

EIGHT DAY RETREAT

BASED ON THE EXERCISES

OF SAINT

IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Property of Fr. Bernard Luedtke

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Meditation Schedule for the 8-Day Retreat of St. Ignatius of Loyola	3
What Are the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius?	4
THREE PRAYERS OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA	5
Introductory Notes.....	6
A Preparatory Meditation On The Pursuit of Perfection	10
First Day Orientation – Getting into Retreat Basic Dispositions	14
Entering on the Exercises.....	16
Summary of the Introductory Observations (often referred to as Annotations)	19
FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION (Text No. 23).....	20
Second Day - On Sin and Sinfulness, Shame and Abashment.....	28
A Meditation on Three Sins (Text No. 45-54)	31
A Meditation on One’s Own Sins (Text No. 55-61)	36
A REPETITION OF THE TWO PRECEDING MEDITATIONS On Three Sins On Personal Sin	43
Third Day - From Sin to Redemption Devotion	46
A Meditation on Hell	47
A Meditation on the Prodigal Son.....	53
The Kingdom of Christ.....	62
Fourth Day - The First Thirty Years Imitation	66
A Contemplation on the Incarnation	68
A Contemplation on the Nativity	77
A Contemplation on the Hidden Life	80
Fifth Day - Spiritual Poverty and Discernment, Jesus and Lucifer	84
A Meditation on two Standards Part I	85
A Meditation on Two Standards Part II – Satan.....	90
A Meditation: Attaining Spiritual Poverty.....	94
Sixth Day - Jesus the Savior, Observing Christ	98
A Contemplation: John Baptizes Jesus.....	99
A Contemplation: The First Miracle Performed at the Marriage Feast of Cana in Galilee	102
A Contemplation: The Transfiguration of Jesus.....	105
Seventh Day - The Suffering Servant, Enduring with Jesus.....	108
Contemplating the Passion	109
Contemplation: The Last Supper.....	110
Contemplation: “Behold the Man”	115
Contemplation on My Other Self by Clarence J. Enzler	119
Contemplation: The Crucified	127
Eighth Day - Contemplating the Risen Life.....	132
A Contemplation: On the Resurrection of Christ our Lord and on His First Apparition	134
Contemplation: On the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ	137
Contemplation: To Attain the Love of God	141

Meditation Schedule for the 8-Day Retreat of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Sunday	1 st Meditation	<u>THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION</u>
Monday	2 nd Meditation	<u>FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION</u>
	3 rd Meditation	<u>THE THREE SINS</u>
	4 th Meditation	<u>ON ONE’S OWN SINS</u>
Tuesday	5 th Meditation	<u>A MEDITATION ON HELL</u>
	6 th Meditation	<u>A MEDITATION ON THE PRODIGAL SON</u>
Wednesday	7 th Meditation	<u>THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST</u>
	8 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION ON THE NATIVITY</u>
Thursday	9 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION ON THE HIDDEN LIFE</u>
	10 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION: JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS</u>
Friday	11 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION: THE FIRST MIRACLE PERFORMED AT THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF CANA IN GALILEE</u>
	12 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION: THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS</u>
Saturday	13 th Meditation	<u>CONTEMPLATION: THE LAST SUPPER</u>
	14 th Meditation	<u>“BEHOLD THE MAN”</u>
	15 th Meditation (midnight)	<u>THE PASSION FOUND IN “MY OTHER SELF”</u>
Sunday	16 th Meditation	<u>CONTEMPLATION: THE CRUCIFIED</u>
	17 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION: ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST OUR LORD AND ON HIS FIRST APPARITION</u>
	18 th Meditation	<u>A CONTEMPLATION ON THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST</u>
Monday	19 th Meditation	<u>TO ATTAIN THE LOVE OF GOD</u>

What Are the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius?

by Joe Paprocki, author of *The Catechist's Toolbox*

It's a well known fact that we need exercise to maintain our physical health. St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) recognized the need for exercise in order to maintain our spiritual health as well. In fact, around the years 1522-1524, St. Ignatius composed a retreat handbook titled *Spiritual Exercises*.

Ignatius was a Spanish soldier wounded in battle in 1521. During his long and painful recovery, he reflected deeply on his ultimate desires, learning to discern between desires that were grounded in vanity and those that were grounded in holiness. After coming face to face with his own sinfulness and God's grace and mercy, he left behind his life as a soldier and dedicated his life to God. He concluded that this personal experience of God could be experienced by all people through the practice of the spiritual exercises he himself had engaged in. The result, of course, is the *Spiritual Exercises*, designed to help people to experience a deepening experience of God in their daily lives.

The *Spiritual Exercises* begin with what Ignatius calls his **Principle and Foundation** which states that our purpose in life is to be with God forever, living with profound gratitude for the gifts of God and holding ourselves in balance so as not to displace God with any one of his gifts. The exercises, designed to help us achieve and maintain that balance, were originally designed to take place over a 30-day retreat, with each of the 4 weeks (stages) focusing on a specific goal:

Week one: to "reform the deformed"—the focus of the first week is to recognize God's unconditional love and to come to terms with our failure and the failure of all of humanity to respond generously to that love.

Week two: to "conform the reformed"—the focus of the second week is to reflect on the person and life of Christ so that we may freely choose to love him and follow him more closely and faithfully.

Week three: to "confirm the conformed"—the focus of the third week is on the Passion and death of Jesus so as to share in and identify more closely with his suffering and to deepen our commitment to him.

Week four: to "transform the confirmed"—the focus of the fourth week is to grow in desire for Jesus to reveal the joy of his Resurrection and to embrace this joy as the foundation of our call to share in Christ's mission.

The exercises themselves consist of meditations on Scripture passages as well as prayers, considerations (imaginative mental exercises), and contemplative practices, all designed to allow Christians to learn how to see God's grace active in their everyday lives. While a 30-day retreat is not in the cards for most of us, today many retreat centers offer much shorter retreats that follow the pattern of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Likewise, we can benefit from the wisdom of the *Spiritual Exercises* by practicing what Ignatius called a daily *Examen*—a prayerful review of our day to discern how God's grace is present in our daily activities and how we are responding.

THREE PRAYERS OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA



Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing more. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that my heart may neither desire nor seek anything but what is necessary for the fulfillment of Your holy Will. May health or sickness, riches or poverty, honors or contempt, humiliations, leave my soul in that state of perfect detachment to which I desire to attain for Your greater honor and Your greater glory. Amen.

O my God, teach me to be generous;
to serve You as You deserve to be served;
to give without counting the cost;
to fight without fear of being wounded;
to work without seeking rest;
and to spend myself without expecting any
reward,
but the knowledge that I am doing Your holy
Will.

Act of Consecration to Mary

O my Queen, O my Mother, I love you and give myself to you., I give to you this day my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, my whole self. Since I am yours, keep me and guard me as your child forever. Amen.

(This prayer is often attributed to St. Ignatius, sometimes to St. Francis Xavier)

Introductory Notes

The title page of this document is a copy of the title page of the book containing the thirty-day retreat of the full Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, published over 150 years ago in Latin. It reads: "The Spiritual Exercises – of St. Ignatius Loyola – Illustrated by Meditations – for the use – of the Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Jesus – by Professed Father Xavier Weninger – of the Society of Jesus – at Cincinnati – the Lehmann Brothers Press – 1849.

It is this thirty-day retreat that Father James J. McQuade, S.J. has translated from the Latin and adapted to use as a shorter retreat of from six to eight days in the following notes.

Francis Xavier Weninger, S.J.

The career of Father Weninger is an episode of importance in the story of the upbuilding of Catholicism in the United States. He was born August 31, 1805, in his father's castle of Wildhaus in Marburg, Province of Styria, Austria. His mother was a member of the nobility, his father a wealthy landowner with connections at the Hapsburg court. As a student at the University of Vienna he enjoyed the personal patronage of the Empress of Austria.

Doctor of Divinity, fellow of the University of Graz and professor of dogmatic theology at twenty-five, he became a Jesuit at twenty-seven, entering the Austro-Hungarian Province October 31, 1832. He had a gift for preaching and giving missions and the success he met with in this ministry during his sixteen years of Jesuit life in Austria was noteworthy.

But his zeal sought a soil more in need of cultivation than his native land. The United States of America, with its German-speaking populations, increasing daily as the tide of emigration rolled in on its shores, seemed to offer the most inviting field for the exercise of his special gifts.

Father Weninger had his wish, going to America in 1848 with encouragement from Father Roothaan, the General, to pursue there his career of missionary preacher. Assigned with his companion on the journey from Europe, Father Christopher Genelli, to the Missouri Vice-province, he was first employed as professor of dogmatic theology in St. Xavier's College, Cincinnati, where in the intervals of teaching a few scholastics were pursuing their studies in divinity. As early as December 1848, at Oldenburg in Indiana he gave his first mission in the United States.

The unusual display of religious fervor attending Father Weninger's initial efforts in the missionary field was more or less typical of the long series of parochial revivals associated with his name. All through his career bishops and priests came forward to render testimony to the striking results of his ministry.

Father Weninger's active missionary career was continued up to within a few years of his death, which occurred at Cincinnati, June 29, 1888. He had lived eighty-three years, of which fifty-six were spent in the Society of Jesus. Of the various influences that went to the saving of the faith of the German Catholic immigrant in the United States during the past century, the labors, whether in the pulpit or with the pen, of this Americanized Austrian had a highly important place. (Taken from "The Jesuits of the Middle United States" by G.J. Garraghan, S.J. Volume II, p. 53, America Press, 1938)

Father Weninger and These Notes

Although these meditations and contemplations are taken substantially from Father Weninger's Latin retreat, they are adaptations rather than literal and exact renditions. At times, for instance, only the general sense of the original author is given; at others combinations of several exercises were made; at still others, his material was supplemented from the experience of Fr. McQuade himself. Hence the responsibility for the contents of the following pages belongs to Father McQuade; anything good in them is attributable to Father Weninger.

Pagination

The pagination of these notes is according to an original design. The pages are not numbered in straight numerical order throughout. They are numbered according to the day, the number, and the page of each Exercise. Hence a designation such as VI-2-3 would mean: Sixth Day, second Exercise, third Page. This method was used to facilitate the addition of material and readings without disturbing the overall pagination. (EDITOR'S NOTE: As this document is being "digitized" in 2017, the decision was made to INCLUDE sequential page numbers in order to assist the retreatants in finding the meditations for the day; also, a Table of Contents has been added).

Exercises

In these directives for mental prayer, three exercises are given for each of the eight days of the retreat. Since ordinarily the daily order for the shorter retreats of six or eight days presumes four exercises each day, a fourth exercise may be made up by the retreatant. Since the material presented in each exercise is far more profuse than can be assimilated and prayed over in a single prayer period, this fourth Exercise may be made as a resumption of one or other of the previous three, as a repetition of all three, or as, where the subject matter is a contemplation, an application of the senses to the three contemplations.

Spiritual Notes

St. Ignatius in the Text of the Exercises (No. 77) writes: "After an exercise is finished, either sitting or walking, I will consider for the space of a quarter of an hour how I succeeded in the meditation or contemplation. If poorly, I will seek the cause of the failure; and after I have found it, I will be sorry, so that I may do better in the future. If I have succeeded, I will give thanks to God our Lord, and the next time try to follow the same method."

In doing this I will notice the particular lights I may have received, the periods of desolation I may have endured, and record such things in my spiritual diary of the retreat. This diary will be very useful later on in the retreat when I plan my program for the future.

Withdrawal

"Ordinarily," writes St. Ignatius in the Text of the Exercises (No. 20), "the progress made in the Exercises will be greater, the more the exercitant withdraws from all friends and acquaintances and from all worldly cares.

"There are many advantages resulting from this separation, but the following three are the most important:

“First, if in order to serve and praise God our Lord one withdraws from numerous friends and acquaintances, and from many occupations not undertaken with a pure intention, he gains no little merit before the Divine Majesty.

“Secondly, in this seclusion the mind is not engaged in many things, but can give its whole attention to one single interest, that is, to the service of its Creator and its spiritual progress. Thus it is more free to use its natural powers to seek diligently what it so much desires.

“Thirdly, the more the soul is in solitude and seclusion, the more fit it renders itself to approach and be united with its Creator and Lord; and the more closely it is united with Him, the more it disposes itself to receive the graces and gifts from the infinite goodness of its God.”

Silence

Speaking at Nazareth on the occasion of his visit to the Holy Land Pope Paul said in part: “I cannot leave without recalling, briefly and in passing, some thoughts I take with me from Nazareth.

“First, we learn from its silence. If only we could once again appreciate its great value! We need this wonderful state of mind, beset as we are by the cacophony of strident protests and conflicting claims so characteristic of these turbulent times. The silence of Nazareth should teach us how to meditate in peace and quiet, to reflect on the deeply spiritual, and to be open to the voice of God’s inner wisdom and the counsel of His true teachers. Nazareth can teach us the value of study and preparation, of meditation, of a well ordered personal spiritual life, and of silent prayer that is known only to God.” (As quoted in the “Second Reading” of the Divine Office for the Feast of the Holy Family).

There could hardly be a better description of the function of silence in one’s retreat. There is a very fine tradition of absolute silence except for really necessary communication at Colombiere Center. We respectfully ask all our retreatants to help us maintain this most helpful means to recollection of spirit in themselves and others.

Text of the Exercises

A loan copy of the text of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius is provided for each retreatant. Although profuse quotations from this text are given in these notes, it is recommended that reference be made at times to the book itself, if only for greater familiarity with this great classic of the spiritual life. There is, moreover, a certain helpful Ignatian spiritual “unction” which can only be savored in the text itself. The translation by Father Louis J. Puhl, S.J. is considered representative of the language style of the original Spanish autograph from which it is rendered into English. Should the use of the loan copy prove the usefulness of the text of the Exercises to one personally, a copy may be purchased from the Registration Office.

Reading During Retreat

During retreat one is to be mindful of the advice of St. Ignatius that: “It is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth.” (Text No. 2) Whatever is chosen for reading is to be selected on the basis, not of its entertainment value or novelty, but on the basis of its spiritual depth, and its ability to inspire one to receive the enlightenment and inspiration of grace.

“Let not Moses, nor any of the Prophets, speak to me;” says a Kempis Bk. 2, Ch. 2, No. 1, “but speak Thou rather, O Lord God, the Inspirer and Enlightener of all the Prophets; for Thou alone without

them, canst perfectly instruct me; but they without Thee, will avail me nothing. They may, indeed, sound forth the words, but they give not the spirit." It is the Most Holy Spirit of Infinite Love to whom one is to attend in retreat reading and only such reading as the Holy Spirit can work with is to be chosen.

One can be more sure of this in choosing those great spiritual classics which many generations of spiritual people have found helpful. The retreat director may be of help in selecting suitable readings for the "in between times" of the retreat days.

The Retreat Interview

Each day the retreatant and the director meet for a session of review and planning. In the review of the day's prayer, the retreat experience of the past exercises is discussed: how things went with one, whether there was desolation, or dryness, or consolation, whether one feels one has attained "that which I want and desire" in each exercise, and such matters. In the planning period the director and the retreatant preview the subject matter of the subsequent exercises. Active cooperation of the retreatant is very necessary for the success of a directed retreat. St. Ignatius says:

"While the one who is giving the Exercises should not seek to investigate and know the private thoughts and sins of the exercitant, nevertheless, it will be very helpful if he is kept faithfully informed about the various disturbances and thoughts caused by the action of different spirits. This will enable him to propose some spiritual exercises in accordance with the degree of progress made and suited and adapted to the soul disturbed in this way." (Text No. 17)

A Preparatory Meditation

On

The Pursuit of Perfection

Note: Perfection is the state of being perfect – i.e. completely finished – having all that a thing should have – complete – for example: Michelangelo at a certain moment stepped back from “The Pieta” – it was “perfect” – and all generations since his time have agreed with him. Jesus is in a state of perfection; the Blessed Virgin Mary is in a state of perfection; the saints show the way to a state of perfection. Our days of solitude and prayer help us to see the way more clearly to a state of perfection for ourselves.

“And much people followed him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, His disciples came unto him.

“And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying:

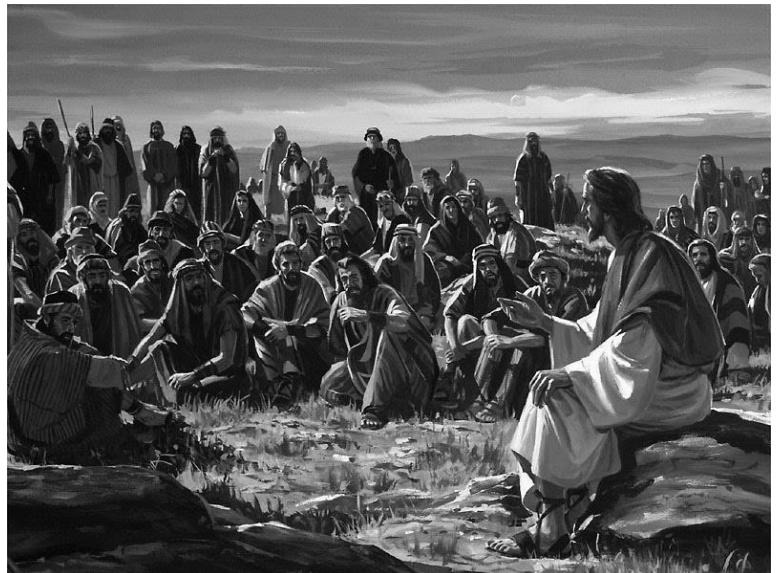
“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...

“Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 4:25-6:33)

First Prelude: Recall to your mind briefly the whole story of the Sermon on the Mount, namely: that Jesus preached the sermon to emphasize poverty of spirit as guaranteeing the freedom to pursue the state of perfection in the effective love for God.

Second Prelude: Picture to yourself the scene of the mystery: Jesus Himself seated on a rock on the hillside – below Him the Twelve whom He has just chosen – below them the general disciples both men and women; then all around the base of the hill the multitudes.

Third Prelude: I ask of my most loving and most affectionate Father the grace for which I desire to open myself in this meditation, namely: that in these days of solitude, interior silence, and prayer, He may grant me the grace gift of knowing Jesus better that I may follow Him more closely and love Him more ardently.



First Point: Looking forward

“Act as though all the past were nothing and with King David say: ‘Now I will begin to love my God.’” – St. Francis de Sales

Call to mind St. Paul. Reflect on the fact that after his conversion, though he had become a “Vessel of Election” and was filled with the Holy Spirit, he used the method of ever beginning anew in order to keep on the road to perfection and advance in holiness. Ponder the words he wrote to the Philippians:

“Brethren, I do not consider that I have laid hold of it (perfection) already, but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind, I strain forward to what is before, I press toward the goal to the prize of God’s heavenly call in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13)

Reflect on the advice of such saints as St. Charles Borromeo, St. Bernard, St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Benedict might well be summed up in the words:

“We should act as do travelers. They do not look back to see how much they have traveled, but ahead – at the distance they must still cover. This goal they keep before their eyes until the end of the day. Again, we should be like misers who, greedy for riches, do not consider what they have already amassed, nor the fatigue they have endured, but try their utmost to acquire more and multiply their riches daily, as though they had never acquired anything in the past.”

Ponder the need to begin over constantly with our eyes on the future as reflected in the observation of St. Teresa of Avila:

“Although to one who has entered religion and guards self against offending God, it might seem that everything has been done, oh! There yet remain certain worms that are not seen until they have eaten away the virtues! These worms are self-love, high esteem of self, rash judgment of others, and lack of charity toward our neighbor. So that, although we fulfill our duties, we do not perform them with that perfection which God wants of us.”

COLLOQUY:

“Lord Jesus, You are the Truth: May Your teaching be the beacon that guides my path ‘amid the encircling gloom’ in all the details of my life. May I, according to my power and the help of Your grace, seek to spread it all around me, most of all by the example of my life, so that people seeing me, may see you and your ‘perfection’ and sense the truth that comes from you.”

Second Point: Pursuing Simplicity

Simplicity is defined as freedom from intricacy or complexity; the quality of single-mindedness; the quality of mind that has but one supreme objective to which all others are subservient; the quality of perfect purity of intention; the quality of complete honesty with God.

Ponder the kind of simplicity recommended by St. Vincent de Paul in his words:

"Perfection consists in one thing only: doing the Will of God. If our Lord said that in order to be perfect it is enough to deny oneself, take up one's cross and follow Him, who denies himself more, better carries his cross and follows Christ more closely than he who tries his best never to do his own will but always that of God? Now do you see how little it takes to become a saint? All that is necessary is acquiring the habit of wanting to do the will of God at all times."

Reflect on the ideal of "simplicity" as expressed in the words of St. Ignatius who says that ideal and consecrated souls:

"...seek only to will and not will as God our Lord inspires them, and as seems better for the service and praise of the Divine Majesty....They will make efforts neither to want this, that, nor anything else, unless the service of God our Lord alone move them to do so. As a result, the desire to be better able to serve God our Lord will be the cause of their accepting anything or relinquishing it." (Text No. 155)

And

"Let him desire and seek nothing except the greater praise and glory of God our Lord as the aim of all he does. For every one must keep in mind that in all that concerns the spiritual life his progress will be in proportion to his surrender of self-love and of his own will and interests." (Text No. 189)

St. Ignatius describes his Spiritual Exercises as designed to achieve this very "simplicity" in the very definition he gives them:

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES which have as their purpose the conquest of self and the regulation of one's life in such a way that no decision is made under the influence of any inordinate attachment.

Third Point: Fundamental Requirement: Abnegation

Both Evangelists, St. Matthew (16:34) and St. Mark (8:34) tell us that Jesus made self-denial a basic requirement not only for His disciples but for all. Let us ponder the words of Jesus:

"And calling the multitude together with His Disciples, Jesus said to them: 'If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"

The spiritual master who stands out as almost a personification of this doctrine of Jesus is St. John of the Cross. Ponder his words:

"I would like to persuade spiritual persons that the way to perfection does not consist of many methods nor much thinking, but in denying oneself in everything and suffering everything for the love of Jesus Christ. If this exercise is lacking, all the other modes of walking in the spiritual way lead astray, even though the person should have reached a high degree of contemplation and communication with God."

Reflect upon the manner in which St. Francis de Sales applies this sublime doctrine of self-denial to the practicalities of living:

“The worst thing that can befall persons who have good will is to want to be what they cannot be and not want to be what they necessarily must be.

They conceive desires to do great things, which perhaps will never be expected of them; in the meantime, they neglect the little things which God puts into their hands.

There are thousands of acts of virtue as, for example, to bear little troubles and the imperfections of our neighbors; to suffer a biting word or some little injustice; to repress a harsh word; to mortify a little attachment or curiosity; to refrain from giving a bit of news; to excuse an indiscretion; to be condescending toward others in little things; these are for everyone, so why not practice them?

Very seldom do we have the opportunity to gain large “sums”, but we can daily gain little ones. And with the intelligent handling of these little “earnings”, there are many who become rich.

Oh, how many merits we would earn and what great saints we would become, if we were to take advantage of every occasion that our vocation offers us.”

COLLOQUY:

“Make me, Lord, a person of the present moment – doing today all that I can do today. Grant that I may detest the least insincerity in dealing with You; seeking in all things, first and foremost, Your holy Will, especially in my retreat.”

“O my God, if there is anything in me that prevents me from serving You sincerely, make it known to me, I beseech You. If my heart is affected or inclined inordinately to any place, person, or work – If I shrink from anything hard and humiliating – I offer it to You, Lord. There it is, in Your very Heart. Is it pleasing to my nature? As far as it lies with me, I don’t want to have it any longer, unless You desire it. Do I shrink from it? I offer myself for it. I desire, beg, and supplicate You for it, if it is for the greater praise and service of Your divine Goodness. Grant that I may ever choose the higher, narrower, and harder path – never the easier and more self-indulgent, the lower and broader path! Amen.”

Note: Many of the quotations in the above Meditation are taken from “The Spiritual Diary” by an unknown author and published by the Daughters of St. Paul, 1962.

First Day

Orientation – Getting into Retreat

Basic Dispositions

General Aim:	<p>To establish even more perfectly in one's heart the desire to make all our choices in life for that which is most conducive to the end for which we were created.</p> <p>To establish even more perfectly than usual our willingness to be quiet: both exteriorly in avoiding the communications from others, and interiorly in surrendering to Divine Providence all the concerns of the secular side of our lives and in attending with greater energy than usual to God, especially the thoughts that come to us from the Good Spirit and promptly dismissing all lines of thinking that have the marks of the Evil Spirit.</p>
Prayer Subjects For This Day	<p><u>First Meditation:</u> Entering My Retreat</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. My Retreat is a Special Grace2. My Retreat is a Work of God in Me3. I have Great Motivation for Making this Retreat <p><u>Second Meditation:</u> On My Own Purpose and Destiny</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I Am a Divine Creation2. I Am to Serve God3. What God Is and What I Am <p><u>Third Meditation:</u> On the Divine Intent for All Other Things</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Using God's Creation2. My Ideal Personal Attitude
A Word on The Notes	<p>The notes here given are not to be regarded as a substitute for the Book of the Exercises. They are intended only to be a help in making the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, especially for one who has frequently made them before.</p> <p>The exact place (by paragraph number) where each Exercise is contained in the Text of the Exercises is given for each Exercise in the title. There is a real unction in the way in which St. Ignatius himself puts things. Father Puhl was at great pains to capture the flavor of St. Ignatius.</p> <p>The same is to be said for the actual words of Holy Scripture as the Holy Spirit works best with the actual words He inspired or as close as one can come to them in a good translation.</p>

Step by Step in the Ignatian Exercises

1. As I approach the place where I am to pray I occupy myself with thoughts and my imagination with images “in keeping with the subject matter of my meditation.” (Text No. 73)
2. “I will stand for the space of an Our Father, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me etc.” (Text No. 75)
3. “Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.” (Text No. 75) Such an act of adoration might be “reverently to kiss my crucifix” or “make a profound bow to the Almighty present” or “to make a double genuflection before God.”
4. “I will enter upon the meditation” in the bodily position of reverence best suited to attaining “what I desire” “and taking as the prayer proceeds whatever position may help “now kneeling, now prostrate upon the ground, now lying face upwards, now seated, now standing, always being intent on seeking what I desire.” (Text No. 76)
5. “If I find what I desire while kneeling, I will not seek to change my position; if prostrate, I will observe the same direction etc.” (Text No. 76)
6. “I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire, without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied.” (Text No. 76)
7. I begin each Exercise with “preludes” by which I compose myself for my prayer. In general, when I meditate on an event the “First Prelude” will be to call to mind briefly the whole story of the event I am to contemplate. (Text No. 102) The “Second Prelude” “will consist in seeing in imagination the material place where the object is that we wish to contemplate. (Text No. 47) The “Third Prelude” is thus stated “I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire. The petition made in this prelude must be according to the subject matter.” (Text No. 48) In the Exercises this will be suggested often for each prayer period.

When the subject of prayer is not an event, the “history of the event” is naturally omitted, and in place of the “place” in the Second Prelude a suitable “image” is substituted. (Text No. 47)

8. Usually in the Exercises several aspects of a subject of prayer are suggested under the title “points”. In meditation or discursive prayer, the “memory” recalls all that one knows or reads about the subject, the “understanding” ponders its inner meaning, application to life, etc. and the “will” responds with acts of admiration, wonder, contrition, desire, hope, love, etc. depending upon the nature of the subject prayed about.

In active contemplation the one who prays allows the “event” to take place before the mind attending to the persons involved, the words said, and actions performed. In each of these the exercitant reflects on what can be learned and so resolves, or what should be said to God and so prays.

9. At the end of the period of prayer a few minutes more or less are saved for direct prayer called a “colloquy.” The colloquy is made by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant speaks to a master, now asking him for a favor, now blaming himself for some misdeed, now making known his affairs to him, and seeking advice in them. One closes with a formal prayer such as the “Our Father” or the “Soul of Christ.” (Text No. 54)

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Meditations and Contemplations

Entering on the Exercises

First Exercise:

Standing somewhat apart from the place of prayer, make yourself aware of having God's full and undivided attention on you for this period of prayer and make the preparatory prayer: "In the preparatory prayer I will beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty." (Text No. 46)

Then, kneeling in my place of prayer "I will make an act of reverence or humility" before God who is present to me. (Text No. 75) Such an "act" might be "to kneel and kiss your crucifix" or "to make a double genuflection" or "to prostrate yourself for a few moments before the Most Blessed Trinity" or some such external act of reverence and adoration in recognition of God's supreme dominion over you and your utter dependence upon God.

The above two steps precede every exercise.

First Prelude: "This will consist in calling to mind the history of the subject I have to contemplate." (Text No. 102) In this first exercise it will be to recall the series of events and causes by which Divine Providence brought it about that you are making this retreat and the way in which God enabled you to overcome the obstacles.

Second Prelude: "This is a mental representation of the place...when the contemplation or meditation is on something visible, for example, when we contemplate Christ our Lord, the representation will consist in seeing in imagination the material place where the object is we wish to contemplate....In a case where the subject matter is not visible the representation will be some sort of symbolic image." (Text No. 47)

In this first exercise "behold yourself standing in the presence of God our Lord and of His angels and saints, who intercede for me." (Text No. 232)

Third Prelude: In this prelude "I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire" (as the fruit of this exercise). "The petition made in this prelude must be according to the subject matter of the exercise." (Text No. 48)

In this first exercise I will ask the grace to "enter upon the Exercises with magnanimity and generosity toward my Creator and Lord and to offer Him my entire will and liberty, that His Divine Majesty may dispose of me and all I possess according to His most Holy will." (Text No. 5)

Note: "I will remain quietly meditating upon the point in which I have found what I desire, without any eagerness to go on till I have been satisfied." (Text No. 76) – This holds even at any point in the preludes.

First Point: My retreat is a special grace!

I ponder and express my thoughts to God on the way God has given me this session of prayer:

*“for learning what wisdom and discipline are,
for understanding words of deep meaning,
for acquiring an enlightened attitude of mind -
virtue, justice and fair-dealing;
for teaching sound judgment to the ignorant
and knowledge and sense to the young;
for perceiving the meaning of proverbs and obscure sayings,
the saying of the sages and their riddles.
Let the wise listen and he will learn yet more,
and the man of discernment will acquire the art of Guidance.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
Fools spurn wisdom and discipline.”
(Book of Proverbs: 1:1)*

“God’s activity in the Exercises takes on many forms: He enlightens the understanding (Text No. 2), He enters the soul, moves it, draws it towards loving Him (Text No. 330), grants it an abundance of fervor, overflowing love, and the intensity of His favors (Text No. 320), makes it attain intense affection, tears and other spiritual consolation (Text No. 322)... and brings the soul’s desire into order” (Text No. 16) (From Fr. W.A.M. Peters, S.J. Commentary: p. 1)

In this point I desire earnestly – hope for ardently – beg perseveringly for the full effects of God working in my soul during these days.

Second Point: My retreat is a work of God in me.

I reflect in union with God on what I can do that during this retreat St. Paul’s beautiful prayer for us Christians may be fulfilled in me:

“This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name.”

“Out of His infinite glory, may He give you the power through His Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will, with all the saints, have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:14)

Pray for the grace to find the golden meaning between “trying to produce the fruit of the retreat by my own intense effort” and, on the contrary “leaving it all to God and doing nothing on my part.”

Third Point: I have great motivation for making this retreat.

“The time has come; you must wake up now; our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were first converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon....” (Romans 13:11)

My retreat is a time in which I can learn how *"I must live my whole life according to the Christ I have received – Jesus the Lord; I must be rooted in Him and built on Him and hold firm by the faith I have been taught and full of thanksgiving."* (Col 2:6)

I need wisdom and St. James says *"If there is anyone of you who needs wisdom he must ask God who gives to all freely and ungrudgingly; it will be given him, but he must ask with faith, and no trace of doubt, because a person who has doubts is like the waves thrown up in the sea when the wind drives."* (James 1:5)

I have a serious need to get close the Holy Spirit, for, as St. Paul says: *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God".* (Romans 8:26-27)

COLLOQUY: The colloquy is made by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant speaks to a master, now asking him for a favor, now blessing himself for some misdeed, now making known his affairs to him, and seeking advice in them. Close with an "Our Father." (Text No. 54)

Litany of the Holy Spirit

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, have mercy on us.
Lord, have mercy on us.

Father all-powerful, have mercy on us. Jesus, Eternal Son of the Father, Redeemer of the world, save us. Spirit of the Father and the Son, boundless life of both, sanctify us. Holy Trinity, hear us.

Holy Spirit, Who proceedest from the Father and the Son, enter our hearts. Holy Spirit, Who art equal to the Father and the Son, enter our hearts.

Promise of God the Father, have mercy on us.
Ray of heavenly light, have mercy on us
Author of all good, have mercy on us
Source of heavenly water, have mercy on us
Consuming fire, have mercy on us
Ardent charity, have mercy on us
Spiritual unction, have mercy on us
Spirit of love and truth, have mercy on us
Spirit of wisdom and understanding, have mercy on us
Spirit of counsel and fortitude, have mercy on us
Spirit of knowledge and piety, have mercy on us
Spirit of the fear of the Lord, have mercy on us
Spirit of grace and prayer, have mercy on us
Spirit of peace and meekness, have mercy on us
Spirit of modesty and innocence, have mercy on us
Holy Spirit, the Comforter, have mercy on us
Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, have mercy on us
Holy Spirit, Who governest the Church, have mercy on us
Gift of God, the Most High, have mercy on us
Spirit Who fillest the universe, have mercy on us

Spirit of the adoption of the children of God, have mercy on us

Holy Spirit, inspire us with horror of sin.
Holy Spirit, come and renew the face of the earth.
Holy Spirit, shed Thy light in our souls.
Holy Spirit, engrave Thy law in our hearts.
Holy Spirit, inflame us with the flame of Thy love.
Holy Spirit, open to us the treasures of Thy graces.
Holy Spirit, teach us to pray well.
Holy Spirit, enlighten us with Thy heavenly inspirations.
Holy Spirit, lead us in the way of salvation.
Holy Spirit, grant us the only necessary knowledge.
Holy Spirit, inspire in us the practice of good.
Holy Spirit, grant us the merits of all virtues.
Holy Spirit, make us persevere in justice.
Holy Spirit, be Thou our everlasting reward.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, Send us Thy Holy Spirit.

Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, pour down into our souls the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, grant us the Spirit of wisdom and piety.

Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of Thy faithful, And enkindle in them the fire of Thy love.

Let us pray. Grant, O merciful Father, that Thy Divine Spirit may enlighten, inflame and purify us, that He may penetrate us with His heavenly dew and make us fruitful in good works, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, liveth and reigneth, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Summary of the Introductory Observations (often referred to as Annotations)

1. The fruit of the Exercises is derived from what the Exercitant does in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and not from exhortation by the director.
2. The director is to hold himself to the minimum instruction necessary for the respective exercitant *"for it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relish of the truth."*
3. In the Exercises we make use of the intellect in reasoning and of the will *in manifesting our love* and the latter with greater reverence.
4. Four Weeks or Periods are assigned to the Exercises: Reformation, Conformation, Confirmation, Transformation.
5. The key dispositions required are *magnanimity and generosity*.
6. Spiritual experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, are to be expected in the making of the Exercises.
7. The Director is to be most gentle and encouraging in all the experiences of the Exercises.
8. Throughout the Exercises the Director is to explain the "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits" as needed.
9. The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits are to be explained only as needed and as applicable to the capacity of the Exercitant.
10. The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits in the Second Week are applicable mainly to those in the illuminative way.
11. The Exercitant is to live day by day through the Exercises seeking the best of each day without anticipating the future exercises.
12. Let the exercitant rather exceed the full hour for each exercise rather than shorten it.
13. It is to be expected that sometimes the hour will pass very slowly but it is not to be shortened on that account – but even extended a little.
14. The director is to caution the exercitant against making rash vows, resolutions or decisions in periods of great fervor.
15. God is the primary director in the retreat: *It is more suitable and much better that the Creator and Lord in person communicate Himself to the devout soul in quest of the divine will, that He inflame it with His love and praise and dispose it for the way in which it could better serve God in the future.* And so the director is to permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord.
16. The exercitant is to counteract all inordinate attachments, prejudices, and preconceptions by counterbalancing them through favoring their opposites.
17. The exercitant is to manifest the interior movements of soul to the director, but not necessarily his whole conscience and secret sins.
18. To those with little natural ability or of little physical strength a short and simple session of spiritual activity is to be given.
19. To those of talent but necessarily preoccupied the Exercises may be given for some time each day for a suitable period.
20. *To one who is more disengaged, and desirous of making as much progress as possible, all the Spiritual Exercises should be given in the same order in which they follow. - - - The more the exercitant withdraws from all friends and acquaintances and from all worldly cares, the progress made in the Exercises will be greater.*

FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

(Text No. 23)

First Prelude: Recall briefly the story of the creation of the world and of the first man: *“And now from the clay of the ground, the Lord God formed man, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and made of man a living person.” (Genesis 2:7)*

Second Prelude: Picture to yourself in imagination the first man in the garden of Eden into whose mind the Almighty has infused knowledge of his purpose and destiny of himself and all his descendants.

Third Prelude: I earnestly plead with the Almighty to grant me “that which I want and desire” in this exercise, namely, that I may really understand the end for which I was created – but in such a way that I may receive from God His most efficacious grace to form those life policies of action that may constitute the Principle and foundation of true renewal in the Holy Spirit.

“O Lord, make me know my end. And what is the number of my days, that I may know what is wanting to me.” (Ps. 38:5)

First Point: I am a divine creation.

Create: to cause to come into being, as something unique that would not naturally evolve or that is not made by ordinary processes.

Give your full attention to Jesus here and now in-living you with His Father and His Spirit – in you as created in the first place and then in the second, transformed in Christ through the gift of the Divine Indwelling – seeing His infinite power which it took to bring you out of nothing – seeing His infinite wisdom which it took to plan and form your marvelous body – and seeing His infinite goodness in the immortality of your soul – all the while giving Him your simple, wordless, grateful love.

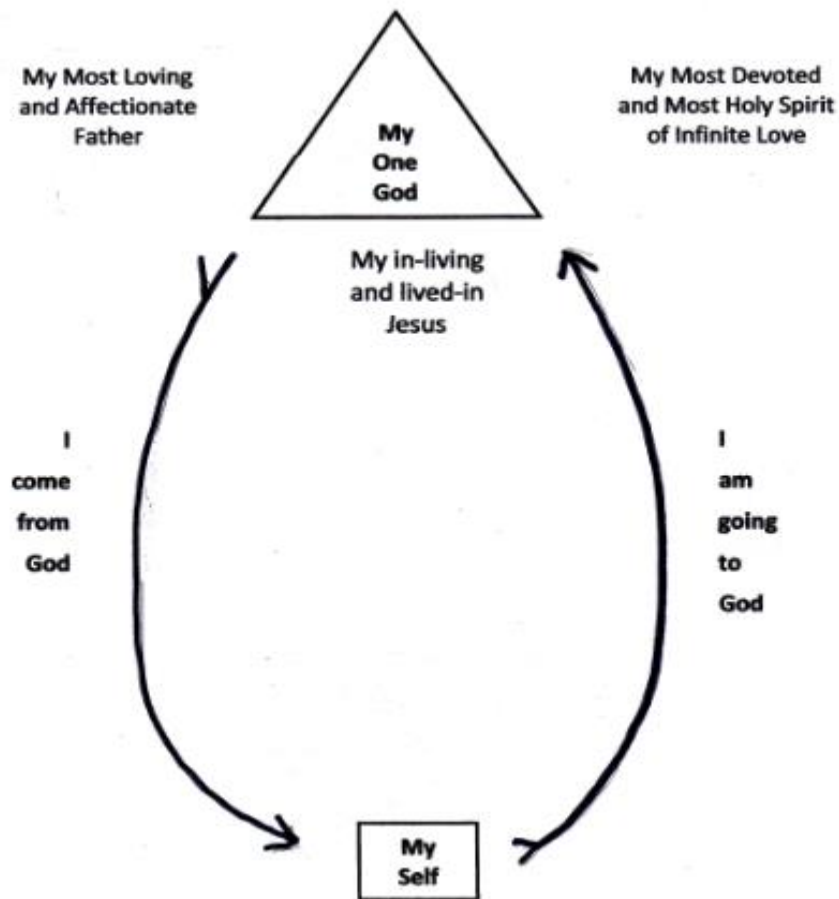
Pray with St. Bernard: “Turn toward Yourself, O God, this little that you have granted me to be; take from this miserable life, I beg you, the years that remain. *“What can I say? Of what can I speak to Him? It is He who is at work; I will give glory to You all the years of my life, for my sufferings.” (Isaiah 38:15)* In place of all that I lost in my evil way of living, O God, do not refuse a humble and penitent heart. My days have lengthened like a shadow and passed without fruit. *“Like a tapering shadow my days dwindle, wasting away like grass in the sun.” (Ps. 101:12)* I cannot bring them back, but let it please you at least if I offer them in the bitterness of my soul. As for wisdom – my every desire and intention is before you – if there were any in me, I would keep it for you. But, God, you know my stupidity, *“God, You know how foolish I have been, my offenses are not hidden from you.” Ps. 68/69:5*, unless, perhaps, it is wisdom for me to recognize it, and even this is Your gift. Grant me more; not that I am ungrateful for this small gift, but that I am eager for what is lacking. For all these things, and as much as I am able, I love You.” (St. Bernard: On the Song of Songs. Sermon 20 No. 1.)

Second Point: I am to serve God.

Serve: to act as a servant, i.e. as one employed by another, especially, as one employed to perform domestic duties.

Is it sufficient to praise and reverence God? Is it not necessary that I also “serve” Him, in all things doing His Holy Will in as far as I can know it?

Pictograph for Second Exercise of First Day (I-2-1)



Is it not reasonable for me to serve Him who gave me “being” itself?

Is it not right and reasonable for me (with all my limitations) to serve the All Holy, the All Knowing, the All Wise, my most benign God, Lord and Father?

“Go back to sleep, he told Samuel; and if the voice comes again, do thou answer: Speak on, Lord; thy servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9)

“If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead, we belong to the Lord.” (Romans 14:7)

“Now when these things were done, the word of the Lord came to Abram by a vision, saying: ‘I am thy Protector, and thy Reward shall be exceedingly great.’” (Gen. 15:1)

Spend some time in simple joyful realization that you have so fine and so great a destiny: I am created by God for God, in order that through Him and in Him I may attain perfect and complete fulfillment and the ultimate in happiness now and forever.

Third Point: What God is and what I am.

Among the precious lessons which St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, received early in her career was one which must be regarded as the foundation stone of her whole spiritual edifice and which is thus narrated and expanded by her biographer. One day as she was praying, our Lord appeared to her and said:

“Daughter, knowest thou what I am? If thou perfectly know this truth, thou are blessed. Give heed then to My words, that thou mayest be able to understand it. Thou art she that is not, and I am He who am. Art thou not she that was made out of nothing? Forasmuch as every creature is made out of nothing, and has no being save in My almighty power, and evermore of itself tends to nothing.

Now if a person were thoroughly persuaded of this, that in truth he were nothing, how could he be proud, or how could he glory in himself or in any of his works, if he knew nothing of his own but defects and sin? But because if he considered this truth alone he would fall away into despair, therefore is it needful also that he know that I am He who am. God only is, of Himself. He alone is unchangeable and incorruptible. The creature, therefore, that sees this, and knows that he can have no being in himself, or find any good or blessedness in himself or any other creature, turns himself to God and beholds Him, the Creator and Preserver of all things, Who maintains all things in their being and blessedness, the everlasting spring and fountain of all goodness, Who alone is able to slake the thirst of his natural desires and longings. And so beholding Him, the creature begins to sigh towards Him and to be inflamed with the love of Him. And he conceives a certain holy fear, which is the guardian of the soul, so that he will not suffer the least motion in his heart which could offend so sweet and bountiful a Master. And he rests so firmly on the provident goodness of God that no adversity disturbs him, because he knows that Almighty God permits it for his Salvation; and he understands that there is no labor or sorrow in this world, however grievous, that can be compared to the glorious reward which he looks for from the hands of God.”

COLLOQUY:

Save a little time at the end for a personal response to the best notions, ideas, inspirations and insights that have come to you during this period of prayer and with acts of thanksgiving for these graces. End with the Our Father.

10. You too, if you abandon your own will, if you fully renounce the pleasures of the body, if you crucify your lower nature with its passions and desires, and if you *"put to death those parts of you which belong to the earth,"* (Col. 3:5) will be truly doing as Paul did, since you will not account your life as more precious than yourself; by this loss that saves, you will prove yourself a follower of Christ. It is wiser to lose it in order to save it, than by saving it to lose it. *"For anyone who wants to save his life, will lose it."* (Mt. 16:25)

V. What have you to say to this, you who are so particular about your food, so unconcerned about your behavior? Hippocrates and his followers teach us to save our lives in this world; Christ and his followers teach us to lose them. Which of the two do you choose as master?

But the man who complains: "This is bad for my eyes, that gives me headache, this affects my heart, that upsets my stomach" - he shows clearly who his master is. Each of us holds forth in the style of the master he has learned from.

It was not from the Gospel, nor from the prophets, nor from the letters of the apostles, that you learned to pick and choose like this. It was flesh and blood, not the spirit of the Father, that revealed this wisdom to you, for it is the wisdom of the flesh.

But listen to what our physicians think of this kind of wisdom: *"To set one's mind on the flesh,"* they say, *"is death;"* (Rom. 8:6) and *"the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God."* (Rom. 8:7) Would you have me preach to you the doctrine of Hippocrates or Galenus, or even of the school of Epicurus?

But I, a follower of Christ, am speaking to Christ's followers: if I should introduce strange doctrines here, I should be in sin. The ideal of Epicurus was the body's sensual pleasure, of Hippocrates to promote good health, but my Master preaches contempt of these two pursuits.

What each of those philosophers seeks, and teaches us to seek with all diligence - in one case how to sustain the body's life, in the other how to pander to its enjoyment - the Savior advises us to lose. (Mt. 10:39)

11. Is not this the message that pounded in your ears from the school of Christ when just now it was proclaimed: *"He who loves his life loses it"?* (John 12:25) He loses it, he said, either by dying as a martyr or by chastising himself as a penitent. Certainly, it is a kind of martyrdom to put to death the deeds of the body by the power of the Spirit, (Rom 8:13) less horrifying indeed than that in which the limbs are severed by the sword, but more grueling because more prolonged.

Do you not see how these words of my Master condemn that wisdom of the flesh, whereby a man either abandons himself to sensual indulgence or pays excessive attention to the body's health? You have heard from the Sage that true wisdom does not dissipate itself by living voluptuously; it is not found in the land of those who live for pleasure.

FIRST PRINCIPLE AND FOUNDATION

(Text No. 23) (I-3-1)

First Prelude: Recall briefly how the Almighty, through several billions of years, created and formed the whole universe of things for the environment and use of mankind. Possibly even read Genesis 1 to 25.

Second Prelude: Picture to yourself the first man in the garden of Paradise as the Almighty revealed to him that all things created were for his use: *“Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, and all living animals on the earth. See I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are upon the whole earth, and all trees with seed bearing fruit; this shall be your food.”* (Genesis 1:28)

Third Prelude: Spend some little time in petitionary prayer for “that which I want and desire” in this exercise: the efficacious grace ever to prefer those things and in all circumstances to follow that course of action and always to make those choices which will lead me more perfectly to fulfill the Divine Will and so to enter into the glory of eternal life with God.

First Point: Using God’s Creation

“The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.” (Text No. 23)

How is one to make of all creation a help to salvation?

BY CONTEMPLATION: one may easily rise from a contemplation of creatures to the attractiveness of the Creator – to His uncreated Wisdom, Power, Goodness, Beauty:

“I look up at Your heavens, made by Your fingers, at the moon and stars You set in place - ah, what is man that You should spare a thought for him, the son of man that You should care for him?” (Ps. 8:4)

BY USE: the right use of creatures according to the divine will is precisely the form of service, praise and reverence that will fulfill the end of man.

“Riches are not seemly for a stingy man; and of what use is property to an envious man?” (Sirach 14:3)

BY ABSTENTION: one may often advance toward one’s true destiny by refraining from the use of creatures where they either hinder (or make no useful contribution to) the service of God – especially in view of the present state of our fallen nature in which, unless I take myself firmly in charge – and unless I deny the impulses and inclinations of nature in many things, I shall most certainly overstep propriety in their use and be unable to ascend to my Creator since I shall be entangled in created things.

“Do not follow your lusts, restrain your desires. If you allow yourself to satisfy your desires, this will make you the laughing stock of your enemies. Do not indulge in luxurious living, nor get involved in such society.” (Sirach 18:30)

Prayer: "O Lord God, never let this truth, revealed to me in this period of my prayers, pass out of my vision. May it enter deeply into my heart! May it remain strong in its influence on my thinking and acting so that it may always and ever more perfectly bear upon my will. Do not cease, O Lord, to say to me, through the enlightenment and inspiration of Thy grace: "You were created for my glory and for your salvation; and everything else was created to help you to attain this end." (F.X. Weninger, S.J. "Exercitia Spiritualia" Lehman. 1849 P. 10)

Second Point: My ideal personal attitude

The perfection of a moral virtue lies in the golden mean – neither too much nor too little, but just right. Too little prudence is rashness; too much prudence is timidity; justice can be carried to the extreme of hardness; it can be softened to sentimentality.

"Two requests I would make of Thee; be they mine while life lasts. Keep my thoughts ever far from treachery and lying; and for my state of life, be neither poverty mine nor riches. Grant me only the livelihood I need; so shall not abundance tempt me to disown Thee, and doubt if Lord there be, nor want bid me steal, and dishonor my God's name with perjury." (Proverbs 30:8)

There are four "loves" with their contrary "horrors" which are likely to hold one captive on one's way to salvation:

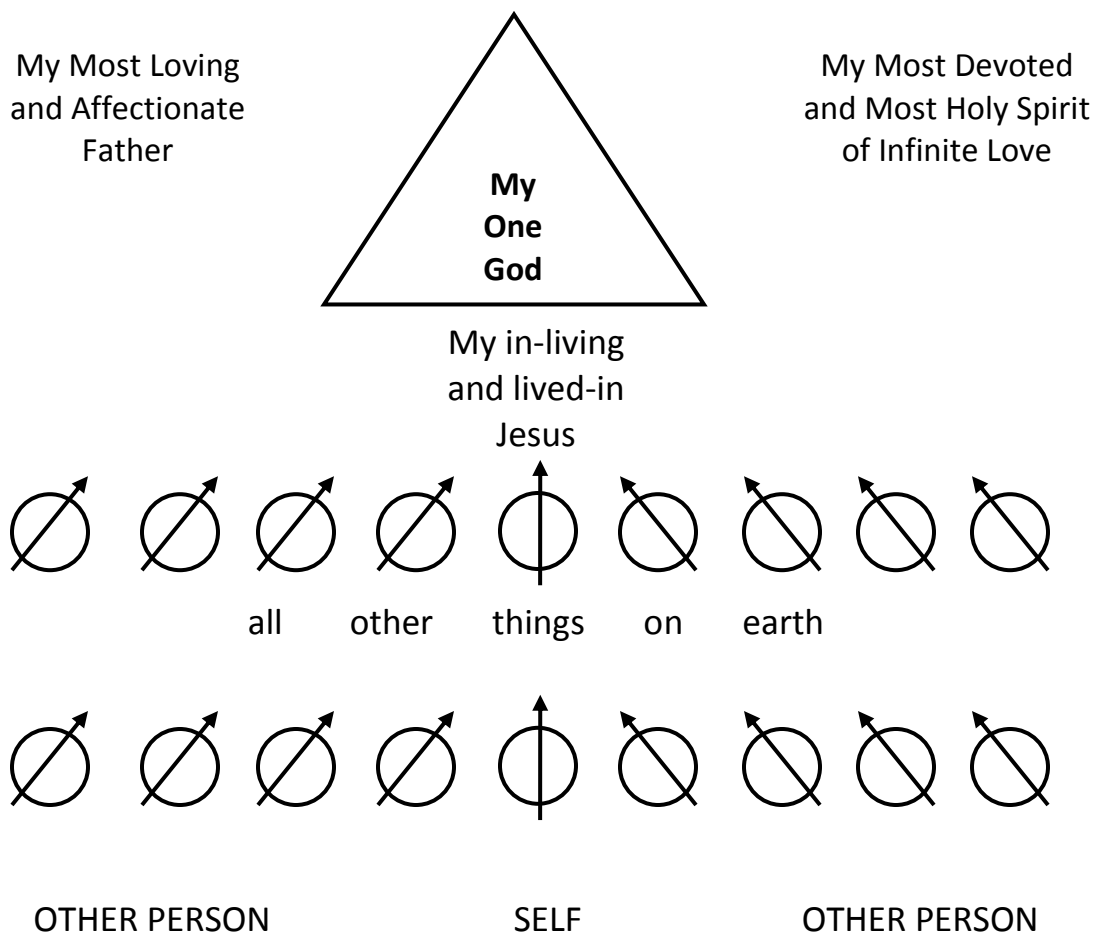
LOVE OF HEALTH	or	HORROR OF SICKNESS
LOVE OF PLEASURE	or	HORROR OF SUFFERING
LOVE OF HONOR	or	HORROR OF CONTEMPT
LOVE OF LIFE	or	HORROR OF DEATH

In attaining my purpose and destiny I must rise above these loves and fears which, because of the effects of original sin are likely to be inordinate.

"By His divine power, Chris has given us all the things that we need for life and for true devotion, bringing us to know God Himself, who has called us by His own glory and goodness. In making these gifts, He has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come; through them you will be able to share the divine nature and to escape corruption in a world that is sunk in vice. But to attain this, you will have to do your utmost yourselves, adding goodness to the faith that you have, understanding to your goodness, self-control to your understanding, patience to your self-control, true devotion to your patience, kindness towards your fellow men to your devotion, and, to this kindness, love. If you have a generous supply of these, they will not leave you ineffectual or unproductive; they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord, Jesus Chris." (2 Peter 1:3-8)

COLLOQUY: Speak to the Almighty in words such as these: There is no point, O Lord in my having been created if I am to perish. Come, therefore, to my aid, O God my Creator. And many Saints, both men and women, have, with Your help, given You what you ask of me: to bring myself with Your aid to the virtue of indifference to all that You have created out of nothing. There is question here of my own blessed eternity. May Your will, as you have shown it to me in this prayer, be done in and by me, through and in all things, so that I may live for you alone, seeking not myself but Your greater glory.

Pictograph for Third Exercise of First Day (I-3-1)



Second Day - On Sin and Sinfulness, Shame and Abashment

General Aim: To attain to shame and confusion of face and contrition through a realization of one's sins, one's sinfulness, and one's need of the graces of the redemption.

To attain to a sense of abashment at the overwhelming generosity, the unlimited mercy, and incomprehensible predilection of God in my regard.

"Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life. A penitent is a buyer of humility. Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort, and carefree self-care. Repentance is self-condemning reflection. Repentance is the daughter of hope and the renunciation of despair. Repentance is purification of conscience." - St. John Climacus: "The Ladder of Divine Assent," Chapter 5.

**Prayer Subjects
For This Day**

First Meditation: The Three Sins

1. The Sin of the Angels
2. The Sin of Adam and Eve
3. The Sin of One Who Went to Hell because of One Capital Sin

Second Meditation: On One's Own Sins

1. The Record of My Sins
2. The Evil of Sin as Such
3. The Insolent Audacity and Arrogance of My Sin
4. The Greatness of God Against Whom I have Sinned
5. The Wonder of Divine Tolerance

Third Meditation: A Repetition of the Two Preceding Meditations with the "Triple Colloquy."

1. The Colloquy with Our Lady
2. The Colloquy with Jesus
3. The Colloquy with Our Heavenly Father

**Spirit of
The Day**

"Original sin has given every man and woman what might be called a very unpleasant character. It matters little whence this unpleasantness comes, it is always something to be ashamed of; if one does not feel shame, one should ask for it, because it is part of what true order involves. Not only is the exercitant a fallen man; he has done little to mitigate or improve his sorry plight. He has made matters worse because he has sinned." – W.A.M. Peters, S.J. "The Spiritual Exercises," p. 58.

REVIEW OF PRAYER

1. In what way has God made His presence known to you in prayer, and throughout the day? i.e., What have you experienced His inner workings to be? Or, perhaps, in what way have you experienced His absence from you?

What are the desires, ardor, or despondency, peace or anxiety, joy or sorrow, you experienced during prayer – rather than stress on the ideas and reflections you had. Here are some questions which may help you reflect on your prayer after your prayer period:

What did I experience during the meditation?

What went on between me and God during my prayer?

How did God seem to be at work within me, i.e.

How was I affected by what I was praying about – how did I feel? What were the reactions, impulses, suggestions, attractions, feelings, intuitions I experienced within me?

Was there anything I found that especially attracted me or appealed to me?

Anything that caused me uneasiness?

Anything God seemed to be asking of me?

Any insight that had particular significance for me?

Any particular distraction that kept on recurring?

2. How do I find my prayer going?

Have I found it pleasant or indifferent or in between?

What do I think is the reason for my having found it so?

Was my prayer intimate and personal?

Did it involve my heart and not merely my mind?

Was there satisfaction in savoring things interiorly?

How many periods of formal prayer today?

Do I think it too much; too little?

Did I have to push myself to stay with it?

Time spent watching the clock – an urge to get it over with?

Did I attain the fruit of the day? Why do I think so?

Am I convinced of what I meditated about?

Am I determined to do something about it?

The effectiveness of subsequent meditations is proportionate to what I derived from the previous meditations.

3. Things related to prayer:

How did I spend the time not taken up with formal prayer?

Do I feel physically rested?

Do I have an order of the day or schedule of any kind?

After prayer, do I reflect on what I experienced during prayer?

Did I write, make notations? after each period of prayer? Did I prepare well?

What was the general mood of the day: a general atmosphere of peace – feel encouraged; or was I sad, restless, tense, dull, depressed, uninterested?

Pictograph for the First Exercise of the Second Day: On the Three Sins

**SIN OF LUCIFER
And his demons**

ONE SIN

No Redemption
Planned

No Redemption
Made

ETERNAL TORTURE IN HELL

*Ruin for so many
But not for me
WHY?*

*My Divine
Predilection*

SIN OF ADAM AND EVE

ONE SIN

Redemption
Planned

Redemption
Now Enjoyed

Redemption
Carried out

*Ruin for so many
But not for me
WHY?*

*My Divine
Predilection*

**SIN OF ONE IN HELL NOW
FOR ONE CAPITAL SIN**

Redemption
Planned

Redemption
Carried out

Grace
Given

Redemption
Refused

*Ruin for so many
But not for me
WHY?*

My Divine Predilection

A Meditation on Three Sins **(Text No. 45-54)**

Note 1: This is to be a meditation, i.e. meditative prayer – a prayer centered in the mind, which pictures and ponders, reflects and thinks of God and His wonderful dealings. The mind seeks understanding and insights. In meditation the lips are quieter than in vocal prayer, though spontaneous colloquies are fostered. But in general the mind is more active.

Note 2: Having explored divine revelation on the purpose and destiny of man, we now turn necessarily to consider all that impedes the attainment of that destiny, summed up, as it is, in the one word “sin.” Grace moves us hopefully to an intense horror of sin as we contemplate it and its effects: 1) in the “sin of the angels,” the very birth of the mystery of iniquity; 2) in the sin of Adam and Eve, the way in which sin entered the human family; 3) in the sin of one soul lost forever through one capital sin followed into irrevocable hardness and obstinacy in evil.

First Prelude: Recall the story: how God revealed the “Fall of the Angels,” and the “Fall of our First Parents,” and “the Sad Plight” of the fallen individual, in order to make me conscious of the evil of sin and to reveal to me the divine predilection of God for me who has been rescued or preserved by His special Providence from the full evil effects of sin.

Second Prelude: This is a mental representation or image: “To see in imagination my soul as a prisoner in this corruptible body, and to consider my whole composite being as an exile here on earth, cast out to live among brute beasts.” (Text No. 47)

Fr. Weninger comments (p. 14) “How repellent to most people is a corpse: And what else am I but a corpse in which my soul is imprisoned to make it live? Thus I go about as a living corpse – as one in exile from my homeland, heaven, among brute beasts. This stark realism prepares me for a change of heart about my self-evaluation.”

Third Prelude: I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire: “Here it will be to ask for shame and confusion because I see how many have been lost on account of a single capital sin and how many times I have deserved eternal damnation, because of the many grievous sins that I have committed.” (Text No. 48)

Note: Given my human weakness and my human passions, I am prone to sin. I therefore either have sinned and been rescued from sin or I have been strangely preserved from sin by the grace of God. In either case I can appear before God in this exercise as a sinner.

First Point: The Sin of the Angels **(Text No. 50)**

Consider:

- That it was an angel – so sublime in every way – that sinned – a truly heavenly spirit, O God, and you did not spare – but me! a worm of the earth! and you did spare!
- That it was not one angel but innumerable angels, and not a single one found mercy – though it was only a sin of thought – and lo, my sins of thought and word and deed and omission! And you spared me!

The Fall of the Angels

Apocalypse Ch. 12

"And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.

"And another sign appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth...

"Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

"And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short...."

Apostrophe to Satan

Isaiah 14:12

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!

"You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.'

"But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit. Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'

"All the kings of the nations lie in glory, each in his own tomb; but you are cast out, away from your sepulchre, like a loathed untimely birth, clothed with the slain, those pierced by the sword, who go down to the stones of the Pit, like a dead body trodden under foot..."

King of Tyre as a Type of Satan

Ezekiel 28

"Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god, though you consider yourself as wise as a god...

"You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God.

"Every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, beryl, and onyx, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald; and wrought in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared.

"With an anointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked.

"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor... you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more for ever."

- That the angels sinned once and were thrown out of heaven and into hell, and I, how many times! And still heaven is open to me!
- That the angels were judged, condemned and punished in the instant of their sin, and how many months and years You have given me, O Lord, for repentance and forgiveness!
- That there was just no redemption for the fallen angels – yet to me is extended Your hand of mercy and forgiveness!

“What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.” Psalm 115/116:12

Second Point: The Sin of Adam and Eve (Text No. 51)

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:8-13)

A catastrophic tragedy! An overwhelming evil! A cataclysmic upheaval! A fatal calamity! A deadly disaster! An irrevocable perversion!

This sin is closer to me even than the sin of the angels for I am born a child of woman of the seed of Adam – and this is a sin of the nature which I possess.

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not.” (Job 14:1-2)

Nine hundred years of penance and they did not expiate their sin!

I behold the despicable effects of this horrible sin in the inherent and obstinate and perduring pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, envy, anger and sloth of my own heart!

I behold the whole of creation upset by the tragic violence of this sin:

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God...” (Romans 8:19)

I contemplate my personal losses in this moral upheaval: I am suffering a slowness and dullness of mind: learning with such difficulty; often not comprehending truth; often clinging to error; suffering from prejudices and irrationalities of various sorts; I am suffering from a great weakness of will in my pursuit of good, even at times knowing choosing the lesser to the greater good – even in these very exercises themselves, finding this good course hard going; I suffer from all the concupiscences – even now having difficulty in generating in myself a horror of sin.

What a terrible thing! Expelled from paradise! Heaven closed! Hell opened! And this in eternity!

DISTURBANCE OF THE FAITHFUL

Some current views "repeated with a display of erudition and broadcast in periodicals and some theological dictionaries, cannot but disturb many minds. The faithful who are used to taking seriously the warnings of Christ and the apostolic writers, have the impression that writings of this kind are intended to effect a change of public opinion on the matter. Those of the faithful who have some acquaintance with biblical and religious sciences are asking how far the process of demythologization is to go under the aegis of a certain type of hermeneutics.(p.210)

TEACHING OF THE FATHERS

"As early as the second century of the Christian era Melito of Sardis wrote a work, *On the Devil*; it would be difficult to name a single Father who was completely silent on the subject. Those most concerned to shed light on the devil's action were, evidently, the writers who were trying to show the divine plan in history, especially St. Irenaeus and Tertullian, St. Victorinus of Pettau at a later date, and, finally St. Augustine." p. 215

COUNCILS OF FLORENCE AND TRENT

"When the Council of Florence spoke of the redemption, it portrayed in biblical terms as a liberation from the domination of Satan. The Council of Trent, summing up the teaching of St. Paul, asserted that sinful man is "under the

THE PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF JESUS

"To begin with, Jesus started His public ministry by allowing the devil to tempt Him in the wilderness. . . Jesus warned His hearers against this enemy in the Sermon on the Mount and in the prayer He taught His disciples. . . In His parables He blamed Satan for the barriers set up against His preaching. . . As He left the supper room He predicted the imminent coming of 'the prince of this world.' These facts and statements - circumstantial, repeated, and consistent among themselves - are not peripheral, nor can they be treated as novelistic intrusions which need to be demythologized. The conclusion is therefore inescapable: *Satan, whom Jesus attacked with His exorcisms and confronted in the wilderness and in His passion, cannot be simply a product of the human ability to tell stories and personify ideas nor a stray survival of a primitive culture and its language.* (p. 212-213)

SATAN IN PAULINE WRITINGS

"The same Apostle who admits that without grace he is helpless before"the law of sin in my members" is also very decisive in his urging that we resist Satan, not allow him to rule us and not to give him any occasion or advantage but trample him under foot. *The reason for this language is that in Paul's eyes Satan is a personal being, 'the god of the present age' and a cunning adversary distinct both from us and from the sin which he urges on us.* p. 214



THE APOCALYPSE AND Satan

"The Apocalypse proclaims the triumph of the Lamb who was slain but we would completely mistake the nature of this victory if we did not see it as the climax of a long struggle in which, through the mediation of human powers that oppose the Lord Jesus, Satan and his angels play a significant role (all these spirits being distinct from one another as their agents on the scene of history. It was for this reason that the Fathers of the Church were convinced from scripture that Satan and the demons are the enemies of man's redemption, and they did not fail to remind the faithful of their existence and action.(p.215)

power of the devil and of death." In saving us, God 'has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us in to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and remission of sins,' while those who sin after baptism 'have given themselves over to. . . the power of the devil.'

**Third Point: The Sin of One Who Went to Hell
Because of One Mortal (Capital) Sin
(Text No. 52)**

*"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagles."
(Psalm 102/103:2)*

"He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure." (Ps 39/40:2)

Contemplate comparatively your sins with those of a soul now in hell either: 1) for fewer sins than I have actually committed; or 2) for having sinned with less pressure from pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, envy, anger, or sloth that I have.

Consider that every soul in hell is a soul that has not been either rescued or preserved from the path to hell as I have been.

Try to let it sink in that there was a time when I either fully deserved (but did not get) the eternal punishment of hell – or a time when I was in dire need of intervention (and got it) lest, given my proneness to sin, I would surely have placed myself in that position.

COLLOQUY: Text No. 53: I shall make this colloquy in words such as these:

"O good, most sweet, and most merciful Jesus, how can I contemplate You nailed to the cross in such agony for my sins without being plunged wholly into sorrow, gratitude and love: when Your infinite love for me, even while I was in sin, was the sole reason why You decided to become one of us human beings and to save me from eternal ruin by such a horrible death?

"Thus have You, my Good Shepherd, sought me out. Though I have richly deserved abandonment, You did not desert me. O my crucified Love! What shall I say of you? I can – I can even now be saved! I most seriously desire it!

"I take myself to task for having done nothing really worthwhile for You, O Jesus, while You have done so very much for me by offering every merit of Your life to the Father, from the first moment to the very last – for me!

"But what shall I do now, finally, at last? Everything You ask, O Lord, just speak for I am listening. First of all is my determination to spend every effort avoiding henceforward every least shadow of sin. Secondly, I intend to place no obstacle to the full effect of these Exercises, in order that You may call me, O Lord, to whatever degree of holiness You wish, even to such a death as you sought out for my sake.

"Thus, looking upon You, my crucified Savior, I shall no longer be silent, but shall speak forth my intent toward the serious amendment and reformation of my life. May this word be done unto me, O Lord Jesus. Amen" (Winginger op. cit. p. 22)

A Meditation on One's Own Sins **(Text No. 55-61)**

Note: The previous exercise will have produced a certain abashment and embarrassment and confusion in one's soul at the evident undeserved preferential love of God for one. In this exercise the movement advances to grief and sorrow for my own sins.

First Prelude: The history: bring to mind the story of my life up to now – the various periods: childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity; the various places where I have lived; the occupations and employments in which I have been engaged.

"Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool."
(Ecclesiastes 10:3)

Second Prelude: In its expression this second prelude is the same as in the prior exercise, but in its overtones it is quite different. "I am to see my soul as a prisoner in this corruptible body" (but now aware that original sin has given me, in addition, what might be called a very unpleasant character) "And my whole composite being as an exile here on earth, cast out to live among brute beasts" (but now with an awareness that I have done nothing to mitigate or improve my sorry plight – on the contrary, I have done much to make it worse).

"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." (Romans 3:11-14)

Third Prelude: Again I ask for the grace which I want and desire: "the grace of a growing and intense sorrow and tears for my sins." What I ask is "contrition" and not "mere remorse." St. Peter had "contrition"; he repented because of the pain in the eyes of Jesus; Judas had mere remorse: the realization of what he had done shattered his self-esteem. The intense sorrow and tears which I seek are to be God-directed.

"O Lord Jesus, through that sorrow by which You yourself were touched and transfixed in heart and deeply grieved by my sins, grant, I implore You, to my own heart the grace of an intense sorrow; I ask You for a share in that overflowing grief and in those tears which you felt and shed for me in your prayer upon the cross."

First Point: The Record of my sins

"I will call to mind all the sins of my life, reviewing year by year, period by period. Three things will help me in this: First, to consider the place where I lived; secondly my dealings with others; thirdly the office I have held." (Text No. 56)

“Period by period”: some sins are characteristic of age: childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity; “places where I have lived”: some sins are characteristic of the home: disobedience, disrespect, unkindness, selfishness, jealousy, envy, quarrelsomeness; some sins are characteristic of neighborhoods: provocation of the aged, gossip, property destruction, harmful pranks; some sins are characteristic of schools: various forms of dishonesty; envies, unkind rivalries, vanity of dress and speech; cheating in exams, hypocrisy; some sins are characteristic of dealing with others: boasting, telling lies, detraction, argumentation, bitterness; some sins are characteristic of occupations: servility to those above one, tyranny and possessiveness to those under one, prejudice against some, favoritism to others, cheating in various forms, unfairness in judgment; some sins are characteristic of religious life – of married life – of single life in the world.

“Why do you boast, O mighty man, of mischief done against the godly? All the day you are plotting destruction. Your tongue is like a sharp razor, you worker of treachery. You love evil more than good, and lying more than speaking the truth. You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. But God will break you down for ever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living.” (Psalm 51/52:1-7)

Second Point: The Evil of Sin

“I will weigh the gravity of my sins, and see the loathsomeness and malice which every capital sin (pride, covetousness, lust, glutton, envy, anger, sloth) has in itself, even though it were not forbidden.” (Text No. 57)

Picture to yourself a person given wholly to pride – a miser given wholly to avarice – one plunged entirely into lust – a person living for food and drink, a sheer glutton – one consumed with envy – another mad with anger – a “slug-a-bed” immobile in sloth – how disgusting – how sickening to see even a little of each of these in my own person!

“But thou, O GOD my Lord, deal on my behalf for thy name’s sake; because thy steadfast love is good, deliver me! For I am poor and needy, and my heart is stricken within me. I am gone, like a shadow at evening; I am shaken off like a locust. My knees are weak through fasting; my body has become gaunt. I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they wag their heads. Help me, O LORD my God! Save me according to thy steadfast love! Let them know that this is thy hand; thou, O LORD, hast done it!” (Psalm 108/109:21-27)

Third Point: The insolent audacity and arrogance of my sin

“I will consider who I am, and by means of examples humble myself...” (Text No. 58)

- A miniature in an expanding universe measured in billions of light years!
- One person in a count of 4,000,000,000 souls!
- A mere human contrasted to many more billions of angels: (In one night *one “angel of the LORD went forth, and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.” (II Kings 19:35)* All behold me defying God! Beneath contempt!
- Myself vs. God! The Infinite, the All-present, the All-powerful, the All-good, the All-wise, the Omniscient God! Incredible!

Fourth Point: The Greatness of the God against whom I have sinned.

"I will consider who God is against whom I have sinned, going through His attributes and comparing them with their contraries in me..." (Text No. 59)

"Moses said, 'I pray thee, show me thy glory.' And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy'. But, he said, 'you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live.'" (Exodus 33:18-20)

"His wisdom with my ignorance" - "The joy of the fool lies in wrongdoing, but the joy of the man of discernment in acquiring wisdom." (Proverbs 10:23)

"His power with my weakness" - "I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances; those who see me in the street flee from me." (Psalm 30/31:11)

"His justice with my iniquity" - "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)

"His goodness with my wickedness" - "You felt secure in your wickedness, you said, 'No one sees me'; your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray." (Isaiah 47:10)

Fifth Point: The Wonder of Divine Tolerance

"This is a cry of wonder accompanied by surging emotion as I pass in review of all creatures. How is it that they have permitted me to live and have sustained me in life..." (Text No. 60)

Considering the effrontery of my sin, I cannot help wondering that:

- Instead of swallowing me alive, the earth sustained me: *for so God's Goodness to me ordained.*
- Instead of withdrawing from me to my suffocation, the air even refreshed me, *for so God's Goodness to me ordained.*
- Instead of burning me to a crisp or leaving me to my darkness, the sun kept on warming me and lighting my way, *for so God's Goodness to me ordained.*
- Instead of tearing me to pieces as I so richly deserved, the animals gave themselves to me for food and service, *for so God's Goodness to me ordained.*
- Instead of turning to poison for my death, the foods of the world pleased, nourished and sustained me, *for so God's Goodness to me ordained.*

I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel which he has granted them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. (Isaiah 63:7)

COLLOQUY: "I will conclude with a colloquy, extolling the mercy of God our Lord, pouring out my thoughts to Him, and giving thanks to Him that up to this very moment He has granted me life. I will resolve with His grace to amend for the future." (Text No. 61)

The colloquy might be expressed in words such as these:

“O Good and Infinitely Merciful God! What would have happened to me if, as to thousands of others, death had suddenly snatched me from among the living and brought me before the Tribunal of your strict Justice?

“Alas, I would by now be judged! Alas I would by now be damned! I would right now be burning in the eternal fires of hell!

“But this has not happened! I am still alive! With what affection and gratitude ought I to praise your Infinite Mercy, O my God! Without delay, therefore, shall my gratitude and appreciation lead me to a thorough and genuine emendation of my whole way of living.

“May your grace grant me the irrevocable decision and irreversible will to carry out this resolution to full execution!” Amen.

Mea Culpa

*How dare I think of Judas as betrayer,
Only fit to turn from and despise
Or be aghast at Peter, who could fashion
The lie of lies?*

*Have I not failed a hundred times or more
To stand beside my Lord in steadfastness?
Have I not sometimes taken thirty coins
Or even less?*

A. Love
Sacred Heart Messenger
March 1963

Council of Trent: Decree concerning Justification. Sixth Session.

Canon 30. If anyone says that after the reception of the grace of justification the guilt is so remitted and the debt of eternal punishment so blotted out to every repentant sinner, that no debt of temporal punishment remains to be discharged either in this world or in purgatory before the gates of heaven can be opened, let him be anathema.

Decree concerning the Sacrament of Penance. Fourteenth Session.

Canon 4. If anyone denies that for the full and perfect remission of sins three acts are required on the part of the penitent, constituting as it were the matter of the sacrament of penance, namely, contrition, confession and satisfaction, which are called the three parts of penance; or says that there are only two parts of penance, namely, the terrors of a smitten conscience convinced of sin and the faith received from the Gospel or from absolution, by which one believes that his sins are forgiven him through Christ, let him be anathema.

Canon 5. If anyone says that the contrition which is evoked by examination, recollection and hatred of sins, whereby one recounts his years in the bitterness of his soul, by reflecting on the grievousness, the multitude, the baseness of his sins, the loss of eternal happiness, and the incurring of eternal damnation, with a purpose of amendment, is not a true and beneficial sorrow, does not prepare for grace, but makes a man a hypocrite and a greater sinner: finally, that this sorrow is forced and not free and voluntary, let him be anathema.

Canon 12. If anyone says that God always pardons the whole penalty together with the guilt and that the satisfaction of the penitents is nothing else than the faith by which they perceive that Christ has satisfied for them, let him be anathema.

Canon 13. If anyone says that satisfaction for sins, as to their temporal punishment, is in no way made to God through the merits of Christ by the punishments inflicted by him and patiently borne, or by those imposed by the priest, or even those voluntarily undertaken, as by fasts, prayers, almsgiving or other works of piety, and that therefore the best penance is merely a new life, let him be anathema.

Canon 14. If anyone says that the satisfactions by which penitents atone for their sins through Christ are not a worship of God but traditions of men, which obscure the doctrine of grace and the true worship of God and the beneficence itself of the death of Christ, let him be anathema.

The Canonical Discipline

What does the title mean?

Our Lord gave his followers a *command* to do penance. The Church by its canons, or laws, has made *determinations* in this matter. These constitute the canonical discipline of penance.

Where is the “contemporary” canonical discipline of penance found?

The basic document is the Apostolic Constitution *Paenitemini* of February 17, 1966 (hereafter, in references, *Paenit.*). It is for the *whole* Church. It is considered a model of post-conciliar legislation. The second document is from the *S. Cong. of the Council* of February 24, 1967 (hereafter, SCC) interpreting the word *substantial* as it is used in *Paenitemini* in describing the observance required. Besides the above two papal documents, there are two U.S. *episcopal* documents: the Statement of the N.C.C.B. on *Penitential Observance for the Liturgical Year*, of November 18, 1966 (hereafter NCCB), and the *Statement of Clarification: Current Discipline on Days of Penance* by the Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices of the NCCB of January 14, 1974 (hereafter C-NCCB).

What “times” are determined for penance?

Two: the *Season* of Lent and the “*Days of Penance*.” This latter is a new term. (*Paenit.*)

What are the “Days of Penance”?

Ash Wednesday and *all the Fridays of the year*. (*Paenit.*)

(C-NCCB: In the United States, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops wished that the Days of Penance “remain Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of the year.” *Paenitemini* gave Bishops the faculty to transfer Days of Penance.)

What is the “obligation” to keep the Days of Penance?

Paenit.: “The substantial observance of the Days of Penance binds seriously (*graviter*).”

This received the following official *interpretation*:

SCC: “One who omits, without an excusing motive, a *notable* part – notable that is, quantitatively or qualitatively – of *all* the Days of Penance, sins gravely against the law.”

C-NCCB: “The teaching of Pope Paul may be simply paraphrased: the obligation to do penance is a serious one; the obligation to observe, as a whole or “substantially” the penitential days specified by the Church is also serious. No one should be scrupulous in this regard: failure to keep individual days of penance is not considered serious; rather it is the failure to observe any penitential days at all or a substantial number of such days which must be considered serious. People should seek to do more rather than less: fast and abstinence on the days prescribed, works of religion and charity on the Fridays outside of Lent should be considered a minimal response to the Lord’s call to penance and conversion of life.”

What “forms” of penance are determined?

On *Ash Wednesday* and *Good Friday*: fast and abstinence (*Paenit.*, C-NCCB, cf. NCCB): On the *Fridays of Lent*: abstinence (*Ibid.*)

Born in Mattoon, Illinois, Father Sparks entered the Order of Preachers in 1921 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1930. Presently, a chaplain and professor at the Dominican Motherhouse in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, he holds a Ph.D. from the Angelicum in Rome.

(From May 1979, THE PRIEST)

**Pharaoh's Chariots vs.
The Horsemen of God**

**St. Bernard on "The Song of Songs"
Sermon 39:5-6**

Greater courage is shown and greater glory achieved in overthrowing the devil rather than Pharaoh, in conquering spiritual powers rather than Pharaoh's chariots.

Would you wish me to designate some of Pharaoh's captain's by their proper names, and describe his chariots for you, so that you may discover for yourselves if there be any others like them? One mighty captain of the spiritual and invisible king of Egypt is Malice, another is Sensuality, another Avarice. Each of them possesses, under his king, the territory assigned to him. Malice therefore is in command wherever the wicked commit their crimes; Sensuality presides over shameful rites of lust, while thievery and fraud are within the domain of Avarice.

And now let us look at the chariots prepared by Pharaoh for his princes to persecute the people of God. Malice has a chariot with four wheels named Cruelty, Impatience, Recklessness and Impudence. This chariot's swift sorties mean the shedding of blood, nor can it be stopped by innocence, nor delayed by patience, nor checked by fear nor inhibited by shame. It is drawn by two vicious horses ready to destroy as they go, earthly Power and worldly Pomp. They are the source of its dazzling speed, for Power gallops where evil beckons, and Pomp courts popular favor in pursuit of dishonest ends... And these two horses are driven by two coachmen called Arrogance and Envy; Arrogance drives Pomp, Envy urges on Power.

The chariot of Sensuality also rolls along with four vices for wheels: Gluttony, Lust, Seductive Dress and Enervation, that is, the offspring of sloth and inertia. And it is drawn by two horses, Prosperous Life and Abundance of Goods. The two coachmen are Lazy Languor and False Security. These coachmen have neither spurs nor whips nor any instrument of this kind; instead they carry a canopy for shade and a fan to freshen the air. The canopy's name is Dissimulation, and its purpose to provide a shade to ward off the heat of human cares... The fan is Permissiveness, that stirs up flattery like a breeze.

Avarice, too, has vices for its four wheels: Pusillanimity, Inhumanity, Contempt of God, Forgetfulness of Death. The beasts to which it is yoked are Obstinacy and Rapacity, and one coachman drives them whose name is Greed for Gain. Avarice is a solitary vice that cannot endure many retainers; one servant suffices. But he is a prompt and tireless executor of the task in hand, lashing his horses onward with cruel whips called Craving to Acquire and Fear of Loss.

The ruler of Egypt has still other captains whose chariots are used in their lord's service, for example Pride, who is one of the more important captains, along with that enemy of the faith, Impiety, whose position is so influential in Pharaoh's palace and kingdom. Besides these, Pharaoh's army contains many officers and nobles of inferior rank whose number is almost countless. What their names are and their duties, their armor and equipment, I leave to you yourselves to pursue as a project of study.

A REPETITION OF THE TWO PRECEDING MEDITATIONS

On Three Sins **On Personal Sin**

Note: During the repetitions of previous exercises, one lingers on those matters in which one has experienced “the greatest consolation, desolation, or the greatest spiritual relish” (Ex. 62, 118) *This return* to previous areas of special consolation and desolation helps one to notice particularly just where one is with the divine will (in consolation) and just where one is short of the divine will (in desolation). These consolations and desolations accentuate the exercitant’s spontaneous, yet often hidden *likes and dislikes* which may (in consolation) or may not (in desolation) be in accord with the divine will and the demands of one’s true self.

Preparatory Prayer: “Grant me, O Lord, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of Your Divine Majesty.”

First Prelude: To see in imagination my soul as a prisoner in this corruptible body, and to consider my whole composite being as an exile here on earth, cast out to live among brute beasts. (Text No. 47)

Second Prelude: I ask that I may have a deeper sense of God’s incomprehensible predilection for me and an overwhelming gratitude as I review the meditation on the Sin of the Angels, the sin of Adam, the sin of the damned soul; also, I ask for a far more intense sorrow and at least interior tears for my sins as I review the meditation on Personal Sin.

POINTS: This exercise will consist in repeating the First and Second Exercise. In doing this, we should pay attention to and dwell upon those points in which we have experienced greater consolation or desolation or greater spiritual appreciation.

Note: The points themselves, as given in the two meditations to be repeated here, are not to be reviewed in some sort of vague and general way. No, full attention, vigorous mental effort and energetic action is to be expended to know sin, as far as possible in its complete and infinite perversity; and sin first in its relation to God: the unique and sole evil by which He is offended and by which His external Glory is diminished, in as far as a creature can do this; and sin second in its relationship to myself, namely to see it as the unique obstacle to my salvation, the cause of eternal loss and punishment. In this way I shall be moved to make much of the Divine Mercy, which, although I have so often deserved hell, still I am not numbered among those who have already perished. I can still be saved by extricating myself from the chains of sin.

At the end I make three colloquies in the following manner:

FIRST COLLOQUY: The first colloquy will be with our Blessed Lady, that she may obtain grace for me from her Son and Lord for three favors:

1. A deep knowledge of my sins and a feeling of abhorrence for them;
2. An understanding of the disorder of my actions, that filled with horror of them, I may amend my life and put it in order;
3. A knowledge of the world, that filled with horror, I may put away from me all that is worldly and vain. Then I will say a Hail Mary.

“The more desperate the need in which I find myself, O Mary, the greater is my confidence in appealing to You, ‘Mother of Mercy’ and ‘Refuge of Sinners.’

“O my Mother, alas, I do not yet find in myself anything near that intense or powerfully moving horror of sin which I want and so badly need.

“I do not even really grasp the full depth of my sin and certainly I do not find in myself as yet that degree of hatred of sin that would move me effectively to total conversion and to become truly ‘a new creature in Christ Jesus,’ your Son. (2 Cor 5:17)

“Please, therefore, ‘Sight of the Blind’ – ‘Full of Grace’ – ‘Mother and Mediatrix of all divine favors’ – intercede with your Son for me that I may have the grace of a full knowledge of my crimes, of an intense detestation of them, of utter compunction, of sincere conversion, so that I may direct the course of my life to Him through whom I was created and that I may live according to the end for which He destined me.

“Obtain for me the grace of total conversion, that is, that I may face the full impact of the damnable malice of my whole life, the disorder of my modes of action and the vanity of every aspect of my worldliness.

“Win for me the divine movement that will remove completely from me whatever does not lead me to my true end and that will make me persevere in a life of total dedication to the divine service, just as you, Mother of God, wished to be known as the handmaid of the Lord, a role which you filled perfectly.

“May I embrace happily and gladly the most holy Divine Will as the norm of all my actions, the norm to follow closely in all things. For this intention I now recite earnestly and affectionately the prayer most pleasing to you as my Patroness and Advocate: Hail Mary, etc.” (Weninger, p. 32)

SECOND COLLOQUY: I will make the same petitions to her Son that He may obtain these graces from the Father for me. After that I will say Soul of Christ.

“From your Mother I now turn to You, her Son, imploring through her intercession the same divine favors. Behold, Your Mother prays with me, with me she appeals to your Infinite Kindness and unlimited Goodness.

“Have mercy on me, Your creature, my Jesus, your creature whom You have redeemed by Your precious blood and holy death on the cross – and grant me this twofold grace, namely that I may fully grasp my sins and thoroughly abhor them and that I may turn from all my evil ways and make a perfect and full amendment and thus totally turn to God as my ultimate and true destiny.

“Thus I beg you, O Lord; thus I appeal to You, O Jesus. Hear me through the prayers of Your most sorrowful Mother. With greatest confidence I beg this from You.

“I place myself, as it were, on Calvary and kneel before Your cross, embracing it, as once Your servant Ignatius did, I appeal to You with an affectionate heart:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me – Body of Christ, save me – Blood of Christ, inebriate me – Water from the side of Christ, wash me – Passion of Christ, strengthen me – O Good Jesus, hear me – permit me not to be separated from Thee – From the Wicket foe defend me – At the hour of my death call me – and bid me come to Thee – that with Thy saints I may praise Thee – for ever and ever. Amen.

THIRD COLLOQUY: I will make the same petition to the Father that He Himself, the eternal Lord, may grant them to me. Then I will close with the Our Father.

“Now through Your Son, Almighty God and Father, I come a suppliant, and raise my eyes and heart to You, just as I came to Your Son through His Mother.

“Father, just as You began this work in me through Your Son, so bring it to completion by granting me overwhelming and powerful graces clearly to see my deficiencies, and the abyss of my iniquity so that my tears of serious repentance may move me to complete reformation.

“Since ‘*all that is good, everything that is perfect, which is given us from above*’ (James 1:16) from You, Father of light, I implore this gift from You through the infinite merits of my Savior, Your only-begotten Son.

“You surely will not deny me that for which Your very grace urges me so insistently to ask. With firm and vivid faith I appeal to that promise which Your Son our Lord made to us when he said: ‘*I tell you most solemnly, anything you ask for from the Father, He will grant it in My name.*’ (John 16:23)

“You will grant, therefore, heavenly Father this favor which I ask for at this very moment in the name of Your Son Jesus, solely for Your greater glory and the salvation of my soul, and I do this in the words of the prayer He has taught us. Our Father, etc.”

Candle Light

*Day has its sun,
And night the stars
But God has candle light.*

*Upon the world’s great
candle-stick He sets
The little taper of yourself
ashine,
That when the Sun has sputtered out,
And all the stars are dead,
Your immortality may flame
and burn
Across His infinite immensity
forever.*

*Wherefore He will sometime
Blow out the sun,
And snuff the stars.*

Preferring candle-light.

--Sister Madeleva

Third Day - From Sin to Redemption Devotion

General Aim: To move from the spirituality of the Purgative Way to that of the Illuminative. To become devoted to Jesus Christ as one's way to salvation out of the abyss of sin and sinfulness. To take the first steps in the movement from fear to love.

The meditations of today look to Christ and call for Him. It is through Christ that one is to be saved from the hell on which we meditate. It is only through Christ that we are assured of the divine Mercy presented in the Parables of Mercy. And so we pass on this transition day to the meditation on the Kingdom of Christ.

**Prayer Subjects
For This Day**

First Meditation: On Hell

1. To see in imagination the Vast Fires
2. To smell the filth and corruption
3. To taste the bitterness of tears, etc.
4. To hear the wailing, the howling, etc.
5. To feel the flames, etc.

Second Meditation: On the Prodigal Son

1. The Departure of the Son
2. The Conversion of the Son
3. The Return of the Son

Third Meditation: The Kingdom of Christ

Part I:

1. The Parable: the Human King
2. His Person, His Call, and the Response

Part II:

1. Applying the Parable to Jesus
2. His Person, His Call, and the responses.

**The Nature of
This Exercise**

This exercise is a transition from the First to the Second Week of the Exercises. It is a consideration of the "situation" – a sort of "looking over" the situation of Jesus Christ, the world of men, and the way various types respond to Christ. There are those who do not hear the call of Christ at all; there are those who hear it and join because of their own sound judgement and common sense; and finally there are those to whom the Person of Jesus appeals more strongly than His Cause, who are moved more by love and whose dedication goes farther.

A Meditation on Hell

“Besides the preparatory prayer and two preludes it contains five and one colloquy.” (Text No. 65)

Introductory Note

There are “five” points, because, unless we enter into ourselves again and bid adieu to sin in our life, the pains of hell will affect our “five” senses. These five senses, therefore, make up for St. Ignatius the five points of this meditation.

There is “one” colloquy (perhaps often to be repeated) which is a unique aspiration of the soul to be freed from this unique most terrible and deadly fate by the “ONE” who can snatch us from it, namely, the “*only one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” (1 Tim 2:5)

Pull yourself together now while there is time and ponder within yourself how you are to meditate on this horrible truth. Truly, even if hell had no relationship to you personally, you still ought to view it with horror, considering only this: there actually is such a place into which souls are actually running and which is a threat to yourself as well.

Just as you can feel horror and disgust in seeing another in the advanced stage of a foul disease, so you can feel within yourself a personal recoil from it. But what is a temporary momentary illness compared to hell and that for eternity?

This hell really exists. This hell threatens you! You who read this and are about to meditate about it, for, unless you often and seriously do this, the danger to you becomes personally imminent, lest you descend thither in a living death. It is most necessary, therefore, to expend every effort to descend into Hell in meditation only, so that meditating on these terrible things your contemplation will bear great fruit. (Weninger, p. 34)

Preparatory Prayer: “Grant me, O Lord, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of Your Divine Majesty.”

First Prelude: “to see in imagination the length, breadth, and depth of hell.” (Text No. 65)

Just as at times the demons from hell have stimulated my imagination with alluring images in glowing color of the sensual pleasures of sin in order to draw me through them into the fires of hell, so now I compel my very same imagination to place before my mind all that the sensual pleasures of sin lead me to. I see in imagination

the Length! - the Breadth! - the Depth! - of Hell!!!!

“But that is not all: between us and you a great gulf has been fixed, to stop anyone, if he wanted to, crossing from our side to yours and to stop any crossing from your side to ours.” (Luke 16:26)

“And the rich man also died and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.” (Luke 16:22)

Second Prelude: “I should ask for what I desire. Here it will be to beg for a deep sense of the pain which the lost suffer, that if because of my faults I forget the love of the eternal Lord, at least the fear of these punishments will keep me from falling into sin.” (Text No. 65)

Ignatius uses the word “desire” (the Latin volo: I will) not mere “wish” (velam). If I do not intend and decide to consider seriously all that follows and to apply myself effectively to these considerations, my meditation will be but an exercise in futility. To meditate coolly in the midst of such horrendous and immense fires will profit nothing. (This holds for all meditations: “that which I desire” is more than “that which I should merely like to have.”) What joy a superficial meditation on hell brings to the devil! Such prayer can motivate neither effective efforts for one’s own salvation nor fruitful work for the salvation of many others.

First Point

“This will be to see in imagination the vast fires, and the souls enclosed, as it were, in bodies of fire.” (Text No. 66)

Visualize a sea of flames in which the soul burns darkly in the shadows of an eternal night – all around it a burning power beyond any on earth – originally meant as *“the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt 25:42)*

“Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. For every one will be salted with fire.” (Mark 9:48-49) (as meat is salted in the brine).

“And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10)

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:14-15)

Second Point

“To hear the wailing, the howling, cries, and blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against His saints.”

Imagine the horror that would encompass us if suddenly we were exposed to the sound of millions of damned souls screaming with pain, wailing in crescendos of agony and fading to whimpering despair – a vast jumble of curses – cursing themselves – cursing each other – cursing God – the saints who had preached to them – defiant, harsh noise – remorse aplenty but contrition none – vast sounds of hate, none of love –

“Woe to them, for they have strayed from me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against me! I would redeem them, but they speak lies against me. They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds.” (Hosea 7:13-14)

The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14)

Let us: *"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* (Matt 7:13-14)

Third Point

"With the sense of smell to perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and corruption."
(Text No. 68)

How sensitive I am to foul, disgusting, and nauseating odors! Yet what are these compared to the noisome foulness in which so many damned persons are packed in an intense stinking congestion. What would happen if here and now just for a moment I would be allowed to smell that odor? St. Basil refers to damned souls living, as it were, in dead bodies ever corrupting more and more and suffering the foul odor of their own corruption with never a moment's interruption and never a sight of an ending!

Fourth Point

"To taste the bitterness of tears, sadness and remorse of conscience."

It will help to recall any experience one may have had of tasting an emetic, i.e. a drug which induces nausea and vomiting. This, indeed would be little as contrasted with the taste of hellish disgust by which the damned are tormented – all the while hungering like starved dogs for food they cannot tolerate without retching – all the while thirsting beyond belief in the immense heat of hell without even a drop of water on the end of a finger.

"Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame." (Luke 16:24)

What depression! What groaning! What remorse of conscience! Hateful sins keep coming to mind, keeping piercing one's consciousness, like thorns without a shadow of sense. It is through this recurring awareness of their sins that

"their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:48)

Fifth Point

"With the sense of touch to feel the flames which envelope and burn the souls."

There does not seem to be a greater pain on earth than that which can be caused by fire against flesh. It is impossible even to imagine the pain of an impossible situation in which on, for a quarter of an hour would be kept miraculously alive in the midst of the iron-melting heat of a blast furnace in a steel mill! But what should I think of the revealed fire of hell, eternal and so immense! Imagine myself in this burning hell, not knowing the way out – looking forever for a way out – ultimately knowing that there is no way out!

There is no redemption in hell. The “way out” is here and now even though one may have fully merited hell a thousand times – and the way is through serious amendment of life. The more completely one’s reform, the more remote the pains of hell become. Is it possible that I should be ambivalent as to what I must do? Shall I not flee from all sin as I would from the fangs of a rattle snake?

Really up to now I have not fully contemplated the actual loss which the damned suffer. The quality and extent of their soul-suffering and torment escapes my sincerest efforts to comprehend it all. I behold a soul drawn to God as its last end, a soul called to intimate union with the beatifying God, yet held back by the agonizing tension of eternal chains. What a waste! What a loss! What a useless tragedy! What blind despair!

*But you who forsake the LORD,
who forget my holy mountain...
but you did what was evil in my eyes,
and chose what I did not delight in.
Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:
"Behold, my servants shall eat,
but you shall be hungry;
behold, my servants shall drink,
but you shall be thirsty;
behold, my servants shall rejoice,
but you shall be put to shame;
behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart,
but you shall cry out for pain of heart,
and shall wail for anguish of spirit."
(Isaiah 65:11-14)*

COLLOQUY: The meditation is to end by entering into conversation with Christ, our Lord (by whose death we have been redeemed from these flames of hell).

This is to be basically an act of thanksgiving – a colloquy which should be made most affectionately. For this it is necessary

“to recall to memory the souls who are already now in hell.”

I shall see in imagination all the persons who, since the death of Cain to the present point of time have plunged into hell -

“some came there because they did not believe in the coming of Christ; others, though they believed, because they did not keep the commandments.”

What does my own conscience tell me about this last class in relation to myself? To impress myself that there is no security in any age for those committed to a life of sin, I behold in imagination three ages including all time:

1. *Those who were lost before the coming of Christ;*
2. *Those who were lost during His lifetime;*
3. *Those who were lost after His life here on earth.*

"Thereupon, I will give thanks to God our Lord that He has not put an end to my life and permitted me to fall into any of these three classes."

"I shall also thank Him for this, that up to this very moment He has shown Himself so loving and merciful to me."

O Crucified Jesus! When I contemplate you on Mount Calvary, my heart is filled with a tremendous sense of gratitude, for I behold You on the cross as standing between me and the very gulf of hell.

Your most precious blood, O Jesus, has snatched me from such great torments and in my sinfulness I have not accepted my rescue as affectionately as I ought to have done.

A whole ocean would not suffice to extinguish even a single spark of the fires of hell, and lo, one drop of Your most precious blood extinguishes for me all the fires of hell together.

With my gaze fixed upon You on the Cross, I bless Your mercy which has thus spared me the fate of this everlasting burning – a fate I have thoroughly deserved. I am still alive! I can still be saved! Serious repentance is for me!

Moved by the horror of hell which has penetrated my very self in this meditation, I find in Your Cross my only hope and my most certain claim for salvation.

Happy I am not to have been numbered among the many souls lost in the whole world during the thousands of years before Your Coming! Happy am I not to have been counted among those who were lost during Your lifetime, as was Judas, one of the Twelve, and the other thief actually beside You on the cross!

How many have been lost in the centuries that have passed since Your coming! How many infidels! How many heretics! How many even sons of the Church! And I not among them!

What would a damned soul do if it could, as I can, change everything? By your most sweet Heart, pierced for me, I implore You, Lord, hear me, save me and free me from the chains of my sins, lest I slip out of Your hand. You Who created me, have mercy on me! You Who redeemed me, have mercy on me! Our Father, etc.

Words over the Gateway to Hell

-Dante

Through me you pass into the city of woe
Through me you pass into the city of pain
Through me among the people lost for aye.

Justice, the Founder of my fabric moved.
To rear me was a task of Power Divine,
Supremest Wisdom, and Primeval Love,

Before me, things create were none
Save things eternal and eternal I endure
All hope abandon, ye who enter here!

HELL

CANTO III

ARGUMENT.—Dante, following Virgil, comes to the gate of Hell; where, after having read the dreadful words that are written thereon, they both enter. Here, as he understands from Virgil, those were punished who had passed their time (for living it could not be called) in a state of apathy and indifference both to good and evil. Then, pursuing their way, they arrive at the river Acheron; and there find the old ferryman Charon, who takes the spirits over to the opposite shore; which, as soon as Dante reaches, he is seized with terror, and falls into a trance.

“THROUGH me you pass into the city of woe:
Through me you pass into eternal pain:
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric moved:
To rear me was the task of Power divine,
Supremest Wisdom, and primeval Love. 1
Before me things create were none, save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.
All hope abandon, ye who enter here.”

Such characters, in color dim, I marked
Over a portal’s lofty arch inscribed.
Whereat I thus: “Master, these words import
Hard meaning.” He as one prepared replied:
“Here thou must all distrust behind thee leave;
Here be vile fear extinguished. We are come
Where I have told thee we shall see the souls
To misery doomed, who intellectual good
Have lost.” And when his hand he had stretched forth
To mine, with pleasant looks, whence I was cheered,
Into that secret place he led me on.

Here sighs, with lamentations and loud moans,
Resounded through the air pierced by no star,
That e’en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
With hands together smote that swelled the sounds,
Made up a tumult, that forever whirls
Round through that air with solid darkness stained,
Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.

I then, with horror yet encompast, cried:
“O master! what is this I hear? what race
Are these, who seem so overcome with woe?”

He thus to me: “This miserable fate
Suffer the wretched souls of those, who lived
Without or praise or blame, with that ill band
Of angels mixed, who nor rebellious proved,
Nor yet were true to God, but for themselves
Were only. From his bounds Heaven drove them forth
Not to impair his lustre; nor the depth
Of Hell receives them, lest the accursed tribe
Should glory thence with exultation vain.”

I then: “Master! what doth aggrieve them thus,
That they lament so loud?” He straight replied:
“That will I tell thee briefly. These of death
No hope may entertain: and their blind life
So meanly passes, that all other lots
They envy. Fame of them the world hath none,
Nor suffers; Mercy and Justice scorn them both.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass them by.”

And I, who straightway looked, beheld a flag,
Which whirling ran around so rapidly,
That it no pause obtained: and following came
Such a long train of spirits, I should ne’er
Have thought that death so many had despoiled.

When some of these I recognized, I saw
And knew the shade of him, who to base fear
Yielding, abjured his high estate. Forthwith
I understood, for certain, this the tribe
Of those ill spirits both to God displeasing
And to His foes. These wretches, who ne’er lived,
Went on in nakedness, and sorely stung
By wasps and hornets, which bedewed their cheeks
With blood, that, mixed with tears, dropped to their feet,
And by disgustful worms was gathered there.

A Meditation on the Prodigal Son

*“Turn to the Lord and forsake your sins;
pray in His presence and lessen your offenses.
Return to the Most High and turn away from iniquity,
and hate abominations intensely...
How great is the mercy of the Lord,
and His forgiveness for those who turn to Him!” (Sirach 17: 25-29)*

First Prelude: It will be to recall to mind the history of the parable: At that time: “The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking His company to hear what He had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. ‘This man’ they said, ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ So He spoke this parable to them: “A man had two sons, etc. – as in Luke Chapter 15 beginning with verse 11.

Second Prelude: Picture to yourself in imagination the son of the parable now returned and in the embrace of his most affectionate Father as a preparation for my similar embrace by God in full and complete reconciliation.

Third Prelude: It will be to ask of God that which I want and desire. Here I ask the grace of compunction or contrition, the grace of preparing for the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a full remission of all guilt of sin and a complete conversion of my whole life to God and His holy service in such a way that the Almighty may show me in the rest of the retreat how He wishes me to serve Him.

“Lord Jesus, You have given me a parable of immense solace to my soul. Do Thou also grant me the grace of contemplating it during this hour with such spiritual advantage as will effect in my person what you intended to bring about by this parable. Grant that I may truly find through You my most receptive Father.

First Point: The Departure of the Son

“Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.” (Luke 15:13)

One’s first object of consideration should certainly be the ingratitude of this son. Surely he was not badly off in the home of his father, for even the hired help were doing well there. Did he hope to better himself away from home? Hardly, for where would he find another such father? Had he been treated harshly by his father? By such a meek Father as that one?

Why, then, did he leave home? That he might follow the whim of his desires – that he might escape any paternal restraint or advice – that he might get out from under obedience.

Reflect on this ingratitude as a symbol or picture of my own. I have deserted God, my Lord and Father, as often as I have sinned. Against my own conscience and overriding the movements of my guardian angel, I have deserted a most loving Father. I deserted Him but for what reason? What was I lacking in the state of my baptismal innocence?

O Blessed time when no guilt lay upon my conscience! Why did I desert my heavenly Father? Had He offended me? Had He failed to provide for my needs? What ought He to have done that He did not do? And nevertheless, I left my God and Father to indulge my passions casting off the sweet restraint of divine law to live in a far off country in the cloudy land of death for sin has no part in God.

O tragic desertion! What an utter fool to have left You, my good and infinitely good God whom I was bound to serve by so many titles! O eternal Father, I deplore my rashness! I blush for my folly!

Second Point: The Misery of the Son

"And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything." (Luke 15: 14-16)

How sad a state! The word of God is fulfilled in every sinner:

"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he will put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until he has destroyed you." (Deuteronomy 28:47-48)

Tell me, my soul, whether the service of sin went well with thee? How little satisfying was the taste of the furtive delights of the world! *"The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."* (Ecclesiastes 1:8), nor can any creature truly fill a heart which is made for God alone. Those filthy pleasures which I sought in sin are indeed the slop of pigs. At first the devil offers them in great promise, but no sooner does one come to taste them than he begins to withdraw them. The devil can never deliver pleasures which satisfy the desires of the heart.

What a tragic mistake! To have sacrificed the liberty of the sons of God for the slavery of the devil! To have turned from the bread of angels to the garbage of swine! O Lord, Father, what have I done?

"Woe to the rebellious children, who carry out a plan, but not mine; and who make a league, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin." (Isaiah 30:1)

Reach forth your hand, O Lord, and break the chains with which sin binds me!



The Prodigal Son

Third Point: The Conversion of the Son

"But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."' (Luke 15:17-19)

What are you saying, degenerate son? You will go to a father you have freely abandoned? Whom you held in contempt? Whose estate you have dissipated? How do you think he will receive you? Shall he not throw you out of the house in which you did not care to live? Should you not fear the blows with which he will drive you away?

No, these are not the thoughts of the son. "I will go to my father," he says, "I know his heart; I have indeed sinned but he is gentle and forgiving. His heart will be touched." Nor did he hope in vain.

I too shall arise, so I have decided! I shall return to my God in the sacrament of reconciliation in a serious and full conversion. I shall no longer carry the burden of my heart's miseries.

On raising my eyes I behold the heavens, the inheritance I have dissipated. On lowering them I behold the hell I have deserved. On looking around I behold all creatures rebuking my infidelity. On looking within myself I behold only what can shame me. Nevertheless, the divine inspiration drives me on. I behold You, my Father, awaiting my return with open arms. O great Father, God of mercies, look upon me and have pity on me, and carry through with all the enlightening and inspiring grace You have begun in me!

Fourth Point: The Return of the Son

"But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)

Consider all this applying all to your own self. Assume to yourself the sentiments of this son now reconciled to his father. Pour out your own sentiments of contrition, gratitude and joy as you see yourself as embraced by the most merciful Jesus as He draws you to His bosom from the cross and together with the son of the parable, cast yourself in imagination at the feet of your loving and affectionate Father.

Ponder who it is that runs; to whom does He run; and what is the mood of this whole meeting? No single word of reproach is uttered. Only embracing and kissing and calling the whole household to celebration. Ponder the feelings of the son at this reception: for joy and sorrow he cannot even finish the words he had planned to say. Imagine what further plans the Father has for him.

Consider how much more my Father in heaven has done than just wait hopefully for my return: the many graces, internal and external which He has sent after me!

COLLOQUY: The meditation is to end with a brief period of conversation with Jesus, His Father and His Holy Spirit in words such as the following:

O my God of mercy, how could such great Goodness as Yours fail to draw me to contrition and complete conversion? I am all yours! I come to your feet with deep sorrow in my heart.

O true Father of mercies, how You flood me with admiration and consolation when I consider Your infinite kindness toward me! All I can do is exclaim: O Goodness! O Love! O Clemency! O Father!

Who am I that You should show such kindness to me? You called to me while I was fleeing from you. You sought me as I wandered far afield from You. You kept moving me to contrition. You kept offering your pardon, and all the while I was planning further evil. While I was ever designing new sins with which to offend You, You were devising an ever more loving reception.

You have received me into grace. You have washed away all my sins with Your most precious Blood. I behold You, the Lamb of God, who takes away all my sins. O Goodness! O Love! O Clemency!

All creatures – in the heavens and on the earth – in the depths and in the heights of the whole universe – I call upon you to bless the Most Merciful One in all eternity and do not cease to praise Him. He who is mighty, He who is merciful, has done great things to me!

I behold Your open arms, O Lord; I hear Your voice calling, *“Return to Me and I will return to you.”* (Zecharias 1:3) Behold, O Lord, I cast myself at Thy feet. Miserable sinner that I am, I do not expect You to embrace me.

I prostrate myself at Your feet and with all my heart I exclaim: “O my Father, I have sinned, have mercy on me; I have sinned before heaven and before Thee. I, your son, have been dead in sin, O Life, raise him from this death.”

The work of Your hands is perishing, the price of your most precious Blood is being spent in vain. If you wish, You can make me clean. If you wish, You can save me!

Snatch me, O Lord, from the malice of Satan and blot out my iniquity. Wash me, O Jesus, in Your precious Blood and I shall be truly clean. In the name of Your most sweet and pierced Heart, I implore You, O Lord Jesus, to hear me, to save me, to free me from my sins, lest I destroy the work of Your hands.

O my Creator, pity me! O My Redeemer, be merciful to me!

Translated and adapted from Weninger: Exercitia Spiritualia, p. 65

Prenotes to Second Part

The Christ Life

The fruit which has been sought in the First Part of these Spiritual Exercises has been: to recognize under grace that one has wandered from that way which was to have led the creature to the attainment of the true destiny intended by God. It was, consequently, to bring one to a deep grief for this error through serious contrition, to make a good confession of all one's sins and to make a firm determination to return to the right path and to persevere in it forever.

Now in the Second Part of the Exercises it is necessary for one to raise one's eyes to Jesus Christ our Lord and to contemplate His life in order to render one's desire for reform effective and permanent. Jesus is the Model proposed to all men by the heavenly Father. It is through imitation of Him that one is best reformed, one's moral conduct elevated, and one's feet best directed in the paths of peace.

One is to follow, therefore, the footsteps of Jesus who said of Himself: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) In Jesus one has the norm, the model and the ideal of the absolute in virtue and holiness. It follows, therefore, that the closer one's life approximates His, by that degree shall one be the more perfect and thus more fully reach the end for which one was created.

It is for this reason that the Second Part of the retreat corresponds to the "Illuminative Way" since Jesus is the "Sun of Justice" (Malachi 4:2) and is *"the true Light that enlightens every man that comes into this world."* (John 1:9) On the contrary, there is but darkness in a soul oppressed by sin and disorderly affections from which the Exercises of the First Part sought freedom. The more perfectly this freedom will have been attained, the more happily and efficaciously will be the light of Christ shining forth in this Second Part.

At the same time great vigilance is to be exercised lest the old concupiscences rise again and impede the movements of God in the soul. The enemy never sleeps. In the words of Jesus, the devil says ever *"I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."* (Matthew 12:44-45) We may be sure that the evil spirit will capitalize on the least sign of tepidity.

The chief disposition called for in the Second Part of the retreat is one of ardent love and fervor of spirit with a strong desire of progress in the way of perfection through imitation of our Lord in that precise way in which God by His inspirations and the means of grace may lead one.

First of all, therefore, an enlargement of heart is called for. One surely will wish to be able to say *"I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart."* (Psalm 118:32) Certainly one is to put no obstacle in the way of grace. Only with strong, constant and generous spirit is one to follow Jesus, the model and exemplar of life.

For this reason the Second Part of the Retreat begins with the meditation on "Christ the King" which is designed hopefully to engender in the soul a firm intent henceforth of living for God alone in His kingdom by imitating Christ our Lord.

This meditation constitutes, as it were, the “foundation” of the whole Second Part of the retreat and therefore is to be made with special attention and care. Through the subsequent Exercises on the life of Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God will reveal to the retreatant the precise way in which the soul is to imitate Jesus.



“What is the principal source of the fruitfulness of Ignatius’ spirituality? And of the fruitfulness of the Spiritual Exercises, the book in which his spirituality found its most personal and typical expression? This source is to be found, I think, in the union of two factors for the service of God: powerful supernatural logic and passionate love for Christ.”

“There is, first, strong reasoning which already in the Foundation goes straight to the decisive point for a life supernaturalized in its entirety. Then there is, second, enthusiastic love for Jesus, the incomparable Leader – an enthusiasm which moves a person following Him to embrace even poverty and insults in order to be associated with Him in winning the world to the service and glory of the Father.” (Joseph de Guibert, S.J. in “The Jesuits: Their Spiritual Doctrine and Practice”. Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1964)

“In the ‘Kingdom’ the retreatant suddenly advances to a new awareness – that Jesus is calling him to assist in the work of the redemption. It would be comfortable for him simply to bask in the presence of the merciful God as He was seen in the meditations on sin. But the Lord comes with His grace to expand a man’s heart and to give him the desire and generosity to do something about this disordered universe.”

“God moves into the very freedom that is destroying itself in the pursuit of sin and calls it forth to the service of love. All at once a man recognizes the personal presence of God. And with the self-knowledge of the “First Week” he truly understands the prayer of St. Francis: ‘Make me a channel of your peace.’” (John J. English, S.J. in “Spiritual Freedom”, Loyola House. Guelph Ontario Canada, 1975).

“That Which I Want and Desire” – Today

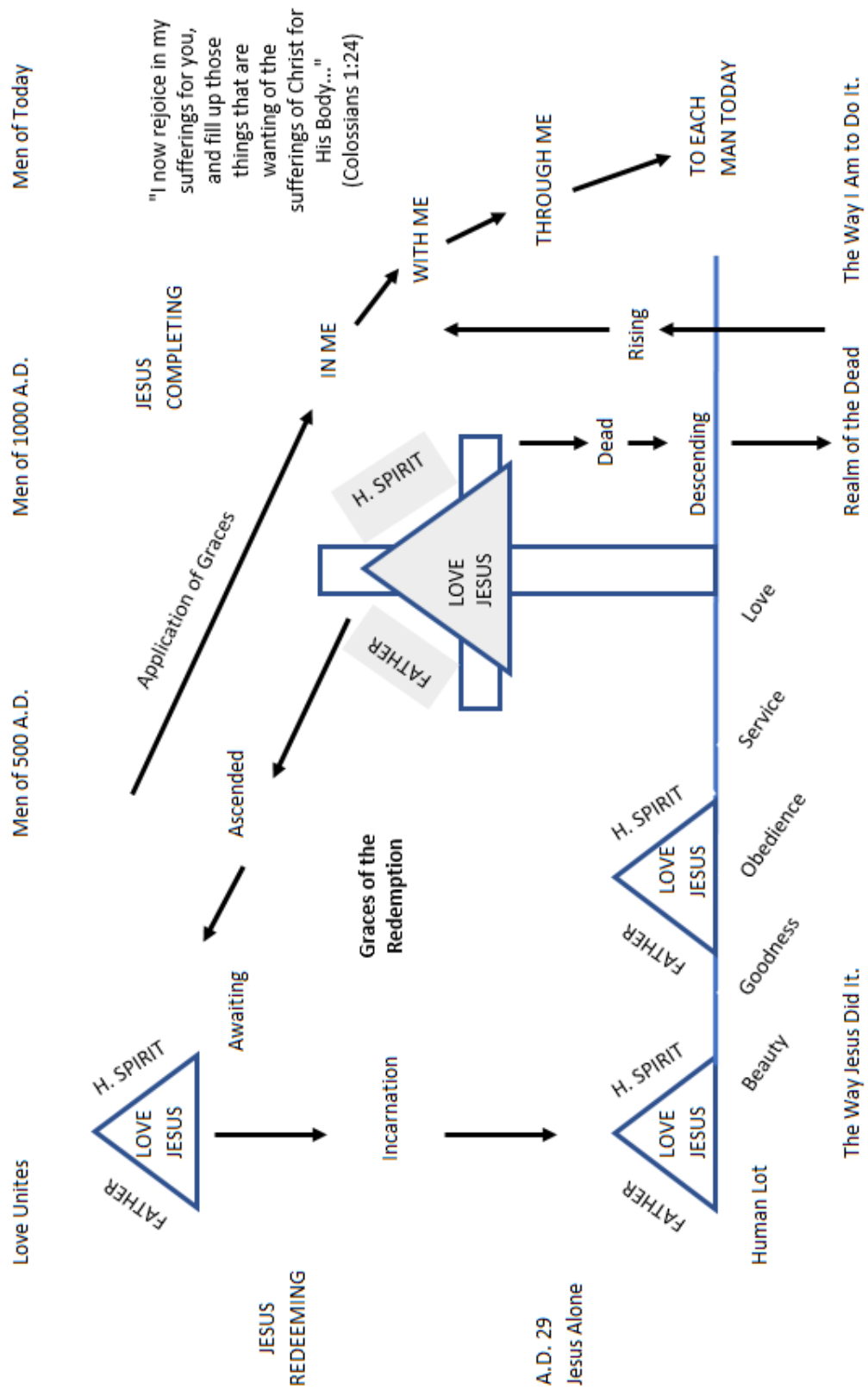
This day I seek to open myself to the graces of a supernatural logic of total self-dedication and of an enthusiastic love of Jesus in order that, as St. Ignatius says in the Text No. 91, “I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most Holy Will.”

As a means to this enthusiastic self-dedication, service, and love, the “what I want and desire” of all my subsequent contemplations on the mysteries of the life of Jesus will be, as St. Ignatius puts it in the Text No. 104: “an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely.”

The Second Vatican Council Speaks

“In the various types and duties of life, one and the same holiness is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father, worshiping God the Father in spirit and in truth. These souls follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ, in order to be made worthy of being partakers in His glory. Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity.” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Section No. 41)

CHART OF THE REDEMPTION



The Kingdom of Christ

A meditation on the parable of the "Call of a Temporal King" as a help to contemplate the life of the eternal King, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Preparatory prayer: I shall beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty (Text No. 46) and I shall offer at once all that I shall do in the whole second "week" in gratitude for the Mission of Jesus on earth, and in particular for those mysteries which I am now about to contemplate in order that I may attain the fruit of this whole part of the Exercises.

First Prelude: This is a mental representation of the place. Here it will be to see in imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Christ our Lord preached.

Second Prelude: I will ask for the grace I desire. Here it will be to ask of our Lord the grace not to be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will. (Text No. 91)

First Point: The Parable: The Human King

*This will be to place before my mind a human king, chosen by God our Lord Himself, to whom all Christian princes and people pay homage and obedience.
(Text Nos. 92, 93, 94)*

Look over quickly the parable itself as given in the text of the Exercises cited above.

Really grant the postulate of St. Ignatius that *this Legendary and ideal king* is really *recognized by all* and is *specially chosen by God* and is *a king of the whole world*, and is *most amiable and faithful to His promises*, is *truly divinely constituted and commissioned*, and by divine revelation is *guaranteed victory* in this campaign and that the *rewards are divinely certified*, and that the campaign is *divinely approved by revelation*.

Hence avoid the pitfall of wondering if there ever were or could be such a king. Simply accept the parable for the sake of its application in the second part.

After finishing the meditation on the second point one can derive further fruit by returning to the parable and thereby find additional applications of the first part considered as an allegory.

Second Point: Jesus Christ as this King

The second part of this exercise will consist in applying the example of the earthly king mentioned above to Christ our Lord according to the following points.

This application will be very easy. One at once sees oneself under a stringent necessity of volunteering for the campaign of Christ the King to a much greater degree than for that of any mere temporal king however good.

"If such a summons of an earthly king to his subjects deserves our attention, how much more worthy of consideration is Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, before whom is assembled the whole world. To all His summons goes forth and to each in particular." (Text No. 95)

Make yourself very vividly aware of Jesus Christ as actually present to you here and now, for that is the way He actually is.

What do you say and do, as Jesus, in His most high Person, appears to you and in a clearly intelligent voice invites you to join Him in the war and the battles of virtue saying:

"It is My will to conquer the whole world and all My enemies...."

It is no terrestrial globe, no worldly reign over the nations that is a matter of concern here but the whole world of human hearts – and the enemies of salvation whose power He has already broken on the cross.

"And thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Therefore, whoever wishes to join Me in this enterprise must be willing to labor with Me, that by following Me in suffering, he may follow Me in Glory."

Certainly, if I really see the loveliness and the power of Jesus, and if I advert to the glorious part He offers me in the victory, I can hardly do otherwise than to:

Consider that all persons who have judgment and reason will offer themselves entirely for this work. (Text No. 96)

When has any Leader so noble ever proposed, or ever could propose a cause to which He could invite His subjects to devote themselves. Indeed, for far lesser leaders, now many have gone willingly to war and deadly combat with only uncertain hope of victory, of money, or fame. And this not directly under the Leader himself but only under one of his subordinates.

What other business is there on earth in which the profit is so great and so certain? How many work day and night in the hope of a little financial gain in the service of men?

But at the call of Christ, as He invites men to possess His kingdom after attractive and splendid labor, and perhaps some little suffering, so many lag behind reluctantly! And do not I also dally at the sound of His call, and even now hold back?

Whatever the past may be, I have reason to be ashamed and abashed at my present indolence! Today, at this minute, I offer my whole life and all my resources and my whole personal genius to the cause of Jesus!

And I want it clearly understood that my aim is not so much a routine commitment necessary for salvation, but rather one of distinguished service!

I will take the advice of the prophet: *"Today if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts."* (Psalm 94/95:8)

Those who wish to give greater proof of their love, and to distinguish themselves in whatever concerns the service of the eternal King and the Lord of all, will not only offer themselves entirely for the work, but will act against their sensuality and carnal and worldly love, and make offerings of greater value and of more importance. (Text No. 97)

It is truly the sign of authentic and outstanding lovers of Jesus not only to maintain a holy indifference, which is the simple duty of every rational creature, an indifference, namely which regards equally opprobrium, poverty and misery, depending solely upon God's holy will, with honors, riches and pleasures in reference to the same divine Will – but rather to advance to a desire, out of love, to imitate and to be more like Jesus and so to prefer opprobrium, poverty and misery. This is the sign of distinguished servants and lovers of Jesus.

The indifference mentioned above is a praiseworthy and rightful response to Christ as God, Lord and Creator. The preference for the latter abnegations is a loving response to Jesus as one's crucified Redeemer!

With the help of divine grace I shall take heart to aspire to this high service. Impelled and strengthened by the force of my affection, and burning with a desire to be an authentic lover of Jesus, an outstanding knight and fellow-campaigner, and with the same inner desire, firm resolution and fervor of spirit with which St. Ignatius prayed in the cave at Manresa, I take my place before You, my Jesus, and as a token of my fidelity and liberality of heart, I address You, saying:

Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favor and help. I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, should Thy most holy majesty deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life.

In this way, O Lord, I hand myself over to You. In making this oblation I wish it to be a holocaust to Your most holy good pleasure so that I am totally yours for every service both in life and death.

This meditation on the Kingdom of Christ is, as it were, the foundation of Christian perfection to which those especially are called who are to make the rest of the Exercises.

In calling the following contemplation on the Incarnation the first exercise of the Second Week, St. Ignatius indicates that this meditation on the Kingdom is out of the usual sequence and has a place in the Second Week similar to that of the "Principle and Foundation" of the First Week.

One should be sure, therefore, to attain the fruit of this Exercise before passing on. The whole effectiveness of all that follows depends on the fervor and firmness of this oblation. The most precious fruit of this Exercise is a generous response to Christ the King calling us to fight for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.



Fourth Day - The First Thirty Years Imitation

General Aim: To begin our exploration of all that is involved in being “willing to labor with me, that by following Me in suffering, he may follow Me in glory.” (Text No. 95)

To arrive at an esteem of the exquisite purity of utter selflessness in one’s commitment to being with Jesus in His work for His Kingdom.

To apprehend the sublimity of the ordinary occupations of life when transformed through grace into supernatural actions.

To generate in our hearts an appreciative love of Jesus in response to His love as manifested in all these years of poverty, obscurity, and labor to merit the graces of our redemption.

**Prayer Subjects
For This Day**

First Contemplation: The Incarnation

1. The Persons of the Mystery
2. The Words of the Mystery
3. The Actions of the Mystery

Second Contemplation: The Nativity

1. The Persons of the Mystery
2. The Words of the Mystery
3. The Actions of the Mystery

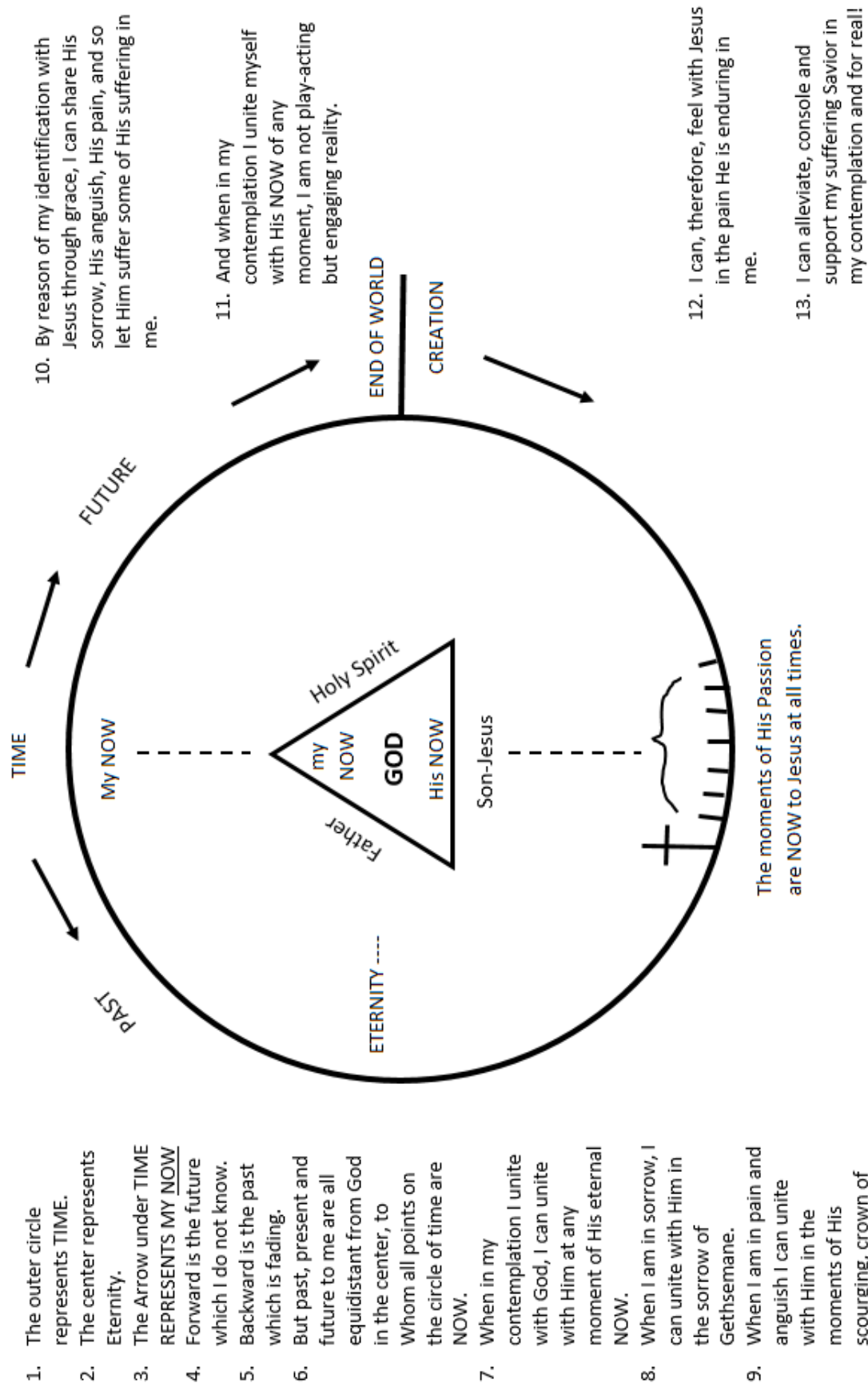
Third Contemplation: The Hidden Life

4. He was Obedient to His Parents
5. Jesus Practiced the Trade of a Carpenter
6. Jesus Advanced in Wisdom and Age and Grace

Contemplation

Contemplation (active) is the form of prayer in which one unites self to the mystery (the event with its inner meaning) as going on in the present tense and as self participating in it. Jesus is truly God to whom all times are NOW in His eternity: the time of the mystery and the time of myself. By uniting with Jesus in prayer I unite my NOW of time with His NOW of eternity (that of the mystery I am contemplating). Hence I am there with Jesus “becoming man” (present tense) with Jesus being born (present tense) and letting it all affect me as I see it happening (present tense).

All "times" are "NOW" to Jesus, eternal God at all times.



A Contemplation on the Incarnation

“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Galatians 4:4-5)

First Prelude: The history: “how the Three Divine Persons look down --- and see that all are going down to hell --- and decree in their eternity that the Second Person should become man --- and send the Angel Gabriel to Our Lady.” (Text No. 102)

Second Prelude: The place: “the great extent and surface of the earth --- so many different peoples --- the house and room of Our Lady . . . ” (Text No. 103)

Third Prelude: The Petition: Ask for “an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely.” (Text No. 104)

Note: “That which I want and desire” is a triple grace: knowledge, love, imitation. The content of this petition will continue to be amplified along these three lines as the Exercises progress and as its expanding scope is recognized.

Particularly in this contemplation the sense of self-humiliation and self-emptying for the love of Jesus thus incarnated and emptied is instilled. According to St. Paul this is the first step in following and imitating Jesus:

“Though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself...” (Philippians 2:6)

Since Jesus out of love for me has assumed the form of my littleness, I shall in recognition of this assume the form of His humility beginning with the total emptying of myself after the manner I see in the incarnate Word of God.

The incarnation was, indeed, a self-humiliation of the Son of God. My imitation of Him, however, will lead to my deification in my very union with Him, so that I shall no longer follow out the desires of the “flesh” but I shall live in the flesh by the Spirit of Christ and I shall follow this Leader, not by exalting myself above my nature but by humiliating and abasing myself.

May it be done unto me according to the good pleasure of the humble heart of Jesus. Amen.

First Point: The Persons of the Mystery

“Firstly, those on the face of the earth, in such great diversity in dress and manner of acting ---” etc. as in Text No. 106.

What a spectacle to behold! In living color: so varied and so miserable a human race! I will consider myself among the innumerable and miserable sons of Adam: my being born, my infancy, my adolescence, my health, my sicknesses, at times laughing, at times sorrowful, now at peace, now disturbed and angry and finally dying!

However, above all this sad vale of tears, this tragic theater of calamities, I will consider the heavens opened:

"Secondly I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons, seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty."

Here, as we ponder what the Blessed Trinity sees on earth, we consider again those lamentable effects of sin which we pondered in the First Week and here too I see it for the personal matter that it is, namely, myself walking in such blindness on the road to perdition, toward an unhappy death, and thence to Hell!

"Thirdly I will see our Lady" (the most pure, most holy, most beautiful, the most elect) ('Like a lily blooming in the midst of thorns' Canticle 2:2) "and the Angel saluting her." (Text No. 106)

How happily I consider Our Lady! Pleasing to God without equal – unknown to the world – poor – in a poor home – in an out of the way village – engaged to a poor man. At the same time I will contemplate the Angel saluting her and reflect upon the scene in the hope of deriving some fruit.

St. Ignatius evidently wishes at the end of this point to direct our specially concentrated attention to the most blessed Virgin Mary. And, indeed, just as the vision of the Crucified after the meditation on hell was most pleasing to me, and at the same time the Crucified was the source of great spiritual fruit, so now in this scene, after beholding the whole human race and myself with it going down to hell, nothing could be more pleasing, helpful, more full of consolation or a greater source of fruit than to see the Blessed Virgin to whom the angel brings the message of the Incarnation.

*She was a human chalice
Delicate and fine
He was her Infinite substance
He was her wine*

*She was the prayer that angels
Very often heard
He was her sound unspoken
He was her Word*

*She was the slender taper
Enclosing Him at night
He was her fame eternal
He was her Light.*

Second Point: Words of the Mystery

This will be to listen to what the persons on the earth say, that is, how they speak to one another, swear, blaspheme, etc. (Text No. 107)

I shall also hear myself: how many stupid and perverse things I have said in the past upon this same earth – and perhaps even now with unbridled tongue, what scurrilous language, what idle talk, what lies, detractions and so on!

Given any hundred persons living together in close communication, how quickly arguments, rivalries, quarrels arise in a general clamor of confusion! What then must it be to see the arguments, strife, quarrels, and general clamor of all men who were, are and will be to the end of time! Truly what a tumult of iniquity the Almighty perceives just in the sound of humanity as it provokes the Divine Justice.

"I will also hear what the Divine Persons say, that is, 'Let us work the Redemption of the human race etc.'"

I will now raise myself above all the noise of this human commotion in order to admire the Divine Mercy. I hear none of the shrill screaming of human conflict but only the quiet eternal decree of Mercy, Goodness, Wisdom, and Love. These I contemplate. In particular I attend to the Divine Decree of my personal redemption: "Let us lovingly redeem him – her!" Let us plan the graces and the benefits which he or she is to enjoy from birth to death and then for all eternity.

"Then I will listen to what the Angel and Our Lady say. Finally I will reflect on all I hear that I may draw profit from their words."

I will contemplate how the Angel Gabriel greets Our Lady and announces to her the conception of Jesus, saying:

"Hail full of grace, the Lord is with you - - - And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." (Luke 1:28 and 31)

"Full of grace" – Contemplate Mary as immaculately conceived and from the very first endowed with a veritable treasury of more graces than are possessed by the angels of heaven, and gifted with immunity from any shadow of sin whatsoever.

On the contrary, I contemplate myself – conceived in original sin, and in the course of my life, perhaps, having lost my baptismal innocence, and perhaps having grace restored again and again through the sacrament of Reconciliation. With what words could the Angel greet me?

Nevertheless, I hold up my head in pride, while at the same time the Virgin Mother, full of Grace, humbles herself – and passes over the grand title "Mother of God" for the very modest "handmaid of the Lord."

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

O would that I could always come forth with such a reply from my very heart, as often as the Almighty spoke to me, not only through an angel but in His very Person. How well things would have gone with me in the matter of salvation!

I shall indeed no longer resist my Lord and God, who for my sake and for my salvation came down from heaven and became man. I shall aim at becoming truly an adopted Son of God by doing His will and following His example – someday to ascend with Him to heaven and inherit the eternal kingdom.

Third Point: The Actions of the Mystery

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book." (Hebrews 10:5-7)

* * * * *

"to consider what the persons on the face of the earth do, for example, wound, kill, and go down to hell" (Text No. 108)

How overwhelmed I would be were I granted a clear vision of the whole number and foulness of all the evil deeds of all the men of all the world from the time of Adam to the end of all time... in thought, in word, in desire and in deed - - - sex perversions, injuries, robberies, plunderings, thefts, homicides and horrible cruelties!

How overwhelmed I myself would be, were God to reveal to me all the sins of my own life in clear detail and number from infancy to now - - - in thought, word, desire and deed!

All my defeats, both in kind and number, by my beastly passions, together with those of all mankind!

I thus behold in horror unredeemed humanity – a veritable flood of iniquity clamoring to heaven in the very things men do. And then I raise my eyes to heaven and consider

Also what the Divine Persons do, namely, work the Most Holy Incarnation, etc."

Contemplate "*The Holy Spirit coming upon Mary*" and "*the power of the Most High overshadowing her*" (Luke 1:35) and performing the miracle of the Virginal Conception of Jesus!

Thus here upon this earth on which I live, the Incarnation of the Son of God took place – an Incarnation which even the Angels of God will never comprehend for all eternity! The Son of God assumes a human nature – my human nature!

I shall offer my thanks for this indescribable grace – praising, glorifying and adoring in joy. I shall determine with all my heart never to lose the fruit of so great a thing. It will be my firm resolve to plan my spiritual progress according to the teaching and example of this Incarnate Word.

“Likewise, what the Angel and Our Lady do; how the Angel carries out the office off ambassador; and how Our Lady humbles herself and offers thanks to the Divine Majesty. Then I shall reflect upon all to draw some fruit from each of these details.”

My fruit will be sorrow and confusion in view of the sins of all the world and my own sins numbered with them; it will be admiration of the Divine Goodness which, nevertheless, following out the eternal divine decree, sent the Angel to announce the Good News of salvation on earth.

With the most blessed and most humble Virgin I shall offer the greatest possible gratitude, accepting the function of my Guardian Angel to me asking me whether I really wish to be a companion of Jesus and if I really desire seriously to conform my whole life to His.

What shall I say? What shall I do? The Blessed Virgin accepted the task of becoming the Sorrowful Mother, the mother of Jesus suffering and humiliated. And I will certainly accept my part as His companion in suffering and in humiliation that I may also be associated with Him in glory.

Splendid indeed is the message to me between the lines, as it were, of the Gospel story of the Incarnation. Upon its acceptance depend my salvation, my degree of perfection and eternal glory.

And so, with the Blessed Virgin, mindful of my vocation and my vows of religion, with humility of heart and tender affection I say:

Behold the “handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.” May I be truly Your companion, O Incarnate Word in humility, in patience, and charity - - in life and in death. In conformity with and confirmation of this oblation I make my:

COLLOQUY: *I will think over what I ought to say to the Three Divine Persons, or to the Word Incarnate, or to His Mother, Our Lady. According to the light I have received, I will beg for grace to follow and imitate more closely our Lord who has just become man for me.” (Text No. 109)*

O would that I even now would be conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit for a true newness of life and formed with Jesus as He enters this world so as to be able to say and affirm “*it is written of me that I should do Your will, O God.*” (Hebrews 10:8)



JOHN 3:16

1. God – the greatest lover.
2. So loved – the greatest degree.
3. The world – the greatest company.
4. That He gave – the greatest act.
5. His only begotten Son – the greatest gift.
6. That whosoever – the greatest opportunity.
7. Believeth – the greatest simplicity.
8. In Him – the greatest attraction.
9. Should not perish – the greatest promise.
10. But – the greatest difference.
11. Have – the greatest certainty.
12. Eternal life – the greatest possession.

....Davies

Life in Christ

I
live
in
me
Heavy Black Lines



Jesus
lives
in
me
Broken Black lines



I
live
in
Jesus
Light black lines



His-My-Thoughts

His-My-Words

My-His-Thoughts

My-His-Words

His-My-Works

His-My-Loves

His-My-Pain

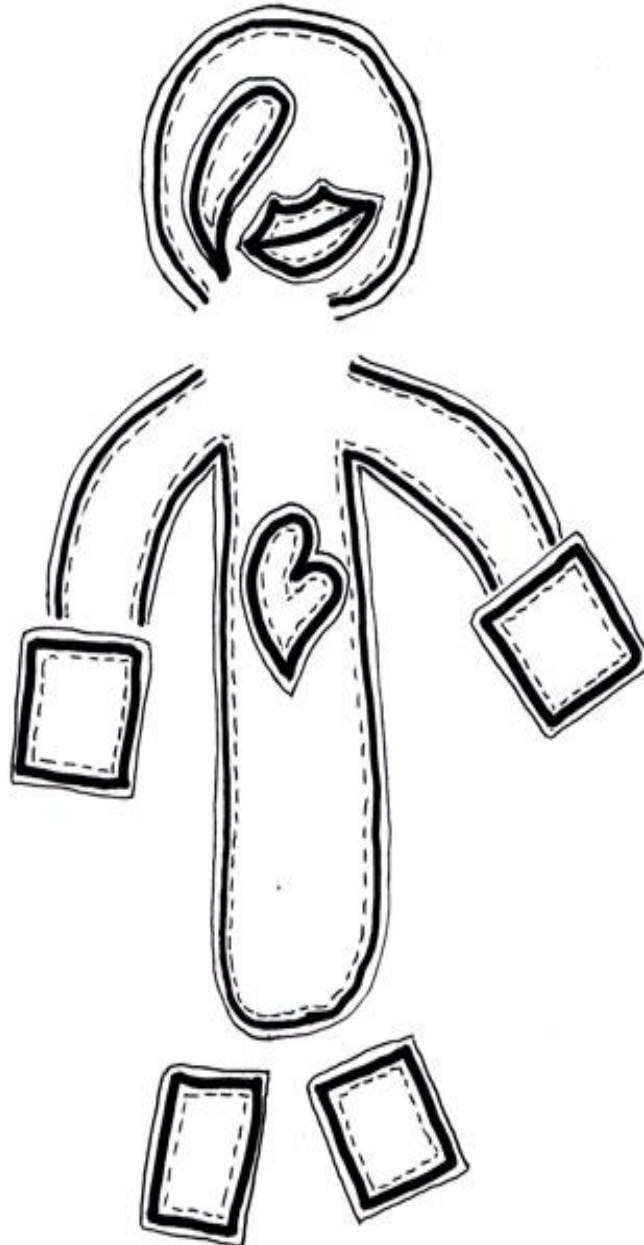
His-My-Places

My-His-Works

My-His-Loves

My-His-Pain

My-His-Places



I ask you to consider that our Lord Jesus Christ is your true head and that you are a member of His body. He belongs to you as the head belongs to the body. All that is His is yours: *breath, heart, soul, body, and all His faculties.*

All these you must use *as if they belong to you*, so that in serving Him you may give Him praise, love and glory. You belong to Him as a member belongs to the head. This is why He earnestly desires you to serve and glorify the Father *by using all your faculties as if they were His.*

He belongs to you, but more than that, He longs to be in you *living and ruling in you: His breath in your breath, His heart in your heart, all the faculties of His soul in the faculties of your soul*, so that these words may be fulfilled in you: *"Glorify God and bear Him in your body, that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in you."* (1 Cor. 6:20)

You belong to the Son of God, but more than that, you *ought to be in Him* as the members are in the head. All that is in you must be incorporated into Him. You must receive life from Him and be ruled by Him.

There will be no true life for you except in Him, for He is the one source of true life. Apart from Him you will find only death and destruction. Let Him *be the only source of your movements, of the actions and the strength of your life.*

He must be both the source and the purpose of your life, so that you may fulfill these words:

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lords. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. (Romans 14:7-9)

Finally, you are one with Jesus as the body is one with the head. You must then *have one breath with Him, one soul, one life, one will, one mind, one heart.* And He must be *your breath, heart, love, life, your all.*

These great gifts in the follower of Christ originate from baptism. They are increased and strengthened through Confirmation and by making good use of other graces that are given by God. Through the Holy Eucharist they are brought to perfection.

(The sufferings of Christ are not in Christ alone)

Jesus Christ is one Man with head and body, the Savior of the body and the members of the body, two in one flesh, in one voice, in one passion, and, when wickedness has passed away, in one state of rest. The sufferings of Christ are therefore not in Christ alone; yes, but the sufferings of Christ are only in Christ.

If by Christ you mean both head and body, the sufferings of Christ are only in Christ. But if by Christ you mean only the Head, then the sufferings of Christ are not in Christ alone. For if the sufferings of Christ are in Christ alone, how can the apostle Paul, as a member of Christ, say this: *“That I may fill in my flesh what is lacking to the sufferings Christ?” (Colossians 1:24)*

If then you are among the members of Christ, whatever human being you are, whoever you are that hears this, whoever you are that does not hear this (but if you are among the members of Christ you do hear this), whatever you suffer at the hands of those who are not among the members of Christ was lacking to the sufferings of Christ.

Your sufferings are added because they were lacking. You fill up a measure, you do not pour something that overflows. You suffer as much as needed to be added from your sufferings to the total suffering of Christ, who suffered as our head, and suffers in His members, that is, in ourselves.

Each one of us in his own measure pays his debt to what may be called this commonwealth of ours. In proportion to our store of strength we contribute as it were a tax of suffering. The final reckoning of all suffering will not take place until the world has come to an end.

Do not imagine, brethren, that all the just who suffered persecution at the hands of the wicked, even those who were sent to foretell the coming of the Lord before He came, did not belong to the members of Christ. God forbid that one who belongs to the city which has Christ for king should not belong to the members of Christ.

In the blood of Abel, the just one, the whole city speaks, and so on until the blood of Zechariah. From then, it is the same city that goes on speaking in the blood of John, in the blood of the apostles, in the blood of the martyrs, in the blood of Christ’s faithful people.

From the Treatise on the Trinity

We believe that the Word became flesh and that we receive His Flesh in the Lord's Supper. How then can we fail to believe that He really dwells within us?

When He became man He actually clothed Himself in our flesh, uniting it to Himself forever. In the sacrament of His Body He actually gives us His own flesh, which He has united to His divinity.

This is why we are all one, because the Father is in Christ, and Christ is in us. He is in us through His Flesh and we are in Him. With Him we form a unity which is in God.

The manner of our indwelling in Him through the sacrament of His Body and Blood is evident from the Lord's own words: "This world will see me no longer but you shall see Me. Because I live you shall live also, for I am in My Father, "you are in me, and I am in you".

If it had been a question of mere unity of will, why should He have given us this explanation of the steps by which it is achieved? He is in the Father by reason of His divine nature; we are in Him by reason of His human birth, and He is in us through the mystery of the sacraments.

This, surely, is what he wished us to believe; this is how He wanted us to understand the perfect unity that is achieved through our Mediator, who lives in the Father while we live in Him, and who, while living in the Father lives also in us.

This is how we attain unity with the Father. Christ is in very truth in the Father by His eternal generation; we are in very truth in Christ and He likewise in us.

Christ Himself bore witness to the reality of this unity when He said: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in Me and I in him."

No one will be in Christ unless Christ Himself has been in him; Christ will take to Himself only the flesh of those who have received His flesh.

He had already explained the mystery of this perfect unity when He said: "as the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so he who eats my flesh will draw life from me." He drew life from His flesh just as He draws life from the Father.

Such comparisons aid our understanding, since we can grasp a point more easily when we have an analogy. And the point is that Christ is the wellspring of our life.

Since we who are in the flesh have Christ dwelling in us through His flesh, we shall draw life from Him in the same way as He draws life from His Father.

A Contemplation on the Nativity

"And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:6-7)

First Prelude: The history: "how with Our Lady nine months pregnant, they went forth from Nazareth – she, sitting on a donkey, Joseph and a maid leading an ox, to Bethlehem to pay the tribute which Caesar had imposed on all those regions. And so Joseph went up from Galilee to profess his subjection to Caesar with Mary, his espoused wife who was with child." (Text No. 111)

Note: I will consider with no little compassion how the Blessed Virgin felt the rejection of finding no admission to the inn – and perhaps there lies the mystery expressed in John 1:11 *"He came to his own home, and his own people received him not."* Perhaps this may be an inspiration to me to be open to His coming to me with the grace of the fruit of this contemplation. Jesus, indeed, wishes to come and to be re-born in my person that I walk in the newness of life.

Second Prelude: The scene: "the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Consider its length, its breadth; whether level or through valleys and over hills. Also observe the place or cave where Jesus is born, whether big or little, whether high or low, and how it is arranged." (Text No. 112)

Third Prelude: Petition: "to ask for an intimate knowledge of Our Lord *who was born for me and in this way*, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely. (Text No. 113)

First Point: The Persons of the Mystery

This will consist in seeing the persons, namely, our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the child Jesus after His birth... Then I will reflect on myself that I may reap some fruit. (Text No. 114)

"For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy Almighty Word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne as a fierce conqueror into the midst of the land of destruction." (Wisdom 18:14)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Contemplate how the Blessed Mother, totally melting in love, gazes upon the most divine and most loveable Infant, and how the eyes of the Divine Child look up to the Virgin Mother in gratitude and love – how the little Mother embraces Him all at the same time – and how her maternal heart is drawn to Him – how the Word was made flesh for me!

Contemplate each phrase of the Roman Martyrology's announcement of the Birth of Jesus in whatever spiritual sense may occur to you:

"In the 5199th year of the creation of the world, from the time when God in the beginning created the heaven and earth;

the 2957th year after the flood;

the 2015th year from the birth of Abraham;

the 1510th year from Moses, and the going forth of the people of Israel from Egypt;

the 1032nd year from the anointing of David King;

in the 65th week according to the prophecy of Daniel;

in the 194th Olympiad;

the 752nd year from the foundation of the city of Rome;

the 42nd year of the rule of Octavian Augustus,

all the earth being at peace,

Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, and the Son of the Eternal Father,

desirous to sanctify the world by His most merciful coming,

being conceived by the Holy Spirit,

nine months after His conception,

was born in Bethlehem of Judea,

made Man of the Virgin Mary

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE FLESH."

Contemplate "the silent night" – silent in sleep and ignorance of the salvation that came to earth this very night. Nevertheless, the heavens were opened to the very heights, to the throne of the Most High. Contemplate all the choirs of angels around the stable adoring their King: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Powers, Virtues, Principalities, Heavens, Archangels, Angels and their glorious song:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." (Luke 2:14)

Second Point: The Words of the Mystery

"This is to consider, observe, and contemplate what the persons are saying, then to reflect on myself and draw some fruit from it." (Text No. 115)

Would that I could hear in my heart of contemplation the tender words with which you, O Virgin Mother, addressed to your divine Infant – especially the words of your heart – that holy night!

Obtain for me, most holy Virgin Mother, the grace to utter some such tender words both of lips and of heart. Let me hear with my spiritual hearing, too, the words which the Almighty spoke to you deep in your heart. Let me have a share of your joy in the birth of you Son. Let me sense, too, the interior affection of St. Joseph, the foster-father of the newly born Infant.

Contemplate the words of the shepherds with which they told of the visit of the Angels and what they saw in this marvelous infant for the Gospel says that *“seeing, they understood the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child.”*

Third Point: The Actions of the Mystery

“This will be to see and consider what they are doing, for example, making the journey and laboring that our Lord might be born in extreme poverty, and that after many labors, after hunger, thirst, heat and cold, after insults and outrages, He might die on the cross, and all this for me. Then I will reflect and draw some spiritual fruit from what I have seen.” (Text No. 116)

Here I contemplate all the hardships of Mary, of Joseph and of the Infant Jesus from now to His last breath on Calvary – endured for me in particular – so as to grow more and more in love of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior.

Before the manger of my Lord, I ponder and consider how even then He was thinking of me and how He was even then offering the hardships of His Infancy to His Heavenly Father for me and for my salvation. I shall reflect in turn on what I ought to do and to be willing to suffer for Him, that I might be totally His, as He has willed to be totally mine.

COLLOQUY: *With the little Infant Jesus in the manger as He looks at me most lovingly, telling Him how tenderly I love Him, how deeply He has penetrated my heart, and how ardently, closely and faithfully I desire to follow His footsteps in all things, in life, in death, and in all eternity. In brief, I shall speak to the Infant Savior as the love of the Holy Spirit shall suggest – and end with an “Our Father.”*

A Contemplation on the Hidden Life

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-4)

"Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book.'" (Hebrews 10:5-7)

First Prelude: The history: *"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."* (Luke 2:51)

Second Prelude: The place: here it will be to picture mentally the house at Nazareth and the scene of the work in which the youthful Jesus dealt with St. Joseph and assisted him in the work of a carpenter.

Third Prelude: The petition: *"ask for an intimate knowledge of Our Lord who lived a life of thirty years of obscurity in labor for me that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely."*

More specifically to ask this grace that through serious consideration of my most loveable Jesus, after the example of Mary and Joseph, I may gain the great fruit of progress in spirit, especially in the pursuit of humble obedience, desiring, as far as in me lies, to be employed in humble tasks, to be unknown – all in order to please God and Him alone.

First Point: He was obedient to His parents. (Text No. 271)

Contemplate the lesson which Jesus, my Teacher and my Inspiration, reads to me by these thirty years. It is a lesson in humility and obedience. Upon these two hinges the solidity and observance of the well-ordered and effective practice of charity. If I am to build a reasonable high and lasting building of perfection, I must make a deep and solid foundation in these two virtues.

Shall I not, therefore, love to be hidden and unknown?

"He, therefore, who aims at inward and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, turn aside from this crowd.

No man can safely appear in public but he who loves seclusion.

No man can safely speak but he who loves silence.

No man can safely be a superior but he who loves to live in subjection."

a'Kempis I:20:3

If I am to be a companion of Jesus in the work of the ministry, this desire for hiddenness is even more necessary to me than to a cloistered Carthusian, for I must seek Christ and not at all myself, and this, not only at the beginning but all the way to the end.

To be humiliated – to be unknown – to be considered as of little value and unimportant – these are to be my enduring aspirations if Jesus is to use me for the glory of His Father and not for my own. This is surely the basic attitude for the Apostolate of Christ.

Second Point: Jesus Advanced in wisdom and age and grace. (Text No. 271)

Contemplate the Persons, Words, and Actions of life in the holy house at Nazareth during the years while Jesus grew from infancy to full manhood of about thirty years.

“Not to advance in the way of virtue is to fall backwards.” In imitation of the advancement of Jesus, I shall keep my heart open every hour and moment to the inspirations of grace and do my very best to cooperate with them.

There is a time which has past. There is time that is to come. There is a moment beyond which there is no more time. Let me call to mind eternity!

I contemplate in that eternity my own degree of glory – how from day to day in my several merits, it increases now in proportion to my spiritual progress, but only as long as time is for me.

What does my consciousness tell me about this spiritual progress? Am I really increasing in wisdom, grace, and merits before God and man – or has my first fervor slacked off, my continued effort died down – toward the fullness of Christian perfection?

Third Point: Jesus appears to have practiced the trade of a carpenter, as St. Mark seems to show in chapter six: “is not this the carpenter?”

Reflect on the fact that Jesus by His omnipotence created the whole universe and sustains it every moment in its existence; and yet He willed to teach me humility by accepting the human lot of common labor as a carpenter. It is thus that He shows me His most human affability.

Consider how fitting it was that He should choose this particular trade. Hardly would any other become Him than a “worker in wood” for His great work of the Redemption would be done upon the wood of the Cross. Even in His hidden life He humbled Himself in wood-working long before He was exalted on the wood of the cross. How often in His work with wood was He mindful of the wood of the cross!

His lesson is one of careful tending not only to the great things of life but also to those which are of less moment and more hidden. Contemplate this way in which Jesus shows me that there is no other way to reach the heights of my vocation – to aspire to the mentality of the sons of God – than the way of self-abnegation.

Reflect on the hidden life as an object lesson that the way to the greater glory of God involves the way to my own greater humiliation; that this is the very principle of the virtue of zeal to which I am to aspire, that is, to be at the service of all, to regard and conduct myself as the least of all, ever seeking to break my pride. Thus I shall live, as Jesus did, a “life hid with Christ in God.”

COLLOQUY with Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth.

TO A DWELLER OF GALILEE

By Charles L. O'Donnell, C.S.C.

You who encountered Him along the road
That led to your forever nameless town,
Him barefoot, travel-stains upon His gown,
While those rude fishermen beside Him strode
Munching disputed corn, - to your abode
You might have asked the wayworn Traveller down,
Served Him, and forevermore renown,
And all of us had reaped where you had sowed.

But you who saw Him pass, where were your eyes?
Were there no clean of heart in Galilee
Whatever way He fared, however He trod,
That you should be deceived by His disguise?
That only His Mother and the few should see
Beneath His brow the tell-tale eyes of God!

Fifth Day - Spiritual Poverty and Discernment, Jesus and Lucifer

General Aim: To become vitally aware of the nature of the spiritual situation in which the Christian is involved.

To come to see the world of human beings as a battle field, made up of two regions, one reserved for those who acknowledge Jesus as their Leader, one for the enemies where the head is Lucifer.

To see Satan as the Prince of This World and as a Master of Deceit.

To see Jesus as the Way, the Life and the Truth.

To lay the foundation of fact upon which one's skill in discernment of spirits can be built.

Prayer Subjects
For This Day

First Meditation: Two Standards: the Standard of Jesus

1. The Commander in Chief of all the Good
2. The Persons to be Sent
3. The Program of Jesus

Second Meditation: Two Standards: the Standard of Lucifer

1. The Chief of the Enemy
2. The Persons to be Sent
3. The Program of Lucifer

Third Meditation: Attaining Spiritual Poverty

1. Myself and Perfect Spiritual Poverty
2. Imperfect Spiritual Poverty
3. Utter Lack of Perfect Spiritual Poverty

A Triple Colloquy.

"Insults,
Contempt, and
Injuries."

In regard to the difficulty of "desiring" insults, contempt and injuries, note that the program of Jesus is in contrast with that of Lucifer. The sincere follower of Jesus so reacts against Satan's lure: "the empty honors of this world" that he actually desires the extreme opposite, namely, "insults and contempt." Note also that after the contemplations on the life of Jesus, one may well be presumed to be so in love with Jesus that he desires to suffer insults, contempt and injuries for Jesus, since Jesus did the same for him.

A Meditation on two Standards Part I

“The one of Christ, our supreme Leader and Lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature.” (Text No. 136)

First Prelude: The history: Here it will be that Christ calls and wants all beneath His standard, and Lucifer, on the other hand, wants all under his.

Note: One should notice particularly the kind of opposition that is here proposed for consideration – how frightening and how true: either-or – either Jesus or Lucifer – there is no other alternative.

Second Prelude: The place: It will be here to see a great plain comprising the whole region about Jerusalem, where the sovereign Commander-in-Chief of all the good is Christ our Lord; and another plain about the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

Note: Jesus is to be visualized as most amiable, the Prince of Peace, the Father of future glory with His Standard of the Cross, and surrounded by His Apostles and all their successors in the Apostolic ministry in fulfillment of the mission given them by their Leader Jesus.

On the contrary, the Devil is to be visualized as frightening, breathing horrible and vindictive pride, and hating God and His Saints, with his Standard, a banner inscribed “The delights of This World”, and surrounded by innumerable demons whom he sends into the whole world to seduce men into sin and its consequent ruination for all eternity.

Third Prelude: The petition: Here it will be to ask for a knowledge of the deceits of the rebel chief and help to guard myself against them; and also to ask for a knowledge of the true life exemplified in the sovereign and true Commander, and the grace to imitate Him. (Text No. 139)

Note: This grace which I ask for is one of loving and choosing poverty, of embracing the most profound humility, of shunning riches, honors and even the semblance of esteem, and all this in order that I may become a “vessel of election” for the salvation of souls through indefatigable zeal that overcomes all obstacles.

The Standard of Jesus

First Point: The Commander in Chief of all the Good

Consider Christ our Lord, standing in a lowly place in a great plain about the region of Jerusalem, His appearance beautiful and attractive. (Text No. 144)

Contemplate Jesus as He is for He is “most beautiful for His greatness, and for the spreading of His branches; for His root was near the great waters.” (Ezekiel 31:7)

Consider how the splendor of His goodness and Majesty shines through His countenance: *“You are the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever.”* (Psalm 44/45: 3)

- how His eyes focus upon me in expectation

Contemplate Him: - in the region of Jerusalem, the “city of Peace”
 - in a lowly place, connoting humility and self-effacement

- how necessary to me are “peace of soul” and “humility of heart” if I am to follow Him in the pursuit of souls!

Second Point: The Persons to Be Sent

“Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them throughout the whole world to spread His sacred doctrine among all men, no matter what their state or condition. (Text No. 145)

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues...” (I Cor. 12:27-28)

I will reflect with no little satisfaction and wonder that I myself am among those whom Jesus Christ has chosen to act and speak for Him.

I will petition the grace not to be outdone in zeal and generosity by the emissaries of Lucifer, but that I may achieve with His grace a fervent zeal in acting for and in Jesus for the salvation of souls.

I will go over in my mind what I may have read about such great examples of ambassadors of Jesus as St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Athanasius, St. Martin of Tours, St. Patrick, St. Gertrude, St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. John Eudes, the Founders and Foundresses of Religious institutes – looking to them for real inspiration.

I will visualize briefly the persons with whom I will be associating, under whose authority I will be working, those for whom I shall be exercising my work for Jesus, begging the graces really to be able to do them the kind of good Jesus wishes to do through me.

Third Point: The Program of Jesus

“Consider the address which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this enterprise, recommending them to seek to help all, first by attracting them to the highest spiritual poverty, and should it please the Divine Majesty, and should He deign to choose them for it, even to actual poverty. Secondly, they should lead them to a desire for insults and contempt, for from these springs humility.”

“Hence there will be three steps: the first, poverty as opposed to riches; the second, insults or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; the third, humility as opposed to pride. From these three steps, let them lead me to all other virtues.” (Text No. 146)

“So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?’” (Matthew 16:24-26)

I will contemplate particularly the ultimate goal of the program of Jesus, namely, through humility to all other virtues.

“Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is all man; and all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Thus by reason of this call of Jesus to lead others to all virtue, I reflect how necessary is it for me myself to expand the ambit of my heart and the direction of my efforts not to miss a single point of perfection which, with God’s grace is possible, in the energetic pursuit of perfection and all the virtues of my state and place in the Body of Christ.

I will seek to motivate myself by looking long at the example of Jesus Christ my Lord and considering:

- who it is that calls me
- what it is that He asks of me
- what it is that He promises me.

Jesus who calls me is my God, my Savior – the Most Holy, the Most Generous, the Most Lovable!

What Jesus asks of me may be difficult but could not possibly be more rewarding.

Poverty has no attractiveness. It is hard, indeed. Opprobrium is difficult to bear. A life of abjection and obscurity is not easy.

But when I raise my eyes to heaven and weigh the reward of these very things ought I not be drawn with an overwhelming desire for them?

"Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." (Genesis 15:1)

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11)

For a little poverty, I shall possess all the riches of the kingdom of heaven; for a little opprobrium and contempt, there will be honor, praise, and eternal triumph; for a bit of abjection and obscurity, I shall be exalted amid the choirs of angels and share the glory of Christ for all eternity!

On the contrary, there are only the riches promised by the world and the devil, riches which the devil is neither able nor willing really to give – riches which are due to return to the dust from which they came.

On the contrary, too, there are the honors of the world – *"as smoke vanishes, let them vanish away" (Psalm 67:3) "as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind." (Wisdom 5:15)* - and often enough they turn to bitterness and disgrace.

On the contrary, finally, the pride of the world in this vale of tears is but the height of stupidity. Having nothing of one's own but sin, there is really nothing for one to boast of. The pride of the world entitles one to associate for all eternity with the demons and the wicked in the humiliating abyss of hell.

COLLOQUY: A colloquy should be addressed to Our Lady, asking her to obtain for me from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard, first in the highest spiritual poverty, and should the Divine Majesty be pleased thereby, and deign to choose and receive me, even in actual poverty; secondly, in bearing insults and wrongs, thereby to imitate Him better, provided only I can suffer these without sin on the part of another, and without offense to the Divine Majesty. Then I will say the Hail Mary.

I will make this colloquy most humbly with the humility of the most pure and most humble Virgin, begging her to show herself a mother in this important matter of my salvation and perfection. I shall ask Mary as Queen of Apostles to ignite in me the flame of apostolic zeal.

SECOND COLLOQUY: This will be to ask her Son to obtain the same favors for me from the Father. Then I will say, Soul of Christ.

"I am Yours, O Jesus, my Savior: receive me, O Lord, confirm me. Behold, Your Mother leads me to You. I am Your servant, the child of your handmaid and Mother. Make use of me at your good pleasure. Grant me the grace to free myself and others as well from the snare of riches, from the lure of luxury, from the folly of vain glory and from the pride of life. Do with me what You will as long as I remain totally Yours and closely united to You, be it in labor, in need, in injustice and contempt, so that I may be a useful instrument for the spread of Your kingdom and the glory of Your name.

“Receive me: grant me the grace of fidelity in this desire and determination, strength for the combat, perseverance for the long way, that I may begin strongly and carry through even to the point of heroism and so fulfill the whole extent of Your divine expectations of me, O Lord.”

THIRD COLLOQUY: This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces.
Then I will say the Our Father.

I address You, my heavenly Father:

- You who sent Your only begotten Son into the world *“that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting.” (John 3:15)*
- You who will that all those you have chosen be *“made conformable to the image of Your Son” (Romans 8:29)*, most poor, most afflicted with affronts, sufferings and crucifixion.
- Grant me, I implore You, the grace of being conformed to His most holy example in every degree of humility and humiliation.

Do not spare me, Father. Make up for my faults and perfect me whom You love, that I may serve well the cause for which You sent Your Son into the world.

I ask in the name of Jesus to be received under His standard who promised so solemnly that *“whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you” (John 16:23)*. I do not ask for riches, not for honors, not for the glory of this world, but rather the opposite of all these – only that I may follow in the footsteps of Your Anointed One to Your greater glory, O Father God and Creator!

Our Father...

CHANGED

Time was, I shrank from what was right,
From fear of what was wrong;
I would not brave the sacred fight,
Because the foe was strong.
But now I cast that finer sense
And sorer shame aside;
Such dread of sin was indolence,
Such aim at Heaven was pride.

-J. H. Newman

A Meditation on Two Standards Part II – Satan

“The one of Christ, our supreme Leader and Lord, the other of Lucifer, the deadly enemy of our human nature.” (Text No. 136)

First Prelude: The history: Here it will be that Christ calls and wants all beneath His standard, and Lucifer, on the other hand, wants all beneath His standard.

Second Prelude: The place: It will be here to see a great plain comprising the whole region about Jerusalem, where the sovereign Commander in Chief of all the good is Christ our Lord; and another plain about the region of Babylon, where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask for a knowledge of the deceits of the rebel chief and help to guard myself against them.

The Standard of Lucifer

The First Point: The Chief of the Enemy

“Imagine you see the chief of all the enemy in the vast plain about Babylon, seated on a great throne of fire and smoke, his appearance inspiring horror and terror.” (Text No. 140)

I shall reflect prayerfully on the meaning of the allegory here presented.

- How Babylon, the city of confusion, is the very residence of Lucifer;
- How the fire allegorizes the commotion and disturbance with no peace that characterizes the movements of evil;
- How the smoke is a symbol of darkness, illusion and dissipation;
- How the whole person of Lucifer inspires horror and terror;
- How such is the real Lucifer and such really is His Kingdom and Rule no matter what he seems like at times;
- How nevertheless he succeeds in presenting himself in a false and alluring light so that almost all the world runs after him, serves him, into sin and hell!

I shall consider these things carefully so that I may be filled with horror and avoid so horrible and evil a leader.

Second Point: The Persons to be Sent

Consider how Lucifer summons innumerable demons, and scatters them, some to one city and some to another, throughout the whole world, so that no province, no place, no state of life, no individual is overlooked.

*“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
(Ephesians 6:11-12)*

Consider the extraordinary as well as the detestable zeal of the Mystery of Iniquity.

I will try to realize that the demons are actually here where I am at this moment, in this very room or chapel, sent there explicitly by Lucifer, the chief of demons, to distract me and hinder me lest I reap the precise fruit of this meditation.

Holding them in contempt, I shall rise to the occasion, fleeing from and suppressing at the same time and in the first instance any and all of their evil suggestions, all spiritual slovenliness, especially by acts of the contrary virtues. The more remiss I am, the bolder they get – the more decisively I conduct myself, the sooner they leave.

Good God, if only You would open the eyes of my soul, I could see the endless comings and goings of these demon snakes and off-spring emissaries of Lucifer throughout the world.

Third Point: The Program of Lucifer

Consider the address he makes to them, how he goads them on to lay snares for men and bind them with chains. First they are to tempt them to covet riches (as Satan himself is accustomed to do in most cases) that they may the more easily attain the empty honors of this world, and then come to overweening pride.

The first step then will be riches, the second honor, the third pride. From these three steps the evil one leads to all other vices.

The aim, therefore, of the spirits of evil is to inflate persons with such pride as will keep them from any obedience to Christ and His church and such as will lead them to live according to the desires of a heart turned away from God and toward the pleasures of this world. I am to become aware of the three great areas of temptation: that of riches, that of honors, and that of pride.

Unless I wish to fall into slavery to Lucifer I am to be very careful of the lure of this threefold seduction. My life policy will have to be one of fortifying myself against the program of Lucifer by cultivating in myself the diametrically opposite virtues: renouncing effectively and from the heart the riches and the pleasures of this world, taking flight from all honors, despoiling myself of all self-love and pride, humbling myself as much as possible.

I might ask myself the questions: whether I pay special respect to rich men because of their wealth? Whether I make much of sensual consolations and the pleasures of bodily comfort? Whether and to what extent I am on the lookout for compliments and honors? Whether I boast of my accomplishments?

Woe to me if self-love and love of my own excellence become the nerve center and motive power of my desires and activities! I would be indeed well under the Standard of Satan! But there is still time to move away and on to the Standard of Jesus.

This would be a good point in the retreat to renew my Baptismal Vows and, if I am a religious, also my Vows of Religion as an extension of those of Baptism, professing with great earnestness my rejection of Satan and all he stands for and offering myself for the work of rescuing souls, as far as I can, from the slavery of Satan.

COLLOQUY: First with Our Lady that she may obtain for me from her Son and Lord the grace to be alert to all that might lure me toward the Standard of Satan, especially in the desire to experience all that the world offers, the desire to be somebody, the desire to possess; secondly, the grace to shun honors and special treatment and every form of self-love and pride, and by this means to escape entirely the deceits and snares of the spirit of evil through the practice of all the contrary virtues. Then I will say the Hail Mary.

SECOND COLLOQUY: This will be to ask her Son to obtain the same favors for me from the Father. Then I will say "Soul of Christ."

THIRD COLLOQUY: This will be to beg the Father to grant me the same graces. Then I will say the Our Father.

For who can keep watch over his inward thoughts so closely and so assiduously, whether they merely occur to him or whether he is their author, as to be able to decide clearly which of the heart's illicit desires are the fruit of his own frailty, which an insinuation of the devil? I believe this is more than mortals can achieve, unless by the light of the Holy Spirit they receive that special gift which the Apostle lists with the other charisma under the name of discernment of spirits. According to Solomon, no matter how vigilantly a man may guard his heart and watch with the closest scrutiny every movement of his inward being, he will not be able to diagnose or judge exactly between the evil that is inborn and the evil implanted from without, even after prolonged study and frequent experience of these matters. For "who can understand sins?" It is of little consequence to us to know the source of the evil within us, provided we know it is there; no matter what its source we must watch and pray that we may not consent to it. The Prophet prays against both these evils: "Cleanse me from my secret sins, O Lord, and spare your servant from those others." As for me, I cannot hand on to you what I have not received. And I certainly have not received the power to distinguish with certitude between what springs from the heart and what is sown there by the enemy. Both are evil, both have an evil source; both are in the heart, though both do not originate there. I am fully certain that I bear them within, but by no means certain which to attribute to the heart, which to the enemy. But this problem, as I have said, entails no danger.

But where the error is dangerous, even fatal, there we are provided with a rule that is certain: not to attribute to ourselves what comes from God within us, thinking that the visit of the Word is no more than a thought of our own. The distance of good from evil is the distance between these two things: for just as evil cannot proceed from the Word, neither can good proceed from the heart unless it has been previously inspired by the Word, because "a sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." But I think enough has been said to clarify which movements of the heart are from God and which from ourselves. And this, I feel, had to be done in order that the enemies of grace may know that without grace man's heart is incapable of thinking good thoughts, that its capacity to do so comes from God: the good thought is God's inspiration, not the heart's offspring. You therefore, if you hear his voice, will no longer be ignorant of whence it comes or whither it goes because you will know it proceeds from God and goes to the heart. But make sure that the word which goes forth from the mouth of God does not return to him empty, see that it prospers and accomplishes all those things for which he sent it, so that you too will be able to say: "The grace of God in me has not been fruitless." Happy the man who has the Word for an inseparable companion who is always accessible, whose delightful conversation is an unceasing pleasure that frees him at all times from the flesh's bothersome vices, and enables him to use his time profitably in a wicked age. He shall be neither wearied nor troubled, since, according to Scripture, no matter what happens to the righteous man, it will not make him sad.

A Meditation: Attaining Spiritual Poverty

First Prelude: The history: Here it will be to recall what St. Ignatius says about one who has Perfect Spiritual Poverty:

“One who has perfect spiritual poverty wants to rid self of attachment to any and all created things, but to do so in such a way that one desires neither to retain nor relinquish these things in actuality. Such a one seeks only to will and not will as God our Lord inspires them, and as seems better for the service and praise of the Divine Majesty.

“Meanwhile one strives to conduct self as if every attachment to it had been broken. One will make efforts neither to want this or that particular thing, nor anything else, unless the service of God our Lord alone move one to do so.

“As a result, the desire to be better able to serve God our Lord will be the cause of their accepting anything or relinquishing it.” (Text No. 155)

Second Prelude: The scene: Here it will be to behold myself standing in the presence of God our Lord and of all His saints, that I may desire and know what is more pleasing to His Divine Goodness. (Text No. 151)

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to beg for the grace to choose what is more for the glory of His Divine Majesty and the salvation of my soul.

First Point: Myself and Perfect Spiritual Poverty

The state of perfect spiritual poverty is the one to which I ought to elevate my spirit, to which I should strive in all things, and in which I am to place the foundation of my life in general.

Poverty of spirit is the indispensable condition for my entering, persevering and advancing under the Standard of Jesus. It is the essential condition that is to direct all my thoughts, desires and actions, namely, looking to the Divine Will alone, His greater service, my greater merit, and the salvation of more souls. No love of creatures, no cupidity, no likes and dislikes are to have any part of me.

It is poverty of spirit to will only what God wills: this is truly to be of Christ and to follow Him. Not to advance in this is to fall behind. What better thing can one do than to commit oneself entirely to the Divine Will? It is in this poverty of spirit that I compose myself for the necessary equilibrium for the election, inclining myself to an ever closer following of Jesus in poverty, contempt, abjection and humiliation.

Second Point: Imperfect Spiritual Poverty

Reflect a little on the way in which St. Ignatius describes an ideal of imperfect spiritual poverty:

“One’s spiritual poverty is imperfect when one wants to rid self of some attachment, but one wishes to do so in such a way as to retain what one has acquired, so that God is to come to what oneself desires, and so one does not give up the matter in question though this would be the better way for one.”
(Text No. 154)

Reflect how such a mentality is judged by:

1. Lucifer who is always urging on his helpmates to cherish that disorderly attachment, to multiply their snares and chains, to make such a conscience ever more coarse, to entice to more and worse faults.
2. The Angels who are friendly towards men, and who see through Lucifer’s frauds.
3. The Saints gathered round Christ: they are themselves poor in spirit, and they pity such unworthy brethren.
4. By Jesus who proclaims aloud: *“How hard it is for them that trust in riches, to enter into the Kingdom of God.” (Matthew 10:24)*
5. By the Divine Majesty: God created those men for His service, and their slothful conduct moves Him to loathing; God so loved them as to give His only-begotten Son for them, and now He sees their love to be so weak; He called them to perfection, and He must behold how they do not listen to His calling.
6. By the soul itself at the hour of death: it finds itself still more or less infected by this disorderly attachment.

It is a serious mistake to put limits to one’s correspondence to the grace of God: to decide that one will follow the voice of God only to a fixed pre-determined degree or only in a particularly specified manner. What a dangerous and hazardous thing this would be! No one knows what arrangement of grace God has preordained. Not to reach a proffered high degree of holiness may well mean for some the loss of eternal life entirely.

One may well ask oneself if one is placing any obstacles to grace, especially the obstacle of habitual venial sin. Is one such as would “like” to be perfect but whose spirit is held in the snare and chain of vain and worldly desires? Is one far from perfect and entire renunciation? How often does one renounce in prayer what one embraces and cherishes later on in action!

Third Point: Utter Lack of Poverty of Spirit

Contemplate the description of one who does not have poverty of spirit at all in the words of St. Ignatius:

“One who lacks poverty of spirit altogether is one who ‘would like’ to rid self of the attachment for the thing acquired in order to find peace in God our Lord and assure salvation, but the hour of death comes and the person has not made use of any means whatever to do so.”

I shall examine my sentiments, my “likes and dislikes” to see if they are well-ordered unto God. A recall of some of the considerations that occupied me in my meditation on ‘Personal Sin’ may help here.

If, because of my tepidity, I have been using no means at all to correct or remove such a disorder, it is a sign that I am lacking entirely in poverty of spirit. It is a sign that I am not really following Jesus and if my inordinate affection is in regard to some serious matter, or in an area that could lead to serious sin, I am off the path of salvation and on the way to eternal damnation.

How stupid can one be? *“The sluggard willeth and willeth not.” (Proverbs 13:4)* How quickly one will consent to a difficult surgery for the preservation of one’s natural life, but how slow one is to undertake the cutting necessary to achieve salvation! “Too little and too late” is as fatal supernaturally as it is naturally. Remedies are to be applied when needed. What blindness otherwise! To know one’s serious need and to put off again and again the means to supply it!

“Folly is a joy to him who has no sense, but a man of understanding walks aright.” (Proverbs 15:21)

“Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20)

The Triple COLLOQUY of the Two Standards

First with the Blessed Virgin Mary: “My Lady and my Mother, Mother of Jesus! You never had any other word in your heart but that famous word of yours: *“Be it done unto me according to Thy word.”* Through the tender kindness of your Immaculate Heart I implore you to ask the grace from your Son for me that I may follow Him with no least reservation through all matters and in all affairs, that I be attracted to no other thing than His good pleasure, that I too have no other wish in my heart than that it be done unto me according to the word of Jesus. I sincerely and earnestly implore this grace through your intercession, O Blessed Virgin Mary.” - Hail Mary....

Second with Jesus: “Jesus, in the spirit of Your own prayer: *“Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done”* I wish to approach You in all circumstances especially in all distress of soul. May my conformity to the Divine Will be as perfect as that of Mary and as that of Your own Self – may it be the beginning and the end of all my desires and operations – and may it be with no movements of vitiated self-love. By the sufferings of Your agony in Gethsemane, O Jesus, I implore You to bring me to that state of mind and will which will correspond perfectly to Your own prayer in Gethsemane, namely, *“Not what I will but what You will, O God!”*

Sixth Day - Jesus the Savior, Observing Christ

General Aim: To attain an ever more interior and intimate knowledge of our Lord that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely.

To get “close” to the “Person” of Jesus in a loving way.

To open myself to an ever greater reverence for Jesus in my familiarity with Him.

To “*let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil. 2:5)

To arrive at that disposition whereby “*I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.*” (Phil 3:8)

**Prayer Subjects
For This Day**

First Contemplation: John Baptizes Jesus

1. From Nazareth to the Jordan
2. John Baptizes Jesus
3. The Heavens Opened

Second Contemplation: The First Miracle Performed at the Marriage Feast of Cana in Galilee

1. Response to an Invitation
2. A Marian Episode
3. The Miracle Itself

Third Contemplation: The Transfiguration of Jesus

1. The Vision Itself
2. “He Spoke with Moses and Elias.”
3. Accompanying Circumstances

Contemplation

Any particular event in the life of Jesus is in itself relatively unimportant; it always yields first place to the “Person” of Jesus.

While contemplating any event of the life of Jesus, the interior movements of soul are to be assessed in light of the Meditation on the Two Standards.

As the intimacy of the retreatant with Jesus grows, so must the reverence increase. One must not put obstacles in the way by way of careless behavior during the exercises.

A Contemplation: John Baptizes Jesus

*“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with Thee I am well pleased.’”
(Mark 1:9-11)*

First Prelude: The history: *“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness; and he went into all the region about the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Luke 3:1-3)*

Second Prelude: The place: A relatively shallow place or ford in the Jordan river where John is preaching to a crowd and then baptizing those who were moved to repentance and personal reform submitting to the baptism of John – and Jesus taking His place in the line with all the others in an act of inconceivable self-abasement and humility.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask for an intimate (interior) knowledge of my Lord who for me abased Himself taking a place among sinners and humbling Himself before John the Baptist – in order that I may love Him more ardently and serve Him with greater fidelity.

I might also ask for all the virtues of which Jesus gives us an example in this particular mystery of his life. Ask for a heart free from all to which the flesh attracts, a heart pure of all worldly desires, a heart joined in devotion to the Most Holy Spirit.

First Point: From Nazareth to the Jordan

“After Christ our Lord had bidden farewell to His Blessed Mother, He went from Nazareth to the River Jordan where St. John the Baptist was.” (Text No. 273)

Reflect on the fact that Christ our Lord here leaves His mother in order to undertake His Apostolic function and so fulfill the will of His Father. He says good-bye to His most holy Mother in order that He might most perfectly obey His heavenly Father – an impressive example of perfect abnegation of the “world” especially of renunciation of the ties of flesh and blood and of inordinate love of relatives and associates – especially for all who follow Jesus and wish to participate in His apostolic ministry! Must not such a one renounce all worldly concerns and even association with a holy Mother as well as good sisters and brothers?

“No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him.” (2 Timothy 2:4)

As long as worldly familiarity with relatives and friends remains, it is impossible for the one who enters the service of Christ to distinguish himself and to disentangle himself from the desires, affairs and concerns of the world.

Contemplate the fact that Jesus moves from His world of Nazareth to the Jordan, that is, to the preacher of penance in the wilderness – again pointing to the need to free oneself from the trap of worldly desires if one is to lead others away from the world, to detach them from secular concerns, to bring them to the spirit of penance, and to lead them to Christ.

One may well look to one's heart and its affections – whether one is sufficiently free from a more humanly care for relatives, from the spirit of the world, from the vanity of attachment to the esteem of others, from the enjoyment of the creature comforts of living, from ambition for offices of power and dignity.

Second Point: John Baptizes Jesus

“St. John baptized Christ our Lord. When he wished to excuse himself because he thought himself unworthy to baptize Him, our Lord said to him: ‘Let it be so at this time; for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice.’” (Text No. 273)

Jesus is baptized! Ponder this stupendous example of humility. Contemplate how Jesus thus deliberately hides and abnegates His dignity to remove the vice of ostentation from my heart. For my instruction the humility of the Savior overcomes the reluctance of John so that I may learn the need of humility in following Him in His pastoral work.

According to the doctrine of the Holy Fathers, humility is the foundation of all virtue and so in the words of Jesus it is necessary if we are “to fulfill all justice.” Where humility fails, pride begins. Grace flees from pride. Without that grace we can do nothing; with it, everything.

“I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)

“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5)

If one is to be found faithful in the kingdom of Jesus, one must be very humble for otherwise one will be a thief stealing God's glory for self. Consequently God cannot use such a one. God will withdraw His grace, His resources and even occasions of promoting the divine glory. And even in what little good such a one does, vainglory, shameful self-esteem, a vain complacency in self will steal away all merit.

Humility is a sign of a blessed predestination as pride is a sign of an unhappy reprobation. I must think humble. I must act humble. I must at all costs become strong in humility.

More affectionately contemplate how the humiliation of the baptism was of a piece with His whole life up to now: “He actually professed during His whole previous life a love of poverty and contempt so that He passed only for the Son of Joseph and Mary, whereas He was the Son of God; for the ‘brother’ of James and Joseph, of Judas and Simon, i.e., their equal, whereas He surpassed all men in dignity; for a person of ordinary wisdom and virtue, whereas He was greater than any in any kind of perfection both divine and human.” (Hummelhauer p. 214)

Third Point: The Heavens Opened

“And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” (Matthew 3:17)

The above words point to the necessary preparation for such work of the apostolate as will be persevering and productive of the hundredfold. This need is that of union with God through personal prayer by means of which the Holy Spirit not only descends into the soul but, as in the case of Jesus in this mystery, remains there. The soul thus lives in the love of God as the very center of all of its desires. It is the basis of one's habit of prayer.

Such a union with God through the Holy Spirit in both actual and habitual prayer is even more necessary for the apostolic than for the cloistered spiritual person, for the former is surrounded by the distractive activities of the world in which such a one labors. Only by this kind of union can the apostolic person speak with something of the unction of Jesus so as to affect souls beyond the mere words, really to move hearts as Jesus did, to be a true and free channel of the Divine Word to souls. The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostolic person is, as with Jesus, closely connected with the mission: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

COLLOQUY: *Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our Life, our sweetness and our Hope! By the glories that came to you of your own profound humility, I implore your intercession for the grace for me to be as humble as the record of my sins and the present degree of my sinfulness calls for. Mother, I have need of thee. The example of your whole life inspires me to follow the pattern of Jesus' humility as shown in this mystery of His Baptism. Now obtain for me the graces necessary for my effort to do so. I ask this of you who, by divine Providence, are constituted the Mediatrix of all Graces and the Associate of Jesus in the work of the Redemption. Hail Mary.... Etc.*

Lord Jesus, Son of God, be merciful to me, a sinner! Take me up into Your own high way of self-abasement, though in all truth it would be hard to find a place lower than that which I deserve. Give me a humble and contrite heart for "A contrite and humble heart, O my God, You will not despise." (Psalm 50/51:19) I cannot take my place fully under Your holy Standard unless You give me the grace to "humble myself more for those virtues which I lack than pride myself on those I possess. (Cf. Psalm 38) You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Soul of Christ etc.

Heavenly Father, grant me the grace to imitate your Son's humility as I see it in this mystery of His Baptism, for I know that You will take me over in the measure in which I am humble for "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) I need humility because I need Your love as Jesus had it for in Him you were "well pleased." Your love can be blocked by the pride of my heart for "Pride is hateful before God and men." (Ecclesiasticus 10:7) Again and again I ask for humility for I cannot attain it of myself and I ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Our Father... etc.

LITTLE THINGS

"Little words are the sweetest to hear; little charities fly farthest, and stay longest on the wing; little lakes are the stillest; little hearts are the fullest, and little farms are the best tilled. Little books are read the most, and little songs the dearest loved. And when Nature would make anything especially rare and beautiful, she makes it little; little pearls, little diamonds, little dews. Agar's is a model prayer; but then it is a little one; and the burden of the petition is for but little. The Sermon on the Mount is little, but the last dedication discourse was an hour long. Life is made up of littles; death is what remains of them all. Day is made up of little beams, and night is glorious with little stars."

A Contemplation: The First Miracle Performed at the Marriage Feast of Cana in Galilee

First Prelude: The history: It is best given in the words of the Apostle St. John (2:1-11):

"On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.' So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.' This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him."

Second Prelude: The place: The rather large living room of a modestly well-off family, decorated, with tables all set for the feast, and at the end of the room the "thrones" set up for the Bride and Groom, with divans and large cushions set all about the room, six large water pots being visible through the door in the vestibule.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask that I may know Jesus more perfectly, who for me worked His first public miracle in Cana at the request of His mother, in order that I may love Him more perfectly and serve Him more faithfully, especially through the graces necessary for living a good Christian social life, especially, as Jesus and His disciples did, that I *"become all things to all men, that I might save all."* (1 Cor. 9:22) Ask, therefore, for the spirit of affability, of compassion, and of sanctification in all the business and occupations of temporal life.

First Point: Response to an Invitation

"Christ our Lord and the disciples were invited to the marriage feast." (Text No. 276)

Reflect on the facts as narrated carefully in the inspired word: Jesus is represented not as eagerly coming to the marriage feast on His own but only in response to an invitation – nor did Jesus come alone, but with His disciples and His mother. It is a highly approved spiritual policy among the saints to abstain as far as possible from purely social contacts, unless there is a solid reason for expecting real spiritual fruit, especially, abstaining from convivial celebrations, receptions and similar occasions. And even then, one does not go alone – and ever solely for such reasons as Jesus had, namely, by His presence to lend dignity to marriage which He was to make into a sacrament later on.

The virtue of affability, which we see here in Jesus, the facility of adapting ourselves to the harmless desires of others, is only for the purpose of attracting them to Jesus, not to ourselves. *"Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory." (Psalm 113:1)*

This calls for many other virtues: the spirit of firmness with self, unlimited charity toward others, rare humility in oneself, ardent and inextinguishable zeal, full control of one's own passions, high prudence and keen discretion. Pray for the gift of these. What a fault it is in an apostolic person to demand that all accommodate themselves to him or her instead of self to them!

Second Point: A Marian Episode

"His Mother calls attention to the shortage of wine, saying to Him: 'They have no wine.' She bids the servants: 'Whatever He shall say to you do.'" (Text No. 276)

Contemplate this manifestation by Our Lady of a virtue without which affability is impossible, namely, the virtue of compassion, especially for the temporal needs of men and women so as to be helpful as far as possible to the poor.

In order that Jesus may come to our aid in this and in all other needs, we listen to Mary as she says to us "servants": "Whatever He shall say to you do." We are advised here to do what we can and to ask from Jesus what we cannot do and help will surely come to others through this solicitude of ours. And we are to have this recourse to Jesus through the Mother of Mercy to whom we are to be intensely devoted. She has unlimited influence with her Son.

This mystery is proof enough of her power. She does not even ask her Son; she merely points up the need and, as it were, at her bidding and in her favor, a miracle! And even if the matter is not of any great moment (What is it to Me and to thee?), even if the time for His manifestation is not quite at hand, He performs the first miracle of His public life and that at her mere suggestion.

Does not Jesus Himself give us here an example of obedience to Mary, but ours must be the obedience of imitation of her virtues: especially here, her virtue of compassion? *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."* (Matthew 5:7)

Third Point: The Miracle Itself

He changed water into wine, "and He manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him." (Text No. 276)

The fact is the Jesus did change water into wine. Here one can well accept the theme of sobriety in celebrations. Those at the wedding feast merited that Jesus should perform this miracle in that He surely would not have done so had He foreseen that the guests would abuse it. Esteem of sobriety in whatever secular celebrations we participate should indeed be one of the fruits of this contemplation.

There is also a sort of allegorical meaning to the changing of water into wine that has been seen by contemplative persons of the past. The water of our natural affections, occupations and businesses is to be transformed into the wine of holiness in our concerns, our dealings and the example of our lives. Our aim should be, moreover, to change the water weakness of human frailty and need, of worldly stupidity and folly, into the wine of spiritual strength and wisdom.

Again, we are to change the water of compunction into the wine of spiritual joy so that others, seeing the difference it makes in our lives, may come the better to believe in Jesus and the message of the Gospel.

COLLOQUY:

"Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love, Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity, inflame my heart with love for You and compassion for those around me.

Grant, O Lord that ever, in all my dealings with others, I may keep in mind Your words: "...as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."

Grant that I may rule all my dealings with others according to Your command: "...love one another, as I have loved you."

Grant that I may think of them as You think of them and of me.

Grant that I may feel toward them as You feel toward them and me.

Grant that I may speak to them and of them as You would were You in my place.

Grant that I may bear with them as You bear with me.

Grant that I may regard it a privilege "...not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Grant that I may seek opportunities of doing good to them in a kindly way – seeing You, serving You, in them.

Place Your thoughts in my mind, Your love in my heart, Your words on my lips – that I may learn to love others as You love me."

(This prayer is from a prayer book entitled "For Jesuits" edited by Fr. John Hardon, published by Loyola University Press, pg. 281)

A Contemplation: The Transfiguration of Jesus

First Prelude: The history: It is best given in the words of the Apostle Matthew (Matt 17:1-9):

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.' When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Rise, and have no fear.' And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, 'Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead.'"

St. Mark 9:5 adds about St. Peter: *For he knew not what he said, for they were struck with fear.*

Speaking of the vision itself St. Luke adds in 9:30: *And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Second Prelude: The place: Common tradition places the scene at Mt. Tabor a little north of the center of Palestine. Almost two thousand feet high, the "beautiful mountain was ascended by a steep, twisting path of steps, through a thicket choked with oak, mastic, carob and turpentine trees. At the end of an hour of difficult climbing they came to a rather wide and bare plateau from which could be seen almost the whole theater of Jesus' Galilean apostolate and the scenes of His principle miracles: Naim, Cana, Capharnum, and the edge of the Lake of Tiberias, and close by the circle of hills where Nazareth was hidden." (Prat, Life of Jesus, p. 423)

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask the grace to have an intimate knowledge of Jesus who for me was transfigured before His three disciples, in order that I may love Him more ardently and serve Him with greater fidelity. Ask particularly for light in making your election in such a way as to be yourself transfigured into a new person different from what you are now; a person like Jesus, with an entirely new way of acting, a way of living not for the natural but for the supernatural, not for the earthly but for the heavenly.

First Point: The Vision Itself

Jesus took with Him His beloved disciples, Peter, James, and John, and He was transfigured before them. His face became resplendent as the sun, and His garments like snow. (Text No. 284)

Contemplate the inner meaning of the choice of the three disciples and that they were led high on the mountain for this is a significant mystery in itself. It has been seen to suggest the three human faculties of memory, intellect and will which are themselves to be transformed or transfigured by the three theological virtues of faith, hope and love, an elevation which is necessary if we are to have the life of the heavenly Adam in us.

The way to the practice of these virtues, if Christ is to be formed in us through them, is mainly that of a union with God through a prayer life that gleams with the splendor of the Godhead Itself as did Jesus in this mystery and as did the countenance of Moses as of old.

By the splendor and pure light with which Jesus shone as the sun, there is indicated a purity of intention in all of one's thinking, desiring, acting and suffering for God's glory alone. The "garments" of the soul will shine like snow, too, through the light of this same sun for the garments symbolize the works of perfect virtue and of purity of soul without the least stain or blemish of pretense or vain glory. Were all this to come about one would be truly transformed into a new person.

"O good Jesus, I am far indeed from any such transfiguration of my whole person. Nevertheless, with the aid of Your grace from on High, I may be able to achieve this elevation of heart from the lowly desires of earth to the high aspirations of heaven. Under Your leadership I may ascend the celestial mountain by the high passes in spite of the weight of concupiscence which ever weighs me down. Take me on, O Lord, and help me do what I cannot do at all in following You on this upward ascent. May I become ever more like unto You." (Weninger, p. 154)

Second Point: "He spoke with Moses and Elias." (Text No. 284)

Reflect prayerfully upon that which the Almighty wishes to teach me by this arrangement:

The fervor of my life is to be nourished by a prayerful contemplation of the "Law" as symbolized by Moses, and the "Prophets" as signified by Elias. In brief, the Sacred Writings of the Old Testament. *"You search the Scriptures,"* says Jesus in John 5:39, *"because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me."*

It is in Holy Scripture that one finds the spark that will ignite the fervor of contemplation and enthusiasm for the practice of virtue. St. Peter (2 Peter 1:19) says: *"And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."* It is by studying the "Law" both the "Old" and the "New", and reflecting within ourselves that Jesus can be transformed in us and in Him, and that we can best show Him forth in our lives.

Contemplate also the symbolism of Moses and Elias regarding how the "Law" and the "Prophets" brought the whole story of salvation up to this point, and how Moses and Elias here, as it were, lay down their task and say good-bye to Jesus who is now to go on with the story in what He has to do and to suffer in Jerusalem concerning which they are speaking to Him in the vision.

Ponder perhaps the words of Thomas a Kempis: "Truth is to be sought in Holy Scripture; not eloquence. All holy Scripture should be read in the spirit in which it was written. We should seek profit in the Scripture rather than subtlety of speech....If thou wilt derive profit, read with humility, with simplicity, and with faith; and never wish to have the name of learning. Be fond of inquiring, and listen in silence to the words of the Saints; and let the parables of the ancients not be displeasing to thee, for they are not uttered without cause.

"Come Holy Spirit, enlighten my heart and understanding. Help me to recognize the eternal truth as I read it, to know Jesus the Lord more perfectly, to love God more intensely and to serve Him more loyally; through Christ our Lord. Amen."
(From "Learning to Read the Bible," by Dr. Pius Parsch, Liturgical Press, p. 5)

Third Point: Accompanying Circumstances

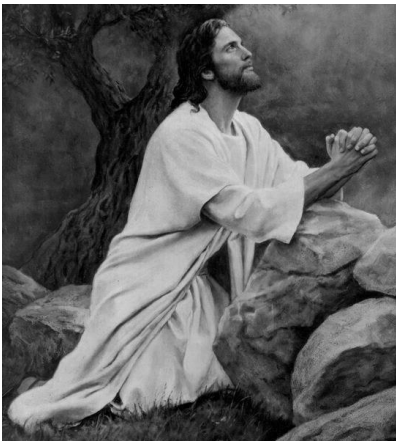
When St. Peter said that they should build three tabernacles, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son.... Hear ye Him." When the disciples heard this voice, they fell down for fear, their faces to the ground. Jesus came and touched them and said to them, "Arise and fear not...Tell not the vision to any one till the Son of Man be risen from the dead."

Contemplating the words of Peter in this mystery we can see how easily does our innate weakness confuse the human with the divine and mistake the intent of God with our own desire. Peter would like to have things set up so as to enjoy the delights of heaven here and now and so to be with Christ forever and at once. But it was not to be either for him or for me.

The word from heaven is "Hear Him," and He is the One who says: *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."* (Matthew 16:24) There is, therefore, another mount which I must first climb with Jesus and it is a mount on which He is transfigured in an altogether different way: *"He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him."* (Isaiah 53:2) I may well ask Him on that mount: *"Why, then, is Thy apparel red, and Thy garments like theirs that tread the winepress?"* (Isaiah 63:2) Indeed, human nature can be terrified by this prospect and, like the disciples, fall down in fear upon the ground but at the touch of Jesus the fear fades away. As did the disciples, so are we to do, namely to remain with Jesus transfigured, whether it be in the heights of consolation or in the lowliness of "only Jesus."

In the rising of the disciples from the ground, in their going down the mountain with Jesus and in the command which Jesus gave them not to tell anyone of this vision until after His resurrection, we see a caution against speaking to others of the more sublime gifts one may have received. The taste, relish and fragrance of spiritual experience may well be dissipated by such attempts at communication. The temptation to vanity is readily apparent in such conversation. Let us be content to *"taste and see that the Lord is sweet."* (Psalm 33:9) We have, moreover, our Lord's own counsel: *"Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you."* (Matthew 7:6)

COLLOQUY: With Jesus and the heavenly Father, asking for the grace of a love of the cross and a mind and heart responsive to all divine communications. Beg the grace not to spend much time in enjoying or in pursuing the delights of the spirit which frequently come through contemplation and through His divine service, for this is not the nature of religious life, nor is it proper to the laborious vocation of our calling.



*Jesus praying to His
Father*

Seventh Day - The Suffering Servant, Enduring with Jesus

General Aim: To attain to sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep interior grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.

To savor the mysteries of the Passion, not just the event but the event with all that the eye of faith can see beneath it.

To gain the full personal impact under grace of what suffering Almighty God endures and for me.

To increase my faith in the necessity of penance as defined by the Council of Trent. (Session 6: Canon 32; Session 14: Canon 5)

Prayer Subjects
For This Day

First Contemplation: The Last Supper

1. Jesus Institutes the Eucharist
2. Jesus Washes the Feet of His Disciples
3. Judas

Second Contemplation: “Behold the Man”

No formal points – Contemplating
the key texts describing what one
does in the “Ecce Homo”

Night Contemplation: The Crucified (My Other Self, pp. 157-176)

1. The Words from the Cross
2. The Words from the Cross
3. The Final Acts

Matters of
emphasis

In the first three points of the suggested form of contemplation St. Ignatius directs us “to see,” that is, to “Contemplate” the Persons, the Words and the Actions; but he changes to “to consider” how Christ suffers in His humanity, how the Divinity hides Itself, and how He suffers all this for my sins.

Nobody likes to be reminded that God died for his or her sins and died for him or her. Yet St. Ignatius makes this factor central in the Third Week. Let us follow this emphasis.

Note too that “what Christ suffers in His Humanity is not identical with what He suffers in His body. More painful than all bodily sufferings is the contempt, the derision, the disappointment, the betrayal. Note also not only what He suffers as “man” but as “This Man.”

Prenotes to Third Part

Contemplating the Passion

In the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius the intent of the contemplations on the passion of Jesus is to confirm one in the good one has been moved to undertake as a result of the prayer on the teaching and doctrine and example of Jesus as pondered in the retreat thus far. In the account of the sufferings of Jesus all His virtues shine forth more brilliantly and invite one more pressingly to His imitation. The thought of Christ suffering greatly stimulates the spirit of a person and motivates one to bear the burden and overcome the obstacles met with in the following of Jesus.

And difficulties are to be expected. The Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to point out that *“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”* (2 Timothy 3:12) Our Lord Himself said: *“From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven has suffered violence.”* (Matthew 11:12) And through Sirach in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, the Holy Spirit Himself speaks: *“My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation.”* (Ecclesiasticus 2:1)

No greater source of inspiration and strength can there be in bearing hardship with constancy and a steady spirit than the example of the suffering Christ. Nothing more surely strengthens the will. There is no greater way to the full appreciation of the value of human souls for whom Jesus suffered and died than consideration of the Lord’s passion. It is, therefore a great stimulant for the zeal that is such an essential element of our vocation.

Moreover, in realizing that in no way was the Father more greatly glorified than by the sufferings of His son, one comes to a love of the cross, a love of suffering for God as a great means of our own promoting the greater glory of God.

One will certainly give oneself the more freely and the more constantly to contemplation on the Passion of Jesus, the more one realizes how much such contemplations are a way to love of God and Christ, who suffered so much for one. This is the love which overcomes all and of which the Inspired Word says: *“Love is strong as death... the lamps thereof are fire and flame. Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can floods drown it.”* (Canticle 8:6)

These contemplations of the Passion not only intensify the loyalty and love of Jesus generated in the prayer of the second part of our Exercises, but they reach back and confirm the fruit of our initial meditations on sin and evil. It is in contemplation on the Passion where we can even more clearly perceive, abhor and recoil from the malice and corruption of sin and flee from it with ever greater energy.

Thus the scope of these contemplations is closely allied with all that has gone before.

Contemplation: The Last Supper

First Prelude: The History: It is best given in the words of the Evangelist – St. Mark 14:22-24

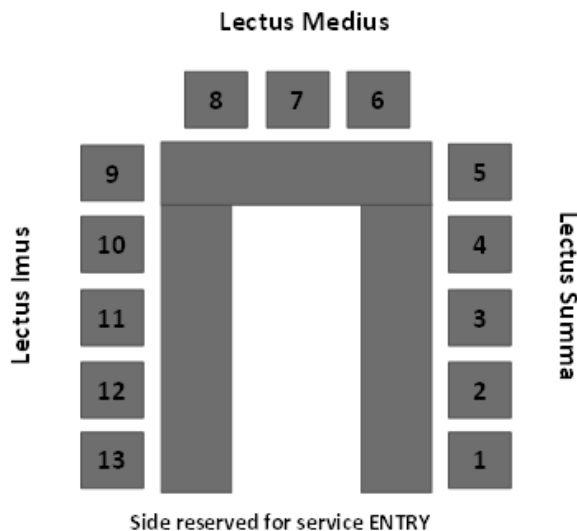
"And as they were eating, He took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank of it.

And He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

Second Prelude: Place: Picture to yourself in imagination the "large dining room furnished" which the disciples "going found as He (Jesus) had said to them," (Luke 22:12) with three couches placed on three sides of an oval or squared table as below:

At the Last Supper we suppose that the disposition was the one generally in use, that of the Roman *triclinium*: three couches placed on three sides of an oval or squared table.



If we number consecutively the places for thirteen guests occupying the three couches of a *triclinium*, the place of honor is in the middle of the *lectus medius* at number 7. This is the place of our Lord, who has at his left St. Peter at number 6, and at his right St. John at number 8. Judas, who is directing the serving, is at the inner end of the *lectus imus* at number 9. If we have this diagram before us, the narrative of the Fourth Gospel presents no difficulty at all.

From: Prat: "Jesus Christ" Vol. II, page 269

Third Prelude: Here it will be to ask for sorrow, compassion and shame because the Lord is going to His suffering for my sins.

I shall also ask that a most tender and most burning sense of devotion and love pour into my heart toward the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

O Jesus, You were most mindful of me when on this day before Your Sacred Passion You made a sacrificial offering of Yourself to Your Father. Now in this present be gracious to me and give me a share in those graces which You so generously gave to St. John at the Last Supper.

First Point: Jesus Institutes the Eucharist

Jesus institutes the most holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist, the greatest proof of His love. He says to them, "Take and eat." (Text No. 289)

As in all the mysteries of the Passion we center our minds most attentively on the most sacred Person of the Savior. We try to visualize here the majesty and amiability of His countenance, the affection in His eyes, the calm dignity of every movement as Jesus takes up the bread in His sacred hands and raising His eyes to heaven to God, His omnipotent Father, He breaks the bread and gives to His disciples, saying: *"Take, eat; this is My Body."* And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, *"Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."* (Matthew 26:22)

It is in this tender and intimate way that Jesus establishes the Sacrifice of the New Law and at the same time the greatest sacrament of His love.

Contemplate first the Sacrifice in which I participate so very often, offering to my heavenly Father His own only-begotten Son in praise, in thanksgiving, in supplication, in reparation.

Contemplate secondly the most holy Sacrament, affectionately and appreciatively, which I have received so often as the greatest possible pledge and proof of the love of Jesus Christ my Savior for me. What happiness to be called to this sacred intimacy of Holy Communion! When this Jesus, this Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, instituted this Sacrifice of the New Law, He saw every Mass, every Holy Communion that was to be to the end of the world! He saw every act of reverence and adoration and love that would be directed toward Him in this Holy Mystery.

At the same time He saw all the acts of irreverence and all the outrageous sacrileges against this very Mystery of His most sacred Person in that same future!

May I never walk away from the Eucharist as Judas did. I will not even ask, as St. Paul did, *"What shall I do, Lord?"* (Acts 22:10) No, my prayer will ever be: Do with me as You will, strike, chastise, take my life, only never permit me ever to be separated from Thee.

May the principle effect of this most Holy Sacrament find its fulfillment in me for Jesus has said: *"This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."* (John 6:58)

Second Point: Jesus Washes the Feet of His Disciples

Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, even those of Judas. He begins with St. Peter, but St. Peter, considering the majesty of the Lord and his own lowliness, does not want to permit it, and says: "Lord, does Thou wash my feet?" St. Peter did not know that Christ was giving an example of humility in this, and therefore, Jesus said to him, "I have given you an example that as I have done you also ought to do."

Calling to mind that there is only one Person in Jesus, namely, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, one God with the Father and the Most Holy Spirit, and making myself conscious of the inconceivable condescension involved in God thus setting Himself to eat familiarly with His lowly creatures, what shall I feel on seeing Him very consciously:

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded Himself with a towel. Then He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do you wash my feet?' Jesus answered him, 'What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part in Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you.' For He knew who was to betray Him; that was why He said, 'You are not all clean.'" (John 13:3-11)

O Lord Jesus, if I could have actually seen You then, what fruit I would have gained from such a sight! A most profound and most unassuming and most gracious humility! But even now, with the help of Your grace, I can view this scene with no little profit if only I gaze attentively at this impressive tribute You make to self-abasement and humility, kneeling thus at the feet of Your disciples!

How abashed I would be and what confusion and embarrassment would cover me were I to behold You kneeling at my feet! Would I not be overcome with an awareness of my own inherent arrogance, self-esteem, and pride? Would I not be embarrassed at my memory of my insistence on respect from others? Would I not be humiliated to the dust? And yet is not the cleansing of the holy Sacrament of Reconciliation, the self-abasement of Your coming to me in Holy Communion, as much and more than the washing of feet?

Knowing how very often, like Peter, I have been reluctant to accept the cleansing of Your sacrament, ought I not say in reparation very sincerely with the Psalmist: *"Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."* (Psalm 50:4) – purify the intent of my living – cleanse the manner of my thinking – wash the hands of my works from their many imperfections – wash and purify my intention – all that I may be wholly pure and truly have part in Thee.

Free me especially, O Lord, from all stain of vanity and pride which ever twist and besmear my ambitions, my actions, and my intentions! When, O Lord, when shall I be freed from the movements and entanglements of pride, from this ferment of iniquity, from this root of all sin and misery? May Your example here at the Last Supper be ever before me! Kneeling and washing the feet even of Judas!

Third Point: Judas

*Jesus eats the Paschal Lamb with His disciples, to whom He predicts His death:
"Amen I say to you, one of you shall betray Me." (Text No. 289)*

Contemplate tenderly the Persons that were at that Last Supper. Jesus was there eating with the Twelve for the last time, and He knew it was the last time. At the beginning of the Paschal meal there were still the Twelve. At its end there would be only eleven. Picture especially the immense love for His disciples and for me shining in His holy Face, and at the same time the trace of sorrow in His Heart for His lost disciple, and a sadness, too, for all that, like Judas, would likewise be lost. (John 18:9)

Ponder those at the head of the table: Jesus in the center, John to His left, and Judas to His right since he had charge of temporal arrangements. Across from John was Peter. See into those four hearts! For Jesus to sit down to table with Judas! Judas has excluded Jesus from his heart but Jesus has not excluded Judas. Jesus actually keeps trying to bring him back from his way of perdition. Jesus indeed makes a pathetic appeal to him, veiled from the others, but nevertheless a great grace offered to Judas. Jesus speaks:

"I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against Me.' ...When Jesus had thus spoken, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.'" (John 13:18)

"The Son of man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (Matthew 26:24)

Ponder the interesting fact that while all the others asked and wondered who it was that should do the betraying, two did not. John's love was so great that he knew he would not, and the love of Judas was so cold that he knew he would. Yet Judas was brazen enough to put the question straight to Jesus: Is it I Lord? Then from Jesus came the tragic words *"Thou hast said it."* (John 13:27) and *"What thou dost, do quickly."* (Matthew 26:25)

O my Jesus, may John's profession of love be my profession too! Who is a greater sinner than I? Who is more weak and liable to fall? Yet relying on Your mercy and kindness, I speak words of love for You with great peace of soul. Although I am most vividly aware of my own great deficiencies and imperfections, I may not, like John, presume to rest my head against Your breast; nevertheless, I do cast myself at Your feet and exclaim: O my Jesus. I love you. I will not betray You. You have wooed my heart with so many and such great graces, You have handed Yourself over for me, in particular You have endured the sadness of Judas' loss, and offered Yourself to the eternal Father for me – no, I will not betray Thee. Rather I pray Your grace that I may merit one day to rest in Your bosom as did the Beloved disciple, safe from all the dangers that threaten my salvation.

COLLOQUY: O Jesus, my colloquy can be none other than one full and ardent act of thanksgiving for Your Gift of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I thank You for all the times I have participated in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of Your Body and Blood. With deep affection, I thank You for the uncounted times You have nourished my soul in Holy Communion. I am grateful for all the times when Your Holy Presence in the tabernacle has been a source of grace, strength, and consolation. I thank You for the continued graces that keep coming to me in this Holy Eucharist.

You have instituted the Blessed Eucharist, O Jesus, as a supreme pledge of Your love for me; may my devotion to this same Eucharist be the supreme pledge of my love for Thee! How hard it would be to bear the miseries of this life if Your Holy Presence were not there to re-create, console and strengthen me! Would that I could gather into my single heart all the love and gratitude of all the saints and holy souls of all time for this gift of gifts, the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar!

End with the Prayer "Soul of Christ."

*"What is your opinion...
He deserves to die." (Matthew 26:66)*

*"I put You on oath by the living God to tell
us if You are the Christ, the Son of God."
(Matthew 26:63)*

*"But He was silent and made no
answer at all." (Mark 14:61)*

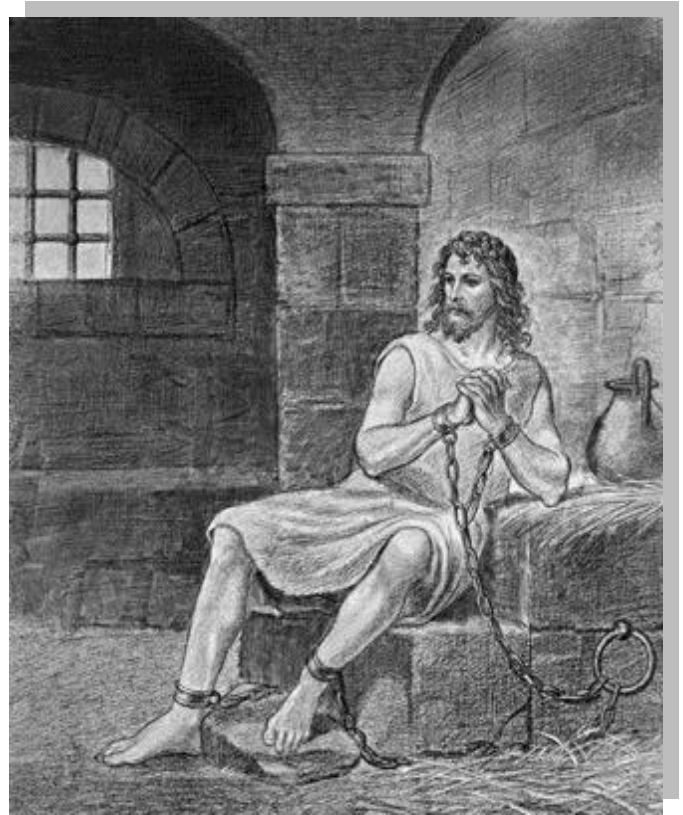
*"Play the prophet, Christ.
Who hit you then?" (Matthew 26:67)*

*"But He was silent and made no answer
at all." (Mark 14:61)*

*"Some of them started spitting at Him and,
blindfolding Him began hitting Him with
their fists..." (Mark 14:65)*

*"Meanwhile, the men who guarded Jesus were
mocking and beating Him.... And they
continued heaping insults upon Him."
(Luke 22:63)*

*"You have heard the blasphemy.
What is your finding?" (Mark 14:63)*



Contemplation: "Behold the Man"

First Prelude: The History: It is best told in the words of the Apostle St. John (19:1-6, 16)

"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; they came up to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck Him with their hands. Pilate went out again, and said to them, "See, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no crime in Him." So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!" When the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" ... Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and He went out..."

Second Prelude: The Place: Picture to yourself a large paved drill area within the gates of the Fortress Antonia. Opposite the gates and facing you are the towering walls of the fortress itself. In the center is a reviewing stand with a stairway up to it from the drill ground. From this reviewing stand Pilate was to conduct the Roman trial of Jesus and upon it he was ultimately to present the wretched Jesus with the famous words "Behold the Man" and finally condemn Jesus to crucifixion.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask for sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.

I may ask that my sorrow with Christ in sorrow will result in my having a clearer perception of my sins and sinfulness; that the multiple sufferings apparent in the sight of Jesus here may underscore the many times I have offended Him; that I may have a sense of being broken with Jesus thus broken in body and spirit for the forgiveness of my sins; that I may be received under His standard in my resolve to follow Him, even though I be hated, rejected, and condemned by all the world.

Note: The presentation of Jesus in this condition sums up the interior and exterior suffering Jesus has endured and is enduring from the beginning to the crucifixion itself. It is a central scene, the contemplation of which, may hopefully serve to bring one to the fullest possible realizations of all the sufferings of Jesus in the very brief time for contemplation on the Passion in these briefer retreats.

Formal "points" will therefore be dispensed with and we shall center on all that one can "see" in response to Pilate's invitation: "Behold the Man."

And he took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death..." (Mark 14:33)

Your sorrow and anguish of spirit, O My Jesus, did not stop at the gates of Gethsemane. The whole agony was but a revelation of the feeling that was to pervade the whole Passion. How truly You can say as You are presented thus by Pilate: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Alas, how much more blood You have shed since the bloody sweat of Gethsemane!

And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize Him and lead Him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to Him at once, and said, "Master!" And he kissed Him. And they laid hands on Him and seized Him. (Mark 14:43)

Lord Jesus, in beholding You, I behold a betrayed man – and by one of your very own. You would not be standing there in this pitiable condition had You not been betrayed by Judas and by every sinner before and after his time. How often “one of the Twelve” betrays You even today! Accept what little I can do in reparation.

Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me, what I said to them; they know what I said." When He had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" (John 18:20)

I see in Your holy Face, my Jesus, the swollen right cheek and the purple discoloring of your right eye as a most sacred record of this foul blow. I am sorry about that blow but more sorry for the sins and sinfulness of souls like mine who are behind it and for whom it was endured. All I can do now is contemplate You with grateful and contrite love!

And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, "Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?" But He was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked Him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And the high priest tore his garments, and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard His blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. (Mark 14:60-64)

My Lord Jesus, You would not be standing there before the Roman Judge had not Caiphas and the tribunal of Your own chosen people rejected You and condemned You to a death which only the Romans could inflict, because they would not accept the kind of Person You had to be, nor the kind of Kingdom You had to propose. *I believe, Lord. Help my unbelief. (Mark 9:23)* Grant me the grace, my Jesus, simply to accept You for what You are. Protect me from twisting You into my own image of what I would like You to be rather than what You are.

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him. So he questioned Him at some length; but He made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Him. And Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him; then, arraying Him in gorgeous apparel, he sent Him back to Pilate. (Luke 23:8-11)

Beholding the mock purple royal robe in which You stand here before Pilate and with which the soldiers had made a fool of You, my Jesus, I think of the white robe of the fool in which Herod clothed you and sent You back to Pilate. Since You were made a fool for me, grant me the grace not only to be willing to be regarded as a fool when it is necessary for me to endure such contempt in Thy service, but actually eager "to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world. So You were treated before me." (Text No. 167)

Now of necessity he (Pilate) was to release unto them one upon the feast day. But they all cried out together, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"-- a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city, and for murder. (Luke 23:17-19)

As I behold You, Jesus, standing there before Pilate and the whole multitude, I see a Man in a truly pitiable state – "no beauty in Him, nor comeliness, and we have seen Him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him: despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity; and His look was as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not." (Isaiah 53:2-3) Indeed Barabbas looked the better of the Two! Grant a great penetrating power, O Lord, to my spiritual sight that I may see Thee beneath whatever deceiving appearances there may be concealing the movements of Thy divine wisdom or the sweetness of Thy holy Presence.

Then, therefore, Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. (John 19:1)

O Jesus, to witness in spirit the agonies of Your scourging! Let me at least suffer the forced contemplation of it! With sympathetic love! With suffering love! With reverent love! With responding love! With contrite love! Let me unite with the mystical contemplation of the Virgin! What a transcendent anguish here! What a terrible record You have left on the Holy Shroud of Turin! Lord Jesus, unite me to Thee in this contemplation of Your scourging! Lord Jesus, Son of God, be merciful to me, a sinner!

And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; they came up to Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck Him with their hands. (John 19:1-3)

And they clothed Him in a purple cloak, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on Him. And they began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck His head with a reed, and spat upon Him, and they knelt down in homage to Him. (Mark 15:17-19)

My in-living and in-lived Jesus! My most loving and affectionate Father! My Most Holy Spirit of Love! I unite with Thy eternity moment as Thou art clothed with cast-off purple, crowned with thorns, holding a reed in Thy right hand. O Most Blessed Trinity, Thou dost not look like anything that Thou art! And I? I must take my place with the cruel soldiers! They, like myself, did not know really what they were doing, but they did it! And Thou hast borne it in love for each of them and for me! Let every one of my genuflections before the Most Blessed Sacrament be acts of reparation for these mocking genuflections and for my many sins! Guilt or no guilt, there they are! Thorns are thorns, blows are blows, whatever the intention behind them!

Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" They cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed Him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, and He went out... (John 19:14-15)

Lord Jesus, let me contemplate you finally sent to the Cross – unknown and despised, calumniated and persecuted – abandoned by men and tempted – betrayed and sold for a vile price – blamed, accused, and unjustly condemned – clothed with a garment of opprobrium and shame – buffeted and mocked – dragged with a rope around Your neck – scourged unto blood – reputed to be a fool and to be possessed by a devil – to whom Barabbas was preferred – shamefully stripped of Your garments – crowned with thorns and saluted in derision – lad with the cross, and with the maledictions of the people – overwhelmed with insults, sorrow and humiliation – sorrowful unto death – insulted, spat upon, beaten, outraged and scoffed at ----

O good Jesus, who has suffered an infinity of insults and humiliations for love of me, imprint the appreciation and love of them on my heart and make me desire to endure them. (This last colloquy from "For Jesuits" by John A. Hardon, S.J.)

Contemplation on My Other Self by Clarence J.ENZLER

GETHSEMANI "Then they spat in his face and dealt him blows ..." (Matthew 26:67).

If you would know what sin is, My other self, study Good Friday and the night before. So terrifying were those hours that My chosen Apostles scattered like frightened birds, and only one of them could bear to watch Me die. Listen to him. He will tell you what he saw.

* * * * *

I am John, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

There are no words, my fellow member of Christ's Body, to tell you how divine our dear Lord is in His love and unswerving purpose or how human in His sorrow and dismay.

He spends the earlier hours of Thursday night giving us, His friends, the gift of His Body and Blood. He talks to us at length, painstakingly telling us that He is going to His Father and that we must not let ourselves be afraid. He warns us that the world will hurl hatred and persecution against us, but He consoles us by promising to send the Holy Spirit and by giving us His own peace and joy.

He prays to the Father for us, that we should all be one. Calling us His friends, He gives us His new commandment of love. He will live on in us, He says, if we but live in Him by keeping His commandments. "I am the vine, you are the branches."¹

He tells us that whatever we shall ask the Father in His name, or whatever we shall ask Him in His own name, will be granted.

All this He does with extreme care, repeating Himself over and over in different words, explaining to Peter, Thomas, and Philip, who ask Him questions, just what He means. Reluctant to leave us, He prolongs the hour of parting coming back again and again for another word, seeming to ask us, "Do you understand? Are you sure now that you understand?"

And then we go out to the garden and He is overcome by sadness. He tells the eight to sit down while He goes on farther to pray. He takes Peter, James, and me aside. "I am plunged in sorrow, enough to break my heart!" He tells us, "Stay here and keep awake."²

Why does He take us three, asking us to watch with Him? Is it because He looks to us for pity and comfort? If so, how we failed Him!

Going a little way off, but still within our sight, He falls to His knees, and then upon His face, praying.

"Father, you can do all things! Spare me this cup! No, not what I will, but what you will!"³ Thus He prays for some time.

Rising after a while and coming back to us, He finds us sleeping. We did not want to sleep. We tried to watch with Him, but a deep sadness and foreboding overcame us with such fatigue that we could not resist.

He speaks to Peter in His gentle way. "Simon, are you sleeping? Were you not able to stay awake one hour? Keep awake and pray, all of you, that you may not succumb to temptation." And then He adds these words to show how well He knows our human frailty, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."⁴ And that is true. We slept not because we wanted to, but because we were so frail.

Again He goes back to pray, falling on His face. "My Father, if this cup cannot be spared me, and I must drink it, may your will be done."⁵

And after a while He returns a second time; we awaken to find Him gazing upon us, and we know not what to say. Without a word of complaint, He resumes His prayer.

An angel from heaven comes to give Him strength, for now He falls into an agony. As He prays even more ardently, His sweat falls to the ground as thick drops of blood. And this we see in the full light of the spring moon.

Why does He keep coming back to us between His prayers? It is partly because the sins of the world have laid a crushing burden upon His great Heart, He looks for one to pity and comfort Him. But there is no one; and hence He goes back again, alone, to wrestle with dread.

He comes back because, even in His own bitter distress, He is keenly aware of our coming temptation, our need for strength. Peter will soon deny Him, yet He urges him to pray. What a lesson this is for us to cling to in our future years. Knowing that Peter will fall, but that Peter does not have to fall, knowing that Peter can find courage through prayer, yet all the time aware that Peter will sleep instead, He urges him to pray.

How sublime that He can think of us, even in His own agony!

How touching that He makes excuse for us: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."⁶

How human He was in His sorrow; how divine in His love.

THE BETRAYAL "One in your group will betray me." (John 13:21)

After His ordeal in the garden, having won the victory, calm, serene, but terribly grave, He wipes the bloody sweat from His face, rouses us, and goes out to meet His enemies.

Judas is at hand. He brings with him soldiers, servants, and hangers-on, some carrying swords, others clubs, still others lanterns. They want to be very sure to take Him this time. They have no need to be anxious. He is willing. He is ready.

Judas breaks away from the crowd. Jesus is standing in front of us. Indeed, it is only His presence that keeps us from running away.

As Judas looks at Him, His face so pale, haggard, deep-lined with struggle, what does the traitor think?

Perhaps he thinks: "I cannot do this. I cannot betray my intimate Friend, my Companion, my Teacher." Or perhaps: "I must go through with it. I have taken their money. They're watching me. They will kill me if I play them false. And they have Him anyway."

Judas is a coward. He kisses Jesus; as you would go to someone and hold out your hand in a gesture of friendship, he kisses Him.

And Jesus says to him, "So this is the errand, my friend, on which you have come!"⁷

Judas knows what He means - why are you doing this?

"Judas, with a kiss you betray the Son of Man?"⁸ Is this your friendship, you who were my comrade?

Do you not see how He is showering grace upon Judas' soul, how He seeks to strengthen and save him? Now is the time for Judas to turn on the multitude, flinging the silver in their faces and taking his stand by the side of his Master. It may be too late to save Christ, but not too late to save Judas. But Judas is a coward.

When he has kissed that face, when he hears the soft vibrant voice call him "friend," what thoughts race through his mind? Does his heart almost stop beating as the first despairing pangs of remorse stab him?

At that moment Jesus steps farther forward. "Who is it you are looking for?"

"Jesus," they say, "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I am he!" And there is a force in His manner that causes them all to shrink back, so that those in front fall against those behind and, tripping over one another, they tumble to the ground.

Once more. He asks them, and when they reply. He says: "I told you that I am he. Therefore, since you are looking for me, let these men go unmolested."⁹

Then Peter draws the sword he carries and strikes at the nearest foe.

It is easy to think about this as though it were only a scene from a play. But it is far different. Peter strikes hard, strikes to kill. His blow is aimed at Malchus, the servant of the high priest, and Malchus, dodging and taking the sword on the side of his head, has his right ear sliced off.

Malchus cries out, the guards start forward. Peter, knife upraised, stands his ground.

But Jesus stops further bloodshed. He makes Peter put away his sword. He approaches Malchus, touches his ear, and instantly it is fully healed.

With this dramatic sign He again gives Judas opportunity to turn back, and not only Judas but all His enemies.

Some of them, indeed, hesitate until goaded by Satan, their leaders seize Him.

Encouraged by His resignation, they tie Him securely. And we, His disciples, do nothing. Most of us run away.

THE SCOURGING "He was bruised for our sins." (Isaiah 53:5).

He does not want us to fight to save Him, for He has told Peter to put away his sword.

Nevertheless, we might at least have gone with Him, proving to Him that our loyalty was greater than our fear. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

They lead Him away.

Gathering the remnants of our courage, Peter and I follow the crowd at a safe distance to the palace of Annas and Caliphaz. Since my family and I are known to Annas and his household, they allow me to enter the courtyard while Peter at first stays outside.

Annas questions the Lord about His teachings and His followers. When Jesus says to him: "I have spoken openly. . . . Question those who heard what I said,"¹⁰ a servant strikes Him in the face.

This is but one of many blows during that frightful night. Struck often, His face spat upon, blindfolded, and slapped, and called upon to prophesy who has hit Him, He is silent. These are heavy blows that jolt His head from side to side. How His head must ache. How nausea must be sweeping over Him.

All through the night they torment Him. In the morning after they have condemned Him, they lead him to Pilate. You know how Pilate tries to set Him free. Sending Him first to Herod, he then seeks to release Him in accordance with the custom of the Passover, but the multitude chooses Barabbas, the robber and murderer, instead. Pilate has Him scourged, hoping that this will satisfy the crowd.

You do not know what a Roman scourging is like. They bind Him, naked, to a column in such a way that He can hardly move, and so that every blow may leap upon Him with full force.

And they beat Him. They beat Him with whips that are thongs of hardened leather in which pieces of lead and bone are embedded, with sharp points to tear the flesh.

The blows fall, regularly as a metronome--one-two-three-four-five. The first lashes raise long red welts. Others break the skin and the blood begins to run. Soon flesh hangs down in shreds. Pieces of skin and flesh fly from the bloody back.

With each blow the thongs wrap themselves around the body, the pieces of lead and bone cutting deep and yet deeper. Though the poor body trembles and sags, the thwack! thwack! thwack! thwack! of the scourges continues relentlessly.

Jesus says not a word.

The executioners set their teeth. They will force Him to scream. He must beg, He must plead, He must curse; He must not be silent.

Now the blood flows from a hundred wounds and more. It spatters the executioners, the lookers-on, the column, the earth; it collects in a spreading pool at the victim's feet.

Only when Jesus can hardly hold Himself on His feet, when dizziness and nausea and weakness cause Him to sag helplessly against the column, upheld only by His bound wrists, only then do they stop. They must not kill Him. Pilate has not sentenced Him to death.

But they are not yet finished. This man, remember, has said He is a king. The body has been torn with scourges, now let us see how the spirit can be racked with ridicule.

They drape a scarlet rag around His shoulder, set Him up against the column, place a reed for a scepter in His right hand. Now for a crown!

One of them weaves some thorny plants, kept for firewood in the courtyard, into a kind of crown. The thorns are needle sharp, long, and tough. Setting this crown upon His head, they press and beat it firmly down. Curved thorns cut through the top of the scalp and protrude again at the forehead.

Now a satanic ridicule begins. One by one, the soldiers, who have been called to join in the fun, come before the Lord, bowing and kneeling in mock homage. Snatching the scepter, they beat Him on the head, across the face. Blood runs anew over His forehead, around His brows, down His cheeks, along His nostrils; and from His nose blood flows into His beard.

Finally, tired of the game, they return Him to Pilate; and even hardened Pilate is startled. "Now look!" he says, "Here is the man!"¹¹

Man, indeed! Is this a man, this creature, this worm?

Yes, this is a man and the Victim of men. And this is God.

And this is SIN!

Do you ask, how could men do such fiendish things?

You also could do them. Yes, all of us while on earth could do them.

Given over to sin, we could do all these horrors that now make us cringe and shrivel up inside just to think of them.

This is what sin does to men. This is what sin makes of men, little by little, until the work of destruction is complete, until of their own free will they choose hell.

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

"He gave them the greatest proof of his love" (John. 13:1).

Did John's words shock you, My other self, into a new dawning realization of the tragedy of sin?

Can you bear to be shocked still more? Can you endure seeing Me carry My cross, hanging upon it, through the eyes of My Mother?

How her heart was torn! Think how your heart would break if you saw your son or your daughter, your husband or wife, your father or mother suffering what I suffered.

How your soul would cry out in sorrow for the bloody, broken body; how it would twist in agony to see the brutal falls to the rough stones; how it would cringe to gaze on the tortured face; how it would scream at the ring of the hammer on the spikes; how your tormented spirit would strive to tear itself from your body at sight of the poor corpus on the gibbet.

Could you bear this anguish?

Had Mary been less than the immaculate one with integrity preserved, could she have witnessed My Passion and not have gone mad?

Listen to Mary, My Mother and your Mother. Listen, if you dare to know more fully what sin is.

* * * * *

My child, among the grievous pains my Son endured was the sight of my own sorrow. I saw Him die. In spirit I died with Him, I watched His martyrdom; He watched mine. My soul was sorrowful beyond the power of your mind to conceive. His soul was more sorrowful still.

When they led Him away to be crucified, they tore off Him the red rag they had put on Him in ridicule so that once again His wounds opened and the blood began to run anew.

They put on Him His own clothing, the seamless garment I had made for Him. Immediately it is stained with blood. The back of His garment becomes soggy, for His flesh lies open in so many places.

Bringing Him the heavy beam, they lay it on His bruised and beaten shoulder. He staggers under the weight, then starts to walk with weak, uncertain steps after the soldiers.

Golgotha is not far, only an eternity. The street is rough and stony. The jarring of the beam on His shoulder starts the blood flowing afresh from His thorn-covered head. Blinded by blood, He can hardly see where to put His feet. He steps on the side of a stone, loses His balance, and falls.

The wood comes down heavily upon His shoulder and the back of His neck, driving the thorny crown deeper into the head that I had cradled so often against my breast. His fine hair is soggy and matted with bloody mud; His hair that I combed and brushed so tenderly when He was my child.

The soldiers help drag Him to His feet. The Lamb goes forward again to the slaughter.

His knees and legs are torn, blood-red and open, those strong, graceful limbs that flashed in the sunlight as He ran gaily in His boy games long ago.

With every step the beam shifts a little on the bruised shoulder. The raw wound widens, the furrow lengthens. Have you ever tried to carry a heavy plank on an uneven path, even one that does not rest on an open wound?

He falls again and again from sheer weakness. Each time the wood crushes Him more cruelly to the street. Do you see how, once, the end of the beam smashes with sickening force on the back of His outflung hand? This is the hand that caressed my face, the baby hand I used to kiss, the boy's hand that held wood for Joseph, the man's hand that knew the carpenter's skills, the physician's hand that healed the sick and disabled, the priest's hand that blessed His people.

Now, utterly drained of strength, He can bear the burden no further. Surely He will die, the soldiers think, unless He is helped. How little they know! He will die when the sacrifice is complete. He will die when He is ready. He alone can offer up His life, He alone can lay it down; no one can take it from Him.

Nevertheless, the soldiers do find one to help Him: Simon. And I know that He accepts Simon's aid gratefully and richly blesses him for it. And I bless Simon, too. It is right that He who in His earthly life helped so many should not be without help in His last hours.

Now we have reached Golgotha. I told you it was not far. Jesus, my Son, has brought His cross to the scene of execution. The sacrifice, the ransom, the Mass, is about to be offered. My Son will die, so that my sons and daughters may live.

THE CRUCIFIXION "Father, forgive them . . ." (Luke 23:34).

Your Lord stands on trembling legs, waiting . . .

His head is bowed. His strength is gone. Only the will remains indomitable.

They take the beam from Simon and lay it on the ground.

The final act has begun.

They tear His garments from His body. His clothing is glued to His back, His shoulders, His thighs and legs, His arms, even His chest. It has become imbedded in the raw wounds and dried blood.

When they rip off His garments, every sore is opened anew. Pieces of flesh are torn from His body. Doctors have written about the agony He must have suffered, about the violent shudder that racked His body, wondering that He did not faint from shock and pain.

What they imagine, I see with my eyes.

His executioners lay Him on the cross, stretch out His arms, and mark the spots for the nails.

They seize His hand, holding it firm. The spike is touched to His wrist. The raised hammer falls and the nail penetrates His flesh. They drive it fast.

Yes, my child, doctors writing of this have told you how His thumb with a spasmodic movement strikes against the palm of His hand. They know what this means: the great nerve center in the wrist has been touched. An indescribable flame of pain has shot up through His arm, bursting like a fire bomb in His brain. They have told you that the nerve is not completely cut, only ripped, so that the raw nerve

itself remains pressed against the spike, leaving this unbearable agony to be repeated over and over with every movement, no matter how slight; and this goes on for hours.

Doctors have written about what they saw in imagination. You could not bear it if I told you what my eyes beheld.

But this I will tell you. Horrible as is this physical torment, it is not the worst of my Son's agony. Mental agony is worse, mental agony that, later on, will bring from His lips, the psalm of desolation: "My God, my God, why do you abandon me!"¹²

They stretch out His other arm, place the nail, poise the hammer. I saw His face contorted with inexpressible pain a moment ago. I cannot bear to watch it again.

But I cannot help hearing the *sounds* of torture....

They have stopped the hammering. They are lifting Him to His feet, raising the beam to which His arms are nailed.

I know nothing of nerve centers. But agony, that I know! Undiluted pain! Convulsive torment!

They move Him back against the upright stake which they have fastened securely in the ground. They help Him "climb" the stake until, with a sudden effort, they are able to place the beam on top of the upright.

If you could see how His body sags, how it pulls on the poor pierced wrists, how His head drops forward!

Bending His knees so that His feet are flat against the upright, they nail Him fast.

Must I go on to the end? Have you not seen and heard enough?

Must I tell you how, for hours, He hangs between heaven and earth, bereft of respect, of belief, almost friendless, so terribly alone?

Do you see the huge spikes through His wrists and feet? Do you note the torn knees, the countless lacerations, the great welt on His shoulder, the crown of thorns running into and through His scalp, the puffed lips, the swollen nose? Do you see how the flies settle in His sores? How slowly He turns His poor tired head from side to side, like a great heaviness that He can move only by inches and with a mighty effort.

He prays: "Father forgive them . . ." ¹³

He forgives, too: "I assure you, this very day you will be with me in paradise." ¹⁴

He bequeaths: "Mother, this is your son." And to John, "This is your mother." ¹⁵

You are now my child; I am your mother.

He looks at me. Often has He given me His eyes in these thirty years and more, but never has He given them to me more tenderly.

Do not think that His words come easily. Each time He speaks, He must raise Himself. He must draw air into His lungs, air to breathe and air to speak. He pushes His pierced wrists and feet against the nails, holds Himself erect, renewing the shooting pains, reliving all the agony.

And note that even in His torment, His words, His thoughts, His prayers are first of all for others. Only when He has heard their pleas, spoken and unspoken, does He say, "Why do you abandon me?" ¹⁶ and "I am thirsty." ¹⁷

Now, one last time, He draws Himself erect. With a great shout, He cries in triumph: "It is now completed." ¹⁸ "Father . . . into your hands, I commit my spirit" ¹⁹

The Sacrifice - the Ransom - the Mass - is over.

And I am glad. I am glad to hold His lifeless body in my arms. He has suffered, never to suffer again.

He has suffered for love of His Father. For Him He stretched Himself out on the cross. For Him He laid down His life: to magnify the Father, to glorify the Father; to win countless souls for His Father.

He has given to God the complete submission of the human will that men refused. He has satisfied divine justice by making exact return of that which man and woman have stolen from the Almighty.

My child, give yourself to Him; open your heart to His love; unite your will with His so that in all the world there may be but one will, one love: the will and love of the loving Christ.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSION "Rejoice...that you share in the sufferings of Christ." (I Peter 4:13)

My other self, I would have you learn three lessons from my passion and death.

The first lesson is the horror and tragedy of sin. It was sin that brought into the world the brutality, the torture, the savagery, the hate which reached their culmination in my crucifixion. Sin unshackled evil. Sin unleashed death.

You, like all men, have the awful power to withhold your will from me. How would you feel if the person dearest to you in all the earth should deliberately turn away from you to choose a life of utmost misery? That is how I feel when a soul rejects me, choosing misery in preference to happiness so complete and rich it never entered the mind of man to conceive of it.

It is then that I say as I said of Jerusalem: "How often have I been willing to gather your children as a mother bird gathers her brood under her wings! But you refused it!"²⁰

The second lesson is how to conform your life to the divine will in the midst of sin. My Father wills that men should be free. Though men's freedom perverted by sin led to my bitter suffering, I accepted it. Adam refused to conform to the divine will in a matter that cost him only his pride. The Son of Man conformed to the divine will in a matter that cost him his life. So you must do. Never curse your God, my other self, for what men's sins do to you.

My executioners crucified me by misusing the power I gave them. I, myself, enabled them to strike with the hammer. Of themselves they could do nothing. Does not this give you new insight into the humility with which you should accept the Father's will and the abandonment with which you should seek to carry out the tasks he gives you?

The third lesson is that you can endure anything sin can hurl against you if only you throw yourself trustingly upon me. That is how the saints were able to accept martyrdom. That is how you, too, will be able to accept martyrdom, if this should be the divine will for you.

Suffering is necessary to bring the mind and body into subjection. Either you will be the slave of your passions or you will be their master. Rightly endured, suffering will help make you free. I gave you example by suffering every torment imaginable; torture in every limb, every joint; torture in my back and head; mental agony of anticipation, knowing the torment that was to come, knowing the day and the hour; mental agony of sorrow at the betrayal of my onetime comrade; mental agony of revulsion as I was spat upon; mental agony of shame as I was exposed to obscenity; mental agony of dereliction as I was abandoned on the cross; mental agony to the utmost as I watched my Mother's own martyrdom.

Every sorrow was mine, my other self. As I conquered them all, so I promise you that you also can conquer whatever suffering I ask of you; yes, conquer and rise again with new control over your passions and something regained of the integrity humankind lost through the first human sin.

Learn these lessons. And know this as well.

Though my soul was sorrowful beyond measure; even to the extent of asking my Father to let this chalice pass from me, yet I had one sweet consolation: the thought of my Mother, my saints, and you. You would understand me; you would be loyal to me; you would love me so much the more because these others hated me; you would follow me so much the more closely because my disciples left me; you would watch and pray so much the longer because my chosen three slept in the garden. You would come to me more often in the Sacrament of my love; you would live for me and in me; you would be, with me, the Father's victim; you would join your life to my Calvary in one gloriously redemptive and atoning Mass.

Thus, my other self, I was consoled.

Knowing this, can you fail me? Can you ever, with full deliberation, sin again?

FOOTNOTES:

1. John 15:5
2. Mark 14:34
3. Mark 14:36
4. Mark 14:37-38
5. Matthew 26:42
6. Mark 14:38
7. Matthew 26:50
8. Luke 22:48
9. John 18:4-8
10. John 18:20, 21
11. John 19:4, 5
12. Mark 15:34
13. Mark 23:34
14. Luke 23:43
15. John 19:26, 27
16. Mark 15:34
17. John 19:28
18. John 19:30
19. Luke 23:46
20. Luke 13:34

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Contemplation: The Crucified

First Prelude: The History: St. Mark tells the story in briefest detail (St. Mark 15:22-38):

And they brought Him to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him, and divided His garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour, when they crucified Him. And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "The King of the Jews." And with Him they crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left. And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!" So also the chief priests mocked Him to one another with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save Himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with Him also reviled him. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Elo-i, Elo-i, lama sabach-thani?" which means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, He is calling Elijah." And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to Him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Second Prelude: The Place: Below picture the rocky knoll upon which the crosses stand. Above picture the dark lowering clouds that all but shut out the sunlight. Before you see the three crosses against the darkening horizon. Immediately before Jesus see the Enemy group. Right around the cross of Jesus on guard behold the Roman cohort of men who are the executioners. Off to the side behold the Mary Group. Milling around and through the whole behold the bystanders, the curious, the thrill seekers. In and among the whole the ever present boys and dogs.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.

Ask, perhaps also, that I may take from this contemplation the fruit which I would have gained had I actually stood there that Friday with the Sorrowful Mother and St. John beneath the cross of the Lord and if I had been able to see that same Lord nailed to the cross before my very eyes and for my very self. Ask especially for the grace of final perseverance.

First Point: The Words

He spoke seven words upon the cross: He prayed for those who crucified Him; He pardoned the thief; He recommended St. John to His Mother; He said with a loud voice, I thirst, and they gave Him vinegar to drink; He said that He was forsaken; He said, It is consummated; He said, Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit. (Text No. 297)

Contemplate Jesus hanging in such great pain upon the Cross in the spirit of the prophecy of Zechariah:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on Him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a first-born. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo." (Zechariah 12:10)

In this spirit I shall view with devotion and sorrow my Lord affixed to the Cross and I shall "hear" as if from His very lips, every word He says.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Ponder these words affectionately. They are directed immediately at His executioners and His persecutors but they reach far beyond the present scene. It is the sentence and prayer which St. Paul refers to when he writes:

In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save him from death, and He was heard for His godly fear. (Hebrews 5:7)

Jesus was praying thus on the cross for all and each, including me, even for me in particular, and Jesus "was heard for His reverence." Try to hear the tears in the voice of Jesus.

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Contemplate with wonder and love the greatness and the sweetness of the consolation, like he never experienced before, in his converted heart as he hears this "word" from the lips of the Crucified. So the Lord promises not only to him but to every soul approaching Him with a contrite and confident heart. I am indeed an exceptional person if I have not stolen God's glory in the pride of my heart. Grant, dear Lord, that which You Yourself desire, namely that I may enter today into the paradise of grace and never leave it; more, but that I may make constant progress from day to day on the way which leads to perfection, and so arrive at the Paradise of heaven.

When Jesus saw His Mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing near, He said to His Mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:26)

Ponder and reflect imaginatively what was in the mind of Jesus, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, as He said these words – what the Sorrowful Mother (so brilliantly enlightened by the Holy Spirit within her) standing under the cross understood by them – what meaning they carried to John, the most mystical of the disciples – what, finally, these same words mean to me.

Although crucified for my sins, the Lord Jesus so loved me as to have given me His own Mother in the person of John. O Mary, show thyself a Mother. Obtain for me the grace to show myself Thy servant and Thy child, forever promoting your honor, reverence, and love. Mother, I have need of thee!

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? (Mark 15:34)

Hear these words with heart as well as with mind. They are words directing his persecutors to the Psalm (21) in which almost every detail of the scene before them was prophesied and which ends with a glorious prophecy of His resurrection.

Hear these words with deep sympathy as they express the abyss of sorrow and sense of desertion which pervaded His being as He sounded the depths of the human lot in approaching the mystery of death.

Hear these words appreciatively: Jesus has taken all “abandonment” out of death by feeling the whole of it upon the Cross – that I may meet death with consolation in my heart.

Hear these words with simple faith, accepting them fully at their face value, attributing their incomprehensibility to the weakness of our understanding – as to how He could be so forsaken. It is a fact. Take it.

*After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture),
“I thirst.” (John 19:28)*

Contemplate how it was a great physical thirst as one would expect with the loss of almost all His blood, but that it was vastly more a spiritual thirst – how it was the thirst of an immense desire for the glory of His Father – for the salvation of souls – for the conversion of infidels and sinners – for my own ever fuller conversion, sanctification and eternal salvation. Ponder what I can do to alleviate this spiritual thirst of Jesus.

O Jesus, what I can do may be only little drops of the water of spiritual refreshment but I offer them with a loving and humble heart: my resolutions, proposals and hopes for the future as in my “election.” Accept them graciously for You have inspired them generously and offer Your graces abundantly.

When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, “It is finished.” (John 19:30)

Savor spiritually this small expression so full and overflowing with the solace of salvation – how there was solace for the Lord Himself – solace for all of us.

Consider how He Himself expressed His solace in anticipation:

I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou gavest me to do; and now, Father, glorify Thou Me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. (John 17:5-6)

Sin is destroyed, hell is blocked, the devil is chained, death both of soul and body is overcome, humanity is freed, heaven is opened, the Kingdom of heaven is founded on earth, the fountains of grace are opened to all.

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this He breathed his last. (Luke 23:46)

I consider lovingly these last words of Jesus. May these also be my own last words, O Lord Jesus, and the last aspiration of my heart. With these words may I resign myself at the moment of death into Thy most Holy Hands, O heavenly Father, accepting gratefully the kind of death merited for me by Your Son on the Cross, a death that opens out to me eternal life. May I have the grace so to live as if I were to die each day so that I may have a soul rightly to be commended unto Thee.

Second Point: The Signs of Nature

The sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. (Text No. 297)

Consider the fact that by these miracles, wrought by God in inanimate creation, we are to be moved through the operation of grace, to a sense of compassion for Jesus the Savior who has suffered and died for me.

Reflect on what the effects of such a sense of compassion would be: a movement in my soul to lessen my appetite and desire for the delights of this world – a softening of my all too hard heart – an opening of the “sepulcher” of my sensual and tepid life that I may live as one risen from the dead – a tearing of the veil that keeps me from true self-knowledge and a genuine knowledge of God, a veil that often conceals the Divine Will from me, namely, the veil of self-love. Would that every one of these effects, O Lord, might have their fullest possible impact on me.

Third Point: The Final Acts

They blasphemed Him saying, “Thou who wouldst overthrow the temple....come down from the cross.” His garments were divided, His side was pierced with a lance, and blood and water came forth. (Text No. 297)

Consider finally those things which the enemy circle say and do, in order to derive some fruit therefrom.

As they blaspheme, so I, to the contrary, will praise and bless the Lord with ever greater affection of heart. It was for me he suffered these blasphemies, curses, affronts on the Cross – and now in every way I shall seek His glory.

As His enemies want Him to come down from the Cross, so do my enemies want me to come down from the Cross as well. The devil desires nothing more, nor those who follow his lead, that I abandon all that I propose to do for my own sanctification and God's greater glory. I flee for help to the pierced Heart of Jesus. In that Heart, that is, in full awareness of the love of God for me, I will live, I will adore, I will mourn for the death of Jesus, I will give thanks to God, I will praise and celebrate the Mercy, the Love, the Long-suffering of God.

COLLOQUY: Lord Jesus, according to Your promise: *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself," (John 12:32)* draw me altogether unto Yourself lest I ever more be separated from You. Do not reject a creature whom You have redeemed with Your Blood. I see Your arms extended on the Cross; I see your head inclined toward me, Your Heart opened to me. I come to You, Lord, and I venerate Your Holy Cross, embracing it in the words of Holy Mother Church: Hail Holy Cross our only hope!

Note: In the colloquy I can also make a formal offering of the Passion of My Lord to His heavenly Father that He may be propitious to me precisely because of the Passion and Death of His Only-begotten Son. I can spend some time praising Him and His infinite love for me. At the end I may say the Our Father with special devotion.



Eighth Day - Contemplating the Risen Life

Prenotes to the Fourth Part

We now turn to the contemplation of those Mysteries of Jesus in which the whole spirit is one of rejoicing. Through considerations of the happy events of the Risen Life one is moved to constancy in the practice of virtue and to the magnanimity in general of the sons of God. In these mysteries one finds one's heart dilated.

To attain this one must look to the incomparable happiness of Christ the Savior Himself, and one must share it with Him. One must, of course, also be mindful of that hundredfold which Jesus promised on earth and which is to follow for those who have abandoned the pleasures of this earth. (*Matthew 19:29: And every one who has left ... for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold*). One is to savor well the attraction of that most blessed lot which awaits those who use well this brief period of exile.

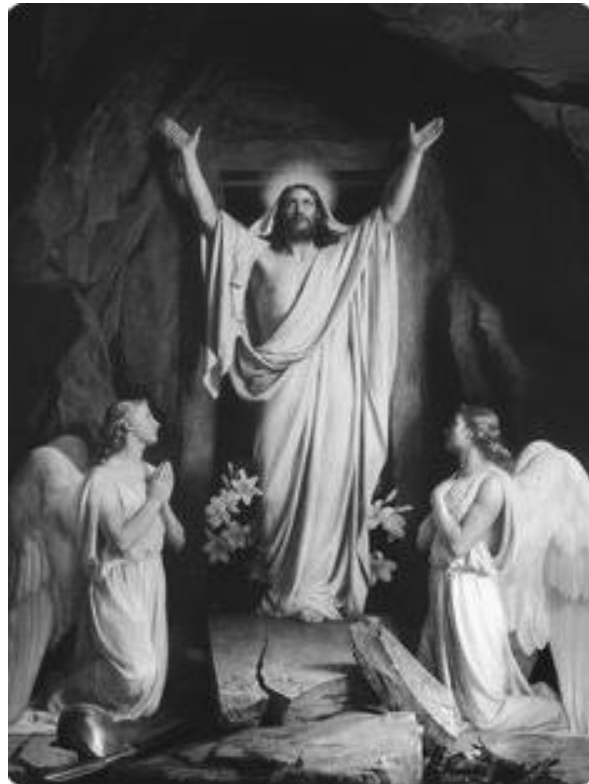
Who is there who would not wish wholly to belong to God and to His Christ after savoring a little here on earth the joys of these glorious Mysteries? This last part of the retreat looks to the "Unitive Way" – the way of belonging entirely to God. This part is entirely in the realm of God's love. The Resurrection of Jesus is seen as the basic foundation of this Fourth Part of the retreat. Hence its main fruit is a growth away from a taste for the things of this world and the development of an appetite for the things of heaven. This is what St. Paul says: *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."* (Colossians 3:1)

One should note very carefully what St. Ignatius advises for obtaining the fruit of this part of the retreat, and especially the petition of the third prelude for that which I want and desire, namely, "to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and glory of Christ our Lord." The precise fruit of these contemplations is an "efficacious" joy in our hearts generating a most pure, most holy love of Jesus Christ, our God, our Lord, our Savior – "efficacious" in the sense that the joy of these glorious Mysteries can and should bring strength to our weakness in the hope that they excite that we also may attain that glory we see enjoyed by the Risen Jesus.

However, the joy itself is to be "because of the great joy and glory of Christ our Lord" (Text No. 221) and we are not to emphasize directly what it all means to our own happiness. If we obtain this fruit of these contemplations in this way the joy of our spirit will be well-founded and enduring. Since the "joy and glory of Christ" is outside of and above all the cares and troubles of this world, the joy we have in Him will be secure and inviolable.

By having this "joy and glory of Christ" ever before my eyes, I shall have no reason to be disturbed or fretful when I go through periods of spiritual dryness, since even then I shall possess true solace of heart, saying to myself, as it were, "My time for joy over my own glorious transformation is not yet at hand. I do not expect it. It is sufficient for me that Jesus Christ, my King and my Leader, whom I love infinitely more than myself, enjoys such glory and such joy." One whose heart is thus prepared will advance daily, and especially in these contemplations, in a truly "efficacious" love of Jesus.

And that I may attain to all this the more fully through contemplating Your glory and the joys of Your Kingdom, and through the exaltation which You experience in Your Risen Life and which will go on with You forever, I address my prayer to You, Jesus Christ, Victor! I pray that You be so kind as to admit me to the companionship of an interior union with You so that I may really reach out and grasp the most sweet and most excellent fruit of this part of the retreat.



A Contemplation: On the Resurrection of
Christ our Lord and on His
First Apparition

First Prelude: The History: Recall how after Christ expired on the cross His body remained separated from the soul, but always united with the divinity. His soul, likewise united with the divinity, descended into hell. There He sets free the souls of the just, then comes to the sepulcher, and rising, appears in body and soul to His Blessed Mother. (Text No. 219)

Second Prelude: The Place: Here it will be to see the arrangement of the holy sepulcher and the place or house of Our Lady. I will note its different parts, and also her room, her oratory, etc. (Text No. 220)

Third Prelude: The Petition: This will be to ask what I desire. Here it will be to ask for the grace to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and glory of Christ our Lord. (Text No. 221)

First Point: The Realm of the Dead

The Soul of Jesus descends from the Cross to the Realm of the Dead and from this confinement He frees the souls of the just. (Cf. Text No. 219)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which He went and preached to the spirits in prison... (1 Peter 3:19)

Contemplate what a gloriously grand and pleasant vision it was for the soul of Jesus at the moment He expired to find Himself triumphantly exalted in joy and descending to the realm of the dead and to behold the powers of the Mystery of Iniquity falling before Him down to the deepest hell, driven by the force of His victory over death and hell, and terrified by the vision of His Majesty, so fully concealed in His Sacred Passion.

Give serious thought and prayer to the state of the souls of the just in limbo. For thousands and thousands of years they had been praying for the coming of the Redeemer. Picture to yourself Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah at the moment the Victorious Christ came to them: *“Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed.” (Apocalypse/Revelation 5:5)* The gates of the realm of the dead are flung open.

How great the exaltation of all those ancient souls! “Hail our Savior” they exclaim, “Long Live Jesus” they cry. What intense joy our First Parents have in greeting the Redeemer of the race of humanity whom they had plunged with themselves into the misery of slavery to sin! And so for all the prophets, beholding in Jesus the fulfillment of their life’s dedication, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel!

But let me contemplate as well Your own indescribable joy, my Jesus, as you savor the applause of all these thousands of holy souls, anticipating as it were the joys of Paradise, the sweetness of eternal perfect happiness, thus accepting from each and all congratulations for Your tremendous Victory and Mercy. What magnificent alleluias were sung this day to you in the realm of the dead, my beloved Savior! By this very joy of Yours I implore You, O Lord, snatch me today and forever from the darkness of the life I have led thus far. Do not permit me to be led by my old desires. Grant that I may be with You and free forever from my old captivity in an entirely new condition of loyalty and love.

Second Point: The Resurrection Itself

The most blessed soul of Jesus, in the company of the souls whom He has freed from the prison of waiting, comes to the sepulcher and, assuming and transforming His holy Body, He rises from the dead and passes through the walls of the sealed tomb. (Text No. 219)

I will contemplate first and briefly with the holy souls of the ancient just, the most Sacred Body of Jesus, my Lord and Beloved, lying there on the stone slab in the tomb. I shall try to see for a little with their compassionate eyes all the evidences of the long drawn out sufferings of their Hero. At this first light, ending this most blessed and most joyful night, I shall recall the words of the Gospel: *"And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it."* (Matthew 28:2) The earth shakes! The stone is rolled back! The Savior Rises, filled with heavenly light, gleaming with indescribably glory!

*Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me! O LORD, be thou my helper!"
Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
That my soul may praise thee and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever. (Psalm 29/30: 11-13)*

Above all I shall listen with my "spiritual hearing" to the grand "Alleluia" of the glorious Redeemer Himself, coming from His jubilant Heart and sounding through all the courts of heaven!

"O blessed night," as the Church sings in the Easter Vigil, "chosen by God to see Christ rising from the dead!" Hear, my soul, and join in congratulation with your Risen Savior. Hear also the Alleluia of your own loving heart in union with the celebration of all the saints in glory! What a tremendous thunder of exaltation comes from the Angelic Choirs, acclaiming their Victorious King! What was their "Glory to God in the highest" at His birth in comparison with their song of triumph for their Risen Lord?

I will seek to share the joy of those most blessed souls whom Jesus brought up with Him from limbo and I will sing with them in spirit their song of thanksgiving for the Redemption. How much more the joy of these souls than was the joy of the shepherds at Bethlehem (and some of them were surely present here) for now the word is: "Behold I bring you Tidings of great joy that will be to all the people: this day is risen for you the Savior of the world."

Although I do not really know what total joy is, such as fills the Heart of Jesus, still I can congratulate Him on it and hear Him say:

"Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (Revelation 1:18)

Third Point: The First Apparition

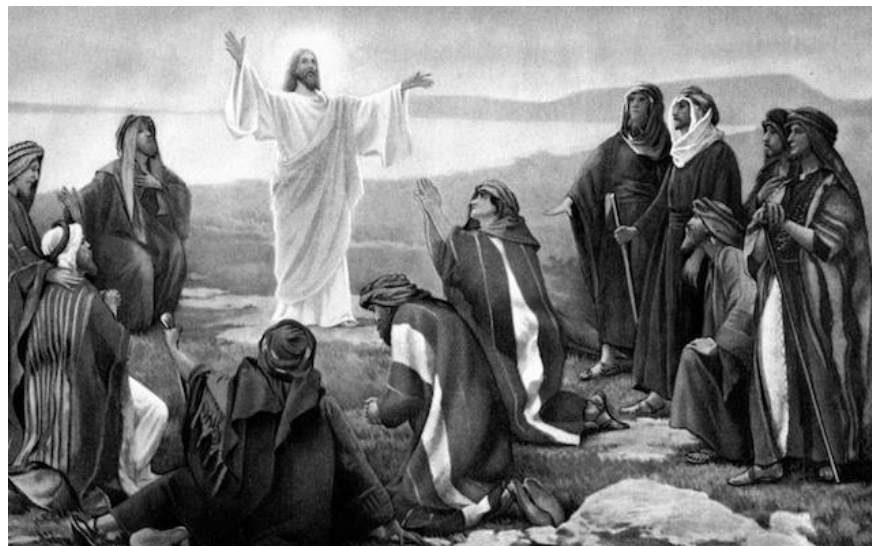
He appeared to the Virgin Mary. Though this is not mentioned explicitly in the Scripture it must be considered as stated when Scripture says that He appeared to many others. For Scripture supposes that we have understanding, as it is written, "Are you also without understanding?" (Text No. 299)

Reflect on how no one could give Jesus more joy in His Risen Life than His Own Mother, and this is the day of Christ's joy unlimited! His joy and hers was as high at this meeting as His sorrow and hers was deep on the Jerusalem street that led to Calvary. I will contemplate the embrace of the Mother and Son, mingling joy in their mutually consoling love. No words can express it.

What an "Alleluia" that must have been of the Most Pure Heart of Mary and the Most Sacred Heart of her triumphant Son. I will rest my mind contemplating this union of mind and heart in the joyful embrace of Jesus and Mary, and join my joy to theirs. Unless I join my joy to the joy of the heart of Mary, I shall never rejoice with Jesus as much as I can, though in any event I can never rejoice in a way worthy of the "great joy and glory of Christ, Our Lord."

COLLOQUY: I shall spend these last moments of my prayer, O Jesus, joined heart to joyful heart with Your Most Blessed Mother, and offering to You Yourself a most solemn act of thanksgiving for Your Resurrection, imploring from You, through the joy of Your Most Sacred Heart and of the Most Pure Heart of Your Mother, that You grant me a share in the graces and divine favors with which You endowed the Heart of Your Mother and mine in this First Apparition.

"Jesus, in this mental prayer I kept vigil at Your tomb until the hour of Your resurrection. At that hour I imagined the spontaneous disappearance of Your body as it was called out of time and space. That disappearance and its implications left me mentally soaring far and wide in search of all the antecedents and implications of Your resurrection. It was a rewarding experience, but I yearn to return to You, Beloved, to gaze on You in spirit as I pursue the joy of knowing You in Your resurrection glory. Keep me in Your presence until my next session with you in prayer. May I ever gaze on You more intensely and learn from You what joys the resurrection has brought You." (Herbert F. Smith, S.J. "The Lord Experience," Liturgical Press, p. 323)



Contemplation: On the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ

First Prelude: The History: The story we are about to contemplate is best told in the words of St. Luke:

"Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.'"

"Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God." Amen. (Luke 24:46-53)

and

At that time Jesus said to His disciples: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. (Acts 1:8-12)

Second Prelude: The Place: Picture to yourself the hill of Mt. Olivet rising to the East across a valley from the Temple of Jerusalem and see in imagination Jesus with His Blessed Mother and with the Eleven and other disciples, saying good-bye to each and then blessing them all and ascending from them into heaven.

Third Prelude: The Petition: Here it will be to ask for the grace to be glad and rejoice intensely because of the great joy and glory of Christ our Lord and especially that this grace of joy and rejoicing with Jesus may produce in my soul the fruit intended by the Almighty in arranging the Ascension Event in this way.

The special fruit to be produced in me by the contemplation and participation in this joy will be a gift of a "heavenly taste" that my true treasure may be in heaven and therefore my heart also. (Matthew 6:21) O Jesus, fill my heart with this heavenly sense. Then there will be nothing too hard for me and I shall be truly faithful to You in all things and forever.

First Point: The Forty Days

After He had manifested Himself for forty days to the Apostles, and had given them many proofs, and worked many miracles, and had spoken to them of the Kingdom of God, He commanded them to await in Jerusalem the promise of the Holy Spirit. (Text No. 312)

How often our dear Lord has come to me in these days of my retreat, giving me many insights and understandings, illuminating my mind and inspiring my will, never ceasing to persuade and move me, teach me with internal stimulations, enflaming my heart with love, to make a complete and unreserved oblation of myself to Him!

How surely He has led me to the Third Kind of Humility which is only a step short of eternal life! With what persistence, prayer period after prayer period, has Jesus not led me toward my own sanctification, to the fulfillment of my vocation!

Jesus, indeed, in my prayer has revealed His intimate secrets to me, secrets quite hidden from those who are obsessed by worldly things and concerns. You have revealed to me the true meaning of the interior life, the interior Kingdom where You rule supreme, a Kingdom I had little understood before, cared little about, and neglected to grow and guard it.

How fortunate I am to have been blessed by Your constant contact with me during the days of this retreat, and to learn from You personally how vain and empty are all things on the face of the earth apart from Your divine love. You have led me by your grace to promote Your glory, to renounce all else in a full abnegation of my affections for my love of You, and to bring forth in me a desire to make You known and loved throughout the world.

Send forth, O Lord, send forth upon me the Holy Spirit You have promised, so that all I have proposed to do in this retreat, I may carry through to the end under the guidance and by the strength of the Holy Spirit to the Greater Glory of Thy Name!

Second Point: The Ascension

He led them to Mt. Olivet and He was lifted up before their eyes and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (Text No. 312)

Note in your contemplation the significance of the fact that it is the same Mt. Olivet which figured so prominently in the beginning of the Passion, the sweat of blood where the soul of Jesus was sorrowful unto death, the same Olivet from which Jesus now ascends into heaven.

And He was raised up "in their presence." In whose presence? He was raised up in the presence of His most Blessed and most beloved Mother, of His dear Eleven, and the rest of His disciples and of the holy women who had faithfully mourned Him under the Cross on Calvary. Now they see their same Jesus after such a brief time elevated in glory above the earth, borne into heaven to sit on His throne at the right Hand of His Father. (John 14:2)

How full of heavenly consolation must have been those final farewells with which He parts – from His Mother – then from the Eleven – and finally the others before He was to leave to prepare, as He said, a place for each of them and for each of us.

I shall contemplate this farewell very attentively so that I may savor it with affection, as my self being among them there and as it all happening now – and so I place myself with them in spirit at the feet of my Savior that He might bless me, that my heart may ascend with Him and not really rest anywhere except in Him.

“And He was lifted up.” Look, my soul and see Him departing. What a triumph He receives in Heaven! The Psalmist gives words to the song of Angelic welcome:

*Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! (Psalm 23/24: 9-10)*

The Victor enters His heavenly Kingdom in triumph. And a cloud receives Him out of their sight – nor has ear heard what He has prepared there for the very least of His servants. A cloud receives Him: He is not seen, He is believed. He is their hope. It won't be long really before He will appear to each of them and to myself face to face, for it is only a cloud that conceals Him, a passing cloud, not a roof – as He Himself has said:

*“A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me
...your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.” (John 16:17, 22)*

In these things I believe, for these things I hope, on these things I meditate – and so what shall ever separate me from Jesus? What shall hold me back from that loyalty which brings me to the new life ahead? Thus do I hope to ascend with Jesus to a blessed eternity. I shall renew my resolutions in the presence of my ascending Lord.

Third Point: The Angelic Message

While they were gazing up into heaven, the angels said to them: Men of Galilee, why stand ye looking up into heaven? This Jesus who hath been taken up from you into heaven will come after the same manner wherein ye have beheld Him going up into heaven. (Text No. 312)

Thus it will clearly happen to me. Anticipate it joyfully in your contemplation. Jesus will come. Jesus, who has gone ahead to prepare a place for me in heaven, will come to take me there Himself. He will come at the moment of my death and, if I be sufficiently purified by then, He will take me with Him at once and introduce me straightway into the Glory of Heaven.

Jesus will come, finally, at the end of the world when my glorified body, made now similar to His, will be joined again with my soul. He will come then, accompanied by a multitude of Angels in the clouds of heaven with great majesty.

*They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;
and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:30)*

And He will say to His chosen ones:

"Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34)

O my Jesus, what an expectation of my heart! What joy will be mine! To see my future among the ranks of the blessed entering in a magnificent Ascension triumphantly into heaven! What shall I then see? What shall I hear? What shall I possess in the Church triumphant? St. Benedict! St. Bernard! St. Francis! St. Dominic! St. Teresa! St. John of the Cross! St. Ignatius! Founders and Foundresses of Orders and Congregations! All shining like the stars for all eternity. All of them who have prayed for me in my day to day practice of perfection, and now my associates in the light of Glory! And forever!

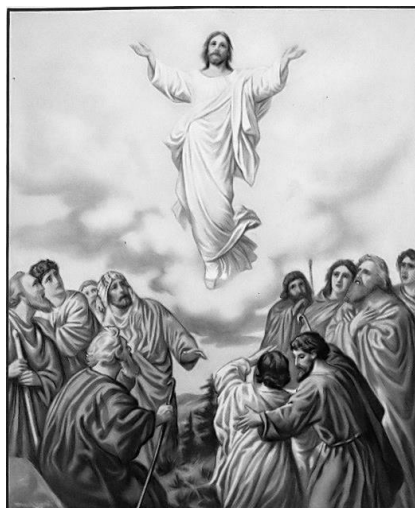
And now my own Guardian Angel is presently telling me what the two Angels told the disciples on Mount Olivet: Why stand you here? It is not enough for you just to stand here in contemplation of the heavens. You are to do what the disciples did, namely, fervently and with great diligence and zeal give yourself to the work of God, awaiting fully prepared for the coming of Jesus with His very words, as it were, ringing in your ears:

"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done."

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Apocalypse/Revelation 22:12)

O Blessed Eternity! O Reward Exceedingly Great! O Blessed Eternity with Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus Come!

COLLOQUY: I will make my colloquy with the triumphant Jesus, rejoicing with Him and with His Blessed Mother and with all the Angels and Saints and end with the prayer: Soul of Christ.



Contemplation: To Attain the Love of God

Note: Before presenting this exercise it will be good to call attention to two points:

1. The first is that love ought to manifest itself in deeds more than in words.

In the calling attention to this St. Ignatius seeks to prepare the heart of the retreatant not only for mere contemplation on the love of God, but actually and specifically to the very exercise of that love, an exercise in which the soul of the retreatant gives itself totally and unreservedly to God as his Supreme Good, not as an act of oblation in the formula of a prayer, but the fullest oblation of his or her whole Being for the service and good pleasure of God.

Special note is to be taken of the word “more” in the above statement; St. Ignatius is not saying that love consists in works alone. One who loves will not be lacking in words and feelings of love but right now in this contemplation St. Ignatius is concerned rather with the deeds by which the authenticity and effectiveness of the love for the Beloved is proven.

And thus the heart is prepared in this exercise to demonstrate his or her love for God not only in words and affections but especially in deeds, namely, deeds confirming one’s renewal of desires and confirming self in the resolutions made during this holy time through which we have just prayed. In this way I am to make a full and total oblation of myself in a love of truth and deeds to my Lord and my God with my whole heart, my whole mind and with all my faculties and powers.

2. The second is that love consists in a mutual sharing of goods, for example, the lover gives and shares with the beloved what he possesses, or something of that which he has or is able to give; and vice versa, the beloved shares with the lover. Hence, if one has knowledge, he shares it with one who does not possess it; and so also if one has honors, or riches. Thus, one always gives to the other. (Text No. 231)

Applying this to the matter of my relationship to God, I can do this by devoting my liberty, which I have received from God, using it to make a freely given and completely full oblation. I am, hopefully, to do this with the grace of God in this very hour of prayer and thus “attain” to the love of God.

First Prelude: This is the representation of the place, which is here to behold myself standing in the presence of God our Lord and of His angels and saints, who intercede for me. (Text No. 232)

Note particularly how St. Ignatius puts the Saints and Angels between the retreatant and God. How very much the realization that the whole heavenly court is interceding for one so lowly as myself, ought to dispose me toward loving my God! I certainly have not merited a concern like that of all the Saints and Angels. Rather in justice they should be turning away from me in disgust because of my sins.

Second Prelude: This is to ask for what I desire. Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty. (Text No. 233)

Come Holy Spirit! Fill my heart! Enflame me with the holy fire of Your Love. You are the Love of the Father for the Son. You are the Love of the Son for the Father. May the fire of Your Love so transform the depths of my soul that, as His child, my heart may grow to be truly like the heart of my Father, and that I may give myself to Him as an acceptable sacrifice of my whole self, and become truly a holocaust offered to His Divine Majesty.

First Point: The Gifts of God to Me

This is to recall to mind the blessings of creation and redemption, and the special favors I have received.

I will ponder with great affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and finally, how much, as far as He can, the same Lord desires to give Himself to me according to His divine decrees.

Then I will reflect upon myself, and consider, according to all reason and justice, what I ought to offer the Divine Majesty, that is, all I possess and myself with it. (Text No. 234)

Before His Divine Presence (as in the first prelude) recall how, to begin with, I was plainly nothing, and how by an act of His Omnipotence (only omnipotence could do it) God drew me out of nothing – me, in preference to infinite other beings and even other whole worlds which He could have created, and then gave me such a sublime being and essence, creating me in the very image of my great God Almighty Himself! Thus, O most Holy Trinity, My God and Creator, Your most holy decree of creation in love was made for me:

“Let us make man after our own Image and Likeness.” (Genesis 1:26)

Not only did You create me, but You created me for Yourself! And this involves the beatific vision for me and eternal perfect happiness! Now I can add what I did not add in “The Principle and Foundation” meditations at the beginning of my retreat: “I was created to praise, reverence and serve – and love – God.”

Contemplate also the Gift of God in that after I had lost all not only through the sin of my first parents, but also and worse by my personal sin as well, He showed me an inconceivable love:

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9, 10)

And so I contemplate the Son of God coming into the world for me, a mere creature and a sinner at that, not for some grand Angel but for me, in order to find and save that which He had lost.

“For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10)

What was lost? I was. My soul was lost on the way of sin – a captive in the chains of sin – very dead with the poison of sin! And to save me from eternal death! And with what a sacrifice! Affronts, pain, blood, tears – from infancy in a manger to death on a Cross! What now?

What shall I render to the LORD for all his bounty to me? (Psalm 115:12)

And lo, what else does He wish than merely that I love Him who has loved me to the ultimate and opened His heart to me on the Cross? O my Love, what shall I say of You? to You? I will love You who redeemed me with Your Blood that I might love You!

Moreover, I will ponder and contemplate how these inestimable gifts were brought to me in a most exquisite, delicate and singular manner by divine providence, beginning with my infancy until now, even after I had offended Him, perhaps seriously, along the way. All He did was spare me and load me with further favors and graces – and now all He asks is that I love Him!

“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul?” (Deuteronomy 10:12)

With all my heart, therefore, I make my profession of love and the total offering of myself in these words:

“Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O Lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.” (Text No. 234)

Second Point: The Divine Presence

This is to reflect how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them existence, in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man bestowing understanding. So He dwells in me and gives me being, life, sensation, intelligence; and makes a temple of me, since I am created in the likeness and image of the Divine Majesty.

Then I will reflect upon myself again in the manner stated in the first point, or in some other way that may seem better.

The same should be observed with regard to each of the points given below. (Text No. 235)

In this point and in those which follow, the soul, which loves God above all things is enriched and fortified, lest his love of any creature or even his love of self take anything away from his love of God, but rather that it be intensified by these further reflections on the Love of God. And so, just as the first point of this contemplation corresponds to the first part of “The Principle and Foundation” (Text No. 23), so the following points correspond to the other elements in order and in a beautiful harmony, yet in such a way as to be as suitable to beginners as to advanced.

Lest the love of other creatures on the face of the earth, therefore, diminish in the least the love of their Creator and Lord, we are directed in this point to rise quickly from the creature to the Creator. One who finds beauty or joy in any creature is to recall and reflect at once that all this is in them from God and through God and that these charming perfections are in God in a very much higher way.

For all men who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature; and they were unable from the good things that are seen to know him who exists, nor did they recognize the craftsman while paying heed to his works; ...

*If through delight in the beauty of these things men assumed them to be gods,
let them know how much better than these is their Lord, for the author of beauty
created them. (Wisdom 13:1,3)*

How stupid should I also be were I to fasten my heart on any creature rather than on the Creator! What folly it would be not to let the beauty of creation lead me to the beauty of God and so be an incitement to a more intense love of God, their Creator.

In other creatures it is not so much their beauty as their usefulness that attracts me. I am to realize here too that their usefulness is not due to them but due to God and at every moment involves His divine concurrence. It is God Himself, therefore, and not “things” that serve us well for He works through all things.

How much more does the presence of the Almighty shine through the supernatural gifts. These transcend the whole order of nature: the beauty of the Incarnation, the tenderness of the Passion, the sublime divine likeness of my soul to God, the intimate indwelling of the Blessed Trinity, the vital Christ-life within me, the Sacraments, especially, the Eucharist. The most basic gratitude for all these moves me directly to their Creator in the highest degree of love.

Third Point: God's Labor of Love

*This is to consider how God works and labors for me in all creatures upon the
face of the earth, that is, He conducts Himself as one who labors. Thus, in the
heavens, the elements, the plants, the fruits, the cattle, etc. He gives being,
conserves them, confers life and sensation, etc.
Then I will reflect on myself.*

Contemplate on something of an advance on the previous point: not only is God present to me in the works of creation, but He is laboring, as it were in the things He has made.

If I should attend carefully to all the toil of the Almighty in all the management of the universe of living and non-living things, I would, indeed, be enflamed with love for Him ever anew and ever more intensely.

How every motion in the universe would draw me closer to God who moves all things! How I would find God, as did the saints, in all the flowers of the meadow, in the shining stars. Indeed, I would come neither to know nor to love anything but God.

When I reflect, particularly, on my very essence as being in the very image of God, when I ponder the operations of grace in my very soul, when I consider the place I occupy in the Church as a temple of God, and when I contemplate all that God has promised me in heaven, with what love my soul should burn!

Take, O Lord, and receive me, for I love you and You alone in all creatures and through all things and above all things, O my God, my Love!

Fourth Point: My God, My Love, the Source of All Good

This is to consider all blessings and gifts as descending from above. Thus, my limited power comes from the supreme and infinite power above, and so, too, justice, goodness, mercy, etc., descend from above as the rays of light descend from the sun, and as the waters flow from their fountains, etc. Then I will reflect on myself as has been said. (Text No. 237)

Lest the loving oblation of myself which I am making in this retreat be ever retracted even in the least degree through a contrary oblation of self love (which is really the vainglory which poisons all virtue and which brings self-esteem into direct opposition to Divine Love), I give myself in this point to contemplate the perfect antidote by devoting myself, mind and heart, to this truth: whatever is good, whatever is right and holy is not from myself as of myself, but from Him from whom all good comes...

"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. " (James 1:17)

"Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good." (Matthew 19:17)

God is Infinite Happiness. God is, as theologians say, Infinite Good "diffusive of Himself," communicating Himself to His creatures, not only in all that is good, but more especially in spiritual goods of the supernatural order, those pertaining to the perfection, to the spiritual beauty, to the adornment, to the salvation of the soul – and all this comes down from God as rays from the sun or as waters from the spring.

The more fully one realizes that all comes from God, that all the good that may be found in myself is not really mine at all, the farther I shall be from all self-love, from all vanity. On the contrary reflection on whatever good there is in myself will be an incentive and an incitement to divine love in my heart!

Reflecting therefore on myself and recognizing all these things lovingly, I shall offer myself with all graces and gifts, which God has been kind enough to give me throughout my whole life, and with utmost sincerity and from the bottom of my heart I shall say: Take and receive, all are Yours, Lord and Creator, dispose of them according to Your Will. I shall live no more for myself but for You alone, My God and my All! I shall not cease until every slightest vestige of self-love is burned away by the fire of Your love. O Jesus most kind! O most loveable Jesus! Confirm all that You have brought me to desire and resolve in this retreat. I appeal to You who have formed me from birth to hear me, the work of your own very hands. Do not look down on me, do not despise me whom You have redeemed with the painful shedding of Your own precious Blood. May I be truly Your companion! May I be totally Yours and You be totally mine. May my whole life be a perpetual exercise of my love for You over all things so that I may bring myself and many others with me to salvation through You. It is my ardent desire that all may love You above all things to the greater glory of God.

COLLOQUY

I shall make this colloquy an intense act of thanksgiving for all the graces given me in the meditations and contemplations of this whole retreat, speaking not only with words but with a heart burning with grateful love. I may even feel impelled to respond now to the Call of the King with those who “not only offer themselves entirely for the work, but will act against their sensuality and carnal and world love, and make offerings of greater value and of more importance in words such as these:

“Eternal Lord of all things, in the presence of Thy infinite goodness, and of Thy glorious Mother, and of all the saints of Thy heavenly court, this is the offering of myself which I make with Thy favor and help. I protest that it is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided only it is for Thy greater service and praise, to imitate Thee in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual, since Thy Most Holy Majesty has deigned to choose and admit me to this state and way of life.”





"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?"

"Mary has chosen the better part." (Luke 10:40)

CONTEMPLATION

"Contemplation is a free and clear vision of the mind fixed upon the manifestation of wisdom in suspended wonder."

Richard of St. Victor

"Contemplation is the clear and free glance of the soul bearing intently upon objects of perception, to its furthest limits."

Hugh of St. Victor

TOO MANY WORDS?

Do not attempt to talk much when you pray lest your mind be distracted in searching for words. One word of the publican propitiated God, and one cry of faith saved the thief. Loquacity in prayer often distracts the mind and leads to phantasy, whereas brevity leads to concentration.

St. John Climacus: Step 28.

God Alone

"How astonishing to see a soul to whom God offers the joys of heaven, and who might find in God his happiness, even in this life – amusing himself, like people of the world with pleasures which flatter the senses, the news of the day!"

Lallemant, p. 106

**Contemplation by a Contemplative
St. Peter of Alcantara**

"A Golden Treatise of Mental Prayer" Mobray. 1905 p.117.

Eighth Counsel: Let the last and chiefest be that in this holy exercise we should endeavor to unite Meditation with Contemplation, making the one a ladder for attaining the other.

For this we must know that the very office of meditation is to consider divine things with studiousness and attention passing from one to another, to move our hearts to some affection and deep feeling for them, which is as though one should strike a flint to draw from it the spark.

For Contemplation is to have drawn forth this spark: I mean to have now found this affection and feeling which were sought for, and to be enjoying them in peace and silence; not with many discursive and intellectual speculations but with simple gaze upon the truth.

Wherefore, says a holy teacher, Meditation goes its way and brings forth fruit with labor, but Contemplation bears fruit without labor. The one seeketh, the other findeth the one consumeth the food, the other enjoys it, the one discurseth, and maketh reflections, the other is contented with a simple gaze upon things, for it hath it possession their love and joy. Last, the one is as a means, the other as the end; the one as the road, and journeying along it, the other as the end of the road and of the journeying.

"From this is to be inferred a very common thing, which all masters of the spiritual life teach, although it is little understood of those who learn it; which is this, that, as the means cease when the end has been attained, as the voyaging is over when the port has been touched, so when, through the working out of our Meditation, we have come to the repose and sweet savor of Contemplation, we ought then to cease from that pious and laborious searching; and being satisfied with the simple gaze upon and thought of God – as though we had Him there present before us – we should rest in the enjoyment of that affection then given, whether it be of love, or of admiration, or joy, or other like sentiment.

The reason why this counsel is given is this that as the aim of this devotion is love and the affections of the will rather than the speculations of the understanding, when the will has been caught and

taken by this affection, we should put away all those discursive and intellectual speculations, so far as we can, in order that our soul with all its forces may be fastened upon this affection without being diverted by the action of other influences.

A learned teacher, therefore, counsels us that as soon as anyone feels himself fired by the love of God, he should first put aside all these considerations and thoughts - however exalted they may seem - not because they are not really good in themselves, but because they are then hindrances to what is better, and more important.

For this is nothing else than that, having come to the end and purpose of our work, we should stand therein, and leave Meditation for the love of Contemplation.

This lay especially be done at the end of any exercise, that is, after the petition for the Divine love of which we have spoken, for one reason, because then it is supposed that the labor of the exercise we have just gone through has produced some divine devotion and feeling, since, saith the wise man, 'Better is the end of prayer than its beginning.' Ecclesiastes 7:9, and for another reason, that after the work of prayer and meditation, it is well that one should give his mind a little rest, and allow it to repose in the arms of Contemplation.

At this point then we should put away all other thoughts that may present themselves, and quieting the mind and stilling the memory, fix all upon our Lord and remembering that we are then in His presence, no longer dwell upon the details of divine things.

And not only at the end of the exercise but in the midst of it, and at whatever part of it, if this spiritual swoon should come upon us, when the intellect is laid to sleep, we should make this pause, and enjoy the blessing bestowed, and then, when we have finished the digestion of it, turn to the matter we have in hand, as the gardener does, when he waters his garden bed; who, after giving it a sufficiency of water, holds back the stream and lets it soak and spread itself through the depths of the earth; and then when this hath somewhat dried up, he turns down upon it again the flow of water that it may receive still more, and be well irrigated.

PETER OF ALCÁNTARA, ST. (1499-1502), mystic. Pedro Garavito was born in Alcántara, Spain, son of the governor, studied law at Salamanca, became a Franciscan Observant at sixteen, and was ordained in 1524. He held offices in his order at Robredillo, Plasencia, Lapa, and Estremadura. When he was defeated at the provincial chapter in Plasencia in 1540 in his attempt to impose stricter rules, he resigned and lived as a hermit with Friar Martin of St. Mary on a mountain near Lisbon. In 1554 he secured papal permission to build a friary near Pedrosa, where he installed the strictest rule in 1555. The monks there became known as Alcantarines and in 1561 were made into the province of St. Joseph under the Observants, which drew much censure from the Conventuals. In 1560 he met St. Teresa at Avila, became her confessor, and encouraged her in reforming the Carmelites. His life was one of great austerity and penance and was marked by supernatural occurrences. His *Treatise on Prayer and Meditation* was widely used by St. Francis de Sales. He died in Arenas, Spain, on Oct. 18 and was canonized in 1669.

Retreat document is property of:

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NOTE: Entire retreat document was re-typed (digitized) by Debbie Bellman from Ohio in the fall of 2017.