice ! How many interior immolations have I not refused Thee, O my Jesus ! And yet Thou dost not withdraw Thyself from my soul in the Holy Eucharist ! I taste its sweetness ; and yet I never sufficiently reflect that, in order to procure this blessing for me, Thou didst endure the bitter sufferings of the Cross. Since Thou hast seen my cowardice and my weakness, I will say to Thee, with St. Augustine, " Grant that the remembrance of Thy wounds may serve as a vestment to cover all my defects ; and may it so powerfully strengthen me in my trials, that I may place all my joy and all my glory in participating in the sufferings and opprobrium which Thou didst endure in Thy Passion ; for in Holy Communion I find a consoling sweetness and strength, which enable me to endure the hardness of Calvary."

VI. Union with Jesus Christ by means of Detachment.

As long as your heart still retains attachment to any creature, it will not dare to contemplate the state of absolute abandonment in which Jesus was left upon the Cross ; neither can any one bear it who has not entered into the spirit of these grand words, " He that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me ; and he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." Approach the Altar, and you will hear these words : " If any one love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and take up our abode with him" (John xiv. 23).

Come, then, O Lord ; take possession of this poor heart, fill it with Thy presence ; for it sincerely desires to love and to bless Thee for having united Thy Passion and Holy Communion so marvellously together, that, if I have courage to bear Thy Cross, it will be always granted Me, not alone to be the witness of Thy immolation, but to enjoy the sweetness of Thy celestial feast, to see Thee consummate in my heart the Divine function of Saviour, by Thyself applying the merits of Thy Passion to my soul.

VII. Holy Communion prepares us for Suffering.

The frivolous soul is alarmed at the severe language of the Cross ; but these burning words, " With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," issue from the tabernacle to reprove and melt her cold indifference. These words remind us that this celestial Bread was first prepared for us in the midst of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Refuse not, then, the holy bitterness which prepares us for the happiness of Holy Communion and of heaven. " When Jesus Christ," says St. John Chrysostom, " is upon the Altar as a Victim, while the priest is praying, and all those present are adoring the precious Blood, then think you are no longer on earth, but in heaven ; where your soul, free

from all disturbing thoughts, is united with the saints of God." The priest, when he presents you with the Sacred Host, makes the sign of the Cross, to teach you that the Holy Eucharist and the Cross together contain all that is most worthy of your love : the Holy Eucharist, because in that Jesus Christ gives us such wonderful proofs of His love, in choosing to remain with us until the end of the world, as at the very moment when He is about to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for our salvation ; the Cross, because we owe to it the blessing of Holy Communion.

Lord Jesus, I should not have been an indifferent spectator of Thy sufferings upon the Cross ; shall I, then, be cold and insensible in the presence of the Altar, where Thy Blood flows for us with as much love as it did upon Calvary ? Deign Thou to open the ears of my heart, that I may hear Thy Divine voice repeating to me, " I give you My Blood and My life ; but I entreat you to give Me your will." I will not refuse Thee any thing by which I can prove my love, O my Jesus ; for if it was Thy will to suffer such great things in order to convince me of Thine, I ought to consider no sacrifice too great by which I may manifest my gratitude to Thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Contemplate our Lord with the eyes of faith ; kiss in spirit the wounds in His feet and His hands, approach with deep reverence the wound in His sacred side, and gather up the drops of blood which flow from it.

Jesus espoused the Church upon the Cross, and you are the fruit of that Divine alliance. Love and adore the Author of your life and your salvation.

Unite your feelings to those of the Blessed Virgin, of St. John, and St. Magdalene, the three persons who loved their Lord most tenderly at that time upon earth ; ask that you also may be one of those souls who most love our Blessed Lord.

Jesus shows you His wounds, not so much to excite

your compassion, as that you may rejoice in beholding the wonderful love of which you are the object.

He asks you to abide in His love, and out of love to accompany Him to Calvary; to suffer His Cross to approach your heart,—that Cross on which He chose to die,—the Cross of this day, perhaps of this very moment; He asks you, finally, to give yourself up to Him with a will perfectly resigned, to allow the Cross to touch you when He will, and in such a manner as He wills.

Implore our Lord to teach your heart to rest willingly upon the Cross; it will find there resignation, strength, and a sweet peace, which will be communicated to it by Holy Communion.

I. “*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam æternam.*”

These words are addressed to me as often as I communicate. Perhaps I have never sufficiently reflected upon them. And yet, how grand and consoling are these words! If the sacred Body of my God is to keep my soul, it is not, then, only a passing gift; it is a stable, permanent donation, for my consolation, my defence, and my personal advantage. But how is this adorable Body given to me? In all its holiness, in the majesty of its glory, and yet without losing any of the vestiges of His sufferings which He endured for my salvation.

O my Saviour, I cast a glance of reverence and love upon Thy adorable person. I fall prostrate before Thy sacred Humanity, on which I contemplate the ineffaceable traces of my sins. I adore all Thy sufferings,—I offer them up to Thy Father, in order to obtain His mercy; it is not my voice that He hears: Thy wounds beseech Him in me. “Your voice,” says David, “is the voice of a Victim who offers Himself up to God, and prays for us” (Ps. xxvi.). When this voice issues from my inmost heart, shall it not melt the heart of God? The marks of Thy presence are impressed upon me; upon my faculties and senses Thou didst imprint some faint

resemblance of Thy Divine image, the living seal of a love which has suffered so much ; and yet I desire to escape from the law of suffering, of expiation ! Ah, no, Lord Jesus ! inscribe this remembrance on my whole being in Thy Blood, even as my name is written in Thy wounds by my sins, and in Thy heart by Thy love ; for myself I now declare, as I kiss those sacred feet which were pierced on the Cross for me, that I henceforth consent to labour, to suffer, for Thy glory alone ; and since Thy crucified Body daily protects me from dangers, as not a moment of my life passes by without being watered by the virtue of Thy Blood,—ah, I implore Thee, give me a love which shall have as much power over Thy heart as the free consent of my will concedes to Thy adorable person over me.

II. *“ In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us ”* (1 John iii. 15).

How happy would you be, if your heart were so completely filled and occupied with Jesus Christ, that it should have room for no other thought, no other remembrance, save that of His suffering and of His love !

Lord, Thou didst once give Thy life, and shed Thy blood to its last drop, for my salvation ; and Thou didst then conquer death, only that Thou mightest henceforth offer Thyself up a perpetual sacrifice out of pure love. Together with Thy adorable Body and Blood, Thou dost communicate to me Thy life, in order to sustain mine amidst the perils of the world. My gratitude is not so much excited even by the sight of the sufferings and ignominy which Thou hast endured, as by the object which Thou hadst in view in submitting to them ; that object was to attract my heart to Thyself. “ Thou didst die for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them ” (2 Cor. v. 15). Take my whole life, O my God ; take possession so completely of my whole being, that I may

have no more self-action, no more desire to please myself and to live according to my natural inclinations, but that all my thoughts, feelings, and actions may be animated by Thy love alone.

III. "*The charity of Christ presseth us*" (2 Cor. v. 14).

The love of my Lord inclines my heart to love Him even more powerfully than His sufferings and death ; it is impossible for me not to love Him, when I consider that His motive in undertaking and consummating His sacrifice was His desire to possess my heart, and to see me correspond to His love.

"Thy wounds, O my Jesus, are the wounds of love; they are, consequently, well fitted to inflame our hearts; apply them, therefore, to the coldness and hardness of mine, that so it may be softened and penetrated with gratitude. I behold Thee given up as a bleeding Victim into the hands of the executioners, and descending every day, at the word of the priest, as a Victim of love upon the Altar. Then I comprehend better those Divine words, 'Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends' (John xv. 13). Thou didst die for me, O my Jesus; then hast Thou loved me as much as even the heart of God can love: but this was still too little to content Thee; I find Thee in the tabernacle, with Thy heart, Thy life, Thy grace, Thy love, which, in abasing Thee even to me, raises me up to Thee. Now I shall no longer find it difficult to follow Thee from the Cross even unto death, and thus to prove my fervent love to Thee."

IV. *Fidelity to the Cross.*

After the labours and suffering of His Passion, Jesus demanded your eternal happiness as a recompense from His Father; and this demand is repeated by Him every day in the Holy Sacrifice. His *present* work is that of your *sanctification*. Be faithful to Him in return for the liberal donation of His person and graces. When I

adore Thee in my heart, O my Jesus, I will not separate the thought of Thy sufferings from that of Thy love ; my sins no longer demand the offering of bloody victims, since the virtue of Thy blood-shedding subsists for ever. From the Altar, as from the Cross, there still ascends to heaven a perpetual satisfaction, which does not dispense me from the duty of uniting my sacrifices with them. I will offer them to Thee, and will not grow weary, and I will give Thee thanks for preserving me from the misfortune which so many have suffered, in dying without ever being washed in Thy most precious Blood,—without ever enjoying the sweetness which I enjoy in Holy Communion.

O Jesus, Thou dost forget Thy sufferings, when I weep for them at Thy feet,—Thy *wounds*, when mine are healed by Thy hand,—Thy *sorrows*, when Thou dost soften mine. Thou art forsaken by all men ; what matters it if I come freely to seek Thee ? A thousand outrages and irreverences offend Thee, but Thou wilt be comforted if Thou dost receive the overflowing affection of my heart, burning with the fire of Thy sacred love.

Nevertheless, I confess it with shame and regret, Thy crown of thorns has not made me less proud, nor Thy flagellation less sensual ; Thy Cross does not enable me to practise mortification more generously, nor has Thy death detached me from myself and earthly things. Thy heart loves me with a generous affection, which ought to create some return of generosity in mine. Each Communion I make shall increase it, and death alone shall be able to extinguish that sacred flame.

Deign to penetrate my soul with this truth, and may I henceforth be more submissive to the inspirations of Thy grace,—less absorbed in self ; and thus may I direct all my actions to the end of Thy greater glory !

V. "*He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things ?*" (Rom. viii. 32.)

If my heart is deeply touched and filled with confidence by the consideration of Jesus on the Cross,—attached to it not so much by the nails which pierced His sacred Body as by His pure love for us,—how ought it not to be affected at this moment, when Jesus Christ is actually within me, with all the merits He acquired by His sufferings !

O Jesus, I love Thee a thousand times better than all Thy gifts ; I only ask for them, that they may render me less unworthy of Thy favours. I deliver myself up to Thee as a victim of love. The pledges which Thou didst give me of Thy love, even when I loved Thee not, make me hope that Thou wilt not reject me, and that I may regard myself as consecrated to Thee.

O my God, behold in me Thy Divine Son. I offer to Thee all His virtues, His affections, and His actions. Receive them for Thy glory, and, through His merits, grant me those graces which He now requests of Thee. Thy mercy shall satisfy for all my debts to Thy justice. I hope that, since Thou hast granted me forgiveness of my sins, Thou wilt also accord me the grace of final perseverance, and the gift of Thy most pure love. I implore these graces for the sake of Jesus Christ, who has promised that Thou wilt always grant our petitions, if we make them in His name.

VI. "*He was wounded for our iniquities.*"

When the Prophet pronounced these words, he spoke with reference to the heart of Jesus. The wound received by that Divine heart was, as it were, a last effort of love, by which Thou didst open to us most fully the treasures of Thy mercy and grace.

O my Saviour, I behold the traces of Thy wounds upon Thy sacred Body, and in Thy heart I find nothing

but bitterness and anguish. Thou didst eagerly accept them as a means of consolidating my union with Thee. Hitherto, I have been bathed in Thy Blood ; I have been nourished by Thy sacred Flesh ; I have always *received*, and have never dreamed of *giving*: but, because Thy hand is liberal, should my heart be ungrateful ? I offer Thee my blood and my life ; I am ready to suffer and to die at such a time, and in such a manner, as Thou shalt appoint. I will refuse nothing to Thee, O my Jesus, who hast refused me neither Thy love, nor Thy Blood, nor Thy life, and who would have suffered less if I had sinned less. Oh, when Thou comest to me again, I will give Thee my whole heart without reserve.

VII. *He offered Himself freely.*

The sacrifice by which our Lord immolated His own *will* was even greater than that which attached His Body to the Cross. You may unite yourself daily to the perfection of that solemn offering. Jesus offers Himself upon the Altar, with the effusion of the same Blood, the same love, and the same will. Make an offering of your will to Him, that it may be absorbed in His. Form a generous determination to make the sacrifice of your tastes, your inclinations, your judgment to Him, to suffer for Him your daily trials and sorrows, and to persevere in the face of every difficulty.

Would it not have been sufficient, O my Jesus, for Thee to have shed one tear, uttered one sigh, or poured forth one drop of Thy Blood for our salvation, without consummating such a painful sacrifice ? But Thy desire of sacrifice was like Thy love ; it was stronger than death in Thy heart ; for it survived the tomb, and remains to this day upon the Altar, where Thou dost daily renew Thy oblation once offered on the Cross. Shed Thou, I beseech Thee, the blood of two victims, the one Thy adorable Body, the other my poor heart. Grant me grace to display henceforth as much courage and resolution, in thus sacrificing myself with Thee, as I had

hitherto displayed weakness and fear. In Thy sacred presence, O Lord, I will venture to repeat, with one of Thy saints: "Send me sufferings, that I may be united to Thy sufferings, if such is Thy good pleasure; and grant that I may bear out of love the crosses that are appointed in my life, but especially the cross of *this present moment*, which is sent me from Thy hand and from Thy heart."

VIII. *How to imitate Mary at the Foot of the Cross.*

Our Lord conducts us to heaven by the way of the Cross; but the first to follow Him along that sorrowful way was His Blessed Mother. Upon the Altar of Calvary, God received two Victims in one oblation. Make yourself a victim with our Lord, by resigning yourself fully to all His appointments, as Mary did. At the foot of the Cross, she is the most perfect example of submission that you can follow.

Firstly, Mary conformed herself to the will of God, as manifested in the sufferings and death of her beloved Son. This was the most heroic action of her life.

Secondly, She exercised profound humility in the midst of the contempt and ignominy of Calvary.

Thirdly, She stood at the foot of the Cross. Not all the grief which wrung and agonised her heart had power to shake her invincible patience and constancy.

Fourthly, She kept silence, not choosing to give utterance to her grief, or even to make a single complaint.

Fifthly, She united herself closely with Jesus in His agony, His sacrifice, His sufferings, His death.

Having contemplated the virtues of Mary, can I complain of my sorrows, when I behold her keeping silence in the midst of most cruel sufferings, or uttering words of patient love to God, and forgiveness of her enemies? Shall I complain that I suffer *alone*, when, in the midst of my tears, I enjoy the sweetness of Holy Communion?

O Mary, when the Body of Jesus was taken down

from the Cross, thou didst enjoy a sad consolation, of which thou couldst not be deprived even by death : thou wert permitted to contemplate all the wounds of thy beloved Son. Jesus Christ has granted me the unspeakable consolation of pressing His adorable Body to my heart, and of contemplating His glorious wounds. I cannot venture to say that I am willing to suffer like thee, in order to testify my love. I do not dare to ask what my weakness would not be able to bear ; it suffices me to live by thy grace, in accomplishing thy holy will.

Conclusion.

To wish to love God without suffering, is to be ignorant of the whole spirit of Christianity. To desire to be united to Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, and not to suffer with love, is an illusion ; but to unite love with suffering, this is the heritage of the saints. May this be your lot ! Unite yourself to those souls who have had most love for our Lord ; leave the tabernacle, only to throw yourself at the foot of the Cross, and there fix your abode ; and, as you contemplate that most touching spectacle, which the love of God Himself could not surpass, let your heart be filled to overflowing with gratitude, with love, with true desire for self-sacrifice. You will then experience how sweet it is to suffer and to weep with Jesus, who in the tabernacle, as upon the Cross, leads a life of sacrificial love.



TWENTY-NINTH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE APPARITION OF JESUS TO THE HOLY WOMEN.

Preparation.

IN the Holy Eucharist, our Lord does not communicate to us His passible life, but His glorious life; therefore, the soul that frequently communicates ought to consider with great attention the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection, as they are recorded in the Gospel. We shall find in the behaviour of those persons who saw Him again after His resurrection a model for our relations to Him in that adorable Sacrament. Observe the gentle kindness with which the Lord rewards the fidelity of those holy women, and comes Himself to bring them consolation.

I. "*They looked at the place where He had been laid.*"

After following our Blessed Lord to Calvary, some pious women went to the sepulchre where His Body had been laid. They desired to ascertain if proper respect had been paid to the dignity of those august remains, and intended to return and offer Him fresh proofs of love and devotion. Their love to Him who had loved them, and given Himself for them, was not cooled by death, but extended beyond the grave. Can there be a more exact description of what our behaviour should be with relation to the Most Holy Eucharist? The irresistible attraction which drew the pious Jewish women to the sacred tomb ought to be felt still more powerfully by the Christian soul. It is her part to ornament the sacred abode of His love, where Jesus reposes, living in glory in the midst of us. When you have once felt the penetrating charms of the Holy Eucharist, you will understand that it is impossible either to resist or to

explain them. If you have received the gift of that Divine attraction, suffer it to reign in your heart, and Holy Communion shall be its daily aliment. Lord Jesus, come and reign over my life with Thy immortal hopes; and as I can imagine nothing sweeter in life than to love Thee and to please Thee, vouchsafe to receive and to retain all the love my heart contains.

II. *“Very early, while it was yet dark, they came to the sepulchre.”*

Remark the courageous activity of these Jewish women. Love is not deterred by fatigue. A fervent soul prevents the light of day, to cast a glance of love towards the mystic tomb where Jesus keeps watch over us. The early morning, when we first awake, is the most favourable moment for spiritual exercises. Has the rising sun ever surprised you before the tabernacle? You ought to come to Jesus Christ with eagerness, love Him above all things, refuse no sacrifice that He demands of you, cast off no yoke that He imposes upon you, and strive to characterise your love by force, by perseverance, and by generosity. Four different sepulchres have been offered to Thy sacred Body, O my Jesus,—the bosom of Mary in the Incarnation, the grotto of Joseph of Arimathea after Thy death, the tabernacle, and, finally, my heart in Holy Communion. I cannot offer Thee the purity of Mary, who bore Thee in Thy passible and mortal state; but I will offer Thee the joy of beholding me seek Thee with eagerness, and I will preserve Thy sacred presence with deep fervour of devotion.

III. *“Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”* (Mark xvi. 3.)

They mutually asked this question, seeking how they should prove most promptly their love to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold in this the model and the fruits of relationship cemented by piety.

"We ought to be always thinking of God," says St. Gregory of Nazianzen,—“we ought to think of Him more often than we draw our breath; but we should only speak of Him at *fitting seasons*.” It is in the intimacy of near relations and friends that this *fitting opportunity* of the pious heart is found. The Christian soul knows at all times how to approach our Lord, and seizes every opportunity of consoling His Divine heart for the sadness it experiences in hearing that holy religion evil spoken of, which is the source to us of such unnumbered benefits. The name of Jesus Christ is mentioned with deep reverence in the conversation of the Christian woman. But it is especially to the poor, the living images of Christ, and His dearest friends, that she brings real and strong consolation. Oh, be firm and constant in the worship of Jesus crucified; never omit a fitting occasion to speak of Him who impoverished Himself that He might enrich you to all eternity.

These pious women had taken counsel only of their courage, not considering the difficulties of a step which had relation to Jesus dead and buried. Has your devotion to the Holy Eucharist that touching characteristic of self-forgetfulness? The repose of our Blessed Lord in the sacred tomb of the Altar is not the insensibility or the silence of death; it is the activity, the fecundity, of life; it is the glory of God, the calm repose of eternity, strength and power, immensity in the effusion of love, without the possibility of uncertainty or deception.

Do you not also sometimes say, Who will roll me away this stone?—that is to say, this sadness, this imperfection, this suffering, which hinders me from prayer, which prevents me from making proper preparation for Holy Communion. Do you not fear even the slightest annoyance? When you come to our Lord with your heart cold and indisposed to devotion, do not be too sorrowful at the presence of the apparent obstacle; the subtlety

of the glorious Body of Jesus Christ can overcome every impediment, and traverse every barrier. Turn to Him with an upright will ; and no rampart, no obstacle, however difficult it be, will be able to withstand His power.

IV. "*And they, entering in, found not the Body of the Lord Jesus.*"

It is not enough to behold the tomb of Jesus ; we must enter into it by Holy Communion. It is not sufficient for us to *think* of His love and death ; we must *die* to ourselves, out of love to Him.

Do you ever enter the temple without finding Jesus there? This reflection is enough to show the difference between the favours which He accorded to His first disciples, and those which He grants to you. And yet the hour of trial must arrive ; you come to the tabernacle, and it seems as if it were empty,—the voice of the Lord is mute. But persevere in your patient search : for even if He does not speak to you, He hears you ; and though invisible to mortal eye, He beholds you kneeling at His feet. Prepare your heart to receive Him, for St. Peter Chrysologus says, "The heart in which Jesus Christ lives and reigns is a heaven ; that in which He is dead and buried is a sepulchre."

Even in Thy sacred presence, O my Jesus, my heart, torn by a thousand varied interests, is often drawn away from the contemplation of heavenly things, by trifles which seem less than nothing when weighed in the balance of eternity. My thoughts and desires fall short of the heavenly objects to which alone they should be directed, and even my prayers are chargeable with the same defects. I lose sight of Thy glory, and, like those women who found not Thy sacred Body, I receive Holy Communion without entering into a full and true union with Thee. Grant that I may henceforth come into Thy presence with a pure intention, which shall guide me by the light of faith to Thee alone.

V. *“ They saw two angels in white, sitting ; their countenances were like lightning, and their raiment white as snow.”*

The graces vouchsafed to us by God are often conferred in a sudden and unexpected manner, which, if well considered, is calculated to encourage and strengthen our confidence in time of trial. To fulfil the designs of God in your respect, it is often necessary that you should submit to heavy trials ; and you surely would not wish to purchase a short-lived happiness here below, by basely refusing to make the sacrifices which are demanded of you by God ? If you reflect an instant, you will acknowledge that you have received far greater favours than were vouchsafed to these holy women. They beheld angels, but into your heart the God of angels will shortly descend. St. John Chrysostom declares that he often saw a multitude of angels filling the sanctuary, especially during the Holy Sacrifice. They surround the Altar every day, they are ever at your side. Live, then, by faith. Consider those inspirations which gently renew your fervour, or encourage you to renew your life,—are they not also “ angel visits,” bright emanations from Divine grace ?

The angels appeared near them. Jesus Christ requires something more than our presence only ; He expects us to be full of love when we receive Him into our hearts. Draw near frequently to the holy table ; and in that close and constant intimacy with our Blessed Lord you will obtain favours which He denies to those who come less frequently.

Explore His Divine heart ; study its beauties, its secrets. Even in human relationships, we can often find means to increase our growth in holiness ; what, then, may you not expect from familiarity with God ? Do you not feel that your soul is deeply touched and elevated above this world, when you think of the happiness of receiving your God, of being allowed to speak to Him as a Father, a Friend ?

The angels were resplendent with light. It was from their close contact with the Divine Sun of grace that they were enabled to shine so brightly. Your soul ought also to glow with a flame of Divine love, since you have been drawn so close to His sacred heart. Ask Him to enkindle that sacred fire within you, that all earthly flames may be consumed by that Divine love.

VI. "*Fear not you*" (Matt. xxviii. 5).

How shall I sound the depth of meaning contained in this last word, "you"? If it was intended to convey unspeakable consolation to the pious women, does it not also seem to imply some unknown mystery of terror to the Jewish people, who had just denied and crucified their God? But when our Lord sees you come fearful and trembling to the holy table, He says to you, with an accent of ineffable tenderness, *Fear not you*, who every day console My solitude upon the Altar,—*you*, who consult Me in doubt,—*you*, who offer Me your joys and sorrows,—*you*, who weep for the outrages which I suffer continually, and never willingly offend Me. Ah, I will not show the rigours of my justice to *you*.

Lord Jesus, from these words of the angels, I learn to place still greater value upon the Holy Eucharist. In that Blessed Sacrament, Thou dost condescend to speak to me without the intervention of any created being. Thou hearest my prayers and my desires,—Thou dost mercifully encourage my timidity and provoke my love. Never have my prayers and supplications failed to be heard,—never hast Thou repulsed my tardy repentance. Thy bountiful goodness teaches me this important lesson, that he who fears and loves God need fear no created thing.

VII. "*You seek Jesus, who was crucified*" (Mark xvi. 6).

"Many people seek Jesus," it is said in the *Imitation*, "but not Jesus *crucified*," because they desire to be saved without suffering. Others think to find Him amidst the

pleasures of the world, which are under the dominion of sin and death. Few seek Him on the Cross,—the number of those who do so is so small, that the Prophet Jeremias makes this important remark : “ Lord, Thou art good to those that hope in Thee ;” but when he speaks of the souls that seek Him for Himself alone, out of pure, disinterested love, then he mentions only one : “ Thou art good to the soul that seeks Thee.” St. Bernard explains this passage by saying that to seek God for Himself alone is an act of such elevated perfection, that only a small number of privileged souls ever attain to it.

If an angel from heaven were to inspect each particular of my daily and hourly conduct, could he bear witness that I am seeking Jesus only, without any admixture of earthly views ? But if it is the duty of a Christian, from his very baptism, to direct all his actions to the sole glory of God, how can I dare to come day by day to the Altar to seek for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, without any true union of my heart and soul with Him ? Such a voluntary imperfection in the motives which lie at the root of our actions is not rare ; it repels the love of Jesus, and weakens the growth of holiness in our souls.

Am I indeed seeking Jesus crucified ? am I endeavouring to imitate His humility, His mortification, His love of suffering, His devotedness to God’s glory, His zeal for the spiritual benefit of the poor and weak ? If all my actions bear the seal of Jesus crucified, then am I truly seeking my good Master ; but if I only love the holy table, if I am impatient in poverty, if I shrink from the contemplation of Calvary, then is my heart less devoted to Jesus than to the world. How can my soul be prepared to receive Him, if it is still striving to reconcile two things so utterly incompatible as the world and the Gospel ? I desire, then, O my Jesus, to seek Thee no less earnestly at Calvary than at the holy table,—that, by cheerful endurance of suffering for the

time to come, I may repair my past cowardice and negligence in Thy service.

VIII. "*Why seek ye the living with the dead?*"
(St. Luke xxiv. 5.)

This question put an end to the doubts of the pious women; but when addressed to us, it is a reproach for our habitual want of fervour and devotion. How often do our prayers languish during the Holy Sacrifice! how often does our coldness in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament seem as if we regarded the tabernacle as the sepulchre of the Humanity of Jesus, rather than as the dwelling-place of the living God!

These words also warn me not to consider too exclusively this mystic abode of Jesus Christ, which will vanish with the world, in which all is fleeting and transitory; but to raise my thoughts and desires to the region of the living, which is His true abode, and which will also be mine.

As in heaven we shall enjoy the happiness of eternal communion with God, and our beatitude will consist in the perfection of that communion, let us endeavour to remain united to our Lord, not in this precious moment only, but always, that we may begin that heavenly existence even in this world. Let us no longer cling to earth, which offers even in Holy Communion only a commencement of happiness—Jesus Christ *invisibly* possessed by us; but let us aspire to heaven, where Jesus Christ Himself possessed and loved visibly and eternally will constitute the absolute felicity of our souls.

These holy women expected to find a dead body; but they will behold our Lord Jesus Christ full of glory and beauty: this is the reward of seeking Jesus crucified with ardent love.

In Holy Communion, I too partake of this favour; when I receive the Sacred Host, Jesus Himself, living and glorious, enters into my heart, and His apparent immobility reminds me that, after a few more toilsome

days, I shall enter into the possession of eternal rest with Him.

I thank Thee, O my God, for that blessed hope of the resurrection to eternal life which Thou didst confirm to me by the resurrection of our Blessed Lord. Grant that, in fixing all my desires and hopes in Thee, I may lose all remaining love for earthly things, and that both my words and actions may plainly declare that I am seeking only Jesus Christ.

IX. "*He is not here.*"

These words often express the cry of the loving soul when deprived of the presence of the Lord, or the prayer of the soul that is grievously tried by obscurity and distress. But there is still another sense in which these words may be taken ; when we approach the holy table with little generosity of will, perhaps with a determination to refuse some sacrifice which Jesus requires of us, He is not then there with the same expansive tenderness.

It is a most distressing state of mind in which we sometimes find ourselves, when our souls are animated with a lively faith in our Blessed Lord, joined to a certain amount of love ; and yet, while feeling that we have offended Him, we love our faults too well to make a generous effort to shake them off,—and thus we remain in the undecided state of one who feels himself too weak and selfish to make generous sacrifices to God, and yet knows that they are imperatively demanded of him by his conscience. Let it not be so with you : since you have left the tomb, be careful not to descend into it again ; act in such a manner that the angels, as they look down upon us, may say, *She is no longer here* in mind or in affections ; and that those blessed spirits who surround the tabernacle may ever be able to offer to Jesus your thoughts and love, until that day in which your happy soul, escaping from its earthly bonds, shall cleave the air with them, to follow Jesus in His descent upon

earth. Occupy yourself with these thoughts until the time of Holy Communion.

Act of Thanksgiving.

The day of the resurrection of our Lord was emphatically "the Lord's day;" but the hour of Communion is *the hour, par excellence*, of your life.

You now possess Jesus Christ; approach *very closely* to Him; let there be no empty space between His heart and yours.

Adore Him with profound reverence; kiss respectfully His sacred feet: He will not refuse to your affection that which He permitted to the holy women. Keep silence; He will speak to you.

Suffer your soul to be transported with holy joy. Implore His benediction.

I. "*Come, see the place where they laid Him*"
(St. Mark xvi. 6).

At the very moment of Holy Communion, we seem to hear the angels' song, "Come" with us to adore the Lord. Offer Him their angelic sentiments of love.

"See:" the angel was pointing out the table of the sepulchre, and the deserted grotto in which the Body of Jesus had lain during many weary hours. St. Peter Chrysologus says, that "the rock in which they enclosed the sacred Body of the Lord, to bury His remains in silence and oblivion, became the abode of angels and the school of life."

Your heart, in which the Sacred Host reposes, ought to be the seat of virtue and angelic purity. Does it still appear in the sight of our Lord as a hard stone, which will not receive the impression of His will, which He desires to stamp upon it with His Divine hand? Are not the angels sometimes obliged to reiterate their invitation, "Return to the place where Jesus reposes," before your wandering spirit returns to Him from its frivolous distractions?

If the angels still appear upon the Altar to point out the place in which the adorable mystery of our redemption is continued and accomplished, it is now your part to invite them to come and venerate in your heart the living tomb into which Jesus Christ now descends. You ought to pay such respect to this living sanctuary, by guarding it carefully from all that might stain its purity, that the angels may always be able to speak of it in the same words: "See the place where Jesus lay this morning,—yesterday." That natural tabernacle should never be empty. The sacramental veils, where-with our Blessed Lord is enveloped, never disappear without leaving behind them a Divine light, a flood of heavenly graces. You will receive great help in comprehending the manner in which Jesus operates upon the heart in which He reposes in Holy Communion, by meditating on and applying in due measure to yourself that passage in St. Bonaventure where he speaks of the Blessed Virgin after the Incarnation: "Her soul was inundated with Divine grace; as all the rivers of the earth meet and flow into the ocean, so the rivers of heaven—that is to say, all heavenly graces—were accumulated in her soul, and in that new sea the waters always rise to the level of the banks which confine them." Yes, God in His mercy has made our hearts so capacious, that they are incapable of being filled by any earthly ocean, however vast; therefore, Jesus Christ alone is the fulness thereof. He is ever yours; see, then, that you belong to Him alone.

Join with Mary in her song of gratitude and love; may the vast abyss of your inner nature be stirred and elevated by the purest sentiments! Let the accents of your fervent and holy joy ascend to heaven.

II. "*Remember how He spoke unto you, and foretold you these things.*"

Into what minute particulars does the angel enter, and what sweet familiarity does he display in his con-

versation with the pious women ! The reason of this is, that the links which connected heaven and earth are reunited by the death of Jesus Christ, and that our conversation may henceforth be in heaven. The remembrance of His Divine words ought to accompany you throughout the day, to follow you during the watches of the night, and to anticipate your waking hour. Engrave deeply on your memory those words which He speaks to you during your act of thanksgiving.

He warns you then to redouble your vigilance, and provides you with armour to defend you in the strife with sin. With what tender solicitude does the love of our Lord surround all your steps ! Be ever attentive and submissive to His love and care.

All things are known and open unto Thee, O Lord Jesus. " My days are evil ; full of afflictions and trials, I am defiled by a multitude of sins, surrounded by many passions, influenced by divers fears, distressed by cares, distracted by curiosity, embarrassed by vanity, afflicted by temptation, softened by pleasure, and tormented by poverty" (*Imitation*). Help me, O Lord, to overcome these miseries. Oh, how painful it is when a multitude of things crowd in upon my mind, distract me in prayer, and obstruct the ascent of my love and adoration to Thee ! When shall I taste the fulness of joy ? when shall I enter into true liberty ? Be Thou ever, O my Jesus, my all in all.

III. "*Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.*"

These words are a signal to arouse in the heart of the Christian all that devotedness, zeal, and patience in the fulfilment of duty, of which our lives should be composed, and which should especially characterise our Communions.

It is the will of Jesus Christ that you should coöperate with Him in labouring for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As in the Holy Eucharist He

pursues this double end with persevering sweetness, so He confides to you the trust of spreading His love amongst your own family and friends, by the exercise of holy zeal.

Return quickly to your home, and seek to associate yourself with His efforts, by communicating to them the sacred fire which burns in your own bosom. You will not return alone; Heaven smiles upon your humble efforts, angels accompany your steps, and our Lord Jesus Christ follows you with a glance of love. He sends His angels to watch over and protect you now, as they will hereafter share your happiness in eternal glory. The Holy Eucharist is the commencement of that glory; it is not, then, surprising that the denizens of heaven should approach you. God, in choosing you, amongst thousands of others, to unite you to Himself, has raised your soul to a dignity which might be envied even by them. Go, then, under this effusion of grace; with the Blood of Jesus Christ upon your lips, and with His love in your heart, pursue your daily round of duties, proclaim aloud by your holy example that Jesus is risen again in you, and that all your thoughts, desires, and intentions are animated by His Spirit; let every one of your actions bear the impress of the remembrance of His presence; and whilst your words are addressed to men, let your soul ascend to heaven.

The tabernacle and heaven are really the two culminating points of the whole universe, and your eyes should ever be exclusively fixed upon them. Jesus Christ, who appears in the tabernacle under the veil of mystery and in peaceful silence, will reveal hereafter in heaven the wondrous height of His power and His eternal beauty.

Before you leave the sanctuary, humiliate yourself in a profound sense of your own nothingness, that so you may be penetrated to your inmost soul with sanctifying grace. Jesus Christ saved the world by His endurance of the privations of Bethlehem, and by the sacrifice of Calvary; but Mary coöperated in the redemption of men only by sharing the poverty of her Divine Son,

and by making the sacrifice of herself at the foot of the Cross. Jesus Christ gives Himself to you in the midst of His sacrifice ; let it be your care to continue it by an intimate union with Him in His abnegation, His devoted obedience, and His immolation. You may say with truth to the angels, as they contemplate the Body of Jesus Christ in you, "This is flesh of my *flesh* ;" as also Jesus Christ should be able to say of your life, "This is the oblation of My sacrifice, and the continuation of My life."

I will no longer fear the years that are to come, Lord Jesus. When I have no more strength to serve Thee in a life of activity, I will make up the deficiency by the sacrifice of my nothingness, and constant acts of love.

IV. "*They left the sepulchre with fear and great joy.*"

They went out of the sepulchre because Jesus was no longer there. What could they do away from Jesus? You may leave the church without also departing from Him. Dwell in His heart ; it is your abode.

Your life will be enveloped in clouds of sorrow, if that day should ever arrive when it is no longer animated by Divine love. Observe these words of the Evangelist, "They returned with fear and great joy." Heavenly communications may sometimes cause us a feeling of involuntary fear, in the presence of that Divine Majesty drawing thus so near to us ; but this feeling is surpassed by that of joy. Every thing that comes from God rejoices the soul. These women had now hardly a doubt remaining on their minds that Jesus had really risen, as He had said. Faith increases hope ; our nature, remembering her primeval destiny, thrills with joy in the hope of the resurrection and of eternity. Our soul is too great for earth, and beats the narrow bounds of this mortal prison in which she is exiled and enchained, far from God, to whom she aspires.

Grant me grace, O Lord Jesus, to fear Thee less than I desire Thee, and to live with such purity that I may

be able, at each Communion, to apply to myself those words of the dying St. Monica, "Nothing in me is far removed from my God."

V. *Jesus appears to them.*

The greatness of Jesus Christ, the wonderful elevation of His Humanity, restrained not the ineffable sweetness of His heart. What touching instruction we may derive from this appearance of our Lord ! Let us never more think or say that in heaven we shall lose the memory of the heart,—that we shall never more behold those we love, or that we shall be entirely separated from them. If you wish to comprehend the life of heaven, study the first action of Jesus risen.

In the silence of early morning, hardly has He passed through the immovable stone which lay at the mouth of the sepulchre, and united His beautiful and glorious Soul to His sacred Body, than, instead of displaying Himself to the gaze of the assembled hierarchy of heaven, He hastens to comfort His friends. The holy companions of Mary had wept with her over His sufferings ; they had followed her to the blood-stained mountain, where His life passed away in bitter anguish ; they had prepared sweet perfumes and precious spices for His burial. Jesus Christ would not be surpassed in love nor in tender compassion. First, after His Blessed Mother, He permitted *them* to behold the beauty of His glorious resurrection. They had loved and adored Him in His humiliations, and they shall now rejoice in His glory and in His joy.

Jesus still behaves to us with the same tenderness and consideration ; only I comprehend it less fully in its reference to myself, because I have not studied it with the profound attention it deserves. Jesus in the tabernacle is still the same ; His feelings are as tender, His devoted love unchangeable as heaven itself. "I change not," says the Lord, in the Sacred Scriptures ; if it were not so, would He have remained upon earth ?

He granted to His disciples forty days of visible appearances, to console them for the grief and terrors of His Passion, and to accustom them to a separation, the prospect of which appeared so afflicting, after long years spent in unrestrained intimacy with Him. But Jesus, foreseeing the desires, even more than the necessities, of my soul, makes His abode permanent with me. He does not, indeed, come in the imposing majesty of His visible presence; but, with exquisite tenderness, He leaves it to us to fix the day, the hour, for His most familiar visits; He awaits me, and never delays to come in answer to my prayer; He condescends to the sweetest familiarities. No outward adornments are required of me at these sacred seasons; simplicity and holy freedom, purity and love,—these are the only ornaments required in those who come to this holy table.

In commencing the life of Christ, I have entered the life of heaven: in Holy Communion, Jesus approaches me, as I shall hereafter approach Him in heaven. He is veiled here, it is true,—but that is the only difference: heaven will be the glorious perfection of my union with Him in the Holy Eucharist. I feel impelled to repeat it again and again: here I have the same real presence, the same happiness; there is nothing wanting, save the dawn of the eternal day.

VI. “*Jesus met them, saying, All hail!*” (Matt. xxviii. 9.)

Jesus Christ spoke first to the women, who were terrified at this marvellous apparition. The sweetness of His voice, the irresistible charm of His whole person, filled them with celestial joy. Listen to the inward voice of Jesus Christ in your soul. All that is recorded in the Gospel takes place every day in the soul of the faithful communicant who comes before Jesus adorned with the graces of humility, self-sacrifice, suffering, repentance, devotedness, and zeal.

All hail!—these words addressed by God to His creatures! Never before in the Gospel narrative have,

we seen our Lord addressing any person whatever with such a condescending affability. But, more amazing still, man is redeemed; he has recovered and surpassed his primitive greatness; the Holy Eucharist is instituted. In the person of these women, Jesus Christ designed to honour all the members of His Divine and mystical Body, all the souls who should be identified with Him throughout all ages, by communion with His glorified Humanity.

Respect, then, your own personal dignity, which Jesus thus makes known to you by saluting it almost with respect. It imposes upon you this obligation, that you should emulate the angels in the purity and sanctity of your life.

Fear not to consider earnestly, for the purposes of encouragement and practical edification, the consequences which may be deduced from this simple reflection: Jesus Christ, though now elevated in His resurrection to the splendour of His glory, not only does not disdain the image of His Humanity reflected in us, but surrounds it with the honours of His triumph.

Let us, in our turn, honour in the poor around us, not only our own image and that of Jesus Christ (the *paternity of our nature*, as it is said in *Isaias lvi. 7*, "Despise not thine own flesh"); but let us also honour, in the *soul* of the poor man, the mysterious splendour of the glorified Soul of Jesus, and, in His *suffering Body*, our own flesh made Divine in our crucified Lord. This double union of natural resemblance and mystical unity is consummated in our common participation of the Holy Eucharist.

O my crucified Lord, Thou didst not address this salutation to one person only, because it was Thy intention to teach me that Thou dost call us all to the promised glory by Thy resurrection; and that Thy merits are applicable to all, provided that our will is commensurate with our efforts. As Thy love is so liberally extended to us, I will learn from Thy sacred heart the

motive of true love to my neighbour, and an earnest desire to relieve him in all his afflictions.

VII. "*They came up, and took hold of His feet, and adored Him*" (Matt. xxviii. 9).

The pious soul is drawn by a secret but irresistible attraction to our Lord Jesus Christ. If difficulties obstruct her progress, she surmounts them, or casts them aside by the generous impulse of her heart. Her thoughts are concentrated in the tabernacle ; but when her liberty is complete, she flies towards the infinite good which has attracted her love.

Follow these pious women in their close approach to our Lord ; contemplate the infinite beauty of His countenance, which is illuminated with Divine majesty. They recognise their God ; you behold your Spouse. They prostrate themselves ; He receives you to His embrace. They kissed His feet ; you clasp Him to your heart. Ah, how much Jesus loves you ! And yet, could these holy women, in the moment of our Lord's appearance, have imagined it possible to receive greater favours from their Divine Master than were then vouchsafed to them ?

A lively faith is the well-spring of all confidence in the goodness of God. After Holy Communion, you may ask every thing from His power, hope for every thing from His love. How often, wearied with the overwhelming trials of life, have you not recovered peace and serenity by a fervent aspiration to Jesus ! When to our human eyes it seems as if all were lost, then consolation springs from the very extremity of grief.

Adore Jesus Christ with those pious believers ; fervent love will quickly spring from faith and adoration. The angels receive from the continual contemplation of God a perpetual increase of enlightenment and love. You do not enjoy that plenitude of life which is congenial to their nature,—in you it is restricted ; but in the Holy Eucharist Jesus Christ accords to your soul a

degree of perfection which bears an exact proportion to its future glory. It expands in Him to new light and perfection, under the influence of heavenly grace,—and in the rays of the Divine Sun of Justice, it acquires a grandeur which reflects, to some extent, the glorious Humanity of our Lord in you.

Let your soul be filled with holy aspirations of joy and love. If you require a comparison to illustrate your happiness, cast but one glance upon the world : in the brilliant abodes of its votaries, all are still quiet and buried in sleep,—as, in like manner, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem slumbered at the hour when Jesus Christ was blessing the pious lovers of Calvary ; or, perhaps, under the skies, all are awake, and actively engaged in business, in pleasures, and some perhaps in crime. And you, alone with Jesus only, enjoy the full repose of His love ; no importunate intruder disturbs this delicious meeting ; none but the angels watch to discover its secrets. Ah, prolong your contemplation of His adorable person. Jesus Christ reveals Himself to His faithful servants when they eagerly seek Him ; He suffers them to assure themselves that He is really present ; but soon He escapes from *their* pious tenderness, while He encourages and takes pleasure in all the lengthened outpourings of your love.

The longer we abide in the light of Thy presence, O Lord Jesus, the less can we bear to depart from it. Thou art never absent when we seek Thee, and Thou dost never delay Thy coming. Thou art always accessible and always present ; Thy love watches over my life, and my last act of faith will be extinguished by the ravishing sight of Thy Divine Majesty. Prepare me for that supreme communion. Attach me to Thyself far more than to Thy gifts, so that, if Thou shouldst at any time withdraw them from me, my love may accept the sacrifice as a grace of equal value and efficacy with them.

Conclusion.

If the whole world arise up against me, what shall I fear? I have communicated; it is not in the power of any earthly creature to deprive me of my God. I bear Him in my heart; and, as long as my will remains firm in His service, I shall preserve that heavenly treasure. After well considering all things here below, and weighing in the balance of eternity the pleasures, the honours, and the fortunes of the world, together with the ill-will and the malignity of men, I find that the world is less than a grain of sand, in comparison with eternity. Raising myself by an act of faith above all which is not God, I bless and praise Him for His tender love, in placing the end of my earthly pilgrimage between the tabernacle and heaven; and I turn peacefully to the consideration of that consoling thought which is thus expressed by a pious and learned religious: "With the hope of heaven in a little time, and with Holy Communion every day, how can I fail to suffer patiently, and even with sincere and humble joy?"

THIRTIETH EXERCISE FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PROTESTATION OF LOVE.

Preparation.

AFTER His resurrection, our Lord frequently appeared to His Apostles; but still they now beheld Him only in a passing manner, and on unforeseen occasions. We are more highly favoured than the Apostles; His glorious Humanity, veiled in the Blessed Sacrament, never leaves us: and this, His hidden presence, does not bring less happiness to our souls than was enjoyed by them.

I. "*When the morning was come, Jesus showed Himself to His disciples at the sea of Tiberias.*"

In these simple words, many mysteries of our Lord's love are revealed,—mysteries by which we are surrounded so habitually, that we are apt to pay little attention to them. First, let us observe His eager haste. He hardly waited for the break of day to make Himself known to His Apostles. Jesus Christ does not appear to me on those celestial shores which I ardently desire to attain ; but, like the Prophet, I have experienced the visible protection which He has often extended to the frail skiff in which I make head against the currents of the world.

His heart awaits us in the holy tabernacle, with the same eager love ; He demands our first waking thoughts and the earliest aspirations of our hearts ; He loves to take possession of my heart before any foreign power has invaded the territory which should be sacred to Him alone.

Observe, again, the *vigilance* of His love : since His resurrection, our Lord had already appeared several times to His Apostles, sometimes in the evening, sometimes in the course of the day ; but observe, especially, that, in this apparition at early morning, the Apostles were on the sea, having returned to their occupation of fishing for the first time since, at the call of Jesus, they had left their nets and followed Him. They were engaged in a lawful occupation, avoiding idleness and sloth ; yet they wearied themselves in vain, and encountered unknown perils,—a lively image of the soul that is still surrounded by the dangers of the world, after consecrating herself to Jesus Christ. The waves of earthly passion, which have been calm for a time, now surge and roar around her ; for the devil joins his efforts with our own evil nature to tempt us. This soul will soon be in great danger, unless she carefully avoids all occasion of sin ; but Jesus watches over her from His abode in the

tabernacle, as He had then watched invisibly over His Apostles. As He then suddenly appeared upon the shore, so does He now descend upon the Altar at the break of day. He offers Himself up for a sacrifice to His Father, to counteract the effects of temptation, to shed upon our souls the merits of His Blood, together with the sovereign virtue of His prayers. From the place of His eternal repose, Jesus Christ follows you with the glance of love ; He implores God to help you with the powerful entreaty of the most devoted love. Give Me that soul, He says to the Eternal Father ; it is Mine ; I have graven it on My hands : behold the marks of My Blood.

Such is the prayer which Jesus offers up each day for you upon the holy Altar. If He is so intently occupied with the care of your salvation, will you still regret the absence of earthly consolations, of creatures ? Will you think it hard to leave your repose, that you may respond to His eager desire of breaking that sacred Bread with you ? will you refuse to come to receive the gift of His most precious Blood, which can enkindle in your heart the fire of His love ? Happy shall I be, if, in thus fulfilling all Thy desires, O my Jesus, I merit to receive the heavenly gift which Thou dost so ardently desire to bestow upon me.

II. "*Jesus said to His disciples, Children, have you any meat ?*" (St. John xxi. 5.)

What patient kindness is displayed in these words ! Should not the Apostles at once have recognised in them the heavenly voice to whose sweet and powerful accents they had so often listened ? How could they fail to recognise Him, when He showed such a tender interest in their welfare ? Consider, with fear, the mystery of their blindness. The disciples, busied in material cares, were anxiously navigating their little boat ; their whole thoughts were concentrated in anxiety for their lives, which were in danger from the menacing waves.

Is it not often thus with us ? Jesus Christ speaks to

our heart ; we see Him upon the Altar, almost without noticing Him. Absorbed in the interests of the world, in the pursuit of fortune, pleasure, and affection, our heart remains deaf to the voice of Jesus, insensible to His paternal advances.

He now asks you also what provision you are making for the long voyage to eternity in which you are at present engaged. Some food is necessary to sustain your strength during such a long and fatiguing journey ; and this food must be nothing else than the love of God, which is the source of all virtues ; these virtues are the preparation of the soul for Holy Communion ; the Holy Eucharist is its strength, its viaticum in the pilgrimage from earth to heaven. Jesus says to your heart : My child, have you the graces of humility, of patience, and devotion ? Have you My spirit of obedience and poverty ? My blessing always accompanies these virtues. "Labour not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which I will give you" (John vi. 27). Answer Him, then, with simplicity and sincerity, that you are not possessed of any spiritual good, or of any virtues whatsoever ; but that you hope to receive all things needful from His merciful hand.

Lord Jesus, my soul is blind to all that belongs to the supernatural life, such is its lukewarmness in heavenly things. Arouse me from this incomprehensible apathy, which will shortly become dangerous to the life of my soul. Make known to me all my faults, my imperfections, my sins. How I blush to compare my dispositions with those of the saints ! They lived in a state of continual preparedness for the holy mysteries, and they received them in order to become more fully prepared for them. Give me grace to find in Holy Communion an increase of light, that I may know myself ; and of strength to correct myself of my faults.

III. "*Cast the net on the right side of the ship.*"

Consider the touching solicitude of our Lord, who is not discouraged by the inattention of His disciples. Instead of withdrawing Himself, He takes still greater interest in their labour ; and it seems as if He came close to the sea, that they might hear His words more plainly : " Cast the net on the right side."

What is this mysterious net which Jesus had in view? It is our *intention*, that is to say, our free will, directed to a pure and upright end. Consider on which side your desires and will have hitherto been inclined—on the side of grace, or on the side of nature? Are you actuated by human motives and objects in the performance of your duties, in your employments, your business, your visits, your amusements? Is all your conduct regulated by the influence of Divine grace? Have you cast the net upon the side of heaven, or upon that of earth? Are not your temporal interests more carefully attended to than your spiritual ones? Are you living like an exile, who is daily expecting his recall to his native country, and contracts no friendships or engagements in the place to which he has been driven by temporary misfortune? Have you cast the net on the side of the Cross and the tabernacle, or upon the side of the pleasures of this world? In what spirit do you accept labour and suffering? When you approach the Altar, is it in a spirit of fervent love, avoiding pleasure and luxury, and choosing rather the mortification and the solitude of Calvary, never seeking to please creatures, desiring only your spiritual advancement, and a closer union with Jesus Christ? Consider the direction in which the will of God seems to be drawing you, and fix your desires and your choice in full accordance with His will.

How many graces and blessings, forfeited through your own fault, may have been given to another soul, who has more faithfully directed her intention to our Lord! Nothingness and emptiness are hidden under the

glittering surface of temporal prosperity, for it is destitute of all the elements of true happiness. It is written in the Sacred Scriptures, "Happy is the man that has applied his heart to keep Thy law." This law is to you the love of our Lord, reduced to practice by the faithful performance of His precepts. Conform your will to His, and in so doing you will find your true happiness. Before I come to receive Thee, O Lord Jesus, I will transport myself in thought to the last moments of my life, when I shall be called to render an account to Thee of all my actions; my net will then remain on the same side as that on which I now cast it. May this conviction rectify and strengthen all my resolutions! I shall not then have my possessions, nor my talents, nor my brilliant existence, to resign to Thee; but I desire to bring Thee a heart separated from all human affections, a mind unalterably fixed upon the contemplation of Thy greatness. Receive my intention from this day forth to render loving service to Thy sacred heart, and to remain firm in my allegiance unto the end. I know that, if I should be so unhappy as to fall even for one day into mortal sin, my union with Thee would be dissolved, the light which guides me to discover Thy presence in the tabernacle would be extinguished, and I should become like one of those unhappy souls who neither know nor seek Thee there. If it has been Thy good pleasure to enlighten the darkness of my mind, and to withdraw me from the stormy sea of the world,—this is a grace which Thou dost not confer upon every one,—I will endeavour to preserve it by purifying my intention, which is the principal spring of perfection. What happiness is mine, O Lord Jesus, in being thus the object of Thy tender love, of Thy special care, and of the incessant outpouring of Thy salutary inspirations! And if my weakness is still so great that I am unable to do all the good that I desire, I hope, at least, to receive from Thee grace to direct my will aright, and to sustain it in the path of Thy commandments.

IV. *Jesus alone upon the Sea-shore.*

Does not Jesus still remain in this state of isolation with respect to us? In His dwelling-place upon the Altar, where we almost seem to stand upon the shore which is washed by the ocean of eternity, what silence, what desolation, reign around Him!—and He is so busied in promoting our dearest interests, that He hardly seems to perceive our coldness and neglect.

Be not silent when you are before the tabernacle. Never think that you are alone; for, however great be the loneliness and neglect from which you suffer, Jesus Christ shares it with you. You can always tell your sorrows to Him, always seek consolation in His presence, or at least you may weep before His sacred heart. The sweetest privilege of earthly love is to claim the confidence of the beloved one. When Jesus has given you so many proofs of His love, has He not a right to yours?

Relying on Thine infinite goodness, O my God, I will venture to give utterance to the sad thoughts which weigh upon my mind: those who are far dearer to me than myself snatched away by the hand of death—that loneliness of heart which is so hard to bear; sometimes friends appearing indifferent to my sorrows—sadness of heart caused by painful and adverse circumstances; difficulties and discouragements in the path of virtue—the fear of losing my soul amidst the temptations of the world. As God, Thou knowest these and all other troubles which assail me; but Thou dost also desire to know them as a friend. I am often tempted to seek in creatures a consolation which they are equally unwilling and unable to afford me. If the relief of opening my heart to a compassionate fellow-creature, powerless though he be to console me, has often relieved my sorrow, why does not my soul more ardently desire to pour out all her troubles into Thy bosom? Listen, O Lord, to the cry of my suffering heart. (Here detail all your trials and suf-

ferings to our Lord ; and after you have done so, turn away your mind from them, and fix your thoughts on Him alone.)

I have now told Thee all my afflictions ; I cast my burden upon Thee ; do Thou bear it for me. I know that I cannot resemble Thee unless I accept suffering, unless my whole being is marked with the sign of the Cross. Thou dost not command me to *love* it, but to *bear it patiently*. All the sorrows which overwhelm my existence are known to Thee, and Thy presence supports and comforts me under them.

But sorrow obscures the thoughts of faith in our hearts, and disposes them to chafe in secret against the heavy yoke imposed upon them in the toilsome ascent of virtue. When this dark cloud hangs over me, and obscures my hopes, I hear Thy voice saying, " Courage, My daughter ; I will be with thee in the day of tribulation." Yes, Lord ; even when Thy presence seems to have abandoned me, Thy hand still leads me along the path of life. The sorrows of my life are the steps of the ladder by which I ascend to Thee. I thank Thee for the lesson of suffering which raises me to Thee, by detaching my soul from earth.

Thou alone, O Jesus, canst satisfy the desires of my heart ; art Thou not my supreme good ? If the sight of Thy Divine Majesty will hereafter fill me with eternal happiness, Thy presence in the Holy Eucharist already suffices to cheer and console my life. I beseech Thee to inflame my heart with sincere and ardent love, which, being continually fed and increased by Holy Communion, may ascend in fervent aspirations to Thee, and may suffer no disturbance or diminution from the variations of the inferior part of my soul.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Prostrate yourself before the sacred Humanity of our Lord. Adore it with deep devotion ; consider its beauty, its elevation, its graces, its merits, its union with the

Word. Admire the perfections of our Lord's Humanity, the masterpiece of the power of God.

Let your behaviour in His presence be characterised by great reverence and recollectedness.

Consecrate to Him your heart without reserve,—your heart, which you have so often given to Him, resumed it again, and then offered it anew.

Like St. Peter, make a triple protestation to our Lord of your sincere and fervent love.

I. *"It is the Lord."*

The pure eyes of St. John speedily recognised his Divine Master: "It is the Lord," he exclaimed. The other Apostles, occupied with the navigation of their little boat, did not yet see Him. Jesus is close to them, and they behold Him not. It would, happily, be impossible for me to fail in recognising Jesus; for He never departs from me. I can always exclaim with thankful happiness, when I behold the Sacred Host, "It is the Lord." But if the sight only of the tabernacle thrills my soul with joy, ah, what do I feel when I receive Holy Communion? Then my faith is more lively, my happiness far greater, and I fall prostrate before my Lord, while my heart burns with adoration and love.

A very few days had elapsed since the crucifixion; the absence of Jesus had been of short duration; and yet the Apostles were troubled at His return. Was this return indeed un hoped for, and was Jesus an unexpected guest? But as soon as they recognise His sacred presence, happiness springs up afresh in their minds, and they quickly forget the disappointments of unfruitful labour, the fatigues of a night passed in watchfulness and incessant toil.

It is the Lord, they cry; the Lord who consoles us, who revives our hopes, who blesses our laborious efforts, and who brings forth the fruit of our painful labour.

Peter recovered his faith; he left his ship, and resigned for ever his desires of lawful worldly gain. Moved

by a feeling of deep respect, he hastily resumed his garments, and with eager love he cast himself into the sea, to reach our Lord more quickly than the rest. Not deterred by difficulties, he took the most direct road to Jesus. He did not reflect that his clothes would be soaked with sea-water ; he was ready to make any sacrifice, in order to reach his Lord. And I too have been in haste to land on that shore to which the presence of our Lord is the all-powerful attraction ; but in that fair country which grace has fertilised and adorned, silence and self-sacrifice are the conditions required of those who desire to enjoy the gifts of God.

When next I hear those solemn words, "It is the Lord," shall I receive Thee with the clear-sighted love of St. John, the faith, the detachment, the confidence, and the fervour of St. Peter ? If I have not now brought these feelings to Thine Altar, deign to inspire my soul with the like graces for the future. Thy watchful eye still follows with tender interest my progress over the stormy sea of life, my efforts to resist the strong currents of my passions, ever threatening to sweep away my frail bark, and to prevent it from reaching the safe harbour of Thy sacred heart, where, once safely moored, no storms or tempests can assail me more.

Enable me, O my Jesus, to submit all my actions to the guidance of an upright will, firmly resolved to make every sacrifice in order to obey Him, and unite myself more closely to Him.

Observe, by the way, that St. John, the beloved Apostle of Jesus, did not strive to be the first to reach his Lord and Master, but left that privilege to the repentant Peter. Learn from him to seek a fitting moment for yielding to others the pleasure of spending themselves in the exercise of virtue, and also the consolation of achieving desired success in all those works which they undertake for the glory of God.

II. "*It is the Lord.*"

The soul that is predestinated to eternal life should be intimately acquainted with our Blessed Lord. The frequent communicant must not only know Him well herself, but she must make Him known to others ; for He is not equally well known to all. Our Lord is recognised by the Beloved Disciple, because the pure heart easily penetrates those veils which surround His holy and glorious Humanity. At the Altar, it is also the purest and most loving soul that enjoys the most intimate and consoling sense of His sacred presence.

Thou didst manifest Thyself to Thy disciples at distant intervals only, O Lord Jesus ; whilst I enjoy the happiness of beholding Thee daily upon the Altar. From the tabernacle, as formerly on the sea-shore, Thou dost watch the heavings of the troubled waters of the world. Thy presence is not so distinctly shown to me as it was to the disciples ; but my heart can never doubt of Thy sacred presence ; and, with a certainty far stronger than sense can give, I cry with joy, "*It is the Lord.*"

After Holy Communion, Thy presence with me is revealed by a feeling of heavenly sweetness. I contemplate Thee in myself, and the Divine impression which is thus communicated to me calms the agitation of my mind, in the inevitable trials of my life. Those sacred words which have power to bring Thee down from heaven, O my Jesus, assure me that Thou art really present amongst us. I can never be weary of adoring and blessing Thee with reverential love. Let not the angels, who accompany Thee upon the Altar, have cause ever to say to each other, when they observe me at the Holy Sacrifice, or after my act of thanksgiving, "*She does not know the Lord.*" Deliver me from the blindness of sin. Enlighten my soul with the rays of Thy Divinity. May my affections be fixed upon

Thee alone, who art the unchangeable centre of the world which Thou hast created !

III. "*Peter, lovest thou Me ?*"

After preparing, with His own Divine hand, a repast for His Apostles upon the sea-shore, and sweetly inviting them to partake of it, Jesus demands of Peter a public protestation of his love. Follow this scene in all its particulars. He first enlightened the mind of Peter by the miraculous draught of fishes : He did not address a single reproach to him for his past unfaithfulness ; He did not even appear to remember the guilty oath with which Peter had confirmed his thrice-repeated denial of his Lord and Master ; He presented to him, with His own hands, the bread of angels. What was the reparation for his past faults which our Lord at length exacted from him ? Justice appears to demand a signal expiation, and Jesus will doubtless provide a fitting occasion for it. Peter had wounded the heart of his Divine Master, and from his own inmost heart must the reparation proceed. As his fault was known to all the Apostles, they must witness his acts of repentance ; and as he had sinned by a triple negation, Jesus will cause him to repeat a threefold reparation.

In the same manner does Jesus conduct Himself towards me, when I have offended Him ; He permits me to approach Him as usual : He desires to make me feel that my unfaithfulness does not affect His tenderness, and to impress me with His great and wonderful indulgence, in order to feed the flame of my repentance with still more ardent love.

I shall never forget the lesson of meekness which is given me here by Thy heart, O my Jesus ! Peter has denied Thee, and yet Thou hast received him with kindness,—Thou dost pardon him, without even mentioning his offence. Thou art, if possible, still more merciful to me ; for have I not denied Thee, betrayed Thee, a thousand times, O Lord, in the thoughts and

desires of Thy love? Never hast Thou for one moment ceased to display Thy clemency, never hast Thou reproached me for my past ingratitude. Thou dost only ask me for sorrow and for love. Thou dost easily forget my offences against Thee ; and, as long as my faults do not cast me into a state of discouragement, Thou dost permit me to love Thee as much as if my heart had always continued faithful to Thee. Grant that I may repair my past offences by penance, animated by tender love.

IV. *“Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.”*

Surely Peter must have felt the most intense happiness, when he heard this question addressed to Him by our Lord,—when such an opportunity was afforded him of declaring his sincere, humble, and henceforth inviolable love. What a consolation was granted to him at this instant! With what tender accents of repentance, gratitude, and holy joy did he not reply, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee”!

I also desire, O my Jesus, to declare by my conduct my generous love to Thee ; to say to Thee in truth, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee :” and because I love Thee, I have left all and followed Thee. Never will I leave Thee more ; my heart is entirely Thine. This resolution, O Lord, should always have been adhered to by me ; but, alas, I have too frequently broken it, by repeated acts of cowardly weakness, without ever yet discouraging Thy constant love. Long intoxicated by the world, I lived in vanity and pleasure, and I forgot my promises to Thee, while I was so far from Thee : but at length Thy grace aroused my soul ; Thy voice, issuing from the tabernacle, said : “My daughter, lovest thou Me ?” and, as if awaking from a long sleep, I raised my eyes to Thee, and the Divine attraction of Thy sacred heart conquered all the false charms of the world ; and when I had communicated, I exclaimed, “Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love

Thee," that I will love Thee for ever ; doubt no longer of my love. I have sinned, but I weep for my sins, and I desire never to offend Thee again.

And now, O Lord, I know Thee, and I can never more forget Thee. I have loved creatures ; but now I break off from them, I sacrifice to Thee every thing that I possess. It is true I am weak and timid ; but fear not,—I love Thee, and I will labour to gain souls to Thee, to make known to them the inexhaustible treasures of Thy grace, to inspire them with the confidence which I feel in Thy mercy. I am afraid of suffering ; but since it is the appointed means by which I may attain to loving Thee with greater purity, accept the offering of my will, united to my grief.

V. "*Lovest thou Me more than these ?*"

This touching question, which at any other time would have caused the heart of the Apostle to overflow with joy, by proving that our Lord desired more love from him than from all the others, must now have pierced his soul with a dart of bitter grief. From this triple interrogation, repeated so soon after his fall, it appeared as if his Divine Master had still some doubts remaining of the truth of his love and devotion.

St. Augustine observes, that "A generous love must confess three times what fear had thrice denied." Jesus Christ does not address this question to Peter only, but to all those souls who are called to frequent Communion. Are not these souls especially favoured by the peculiar love of our Blessed Saviour ? is it not natural He should expect from them a love equal to His own, special proofs of devotedness, a more lively repentance for their past infidelity to His love ? Peter had been the first to make his confession of faith ; he was also the most ardent in his protestations of love,—to show us by his example how the soul should act that is closely united to Jesus Christ.

Another motive still seems to have dictated these

words of our Lord ; by reiterating His interrogation, He seems to question the truth of Peter's affirmation, and consequently inspires him with some fear as to the sincerity of his own feelings, and recommends to him greater watchfulness over the purity of his motives for the future. This is because humility is the sure guardian of perfect love. The soul that loves Jesus always fears that she does not love Him sufficiently, and strives to prove the truth and sincerity of her love by her actions. Hidden under the veil of silence and obscurity, O my Jesus, Thou dost speak to my heart in accents of inimitable tenderness ; Thy triple interrogation warns me that those who love Thee, and receive Thee frequently, should also out of love fear to offend Thee ; that they should serve Thee by love, should live by love ; that all their actions should be inspired by Thy love ; that they should seek to please Thee even in the least particulars, knowing that love gives value to the smallest things. They should also labour in the service of God with a loving and zealous freedom, and avoid no occasion of mortifying their inclinations and of conquering their self-will.

Animated with these feelings, suffer me to address Thee thus : Lord, I no longer fear Thee, because I love Thee ; for if Thou didst love me when I loved Thee not, how canst Thou fail to love me now that I love Thee ? And if it is indeed true that Thou lovest me, and that I love Thee, how couldst Thou separate me from Thee for ever ? I believe and hope firmly that Thy love will grant me all the graces necessary for my salvation.

VI. "*Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

Meditate upon this third response of Peter ; it is prompted by true and humble love. At length comprehending our Lord's motive in thus three times repeating His interrogation, and combining in his soul repentance for his past faults with most ardent love

and deep sorrow at finding that his Master still doubted his affection, he did not dare to make any further affirmation of the truth and sincerity of his feelings; trembling at the recollection of his weakness, he does not venture to repeat that he loves Jesus, and that he will remain devoted to Him for ever; but, taking Him who reads the secret thoughts of the heart for the judge of his sincerity, "Lord," he said, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He makes no loud and positive declarations of love; he expresses his thoughts and feelings in a short and humble answer: "*Thou knowest, Lord,*"—that is to say, I distrust my own strength, but, by the aid of Thy grace, my heart is ever Thine.

O my Divine Master, I will faithfully profit by this heavenly lesson. When I have offended Thee by my faults, I will return to Thee without fear, notwithstanding my confusion, and I will not hesitate to believe that Thou still lovest me. I will comprehend that, although presumption is abhorrent to Thee, Thou dost lovingly receive the guilty and repentant soul; and that the only way to prevent Thee from long suspecting the fidelity of my love is to have a great distrust of myself, of my resolutions, and of my actions. I will ever be vigilant and humble of heart, and I will repeat with the Apostle, "Although my conscience does not reproach me, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord" (Rom. iv. 4); and perhaps He sees defects in me which are hidden from my own eyes.

I rejoice, O my Jesus, that in giving Thyself to me so frequently in Holy Communion, in preference to so many souls that do not appreciate that happiness, Thou dost testify to me a more lively and tender love. Although I feel, alas, all the weakness and imperfection of my feelings, yet I entreat Thee to believe in my love, O my Jesus. As I felt yesterday, so I feel this day; I protest this at Thy feet, O Lord. I aspire (though I fear to declare it) to that generous love felt by those

hearts which are always united to Thee. I have not their perfect dispositions, but at least I beseech Thee to receive my desire to love Thee as much as I am capable of loving ; and that my love may be unchangeable, give me grace to arrive, by the highest degree of self-sacrifice, at the highest degree of charity.

Conclusion.

Never give way to discouragement after the commission of a fault ; you may efface it by the tears of penance, and thus surpass in merit those who have preserved their innocence, if you surpass them also in the ardour of your love for Jesus Christ. To love Him in life and in death,—this is the point to which the generosity of true love should attain. Such ought to be your resolution, if you desire to be numbered amongst the faithful disciples of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

FINAL PRAYER.

PARAPHRASE OF THE "SUSCIPE" OF ST. IGNATIUS.

TAKE, O Lord, and accept all my liberty ; it is Thine inalienable right. What dost Thou require of me ? Is it isolation, separation from those I love ?—*Ecce ancilla.* Is it obscurity, humiliation, or at least indifference on the part of men ?—*Ecce ancilla.* Is it suffering or infirmity ?—*Ecce ancilla.* Is it obedience ?—*Ecce ancilla.* Is it still more than this ? Ah, it is with happiness at the thought of the most perfect gift that I am able to conceive, that I still cry, *Ecce ancilla.* Take my memory, my understanding, and the affections of my heart ; for perhaps I might refuse them to Thee, or I might give them to Thee only in part.

As Mary did not hesitate to offer to God her Son,

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who was the treasure of her life, and to immolate herself with Him, receive also my treasure, O my Jesus, even Thy Person, which Thou dost give me in the Holy Eucharist. I lay at Thy feet, with the oblation of myself, all my Communions ; for I can only thank Thee worthily for this august Sacrament by receiving it as an offering to Thy glory.

Thou hast given me all, in the excess of Thy love, in giving Thyself to me ; *I restore to Thee* in Thyself an act of thanksgiving which is equal to Thy gift.

Give me only Thy love ; when I love Thee perfectly, *then shall I have all I need.* *Thy grace is sufficient for me* to bear the burden of life, to lighten it, and to obtain for me a blessed eternity. Amen.

THE END.

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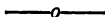
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