

SELECTIONS FROM
Meditations on the Gospel

VOLUME I

BY JACQUES BÉNIGNE BOSSUET

translated by

SISTER LUCILLE CORINNE FRANCHERE, O.S.B.

with a special introduction by

REV. L. COLIN, C.S.S.R.

and

REV. TH. REY-MERMET, C.S.S.R.

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SELECTIONS FROM
Meditations on the Gospel

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*I dedicate this work on the Meditations of
Bossuet to Sister Mary Bernard Coleman,
O.S.B., my most devoted and loyal friend for
many years.*

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It is the translator's hope that the meditations presented here may provide food for thought for all their readers, but primarily among our family of clergy and religious—from bishop to humble priest, from sisters superior to all their children.

Bossuet emphasizes the love of Jesus for all mankind. His seemingly harsh admonitions always remind the reader that although terror may strike the body, the soul without sin will gain eternal happiness—Dear soul, persevere in your love and that is all that matters—come to me all you who suffer.

Again in his teachings, Bossuet tells us not to be frightened at what we sometimes understand in the Bible as a sign of the end of the world. In fact, these passages merely warn the Jews that the city of Jerusalem will be destroyed and give the faithful a timely warning to fly into the mountains away from the terrible conflagration and carnage. But, as he further warns, that last agony of fear and horror experienced when the sun's light is extinguished, when the moon and all the stars lose their consistence, that will be the last call. At that time, men will wither

with fear, but again, Bossuet advises: "Fear not, great and small, if your souls have not died in sin." Your reward will be an eternal kingdom.

The goodness of God never conflicts with His justice. If justice takes its toll in one way, goodness rewards in another. Instead of overcoming sinners with vengeance, God's goodness overcomes them with humility; instead of crushing them with chastisements, God's goodness moves sinners to contrition. If justice requires satisfaction be made with blood, goodness offers that of a God. Although it is true that God exacts the full measure of justice, Bossuet reminds us of what is still more important, God forgives.

METHOD IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE MEDITATIONS

The whole work is divided into three parts. Each part is then subdivided into days, instead of chapters. The first part consists of forty-seven days based on the eight beatitudes, which themselves form the epitome of the Sermon on the Mount. Part two consists of eight days of preparation for the last week of the Saviour. Part three consists of fifty meditations on some of the most important sermons of Our Lord. These latter are the most worthy of meditation on account of the circumstance of Our Lord's approaching death.

Bossuet quotes extensively from the Scriptures. Following his example, the translator has used the Douay version in English, except on those occasions when Bossuet's French seemed to warrant a revised edition.

May these meditations bring forth good fruit for all of us, and may we "taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

Sister Lucille Corinne, O.S.B.

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INTRODUCTION

On the 28th of September, 1627, Jacques Bénigne Bossuet was born at Dijon, France, the seventh child of Monsieur Bénigne Bossuet, a lawyer at the Parliament of Bourgogne. It is said that at the instant of the child's birth, his godfather, who was his grandfather, Jacques Bossuet, opened his Bible and read the following passage from Deuteronomy: "The Lord has led him, has instructed him and guarded him like the apple of his eye" (Deut. xxxii.10). Never did Providence express itself more aptly.

According to Daniel-Rops, the name Jacques Bénigne Bossuet "seems to ascribe to him alone all the Catholicism of classical times." It evokes first of all, however, the image of the magnetic orator of the sacred pulpit. Indeed, this man was one of those "who have exercised most perfectly, the power of speech." But Bossuet was too great to be confined within the limits of a specialty, no matter how vast and sublime it might be. Instead, his fifty years of public life are divided into four distinct periods, and in these periods, his genius was to assume all of its exceptional dimensions.

From 1652 to 1669, the first important period of his public life, Bossuet held the office of Canon of Metz.

Later, he was called to Paris to be God's spokesman through his sermons, stations and funeral orations. Oratorical sacred art attained its apogée in these works.

During the second period, from 1670 to 1680, Bossuet acted as Preceptor to the Dauphin. At various times throughout this period he was catechist, statesman, philosopher and historian—in all—the greatest of his time.

Appointed Bishop of Meaux in 1681, Bossuet extended his apostolate to embrace all of Europe. He became an undisputed Doctor of the Church—a new Augustine of the seventeenth century.

During the fourth and last period of his life, the time from 1694 to 1704, Bossuet's limitless spiritual vitality rebounded upon itself, and retiring within himself, he wrapped himself in meditation. His *Méditations sur l'Évangile* and the *Élévations sur les Mystères* are the fruit of this spiritual contemplation. The intensity of zeal which Bossuet brought to his writings, among the greatest of French spirituality, brought on a total exhaustion which resulted in his death in 1704.

* * *

We must not conclude from the above, however, that the *Méditations* are a work of senility or of a doddering old age. For Bossuet, old age was not an invitation to rest. On the contrary, it was an impetus for him to act, and to act quickly. "Night is approaching during which he will no longer be able to work." Indeed, Bossuet's brilliant intellect remained clear until his final hour.

The majority of lives, like comets, trace an ascending line, then, becoming tired, begin to curve downward, fall and deteriorate into old age. Bossuet's genius, however, continued to mount ever higher, and to become more

brilliant as he neared his goal—proximity to God. As Bossuet approached death, a new source of poetry fresher and more colorful than the former, and contained until then in the intimacy of his heart, burst forth. This new inspiration, this “light,” was the source for his *Méditations sur l’Evangile* and the *Elévations sur les Mysterès*.

There is something profane in emphasizing the literary magnificence of these works since Bossuet’s purpose was a pastoral and not a literary one. He did not write to satisfy a literary desire; rather, he wrote only for the salvation of souls. Although his entry into the realm of literature was accidental and unconscious, no writer ever brought more honor to the French language. Neither has any other author so fully exploited this language or drawn from it more beauty of expression. “There is nothing in French more beautiful than a page of Bossuet” (Ferdinand Brunetière).

The *Méditations*, the polished result of ten years labor, may be considered the pinnacle of Bossuet’s work. As La Harpe has said, “Those who have not read the *Méditations* are not acquainted with the real Bossuet.”

La Harpe spoke as a literary critic. However, his remarks about the soul of this great bishop ring still more truly: “The *Méditations* condense the sum of theological science, of human experience, and of the interior life of a man who for sixty years has never ceased to meditate on the Scriptures and to live in the face of God.”

But what of his famous sermons? Bossuet himself never worried about having his sermons printed. In fact, only one, the *Sermon on the Unity of the Church*, was ever published by him. Why? Precisely because he wrote his *Méditations sur l’Evangile* and his *Elévations sur les Mys-*

terès for the public, and included therein the best of his sermons of former times. These two works, then, give us the substance of his sermons, unified, synthetized, and subtly reduced to their essence to render them still more mystical and more lyrical.

The *Méditations* were "begun," according to Bossuet, for a few Sisters of the Visitation of Meaux. This was fortunately, however, a minor motivation and quickly forgotten. Nothing in these pages suggests that the *Méditations* were meant exclusively for convents. Rather, Bossuet the Christian, Bossuet the priest, speaks to all Christians and introduces them to the fundamental and highest sanctuary of spirituality.

* * *

Bossuet did not draw up *ex professo* a complete treatise on spirituality. He did, however, live and teach a unified and structured spirituality whose major themes form the framework of his *Méditations*, as of all his work.

This is the spirituality commonly referred to as that of the "French school." In the history of Christian spirituality, this term does not designate a particular and national spirit, but a doctrine "without doubt the most original, the richest and the most fruitful of those witnessed by the golden age of our religious history" (Henri Brémond). Its works are those of the Church: The Gospels, Saint Paul, and the Fathers, especially St. Augustine. The Church sanctioned and approved this school of spirituality by canonizing two of its masters: Jean Eudes and Louis Grignon de Montfort, and also one of de Montfort's disciples, Vincent de Paul.

Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), however, is the unquestioned father of this school. Always a student of

science, he upheld the truth and served as a model for many saints and doctors. Indeed, all the great French writers of this epoch were Bérullians. And the greatest of all was Bossuet.

The following well-known passages from Bossuet reveal how much he was a part of the French school:

The Sovereign grandeur of God and the emptiness of man who must live "benumbed with respect" in adoration;

Merciful Providence Which calls for unlimited confidence and total abandonment;

The grandeur and mercy of God became incarnate in Jesus in order that Christians might become other Christs;

Through the liturgy and the sacraments, the soul unites itself to the Word Incarnate and assumes "the sentiments and dispositions of Jesus Christ";

The summit of the liturgy and of the sacraments is the Eucharist: "through communion, the faithful are united with Jesus Christ."

Prayer is also a nourishment whereby the soul assimilates the mysteries of the Word Incarnate: one prayer wherein faith eagerly contemplates the word of God, the heart is stirred and the gaze becomes tender. When this happens, adoration follows, then love, and all the other Christian sentiments without falling short of resolute action.

Here is "the French school." Here is Bossuet. Here is the essence of his incomparable *Méditations*.

* * *

It has been said that Bossuet was a prophet of the past more than a guide to the future.

Indeed, this is somewhat true in his polemic work. Every innovation disturbed him, although he thoroughly knew and appreciated the great mystics of his time. Personally, however, Bossuet nourished himself and the souls committed to his care on the word of God which cannot fail. His spiritual works, therefore, are built upon an immovable rock and draw from it a firmness and actuality which renders them directly applicable to all centuries, to all cultures and to all mentalities: The eternal actuality of the universal Gospel, the universal timelessness of the Word of God.

In conclusion, let us reflect on the applicability of Bossuet's work, especially his *Méditations*, to modern times.

We are now living in a period of intense biblical renewal. The Scriptures are kneaded into Bossuet. At the age of fourteen, he read the Bible, by accident, and received from it, in his own words, "an impression of joy and of light." Bossuet had found his source. He would lead his flock there: "I did not take up the pen to teach you the thoughts of men."

After the Bible, the writings of the Fathers of the Church are recognized as tradition interpreted. In our return to them today, we may look to Bossuet to lead us there. Tertullian inspired his youth, as Augustine, John Chrysostom and Bernard of Clairvaux nourished his adult years, inspiring his works with a sense of exaltation, simplicity, and tenderness. None of the Greek or Latin Fathers were strangers to him. He flavored his works with their best substance. To return to Bossuet then, is to return to the Fathers.

Finally, Bossuet is contemporary in his outlook. With

Bossuet, the discussion of sacred doctrine is of more importance than instruction in moral behavior. Disagreeing with his contemporaries, Bourdaloue and Massillon, who were more intent on instruction in moral behavior, and who believed that they had supplanted *the theologian*, Bossuet held to his belief that good morals are a consequence of a firm foundation in sacred doctrine, an imitation of Christ. Posterity has not been deceived and has recognized "the Eagle."

L. COLIN, C.S.S.R.

and

TH. REY-MERMET, C.S.S.R.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE FIRST DAY

The Epitome of the Sermon. Eternal joy is designated under different names in the eight beatitudes (Matt. v. 1-12).

Man's chief aim in life is to be happy. Our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world in order to give us the means of attaining this happiness. To find happiness where it should be found is the source of all good, and the source of all evil is to find it where it should not be found. Let us say then, "I wish to be happy." Let us also see the goal where happiness is found, and the means to attain it.

Our goal and the means to attain it are mentioned in each one of the eight beatitudes. Eternal joy is everywhere designated under different names. The first beatitude treats of it as a kingdom; the second, as the promised land; the third, as veritable and perfect consolation; the fourth, as the surfeit of all our desires; the fifth, as the final forgiveness which will remove all evils and give all good; the sixth, as the sight of God; the seventh, as the perfection of our adoption; and the eighth and last, returning to the first, as the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold then joy abides in each. But, as there are several means to this end, each beatitude suggests one, and all together they render man happy.

If the Sermon on the Mount is the epitome of all Christian doctrine, then the summary of the beatitudes is the ruling principle of the Sermon on the Mount.

If Jesus Christ teaches us that our justice must surpass that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, just what He means thereby is clear from the following: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice.* If men truly desire justice as their veritable nourishment, and are really famished, they will find an abundance of this food on all sides. These are they who will obey the least of Our Lord's precepts like starving men who leave nothing, not even a crumb, so to speak, on their plates.

If we are enjoined not to mistreat our neighbor by word of mouth, this results from the gentle and peace-loving spirit, to which is promised the Kingdom of Heaven.

We must not look at women with lust: *Blessed are those of a pure heart.* Our hearts will be perfectly pure only when we have cleansed them of all sensual desires.

Blessed is he who spends his life in mourning and wholesome sadness rather than in intoxicating pleasures.

Do not give evidence on oath. Say rather, *a thing is or a thing is not.* This again results from tact and gentleness. He who is gentle, is humble. He is not overly attached to the senses that render man too positive. Rather, he says what he thinks simply, with sincerity and gentleness.

We easily pardon all insults if we are filled with this spirit of forgiveness which heaps upon us a greater abundance of mercy.

We do not then return violence with violence, because we are gentle and peace-loving.

We love our friends and our enemies, not only because we are mild, gentle and peaceable, but because we are famished for justice, and because we desire to have it

abound within us much more than in the Scribes and the Pharisees.

This hunger which we have for justice causes us to wish to have it from genuine need, and not from ostentation.

We enjoy fasting when we find our genuine nourishment in truth and in justice.

Through fasting our hearts become pure and we are then cleansed of the desires of the senses.

Our hearts are pure when we reserve, for the eyes of God alone, all the good deeds that we perform. When we are glad that God alone sees within us, we do not have to use virtue as a disguise to deceive the world and to attract to ourselves the respect and the love of creatures.

When our hearts are pure, our eyes shine with goodness and right intentions.

We avoid the pursuit of wealth when we are truly poor in spirit.

We do not judge others when we are gentle and peaceable, because this gentleness banishes pride.

Purity of heart makes us worthy of the Holy Eucharist, and eager to receive this celestial bread of angels.

We pray; we demand; we knock at the door when we hunger and thirst for justice. We ask God for actual favors, and we expect them from Him because we aspire only to the winning of His Kingdom and to the land of the living.

We enter voluntarily through the back door when we esteem ourselves happy in the poverty, tears and afflictions which we suffer for justice.

When we hunger for justice, we are not content to say *Lord, Lord*, but nourish ourselves instead with His truth.

We then build a solid foundation upon a rock, and find it strong enough to build an entire edifice upon it.

The beatitudes, then, are the epitome of the entire Sermon and an agreeable summary, because recompense is joined to a precept, and the Kingdom of Heaven, under several admirable names, to justice.

THE SECOND DAY

The First beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matt. v. 3).

Our Lord begins the beatitudes with, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*; that is to say, not only those who have chosen actual poverty by giving up everything in this world in order to follow Him, and to whom He has promised a hundred-fold in this world, and life eternal in the next, but also to all those who are detached in spirit from the goods of this world, those who are poor without murmuring, and without impatience. These do not have the materialistic spirit, the insatiable need to claim all things for themselves. Eternal happiness belongs to them under the majestic title of a kingdom. Because the evil of poverty on earth renders men wretched, weak and powerless, happiness is given to them as a remedy for this lowliness under the most august title, which is that of a kingdom.

At the word *Blessed*, the heart expands and is filled with joy. It contracts at the mention of poverty, but expands again at that of kingdom and of *kingdom of*

heaven. For what would we not suffer for a kingdom, especially a kingdom in heaven with God, eternal, spiritual, abounding in everything, whence all unhappiness is banished.

Oh my Saviour I give You all! I abandon everything in order to have a share in this kingdom! Let me be stripped of everything for such a hope. I divest myself in heart and spirit and, when it pleases You to really strip me of everything, I surrender.

This is what all true Christians are obliged to do, but the humble religious rejoices in the fact that she is actually dispossessed, dead to the goods of this world, unfit to possess them. Blessed privation which gives God!

THE THIRD DAY

The Second beatitude: Blessed are the meek (Matt. v. 4).

Blessed are the gentle. Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart. (Matt. xi. 29) The truly meek are without bitterness, without disdain, without bombast, without guile, without cruelty. They try to win the proud with gentleness. They are kind to those who are ill-natured, not opposing violence with added violence, but always ready to correct the excesses of others with words that are truly gentle and tactful.

Indeed, some practice sham kindnesses, using disdainful words filled with hidden arrogance, ostentation and pretended mildness and tact, but these are more insulting than outright bitterness.

Let us consider the mildness of Jesus Christ of Whom the Holy Spirit speaks thus in Isaias: "*Behold, my servant. I will uphold him; my elect, my soul delighteth in him; I have given my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor have respect to person, neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench, he shall bring forth judgement unto truth.*" (Isa. xlii. 1-3)

This is what Isaias saw in his soul. This is what St. Matthew found so beautiful, so worthy of Jesus Christ, that he took particular care to exalt it to the highest degree. (Matt. xii. 18-20)

The gentle man is kind toward the weakest. Even though a reed already weak is rendered weaker by being crushed, far from taking advantage of this weakness, the gentle man will move aside in order not to step on it.

Do likewise to your crippled neighbor. Far from seeking an occasion to annoy him, take care lest in passing you might, through possible carelessness, step on him and crush him. But who is this crippled neighbor if it isn't your neighbor in a fit of anger? He is crushed by his own anger, for this feeble reed crushed itself when it struck back. Do not strike the final blow.

Then there is the symbol of the *smoking flax*. It burns—this is anger in the heart; it smokes—this is some insult which an irritated neighbor has hurled into your face. Take care lest you extinguish it with violence. Listen to what St. Paul says: *Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge is mine, I will repay saith the Lord.* (Rom. xii. 9) Let your anger smoke a little, and allow it to burn itself

out. If it smokes, it means that it is extinguished. Do not extinguish it with force. Allow this smoke to rise in vapor and lose itself uselessly in mid-air, without reaching or wounding you.

This is what the Saviour did when He suffered so many injuries without bitterness. *You are possessed of an evil spirit*, they said to Him; *who is planning to put you to death?* (John vii. 20) And He answered calmly: *I am not possessed of an evil spirit, but I render honor to my Father, and you dishonor me.* And again, at another time, when reproached in the same manner He answered: *You are angry with me because I worked a miracle on the Sabbath, in order to cure a man.* (John vii. 23)

The gentle man does not extinguish the smoking flax but allows it to smolder in order to see whether these wretches, weary of hurling insults at so humble and mild a man, will not come to their senses.

Such was, in general, the conduct of the Son of God, especially during His passion: *when He is cursed, He does not curse in return; when He is struck, He does not complain.* (I Petr. ii. 23)

If I have spoken evil, He said to him who struck Him, *give testimony of the evil; but if well, why strikest thou Me?* It is He Who said: *Learn from me for I am gentle.* (Matt. xi. 29) He is compared to a lamb, the gentlest of all animals, which allows itself not only to be sheared, but also to be led to the slaughter without complaint. (Isa. liii. 7)

We are happy in His mildness, and we possess the earth. The holy land promised to Abraham is called *a land flowing with milk and honey.* (Exod. iii. 8) All sweetness abounds there. This is the figure of heaven and

of the Church. What causes bitterness in the soul is the fact that we bestow upon others the bitterness and the venom that we have within ourselves. When our soul is at peace through the enjoyment of well-being and through the joy of a good conscience, we harbor nothing bitter within ourselves, and so entertain only good feelings toward others. The genuine mark of innocence, whether a preserved innocence or a recovered one, is gentleness.

Man is so prone to bitterness that he often becomes embittered toward those who are kind to him. A sick man is irritated with those who ease his pain. Almost everybody suffers from this malady. This is the reason we become embittered against those who often advise us for our own good and especially against those who have the authority to do so. The natural pride which we carry within us is the cause of this injustice: *Blessed are those who are gentle; they will possess the land where all gentleness abounds. There joy is perfect.*

THE FOURTH DAY

The Third beatitude: Blessed are they who mourn (Matt. v. 5).

Blessed are those who weep. Whether they weep over their miseries, or shed tears because of their sins, they are happy and they will receive the real consolation which is that of the next life, *where all affliction ceases, where all tears are dried.* (Apoc. xxi. 4)

Abraham said to the wicked rich man, *You have received your goods in this world, while Lazarus has received his hardships; for this reason he is consoled, and you are tormented.* (Luke xvi. 25)

Lazarus was happy because he suffered with patience. His painful state often caused him to weep over his extreme sufferings, but he received no consolation from men. The pitiless rich man disdained to look at him. Because he suffered with patience, however, Lazarus was consoled, and God received him into the place where there is neither sorrow nor pain.

The world will rejoice and you will be afflicted, but your sadness will be changed into joy. (John xvi. 20) This is the promise the Saviour made to His disciples. Sadness and joy come by turns. He who has rejoiced will be afflicted; he who has grieved will rejoice. *Blessed are those who weep, for they shall be consoled.*

Among all those who weep, however, none will be so soon consoled as those who weep for their sins. For others, sorrow, far from being a remedy for evil, may prove to be an added evil which augments sorrow. Sin is the only evil which is cured with tears. Let us weep then without end, sinners, all of us. As the Psalmist says, may our eyes be changed into inexhaustible fountains whose perpetual streams hollow out our cheeks. The remission of sins is the fruit of pious tears. Ah! a thousand times blessed are those who weep for their sins, for they will be consoled!

But what shall we say of those who weep through love and tenderness? Blessed, a thousand times blessed! Their hearts melt within themselves, as the Scripture says, and seem to flow away through their eyes. Who can tell me

the cause of these tears? Those who shed tears often are unable to explain what touches them. At times, it is the kindness of a father; at other times, the condescension of a great leader. It may be the absence of a fond husband—the void that he leaves in the soul during his absence—or it may be the sound of his loved voice when he is approaching, and calls to his beloved wife. More often than not, however, it is something more vague, something which we cannot explain.

THE FIFTH DAY

The Fourth beatitude: Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice (Matt. v. 6).

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be refreshed. Hunger and thirst—this is a burning ardor, a torturing and pressing desire which comes from extreme need.

Seek the kingdom of God and His Justice. (Matt. vi. 33) Justice reigns in heaven, and, therefore, it must also reign in the Church, which is often called the kingdom of heaven. Justice reigns when we render to God what we owe Him, for then we also return, for the love of God, all that we owe to the creatures in whom we see Him. We pay ourselves what we owe to ourselves, for we have given to ourselves all the good of which we are capable when we have filled ourselves with God. Then, as Jesus Christ said to St. John, we have accomplished all justice.

The soul then hungers no longer, thirsts no longer. It

has its true nourishment. *My nourishment is to do the will of my Father*, said the Saviour, *and to accomplish His work.* (John iv. 34) This is also what the Saviour calls absolute justice—to accomplish in all things the exact will of His celestial Father. We ourselves should follow this rule, for even while we are doing the will of God, He is also doing ours. The Psalmist chants: *He will do the will of those who fear Him* (Ps. cxliv. 19), and thus He will satisfy all their desires. Blessed are those who desire justice with the same eagerness with which they crave food and drink when they are racked with the pain of hunger and thirst, for then they will be refreshed. With what will they be refreshed, if it be not with justice? Moreover, they will be refreshed even in this life, for the just will become more just, and the saint will grow in saintliness in order to satisfy his eagerness. But perfect fullness and gratification will be found only in heaven where eternal justice will be given us with the plenitude of God's love. *I shall be refreshed*, said the Psalmist, *when your glory appears to me.* (Ps. xvi. 15)

Must we always thirst for justice? The Saviour has said: *He who drinks of this water*, that is to say, of the pleasures of this world, *continues to thirst, but he who drinks the water which I shall give him, will never thirst; but the water which I shall give him will become within him a gushing fountain for life eternal.* (John iv. 14)

Will he then no longer thirst? In fact, that man will not thirst, because he will desire no other pleasure, no other joy, no other good than that which he tastes in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the just man will always be thirsty, for he will never cease to desire this supreme good, and he will wish to possess it more and more. But

while he continues to thirst, he will also continue to quench this thirst, because he has within him the eternally gushing fountain. He will never experience the enervating and insatiable thirst of those who seek the pleasures of the senses. He will always thirst for justice. Since his lips will always be attached to this life-giving spring which he has within himself, however, his thirst will never tire nor weaken him. *He who believes in me, says the Son of God, will have rivers of clear, pure water flowing through his being. Let him come then, and let him drink.* (John vii. 37, 38)

Come, holy souls, come to Jesus. Desire. Drink. Absorb. Do not fear that this celestial water will ever be lacking; the fountain is more alive than your thirst; its abundance is far greater than your need. "*Fons vincit sitientem,*" said St. Augustine.

THE SIXTH DAY

The Fifth beatitude: Blessed are the merciful (Matt. v. 7).

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The most beautiful effect of charity is to be touched by the hardships of others. Jesus Christ said: *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* (Act. xx. 35) This saying had not been proclaimed by the evangelists, for God wished to give to St. Paul the glory of proclaiming it to the world. *Remember,* said St. Paul, *this saying of the Lord Jesus: It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Blessed then are those who give rather than receive. Again, blessed is he who invites to his banquet, not the rich—who are able to return the invitation—but the poor, the crippled, the halt and the blind. *Then, says the Saviour, you will be happy, for they have nothing with which to repay you. And you will be amply repaid at the resurrection of the just.* (Luke xiv. 12–14) Blessed then are the merciful who give without hope of receiving anything from those upon whom they shower works of mercy. They will obtain from God an infinite mercy.

Thus those who are unrelenting, unfeeling, without tenderness, without pity, deserve to find over themselves a sky of brass or stone, a sky which gives no sun, no rain, no soft refreshing dew. On the other hand, those who are sensitive to the miseries of others, will share in God's graces and His mercy. *They will be pardoned as they will have pardoned others; they will be given unto as they will have given unto others; they will receive according to how much they will have given to their brothers.* (Luke vi. 34, 38) It is Our Lord Jesus Christ Who said: *And as much compassion as they will have shown others, God also will show them.*

We must show mercy toward all those whom we see suffering: toward the sick, the afflicted. If we can do nothing else, we must endeavor to soften their pains with words of consolation and wise counsel. We must help carry their burdens whenever possible, and offer to share these burdens if possible. This is the most beautiful of sacrifices. Our Lord said: *I love mercy better even than sacrifice.* (Matt. ix. 13)

THE SEVENTH DAY

The Sixth beatitude: Blessed are the pure of heart (Matt. v. 8).

Blessed are those who are pure of heart. Who could ever describe the beauty of a pure heart? A perfect crystal, gold without alloy, a diamond without a flaw, a perfectly clear fountain. None of these comparisons can equal in beauty the perfection of a pure heart. We must keep it from all uncleanness, especially that which may mar it with the pleasures of the senses, for one drop of these false pleasures will disturb this beautiful fountain. How beautiful, how ravishing is this incorruptible fountain of a pure heart! God is pleased to see Himself there as in a beautiful mirror. He stamps His image thereon in all His glorious beauty. This perfect mirror becomes a sun through the rays which penetrate it. The purity of God is joined to ours, when He operates within us. Our purified glances will see Him shine within ourselves and sparkle there with an eternal light. *Blessed then are the pure of heart, for they will see God.* (Matt. v. 8)

Let us love chastity then more than all the other virtues. It is this virtue that renders the heart pure.

At every object which touches us, let us always fear that in loving it, we might tarnish the purity of our heart, or drive it even deeper into the uncleanness from which we ought to have removed it.

Blessed be the pure heart: it will see God. These few

words are all that is necessary to nourish the soul for an entire day. That heart will see God; it will see all beauty, all goodness, all perfection, the source of all good, all good united, as God to Moses when He showed Himself to him: *I shall show you all good.* (Exod. xxxiii. 19) To see an object so perfect and to love it is one and the same thing. The heart will see God and will love Him. But because it loves, it will also be loved. It will sing the praises of God Whom it will see, and Whom it will love eternally. It will be refreshed with the abundance of His house, and intoxicated by the torrent of His delights. Happy creature! For that experience, however, the heart must be pure. Blessed then is he whose heart is pure. Let him who is clean continue to purify his heart more and more. Let him who is unclean remove himself from the uncleanliness wherein he is crawling. Let him cleanse the muck which dishonors and disfigures him.

THE EIGHTH DAY

The Seventh beatitude: Blessed are the peacemakers (Matt. v. 9).

Blessed are the lovers of peace, for they will be called children of God. God is called the God of peace. (I Cor. xiv. 33) He calls those who are of the same heart and spirit to inhabit His home, says the Psalmist. (Ps. lxxvii. 7) His kindness conciliates everything. He has composed this universe of the most opposite natures and qualities. He causes such opposites as night and day, cold and heat,

winter and summer to unite for the formation of the universe, and for the preservation of the human race. He receives His enemies in His peace. *You must, says Jesus Christ, love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you. You must pray for those who persecute you in order that you may become the children of your celestial Father who causes the sun to rise on good and bad alike, and who brings down the rain on the unjust as well as on the just.* As we shall see in the following: *Blessed then are the peacemakers*—those who love peace, and who help to procure it; *they will be called the children of God* because they bear the mark of so good a Father. (Matt. v. 44, 45)

The sun does not shine less brilliantly in countries where God is unknown, and their pastures and fields of grain are not less refreshed by the rain. Thus, as St. Paul said: *God is never without witnesses. He leaves His mark everywhere.* When the sun rises, it informs us of God's supreme goodness, since its colors on rising are no less vivid for the enemies of God than they are for His friends. Adore then, when the sun rises, the goodness of God Who pardons, and do not show your brother an angry expression while heaven and God Himself show him a countenance so serene and so gentle.

Jesus Christ, the only Son of the celestial Father, is the master peacemaker: *Coming, He preached peace to those who were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh, causing all enmities to die within Himself.* (Eph. ii. 17) And as St. Paul says, *He made peace, through the blood which He shed on the cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven.* (Col. i. 20)

Following the example of the only Son, the adopted children must take the stamp of their father, and show

themselves true children of God through their love of peace.

According to the words of the Saviour, this grace of being children of God is perfected in the life to come. *They are God's children, being the children of the Resurrection.* (Luke xx. 36)

Let us, therefore, be truly peace-loving. Let us always find words of reconciliation and of peace in order to soften the bitterness that our brothers might feel toward us, or others, seeking always to mitigate evil gossip, and to prevent enmities, coolness and indifference. Finally, let us attempt to bring about a reconciliation between those who are divided in friendship or brotherhood. This is doing the work of God. We prove ourselves His children by imitating His goodness.

How withdrawn from this spirit are those who take pleasure in fostering quarrels among themselves, who through evil gossip—often false—exaggerate statements about their neighbors instead of discreetly keeping silent. They awaken in the minds of acquaintances and even of good friends, incidents which should have been forgotten. They use stinging words, as well as disdainful speech, embittering their brothers and sisters who are already much affected and mentally disturbed through their anger.

THE NINTH DAY

The Eighth and last beatitude: Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake (Matt. v. 10).

Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice sake. The kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (Matt. v. 10) It belongs to those who suffer for having done good, for having given good example, for having obeyed simply, and for having shamed by their good example those who do not live a life of virtue. Reproaches are even hurled at these sufferers who are persecuted for justice sake. Those who carry their daily cross and persecute their evil desires also suffer persecution for justice.

This is the last and most perfect of all the beatitudes, for this is the beatitude which bears within itself the true mark and character of the Son of God.

For this reason, Jesus ends with this beatitude. Not content with having spoken of it as He has the others, He continues with the following discourse: *You will be blest when you are cursed and persecuted by those who speak nothing but evil of you. Rejoice, therefore, and be filled with joy. After all, not only the prophets were persecuted in like manner, but even the Messiah Himself.* (Matt. xi. 12)

We return now to the beginning, and to the Kingdom of Heaven which appeared in the very first beatitude. Poverty and persecution for justice bring us closer to the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE TENTH DAY

The true character of the Christian is brought out in the eight beatitudes (Matt. v. 3-12; Luke vi. 20-27).

What a happy week we have spent with the eight beatitudes; a beautiful octave wherein we have endeavored to impress within ourselves the eight positive characters of the Christian, characters which include a summary of Christian philosophy; poverty, gentleness, tears, or disgust with the present life, mercy, love of justice, purity of heart, love of peace, and suffering for justice.

Three of these characters—gentleness, mercy, and love of peace—appear to be alike. Nevertheless, each one has its own essential faculty. It is one thing to be peaceable, and another to know how to end all quarrels. It is one thing to be gentle without ever offending or embittering others, and yet another to be well-meaning and merciful.

The negative characters are those opposed to the eight positive characters of the Christian: the spirit of materialism, bitterness, love of pleasure, injustice, hardness of heart, quarrelsomeness, impatience in afflictions, and fear which causes us to abandon the rule of truth and of justice.

St. Luke reduces the summary of the beatitudes to four: *to be poor, to be famished, to weep, and to be hated and persecuted for the love of the Son of God.* To these four beatitudes Jesus Christ adds four warnings to the men of the world. "*Woe to you, oh you rich, for you have your consolation here below! Woe to you who are content and flushed with the goods of the earth, because a time will come when you will be hungry, and there will be nothing to eat! Woe to you who laugh and are carried away by the joys of the century, for your joys will be turned into tears! Woe to you when men applaud you, for it was thus that the false prophets were treated!*" (Luke vi. 24-26)

Let us fear, then, the consolations of the world. Let us not search for them. Let us fear to receive them. Let us shun the world's praises and plaudits. Let us welcome instead the enslavement of the beatitudes, which, for love of poverty, urges us to love of suffering, and through that of suffering, returns us to that of poverty, and helps us to find the same kingdom of heaven in both poverty and suffering.

The doctrine of the beatitudes is summarized in these three words: *gentleness, mercy, and love of peace*. Let us ponder them thoughtfully.

The doctrine of morals tends above all things to make us happy. The celestial Master begins with that, so let us therefore learn from Him the road to real and eternal happiness.

THE ELEVENTH DAY

The four marks of the Christian (Matt. v. 13–20).

After this summary of Christianity which Jesus Christ prepared for His followers, He pointed out the three requirements for those who wished to be His disciples: *To be the salt of the earth, to be the light of the world, and to be of an extreme exactitude in the observance of the commandments.* (Matt. v. 13) He later added a fourth, which speaks of eminence and perfection: *If your justice does not abound. . . .* Behold here is the entire idea of Christian justice.

Salt seasons meat. It sharpens the taste and prevents

tastelessness. It also prevents spoiling. So too, the conversation of the real Christian must encourage, in others, the taste for piety. This is what prompted St. Paul to say, *May your discourse be full of grace, and well seasoned with salt.* (Col. iv. 6) Those who are slothful and slow in their conduct are very far removed from this exhortation. They must possess, in the words of the early Christians, a saintly vivacity. They should resume their conversations with force and vigor, and sometimes prick words to the quick, as a grain of salt will do to the flavor. But there is also danger in the use of too much salt. Instead of awakening the appetite, this seasoning might, figuratively speaking, set fire to the mouth and the lips.

To be the light of the world is an added degree to that of the preceding. It carries with it the obligation to be an example which edifies and illuminates the House of God. This is what we owe to one another. And if, on the contrary, we are a scandal to others, the malediction of the Saviour will fall upon us: *Woe to the world because of scandals which might arise. It is impossible that there be no scandals, but woe to him through whom these scandals occur. It would be better for him that he be cast into the sea with a millstone around his neck.* (Matt. xviii. 7; Mark ix. 41; Luke xvii. 1) Weigh these words, dear Christians, you who do not hesitate to scandalize the irresolute, the little ones of the Church.

You are the light of the world. This refers to all Christians, and not merely to pastors. St. Paul says: *You must shine in the midst of a corrupt and evil nation. If someone speaks,* says St. Peter, *let it be as a discourse from God. Act as if God were speaking,* said Matthias. St. Clement of Alexandria reported that when someone commits an evil

deed in the neighborhood of a Christian, the blame must be placed at the door of the person who failed to set a good example.

Finally, Christian living demands an extreme exactitude. We Christians must pay attention to the slightest rules or precepts, and not despise any of them. Laxity begins in little things. From there on, we are apt to fall into the greatest evils. *He who undervalues small things, falls little by little.* (Eccles. xix. 1)

In order to establish this exactitude of Christian justice, Jesus Christ advanced a beautiful principle: *the word of God is inviolate, and will be accomplished to the least iota.*

He notes here in particular what had been predicted of Him in the law and in the prophets, and it is the reason why He says: *I come to accomplish all.* Among the events predicted in the law were the birth of Christ, His sufferings, His cross, His resurrection, and the conversion of the world and of the Gentiles, with the reprobation and the just punishment of the Jews. These were the major predictions, but they were not the only ones. There were the iotas or the lesser predictions which must also be accomplished. His garments must be divided and there must be gambling for His seamless tunic. See what precision in distinctions so subtle and so exact! These are the iotas or the minor predictions. He will be sold. This is the major prediction. He will be purchased for thirty pieces of silver which will be used to buy a grave in the potter's field. These are the iotas, the minor predictions, which are not to be overlooked any more than are the others. He will thirst, and that thirst will be quenched with vinegar.

He will suffer. Behold the major prediction! This suffering will take place outside the city gates. That is the iota. He will be immolated like the Paschal Lamb but His bones will not be broken on the cross, no more than were those of the lamb. Again the iota. Jesus Christ wished to remind us that all that is said figuratively in the law will be accomplished as a fact in the Gospel, even the most minor circumstances. Everything, even the simplest incident or article, is significant in the law. Everything, even the simplest thing, will be accomplished in the Gospel. *You will not bind the jaws of the ox which tramples the grain.* (Deut. xxv. 4) St. Paul here applies the saying to preachers. It is thus with other prophecies. *Do not think of your habits as bolts of wool and linen. Be sure that there are borders and edgings in your habit.* (Deut. xxii. 11, 12) All the minor prophecies have great significance and serve to inspire Christians to practice gentleness, moderation, simplicity, right thinking, honesty, and all the other virtues.

What our Lord Jesus Christ infers from this is that we must never forget His simplest precepts. For, if all that God desired His Son to do must be accomplished, even to the simplest iota, and nothing is to be omitted, we also must endeavor to accomplish all that He has commanded.

And note what a forceful expression He uses! *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.* (Matt. xxiv. 35) If the sun were suddenly to disappear, and this torch of the world should suddenly become extinguished in broad daylight; if the sky should go to pieces, if the earth, this solid foundation, should suddenly be reduced to powder under our very feet, what a disaster it would be. Everything would be lost. Nevertheless, the

tragedy would be far greater, and all would be completely lost, if we failed to observe the very least of the commands of Jesus Christ.

Sorrow rectifies disorder. Sin is a disorder, and must be atoned for. We return then, through sorrow, into the order which we had set aside through sin. To sin with impunity is the height of disorder. This would be the disorder, not of the man who sins, but of God Who does not punish. However, this confusion will never be, because God, Who is the rule itself, can never be irregular in anything.

As this rule is rigid and unbending, all who do not fit into it will break, and will feel the effect of the invincible rectitude of the rule.

But if threats are fulfilled, promises will be also. Come, Christian, to your crucifix; see there all predictions fulfilled, even to the very smallest. Say to yourself: all will be accomplished, and the happiness which is promised me will never fail. I shall see God; I shall love Him; and I shall praise Him forever and ever. All my desires will be granted; all my hopes accomplished. Amen. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY

The superiority of Christian justice to that of the pagans and the Jews (Matt. v. 20-47).

Jesus Christ, Who until now has given the directions for Christian living in a rather general way, begins here to enumerate the precepts in detail. He gives the follow-

ing rule as a foundation: Christian justice must surpass that of the most perfect among the Jews and the doctors of the law. Let us take a moment to reflect on the perfection of the Evangelical law, which, at our baptism, we swore to observe.

In order to motivate us, Our Lord Jesus Christ took particular care to elevate us to the perfection of Christian justice by three degrees.

First, He told us that we must elevate ourselves above the wisest of the pagans. This is what He meant when He said: *Do not the pagans do this?* meaning to say, you must do much better than that. You have been told to despise riches. Did not the wise pagans despise them also? To be faithful to your friends. Were not the pagans also faithful to their friends? To avoid fraudulence and cheating. Did not the pagans detest these evils? To flee adultery. Did not the most licentious pagans have a horror of this evil?

Secondly, He told us to elevate ourselves above the justice of the law and above those who know God. And this precept is again divided into three degrees to avoid the three faults of the Judaic justice. The first fault of this justice is that it is merely exterior. *You Pharisees, you are careful to make clean the outside of the cup and of the dish.* For this reason, He called them *whitened sepulchres*. (Matt. xxiii. 25–27) Observe the justice of the Pharisee in St. Luke: *I am not, said he, as the rest of men. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I possess.* (Luke xviii. 11–12) This man boasts only of his exterior observances, and those who are attached only to external acts of worship—reading the breviary, going to church, assisting at the sacrifice of the Mass, attending Matins, taking holy water, kneeling—without absorbing the spirit of

the above, resemble him. This is pharisaical justice which seems to possess some exactitude, but which brings down upon us this just reproach from Our Lord Jesus Christ: *These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.* (Matt. xv. 8) This is a false justice. But what shall we say of those who do not even possess this justice and exterior exactitude? Are they not even worse than the Pharisees and the Jews?

The second fault of the Judaic justice is as St. Paul says: *Not knowing of the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own justice, the Jews have not submitted themselves to the justice of God,* because they have believed they could perform good works through their own merits, instead of recognizing that it is God Who is operating within them.

St. Paul possessed that justice, but see how he speaks of it: *My conduct was without reproach according to the justice of the law.* Notice these words: *without reproach.* It would seem impossible to carry perfection further and yet, he adds almost immediately, *but that which was a gain for me according to the law, I considered a loss because of the eminent knowledge that I had of Jesus Christ. I wished to win Jesus Christ, and to have in Him, not my own justice which comes from the law, but the justice which comes from faith in Jesus Christ, justice which comes from God through faith.* (Phil. iii. 6–9)

Here then is the second fault of the Judaic justice; that is, the Jews believed that they were just of themselves. This kind of justice, according to St. Paul, is impure and nothing but dung because it is only pride. Let us, therefore, try to avoid it by humbly bringing to God the little good that we do.

The third fault of the justice of the Jews is that their works were very imperfect compared to the perfection by which man is elevated through the Gospel. We are obligated to a greater perfection than those who merely perform good works. Why? *Because of the eminent knowledge that we have of Jesus Christ*, says St. Paul. Moreover, it is one of the truths that Jesus Christ taught: *If your justice is no more abundant than that of the doctors of the law and of the Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. v. 20)

Behold, therefore, Christian justice is elevated by two degrees; that is, it is above the justice of wise pagans, and above the justice of the Jews. It is from this knowledge that the great idea of Christian justice must be formed.

But there is a third degree of perfection. It is this: Christian justice must be elevated beyond itself. *No, my brothers*, said St. Paul, *I do not believe I have yet attained the justice at which I am aiming, nor that I am perfect. I pursue my course as a man who does not believe he has obtained what he hopes to obtain. All that I do, all my thought, all my aim, is trying to forget everything that is behind me.* (Phil. iii. 12, 13) Notice all the progress St. Paul has made is as nothing to him. He does not stop. He does not rest. *I rush forward to what is before me.* (Phil. iii. 12, 13) Note this expression: *he rushes forward*; he makes an effort; he goes out of himself; he dislocates himself in some way through the effort that he puts forth in order to advance. Here then is the true Christian, the truly just man. He believes he has done nothing, for, if he considers himself sufficiently just, he is not so at all. He must, therefore, continue to advance and go out from his state continually: *Be perfect as your celes-*

tial Father is perfect. (Matt. v. 48) At least, have the will to be perfect for it is to renounce justice, to be satisfied with the justice which we have already chosen of ourselves, assuming that it is sufficient. And remember that unless you advance, you are bound to move backward. You glance behind, against the precept of the Gospel, and what does the Saviour decide? *That you are not yet fit to enter the Kingdom of God.* (Luke ix. 62)

This is the reason Christ said that we must *hunger and thirst for justice.* This is no ordinary appetite. It is an appetite like that which forces us to nourish ourselves in order to live: an ardent and invincible desire which must constantly inflame us. No matter what your condition, you must continue to have this hunger and thirst. The capacity of your spirit is infinite, but so also is the justice which you seek.

Upon this foundation of the perfection of Christian justice, Jesus Christ built the entire edifice, that is to say, all the precepts of His Gospel, in order to elevate us beyond the pagans, the Jews, and ourselves. This is what we are to understand in the following: *Be perfect as your celestial Father is perfect,* and also what His apostle St. Paul has expressed in the manner which we have seen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY

Hatred, anger, harsh words: what is in their punishment? (Matt. v. 21-22)

After presenting this lofty idea of Christian justice,

Jesus Christ begins to clarify our obligations to our neighbor, and teaches us how much we must avoid disturbing him. St. John says: *He who hates his brother is a murderer.* Jesus Christ deems it so. This is what he meant when He said: *It is not only in killing him (our neighbor) that we render ourselves worthy of being punished by judgement.* And again, *If we are angry with him, if we show our indignation by uttering some angry word or some expression of disdain, we are deserving to be condemned by the Council.* We are worthy of a much greater penalty, *but if we are carried away to the point of calling him insane, we shall not avoid eternal fire.* (Matt. v. 21, 22)

We must here weigh carefully the three degrees of anger: 1.) to become bitterly angry, 2.) to express our anger by some outburst of passion, and 3.) to hurl atrocious injuries in our brother's face, calling him a fool. We must also compare these three degrees of anger with their three punishments: judgement, council, and fire.

Formerly, *judgement* entailed capital punishment, since it was attributed according to the ancients to murder, which the law punished, unpardonably, by death. But Jesus Christ, in order to show how weak and inadequate human justice is compared to the divine, which, He had just declared to men, places *judgement*, that is to say, the capital punishment of human judgements, for the least culpable degree. By this, Christ wished to show that, before God, anger against a brother is in itself a sin deserving of death. Therefore, we must not doubt that we are committing a mortal sin when we remain voluntarily alienated from our brother, which often happens when

we remain angry with him, because then our anger is turned into hatred. In this state nothing excuses from mortal sin except the resistance which we bring to so wicked a habit and disposition. When such hatred dominates the heart, charity is completely extinguished.

The second degree of punishment is that by means of the Council, or police of the Jews. Beyond the actual judgement where particular crimes were punished by death, if necessary, there was also the Sanhedrin, or the supreme council of the nation, which was the more severe because it judged public crimes concerning the state of the people of God in religion, and in the government without any appeal. In order to express the just punishment of the person who was guilty of the second degree of anger, that is to say, anger to the point where a person expresses his hatred by the utterance of some word of fury or abuse, Jesus Christ goes from ample judgement to that which is far more rigorous and inevitable among men, which is the extreme rigor of the sovereign Council of the nation.

The last degree follows after that, which is to utter atrocious injuries, like calling one's brother a fool. And for that, there is nothing in the world of men through which we can express more vividly the vengeance carried out, than to refer to a valley outside of Jerusalem reputed abominable. This valley was called the valley of the cadavers and of ashes, because, in the time of the idolatries among the people of God, the Israelites burned their infants in honor of the infamous idol of Moloch, and then threw their ashes and their cadavers half burned into this place.

This then is the valley of the cadavers, also called the

valley of death, to which Jesus Christ compares the terrible punishment of those who accuse their brothers of insanity. If Christ orders this penalty for verbal injuries, how much greater will be the torments of those who strike and kill? The Son of God does not speak of it, as though not wishing to even suppose that such a thing might happen among His own. Rather, He merely intimates how violent actions will be punished when mere words are punished with such rigor.

Let us weigh all our words then, since they are weighed with such rigor in the sovereign judgement of God.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY

Reconciliation (Matt. v. 23–26).

Another great and beautiful precept, and one through which we can understand how much God loves peace, is that wherein He commands us, as He does, to become reconciled with our brother before approaching the altar. He cares nothing for the oblation which is offered to Him by a person whose heart is filled with resentment and whose hands are extended toward vengeance.

We note the following words many times in the Bible: *If your brother holds a grudge against you* (Matt. v. 13), even if you have given him just cause, but also if he has taken it amiss, you must have a charitable understanding with him, for fear that you might come to hate him when you know that he hates you. The first gift that you must

offer to God is a warm heart free from cold indifference, and from all enmity toward your brother.

Do not even wait for your communion day, the day of oblation, where and when you will find yourselves together, and where you may even assist together at the holy sacrifice. This day must be preceded by the reconciliation.

We must carry the love of peace still farther. St. Paul says: *Do not let the sun set upon your anger.* (Eph. iv, 26) The darkness would augment our sorrow, and upon awakening, our anger would return and would become more bitter. The sad and dark passions—hatred, vengeance, and jealousy—become embittered during the night, as do wounds, hemorrhages, and other serious maladies.

During quarrels, in law courts, and in all dissensions, we deliver each other to a judge because the offense is mutual. We must, therefore, fear *prison whence we are not released until we have paid in full.* To this end we should agree on a voluntary reconciliation with each other rather than submit to a judgement which might augment the bitterness. This is what we must consider carefully.

St. Augustine says that *this enemy with whom we must become reconciled while in the way with him* (Matt. v. 25, 26) is the truth which condemns us in this life and delivers us, in the other, *to the executor, who obliges us to pay to the last penny*, that is to say, to remain eternally in this frightful prison, since we can never satisfy for our crimes.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY

The delicacy of chastity: pluck out your eyes; cut off your hand. The indissolubility of marriage (Matt. v. 27-32).

Concerning the preservation of chastity, we must fear even a careless glance. Poison enters through the eyes. *Take care, said Moses, not to allow your eyes and thoughts to wander for fear of soiling yourself with the objects which surround you. (Num. xv. 39)* Job also said: *I have signed a pact with my eyes, that I should keep them modest, never vague nor wandering. (Job xxxi. 1)* The veil of sacred virgins is the mark and instrument of this prudence. Their life is a mystery; wandering eyes are banished from it. These virgins never wish to see nor to be seen. This is the first teaching of Jesus Christ on this subject.

The second is that we must be prepared to renounce all human ties, not only the most agreeable, but even the most necessary, rather than to jeopardize our salvation. The secret is to flee, to avoid occasions of temptation, to fear even the most remote, to take precautions against the weaker parts of the body, to cut off even our right hand, or a foot, to pluck out our very eyes. All must be abrupt in this matter. For it is necessary to avoid, as much as possible, even the necessity of waging war. For we are not courageous for long, nor firm against ourselves.

If your eyes offend, if your right hand scandalizes (Matt. v. 29, 30), that is to say, if persons who are dear to you are an occasion of sin, renounce their friendship. If they

cause you to be a scandal to your neighbor, do likewise, because all that causes him to fall, is also dangerous for you. You will become like that man whose fate would have been happier had he been *thrown into the ocean with a millstone around his neck*. (Matt. xviii. 6)

The third teaching on this subject concerns marriage and its indissolubility. Here again we can read a deeper meaning. For as the tie of marriage signifies the union of Jesus Christ with His Church, so too the souls who have entered this blessed contract must keep faith with Jesus Christ and never break their contract with Him.

We must, therefore, avoid even the most insignificant acts which might be displeasing to the celestial Spouse. It is not only the ruptures which are to be feared in marriages, but also the least coolness.

Anything can lead to divorce if we are not careful, and promptly repair the least negligences. The sensitivity of the spouse is easily wounded. Love that is allowed to cool soon dies.

Watch then, Christian soul. Watch every little movement. Nothing pleases the loved one so much as the lover who tries to please him in all things. Remember there is nothing more terrible than the celebrated saying of the Son of God: *I should like you to be cold or warm*. (Apoc. iii. 15, 16) In either case you might be capable of some kind of positive action, *but because you are luke warm and without efficacy*, it is impossible to do anything with you, and *I shall vomit you out of my mouth*.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY

When you are under oath: Christian simplicity (Matt. v. 33-37).

I find this point one of the most touching in Christian doctrine because the Son of God established there the most amiable of all virtues; that is, sincerity. The true Christian never lies. He says: *a thing either is, or it isn't* (Matt. v. 37), and this expression takes the place of an oath. Instead of swearing by heaven, by earth, or by the Holy City, or even by his own head, the true Christian says: *A thing either is, or it is not,—yes or no.* There can be no place for a lie in so simple an expression, neither does it suffer any concealment, for without excuse or embarrassment, this man says: *A thing is, or it isn't.* The sincerity of a Christian must be so perfect and so well recognized, that the world will hold to this simple expression as though this Christian had sworn a thousand different oaths.

This expression is very powerful. *All that is in excess of it, comes from the devil* (Matt. v. 37) or from evil. All that we say besides that *a thing either is, or is not,* comes from the hardness of our hearts. It is malice and deceit. In a word, it is Satan who has introduced it. Let us return to the source. Let us render ourselves so believed on account of our sincerity, that we can be trusted when we utter the simple expression: *either a thing is, or it isn't,—yes or no.*

Do not be so affirmative; so positive; do not exaggerate;

do not swear. (Matt. v. 37) This is a part of the gentleness on account of which it is said: *Blessed are the meek.* (Matt. v. 4) That which you might say beyond simple affirmation or negation would not be necessary if your hearts were well disposed.

Be sincere in this matter, and if it is absolutely necessary to go beyond this, let it be solely for the sake of others who need to be urged more forcibly: *Be born again, purge out the old leaven.* (I Cor. v. 7) The wicked man is a liar, because he is only interested in hiding what he says and does. *Clothe yourself with the new man Who is Jesus Christ, created according to God, in justice and in the saintliness of truth.* (Eph. iv. 24) *Do not lie, which is suitable only for the wicked who wish to hide themselves. Be truthful with one another, because you are members of one body.* (Eph. iv. 25) Your hand does not wish to deceive your head when it takes it to guide you through the shadows. Your eyes do not wish to betray your footsteps, nor these to hide their journey from your eyes and head. If these members could speak and question one another, they would simply tell the plain truth in all things—*yes or no—either a thing is or it isn't.* Live this way, dear Christian. Do not pretend to be mysterious and important. Remain silent; practice moderation and prudence. Do not pretend to be what you are not—a wise and knowing person. Do not dissimulate; especially, commit no evil. Do not doubt, nor be suspicious, in order that you may have nothing to hide. If you sin—and who does not sin?—confide this sin to your confessor in the confessional in the same way a patient confides in his physician and say: *This thing is; this thing is not.* Do not seek vain excuses for your faults, nor engage in lengthy circum-

locutions in order to justify yourself. Humility will make you sincere.

We take an oath in the name of God, and we call Him to witness in order that our word, feeble by itself, may become firm and inviolable through the intercession of the name of God. If we are filled with God and clothed again with Jesus Christ, however, the truth is in us, and our discourse, being strengthened through the merit of the source whence it has come, does not need to be fortified by the formality of an oath.

There are some people who believe that an oath cannot be taken unless they call upon the name of God. They did not consider it an oath to say: In the name of heaven, earth, or the Holy City, etc. But Jesus Christ decides that there is, in all this, something which, concerning God, must be considered a kind of religious sincerity, without permitting man to profane it with his own oaths.

This expression is remarkable: *Do not vow by your own head, for you have not the power to make black or white one of your hairs.* (Matt. v. 36) Of all that you claim to be yours, there is nothing you may dispose of, not even the color of your hair. Do not say then: *I swear by my head,* for far from having power over your head, you don't even have any over your hair, neither to make it grow, nor to change its color. Be submissive to God, then, and never speak of being able to dispose of the least thing.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY

Fraternal charity: an extension of Christian perfection (Matt. v. 38-43).

In this discourse, Jesus Christ returns to the obligation of brotherly love, about which He has already said that, far from being permitted to kill or to strike, we should not even be angry with our brother, nor show him bitterness by any injury. If any misunderstanding exists between us, therefore, we must find a way to become reconciled. Do not hire a judge, if possible, to settle your differences, nor even a mediator to conciliate your injured spirits. We have a natural mediator in our mutual reconciliation, who is Our Lord Jesus Christ, the spirit of charity and of grace which animates us. We must be tractable, and each one of us must be more than willing to come to terms with his brother. Our Lord has said that if we sense some feeling of antagonism in the heart of our brother, we are obliged to warn him in order to calm him, and to prefer a reconciliation to a sacrifice. Now Our Lord increases the obligation and definitely eradicates the spirit of vengeance.

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. (Exod. xxi. 4) This form of justice was permitted among the ancients, but Our Lord does not permit the Christian to practice it, nor to seek it for his own satisfaction. If public justice suppresses violence, the Christian does not oppose it. Rather, he respects public orders, but as for himself, far from having his revenge on the person who strikes him,

he will, so to speak, turn the other cheek. He will give his own coat willingly to the stranger who wishes to rob him of it, rather than to undertake a lawsuit for a small offense, or enter into a spirit of quarreling and resentment. He will willingly run two miles for him who will have forced him to run only one. The tranquility of his heart is dearer to him than the possession of all that might have been taken from him unjustly, and if he must fail in charity in order to recover the goods of which he was deprived, he wants none of it at that price. Oh dear Gospel, how pure you are! Oh Christian doctrine, how amiable you are! But, oh dear Christians, how badly you respond, and how unworthy you are of so beautiful a title!

Give to him who asks for help in need. Do not run away, as is done ordinarily when a neighbor in need asks for a loan. (Matt. v. 42) Do what you can to help him; be liberal and kind. All the riches in the world do not equal the price of these virtues, nor the recompense that they bring.

The three degrees of charity toward our enemies are: *to love them, to give to them, and to pray for them.* The first degree gives rise to the second, because when we love, we give. The third degree is the one which we believe we can do the most easily and yet, it is the most difficult because it is the one we perform with reference to God, asking for His help. Nothing must be more sincere, more cordial, or more genuine than the prayer which we present to the One who sees all, even to the very bottom of our hearts.

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY

The extension of Christian perfection (Cont'd.) (Matt. v. 46-48).

Examine yourselves on these three degrees: *to love, to do good, and to pray. Where is the credit, to love those who love us? The publicans do the same thing. Where is the credit in greeting those who greet us? The pagans do the same.* It isn't for nothing that you are offered an eternal heritage and perfect happiness. It is not to allow you to remain equal to, or even beneath the pagans. Admit this to yourselves, dear Christians! What reward do you deserve, Christian women, if you despise vain flattery? The pagans despised it also. Where is your glory, if you despise riches? Philosophers have felt the same way about riches. Tell yourselves the same thing about chastity. The vestal virgins also loved chastity. Concerning cordiality, the pagans of the world glorified this virtue. Raise your thoughts higher, and aim *to be perfect.* (Matt. v. 42) Like whom? Like the philosophers, like the pagans, like the Jews, like the Pharisees, like the doctors of the law who were the most perfect of the Jews? No, Jesus Christ said: *You will have no part of His Kingdom if your justice does not surpass theirs.* (Matt. v. 20) *Be perfect as your Celestial Father is perfect.* (Matt. v. 48) And, as you can never be equal to Him, continue to grow toward this perfection. The task is great, but the help is equal to the attempt. God who calls you to so high a place will hold out His hand. His Son, Who is His equal, will come down to

you in order to assist you. Say then with St. Paul: *I can do all with Him who fortifies me.* (Phil. iv. 13)

Oh dear Christian! You who are so far from the perfection of your state in life, when will you begin to surmount your heedlessness?

Let everyone say to himself from the bottom of his heart: I do wish to learn to be a true Christian. Pause at these words: *The ancients were told: and I tell you.* Who is the one who has given us this new law? It is Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, the Light of Truth eternal, the Master Who is sent to us from heaven to teach us, but at the same time, is the Saviour Who helps us, and Who, as we have just witnessed, bestows His graces according to the work which He imposes upon us.

THE NINETEENTH DAY

Relapses (Luke xi. 21–26; Hebr. vi. 4–9; II Ptr. ii. 20–22).

In order to strengthen ourselves against moral relapses, let us dwell upon what St. Luke says about the *Armed Fort.* (Luke xi. 21–28)

The *Armed Fort* is the devil. Let us consider the following words: *that which he possesses is in peace.* Think of the unhappy peace enjoyed by sinners. With dulled conscience they see themselves perish from the cold without caring. Their passions gratify them, and the devil reigns supreme. Jesus Christ drove out the *Armed Fort* when He disturbed the hardened heart after he had done penance. But that is not all, and Satan does not loosen

his hold. He returns with seven devils more wicked than himself. Ponder this well. These unclean spirits again contaminate the house which penance has cleansed, and make themselves at home: *And the last state of that man is worse than the first.* (Luke xi. 26) If at every relapse our condition becomes worse, and the devil's domination is increased, and if we sink deeper and deeper in evil, if our strength continually diminishes, where will we be in the end, and how can we extricate ourselves from this cesspool? It is true that God can help us out of it, but while there is no real cause to despair, there is everything to fear.

It is impossible, says St. Paul, that those who have once been enlightened through the grace of baptism, who have tasted the celestial gift, and who have been made participants of the Holy Spirit, who have afterwards fallen, it is impossible that they be regenerated. (Hebr. vi. 4-6) If St. Paul speaks thus of those who have violated the sanctity of baptism, how much more must those, who have added to this profanation, fear the penance so often repeated, and so often despised? *The earth, which often drinks the rain which falls upon it, but which produces only thorns and thistles, is on the verge of being cursed, and is finally set on fire.* (Hebr. vi. 7, 8)

There is nothing to explain here. The words speak for themselves, and there is nothing to do except to meditate upon them with attention. After these words have filled you with terror, raise your hopes through the following, and believe all that the Church teaches you through the words of St. Paul: *For, dearly beloved, we hope for better things from you, things that bring you nearer to salvation, though we speak thus, for God is not unjust that He*

should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in His name. (Hebr. vi. 9)

THE TWENTIETH DAY

Pride in good works (Matt. vi. 2-4).

After having brought Christian justice to the degree of perfection which we have just seen, and even after having given us God Himself for a model of perfection, Jesus Christ saw that man, inclined to vanity, might wish to obtain glory from the exterior practices of so perfect a justice, and this realization gave rise to the following precept: *Do not brandish your justice before men in order to be noticed. (Matt. vi. 7)* Our Lord, however, does not forbid the exterior practice of Christian justice on all occasions in order to edify our neighbor. On the contrary, He has said: *Let your light shine before men, in order that your Celestial Father may be glorified in your good deeds, but take care, do not do so to be well thought of by men, otherwise you might forfeit your reward. (Matt. v. 16)* You may demand it of men for whom you act, but expect from God only the punishment that He has reserved for hypocrites.

Whenever you are praised, fear this word of the Saviour: *Verily I say to you, you have received your recompense. (Matt. vi. 2-5)* These words are so important that Jesus Christ repeats them often in this chapter.

Remember what Our Lord said of the wicked rich man: *He has received his goods in this life. And again in*

the parable of the Feast: *We have given you what was coming to you.* (Luke xvi. 25; xiv. 12)

Blessed then are those, *whose lives are hidden in Jesus Christ*, as St. Paul says (Col. iii. 3), whom the world knows not, who live in the secret of God. Again this saint says, *they are as though unknown* (II Cor. vi. 8), for they are not concerned with the vain discourses of men: *But they are known.* Indeed, God is all the more concerned with them because men have ignored them. Blessed! Blessed! *If I were still pleasing to men*, says St. Paul, *I should not be a servant of Jesus Christ.* (Gal. i. 20)

We must here avoid a certain casualness which causes us to neglect our exterior actions toward outsiders, actions which should edify our neighbors. We say: It is none of my business what he thinks. It is as though we were to say: I am not concerned whether I scandalize him or not. God forbid! In exterior actions edify your neighbors, and practice self-control, even to the wink of an eye. All this must be done naturally and simply, however, so that the glory of it may return to God.

Be careful also of becoming content with mere external observances. God must have His show, so to speak, in the secret of a heart which searches for Him.

Do not let your left hand know what your right hand does. (Matt. vi. 3, 4) Hide your alms-giving from your most intimate friends. *Hide it in the breast of the poor* (Eccl. xxix. 15), says the wise man. If possible, do not let the man who is poor know you. Also, if possible, it would be better if you could hide the good that you do even from yourself; at least, hide the merit of it from your own eyes. Always believe that you do very little; that you do nothing; that you are a useless servant. Continue to fear

always in your good works, that your intentions are not always pure, not hidden enough from the eyes of the world. Let God alone know the merit of your actions. Do good without expecting anything in return. Be so interested in the good work itself that you never dream of receiving anything in return. Leave everything to the judgement of God.

Do not blow your own trumpet (Matt. vi. 2), like those who talk without ceasing of what they do and of what they say. They are themselves their own trumpets, so much do they fear that they will not be seen or heard.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY

Prayer and the presence of God in the secret recesses of your heart (Matt. vi. 5–8).

Enter into the privacy of your apartment. Go in to the most intimate part of the house that you may not be disturbed and may withdraw into the most sacred intimacy of your heart. Lock your door and disregard your senses; do not indulge in woolgathering. Pray in secret. Open your heart to God alone, and let Him be the sole custodian of your secret sorrows.

Do not talk much. It isn't a question here of confiding your most secret needs to God in a lengthy discourse: *He knows all before you utter a word*. Remind yourself secretly what can profit you, stir you, and wrap you in complete meditation. The prayers of the pagans, who did not know God, were only a superabundance of thoughtless

words. Speak little with your lips, and much with your heart. Do not multiply your thoughts, for it is thus that you become scatter-brained and heedless. Arrest your thoughts on some important truth which may have seized your heart and mind. Consider. Weigh. Taste. Rejoice. Truth is the bread of the soul. Do not gobble each morsel. Do not pass from one thought to another, or from one truth to another without pausing. Hold to one at a time. Clasp it tenderly. Attach it to your heart rather than to your mind. Draw its essence by dint of pressing it through your loving care.

God sees you in the secret recesses of your heart. Remember: He sees the very depths of your heart, even better than you do yourself. Make an act of simple and earnest faith in His presence. Christian soul, place yourself entirely under His very eyes. He is intimate. He is present. He gives being and movement to all things. Nevertheless, do not stop at the mere thought of His presence, of which all creatures, animate and inanimate alike, are conscious. Believe, through a lively faith, that He is present in you, in the way of giving you interiorly all your good thoughts, and not only good thoughts, but also proper desires, sincere resolutions, and all good intentions, from their first origin to their last perfection. Continue to believe that He is within you, a righteous man, and that He makes His dwelling there, according to the Saviour's word: *We shall come to Him, and we shall make our abode there.* (John xiv. 23) He dwells there in a stable and permanent manner. Long for Him to be within you in this way. Offer Him your innermost being in order that He may be there, and that He may dwell there, and that He may make of it His living

temple. Come out of yourself occasionally, and with the same faith which makes you see Him within yourself, look at Him in heaven, where He manifests Himself to His dearly beloved. It is there that He waits for you. Run. Fly. Break all the ties—all the attachments—that bind you to flesh and blood. Oh, my dear God! When shall I see You? When will my heart be pure enough to allow me to see You everywhere? Oh, light which brightens all! Oh, life which animates all! Oh, truth which nourishes all! Oh, good which refreshes all! Oh, love which unites everything! I praise You, my celestial Father, You Who see me in the secret recesses of my heart.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father (Matt. vi. 9).

An exercise of love should accompany all our requests for favors.

Our Father. From the very first word of the Lord's Prayer, our heart melts with love. God wishes to be our father through a special adoption. He has an only Son Who is equal to Him, and in Whom He has placed His affection, and yet, He adopts sinners. Men usually adopt children when they have none of their own. But God Who had such a Son, adopts us nevertheless. Adoption is an act of love, for we choose the child that we adopt. Nature gives us other children, but love alone creates adoptive children. God Who loves His only Son with all the fire of His love, shares with us the love He has for

His Son Jesus. It is what Jesus Christ asks in this beautiful prayer which He addresses to His Father for us: *May the love which you have for me, be theirs also; and I also love them.* (John xvii. 26) Let us love such a Father then, and let us say thousands of times: our Father, our Father, will we never love You, will we never be real children pierced with your Paternal tenderness?

Let us repeat it once more, our Father. What makes us say our Father? Let us learn from the words of St. Paul: *Because you are children, God sends within you the spirit of His Son, Who cries within you: Father, Father.* (Gal. iv. 6) It is the Holy Spirit Who is within us. It is He Who forms within us this intimate cry of the heart through which we call upon God, as to a father who is always ready to listen to us.

St. Paul says in another place: *Those who are moved, who are led by the spiritual God, are the children of God . . . and God sends us the spirit of adoption through whom we cry out, Father, Father.* (Rom. viii. 14, 15) Again, therefore, it is the Holy Spirit Who prompts this filial outcry, and through Whom we appeal to God as to our Father.

Why do we call it a cry? A great need causes a person to cry out. A child cries only when he suffers, or when he needs something. But to whom does he cry out in time of need if not to his father, to his mother, or to one who takes the place of father or mother? Let us also cry then, for our needs are extreme. We are weak; sin has prevailed upon us; and the pleasures of the senses sweep us off our feet. Let us call for help, but let us call to our Father. What is it that impels us to cry out? The Holy Spirit, the God love, the love of the Father and of His Son, *He Who pours love into our hearts.* (Rom. v. 5) Let us clamor.

Let us cry out with ardor. Indeed, may all our bones scream: oh God, You are our Father!

Abraham and the other fathers from whom we come according to the flesh have ignored us, and Israel has not known us, but You, oh God, our real Father, You do know us, and it is You Who send us, from the intimacy of Your great heart and from the infinite source which is Your love, this spirit which causes us to cry out to You, our Father.

This spirit, adds St. Paul, renders proof to our spirit, that we are children of God. (Rom. viii. 16) Oh dear God! Who will listen to this testimony of the Holy Spirit, which tells us interiorly that we are children of God? What voice, in the peace of good conscience and from a heart that has nothing to reproach itself, tells us secretly and in the intimate silence of our heart, God is your Father; you are His child. This voice is too intimate; too few hear it. The Holy Spirit does not render this secret testimony to all. He would wish to extend it to everybody, but too few are worthy of it. Oh dear God, make us worthy of it! It is right to ask this grace of God, for, in fact, it is He Who gives it. And God answers: Act with Me; do your part; open your heart to Me; silence natural desires; say to Me often from the secret recesses of your heart: Our Father, our Father.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY

Who art in Heaven (Matt. vi. 9).

Again we say: *Our Father*. However, let us add to this: *Who art in heaven*. You are everywhere, but You are in

heaven, as in the place where You gather together Your children, where You show yourself to them, where You manifest Your glory to them, where You have assigned to them their heritage.

St. Paul said to us: *The Holy Spirit renders testimony to our spirit, that we are children of God.* (Rom. viii. 16, 17) But let us listen to what he adds: *If we are children, we are also heirs.* And that isn't all. Let us imagine the height of our happiness: *Heirs of God and co-heirs with Jesus Christ.* We shall possess the same heritage, the same kingdom. We shall be seated on His throne; we shall share in His glory; we shall be happy in Him, through Him, and with Him. This is the reason we call: *Our Father Who art in heaven,* because we understand well from where He is calling us.

Love Him Who makes us His heirs and the co-heirs of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ? Who could not love Him? Who could refuse such a heritage? It is given only to those who love Him. Our heritage is God Himself. He is our only good. He alone is our recompense. *I am,* says He, *your protector and your too great recompense,* (Gen. xv. 1) too great for your merits, but in proportion to the immense kindness of your God.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

Hallowed be Thy name (Matt. vi. 9, 10).

Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This is the perpetual continuation of the practice of loving. To sanctify the name of God is to glorify Him in all things, and to breathe only His glory. To desire His kingdom is to submit ourselves to Him with all our hearts, and to wish that He reign over us, and not only over us but also over all creatures. His kingdom is in heaven, and will burst forth over the entire earth at the last judgement. Let us place ourselves then in a state of anticipation. May we be among those of whom Jesus Christ says: *When these things come to pass, when the signs of the precursors of the last judgement appear during the last days, while other men wither with fear, look, and lift your heads, because your redemption is at hand.* (Luke xxi. 28)

Jesus Christ comes for each one of us when our life is ended. Therefore, when these last days approach, when Jesus Christ knocks at the door to call us, we must be in a state to receive Him with joy, and to say to Him: *Thy kingdom come, for I desire that that which there is in me that is mortal, be swallowed up by life.* (II Cor. v. 4)

But who among us truly desires the kingdom of God? Who among us can heartily say: *Thy kingdom come!* Nevertheless, this is the place that this word prepares us for: *Our Father Who art in Heaven.* Heaven is our home. It is our home since it is there that our Father dwells.

We are, therefore, not in good faith when we say: *Thy kingdom come,* or which in reality means the same thing, *that Thy kingdom come to us.* That which stifles this desire within us, which ought to be so natural to Christians, is love of the world and of its pleasures. We love this life filled with all sorts of evils, and what is worse, filled with sin which is the greatest of all evils.

Let us break these ties and say: *Thy will be done*. To conform our wills to the will of God is the true and perfect exercise of love. Oh, our Father Who art in heaven! We love You and it is for this reason that we make Your will our happiness. May that which is done in heaven be done on earth! May that which ends in heaven begin here!

This life must not be loved, but tolerated, says St. Augustine. It is the place of pilgrimage, the place of exile, the place of groans and of tears.

Therefore, oh our celestial Father, may Thy kingdom come; may Thy will be done.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

Give us this day our daily bread (Matt. vi. 11).

Give us this day our daily bread. This is the request of a child who asks his father in confidence for all his needs, even the simplest. Oh, our Father! You have given us a mortal body. You did not create it thus at first, but we have disobeyed You, and death has become our lot. This infirm and mortal body needs nourishment every day or it becomes exhausted, and perishes. Give us this nourishment; give it to us simply and sufficiently. May we learn in asking for it that it is You Who give it to us day after day. You give it to Your children, to Your servants, to Your soldiers. Since You wish that they fight under Your standards, You give them their daily bread. Let us ask

for it with confidence! Let us receive it from Your hands with thanksgiving!

But if You find it fitting to refuse, Oh my God, our good Father! *Thy will be done*. It is rare that those who serve You faithfully lack bread. Yet, You often refuse that which nourishes the lustful and the dissolute, for they are evil, and it is more worthy of You to refuse them than to satisfy them. Nevertheless, You hardly ever refuse the necessities of life to those who fear You, and who ask You for them with humility. You have given charge to the rich of the sustenance of the poor, and You have attached so many blessings to alms-giving, that the fountain in Your Church can never be drained of them. Finally, however, if it please You, oh our Father, that we want for bread or for some other necessity, what shall we say? We should then have to return to our former demand: *Thy will be done, for my real meat*, said Jesus Christ, *is to do the will of Him Who sent me*. (John iv. 34)

Another version declares: *Give us our bread which is above all substance*; by which we understand, of course, the bread of the Eucharist. Oh dear God, give it to us today; give it to us every day. May we be worthy to receive Holy Communion every time that we assist at Your sacrifice! The table is ready, yet the guests are lacking but, oh my Jesus, You are calling them. Let us desire this bread of life! Let us desire it with ardor and avidity! Those who hunger and thirst for justice desire it, for all grace abounds there, and the perfect exercise of love is to desire, without ceasing, to receive Jesus Christ.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

Forgive us as we forgive (Matt. vi. 12–15).

Forgive us, as we forgive. How admirable it is that God makes the forgiveness which we expect from Him, depend on the forgiveness which He commands us to grant to those who have offended us. Not content with having everywhere inculcated the obligation, He places it in our own mouths, in our daily prayer, in order that, were we to fail to forgive, He might say to us: *I judge you through your own mouth, you wicked servant.* (Luke xix. 22) You have asked me to forgive on condition of your own forgiveness. Therefore, you have pronounced your sentence when you refused to forgive your brother. Go to the unhappy place, where there is neither forgiveness nor mercy.

It is that which Jesus Christ stresses in this passage, and it is that which He explains again in a terrible manner in the parable of the harsh servant.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Matt. vi. 13).

Lead us not into temptation. We do not pray simply to refrain from falling into temptation, but to anticipate it in accordance with this admonition: *Watch and pray, for*

fear that you might enter into temptation. (Matt. xxvi. 41) Not only for fear that you might yield to it, but also for fear that you might enter into it.

We must understand, by these words, the necessity of praying at all times when the need arises, and even before it arises. Do not wait for the temptation, for then the trouble and the agitation of your mind will prevent you from praying. Pray before temptation, and forestall the enemy.

God tempts no one, says St. James. (James i. 13) Thus, when we say to Him: *Lead us not into temptation*, obviously we must understand: Do not permit us to enter there. Also as St. Paul says: *God is faithful to His promises* (I Cor. x. 13), and He will not suffer that you be tempted beyond your strength. We must remember, however, that our strength consists principally in our prayers.

Deliver us from evil. The Church explains: Deliver us from all evil—past, present, and to come. The evil which is past, but which leaves bad effects, is the sin already committed. The present evil is the sin of which we are still guilty. The evil yet to come is the sin which we have to fear. All the other evils are as nothing except as they lead to sin through murmuring and impatience. It is principally in view of this danger, that we ask to be delivered from the other evils.

Deliver us from evil. Deliver us from sin and from all the consequences of sin, consequently from illness, from pain, and from death, in order that we may be perfectly free. Then also shall we be supremely happy.

Another version is: *Deliver us from the bad one*; that is, from the devil, our enemy, and from all his temptations.

When we ask for strength against temptation, it isn't only against the devil, but also against ourselves. As St. James says: *Each one is deceived by his own concupiscence which attracts him and which carries him away.* (James i. 14) This is the great temptation, and the devil himself cannot ensnare us except by recourse to it. How great then is our weakness, since we are ourselves our greatest enemies! And yet, we fear not! We sleep! We neglect our salvation. We do not understand the necessity of praying.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

Fasting (Matt. vi. 16, 17, 18).

In this discourse, Jesus Christ unites the doctrine of fasting with that of prayer and alms-giving. These are three sacrifices which go together, according to this sentence from Tobias: *Prayer is good with fasting and alms-giving.* (Tob. xii. 8) For it is through alms-giving that we sacrifice our gains, through fasting that we immolate our body, and through prayer that we offer to God our affections and, so to speak, the purest incense of our spirit.

That which is said here of fasting is similar to that which was said of prayer and of alms-giving; that is, we must do it for God alone and for His eyes, without the judgement of men. Then, though we have badly supported the Church in neglecting what we ought to observe, it is good to support it without affectation, through the more severe observances. That demands a great deal

of precaution, however, and we must again avoid ostentation, the plague of good works.

When we mention fasting in this instance, we also refer to all the other penances by which we mortify our body. We must hide them carefully, and *not carry around a sad air like the hypocrites; but anoint our head and wash our face*. Unlike those who bear penances impatiently, and who seem to blame all those to whom they speak by treating them harshly, and by annoying them, we must express gentleness and joy to all. The penance which we perform should render us gentler, more tractable. It is intended to correct and not to excite ill temper. It is what this unction of the head and this washed face mean; it is gentleness and joy.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY

Our treasure in heaven. The single eye. The impossibility of serving two masters (Matt. vi. 19–24).

Love of Jesus Christ uproots avarice and prevents fear of poverty. *To have your treasure in heaven* (Matt. vi. 20) is to place your affection and hope there; to have your treasure in heaven is to send your riches there through the hands of the poor. *Where your treasure is, there your heart is.* (Matt. vi. 21) These words are profound. With what are you filled? There where your thought turns naturally is your treasure. It is there that your heart is. If it is God, you are fortunate. If it is something mortal, something which rust, corruption, and mortality con-

sume unceasingly, your treasure escapes you, and your heart remains poor and exhausted.

The single eye (Matt. vi. 22) is purity of intention. The eye is single when the intention is pure, and the intention is pure when the heart is not divided. This is what we call simplicity and integrity. The intention is the glance from the soul. The eye looks fixedly at only one object, and the soul can pause at only one good. When the glances are vague and diverted, they see all and they see nothing. Thus when the soul diverts itself in vague desires, it knows not what it wants, and so it falls into indifference. God wants a resolved and steady look.

That this is so, moreover, is confirmed by the following words: *You cannot serve two masters* (Matt. vi. 24), nor love two things at once. When we do not know what we love, and when we divide ourselves between God and the world, God refuses what we offer Him, and the world has everything. We must, therefore, be determined, apply ourselves, and act with efficacy in the way of piety.

The good intention sanctifies all the actions of the soul, as the arrested look assures and lightens all the footsteps of the body.

It is this good intention that we must continue to renew often during the day, and continually pray to God to strengthen. We must reduce ourselves entirely to a single look.

You cannot serve God and Mammon. (Matt. vi. 24) According to St. Paul, *avarice is the cult of idols.* (Coll. iii. 5) Those who love good fare *have their bellies for their God.* (Phil. iii. 19) We make a God of all the objects of our love. Every unregulated attachment is idolatry. Who would wish to serve an idol, to transfer the

glory of God to a false divinity? The very thought horrifies. Nevertheless, it is what all those do who love some object more than they love God. Thoughts, affections—the purest incense of the heart—all His adoration goes there. Alas! how miserable we are. Can a reasonable creature give himself to himself? Can he sacrifice himself to any one else except to God?

Uproot avarice! Uproot ambition! Uproot the love of sensible goods, and of all love of the world! These are so many idols that you must batter down in your heart. May the things of the world, far from possessing your entire heart, not even occupy the least part of it. Give all to God. Probe to the very depths, and empty your heart for God. He will know well how to occupy and fill it.

To fill one's self with worldly things is to fill one's self with those meats which fill and bloat without nourishing, and which immediately famish and starve, because they contain no juice, nothing that can be turned into bodily sustenance. How empty we are when we are filled only with this sort of thing!

THE THIRTIETH DAY

Do not be solicitous about this life: Trust in Providence (Matt. vi. 25–34).

Do not be solicitous. This does not exclude a moderate prudence nor regulated toil, but only concern and emotional disturbances.

Life is more than nourishment, and the body is more

than raiment. (Matt. vi. 25) God, Who has given you life and Who has formed your body before you were able to take any care of it, will give you all the rest. He who has done the most will not disdain to do the least.

Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns . . . ; they do not work, neither do they spin; and your celestial Father feeds them . . . and clothes them. (Matt. vi. 26–30) Happy these little animals, happy the flowers, happy thousands and thousands of times all these little creatures, if they were able to feel happiness! Happy about the paternal care that God takes of them! Happy to receive everything from His hand! As for us, our sin ties us down to a thousand labors, but let us not allow them to drive us to mental agitation. Let us work, for it is work that is the just penalty imposed upon us for our sin. Let us work in the spirit of penance, but let us surrender to God the success of our efforts.

You of little faith, your Father knows that you have need of these things. (Matt. vi. 30, 32) Do you doubt that He knows what is necessary for you? He created you. Do you doubt that He wishes to provide for your needs? He promised to care for you. He Who has anticipated you in everything, and Who has given you the existence which He had not promised you, will He refuse you now that which He promised you before you were born, after having created you? Do not then be solicitous.

See how you grow, how your body sustains itself! *Could you add one cubit to your stature?* (Matt. vi. 27) While you were sleeping God made you grow, and from a child, He made you a man. Believe that He will do all that is suitable for your well-being. Rely on His power and on His goodness.

Do not be solicitous, St. Matthew says. St. Luke adds: *Do not be as though lifted on high* (Luke xii. 29), as if in peril of falling, and always in uneasiness, for this is the effect of solicitude. Lean solidly on Divine Providence.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY

Do not resemble the pagans (Matt. vi. 32).

The pagans seek these things. (Matt. vi. 32) Notice always how Jesus Christ raises us above the vices of the pagans, and even above their virtues: *The publicans certainly do it, the Gentiles certainly practice it.* (Matt. v. 46, 47) He told us awhile ago: let us consider well in what we surpass them. It is not without reason that Jesus Christ said that *the Ninevites, and all the pagans, will rise against us on the day of judgement.* (Matt. xii. 41) Of what use is Christianity to us if we lead a pagan life? Alas! how much paganism exists in the midst of the faithful! How many Christians live as though they did not know God! In fact, God does not exist for them. Alas! Where shall we find enough tears to deplore our blindness!

THE THIRTY-SECOND DAY

We must seek God and His justice (Matt. vi. 33, 34).

Seek then the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. vi. 33)

The kingdom of God and His justice. This is not a

justice founded on ethics, like that of the pagans, but Christian justice, founded on the example of Jesus Christ and on the rules of the Gospel. A justice, as you have seen, which will make you live another way than those who do not know God, another way than those who lived before Jesus Christ appeared. This is a justice conformable to your vocation, to your position, and to the graces which you have received, for it is this which is called *the kingdom of God and His justice*.

Seek. In everything else which He has spoken, Christ has never uttered this word *seek*, for it is supposed that God, through His kindness, can give us everything, and does it without our help. That often happens, it is true, concerning the goods of this earth, but as for the kingdom of God, seek: *Work out your salvation in fear and trembling*, says St. Paul. (Phil. ii. 12) This is the only object which justifies your solicitude.

And yet, I dare to say it, we must banish uneasiness and solicitude from this seeking. For, as St. Paul adds: *It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will*. (Phil. ii. 13) Tremble then in working out your salvation; and yet, do not distrust your strength too much, for God works with you. It is He Himself who performs with you all that you perform. Put your trust then in His help. Surrender yourself to His arms. He is kind; He will pity your weakness; He will work within you, through His will, that which you also must work. Work out your salvation then; work at it with care, and even with trembling; but work at it with tranquility, as a person who is strengthened by the help of an all-powerful and kind God.

Be not therefore solicitous for tomorrow, for the mor-

row will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. (Matt. vi. 34) This precept, so important with regard to all the cares of this life, is still more so with regard to matters of salvation. There are some people who torment themselves saying: Now all is well; I have confessed; I have begun my conversion; but what troubles will follow, what temptations, what annoyances! I shall never be able to resist; life is so long; I shall succumb under so many moral duties.

Come, my son. Come, my daughter. Rise above the difficulties of this day. Do not be solicitous for those of tomorrow. One after the other, you will conquer them all. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* He, who helped you today, will not abandon you tomorrow. Too much caution and uneasiness will ruin you.

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY

More on avarice and on riches. Do not place your confidence in that which you possess (Luke xii. 15-35).

Let us concentrate here on what is said in St. Luke: *Bring me a penny that I may see it.* (Luke xii. 15) Uproot entirely, even to the least fibre, so great an evil as the love of money. Do not tolerate within you the least feeling for it.

No matter how wealthy you may be, you will always be wanting in something, either in goods, in health, in fortune, or in greatness. Rejoice in this failure. Accept with joy and consolation this part of poverty which has

befallen you. Love it as a mark of Christianity, as an imitation of Jesus Christ. Love your poverty, your privation. If you are a religious, renounce all love of ownership. Rejoice in our Saviour, that not only do you not possess any property, but, in fact, you are, through choice and state, incapable of possessing any.

Man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth. (Luke xii. 15) It is useless for you to say: I have enough to live on. You will not live longer because of it. It is useless for you to say: I have nothing to fear; I have an abundance of everything. *Madman, you will die tonight.* But how? Can we explain death? *This night they will require thy soul of thee.* (Luke xii. 20) Your life does not belong to you; it is only borrowed. You will be asked to return it. When? *This night.* You will be found dead in your bed tomorrow without all this great wealth which you boasted of, and which was not able to give you the least help, nor prolong your life a moment longer.

What shall I do (Luke xii. 17), says the rich man, with so great an abundance of all sorts of good things? Behold the first effect of great wealth: solicitude. What shall I do? Where shall I put it? How shall I keep it? *My granary is not sufficient. I shall make more, and I shall say to my soul: Rejoice; live well; refuse nothing to your senses. Drink, eat, rest in your abundance.* (Luke xii. 18) And while you imagine being able to rest in your riches, you are deprived, not of these riches, but of this very soul that you urged on to enjoyment. *And to whom will be this great good that you had acquired?* (Luke xii. 20) Who will enjoy it for you when you are no longer alive?

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not

rich towards God. (Luke xii. 21) And who does not place in Him all his riches. Such is his fate. Such is his case. Such is the end of his life. This is how all his riches end.

After these reflections, turn once more to the words of the Son of God. Reread them. Relish them once more. You will find them without comparison, stronger in themselves than all that we have been able to say, in order to make you feel the strength of them.

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY

Consider what God does for ordinary plants and animals; consider ourselves as His favorite flock (Luke xii. 22-34).

It is for that, that I say to you: do not be solicitous; consider the ravens. (Luke xii. 22-24)

In Saint Matthew we find the statement is generally, *the birds of the air.* (Matt. vi. 26) In St. Luke, however, we read of the raven, the most voracious bird, and one who, nevertheless, without granaries or provisions, without sowing or laboring, finds sufficient food to nourish itself. God furnishes him with that which he must have for himself *and for his little ones who call upon him*, says the Psalmist. (Ps. cxlvi. 7) God listens to their cries, though they be harsh and disagreeable, and He nourishes them as well as the nightingales, and the others, whose voices are more sweet and melodious.

Jesus Christ teaches us in this admirable sermon to consider nature, flowers, birds, animals, our body, our soul, and our unconscious growth that they might influence us

to glorify God. He shows us all nature, in a more exalted manner and with a more sensitive eye as the image of God. Heaven is God's throne; the earth is His footstool. The capital of His Kingdom is the seat of His empire. His sun rises and His rain falls to assure us of His goodness. Everything speaks to us of God. He has not left Himself without evidence.

We have already remarked that to signify uneasiness, Jesus Christ makes use of this expression in St. Luke: *Do not remain as suspended in the air* (Luke xii. 29), as when not knowing how, nor upon what we are sustained, we always think ourselves ready to fall. Do not remain in this terrible uneasiness. Rather, believe that God sustains you.

Of all the words which are characteristic of St. Luke in this discourse of the Son of God, the most capable of inspiring us with courage in our miseries and weaknesses are these: *Fear not little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom.* (Luke xii. 32) In all which precedes, we are taught not to fear lack of nourishment, for God provides for it, and His customary discretion does not allow the lack of necessities to those who trust in Him. But here He raises us higher, for after all, if you should come to want bread, what of it? You will still have *a kingdom.* And what kingdom? God's. *Fear not, little flock, for God is giving you His kingdom.* This kingdom is not for the great of the world; it is for the little ones, the humble, this little flock that the world counts as nothing. These are the little ones whom the Father considers; those who, in fact, seem to be as nothing in comparison with the magnificence and the immense multi-

tude of the impious, but it is for this little flock that God supports the rest of men.

What then do you fear? To die of hunger? How many martyrs have died of it in prisons? Did this death prevent them from receiving the martyr's crown? On the contrary, it is through this death that the crown was placed on their head. Fear nothing then, little flock. *Sell all, and give all to the poor; and make for yourself a treasure in heaven where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.* (Luke xii. 33) It is the treasure of good works.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH DAY

(The same subject.) Beware of all covetousness (Luke xii. 15-21).

We cannot meditate too much on this meaningful admonition of Our Lord: *Beware of all covetousness.* (Luke xii. 15) There are several kinds of avarice. There is one which is sad and sordid, which amasses without end and without enjoyment; *an avarice which dares not touch its riches, and which seems, as says the wise man, not to reserve to itself the right over these riches except that of looking at them and saying: I have them.* (Eccles. v. 9, 10) But there is another avarice, more gay and more liberal, which wishes to amass without end like the other one, but in order to revel in wealth, to indulge itself, and such was the avarice of the man who is depicted in the Gospel.

Such a miser has a great deal of disdain for the sort of

avarice wherein one complains about everything to one's self in the midst of abundance. He imagines himself to be much wiser, because he possesses. God, however, calls him a *fool*. (Luke xii. 20)

The one is a fool for saving too much, and because he imagines himself more fortunate through the amassing of a fortune of which he makes no use, but the other is a fool for possessing too much, and because he imagines solid tranquility in a fortune that he will lose the following night. *Beware then of all avarice*—as much from that which possesses as from that which denies itself everything. *Be rich in God*. Make of God and of His kindness all your treasure. We cannot possess too much of such a treasure. There is no need to save this treasure, because the more we make of it, the more it increases.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH DAY

Do not judge (Matt. vii. 1-21).

Do not judge. There is a judge above you, a judge who will judge your judgements, who will ask you to render an account of them; who, by a just judgement, will punish you for having judged without power and without knowledge, which are the greatest faults of judgement.

Without power. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own lord he standeth or falleth.* (Rom. xiv. 4) It is for his master to judge him.

Do not judge, therefore, the one of whom you are not the proper judge.

That which St. Paul adds, rash judge, closes your lips still more firmly. You pronounce on the state of another's servant, and you say that he is either falling or he is going to fall. *But he will not fall*, says St. Paul. *God is able to make him stand.* (Rom. xiv. 4) Do not judge then that he is going to fall.

St. Paul continues: *But thou, why judgest thou thy brother? Or thou, why dost thou despise thy brother?* (Rom. xiv. 10) He is your brother; he is your equal. It is not for you to judge him, since you are both liable to the tribunal of the great Judge, before Whom all men must appear: *For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Jesus Christ. . . . Each one will render there an account for himself.* (Rom. xiv. 10–12) Do not propose, therefore, to judge others. Remember the account that you will have to render of yourself.

St. James is not less forceful. *There is*, says he, *but one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy and to deliver.* (James iv. 12) *Who are you then, you who judge your brother?* He concludes from this beautiful principle: *He who judges his brother, or who slanders his brother, judges the law, and slanders the law.* (James iv. 11) For the law has forbidden you this judgement which you usurp. *But*, continues this great apostle, *if you judge the law, you do not wish then to be an observer, but the judge.* (James iv. 11) You elevate yourself above your measure of action. The law will soon fall back on you with all its weight, and you will be crushed. Notice, in these two Biblical verses, what force and what light of the truth there is against your rash judgements.

You see that you judge without power, but do you realize that you also judge without knowledge? You do

not know the one whom you are judging; you do not see the inner man; and you do not know his state of mind, which possibly justifies him. If his crime is obvious, you do not know whether he will not repent of it, or whether he has not already repented of it. He may be one of those whose conversion will be a cause for rejoicing in heaven. *Therefore do not judge.*

Charity is not suspicious: it thinketh no evil; it is gentle; it is patient; it endureth all things; it believeth all things; it hopeth all things; it rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoices when it does right, in the truth. (I Cor. xiii. 4-7) Therefore, it does not delight in judging.

This is true the more so, in that in judging others, charity would judge and condemn itself. *Wherefore thou art inexcusable, oh man, whoever thou art that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest. (Rom. ii. 1)* You are judged by your own lips, wicked servant, and you yourself pronounce your sentence. *For with what judgement you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Matt. vii. 2)* What joy for a criminal to hear from his own judge's lips: *You will not be judged; judge not that you may not be judged. (Matt. vii. 1)* In that case, however, he must not judge others.

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY

We see the least faults in others, and yet do not see the greatest within ourselves (Matt. vii. 3-5).

Jesus Christ explains another reason why we should not judge; because our own crime is greater than the one which we condemn. *Why seest thou the mote that is in your brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?* (Matt. vii. 3)

Hypocrite! The most wicked hypocrisy is to condemn everybody. In so doing, we pretend to be virtuous, and mean to excite admiration by the regularity of our ways, the severity of our doctrine. It is an incorruptible man who neither flatters nor criticizes any one. But the hypocrite, being what he is, does not even intend to mend his ways. He harps without ceasing on the slightest imperfections of others, and yet is not even conscious of the excessive faults which are weighing him down. No men are more lenient to themselves than these pitiless censors of the conduct of others.

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY

The sacred Reality: discernment in the preaching of the Gospel (Matt. vii. 6).

The sacred Reality is the body of Jesus Christ. *Give not that which is holy to dogs, to the impure, to the shameless, to those who bark indiscriminately at everybody, who relapse into their sins, and whom St. Peter has compared to a dog who has returned to his vomit, and the sow, that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.* (2 Pet. ii. 22)

In general, *the sacred Reality* signifies all the mysteries which the shepherds of the Church are admonished to

present with a great deal of discernment in order to prevent the unworthy from treating them with irreverence.

The pearls before swine are the saintly discourses presented before those who are incapable of appreciating them, and who, for this reason, turn with fury against those who present to them a reality so little conformable to their own nature.

Consider, dear Christian, to what you are reduced by your sin! God Who has created you in His image, and Who has elevated your soul, renewed by grace, to the rank of His well-beloved, observes you now in the rank of *dogs and of sows*. Have pity on your state, and aim at quitting it. Have recourse to prayer.

THE THIRTY-NINTH DAY

Pray with faith. Ask. Seek. Knock (Matt. vii. 7).

After having shown the sinner the deplorable and shameful state into which he has fallen, Our Lord also shows him through prayer, the way to rise from it.

Ask. Seek. Knock. These are the three necessary degrees, and as three entreaties, must be offered up perseveringly, one after another. But what must we ask of God to remove us from this more than bestial state where sin had placed us? We learn it from the words of St. James: *But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth abundantly to all men, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.* (James i. 5, 6)

This is what Our Lord Himself teaches us: *Verily, I say to you: If you have faith, and stagger not, you will obtain all, even to casting mountains into the sea. And, all that you will ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.* (Matt. xxi. 21, 22)

Look then how far you have gotten through your sin, and then ask for your conversion with faith. Do not say that it is impossible. Though your sins be of a weight more crushing than that of a mountain, pray, and He will listen to your prayer. *Believe firmly that you will obtain what you ask for, and it shall be given to you.* Jesus Christ makes use of these extraordinary comparisons to show that everything is possible to him who prays.

Be courageous, dear Christian, and never despair of your salvation.

THE FORTIETH DAY

Persevere and be humble in prayer (Matt. vii. 7, 8; Luke xi. 5-13).

When praying, knock, so to speak, and persist in knocking to the point of making a nuisance of yourself if that were possible. There is only one way to compel God, and to wrest His graces from Him, and this way is to ask constantly and with a steadfast faith: *Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* He repeats once again: *For whoever asks, shall receive, and whoever seeks, shall find, and it is opened to whomever knocks.* (Luke xi. 9, 10) It is neces-

sary, therefore, to pray during the day, during the night, and as many times as we wake up. And then, although God seems either not to listen, or even to rebuff, we must continue to knock. Expect all from God, but, notwithstanding, act also. For we must not merely ask as though expecting God to do it all Himself, but more, on our part, seek, and operate our will with grace, for all is accomplished through this cooperation. Let us never forget that it is always God Who anticipates—that is the foundation of humility.

THE FORTY-FIRST DAY

Pray perpetually (Luke xviii. 1–8).

We must continue to pray and never cease. (Luke xviii. 1) This perpetual prayer does not consist in a ceaseless intense application of mind, which would exhaust our energy, and which might prevent us from succeeding. Rather, prayer is made perpetual when, having prayed at regular hours, we glean from our prayer and from our reading, some truth or word which we keep in our heart, and which we recall without effort from time to time, keeping ourselves as much as possible in a state of dependence upon God, silently presenting our need to Him. Thus the soul, in exposing its needs to God, is like the desiccated earth which seems to ask for rain, merely by exposing its drouth to the heavens. As David says: *My soul is as earth without water unto Thee.* (Ps. cxlii. 6)

Lord, I do not need to pray to You. My need prays to

You; my necessity prays to You; my indigence prays to You. As long as this disposition lasts, we pray without praying, and God understands this language. Oh Lord! You before Whom I stand, and to Whom my misery appears complete, have pity on it. Every time it appears before Your eyes, oh very good God, may it solicit for me Your mercies!

Behold, one of the ways by which we can pray always, and possibly the most efficacious.

THE FORTY-SECOND DAY

Beg God persistently with ardent and repeated cries (Luke xviii. 4-7).

Think of the cry of the elect which ascends night and day before God. Our injustices, our scandals, all that we do so poorly to imitate the saints causes them to suffer and cries vengeance against us night and day. We cannot appease this cry except by a continuous cry of penance. Have mercy; my God, have mercy. This must be our cry night and day; this is what our need cries out without ceasing.

Think of the sad state of a certain judge who neither *fears God* nor *regards man*. (Luke xviii. 4) When nothing restrains, there is no hope, but when we have some restraint, and although not fearing God, are at least somewhat held back by the fear of men, we can hope, and our passions, thereby, suffer some sort of moderation.

THE FORTY-THIRD DAY

The motives of hope in prayer (Matt. vii. 11).

The assured foundation for this faith which Jesus Christ exacts of us to ask and to obtain, is to understand clearly that God is a father. *How much more, Christ says, will your celestial Father be liberal toward you!*

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him? (Matt. vii. 11) If you give that which has been given to you, and which you possess only as a loan, how much more will God give, He who is the source of all good, and Whose nature is, so to speak, to give?

If we who are evil, but are we evil, even to our children? The Son of God wishes to make us understand that man is evil, even toward his children. Experience has shown, only too well, that we think of ourselves rather than of our children in the good things that we procure for them. God, therefore, being kindness itself and the highest good, is the only one who can give good things to those who have recourse to Him.

Let us always say to ourselves: We can hope for all things from a father. Let us repeat with Jesus Christ: What is a raven? Our celestial Father nourishes it. Will He Who feeds His servants leave His children without help? Will He Who feeds the animals be insensible to the needs of His children? We can, therefore, ask for anything, and we must hope to obtain all as soon as we ask Our Father.

THE FORTY-FOURTH DAY

Ask through Jesus Christ. The qualities of a perfect prayer (John xvi. 23, 37).

We must learn to ask through Jesus Christ. To ask through Jesus Christ is to ask for what He commands. It is to ask for His glory, to interpose the name of the Saviour, and to place one's confidence in His kindness and in the infinite merits of His blood. That which we ask through the Saviour must primarily concern our salvation; the rest is accessory. When we ask in His name, the One to Whom the Father can refuse nothing, we are sure to obtain what we desire, for Jesus Christ has promised it. To doubt, therefore, would be to make a liar of Jesus Christ: *Verily I say unto you: If you ask My Father anything in My name, He will give it to you.* (John xvi. 23)

When, therefore, we do not obtain what we have prayed for, we must rest assured that we have prayed carelessly. St. James says: *You ask and you receive not, because you ask amiss: that you may consume it on your own concupiscences.* (James iv. 3)

To ask badly is to ask without faith. According to St. James: *If any of you want wisdom, let him ask God for it; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering* (James i. 5, 6), without fear, believing certainly that you will obtain if you ask sincerely, with faith and with perseverance. The Saviour will not give us that which we ask if it is contrary to our salvation. Let us ask, then, for our conversion; let us cling to that. We shall obtain it.

Religious soul! the principal fruit of Christ's doctrine on prayer is to be faithful to the hours we consecrate to it. Were you to be distracted within yourself, and to lament for being so; were you only to wish not to be distracted and that you might remain faithful, humble, and meditative, the obedience which you render thereby to God, to the Church, and to the rule, while maintaining exterior piety—genuflections, bows, and all the rest—conserve the spirit of prayer. We pray then through position, disposition, and will, but especially when we humble ourselves on account of aridity and distractions. Oh, how agreeable this prayer is to God! How it mortifies body and soul! How many graces it obtains, and how many sins it atones for!

THE FORTY-FIFTH DAY

The epitome of Christian morality; its termination (Matt. vii. 12–20).

Do as you would have done unto you. Nothing is more simple than this principle, and yet nothing is more universal in practice. All human society is contained therein. Nature itself teaches this rule, but Jesus Christ elevates it adding: *This is the law and the prophets.* (Matt. vii. 12) It is the summary of the law and the epitome of all justice. The root of this principle lies in the precept: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* (Matt. xxii. 39)

Exert yourself. Salvation cannot be undertaken with laxity. The door of mortification, poverty, and penance is

narrow; the road of license is wide. The great number; the little number. Infinite subject for meditation here, and inexhaustible consolation for the humble.

A good tree bears good fruit; a bad tree bears bad fruit. (Matt. vii. 17–19) This is what enables one to discern good penance from the bad.

Strange state of a reasonable creature who, for want of bearing good fruit, is fit only for the fire.

By their good fruits you shall know them (Matt. vii. 20), and not by their leaves; that is to say, by their works, not by their words. The fig tree which Jesus Christ cursed had leaves, but because it had no fruit, Jesus Christ considered it barren. *May no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever.* (Matt. xxi. 19) As a punishment for being fruitless, it became more so. If we do not produce fruits in season, and when the Master expects some, there will come a time when we cannot produce any.

A wise confessor must ask his penitent for fruit and not for leaves. He must not be content with the appearance of a good tree which he judges by its leaves and flowers. He must have evidence of real fruit; otherwise the confessor has reason to doubt that the penitent is sincere.

THE FORTY-SIXTH DAY

True virtue (Matt. vii. 21).

In the above meditation, Jesus Christ spoke of the trees which have no fruit. One worthless kind is the Christian

who merely gives the appearance of goodness, and who in fact produces nothing. This is he who talks much and yet does nothing. He cries, *Lord, Lord*, and yet it would be much better if he would not repeat so much that Christ is the Saviour, and, instead, begin to do what he says he will do.

There are some who never refuse to do anything. Everything that you propose to them, they promise to undertake. Yes, I shall do it—I shall speak, I shall pray, I shall assist at everything—when it comes time to act, however, they stop. The Jews were among those who talked much, and Jesus said to them: *Prostitutes and Publicans do better than you do.* (Matt. xxi. 31, 32) Your exterior piety gives a wrong impression of your virtue. Those who are manifestly wicked, are ashamed of themselves, and will be converted in the end rather than you.

Consider the two men of the parable (Matt. 28–30). The one is ashamed of openly disobeying his father by saying: *I do not wish to do it.* However, after having told his father that he wishes to do it, he follows his inclination, and *does nothing.* The other one says openly: *I shall not do it.* Later, however, he is ashamed of his insolence, and *obeys.* The one has the presumption of wishing to pass for virtuous, and is so, only in words. For this reason he falls. The other has a horror of his rashness and repents.

We must, therefore, not submit too much to the presumptuous discourses of those who promise all, nor despair of those who seem to refuse everything. Great crimes lead to penance rather than insipid and inefficacious modesty, which promises all without having a real desire of carrying anything into effect, or that false piety,

a mere mouthing of words, whereby we believe we have accomplished everything when we speak well of the law and of virtue, as the Jews used to do.

Faithful soul, bestir yourself. Have you promised something? Be it ever so great, continue to do more. Have you refused? Be ashamed then, and do that which you had said you did not wish to do or could not do.

He who listens and acts, in whom virtue becomes a habit through practice, *is the wise man who built upon a rock.* (Matt. vii. 24) Temptations come; sicknesses weaken; afflictions descend upon this soul; but it holds up well. Those who only listen, who take delight in the beauty or in the truth of the sacred word without accepting its summons, or who come down to it imperfectly, have built on sand; these are they who fall at the first occasion, and their ruin is great.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH DAY

The admirable effects, and the invincible power of the doctrine of Jesus Christ (Matt. vii. 28, 29).

Consider the doctrine of Jesus Christ. It is so beautiful and so firm that it causes the admiration of all peoples. For who would not admire the purity, the sublimity, the efficacy of it? It has converted the world; it has populated the deserts. It has caused millions of martyrs from every station in life, of every age and of both sexes to expend themselves, even to the shedding of their blood. It has rendered riches and pleasures despicable; the honors of

the world have lost all their glitter. Man has become an angel, and he has proceeded to set up God Himself as a model. Who would not, therefore, admire this beautiful, this consuming doctrine? But to admire it is not all. *Jesus teaches, as having power.* It is necessary, therefore, that everything submit, and that all human pride be humbled.

God preserve you from a timid doctor who does not dare to tell you the truth, or who flatters you in your faults, in the manner of the Scribes and of the Pharisees, who thought only of attaching the people to themselves and not of correcting them. Ask God for a doctor who will talk to you with efficacy and with force, without sparing you in your vices. It is to that one that your conversion is reserved. Amen. Amen.

PREPARATION FOR THE LAST WEEK OF THE SAVIOUR

The sermons of Our Lord during the last week of His life are the most worthy of meditation because of the circumstance of His approaching death.

Before reflecting on this week so full of instructions and of mysteries, and in order to better understand it, we shall give eight days to a special preparation.

THE FIRST DAY

The apostles do not understand Christ's prediction of the mystery of the cross. We fear to follow Jesus to the cross. (Matt. xx. 17-29; Mark x. 32-46; Luke xviii. 31-35).

Seeing His hour approaching, Jesus goes voluntarily to Jerusalem, where He knows that He will die, and declares it to His apostles.

So, too, St. Paul spoke to the disciples: *And now being bound by the Holy Spirit, compelled by his particular impulsion, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what must befall me there.* (Act. xx. 22) But Jesus went to Jerusalem knowing full well what He must suffer. Announcing it to His apostles, He said: *Behold, we are going to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered into the hands of the wicked.* (Matt. xx. 18)

I do not know, said St. Paul, *what will happen to me in Jerusalem, save that the Holy Spirit in every city witnesseth to me, saying: that bands and afflictions wait for me at Jerusalem.* (Act. xx. 22, 23) Whereas these things were shown only vaguely to St. Paul, Jesus very distinctly explained all that was to happen to Him to the apostles in the one discourse which was to make Him known.

At these words, St. Luke observes, *the disciples understood nothing of that which Jesus was saying to them, even though Jesus spoke to them without ambiguity; that is, this word was hidden to them, and they did not under-*

stand the words that were said to them. (Luke xviii. 34) In his gospel, St. Luke points out, by the care that he takes to make us observe this ignorance of the apostles, how difficult it was for the mystery of the cross to enter into their minds.

Once before, Jesus had explained this mystery, although in terms less clear, and, as St. Luke again remarks: *The apostles understood not this word, and it was as though veiled before them, in such a way that they perceived it not. And they were afraid to ask Him concerning this word.* (Luke ix. 45) The apostles did not understand because they did not wish to understand. They saw that they would have to follow their Master, and they did not wish to know the sufferings toward which He was going, for fear of suffering a similar fate. For this reason, Jesus said to them: *Keep this well in your hearts, that the Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men.* (Luke ix. 44) Jesus had taken care to inculcate this message within them in the days when everybody admired the marvels that He performed. Flattered by His glory, their hearts were moved by what He taught them concerning the shame that He was about to suffer, but they did not wish to hear about it. Nevertheless, that was what Jesus wanted them to know, for He had placed their salvation in His sufferings, and in the obligation to follow Him, and to carry His cross after Him. *Bear this well in your hearts,* He said to them.

Consider here how man deludes himself, how he turns a deaf ear when we wish to tell him what offends his passions and his senses. However clearly we might speak to him, he continues to turn a deaf ear. He pretends not to hear, and fears to delve into the matter. Leave this busi-

ness; renounce this pleasure; give up your own will. He does not hear. He does not wish to hear, nor know, nor question the person who speaks to him. It is for this reason that Saint Mark repeats the message in these words: *As they were mounting toward Jerusalem, Jesus walked ahead of them, and they were astonished, and they were afraid while they followed Him; and calling the twelve, He said to them: We are going to Jerusalem, to suffer there all that He had told them.* (Mark x. 32, 33)

The reason for their astonishment was that they knew that the Pharisees and the doctors of the law were looking for Jesus to put Him to death. They could not understand that He was going to place Himself deliberately into their hands, and so they continued to follow Him trembling. We too fear to follow Jesus to the cross.

In order to encourage us, however, Jesus walks ahead. As St. Luke remarks, *He steadfastly turned His face toward Jerusalem* (Luke ix. 51), seeing His hour had come. His human nature was afraid, as we have seen in His agony in the garden, but He wished to bear our weaknesses to this point, in order to teach us how to conquer them. Let us follow Him then, and, following His example, smile bravely when we must go to penance, to mortification, and even to the cross.

It was on this occasion that His disciples said to Him: *Master, it was only a short time ago that the Jews were looking for you in order to stone you, and yet you are going to deliberately fall into their hands.* (John xi. 8) They wished to turn Him away from this trip. Only Thomas showed that he understood the mystery, when he *said courageously: Let us go, let us also go and let us die with Him.* (John xi. 16) Fine words these, if they had

been followed by accomplishment! But Thomas fled like the others, and he was the last to believe in Christ's resurrection. Behold the man: the one who speaks the most boldly, the most often, is also the weakest when God abandons him to himself. Understand, dear Christian, how difficult it is to go to the cross with Jesus, and how much we need His grace.

THE SECOND DAY

The ambitious demand of the children of Zebedee; the chalice and the cross precede the glory (Matt. xx. 20; Mark x. 35).

On this day we study the same text. Lay stress, in particular, oh Christian, on the demand of the mother of the children of Zebedee. St. Mark says distinctly that it was not only their mother, but the two brothers themselves; that is, St. James and St. John, who made this demand, which shows us that their mother acted at the instigation of her children. It is even possible that eventually they themselves joined her openly in this demand. For this reason the Saviour replied: *You do not know what you are asking; can you drink of my chalice?* (Matt. xx. 22; Mark x. 38)

No request makes one understand more clearly how much difficulty human nature has in understanding the meaning of the cross. Jesus had just spoken of it quite clearly as we have already seen, but far from understanding His meaning, St. James and St. John, who were among

the first of the apostles, came to Him to speak of His glory and of the distinction which they wished to share.

Weigh well these words of Jesus: *You do not know what you are asking. You speak of glory and you know not the sufferings to be experienced before attaining it.* (Mark x. 38) He then explained these sufferings by two similes—that of a bitter chalice that must be swallowed, and that of a bloody baptism wherein we must be plunged. To swallow all kinds of bitterness, to suffer to the point of having our entire body plunged, as it is in baptism—this is the price of glory.

The ambitious apostles accepted these requirements willingly. Jesus, however, Who saw very well that they offered themselves to suffer only through ambition, did not wish to satisfy them. He accepted their sentiment for the cross. For glory, however, He referred them to the eternal decrees of His Father. He could very well have told them what He said later to all the apostles: *I dispose of my kingdom in your favor, as my Father disposes of it in mine.* (Luke xxii. 29) But men who did not wish to suffer except as a result of personal ambition, were not yet deserving of understanding this promise. Therefore, in order to attach them to the cross, the force of which they did not yet understand, Jesus Christ entrusted to His Father that which concerns glory. For Himself, He reserved the power to forecast and to distribute afflictions.

This distribution was accomplished by means of a profound system of religious rules so often practiced in the Gospel and in all Scriptures where, for certain reasons and propriety, some things are attributed to the Father and others to the Son. We must always remember, however, the essence of the message which the Saviour ad-

dresses to His Father: *All that is yours is mine, and all that is mine is yours.* (John xvii. 10)

All the apostles were filled with indignation (Matt. xx. 24), at the demand of the two brothers. Blind men, they were not conscious that they themselves were of the same opinion as those whom they were criticizing. A short time before, and also some time after, Jesus surprised these same apostles muttering and quarreling among themselves as to *who should be the first among them.* (Luke ix. 46) So too we cannot suffer in others the vice which we ourselves possess since we see the faults in others, but are too blind to know and to correct our own.

Notice the admirable change that the instructions of the Saviour and the effusion of the Holy Spirit brought about in the apostles. These men, who never ceased to quarrel among themselves concerning priority, now yield it to St. Peter without a word. They cede this right to him everywhere; he presides at all their council meetings and at all their assemblies. St. John, one of the children of Zebedee, who had just asked for the first place with his brother, St. James, now waits for St. Peter at the tomb of the Saviour, in order that he may be the first to enter. His eagerness to see the proofs of the resurrection of his Master does not prevent him from rendering the homage which he owes to the Prince of the apostles.

Dwell again on the words of Christ in the Gospel (Matt. xx. 25–28), wherein He rebukes all ambition by His good example. Do not be ambitious, oh Christian, and do not desire leadership nor any advantage among men, since you are the disciple of Him Who, being the Saviour of all, has made Himself the servant, and has established His glory in ransoming His elect through the loss of His life.

Ransomed through humility and by the cross of your Saviour, do not think of elevating yourself and do not be puffed up with pride.

Let us consider how much our passions, and especially our ambitions, blind us, and let us cry out at the example of the two blind men, and of Bartimeus, son of Timeus: *Oh Lord, give us back our sight.* Reveal our faults. (Matt. xx. 30)

May no reproach from men prevent us from crying out to Jesus to implore of Him the help of His grace. Let us quit our bad habits. Let us run to Him. Let us open our eyes. Let us glorify God and cease to glorify ourselves.

THE THIRD DAY

The victory and power of Jesus Christ over death in the resurrection of Lazarus (John xi. 1-46).

Jesus approaches Jerusalem. He is already at Bethany, a small village scarcely one hundred and twenty feet from Jerusalem, at the base of the Mount of Olives. His death is near, and that which He is going to do at this approach to help us to prepare for it is wonderful.

The first event recorded here is the resurrection of Lazarus. Jesus was going to die, and it seemed that the empire of death was going to become more firmly established than ever, after He Himself became subject to it. At this time, however, Jesus performs this great miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus in order to make us see that He is Master of death.

Death appears here in all its great horror. Lazarus is dead, in a shroud, buried, already rotten and stinking. Those in charge fear to raise the stone of his tomb for fear of infecting the place and the person of Jesus by this insupportable odor. Behold a horrible spectacle. Jesus shudders over it; He weeps. In the death of Lazarus, His friend, Jesus deplores the common anguish of all men. He regards human nature as created in immortality, and as condemned to death by sin. He is the friend of all mankind and is coming to re-establish it. Jesus weeps over the disaster, shudders over it, and is disconcerted at the prospect of His own anguish. That which appears so horrible to Him in death is, principally, that it is caused by sin. Sin rather than death causes this aversion, this trouble, these tears. He is seized with more aversion as He approaches the tomb. Seeing this ghastly cave where the dead man was lying, one would say that there is no remedy for so great an evil. Some of those with Him said, *He who has made the new-born blind to see, could He not have prevented His friend's death?* (John xi. 37) Nobody said: Could He not resuscitate him? No one even thought of that. It was believed that His power went no farther than that of being able to prevent Lazarus from dying, but to snatch him from death! Although He had given many examples of it, they did not wish to remember, nor believe it. Rather, they thought that He had only tears and horror for such an evil.

Behold all of mankind in death. There is nothing to do but weep over its fate, and we see no remedy for it. This was so from the beginning of history, and like the first part of this description, all therein is filled with horror.

But Jesus said: *This sickness is not unto death, but for*

the glory of God: that the Son of God may be glorified by it. (John xi. 4) And yet Lazarus died of it. The Saviour, however, actually meant that death would be conquered, and that the Son of God would be glorified by this victory.

He continued: *Lazarus sleeps, but I shall awaken him.* (John iii. 23) By calling death sleep rather than death, Jesus shows that it is as easy for Him to raise Lazarus from the dead, as it is to awaken a sleeper.

As He proceeds, Jesus appears more and more the Conqueror of death. *If you had been here, my brother would not be dead, but I know that God will grant You all that You will ask Him.* You have all power not only to prevent death, but also to snatch from it the prey that he already holds in his hands.

Thy brother shall rise again. (John xi. 23) *I know it,* says Martha, *on the last day.* She does not doubt that Jesus can resuscitate him before then, but she does not judge herself worthy of this grace.

Let us savour these words of the Saviour, after which death no longer holds any terror: *I am the resurrection, and the life; he who believes in Me, though he be dead, he shall live; he who lives and who believes in Me shall not die forever.* (John xi. 25, 26) He shall never die. For him, death will be but a transition. He will not remain in that state, and he will reach a state where he will never die.

Martha's faith is great. The Jews said of Jesus: *Could He not have prevented Lazarus' death?* She replied not only that He could do it, but that He would have done it, and that He was still able to resuscitate him if He wished. She saw, in her mind, the general resurrection on the last

day, and confessed Jesus Christ as the One Who, being in heaven and in the bosom of His Father, had come into the world. Jesus, Son of the living God, is living the same life as His Father. *As the Father, said He, hath life in Himself, thus hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself.* (John x. 26) He therefore has reason to tell us that *He is the resurrection and the life* (John xi. 25); and again, *I am the life: As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so the Son also giveth life to whom He will.* (John v. 21) He is the one source of life; He is life itself, like the Father. Life came to us when He was made man. *We announce to you eternal life which was in the Father, and which has appeared to us to be given to us,* said St. John. (John i. 2)

The very tears of Jesus fill us with hope. If the all-powerful Doctor is touched by our ills, if He weeps over them, if He shudders over them, He will cure them.

Take away the stone (John xi. 39); open the tomb; tear down the door of this eternal prison. This is done, without doubt, in order to deliver from it those who are detained there.

Father, I know that you always listen to me. (John xi. 42) We are therefore delivered, since such an Interceder speaks for us. *Lazarus, come forth; appear.* It is true that the prophets had resuscitated a few dead, but death had not yet been treated in such an imperious manner. *The time was to come* (and it already had come), said the Saviour, *that those who are in the tomb will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who will hear it will receive life.* (John v. 25) This which is now done for the one Lazarus, will be done one day for all men.

Lazarus came out immediately, although tied down

with small bands, like a child in its crib, his face wrapped up in linen. (John xi. 44) A living man could not move in such a state; however, a dead man arises and appears. Such is the efficacy in the word of the Saviour.

It is important to meditate well upon all these things, in order to fortify ourselves against the fear of death, which is so extreme in men, that it is capable of causing them to lose their minds, as experience has shown us, when we announce to them that they must die. We need very much to fortify ourselves against this fear. This is done principally by meditating on the promises of the Gospel on death, and by attaching ourselves, by means of a lively faith, to the future life which we are expecting. We need a great grace against such vivid terror. We do not feel it as long as we have health and hope, but when there is nothing left, either of health or of hope, the blow is terrible. The blow is weakened, however, if we firmly believe that Jesus conquered death.

He conquered death on other occasions also—once in a twelve-year-old girl who had just died and was still in her bed (Matt. ix. 18–25), and also in a young man who was being buried (Luke vii. 12, 14, 15). Finally, He conquered it in the tomb and in the heart of putrefaction, in the person of Lazarus (John xi. 41–44). It remained for Him to prevent corruption. Jesus had conquered death in persons who had died a natural death. He still had to conquer it when death would come through violence. Those whom He had brought back to life remained mortal. It remained that with death, He might even conquer mortality. It was in His person that He was to show so complete a victory. After He had been put to death, Jesus arose from the dead to die no more, without even having

experienced corruption. As the Psalmist chanted: *You will not permit that Your Saint see corruption.* (Ps. xv. 10, 11; Act. ii. 27) This which was done by the Chief or Head will be accomplished in His members. Immortality is assured us in Jesus Christ by greater right than when it had first been given to us in Adam. Our first immortality was not to die; our last immortality will be to die no more.

THE FOURTH DAY

The three dead resuscitated by Our Lord are figures of the three states of the sinner (John xi. 41-44; Matt. ix. 18-25; Mark v. 35-42; Luke vii. 12-15).

The real death of man is sin, because sin is the death of the soul. Saints have considered the accounts of the three persons whom the Saviour brought back to life as representative of sin conquered in its three stages: in its beginning, in the person of the young girl; in its progress, in the person of the young man revived as he was being carried to the cemetery; and in its consummation in the state of hardness and inveterate habit, in the person of Lazarus.

Corruption in a person dead four days makes one see a man who stagnates and rots, so to speak, in his sin. The bad odor is scandal and defamation, which inevitably follows this state. The cave where the man is buried makes one see the abyss where the sinner has fallen. The stone on the tomb is the hardness of heart. The bands with

which the dead man is tied are the straps of sin which he cannot break. There seems to be no expedient. Even people of means hope for nothing more. *Master*, said Martha, *by now he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.* (John xi. 39) This is what causes in Jesus this aversion reiterated twice, with bitter tears, which signifies, like the pains of childbirth, the travail of the Church, giving birth again to this rotted dead man. The great cry of Jesus is evidence of the same thing. To bring back to life such a dead man is something more miraculous than the resurrection of Lazarus.

Wretched soul, do not cause Jesus to weep. Do not make Him cry out so, nor shudder so. Keep yourself from falling into this habit of sin. But if you have already done so, do not lose all hope. There remains to you one infallible expedient in the cries and tears of Jesus. *Loose him and let him go*, said the Saviour. (John xi. 44)

Relieve him of these small bands with which he is tied. This is the ministry of the apostles. But it was necessary that before Jesus spoke, that the dead man should hear His voice; that he should already be awake from his deep sleep, and that he should begin to live on receiving the inspiration which calls him to repentance. The apostles could then make use of the power given to them to absolve. But if the sinner has not already received any principle of life, in one word, if he is not already seriously converted, it is useless to absolve him. He is completely dead inside, and the sacraments can do nothing for him. Become converted then, oh sinners, and live.

THE FIFTH DAY

The friendship of Jesus should be a model for our own. An excellent manner of praying (John xi. 1).

Behold the great mysteries of this Gospel. From the point of view of history alone it is marvelous.

Lazarus our friend, says Jesus. (John xi. 11) What happiness for mortals to be able to have Jesus for a friend! Our friend! Lazarus loved Him; His disciples had a share in His friendship.

Jesus loved Martha and Mary her sister and Lazarus (John xi. 5), who was ill. Behold the friends of Jesus. Their house was always open to Him and to His apostles. They were His hosts and His friends.

Since Jesus did not disdain to have friends on earth, let us follow this model in our friendships. Let us love those who are charitable, and who offer voluntary hospitality, for in their capacity as hosts, it is Jesus Whom they receive. Let us love a Martha so zealous to serve Jesus that she exceeds even excessive eagerness, and even worry for which she is rebuked. If our friends have faults, let them be faults founded on good deeds. But let us love especially a Mary who is always at the feet of Jesus, always attentive to His word, and *to the better part which could not be taken from her.* (Luke x. 39-42) Behold those whom Jesus Christ honored with a special friendship.

He whom You love is ill. (John xi. 3) This is what the sisters of Lazarus told Jesus. This is an excellent manner of praying, when without asking for anything, we make

known to the one who loves, the needs of his friend. Let us pray this way. Let us be persuaded that Jesus loves us. Let us present ourselves to Him like sick friends, without saying anything, without asking for anything. Let us pray thus for ourselves. Let us pray thus for others. It is a most excellent manner of praying.

We often say to Jesus in His Gospel: Come, Lord, and heal. Impose your hands. Touch the sick. Here we say simply: *He Whom You love is ill*. Jesus hears the voice of need, the more so that this manner of praying to Him has something that is not only more respectful and more submissive, but still more tender. How beautiful is this prayer! Let us practice it, especially for the cure of the maladies of the soul.

Martha and Mary always remain in character. Martha is always the more eager; she talks more; she acts more. Mary arrives *and prostrates herself at the feet of Jesus* (John xi. 32); she says only one word, and that is enough.

The Master is asking for you (John xi. 28), Martha said to her. Jesus was satisfied with the faith of Martha, but to perfect being affected, He wished to see the tears, the intimate tenderness and gentleness of Mary, always attached to His word from the bottom of her heart.

Jesus wept. (John xi. 35) Where are those wise men who wish that we be unfeeling? That was not the wisdom of Jesus.

See how He loved him. (John xi. 36) Be praised, oh Lord Jesus! for having wished that we be able to observe the tenderness that You have for Your friends. May we be permitted to imitate it, and to love by Your example. Hard and unfeeling hearts are not those that please You. Regulate our friendships, and be our model for them.

Let us not flatter our friends. Let us correct, like You, incautious eagerness. Let us love, like You, the good and the steadfast in our friends.

Oh Lord! May I be of the number of those to whom You say: *You are my friends* (John xv. 15), and again: *I shall tell you who are My friends.* (Luke xii. 4) Oh good and faithful Friend, Who, in order to exercise toward them the love that You Yourself have said to be the greatest of all, have given Your life for them, I wish for no other friend but You. Oh good Friend, bring me back to life. I am more dead than Lazarus.

Martha calls Mary in secret. (John xi. 28) *The Master,* says she, *is calling for you.* There is a certain secret between Jesus Christ and interior souls, who are symbolized by Mary. We must enter into this secret, and not distract it by sharing it with the world. Understand, dear Christian, this sweet secret, this secret between the Word and the soul detached from the senses, which listens to it within, and which knows only His voice.

Immediately, Mary rises and comes to Jesus. When He calls, we cannot be too prompt. The Jews, seeing them leave so quickly, said: *She is going to weep at the tomb.* (John xi. 29, 31) They knew her natural goodness and her tender heart. But Jesus had regulated her tenderness, of which the principal object was His word.

Loose him and let him go. (John xi. 44) Nobody asked where he went, nor what he did, nor what he said, nor what was said to him, nor how he felt. These were all superfluous questions. God Who, from the moment of his death, knew what He wished to do about it, had regulated everything. He knew from where the truths of the next life were to come to us. Jesus, our Doctor, knew all,

and had seen all in the beginning. The simplicity of the narrative teaches us that we must consider the greatest things, and ignore the trifles.

THE SIXTH DAY

Jesus Christ is marked as a sign which shall be contradicted. The incredulity of the Jews (John xi. 46).

That which Simeon said of the Saviour to His Blessed Mother is very true: *Behold this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted: And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that, out of many hearts, thoughts may be revealed.* (Luke ii. 34, 35) The profound malice of man's heart had not yet been seen, nor up to what point it is capable of resisting God.

After such a great miracle it would not seem astonishing that many believed. The resurrection of Lazarus had happened in the presence of many people at the gate of Jerusalem, with the crowd that a mourning in the houses of notables, attracts. *Many believed*, says the Evangelist. (John xi. 45) This was a natural effect of such a great miracle. But others, who knew the hatred of the high priests and the Pharisees against Jesus, went to tell them what they had seen. Thereupon, the council was assembled, and the formal proposal of this assembly was very strange.

This man performs many miracles. (John xi. 47) They do not deny this fact. It is too obvious. *What shall we do?*

The answer is simple enough: believe in Him. But their avarice, their false zeal, their hypocrisy, their ambition, their tyrannical domination over consciences, which Jesus discovered, even while they were seemingly hiding it under a mask of religious zeal, blinded them. In this state, *they cannot believe* (John xii. 37-39), as we shall soon see. And to this end, they prefer to resist God, rather than to jeopardize their authority.

Elsewhere, they continued: *What shall we do to these men? For the miracle which He has just performed is public. All Jerusalem is witness to it, and we cannot deny it.* (Act. iv. 16) The natural answer was: We have to believe it, but if we do believe it, we shall no longer be anything. And it was to this which they could not make up their minds.

The incredulous cried out: Why has not everybody believed, if there have been so many, and so great miracles? They did not understand the profound attachment of the human heart for its feelings and for the things that flatter it. A prodigious indifference to salvation follows from such an attitude. They do not deign to apply themselves to what is really happening, to that which concerns the miracle, nor to inquire about it. And those who have seen the miracle divert their thoughts in order not to believe it, for fear that in believing, they might be forced to give up everything they love, and to embrace a life which appears to them so insupportable and so dismal.

It is necessary, therefore, to understand that besides the external miracles, there also had to be one within, in order to change there the evil tendencies of human hearts. And such is the effect of grace. This is the reason so few

people believed, notwithstanding the fact that they might have seen so many marvels, and that they might have been written down from the very beginning under such particular circumstances, that there was nothing easier than to discover the truth of them. Only those who loved their salvation and the truth inquired about the things which were happening in Judea in full view of everybody, or made the necessary reflections, if they saw them, in order that they might see them in a different light than did the vulgar herd attached to the senses or to prejudices.

Most astonishing, however, is the fact that those who did not see the will of God in the miracles which declared it so clearly were the wisest of the people, the high priests, the Pharisees, and the doctors of the law.

Far from profiting from the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, *they resolved, not only to kill Jesus, who was the author of the miracle, but even Lazarus himself.* (John xi. 53) Too many people came to see him, and he was too much of a living witness against them. They wished therefore to kill him, believing to obscure in this way the miracle of the resurrection, in showing at least that the Saviour had not been able to keep Lazarus alive for a long time. They planned, therefore, to kill him, as if, through this kind of death, they could tie the hands of God. And it was necessary again that the glory of Jesus Christ reveal to the world this marvel of malignity and of folly.

We must no longer be astonished at the blindness of the Jews. The blindness of the impious and of heretics is the same. The secret dispositions of all these people had to be discovered. The effort that must be made against the

senses and against one's self in order to give one's self entirely to truth and to God is so great that, rather than to do it, these people preferred to stifle the grace and the inspiration which brought them there, and to blind themselves.

We are also of those for whom Jesus is a sign of contradiction, and one of these sentiments of the human heart that Jesus Christ, come into the world to discover is the prodigious insensibility of those who, brought up in the faith, and in the midst of information, still prefer their feelings and the pleasures which enchant them, to the truth which shines in their heart. They do not fear to live like the ungodly and the unbelieving.

THE SEVENTH DAY

The blind policy of the Jews in the death of Jesus Christ is a figure of the policy of the century (John xi. 48).

The Romans will come and they will destroy our city, our temple and our entire nation. (John xi. 48) This is the pretext with which the Jews covered their hidden interest and their ambition. The public good imposes on men, and possibly the high priests and the Pharisees were genuinely affected by it, for policy poorly understood is the surest way of plunging men into blindness, and making them resist God.

We see here all the characteristics of false policy, and an imitation of good policy.

Genuine policy is farseeing, and thereby shows its wis-

dom. *The Romans will come.* They will come, it is true, but not as you think, because the Saviour will have been recognized. *The nation will perish.* You have foreseen it. It will perish in fact, but it will come about through the means that you pretended to make use of to save it. So blind is your policy and your foresight.

Policy is clever and capable. See with what air of ability Caiphas said: *You do not understand anything about it.* He understood nothing about it himself. *A man must die for the people.* (John xi. 49, 50) He spoke the truth, but it was in a different way from the way he understood it.

Policy will sacrifice the good of the individual for the public good, and that is just, up to a certain point. *A man must die for the people.* Caiphas understood that an innocent man could be condemned to death under pretext of the public good. But this is never permitted. On the contrary, innocent blood cries vengeance against those who shed it.

The artfulness of politicians enables them to give fine pretexts for their evil designs. There is no pretext more plausible than the public good which statesmen and their adherents pretend to propose to themselves. But God overthrew them. Their policy ruined the temple, the city, and the nation that they pretended to wish to save. And Jesus Christ said to them: *Your houses will be abandoned, you and your children will bear the mark of iniquity* (Matt. xxiii. 38), and all will perish by the Romans from whom you pretend to wish to be spared.

Without being students of political affairs, each one can here consider what is false prudence, or the prudence of the flesh, its artful tricks of concealment, its evil designs, and its pretensions to ability, when, in fact, it is in

complete ignorance of the abuse which it makes of its own authority, when it has any.

In order to arrive at a more compassionate decision, unite yourselves in spirit to *all these children of God dispersed throughout the universe*, that the death of the Saviour was to *gather together*. (John xi. 52)

Verse fifty-three shows us the decision of the council, the decision which obliged Him to hide Himself until His time had come. The death of the Son of God was resolved.

However, Easter was approaching, the time when He was to die. Everybody was preparing for this Easter, and at the same time for the death of the Saviour, since the order was given to all those who might know where He was to make the knowledge public, in order that He might be seized.

Let us anticipate what will happen to Jesus. Observe how many people came several days before Easter in order to prepare for it. Consider the disposition that you must bring to the real Easter, which is communion.

THE EIGHTH DAY

The Three Anointings (John xii. 1-12).

As His final hour approached, Jesus left His retreat around Ephraim (John xi. 54), and returned to Bethany, that is to say, as we have seen, to the town at the gates of Jerusalem, six days before Easter.

The most remarkable event that happened there was a

feast, where Lazarus was at the table with Him in his home. Martha remained in character and was serving. Mary, also, to keep hers, placed herself, as was her habit, *at the feet of Jesus, which she anointed with an exquisite perfume, and wiped His feet with her hair.* (John xii. 3)

The Saviour was anointed by pious women on three separate occasions. Specific reference is made not only in St. John, as we have just seen, but again in St. Luke (Luke vii. 37), in Saint Matthew (Matt. xxvi. 7), and in St. Mark (Mark xiv. 3).

In St. Luke, the woman is not named, and her only identity appears to be that of a penitent sinner. Her tears with which she bathed the feet of Jesus are the mark of her penance, and Jesus Christ, having expressly given her the remission of her sins, confirms this mark. It is also a beautiful confirmation of having explained, as He has done, the nature of the duties of the penitent love, and of showing how far gratitude carries it.

This mark of penitent love is not found in this chapter of St. John, where it is stated only that Mary poured her perfume over the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair, but without the mention of tears or of the gentle and pious affection of the penitent. Neither is there any mention of it in St. Matthew nor in St. Mark. However, these two evangelists mention the perfume poured over His head, while Jesus was at table, a very easy matter in those times when guests dined lying down at table. Saint John adds that *the house was filled with the good odor of perfume.* (John xii. 3) The places, like the times of these anointments, are marked. The penitent sinner performed her anointing long before the last Easter, in the house of Simon the Pharisee, as St. Luke states in his

account. The second anointing, which is clearly attributed to Mary, sister of Martha and of Lazarus, took place at Bethany six days before Easter in the house of Lazarus and of his sisters, according to St. John. And the third, again at Bethany, but this time in the house of Simon the leper, and only two days before Easter, is shown in Saint Matthew and in Saint Mark. In the first and in the third anointings, the name of the woman is not mentioned. In the second, however, St. John notes expressly that the one who anointed was Mary, sister of Lazarus. Indeed, whether the three different anointings had been done by different persons, according to the opinion of some, or by the same one, according to others, at different times and under different circumstances, we must judge each character as she appears to us.

We must also notice that this abundance of perfumes used twice scandalized the hypocrites and even the disciples who did not understand the mystery of it, and that twice Jesus defended this pious profusion of perfumes.

To perfume Jesus is to give Him praise; to perfume the head of Jesus, however, is to praise and to adore His divinity, for the *head of Jesus Christ*, says St. Paul, is God. (I Cor. xi. 3). To perfume His feet, therefore, is to adore His humanity and His weakness. When Mary wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair, she placed at His sacred feet her greatest ornament, her very head, with all the vanities and fineries of the century. All is sacrificed to Jesus. We wish to please Him only. Could the hair which has touched the feet of Jesus ever serve vanity? It is thus that Jesus wishes to be loved. He alone is worthy of such love, and of such great homage.

Therefore, we not only pour these rich perfumes upon

Jesus, *we break the alabaster box* wherein they were confined, says Saint Mark, in order that He may possess all. His head and His feet dripped with precious perfumes, and the entire house was scented with them. The example of the piety of these holy women has filled the Church with its good odor.

When the sinner approached the feet of Jesus, the Pharisee said to himself: *If He were a prophet, He would not allow this woman to touch Him.* (Luke vii. 39) However, here the disciples do not reproach Him for anything against those who touch Him, whether it be that they had never been sinners, or that it had been such a long time since they had been sinners, that the memory of it had been erased by their penitence. Here the women were reproached for something else, and this was their extravagance: *These perfumes could be sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor;* so precious were they, and so abundant was the pouring out of them. (John xii. 5) The love of the poor was the pretext which they used to condemn the piety of these women whom they called indiscreet, and to cover the envy which they had against Jesus and the honors shown Him. Judas was conspicuous among these false charitable characters and these bigots. The most wicked are the most severe censors of the conduct of others, whether it be through the profligacy of their minds, through their hypocrisy, or through false zeal. Judas had still another reason. It was that he stole and kept what was given to him for the Saviour, and he believed that they took away from him that which was not placed in his hands. How loudly avarice speaks when it can cover itself with the pretext of charity!

His insolent speeches attacked not only the women whom he accused of extravagance, but also Jesus Christ who permitted it. But Jesus took their defense in hand by saying that they *had done it for His burial* (John xii. 7), considering Himself as dead, because of the hour which was approaching.

He wished, at the same time, to make us consider with what great respect we should consider this virginal body formed by the Holy Spirit, where divinity resided, through which death was to be conquered, and the reign of sin abolished. What perfumes were exquisite enough to compliment the purity of it!

He wished also that the perfumes, which usually served effeminacy and luxury would, this time, serve piety, and that vanity would be sacrificed for truth.

The poor you will always have with you, and when you wish, you can do them good. (Mark xiv. 7)

Anointings are beneficial to the body. The ancients made use of them, not only through delicacy, but also as a preventative and as a remedy. Dead bodies were literally soaked in balsam and in perfumes in order to preserve them and prevent corruption, even after death. It was the only good that could then be extended to the dead. All sorts of good things could be given to the poor, said the Saviour, *but for Him, they would not always have His body with them* in order to perform this mercy. It was, therefore, necessary to do it for Him while they still had Him, and when they would have Him no longer, to console themselves by doing it for the poor of whose comfort and solace He imputed as being done to His own person. How dear, therefore, must the poor be to us since they take the place of Jesus Christ in our lives! Let us kiss

their feet, take part in their humiliations and in their weaknesses. Let us shed tears over their feet. Let us weep over their misery. Let us sympathize with their sufferings, let us pour perfumes over their feet, consolations in their troubles, and, in their infirmities, a soothing balm over their sorrows. Let us wipe their feet with our hair, and deprive ourselves of vain ornaments in order to help them.

At the same time, let us perfume Jesus; let us exhale from our hearts, tender desires, a chaste love, a sweet hope, and continual praises. And if we wish to love Him and praise Him worthily, let us praise Him for life.

Let us tell Him in the opening up of our hearts, that which St. Paul told the Corinthians (I Cor. i. 30): *He is for us justice, sanctity, wisdom, redemption, and all things*, as it is said to the Corinthians. Let us tell Him all that this same St. Paul said to the Colossians. (Col. i. 12–20) Let us sing to Him all the sweet canticles which the ransomed people sing to Him in the Apocalypse: *The Lamb who has been immolated for us is worthy of receiving merit, divinity, riches, wisdom, strength, glory, benediction.* (Apoc. v. 12; vii. 10–12) This is what all creatures should sing to Him. This is the perfume which we pour over Him in the pouring out of our hearts.

THE LAST WEEK OF THE SAVIOUR

We have spent eight days considering the final approach of Jesus Christ toward Jerusalem. We have finally arrived at this last week of the Saviour which we have proposed to consider.

FIFTY SERMONS OR DISCOURSES
OF OUR LORD

THE FIRST DAY

The triumphant entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem. He is acknowledged King, son of David, and the Messiah (John xi. 12-20; Matt. xxi. 1-17; Mark xi. 1-17; Luke xix. 28-48).

These sermons or discourses will teach us about the triumphant entrance of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, what He did there, and what He said. The tradition of the Church places this entrance on the first day of the week, which is a Sunday. It is for this reason that we call the day Palm Sunday.

Although the first coming of Jesus Christ, against the expectation of the Jews, was one spent in humility, it was not to be destitute of the glory and pomp which the Jews were expecting. This pomp was necessary in order to make them see that however humble the Saviour was, and however contemptible He might seem according to the world, there was in His actions and in His person, something which brought to Him the greatest glory that men can give on this earth, even to that of making Him King, if the ingratitude of the Jews, and a secret dispensation of the wisdom of God had not prevented it.

This is what was seen at this entrance, the most glorious and the most beautiful ever witnessed. There a man, who appeared to be the humblest of all men in consideration and in power, suddenly received from all the people in

the royal city and in the temple, honors extended only to the greatest kings. Behold then this pomp of which we speak. Indeed, the mark of humiliation and of failing, inseparable from the state of the Son of God on earth, was not to be proclaimed here, but we shall all witness it, after we shall have previously contemplated the dignity of glory and of grandeur.

It is necessary to know, therefore, that the Son of God, although exteriorly the humblest of men, was born to be a King. In the manner of the world, His call to kingship was the most admirable and the most august, since it was a result of admiration caused by His examples, His holy life, His sacred doctrine, His great works, and His miracles. The Saviour had appeared, through His marvels, so helpful to all mankind, that the multitudes forgot everything in order to follow Him with their wives and their children even to the farthest deserts, without even thinking of the common necessities: *And Jesus having fed with five barley loaves and two fishes, as many as five thousand, without counting women and children, they were so delighted that they wished to gather in crowds to make Him King, and to recognize Him as the Christ.* One might have seen then something of the pomp which appears today, if Jesus, who had regulated His time in all things, *had not retired into the desert a long time before, in order to prevent it* (Matt. xiv. 13–21; John vi. 14, 15).

On Palm Sunday, however, it pleased Him to allow the admiration that the people had for Him to burst forth. For this reason He allowed them to rush forth to meet Him with palms in their hands, crying loudly that He was their King, the real Son of David, who was to come, and finally the Messiah Whom they were expecting.

The children joined in these cries of joy, and the sincere testimony of these innocents showed how genuine these transports of joy really were. Never had a people shown so much honor to any king. They even cast their garments along the way where He passed. Vying with one another, they cut down green palms in order to cover the roads with them. Everything, even the trees, seemed to wish to bow and fall before Him. The richest tapestries spread before the entrance of kings did not equal these simple and natural decorations. All these trees, pruned for the use which we have seen, an entire people stripping itself to adorn in this manner the road where its king was passing, made a ravishing spectacle. In other royal entrances, the people are ordered to decorate the streets, and the joy, so to speak, is commanded. Here all was done through the delight of the people themselves. Nothing distracted their attention. This King, poor and gentle, was mounted on the foal of a she-ass, a humble and quiet mount. This was not one of those spirited horses, hitched to a chariot, whose pride attracts the notice of the people. No obsequious attendants were seen, or guards, or paintings of cities conquered, or their booty, or their captive kings. The palms which they carried before Him marked other victories. All the display of ordinary triumphs was banished. But the people could see, in the public square, the sick whom He had cured, and the dead whom He had resuscitated. The person of the King, and the remembrance of His miracles needed no other recommendation for this festival. Everything that art and flattery have invented to honor conquerors at their zenith, surrendered to the simplicity and to the truth which appeared in this One. The Saviour was led, with sacred pomp, through

the streets of Jerusalem as far as the mountain of the temple. He appeared there as Lord and Master, as the Son of the house, the Son of God Who is served there, as we shall see. Neither Solomon, who in fact was the founder, nor the high priests who officiated there with so much pomp, had ever received such honor.

Let us pause here, and thoughtfully consider this great spectacle in detail.

THE SECOND DAY

The reign of Jesus Christ over men's minds and hearts, through His miracles, His kindness and His utterances (John xii. 12-19; Matt. xxi. 1-17; Mark xxi. 1-18; Luke xix. 28-48).

That which attracted all this glory to the Saviour was the fame of His miracles, in particular, the one of Lazarus resuscitated, which had just been performed at the gates of Jerusalem. *For all the multitude that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of the grave, where he was rotting, gave testimony; and it is for this reason that the number of those who had come to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the festival of Easter, rushed to meet Him because they had learned that He had performed this miracle.* (John xii. 17, 18) They also extolled His other miracles, the reputation of which had filled all of Judea: *And while they descended the Mount of Olives, the multitudes of His disciples, seized with a sudden joy, began to praise God for all the cures, and all the marvels that they had witnessed.* (Luke xix. 37)

His doctrine remained confirmed by His miracles, for He had performed them expressly in testimony of His mission, and of the truth which He announced. *My Father, He had said in resuscitating Lazarus, I know that You listen to Me always, but I speak here before these people, in order that they may believe that You have sent Me.* (John xi. 41, 42) And, from the beginning of His preaching, He had said to the doctors of the law: *What is the easiest to say to a paralytic: Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say to him: Arise, take up thy bed and walk? Now, in order that you may know the Son of Man has the power on earth to remit sins: Arise, my son,* He said to the paralytic, *and go to your home.* (Matt. ix. 5; Mark ii. 9-11; Luke v. 23, 24) It is for this reason that He joined the preaching of the Gospel and the healing of the sick: *He was going through all of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every infirmity, among the people.* (Matt. iv. 23) It was this also which attached to Him this great reputation, and gathered together so many people around Him, for, continues the same Evangelist: *His reputation is spread throughout Syria, and several crowds followed Him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the country beyond the Jordan.* (Matt. iv. 24, 25) These were the multitudes who followed Him, who uttered the cries of joy, which all Jerusalem and all the rest of the people applauded.

His doctrine, thus confirmed, attracted to Him this admiration, and the reputation of a great prophet. There was also in what He said, a stamp of authority and an efficacy which had never been seen among men: *For He taught them as having authority and power, and not as*

the scribes and the Pharisees. (Matt. vii. 29) *Everybody called Him Lord and Rabbi* (John iii. 2), that is to say, Master, although He had not studied under any doctor of law, and He had never done any of the things which merited this title among the Jews. *And they found not what to do to Him: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him* (Luke xix. 48); and they could not doubt that He was the One to Whom the Psalmist had chanted: *Oh the most beautiful of the sons of men! Grace is poured abroad on thy lips.* (Ps. xliv. 3) They left everything in order to hear Him, so powerful was the charm of His words, and so much were they, not only moved, *but they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded from His mouth, and all gave testimony to Him.* (Luke iv. 22) And it was not only His disciples who said to Him: *Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.* (John vi. 69) But again, those who came with a warrant and with the intention of arresting Him, were themselves taken by His utterances, *and dared not lay hands on Him.* (John vii. 44) When the high priests and the Pharisees who had sent them, asked them: *Why have you not brought Him to us?* They answered: *Never has any man spoken as this man* (John vii. 45, 46); a reply which caused the astonished Pharisees to ask them: *Are you also seduced?* (John vii. 47) But these Scribes and Pharisees themselves, who despised so much those who believed in Him, and did not speak to Him except to surprise Him, did not themselves know how to answer Him, for He closed their lips with precise and decisive answers; *they dared no longer question Him.* (Matt. xxii. 46)

Behold then this admirable reign predicted in the Psalms, and all peoples won over to the Saviour, by the

charm of His words, and by the grace which poured from His lips. The prophet added *that of truth*, which He announced, *of justice*, of which He was the perfect model, *of gentleness* (Ps. xliv. 5–8), and *of the kindness* with which He healed all sicknesses, making His power serve only for the solace of the unhappy and of all mankind.

Who had ever reigned like this? It is thus that Jesus reigned. So it was that His doctrine and His miracles produced all the exterior effect that they were to produce naturally on all minds. He was followed; He was admired; He was applauded. Wherever He went, Jesus was received with cries of joy. Only the envious murmured, and they, nevertheless, dared not speak. But how is it that the cries which sent Him to the cross: *Crucify Him, crucify Him* (John xix. 6), followed so closely those which glorified Him as the Son of David, and that there were scarcely one hundred and twenty men among the brothers, that is to say among the disciples, who retired to the cenacle to receive the Holy Spirit? It is because the real disciples of Jesus Christ are not those who admire Him, who praise Him, who glorify Him, who follow Him everywhere, but those who follow Him within their hearts, who observe all His precepts, who carry His cross, who repudiate themselves. And the number of them is so small. Besides yielding to the allurements of His word and His miracles, these few listen to an interior voice which not all wish to understand, and also experience a miracle which changes their hearts, while in others pride and laxity prevent this effect.

Let us then be genuine disciples of Jesus: *If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*

(John viii. 31, 32) The others can praise me, admire me, follow me from abroad, and glorify themselves to be my disciples, for one always takes great pride in having such a Master, but they do not love me, and I do not know them, neither do I reckon them among my own.

THE THIRD DAY

The triumphant entrance of Our Lord. The predictions are fulfilled to the least circumstances (Ibid).

Let us consider what Jesus did to prepare for His entrance.

When Jesus was in Bethphage, near Bethany at the foot of the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples with an order to bring Him a she-ass and her foal which they would find in a certain castle which He pointed out opposite them. If the master of the house raised any objection, all they had to do, He told them, was to say: The Saviour needs them. Immediately, the owner would let them go. All was done as Jesus said. The apostles placed their coats over the gentle animals, and then seated Jesus on the foal which no one had ever mounted. Suddenly, cries of joy began to ring out. *His disciples knew not the mystery of what they were doing, but after Jesus was glorified, they remembered that all these things had been written of Him, and that they had accomplished them without thinking about it.* (John xii. 15, 16) For it was written in Zacharias: *Rejoice greatly oh daughter of Sion, shout for joy, oh daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy*

King will come to thee, the just and Saviour: He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass. (Zach. ix. 9; Matt. xxi. 5)

Jesus had foreseen all, and knowing the prophecies, He had accomplished all with perfect knowledge. This is as it was with all that He did until His death. For this reason, even on the cross, *seeing that all was being accomplished*, and that there remained nothing more for Him to accomplish during His life than this prophecy of David: *They have given me gall to drink, and, in my thirst, they have quenched it with vinegar* (Ps. lxxviii. 22), He said: *I thirst*, and they offered Him the drink which had been predestined for Him. *He tasted some of it*, enough, that is, to fulfill the prophecy. Afterwards He said: *All is consummated*. All that remained was for the Saviour to yield His spirit. Immediately *He lowered His head*, and, voluntarily, *He gave up the ghost*. (John xix. 28-30)

Jesus, then, knew what He wanted—the accomplishment of the prophecies—but a hidden force carried out all the rest. A vessel was found which contained some vinegar; likewise, a sponge which they could present to Him on the cross, having steeped it first in the vinegar. They attached it at the end of a lance, and placed it on His lips. The implacable hatred of His enemies, which the devil excited but which God secretly regulated, made them attend to all the necessary preparations for the accomplishment of the prophecy. So too, on this occasion, the she-ass and her foal were found at a given point near the place where the celebrated entrance was to take place, and their master willingly parted with them. The apostles placed Jesus upon the foal without realizing the signifi-

cance of what they were doing. Sudden joy seized the people. Cries followed, and here we note that God acted secretly, not only on two, or three, which could be attributed to some secretly concerted action, but upon the entire multitude, even upon the children because, again, it was predicted. If the smallest things were accomplished, if everything was attended to, even to the acquisition of the she-ass and her foal, and the vinegar, what do you fear, dear Christian? Can you doubt the magnificent promises which have been made to you? Jesus has seen all, known all, pondered all, prepared all. Walk in confidence, and fear nothing.

The holy Fathers say that the foal, which no other than Jesus had mounted, represents the Gentiles, indomitable and indocile animals, whom no other before Jesus had subjugated. Come, undisciplined souls, come and submit yourselves to Jesus. Humble yourselves, and let yourselves be led by the reins which He places on your neck.

Admire again the sad and poor equipage of this King. This was a King who was poor, One Who was rich only in graces. *Here, says Zacharias, is your king who is poor, just and Saviour.* But listen to the sequel to this prophecy: *With this feeble equipage, I shall destroy the chariot out of Ephraim, and the horses out of Jerusalem, and the bow for war shall be broken; and He shall speak peace to the Gentiles, and His power shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers even to the end of the earth* (Zach. ix. 9-10), upon which He will preach, and where He will administer the new baptism, *to the very extremities of the earth.* And Thou, Oh Saviour victorious, *Thou also by the blood of Thy testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water* (Zach. ix. 11), and

from the dark cave of the prison. Behold! The most warlike nations and the proudest men are conquered, ransomed, and delivered by this King mounted on an ass.

THE FOURTH DAY

Our Lord predicts the woes of Jerusalem, a figure of the soul given over to sin. (Luke xix. 29; Luke v. 41-45).

Let us follow Jesus, and learn from St. Luke what He did while descending toward Jerusalem and approaching its gates.

In the woes of Jerusalem we see those of the souls which are perishing. *The days shall come upon thee*, said Jesus, *and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round and straiten thee on every side* (Luke xix. 43). And so it came to pass in Jerusalem. We know the frightful labors of the Romans, and the wall that they built around this unhappy city which crowded it more and more every day; that which caused the horrible famine that all the world knows about, when mothers even ate their children. This is what will happen to the soul in sin. Hemmed in on all sides by evil habits, neither grace nor the bread of life will ever be able to find an entrance; it will die of hunger; it will be crushed by its sins; and there will not be left one stone upon another. Strange state of this soul: universal destruction of the entire interior edifice! No longer reason nor lofty cause. All is brutalized; all is matter; all is passion. All is beaten down to the ground and utterly ruined. What has become of this

beautiful architecture which bore the mark of the hand of God? There is no longer stone upon stone, nor peace nor intimacy in this soul. No piece fits in with another. The disorder is universal. Why? Because fundamental truth is taken from it: God, fear of Him, conscience, these first impressions which make a reasonable creature feel that he has a king. When this foundation is turned upside down, what can remain of its entirety?

At this sad spectacle Jesus could not keep back His tears: *If you knew, oh soul! If you knew!* He cannot stop. Sobs interrupt His discourse. His tongue cannot find words to express the blindness of this soul: *If you knew: at least on this day which is again given you*, and where God visits you through His grace. There is a day which God knows, after which there is no other recourse for the soul, *because*, says Jesus, *Thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.* (Luke xix. 42, 44) When an interior light shows you your crimes, when you are invited to give glory to God, and all cries within you that you must give yourself to Him—just as on this day of the visit to Jerusalem, when everybody, even the children, cried out to the Son of David—if you do not listen, the moment will pass. This grace so strong and active will never return.

All this is hidden from the eyes. (Luke xix. 42) Your heart is heavy; your eyes are closed, and grown dim; your passions blind you; a dark veil is drawn over your eyelids; and a frightful drowsiness weighs them down. Oh, soul! Jesus weeps over you, and yet you do not weep over yourself? Weep. Weep. Oh, spiritual Jerusalem! Weep over your loss, at least on this day when the Lord invites you in such an admirable manner. If until now you have been insensible to your own loss, weep today, and you

will live. Do not lose one moment of grace, because you will never know whether this will not be the last that will be given to you.

THE FIFTH DAY

The last sojourn of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. (Read Matt. xxi. 10–151; Mark xi. 11–18; Luke xix. 45 to the end).

The whole city is much affected while Jesus crosses it in triumph: Who is this? And the people said: This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth and Galilee. (Matt. xxi. 10, 11)

Jesus Christ had begun His preaching in Galilee, at Capharnaum and in the surrounding countryside, conformable to the prophecy of Isaias, related in St. Matthew. (Matt. iv. 13–16; Isa. ix. 1, 2) Nazareth was the home of His parents, and His home, but since He had begun preaching, Jesus had established Himself with His people at Capharnaum. This city, together with the surrounding cities and districts, witnessed the majority of His miracles, and heard the greatest part of His instructions. He had even chosen His apostles from Galilee. Since His disciples were almost entirely from this country, on entering with Him in Jerusalem, they did honor to it with the name of such a great prophet.

However, the name of the Saviour was not less renowned in Jerusalem where the fame of His miracles had spread from all parts, so that in the times that He was

preaching in Galilee, *a great multitude, come from Jerusalem and from Judea, followed Him.* (Matt. iv. 25)

He did not fail to spend Passover, according to the ordinance of the law, in this city and in the temple, and He came there also at other solemn feasts. Moreover, He caused His doctrine and His miracles to burst forth there in a wonderful manner, and as much, or more so, than in any other place in the Holy Land. This was the royal city where God had established His name and which was the See and the chief city of the Jewish religion. The resurrection of Lazarus had taken place at the gate of Jerusalem in Bethany. The multitude which accompanied Him on the celebrated day of His entrance, was increased by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who had witnessed this astonishing resurrection. (John xi. 18–20; John xii. 17, 18)

Ordinarily, the Saviour was obliged to live in Galilee, because the high priests and the others who were plotting His death did not have the same power, nor the same means of carrying into effect this dark design in that country, as in Jerusalem and its environs. This design of the high priests also gave occasion for the accomplishment of the prophecy of Isaias. All was duly done, as we have seen, since Jesus was to spend all His life in persecution, in perils, with precautions, and, so to speak, in a continuous flight because of the hatred of the Jews. Nevertheless, when it was necessary, and at the most solemn times, Jesus appeared in Jerusalem in order that the light of the Gospel might be spread from there into the whole country, as from the head over its members.

Let us admire the gentle ways of the wisdom of God who does not wish that His Son work everything through

miracles and through power alone, but also by accomplishing the mysteries of His humiliation; and by teaching His disciples through His example, the precautions and the prudence with which they must act in all things.

Let us follow Jesus to Jerusalem where He will appear for the last time, and where He will also teach and accomplish the most essential mysteries. For this reason too, He enters with more pomp than ever, in order to cause all peoples of those times and of all centuries, to be more attentive to everything He would say and do. Let us observe then, above all else, what He will do in the temple, for it is there that He will spend some time.

THE SIXTH DAY

The character of authority in the triumph of Jesus Christ. His zeal for the holiness of the temple (Ibid.).

Upon reaching Jerusalem Jesus went to the temple, as conquerors usually do, even among the idolaters. For there was a notion among men that it was necessary to return all glory to the divinity, and that to fall at His feet was the most heroic act among men. For this reason, Jesus was called *Triumph of Israel*. (I Book of Kings. xv. 29)

Go then, oh Saviour! Take to Your Father, in His temple, the glory of the most beautiful triumph ever witnessed among men, and the symbol of all the others which You must accomplish in heaven, on earth, and in the lower regions.

Jesus Christ was to appear in the temple, not only to

render supreme homage to God, but also as His Son: *Like the son of the house* (Hebr. iii. 6) in order to accomplish what His Father, Who sent Him, had commanded.

Thus, as soon as He entered, *He viewed all things round about.* (Mark xi. 11)

As it was late, Jesus retired for the day, but He returned the next day. Then, with authority, He drove out the buyers and the sellers. He overturned their desks, their tables, their chairs, and their merchandise. He scattered their money. Sparing no one whom He chased from the holy place, apparently with whip lashes and ropes, He did as He had done at other times, saying to them: *Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic.* (John ii. 16) He spoke therefore, and acted like the son of the house, having full authority, and no one opposed Him.

At the same time, to prove His authority, Jesus performed His usual cures: *And there came to Him the blind and the lame in the temple; and He healed them.* (Matt. xxi. 14) He confirmed that which He had done according to the Scripture: *It is written, says He, My house is a house of prayer.* (Isa. lvi. 7) This is what God had said through the mouth of Isaias, and Jesus added the reproach: *And you, said He, have made it a den of thieves,* as Jeremias had predicted. (Matt. xxi. 13; Jerem. vii. 11)

So it was that this oracle of David was accomplished: *But I am appointed king by him over Sion his holy mountain, preaching his commandment.* (Ps. ii. 6) There was seen in His temple, *The Lord Whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, which Malachias had predicted.* (Malach. iii. 1) Jesus Christ exercised there, in full right, all the authority of His Father: *And He suffered not that*

any man should carry a vessel through the temple. (Mark xi. 16) nor that they use as a public road, a ground so holy. The Gospel does not state that He forbade it, but that He did not encourage it. That is to say, judging by the rest of His actions, that He repulsed them and drove them out. At any rate, He rebuked them with threatening words. Even if Jesus had merely commanded it verbally, it would have been an act of authority, but He acts; He overthrows; He strikes: This in itself is an act of zeal, and St. John and all the disciples applied the word of David to this action: *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.* (Ps. lxxviii. 10; John ii. 17)

Zeal is fervor of the love of God too ardent to expect the help of others, nor does it confine itself to ordinary forms. Rather, it acts with a kind of excess, through absolute confidence in the power of God. We recognize this zeal in the action of the Saviour.

Notice these words: *A den of thieves.* All who bargain must tremble at them since they make them feel that, unless they take heed, bargaining can prove to be a tissue of lies, of cheating, and of theft.

Notice also that the things sold in the temple were oxen, sheep, doves—sacrificial offerings only. Nevertheless, Jesus expelled them all. It was not that these sales were evil in themselves, but rather because this was not the place to effect them. What would He do then about the discourses, irreverences, and other goings on in the temple?

Notice again that He speaks in particular to those who sell doves. Saints have understood this passage as one referring to simonists who sell the Holy Spirit and His graces, who enter through infamous dealings, into ec-

clesiastic and spiritual jobs, and who, in some fashion or other, bargain to obtain the favor of those who give these jobs. *Remove, remove all that*, says the Saviour.

The temple was going to perish, and Jesus who was going to predict it, as we shall see, was not unaware of it, and yet, with zeal and authority, He protected its right to be treated with reverence for as long as it stood. This was His way, therefore, of teaching Christians what they owe to new temples, of which the temple of Jerusalem was but a feeble and imperfect symbol, infinitely beneath the mysteries of Christianity, of which Jesus Christ is the foundation, and wherein His sacred body and His precious blood may be found. Let us tremble at the very sight and at the approach to this sanctuary.

But *the temple of God is holy, which you are*. (I Cor. iii. 17) Our soul is one with it; our bodies are one with it. Let us respect this temple so sanctified and inseparable from ourselves. Let us not allow anything impure nor profane to enter there. Let us beware of making it serve in any unworthy traffic. Let us respect this temple, and *the Holy Spirit who is in you*. (I Cor. vi. 19)

THE SEVENTH DAY

The character of humiliation in the Saviour's triumph. The jealousy of the Pharisees (John xii. 18; Matt. xxi. 15, 16; Luke xix, 39, 40).

The reign of the Saviour was indeed to be glorious and brilliant, although of a different glory and of a different

magnificence than the one which the carnal Jews had imagined. We have even seen that Jesus satisfied, in some way, the expectation of a royalty on earth, by the pomp of this day, and by demonstrating to the Jews that nothing was easier than to make Himself recognized as king by all peoples. In order not to depart from this character of humiliation and persecution, which was to follow Him everywhere to the last day, it was necessary, however, that He have opposition in His temple, and this opposition was apparent in the jealousy of the doctors of the law. This jealousy is explained to us in the words of St. John, for while everybody went to meet the Saviour and applauded Him, the Pharisees said among themselves: *Do you see that we prevail nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after Him.* (John xii. 19) This is what they could not tolerate, and it is this that made them utter two statements which are noted in the Gospels.

Jealousy devoured them, and even while children cried out that He was the Son of David, they said to Him: *And some of the Pharisees, from amongst the multitude, said to Him: Master, rebuke thy disciples. Do you hear what they are saying?* He answered: *Have you never read what is written: Out of the mouths of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?* (Luke xix. 39; Matt. xxi. 15, 16; Ps. viii. 3) Must you then be astonished if, in an age more advanced, the children render to God in my person, praises and a testimony more brilliant? If you had the simplicity and the sincere disposition of an innocent age, you would praise God as they do. Like them, you would honor the one Whom He sends, but your envy, your false glory, your hypocrisy and your false politics, prevent you. Let us strip ourselves of all these vices, and

let us clothe ourselves with the innocence and simplicity of children in order to sing purely and sincerely, the praises of Jesus Christ.

The other answer of the Saviour to the reproach of the high priests and the doctors of the law was: *if these will hold their peace* (Luke xix. 40), said He, *the stones will cry out. God is powerful enough*, said John the Baptist, *out of these stones, to raise up children to Abraham* (Matt. iii. 9), and to make of the most hardened hearts, faithful ones. The time was to come, it had come, when the glory of Jesus Christ would resound so loudly throughout the earth, that God would be adored by a people, who until now did not know Him, and who slept hardened in sin. Oh stone! Oh hardened hearts! Wake up, melt with tenderness at these words of the Saviour.

THE EIGHTH DAY

Jealousy (Ibid.).

While the people applauded the Saviour, and praised Him to the heavens, His enemies, not content with showing their envy in words, which they were not able to restrain, planned secret plots to ruin Him, and were even heartened by the glory of a beautiful day. It was again a trait of this character of persecution which was to follow Him, and which followed Him, in fact, to the end.

Let us consider here the effects of jealousy: it is one of the greatest evils of our nature. Jesus Christ, Who had come to cure it, was to feel the malice of it, and the suf-

ferings which envy was to cause Him were to serve as a remedy to its poison. Envy is the black and secret effect of a feeble pride, which feels itself either diminished, or completely effaced by the simplest luster in others, and which cannot endure the least light. Pride is naturally enterprising, and wishes to shine, but envy hides itself under all sorts of pretexts, and delights in the most secret and darkest of underhand dealings. Disguised detractions, calumnies, betrayals, all evil crafts are its work. When, through these sad and dark tricks, it has gained the upper hand, it bursts forth and joins together against the just man, whose glory defeats it, insult and scorn, with all the bitterness of hatred, and the last excesses of cruelty. Oh Saviour! Oh Just Man! Oh Saint of Saints! What remains to be accomplished in Your divine Person!

Let us uproot envy, and in the least of its effects which we might feel in our hearts, let us apprehend all the malice and all the horror of such a poison.

THE NINTH DAY

Jesus Himself gives to His triumph the character of humiliation and of death that He was to experience. The triumph of Jesus Christ makes different impressions on the Jews and on the Gentiles (John xii. 19-24).

In his Gospel, St. John points out to us two very different effects of the triumph of Our Lord. In the Pharisees, Jesus excited the sentiment of jealousy, and inspired the dark plots which we have already seen. *The Pharisees,*

therefore, said among themselves: Do you see that we prevail nothing? Behold, the whole world is gone after Him (John xii. 19) But at the same time, and during these criminal, secret practices of the children of Abraham against the Christ Who had been promised to them, the Gentiles, who were not of this blessed race, and who also were strangers to this holy alliance, were touched with a holy admiration for the author of so many wonders. *Certain Gentiles, who knew God, although they were not Jews, since they came to adore on the festival day, came to Phillip, one of His apostles, and said to him, with respect: Sir, we would see Jesus.* (John xii. 20, 21) This was not simply to look at Him, for everybody had seen Him on this day, and everybody saw and heard Him when He was preaching, but to see Him in private and so, to enjoy His company.

At the approach of these Gentiles who wished to see Him, Jesus immediately recalled that the calling of the Gentiles was to be an effect of His death. Those great prophecies where the nations are given to Him as His heritage and His possession, were present to Him. In the little things, He saw the great. What the Wise Men had begun from His birth, which was the conversion of the Gentiles in person, these Gentiles continued, and figured again towards the time of His death. The Saviour, seeing in these Gentiles a desire to know Him coinciding with that of the Jews planning to ruin Him, saw, at the same time, in this attempt the beginning of the great mystery of the calling of some through the blindness and reprobation of others. This is what caused Him to say: *The hour has come when the Son of man is to be glorified.* (John xii. 23) The Gentiles will come, and His kingdom will extend throughout the world.

He saw farther; that is, He saw, according to the ancient prophecies, that it was through His death, that He was to acquire this new community and this numerous posterity which was promised Him. It was after having said: *They have pierced my hands and my feet* (Ps. xxi. 17, 28) that David had added: *All the ends of the earth shall remember and shall be converted to the Lord*. It was to be only after his death, Isaias promised Him, that *He would see a long lived seed*. (Isa. liii. 10) And again: *Who shall declare His generation? I have struck Him for the sins of my people*. And again: *I shall distribute to Him very many, and He shall divide the spoils of the strong, because He hath delivered His soul unto death*. (Isa. liii. 12) He saw, therefore, that it was at this price that He was to buy these new people. Their redemption was to cost Him His life. Filled with this truth, and after having said: *The hour has come when the Son of Man shall be glorified*, He added: *Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground dies, itself remaineth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*. (John xii. 23, 24)

It is thus, through the words of Jesus, that we see the real commentary and the real explanation of the prophecies. We are the grain of wheat, and we have a germ of life hidden within ourselves. In this way, like Jesus, we must bear much fruit, and the fruit we bear is intended for life eternal. But first, it is necessary that everything die within us. This germ of life must disengage itself, and rid itself of all that envelops it. The fecundity of this grain will appear only at this price. Let us hide in the ground. Let us humiliate ourselves. Let us allow the exterior man to perish; that is, the life of the senses, the life of pleasure, the life of honor, the life of the body, curiosity, concu-

piscence, all that is sensible within us. Then this interior fecundity will develop its entire strength, and we shall bear much fruit.

THE TENTH DAY

Jesus Christ is the grain of wheat. The members must die like the head (John xi. 25).

Let us look to our head, Jesus Christ, in order to understand the necessity of dying in order to bear fruit, which obligation is imposed on all His members.

For fear that we might not see this consequence soon enough, however, Jesus points it out to us Himself. *He who loves his life, He says, will lose it.* (John xii. 25) To love it is to lose it. To seek to satisfy it, is to lose it. It is necessary that it lose all, and that it lose itself, that it hate itself, that it refuse everything, if it wishes to keep itself for eternal life. Every time something flattering presents itself to us, let us dwell upon these words: *He who loves his life will lose it.* Every time that something difficult presents itself, let us reflect: *To hate one's life is to save it.* Reject, therefore, all that flatters us. Leave it as a complete loss.

To hate one's life! Can one hate one's life without despising all its advantages and all one's natural talents? And can we glorify ourselves over them when we hate them? On the other hand, is it possible not to hate them, when they serve only to lose us in the state of blindness or of weakness in which we find ourselves? Glory, fortune,

reputation, health, beauty, intellect, knowledge, ability—all—bring about our downfall. Indeed, the very approval of our virtue can be a greater ruin than all the rest.

There is nothing that Jesus has so often repeated, and inculcated as the precept: *He who finds his life loses it; he who loses his life finds it.* (Matt. x. 39; xvi. 25)

Let us understand the force of this word *hate*. If the things of this world and of this life were merely vile and valueless, it would be sufficient to despise them. If they were only useless, it would be sufficient to set them aside, and if it were sufficient to give the preference to the Saviour, He would have contented Himself by saying, as He does elsewhere: *If he loveth these things more than me he is not worthy of me.* (Matt. x. 37) To show us that these things are harmful, however, He uses the word *hate*. From that point of view we should hate all things, insofar as they can be opposed to our salvation.

Let us consider again the courage that Christianity demands: to renounce all, to cast all aside. This life is but a tempest, and the vessel must be released, no matter what the cost, for what is the use of saving all, if we ourselves must perish? Consider the foolish merchant who argues whether to throw his package of goods into the water. Blind man, you will lose it, and yourself besides.

THE ELEVENTH DAY

Follow Jesus in humiliation and in death (John xii. 26).

He who wishes to serve me, let him follow me. (John xii. 26) Let him imitate Me, let him be with Me, let him

travel on the same paths: *My Father will honor him, as He has honored Me.* It is necessary to lose all, to abandon all, to throw away all, to hate all. Follow Me, Christian, if you wish to go where I go.

Walk, Jesus, I am following You. Will I have the courage? Alas! You say to me as to Peter: *Simon Peter said to him: Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered: Whither I go thou canst not follow me now; but thou shall follow hereafter.* (John xiii. 36) Oh Saviour! I shall not say that I shall follow You everywhere; I do not dare say so; I feel my weakness. Yet, I have the desire to do so. Help my weak will; inspire me with a strong and courageous will.

See how Jesus Himself gives to His triumphant entrance the character of death. As was His custom in glory He always recalled the mind to death. Thus even on Mount Tabor, where He was taken up and transfigured in such a marvelous manner, Moses and Elias, who had come to honor Him and speak with Him, *spoke to Him of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem* (Luke ix. 31), while fulfilling the ancient prophecies and all the figures of the law. In leaving His glory, He was filled only with His death, and *as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man till the Son of Man be risen from the dead.* (Matt. xvii. 9) It was, therefore, necessary to die, and this is what He wished that they understand, and well, in order to see the road which they were to follow after Him, so as to arrive at the resurrection and to glory.

Let us accustom ourselves to the example of Jesus and in all that flatters us, to remember always, as keenly as we can, the thought of death. Let us accustom ourselves also

always to join these two ideas: glory and earthly pleasure, *eternal confusion*; and again, cross and mortification, *glory and eternal happiness*.

THE TWELFTH DAY

The character of humiliation and of death in the triumph of Jesus. His troubled soul is our model and our remedy. (John xiv. 27, 28).

Jesus continues to give to His glorious entrance the character of humiliation and of suffering. *Now my soul is troubled.* (John xii. 27) What! troubled with thoughts of His glory, of which He had just said: *The hour has come when the Son of Man is to be glorified?* (John xii. 23) Why? Because He saw, as was just stated, His glory united to His anguish, anguish so rigorous and so filled with opprobrium, that He said to Himself at its approach: *Now my soul is troubled.* This statement marks the beginning of His agony, this agony which Jesus was to suffer in the Garden of Olives; this interior battle which He was to fight against His anguish, against His Father, in some way, and also against Himself: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* (Matt. xxvi. 39) Behold then, to this mortal blow, a will in the Son, opposed in some way to the will of His Father. The will submits, it is true, but it is there, and it makes itself felt in the Saviour. It declares itself to the very eyes of the celestial Father.

Oh Jesus! my soul is grieved by your trouble! To whom

shall we have recourse, if You Yourself are troubled, You Whom we call upon in our weakness? This is the mystery. He carries us within Himself. He takes upon Himself our trouble, and carries it within His sacred soul. Our weakness is passed on to Him, and it is thus that He strengthens us; first, by His example; secondly, by the strength that He procures for us.

He strengthens us through His example, for if He had not felt this natural repugnance to death, and this natural horror of pain and agony, we would not learn from Him to say in our sorrows: *Thy will be done, and not mine.* This instruction would be nil.

He strengthens us through merit, for if He did not suffer, He would not offer any sacrifice, or, if so, the sacrifice would cost Him nothing, and thus it would not be a real sacrifice.

Oh my Saviour! through the anxiety of Your sacred soul, heal the anxiety of mine. Your anxiety came neither from sin, nor was your soul prone to sin. Rather, it was a voluntary and mysterious anxiety. You bear within Yourself the mystery of *the power made perfect in infirmity.* (II Cor. xii. 9) This is the great mystery of Christian grace, which begins in the Head, and is accomplished in the members.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY

In His combat and victory, Jesus is our model (Ibid.).

Now my soul is troubled: and what shall I say? (John xii. 27, 28) Therein lies the problem—the mind floats as

though uncertain of itself. *And what shall I say?* Behold, my Saviour, my uncertainties and my emotions which You bear. *My Father, save me from this hour.* Shall I say that to my Father? Shall I ask Him to deliver me from this hour, from this ignominy, from these pains so frightful to human nature? *But I have come for this hour.* Behold the weak man who is aroused, who encourages himself: *I have come for this hour. I am come to cast fire on the earth: and what will I, but that it be kindled: And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.* (Luke xii. 49, 50) This is what Jesus said in His strength. But Jesus in His weakness asked: *What shall I do?* What shall I decide to do? Shall I ask God for my personal deliverance, or for that of mankind? Shall I listen to my human nature, frail in itself, or to the glory of my Father in the salvation of men lost? *My Father, Your glory carries the day: Glorify Your name;* Glorify Your name of Father, in glorifying Your Son. *Not my will, but Thine.* (Luke xxii. 42) Not my rest, but Your glory, and the redemption of the people by whom You wish to be glorified. There is the combat; there is the victory. Jesus has confirmed His invincible soul, or rather, because it was absolutely invincible, and had only to combat for us, He has taught us to combat and to vanquish. And behold, there again in the victory of the soul of Jesus, the image of our combats, and the character of humiliation which was to accompany the Saviour.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY

A voice from heaven renders testimony to the glory of Jesus in His triumph (John xii. 28, 30).

In order that nothing should be lacking to the glory of the Saviour on His entrance into Jerusalem, heaven joined earth in honoring Him, and to this word of the Saviour: *My Father, glorify Thy name*, a voice as loud as thunder came from heaven: *I have glorified it, and I shall glorify it again.* (John xii. 28)

On three separate occasions, voices came from heaven, on the part of the celestial Father, to honor the Son of God. On the day of His baptism, before Jesus began His ministry, the Father made Him known, and gave Him His mission with the words: *This is my beloved son in Whom I am well pleased* (Matt. iii. 17); or, as St. Luke reports: *Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.* (Luke iii. 22)

The same voice was heard again at the transfiguration. While Moses and Elias were entering into a luminous cloud which surrounded them, this voice came from the cloud: *This is my Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him.* (Matt. xvii. 5) The phrase, *hear ye Him*, was added to that which had been spoken at the baptism.

The third occasion is the one we read this day in St. John: *I have glorified it and I shall glorify it again.* (John xii. 28) I have glorified My name of Father, in honoring My only Son. I have glorified Him in eternity; I shall

glorify Him in time. I glorified Him when I caused marvels to burst forth at His birth, at His baptism, and during the course of His ministry. Even now I inspire much admiration for Him among the Jews and the Gentiles, who are already beginning to wish to see Him. I shall glorify Him again, when I give Him, after His resurrection, the glory which He has enjoyed since before the world was made. Exalting Him as God above the heavens, I shall proclaim His name throughout the world.

At the transfiguration, this heavenly voice was only heard by three chosen disciples who were to report it to us after His resurrection. (II Peter i. 16–18)

These voices were also heard on two other very important occasions; on the first, to prepare minds for the preaching of the Saviour from the beginning of His ministry, and on the second, the eve of His death, in order to strengthen the faith against the ignominy of the cross.

The Gospel does not state what these voices effected. In order to judge of them by the event, their great effect appeared only after the resurrection. Regarding the one on the occasion of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, St. John remarks that it caused dissension among those who heard it, and the multitude said: *This is thunder; others said: An angel hath spoken to Him.* (John xii. 29) It would appear, therefore, that they did not wish to believe that God had declared Himself through this voice. *It is thunder.* It is confused talk which signifies nothing. To others, those who expressed themselves best, *It is an angel,* said they, *who has spoken to Him.* Be this as it may, whether they did not wish to continue through a spirit of disbelief, or whether they believed in good faith that God had spoken to Him through an angel, as he Had done to the

patriarchs and to all the people under Moses, Jesus said to them: *This voice came, not because of me, but for your sakes* (John xii. 30), and He explained the mystery to them. Let us apply ourselves to understand it. In the meantime, since Jesus Christ declared that this voice is for us, let us take it to heart, and glorify Jesus within ourselves. He Himself is the voice, or rather the Word, which speaks to us. Let us not listen to His voice as to thunder, like a vague noise. Instead, let us understand that He has spoken to us very distinctly of His glory and of ours, and that the truth has been clearly announced to us. Let us not say that an angel has spoken to the Saviour for us, since God, *Who spoke formerly through the angels, speaks now through His Son*. (Hebr. ii. 2, 3) Listen to Him, we are told. Regulate your actions and all your conduct through His doctrine. Let us give thanks to the celestial Father for having glorified His blessed Son, since His glory reflects upon us. Jesus Himself has said: *And the Glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them*. (John xvii. 22) But let us always remember on what critical occasion He was promised this glory; it was when He was going to die. Let us enter, therefore, into the society of His glory, through that of His sufferings and of His ignominies.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY

The mystery of the celestial voice: the world will be judged while judging Jesus Christ (John xii. 31-34).

In this passage, Jesus explains to us the mystery of this celestial voice and answers: *Now is the judgement of the world.* (John xii. 31) How? By exercising its judgement on Jesus Christ, the world judged so badly that its judgement and its maxims will remain forever condemned. Who can judge with the world that the good things of the earth are the only ones to desire, and that the ills of the earth are the only ones to fear, if Jesus, deprived of all the good things, and charged with all the evil things by the judgement of the world, always remains truth itself, and the blessed Son of God? Who again will dare to judge with the world that one must sustain its interests, its domination, its very glory, to the detriment of all, if in the end, Jesus finds Himself condemned by its maxims? The world is, therefore, judged by the judgement that it has carried from Jesus Christ. The Saviour has judged the world while allowing Himself to be judged by it; and the iniquity of this judgement destroys all others forever.

It is true that the world will only be judged on the last day. St. Augustine, however, distinguishes here between two kinds of judgement, i.e., that of condemnation at the end of the centuries, and that of discernment in this one. He applies to the latter these words of the Psalmist: *Judge me, oh God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy.* (Ps. xlii. 1) This discernment must be made clearly, in order to understand the judgement that the world has brought against Jesus Christ. The world wishes to be flattered; it does not want us to declare its vices. The world does not want us to condemn its maxims, nor does it wish that we live in an unworldly way, because in that way, we are condemning it. For this reason, the world condemned Jesus Christ. Whoever follows the

maxims through which the just man has been condemned, does not distinguish himself from the world, and is judged with it. Be attentive, Christian! Set yourself apart from the nation that is not holy, condemning within yourself, in good faith, all its maxims.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY

Jesus draws all through the power of the cross. Follow Him. (Ibid.).

The prince of this world, the demon who is the master of it through idolatry, will be cast out (John xii. 31), and the false divinities abandoned. To cast out the demon, however, is not enough. It is also necessary to restore the empire to God through Jesus Christ. And I, says He, if I be lifted up from the earth, on the cross, will draw all things to myself. (John xii. 32) There, in the cross, lies enough power to attract all men. All classes of men, not only of both sexes, but from every nation; men of genius from every profession, from every condition, will be so powerfully attracted that they will come to Jesus in crowds. The action of the crucifixion seems to have elevated Jesus as the object of the whole world. On the one side, He is exposed to all contradiction; on the other, He is the object of the hope of the world. *He had to be elevated like the serpent in the desert, as He Himself says, in order that the world might be able to turn its eyes toward Him. (John iii. 14, 15).* The recovery of the universe has been the fruit of this cruel and mysterious ele-

vation. Go to the foot of the cross and say to the Saviour: *Draw me: we will run after thee to the odor of thy ointments.* (Cant. i. 3) The forgiveness which makes You submit to the agony of the cross, the love which causes Your death and which emerges from all Your wounds, is the sweet perfume which is sent forth to attract all hearts. Draw me in this powerful and sweet manner by which You said that *Your Father draws to You all those who come.* (John vi. 44) Draw me in this all-powerful manner which does not permit me to remain by the way. Oh that I might go with You, as far as Your cross; that I might be united to it, pierced with Your nails, crucified with You, so that I might no longer live for the world, but for You only. When shall I say with Your apostle: *I live now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 19 20); and again: *I am attached to the cross with Jesus Christ; For the charity of Jesus Christ presseth us; judging that if one died for all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto Him Who died for them, and rose again.* (II Cor. v. 14, 15) It is thus that Jesus attracts us. It was necessary, as He said, that *this grain of wheat fall upon the earth to multiply itself.* (John xii. 24) It was necessary that He sacrifice Himself, to make all of us within Himself an offering, agreeable to God. The new world was born from His death.

The Saviour had already said: *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.* (John iii. 14) He had also stated: *When you shall have raised the Son of Man, you will know who I am.* (John. viii. 28) The knowledge of this truth was attached to the cross.

I shall draw; I shall win. Consider with what gentleness and strength this action takes place. He draws us, as we have just seen, through the manifestation of the truth. He draws us through the charm of a celestial pleasure, through those hidden sweetnesses, that no one knows about except those who have experienced them. He draws us through our own will, which He operates so gently within us, that we follow without noticing the hand that guides us. Let us follow, let us follow, then, but let us follow as far as the cross. Since it is from there that He draws us, we must follow Him there. We must follow Him even to dying with Him, even to shedding all our blood, and all its natural vivacity, that we may rest only in Jesus. To rest there is to rest in the truth, in justice, in wisdom, in the source of pure and chaste love. Oh Jesus! What power You have hidden in this cross! Make it felt in my heart. *When I shall be lifted up from the earth.* I wish for no other elevation than that one: It is Yours; let it be mine.

Remember that all this was said on the occasion of the entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem, and possibly on the very day, or the following day that it happened. Admire once more how He maintained the character of the cross and of death in this beautiful triumph.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY

The unbelievers do not open their eyes to the light: they walk in darkness (John xii. 34-37).

And how sayest thou: The Son of Man must be lifted up (John xii. 34) from the earth? Jesus had spoken so often of this mysterious elevation. He had, besides, so often spoken of the cross, and of the necessity of carrying one's cross to follow Him, that finally the people had become accustomed to hearing Him. That is what gave rise to this word: *We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever; And how sayest thou: The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?* (John xii. 34) Truth and error are mixed in this statement. The people were correct in saying that Christ was to live and reign eternally, but they did not wish to hear which way He would have to go in order to arrive at His kingdom. The Master was in the midst of them, and all they had to do was to consult Him, after God had certified His mission by so many miracles. That is the reason Jesus said to them: *Yet a little while and the light is among you. I am going away, and this light will not be with you much longer. Make use of it, therefore, while you have it. Walk while you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not, neither surprising you nor enveloping you: he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.* (John xii. 35) Rather, we stumble against stones; we fall into unfathomable depths, and not only do we miss our foothold, but we lose our heads.

Jesus is the light to those who open their eyes in order to see Him. To those who close them, however, He is a stone against which they stumble and dash themselves to pieces. For lack of having wished to learn from Him the mystery of His calling, these people knock and dash themselves to pieces, and do not know Him. Therefore, they ask: Who is this Son of Man Who must be crucified,

and thereby draw all things to Him? Is it You Whom we see so weak? How do You draw to Yourself those for whom You are going to be the rebuff through Your cross? Blind ones, can you not see by the majesty of His entrance, that it would depend only upon Him whether to have glory; that He does not lose it through weakness, but, rather, through wisdom, postpones it? He would tell you this truth, if you asked Him humbly, but you allow the light to go out, and He Who came to illuminate you will be a scandal to you: *But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews, indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness.* (I Cor. i. 23)

Let us weigh these words: *Yet a little while, the light is among you.* (John xii. 35) Let us conceive a certain state of the soul where it seems that the light is lowered. By dint of disregarding it, we cease to notice it. A thick cloud conceals the light from us. So too, our passions, which we allow to grow, cause God's word to be entirely hidden from us. Let us advance as long as there remains for us a tiny spark. What horror to be enveloped in the dark in the midst of so many precipices! This is the state of your soul, however, if you allow this remaining spark of light which shines for you again for a moment to become extinguished.

He that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. (John xii. 35) Strange state! We go because we must move, and our soul cannot exist without movement. We continue to move, therefore, and yet we know not where we are going. We believe we are going on to fame, to pleasures, to life, and to happiness. Instead, we go on to perdition and to death. We do not know where we are going. We have lost our way. As we go farther and

farther away from the right road, we no longer see the least trace of it nor the least direction by which we might be brought back to it. This is a state too common in the life of men. Alas! Alas! This is all we can say about it. It is through cries, lamentations and tears, and not through words, that we must deplore this state.

He knoweth not whither he goeth. Blind man, where are you going? What miserable route are you treading? Alas! Alas! Return while you are still able to see the road. He advances. Ah! what a labyrinth, and how many wrong and inevitable detours he will meet! He is lost. I see him no longer. He does not know where he is, and yet he continues to walk, urged along by a sort of unfortunate fatalism, and driven by passions which he has rendered un-governable.

Come back! He can no longer do so; he must advance. What unfathomable depth is in reserve for him! What precipice awaits him! Of what beast will he be the prey? Without help, without guide, what will become of him? Alas! Alas!

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY

The state of those from whom the light withdraws. Jesus hides from them. The marvels of this day of triumph. (Ibid.).

Jesus said these things, and He went away, and hid Himself from them. (John xii. 36) What a state! when not only do we go away from the light, but, that, in its turn,

the light goes away, and not only does it go away, but it hides! This is the state of those *having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who, despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness. But you have not so learned Christ* (Ephes. iv. 18–20), even if His voice has reached you.

This biblical verse of St. John seems to answer the one of St. Matthew, wherein it is stated that Jesus, after having answered the reproaches that the Pharisees made to Him upon His entrance: *and leaving them He went out of the city into Bethania, and remained there.* (Matt. xxi. 17) This is what St. John calls going away and hiding from them. His hiding place was most probably the home of one of His friends or disciples; perhaps even the house of Lazarus, and of his sisters, Mary and Martha. It is there, on the day of the entrance of the Saviour, that we can conclude all this happened. That it was on this day that the Father caused this voice to be heard from heaven; that it is then that Jesus developed the mystery of His exaltation and of the propagation of His doctrine, and of His glory after His death. How magnificent this day is! What concurrence of marvels! What sweet consolations! What astonishing threats! What self-communing! What fright! What sweet astonishment! What consideration! What mixture of fear and of love must not this day inspire! If we wish to defer until the following day a part of these happenings, and there could well have been some reason for it, that day would nevertheless be a sequel to the triumph of Jesus, since it was on this day that He

purged the temple, with so much authority and zeal, of the thieves who made it their den.

Oh marvelous day! I have not yet seen all your wisdom, nor understood the marvels with which you are filled.

THE NINETEENTH DAY

Reflections on the marvels of the first day. It is necessary to continue without relaxation the work of God through the example of Jesus Christ.

During this week, and from the day that He made His entrance, the Saviour left Jerusalem every night, and hid in Bethany, whence He returned every morning to perform His functions in the temple, where everybody assembled from early morning in order to hear Him. During the day, His enemies were held back through fear of stirring up the people if they were to arrest Him in broad daylight: *For they feared Him, says St. Mark, because the whole multitude was in admiration at His doctrine.* (Mark xi. 18) Or, as St. Luke states: *And they know not what to do to Him: for all the people were very attentive to Him.* (Luke xix. 48) Here He remained during the day, and at night, when His enemies might have found more occasions to ruin Him, He left the city, and withdrew to Bethany, among His disciples, in order to complete His week, and the time which had been prescribed for Him to teach us. He continued to make use of gentle ways, so natural to the divine wisdom, taking the necessary precautions, and using the ordinary means of taking

care of Himself until the night that He was to be taken. Let us understand, therefore, that whether He takes care of Himself, or gives Himself up, He does it all for love of us. He conserved Himself in order to finish His teachings, so that we might not lose one of His words. He surrendered Himself in order to complete His sacrifice. Oh Jesus! I adore You in both of these states, and I shall follow You every morning of this last week to listen to Your words, more touching still in these times than in all the others.

Let us recollect all the marvels that we have seen accomplished on this sacred day of the triumph of Jesus Christ, all the marks of the grandeur, authority, and power that heaven and earth gave to Him. At the same time, let us remember all the marks of weakness, of persecution and of flight which He retained. Let us adore this sacred mingling. If we are calumniated, mistreated, and persecuted by our enemies, even to the point of being obliged to flee and to hide from them, let us not grieve over it. It is the character of Jesus Christ which we must, on the contrary, be delighted to support. Let us continue the work of God, through His example. And, without ever slackening, let us accomplish the will of God.

THE TWENTIETH DAY

The desiccated fig tree: a symbol of the sterile soul. (Matt. xxi. 18, 24; Mark xi. 12, 28).

The day following His entrance into Jerusalem, returning into the city, Jesus was hungry. *And seeing a*

certain fig tree by the way side, He came to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only, and He saith to it: May no fruit grow on thee hence forward forever. (Matt. xxi. 19) This is a parable of things, similar to that parable which we find in St. Luke, chapter xiii, verse 6. It is not necessary, therefore, to ask what this fig tree had done, nor what it had deserved—everyone knows that a tree merits nothing—nor to consider this a malediction of the Saviour with reference to the fig tree, since it was only the subject of the parable. Rather, it is necessary to understand what this tree represented; that is, the reasonable creature who always owes the fruits of his works to his Creator, whenever he asks for some. Finding only leaves, and nothing solid, the Creator rightfully curses it: *May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. (Matt. xxi. 19)*

Strange malediction on the soul, from which God withdraws. Good works never come out of it. What is a fig tree without fruit, or a man without good works?

When we find ourselves desiccated and sterile, how much we must fear then that God may have uttered the fatal word! God has His hour when He waits for the desired fruit. If the hour has passed, and we have failed Him, He pronounces the sad sentence. The tree, without being cut down, is desiccated to the very root. This is damnation before death: we see the tree standing, but it has death in its heart. *Thou hast the name of being alive, but thou art dead. (Apoc. iii. 1)* Let us then be faithful, and ready to give our fruit to the Saviour whenever He asks for some.

Jesus was hungry. Literally, He fasted a great deal. Conforming to the mystery, He was hungry and thirsty when it was necessary, but He is always hungry and thirsty for our salvation.

After this incident, Jesus Christ continued His voyage, and returned to Bethany, according to His custom. The following morning, His disciples stopped at the fig tree, which they found desiccated to the very root; and Peter said to the Saviour: *Rabbi, behold the fig tree, which Thou didst curse, is withered away.* (Mark xi. 21) Jesus did not wish to leave these people without making them see the obvious effects of His curse. Through an admirable effect of His goodness, He strikes the tree and spares the man. Thus, when He wished to show them how malevolent were the demons, and how far they extended their power, He demonstrated on a herd of swine which the demons cast into the sea. (Matt. viii. 32) How good Jesus is, and how reluctant to strike man! Let us not compel the Saviour to act against His inclination to spare us from the effect of His vengeful anger.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY

Man is clothed with the power of God through faith and through prayer (Matt. xxi. 21, 22; Mark xi. 22, 24).

The apostles were astonished by the sudden effect of Our Lord's words to the fig tree. They were much more so when He told them that they could do as much, and even more, provided they had faith. *If you have faith, He said to them, and stagger not, not only this of the fig tree will you do, but also if you shall say to this mountain, Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done.* (Matt. xxi. 21)

Behold here the wonder of wonders: man clothed in the omnipotence of God.

Go, said the Saviour, *heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give.* (Matt. x. 8) Who ever gave such a command?

And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. (Luke ix. 2) Who ever sent His ministers with such commands? Go, He said, *into this house and heal those whom you will find there.* All were filled with wonder at such commands. And yet, He proceeded even further: *All that you ask in my name, you shall receive.* (John xiv. 14) You will be able to do all that I am able to do. You will do all of the greatest things that you have seen me do, *and you will do even greater things.* In fact, if one was cured on touching the edge of the robe of Jesus Christ while He was wearing it, weren't even greater miracles being performed by St. Paul, *when there were even brought from his body, to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them?* (Act. xix. 12) And not only the linens which had touched the apostles had that power, but *their very shadow: when Peter came, his shadow at the least, might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities.* (Act. v. 15)

Here, therefore, is the greatest miracle of Jesus Christ. Not only is He all-powerful, but here He renders man all-powerful and, if possible, more powerful than He Himself is, performing constantly greater miracles, and all through faith and through prayer: *and all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.* (Matt. xxi. 22). Faith, therefore, and prayer are all-

powerful, and they clothe man with the omnipotence of God. *If you can believe*, said the Saviour, *all is possible to him who believes.* (Mark ix. 22)

The performance of miracles, therefore, is not the difficulty. Rather, the difficulty is to believe. *If you can believe.* That is the miracle of miracles; to believe absolutely and without hesitation. *I believe, Lord, help my unbelief* (Mark ix. 23), said the man to whom Jesus said: *If you can believe.*

Lord, augment our faith within us, said the apostles. (Luke xvii. 5) We need only faith, for with it we can do all things. *Oh! if you had faith*, said the Lord, *like a grain of mustard seed, you would say to the mulberry tree: Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea: and it would obey you.* (Luke xvii. 6) And it would find a bottom in the waves to spread there its roots.

Thus the great miracle of Jesus Christ is not to make us all-powerful men. Rather, it is to make us courageous and faithful believers who dare to hope all from God, when it is a question of His glory.

We must understand, therefore, that this faith which can do all, is inspired. In order to dare make this act of faith which can do all, it is necessary that God give us effective motion, the power to act. And the fruit of these precepts of the Gospel, which we read today, is to abandon ourselves to this divine motion which makes us feel that God wishes something from us. No matter how great it might be, one must dare, and not hesitate an instant.

When it is a question of asking God for the things necessary to salvation, we do not need any of this particular motion from God, who tells us what He wishes that we do in order to obtain His power. We know

very definitely through the Gospel that God wishes that we ask Him for our salvation and our conversion. Let us ask then without hesitating, assured that if we do it with the necessary perseverance, all will be possible.

Let us dare all things, and no matter how slight our faith may be, let us fear nothing. A small grain of faith, the size of a mustard seed, enables us to undertake anything. Grandeur has no part in it, said the Saviour. I ask only for truth and sincerity; if it becomes necessary that this small grain grow, God Who has given it, will make it grow. Act then with the little you possess, and much will be given you: *And this grain of mustard seed and this budding faith, will become a great tree, and the birds of the air will dwell in the branches thereof.* (Matt. xiii. 31, 32) The most sublime virtues will not only come there, but will make their abode therein.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY

Persevere in prayer; it contains the fullness of faith (Ibid.).

Weigh well the qualities of faith and of prayer. Do so without the least hesitation, with full faith; this is what St. Paul calls *fullness of faith*; what the Vulgate has translated simply: *In plénitudine multâ: with great fullness.* (Thess. i. 5) The *fullness of intelligence*, St. Paul calls it elsewhere (Col. ii. 2), and again, in formal terms, the *fullness of hope, and the fullness of faith.* (Hebr. vi. 11; x. 22) That is to say then, that it is necessary to have a

faith so full that it does not belie itself in any direction, and that there is no mistrust where God is concerned. Again St. Paul says of Abraham, that *he staggered not by distrust; but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God: fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is able also to perform.* (Rom. iv. 20, 21) Behold then, again according to St. Paul, the faith which obtains all, *and the faith which justifies us.* (Rom. iv. 22) Such, therefore, is the first condition of prayer noted in the gospel; i.e., that it be done with a full faith. The second condition is again marked: *to forgive if you have aught against any man.* (Mark xi. 25) We obtain all that we ask, therefore, if we ask for it with a heart full of faith in God, and at peace with all men. God demands a heart without bitterness and without mistrust. We receive all from Him at this price. Yet, is it possible not to be distrustful of ourselves, and should we not be so? Yes, we should distrust ourselves since we are so weak, and do not even know whether our faith is a lively one, still less, whether we shall persevere. With all this uncertainty, however, I dare say that we must not worry over it. Without examining our worthiness, while our prayer is being kindled, we must dare to wait and demand all, and to be so filled with God, that we no longer think of ourselves. Is this the reckless confidence that the heretics preach? Not at all. Without extinguishing the reflections that we might make on our weakness, however, it is in the fervor of prayer to forget ourselves so completely, that we remain concerned only with what God can do, and with the boundless goodness which He has promised to those who persevere in prayer.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY

The division of the days in the last week of the Saviour. The subject of Our Lord's last discourses (Matt. xxi. 23-32; Mark xi. 11-33; Luke xx. 1-8).

Counting with St. Mark, this day is the fourth day of the last week of our Saviour, which is the fifth before Easter. The first was that of His entrance. The second day of this week began when Jesus, hungry and returning from Bethany to the city, desiccated the barren fig tree and rid the temple of "robbers," as He called them. The third day is the one on which the disciples passed the same fig tree and saw that it was withered and dry; it is also the day when we heard so many marvels concerning the faith. The fourth day is the one on which, as Saint Mark states: *Jesus came once more to Jerusalem* (Mark xi. 27); and it is the one on which He reproached the Jews with the baptism of St. John, as we shall see.

After that, there seems to be no distinction of days. We learn only that *Jesus Christ came every day to the temple to teach there, and that the people came there to hear Him every morning.* (Luke xxi. 37, 38) It is necessary, therefore, to divide what remains of His discourses between Wednesday and Thursday during the day, for He was taken at night, and was crucified the following day.

The closer we approach to the end of Our Lord's life, the more attentive we must be to His discourses. Yesterday, which was Tuesday, He showed us that faith is the

foundation of prayer, and of all Christian life, and that nothing is more essential to piety. Later He will establish faith, and authorize His mission in an admirable manner; first, through the testimony of John the Baptist, and then through that of David. Thereafter we shall witness, one after another, incidents that will close the mouths of all the contradictors, and so leave this testimony to the world that His doctrine was absolutely irreproachable, since His greatest enemies remained mute before Him.

Let us meditate on this truth. Let us consider in what way Jesus Christ answers those who questioned Him with a spirit of contradiction. From their experience, let us learn how we must consult the eternal truth.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

Jesus refuses to answer the questions of the proud and unbelieving Jews, but He answers those of humble and docile minds (Matt. xxi. 27; Mark xi. 33; Luke xxi. 1-8).

And it came to pass that on one of the days, as He was teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes, with the ancients, met together. And spoke to Him, saying: Tell us by what authority dost Thou these things? (Luke xx. 1, 2) It appeared that this demand concerned, principally, the power that He gave Himself to teach, for they came to Him as He was teaching. But the demand extends itself also to all the other things that Jesus did. It is as if He had been asked: by what authority have you entered

so solemnly into the temple? By what authority do you teach there? By what authority do you drive out the sellers and the buyers? It would be for us to give this authority. We have not given it. From whom do you receive it? Behold a demand made in due form by the assembly and by persons who seemed to have the most right to do so. Nevertheless, Jesus gives them no information on the subject. *And Jesus said to them: Neither do I tell thee by what authority I do these things.* (Luke xx. 8) Rather, He contents Himself with accusing them, before the people, of bad faith, and hypocrisy, as we shall see.

On the other hand, Jesus revealed Himself so easily to docile and humble minds. The Samaritan woman, a sinner, spoke to Him honestly of the Christ: *I am He who am speaking with thee*, He told her without circumlocution. (John iv. 26) *Do you believe in the Son of God*, said He to the man born blind? *Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in Him?* *And Jesus said to him: thou hast both seen Him; and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said: I believe, Lord. And falling down, he adored Him.* (John ix. 35-38) And it was the same in other things. When He did not answer in this simple manner, so worthy of Him, it was because the men were not worthy that He manifest Himself to them in this way.

By what authority dost Thou these things? (Matt. xxi. 23) He had already answered them in a similar case, in the presence of all the people. At that time he had said to a paralytic who was presented to Him to be cured: *Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee* (Matt. ix. 2); which, in reality, was far greater than anything He had ever done. However, since the doctors of the law found Him unintelligible, He spoke to them in the following

manner: *Which is easier, to say thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and walk?* (Matt. ix. 6) Man, it is to you that I speak, *arise and walk*. He had, accordingly, clearly established the power that He had to forgive sins, the greatest that could be given to a man. There was no need to question Him about the rest; there was nothing to do but to submit. As they could not make up their minds, they returned to ask Him: *By what authority dost Thou these things?* (Luke xx. 2). It was as though they asked: By what authority do you heal the sick? By what authority do You give back sight to the blind? By what authority do you resuscitate the dead? It was only too evident that it was through divine power, and that they questioned Him on such an obvious point only in bad faith.

Elsewhere He was asked in the same spirit, *How long dost Thou hold our souls in suspense? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* (John x. 24) To hear them speak with such force, one would say that they wished to know the truth in all good faith, but Jesus' reply makes one see the contrary. *You ask that I tell you frankly who I am: I speak to you and you believe me not; the works that I do in the name of My Father, they give testimony of me.* (John x. 25) In reality, these questioners had two testimonies: that of His word, and that of His miracles. Since they deliberated after that, instead of believing, an evil understanding must have been driving them on. Eternal truth, which they deliberated badly, had nothing to satisfy them, and served only to confuse them before all the people. The same will happen to us if we deliberate against our own conscience on things already clarified: we only try then to deceive the world, or to deceive

ourselves. Let us stop flattering ourselves. Let us stop seeking expedients to ruin ourselves. Let us reject this dangerous and scandalous state and be faithful to the duties of our profession. Let us not retreat against the precept of the Gospel. Let us not seek to grow slack and to lose all.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY

The blindness of men who are more disposed to believe St. John than Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. xxi. 23–25; Mark xi. 27; Luke xx. 1–8).

The baptism of John, whence was it? (Matt. xxi. 25)
Is it possible that the Saviour must draw His testimony from Saint John the Baptist, who was only His precursor, who was not the Spouse, but the friend of the Spouse, as he himself had stated; who was not the Christ, but the one who was to prepare the way for Him; who, in one word, was not worthy to loosen the laces of His shoes? That was John the Baptist, and nevertheless Jesus makes use of his testimony to convince those who did not wish to believe in Christ Himself. John, however, had performed no miracles, and Jesus had filled all of Judea with them. John spoke like the servant, and Jesus Christ as the Son, Who spoke of what He had seen in the bosom of His Father. *Such is the weakness of our eyes, says St. Augustine: A torch suits us better than the sun. We search for the sun in a torch.* Jesus understood this very well and so He said: *I have a testimony much greater than that one*

of John's. (John v. 36) When, accordingly, He made use of this testimony, He brought to their weak eyes a light more proportioned to their weakness, and this is what He does on this occasion. Oh, complete blindness of men, more disposed to believe Saint John than Jesus Christ Himself! Oh God! Who wouldn't tremble? But who would not ask You while trembling, how such a strange disposition came into the heart of the Jews? Might there not also be something like this within ourselves? Let us knock at the door to find out the secret; perhaps, it will be opened to us.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY

The unbelieving Jews are confused by the testimony of Saint John (Ibid.; John v. 33, 36).

If we say that the baptism of John is from heaven, He will say to us: Why have you not believed it? (Matt. xxi. 25) He had already told them, and they had not known what to answer: You sent to John and he gave testimony to the truth. (John v. 33) If they had acknowledged the celestial mission of Saint John the Baptist, he would have closed their mouths by his testimony. What could they say then? That the baptism of John did not come from God? They dared not say it before the people who considered him a prophet. We know nothing about it, said they. And I, said He, Neither am I telling you by what authority I am acting. (Matt. xxi. 26, 27) People of bad faith, you who do not dare to acknowledge nor to deny

the mission of St. John the Baptist, you do not deserve that I answer you. Acknowledge; deny; think what you wish. You are confused, and the only course for you is to hold your tongues. There is another one, that of believing in Jesus, but you are not able to do that, as we shall see.

You sent to John, and he gave testimony to the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but I see these things, that you may be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater testimony than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to perfect; the works themselves, which I do, give testimony of me, that the Father hath sent me. (John v. 33-36)

Jesus made use of the testimony of Saint John the Baptist in this way, *in order*, said He, *that you be saved*, and to convince you through yourselves. There then is the pride and the hypocrisy of these questioners of bad faith abashed. They do not deserve that the Saviour tell them again what He has told them one hundred times before, and which, a hundred times before, they had not wished to believe.

How will it be on the last day, when the truth, manifested in all its force, will confuse us eternally before the entire universe? Where shall we go? Alas! Where shall we hide? Let us observe now, however, how Jesus confounds the doctors and the high priests.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY

The Parable of the two disobedient sons; its application to cowardly and lukewarm Christians and to bigots (Matt. xxi. 28-31).

What think you of this: A man had two sons? (Matt. xxi. 28) This parable will convince the high priests and the senators of an evident hypocrisy. The Son of God notes two traits in these two sons: one is that of a manifest disobedience; the other is that of an imperfect obedience, more apparent than substantial, and it happens that the latter is the more injurious.

There are people who promise everything, either from weakness, because they do not have the courage to resist openly, or from instability or deceit. They do not dare to tell you that they do not wish to amend, and although little determined to obey, they say to you: *Sir, I am leaving: Eo Domine*. They address you as *sir*. They have respect. In appearance they are prompt to obey. They do not say, I shall go, but I am going. You would think, therefore, that they are leaving, and that all will be carried out. However, they do not obey. They do not move from the spot, either because they wish to deceive you, or, which is worse, because they deceive themselves, and believe themselves to have more will power and more courage than they do.

This trait is manifestly the worst: these weak resolutions, and this exterior piety cause them to imagine that they have religion, and so they do not have the horror of

themselves and of their condition that will make them change. The one who speaks out, however, and says: *I will not; nolo*, resists God through an open disobedience, and so cannot flatter himself with having any special gift. In the end he is ashamed of himself, and, awakened by his own excess, he repents. *Poenitentia motus Abiit: touched by repentance he obeys.*

With this parable Our Lord attempts to make the high priests see that the latter trait is theirs. Nourished in piety, they speak only of God, of religion, and of the obedience which they owe to the law. Because they speak of it so often, they think of themselves as righteous men, and never correct themselves. For this reason Jesus Christ speaks to them in this terrible manner: *Amen I say to you, that the publicans and the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you.* (Matt. xxi. 31) Abashed by their excesses, these sinners have done penance for their faults on hearing the voice of St. John. You, however, who through your knowledge and the dignity of your duties were to set the example for others, not only have you not come forward first, as one had reason to expect you would, but you have not even known how to profit by the example of others. More hardened in crime than the Publicans and the harlots, you have seen them converted without being touched by it. Indeed, you have sunk even deeper into your crimes; first, by not doing better than such people, and by not setting them the example; secondly, by not even profiting from theirs.

John came in the way of justice, without any other mark of his mission except his saintly and austere life; nevertheless, *the Publicans and the harlots have been touched by him.* (Matt. xxi. 32) Yet, you have seen Jesus

Christ, who walked like John in the way of justice, not in the desert, but in the midst of people and who performed such great miracles that it was enough to move the most unfeeling people. *Which of you shall convince me of sin?* (John viii. 46) You, I say, have seen Him and have heard His voice, and yet you have not believed. What shame is now yours! What torment will follow!

You, oh priests and religious, men and women of God, whose lives do not correspond to your state, and all of you people, so seemingly virtuous, devout persons by profession, apply this parable to yourselves. Will you never tire of wearing the empty title of piety in imitation of the Pharisees, of the high priests, of the senators, and of the Jews? Blush with embarrassment. Humble yourselves. Confess your weaknesses and correct them. It is to you that Jesus speaks in this discourse.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

The parable of the wine growers. The just punishment of the Jews: their heritage is transferred to the Gentiles (Matt. xxi. 33-46; Mark xii. 1-9; Luke xx. 9-19).

Listen again to this parable. (Matt. xxi. 33) In the preceding parable, Jesus made the senators, the doctors and the high priests feel their iniquity. Here he is going to make them admit the punishment they deserve. Indeed, He will convince them so powerfully that they themselves will be forced to pronounce their own sentence.

Listen again to this parable. It is to us that He speaks

as well as to the Jews. Let us listen, therefore, and let us see, under the clearest and the simplest figure possible, the whole history of the Church.

There was a man, an householder, who planted a vineyard. This is what David had chanted: *Thou hast brought a vineyard out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the Gentiles from the land of Canaan, and thou hast planted it there: thou plantedst the roots thereof, and it filled the land: the shadow of it covered the hills, and the branches thereof, the cedars of God: it stretched forth its branches into the sea, and its boughs into the river Euphrates.* (Ps. lxxix. 9–12) Even more clearly, Isaias says: *A vineyard has been planted for my beloved; for the Son who has been anointed the Christ: He has made it of the best plants: He built a tower in the midst thereof, to lodge there, those who guarded it: He built a winepress therein.* Behold the very words of Our Saviour.

He rented it to husbandmen. (Matt. xxi. 33) That is, he entrusted the planting to the high priests, the children of Aaron, and to the doctors of the law.

He sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might gather the fruit thereof. (Matt. xxi. 34) I have sent, said the Lord, *my servants, the prophets, night and morning to warn the princes, the high priests, and the people, that they were to give to God the fruit that He was expecting from the cultivation that He had given to His vineyard by law and the holy Scriptures. Instead of listening to the prophets, they persecuted them and massacred them. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?* said Saint Stephen to them. *They have slain them who foretold of the coming of the just one, of whom you have been now the betrayers and the murderers.* This

is exactly why Jesus Christ reproached them in the parable. (Act. vii. 52) After the prophets, *He has sent His Son*, Jesus Christ Himself: *They will respect my Son*. His admirable doctrine and His miracles should have been enough to make Him respected. Nevertheless, they dragged Him out of the vineyard, out of Jerusalem, to Calvary, where He was inhumanly killed by Pontius Pilate and the Gentiles. Admire how poignantly Jesus hurries them on, how He discovered what they were plotting, what they were going to accomplish in two days. Would they not be moved to pity? All the more so, since the Saviour placed their crime so evidently before their very eyes. Having asked them what the father of a family would do on such an occasion, they had been forced to answer: *He will punish these evil men and will let out His vineyard to other winegrowers* (Matt. xxi. 41) or, as they explained it afterwards: *The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof*. (Matt. xxi. 43) This is what was to happen soon, when the apostles said to them: *To you it behooved us first to speak the word of God: but because you reject it, and you judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles: For so the Lord hath commanded us: I have set thee to be the light of the Gentiles*. (Act. xiii. 46, 47)

Behold then the accomplishment of the parable of the Saviour: the Kingdom of God is taken away from the Jews, and is given to a people who were to bear the fruits of it. *For the Gentiles hearing the declaration that the apostles made to the Jews so boldly, rejoiced and glorified the word of God; and all those who were preordained to life eternal, believed*. (Act. xiii. 48) Thus the Gentiles bore the fruits that God had expected from the Jews, as

the apostle, Saint Paul, states: *Circumcision profiteth indeed, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a transgressor of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* (Rom. ii. 25)

Let us not disappoint the expectation of the Saviour. Since we are of this nation which He has chosen to bear the fruits of His word, let us be fruitful in good works. *But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, chastity, mildness, faith, temperance, goodness.* (Gal. v. 22, 23) These are the fruits that we must bear, and not the works of the flesh which fructify death which are *fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, quarrels, jealousies, drunkenness,* and all the others that Saint Paul mentions in the same passage. (Gal. v. 19–21) Otherwise, the Kingdom of God will also be taken from us as from the Jews, *for if God has not pardoned the Jews, who were the natural branches of His Olive tree, He will pardon you even less.* (Rom. xi. 21) This was to be the great sorrow of the Jews—to see in the hands of the Gentiles the crown which was destined to be theirs; *When, as the Saviour says, many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Matt. viii. 11, 12) For they will see the place which they were to have, the crown which they were to wear on their heads. Then they will weep fruitlessly, and rage will drive them to the very gnashing of teeth. Listen, dear Christian! Read your destiny in that of the Jews. Ponder these words in your heart, and do not let this parable, so clearly explained, fall to the ground.

Oh my God! You destine me for this crown. Let me

accept it readily from Your hands. It will not perish, for You know to whom You give it. You know Your elect, and the number of them will be complete. Place me among the number of those who will not lose their crown.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY

We must render fruit in season. The heritage is ours (Matt. xxi. 41; Mark xii. 7).

Let us weigh these words in particular: *Who will render fruit in season?* (Matt. xxi. 41) Distinct from the fruits of childhood are those of youth and of old age. So too, the fruit of one who is just beginning differs from that of him who is perfect in piety. The fruit of the novice is not that of a religious. Likewise, the fruit of minor orders differs from that of the priesthood. They in turn differ from those of the episcopate. Take care also, to think not only of the fruit, but also of its ripeness. Otherwise, the father of the family will not accept it.

Let us ponder the following: *The heritage will be ours.* (Mark xii. 7) Yet, we seek our independence. The prodigal wishes to be given his share of the possessions. He is tired of being in tutelage under the guidance of a good father. In bringing about the death of Jesus Christ, the high priests imagined that they were relieving themselves of an irksome yoke, an inconvenient ecclesiastical censure. Henceforth, who would dare to trouble the domination that they exercised over the consciences, and the plundering which they did under these pretexts? But the

prudence of the flesh is overthrown even on earth. They lost, not only the fruits, but even the least part of the heritage which they wished to possess. Their power was taken away from them. Their city and their temple were destroyed. There they were, the eternal disgrace of nations.

THE THIRTIETH DAY

The blindness of the Jews in misunderstanding the Christ, who is the cornerstone that they have rejected. (Luke xx. 15-20).

God forbid! they said, for they had a horror of what they were doing. They were those who, after killing the prophets, wished also to kill the Son. Nevertheless when they were told that they wished to do it, they cried out: *God forbid!* (Luke xx. 16) They did not know themselves, and so did not wish to believe that the One they were causing to be put to death could possibly be the Christ, nor that His death could attract the reprobation of the nation. They did not know that opposition and suffering was one of the marks of the Messiah in His first coming. But the Saviour opened their eyes through two prophecies: *the stone which they have rejected while building, has become the corner stone* (Ps. cxvii. 22), the principal stone, the bond and the foundation of the entire edifice. This principal stone was, without doubt, the Christ. But this stone was to be rejected. The Christ, therefore, was to be rejected. And if so, by whom, if not by those to

whom He was coming? It would not have been so marvelous had He not been listened to, nor received by those He was not addressing, such as the Gentiles. But the Jews, who were to build the spiritual edifice, rejected this stone, which became through this means, the cornerstone which unites the Jews and the Gentiles in one single edifice. *This is the Lord's doing and it is wonderful in our eyes.* (Ps. cxvii. 23)

Behold, I will lay a stone in the foundation of Sion, a tried stone, a corner stone, a precious stone founded in the foundation (Isa. xxviii. 16), upon God Himself. And this stone, so precious and so important for the construction of the edifice, will not be placed there without opposition. Because for you, oh children of God drawn from the Gentiles according to the councils of His eternal predestination, this will be a stone of sanctification, resembling the one upon which Jacob had slept his mysterious sleep, and which *was anointed with oil to be a monument to the glory of God.* (Gen. xxviii. 18) But it will be a stone against which you will stumble, *and for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to the two houses of Israel, for a snare and a ruin to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.* (Isa. viii. 14, 15) The Christ was to be this unprecedented and fundamental stone. Nevertheless, at the same time, He was to be a scandal to Jerusalem: *a scandal to the Jews*, said Saint Paul. (I Cor. i. 23) *Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be bruised; and upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder* (Luke xx. 18), said the Lord.

Jesus Christ is our rule and our judge. We bruise ourselves against this rule when we sin; it falls down upon us when He punishes us. One is followed by the other.

The sinner who has bruised himself, and has lost all his strength in transgressing the law of Jesus Christ, is crushed by His just and eternal vengeance. But we can unite ourselves to this stone in a happier and more suitable manner. *Approach*, says St. Peter, *as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen and made honorable by God. Establish yourselves upon this stone, and enter into the structure of this building, like living stones, and become the house of God.* We are thus united by faith and the fundamental stone, which is Jesus Christ, to the entire body of the faithful who are the stones of which this sacred edifice is composed. *Take care*, continues the apostle, *that Jesus Christ be not to you as to the faithless, a stone against which you will bruise yourselves, while stumbling against His word.* (I Peter ii. 4–8)

If the foundation is solid, build upon it without fear; place your prop upon it. Fear not. Do not hesitate. The stone is firm, firm to those who lean upon it for support, and firm to those who stumble against it, to dash them to pieces.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY

The parable of the wedding feast. The Jews are the wedding guests who refuse to come (Matt. xxii. 1–15; Luke xiv. 16–20).

See with what reasonableness the eternal wisdom arranges things! Nothing was more reasonable, during the time that the Saviour's death was being plotted, than to

speak, as He did, to the heads of such a black conspiracy, making them see what would be the effects of this deed, and how disastrous it would be to themselves and to the nation. It was good also to anticipate the scandal of the cross, and to show that if the Saviour were rejected, if He became a scandal to the Jews, He would not be less great, since He was following the ancient prophecies, and was to be the corner stone, the foundation of the entire edifice and the hope of the world. The Son of God taught all these truths two days before His death. Nothing was more calculated, either to correct the malice of His enemies, or to anticipate the scandal of His disciples. That which He is going to say now, is not less apropos.

And Jesus answering, said to them: (Matt. xxii. 1.) It is evident from the use of this word *answering* that He was continuing His discourse. In many passages of the Gospel, it appears that the Son of God, Who saw to the very depths of men's hearts, often answered the secret thoughts of those who listened to Him. After having heard that He would choose for Himself another people, nothing was more natural than for each one to search within himself, for the most obvious reason for this abandonment of the Jews, and the means that He would use to fill His house. Jesus explained this in the following parable: *The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king who made a marriage feast for his son.* (Matt. xxii. 2) Jesus Christ was *the bridegroom of this wedding: He who has the bride is the bridegroom*, said Saint John the Baptist (John iii. 29), while speaking of Him. It is He Who had come to wed His Church, to shelter it through His blood, to endow it with His kingdom, and to bring it into the society of His glory. He gives a great banquet where He gives His sacred word

to be the nourishment of souls. And He gives Himself to all His people as the bread of eternal life.

He sent His servants out to call to the feast all those who had been invited; but they refused to come. He sent again other servants, with an order to say: All is ready, come to the wedding. (Matt. xxii. 3, 4) Those who were invited and who refused to come, were the Jews to whom He gave notice Himself, and He sent word through His apostles that the hour of the feast had come, that they come promptly, or that they call others. This concerned the Jews, but it concerns us also. We are now the invited ones, and we must find out what prevents men from coming to this celestial feast.

The most common excuse given was business, and, so to speak, the enchantment of the affairs of the world. By this, Jesus does not refer to the extraordinary affairs which arise in life. Rather, it is the common routine of business which concerns and which attracts men, so much so that they do not give themselves the leisure to think about their vocation, nor to listen to Jesus Christ Who calls them to His banquet. *But they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death.* (Matt. xxii. 5, 6) In fact, this is what happened to the Saviour. Some resisted His preaching of the Gospel openly, but the main reason for rejecting Him was negligence, *neglexerunt*, caused by concern for the affairs of life. Jesus Christ had already stated this parable on another occasion. St. Luke, who brings it to us, recalls, at the same time, the vain excuses of those who did not come to the feast. *Some said: I have bought a farm; others: I have*

bought five yoke of oxen for farm labor; others, I married a wife and cannot come. (Luke xiv. 18–20) Those did not openly undervalue His word, but, occupied with the cares of the world, they came and went without thinking of anything but their business. They did not say I will have nothing to do with you nor your feast. Rather, they excused themselves with a sort of respect. *I beg you,* said they, *to excuse me for this time.* This was rather a delay than a refusal. Such is life. The apostles came to say to the Jews, to the Romans, to everybody: A great thing has happened in Jerusalem. The truth has been manifested, and the way has been opened for the happiness of the future life.

What is that to me? Each one went his own way, and to his business; one to the city, the other to the country. Each one had his own pleasure or petty interest. How much more gratified were those who were not even occupied with their domestic troubles like ordinary civilians, but who, attached to what is called the great affairs of the world, did not merely say: *I have bought a farm,* or, *I have taken a wife;* but, I have a province, I have an army; I have an important transaction; I have an entire empire to conduct. Who cared in this case what Jesus Christ said? Or who troubled himself to inquire into it?

It happened this way in the days of Noe: And they did eat and drink, they married wives, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark: And the flood came, and destroyed them all. Thus will it be in the days of the Son of Man. (Luke xvii. 26–30) They did not say: they killed, they pillaged, and they committed adulteries. Indeed, concern over the simplest business suffices to deafen us, to blind us, to gratify us, and

to take away from us the leisure to meditate on ourselves. Death always comes unexpectedly; and while in the manner of these silly creatures we take delight in what is presented to us for our amusement, the bowstring suddenly snaps, we are trapped, and there is no longer any means of escaping. Oh poor human nature! Is such a feeble bait all that is necessary to trap you? Is such a weak charm able to put you to sleep? Such a feeble occupation to blind you, and to take from you the remembrance of God and of His terrible judgements? *None of those who are invited will taste of my banquet.* (Luke xiv. 24) This is the sentence of the judge. Such small things have turned them away and deceived them! Where shall we find tears to deplore our blindness and our weakness!

This is the parable that Jesus Christ preached and that He found apropos to repeat a few days before His death. He added to it, for the benefit of the Jews, the part which concerned them and the dark plots which they planned among themselves in order to ruin Him. Some of them laid hands on his servants and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. When the king had heard of it, however, he was angry, and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. (Matt. xxii. 6, 7) Once more let us apply these words to ourselves. He who conspires against justice, in whatever manner it may be, conspires against Jesus Christ. He who oppresses the poor man, attacks Him. He who is not with Him, is against Him; He who neglects His commandments and tramples them under foot, crucifies Him and esteems His blood unclean. (Read, and you will find it stated in Heb. vi. 6; x. 29.)

THE THIRTY-SECOND DAY

The poor and the infirm are called to the wedding feast; compel them to come (Matt. xxii. 8, 9; Luke xiv. 21-23).

The marriage feast is ready; but those who were invited have not been judged worthy. Where shall we find guests? Go into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage (Matt. xxii. 8, 9); the good, the bad, the poor, the halt and the blind. (Luke xiv. 21) I did not come to call the just, but the sinners. (Matt. ix. 13) The Pharisees and the doctors of the law who presumed their justice are excluded; *for they stumbled at the stumbling stone, on coming to me; because they sought it not by faith, but as it were, of works (Rom. ix. 32)* and by their own merits. They did not search for a doctor to cure them, and for a Saviour who might deliver them, but for a flatterer to applaud their false virtue. I want none of them. Those who come to me filled with self-satisfaction will go away empty; *Divites dimisit inanes*, as chants the Blessed Virgin. (Luke i. 53) Bring me the first arrivals. If they are destitute, I shall refresh them; and if they are poor, I shall make them a part of my riches. I shall make them straight again if they are lame. I shall make them see if they are blind. I shall open their ears if they are deaf. It is for this that I have come. Come to me, weak ones. Come, sinners. Do not be ashamed of bringing here your benumbed feet, and your twisted limbs. The grace of Jesus Christ will straighten you.

The Pharisees did not allow themselves to be ap-

proached except by those whom they believed were just. They would say: Do not touch me, do not come near me: *If this man were a prophet, He would know that this woman who approaches Him, is a sinner.* (Luke vii. 39) But it was not so with Jesus Christ and His apostles. They brought to the feast all those whom they found, good and bad: the good, in order to sanction them; the bad, in order to convert them; and it is in this way that they filled the house of God.

Compel them to come in. (Luke xiv. 23) If there were not in grace a sort of violence, Jesus Christ would not say: *Nobody comes to Me whom My Father does not draw.* And again: *When I shall have been raised from the earth, I shall draw all to me.* (John vi. 44; xii, 32)

The preachers of the Gospel must use a sort of force. This force is beneficial, and human nature needs it.

The faithful, great and small, must make use of the power that they have, although with prudence and moderation, to crush the reign of iniquity. Men sometimes wish to be compelled, and a gentle violence prepares minds to listen.

Finally, compel yourself. Do not act indolently. Make use of every means to subdue your rebellious body. Place yourself on the narrow road in such a way, if possible, that you may not be able to retreat.

THE THIRTY-THIRD DAY

The nuptial gown; the feast is ready. The preparation for the Holy Eucharist. A spiritual wedding (Matt. xxii. 11-14).

Take care! Is it necessary only to enter into the banquet hall as soon as we are called, and then our vocation will do all the rest? Take care lest you believe this. The king will enter the banquet hall, and he who does not have on a wedding garment will be shamefully driven out. In the past, the wedding garment, a sort of finery which those who accompanied the bridegroom and bride wore when the latter passed from the paternal home to that of the bridegroom, was required attire to honor the solemnity of the occasion. One also wore this magnificent garment at the wedding feast. So it happens that the Son of God, Who takes His comparisons from the most solemn and best-known customs in human life, uses the wedding garment as a symbol to explain the interior embellishments that must be brought to His banquet.

Innocence and baptismal sanctity are the first of these embellishments. Formerly, the Eucharist was given immediately following baptism. It was always necessary to conserve the grace received and so there must be no doubt that baptismal sanctity was, so to speak, the natural finery that was always brought to the bridegroom's wedding feast. But the parable of the Prodigal Son makes us see that great sinners, who have been unfortunate enough to fall from their innocence and soil this white robe which had been given to them at baptism, are not forbidden admission to the banquet of the father of the family, for He returns their first robe to these prodigals. *Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring on the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.* (Luke xv. 22, 23) Come then, innocent souls; come from baptism to the holy table. Come, you are cleansed; the nuptial feast

is prepared for you, and not only the feast, but also the nuptial bed. For every soul cleansed in this manner is the spouse, and the king's son is united to her. But I do not banish you from this feast, oh sinners! O faithless spouses! You who have failed in your given faith. Return, return, and I shall receive you, says the Lord. You too will enter the banquet hall, provided you have brought back your first robe, and wear the ring which is placed on your finger, the mark of the union when the Divine Word enters with you.

Let us, therefore, bring innocence and sanctity to the table of the bridegroom. This is the immortal jewel that the one who is at the same time the spouse, the guest, and the immolated one asks of us. Otherwise, we should be as swine before which would be cast pearls and precious jewels.

Rich garments are a mark of joy, and it is lawful to rejoice at the table of the king, when He is celebrating the wedding of His Son with holy souls, and when He gives them a body to enjoy, that they may become one body and one spirit with Him through Communion. For that which is here called the nuptial feast is also in another sense, the consummation of the consecrated marriage, wherein the Church and every holy soul is united to the Spouse, body to body, heart to heart, spirit to spirit, and where the following promise of Jesus is fulfilled: *He that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me.* (John. vi. 58) Come then with your richest garments; come with all the virtues. Come with a joy worthy of the feast made for you, and of the immortal meat given to you: *This bread is the bread of heaven; this bread is a living bread which gives life to the world.* (John vi. 32, 33, 41, 51)

Eat, oh friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved, with that which transports the soul, and makes it taste in advance, the pleasures of angels.

If the Bridegroom were always with us, we would never experience sorrow. But let us listen to what He Himself says: *The friends of the Spouse, the children of marriage, as they were called in sacred language, those who are invited to the nuptial banquet cannot fast nor mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them. The day will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and then they shall fast.* (Matt. ix. 15) We are now in those days. We are not in the days when the earth heard the voice of the celestial Bridegroom who made St. John the Baptist say: *The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth with great joy because of the Bridegroom's voice. This, my joy therefore is fulfilled.* (John iii. 29) We are no longer in those times. Jesus has returned to the One Who sent Him, and the celestial Bridegroom appears no longer among us. We no longer see this day that Abraham and all the prophets desired. The Bridegroom has disappeared. The cloud has taken Him and all that remains for us is to cry out night and day with the bride: *Come back, come back my dearly beloved.* (Cant. ii. 17) We must, therefore, bring to the royal feast a joy that is mingled with sadness. The wedding garment, rich and magnificent through the grace of sanctity, either preserved or returned, must contain something of mourning. We must fast, we must mourn at the nuptial feast in the form in which we are to celebrate it. For the feast which we are celebrating is the commemoration of the death of the Bridegroom. Let us then clothe ourselves anew, in spiritual mourning, for this feast. Let us bring to it senses that have been morti-

fied by fasting. Indeed, this is what the fasting of Lent means to us, a means by which we prepare ourselves for the paschal feast.

Formerly, the Church fasted two or three times weekly in memory of the sorrow which the retreat of the Bridegroom had caused Her. Friday, which was the day of His death, and Saturday which was the day of His burial, were consecrated to fasting.

Abstinence remains with us as a mark of the abstinence in which we should live during the absence of the Bridegroom, renouncing joy, and announcing His death until He returns. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the Church obliges us to fast before Holy Communion. We must understand that it is by this fasting that we must prepare for the bread of life, while refusing all other nourishment and ceasing to live according to the senses. Thus mortification of the senses must form one of the pieces of our wedding garment, and we must mortify ourselves in order to celebrate the death of the Saviour.

THE THIRTY-FOURTH DAY

Woe to him who attends a wedding feast without the wedding garment; many are called but few are chosen. Little flock, you are cherished by God (Matt. xxii. 11-14).

My friend, through vocation, who becomes my enemy in slighting it, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. (Matt. xxii. 12)
For, what can one answer the Saviour who accuses us

through the mouth of the apostle, *of not discerning the body of the Lord?* (I Cor. xi. 29) *Tie his hands and his feet*, said the Lord. Take away his liberty of which he has made such evil use. He wished to enter with deadly dispositions. Drive him out: the oftener he wishes to enter the more he must be thrust out doors. But what will he find there, poor wretch? Far from the house of God where light resides, where truth manifests itself, where Jesus Christ shines eternally, where the saints are like stars, what will he find there if not the *darkness* of an eternal dungeon? Behold the exterior darkness of which Jesus Christ speaks so often. *There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Instead of the chaste delights of the holy table, there will be eternal weeping. Rage against one's self, rage against one's rashness, and against the cowardly confessors who have too readily introduced us to the sacred banquet, will drive him to the very gnashing of teeth. To have been called and then to have lost one's place among the number of friends of the Saviour, will cause the most cruel and the most poignant part of our anguish. The voice of the bridegroom and of the bride will cease. All joy will be banished from this sad place; only its desolation will be eternal.

Many are called, and few are chosen. (Matt. xx. 16) Jesus Christ has often warned us of this fact and He had already done so before this.

This statement is true, first among the Jews: *I have come*, said the Saviour, *for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* (Matt. xv. 24) Jesus Christ preached, and performed His miracles, throughout all of Judea. *He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed.* (Act. x. 38) The apostles also rendered testimony of His

resurrection before all the people, as He had commanded them. Nevertheless, in this immense number of the Jews, only the residue, that is to say, a very small remainder of the people were saved. Therefore, *Israel has not found what it was seeking*; that is, the Christ and His kingdom; *but the elect, in very small numbers, have found Him; and the others, of which the multitude was immense, have been blinded* (Rom. ix. 3, 4, 7) for their sins by a just judgement of God. There, manifestly, the word of Jesus Christ about the Jews is verified.

But the Saviour does not speak only of the Jews in this passage of the parable. For, after having shown us that the Gentiles were called in the person of these blind and of these lame who are invited to His banquet, He concludes that *there are many called, and few chosen*. (Matt. xx. 16) *There are few, continues the Saviour, who enter through the narrow gate*. (Matt. vii. 14) There are, consequently, many called, but few chosen. The condition of those who are called but who do not persevere in their vocation is more terrible than that of the others, for these are the servants *who have known the will of their Master without doing it*. Tyre and Sidon and the Ninivites will rise against them, and the *judgement of these ungrateful cities will be light*, compared to the one which Christians, faithless to that grace which they received, must expect. Oh, Jesus! Jesus! Save me. Iniquity is multiplied among the children of men, *for we see no saints*. The world is filled with those who were called but who do not even wish to think of their vocation, nor to remember that they are Christians.

Let us not live like the multitude, for a long time ago it was written: *there is none that doth good, no not one*.

(Ps. xiii. 1) So and so does thus, and we endure it. Let us not excuse ourselves with the multitude, for the multitude itself is inexcusable. If God had feared the multitude, He would not have destroyed abominable cities with fire, nor drowned the universe in the deluge. Jesus Christ said: *I am the truth*. (John xiv. 6) We do not prescribe against God. Let us line up with this small number of the elect, whom the world knows not, but *whose names are written in heaven* (Luke x. 20); those to whom the Saviour said: *Fear not little flock*. Although little in number, little in brilliance—the sweepings of the world which are hidden with Jesus Christ—you too will appear with Him. Oh little number! Wherever you may be, and in whatever corner of the Church you may hide, I join you in spirit, and I wish to live in your spirit.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH DAY

A fraudulent consultation is exposed by a marvelous decision filled with truth: Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Matt. xxii. 15–22; Mark 13–17; Luke xx. 20–26).

Let us consider here the character of those who came to consult the Saviour. Saint Luke calls them deceitful men, fit to set snares: *Insidiatores*, according to the Greek and the Latin, and he adds: *who feigned themselves just*. (Luke xx. 20) Everyman who consults, pretends to be just, for he pretends to be seeking the truth. Under this virtuous exterior, however, there is often hidden a great

deal of deceit: traps are set for others, as here they are set for the Saviour. At times, they are even set for one's self. Nothing is more mingled with fraud than consultations, because each one wishes that he be answered according to his own prejudice.

Those whom Saint Luke has designated by this general title were, according to Saint Matthew and Saint Mark, the Pharisees whose malice and hypocrisy is well known, and also the Herodians. These latter were politicians who set themselves up to honor the memory of the great Herod, that clever politician who, for having rebuilt the temple to a magnificence comparable to that of Solomon's, and for having reestablished in some manner the well-being of a weak and impoverished Judea, had appeared so great before the Jews, whose religion he professed, that some people wished to accept him as the Messiah. Politicians and hypocrites understand one another very well, and there they were, conspiring to trap the Saviour.

They began with flattery, for it is thus that men begin when they wish to deceive some one: *Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou dost not regard the person of men.* (Matt. xxii. 16) It is thus that they put vain men on their mettle to make them speak boldly and beyond all measure, and to make enemies for them. The matter was delicate, since it was a question of government. Indeed, it is in this direction that most of the traps are set to catch the servants of God who, because they are simple and without ambition, are reputed among the people of the world to have the least regard for the great powers. But Jesus Christ makes them

see very clearly that, pretending to public employments, they know how to recognize how far they must go in order to respect them.

Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar? (Matt. xxii. 17) The Jewish people had nourished themselves with the idea that they could not be brought under subjection to the faithless. The Romans had occupied Judea, and had even reunited to their empire a great part of the kingdom which they had given formerly to Herod and his family. Jerusalem itself was under this subjection, and had a governor who ruled in the name of Caesar, and collected the tributes owed to him. If Jesus Christ had decided against the tribute, *they would have delivered Him up immediately into the hands of the governor* (Luke xx. 20); and if He said that it had to be paid, they would decry Him among the people as a flatterer of the Gentiles and of the faithless empire. He silenced them, however, by making them see, first of all, that He knew their malice, and secondly, by an answer which brooks no reply.

Hypocrites, why do you tempt me? (Matt. xxii. 18) *Hypocrites*, you stir up a false zeal, for the liberty of the people of God against the faithless empire, and cover this scheme to ruin an innocent one with a noble pretext. *Show me the coin of the tribute.* (Matt. xxii. 19) I wish but that, in order to confuse you.

Whose image and inscription is this? . . . Caesar's. (Matt. xxii. 20, 21) There, you are convinced, therefore, of the possession which was Caesar's, of the public power, of your own acquiescence, and that of all the people. What then is your answer? You recognize Caesar for your prince if you make use of his money, and allow his image to appear in all your contracts, in such a way that it is

unquestionable that you carry on, under his authority, all the business of human life. Can you exempt public charges, then, and refuse to Caesar the recognition that is owed naturally to legitimate power, for the protection received from it? *Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.* Recognize his inscription, and pay him his due. Pay him, I say, with this money. Give this currency to him alone. Either give up business, and, at the same time, the peace of the public, or recognize the One through Whom you enjoy it.

And to God the things that are God's. (Matt. xxii. 21) By these words, Jesus accomplishes two things: first, He decides that to submit to public orders is to submit to the order of God Who establishes empires; secondly, He confines public orders to their legitimate confines. *Render to Caesar what is Caesar's.* God Himself orders it thus for the good of all things human. At the same time, *render to God what is God's.* His cult, and the obedience to the law which He has given you—this God reserves for Himself. He has left all the rest to the dispensation of public government.

Jesus exhausts the difficulty with this answer. Not only does He respond to this case, which they set before Him, through the use of principles with which they could not disagree, but again, He anticipates the secret objection which they might make. If you command a prince to obey the enemy of truth, what will become of religion? But this difficulty holds good no longer, since in rendering to Caesar what God has placed within His province, he, at the same time, reserves to God what God has reserved to Himself, that is, religion and conscience. *And they, leaving Him went their ways; and they admired*

His answer (Matt. xxii. 22), through which He regulated the whole problem both with regard to the people and the Caesars, without anyone being in a position to complain.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH DAY

The injustice of the Jews toward Jesus Christ. Although calumniated and oppressed by public power, Jesus maintains His authority (Ibid.).

Let us pause now and reflect briefly on the injustice of men. The high priests admired Jesus, and felt that they could not accuse Him, either before the governor, or before the people. But do they become converted and do they cease to wish to ruin Him? On the contrary, the more they are convinced, and the less reason they have to oppose Him, the greater their opposition.

Outwardly, they pretend to be zealous for the liberty of the people of God, and against the empire of the unfaithful, since they even dare to seek advice on the question of the payment of the tribute. But the very ones who advance this false zeal, in three days will cry out to Pilate: *If you save this man, you are not a friend of Caesar's.* (John xix. 12) Indeed, one of the heads of the accusation says: *We have here this man who refused to pay tribute to Caesar.* (Luke xxiii. 2) As we have seen, this is a total perversion of His answer. Who can prevent calumny, if an answer so clear has not been able to do so? All that

remains for Jesus is to suffer if God permits it, and to content Himself with His innocence.

Let us dig deeper into the human heart, and learn to know the injustice of it. Those who pretend here to be zealous against the unfaithful empire, will appeal to it against Jesus Christ and will make use of the same authority against His disciples. Is it a question of flattering the people? Caesar can do nothing. Is it a question of putting their enemies to death? Caesar can do all. Men find justice only in their prejudices, and all is good that will satisfy them; and so, they will even make use of the public power, which is established to restrain them.

Never was an answer more appropriate than that of Jesus Christ's. Never was there a time when instruction was more necessary to the Jewish people than in the critical condition in which they found themselves. These people maintained a spirit of revolt which broke out soon afterwards, and caused their ruin. The Pharisees and the false zealots secretly fomented these evil arrangements. But Jesus Christ, always filled with truth and grace, did not wish to leave this world without having clearly explained to the Jews exactly what they owed to their ruler, and without warning them of the rebellion in which the entire nation would perish.

He knew also that His faithful would be persecuted by the Caesars, whose authority and name would, in two days, intervene in the suffering that was being prepared for Him. Jesus was not unaware of it, since He Himself had predicted it. For one of the things which He had noted in predicting His suffering, is that He would be delivered to the Gentiles. *The Son of Man*, said He, *will*

be delivered to the Gentiles, in order to be flogged, outraged, crucified. (Matt. xx. 18, 19) He knew, also, that the same treatment would be given to His apostles and that the Jews would *deliver them to the Gentiles*, as well, *dragging them before the tribunal and before all the princes*, in hatred of His Gospel. (Matt. x. 17, 18) Although He knew all these things, however, He did justice to the princes, His persecutors: He maintained the authority which oppressed Him and His Church. At the same time, He told His disciples to remain, like Him, without bitterness, and in absolute submission toward this power, in *delivering themselves*, by His example, as Saint Peter states *to him that judged Him unjustly*. (I Peter. ii. 22, 23)

Let us never complain of the injustice of government even though we believe ourselves to be oppressed. Rather, let us imitate the Saviour, and keep for God all that is His, that is to say, the purity of our conscience. Let us render heartily to all men, even to iniquitous judges, if our case fails, and to our greatest enemies, that which is due them. This is what must be done even though they were wrong, and for all the more reason if they are not, and only our prejudice provokes our complaints.

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH DAY

Reflect on these words: Whose image is this? The Christian is the image of God. He must live the life of God (Matt. xxii. 20).

Whose image and inscription is this? (Matt. xxii. 20) Lay aside the public funds and Caesar's image. Christian, look at yourself. Whose image are you, and whose name do you bear? Oh God! You have created us to Your own image and likeness. *You are within us Oh Lord!* As in Your temple, *and Thy name is called upon by us.* (Jerem. xiv. 9) Oh Father, Son and Holy Spirit! We have been baptized in Your name. Your imprint is upon us. Your image, which You placed within us at birth, has been re-established through baptism. Rational soul, created to the image of God, Christian renewed through His grace, recognize your Author. By the image which you bear, recognize to Whom you belong.

To know God, to love God, to consider one's self fortunate thereby, is called, according to Saint Paul, the life of God, from Whom the Gentiles were *alienated through ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.* (Eph. iv. 18) For it is through this knowledge that we understand that God Himself is blessed, because He knows and loves Himself, and when we imitate Him, while considering ourselves fortunate through His knowledge and His love, we live of *the life of God.*

May the desire for the knowledge of God be not simple curiosity on our part, nor a dry meditation on His perfections. Rather, may it tend to establish within us His holy love. We shall live from the life of God, and we shall re-establish His image within us.

Let us unite ourselves in the life of God to the knowledge and to the love which He has for Himself. He alone can know and love Himself worthily. Let us unite ourselves as nearly as possible to the incomprehensible knowledge that He has of Himself. Let us consent with

all our hearts to the praises of which He alone is worthy. We shall live from His life, and His image will be perfect within us.

Let us bear within us all that we know of God. We know His mercy, but that is not enough. Rather, let us imprint this trait within ourselves: *Be you therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* (Luke vi. 36) We admire His perfection, but that is not enough. Let us imitate it: *Be perfect, said the Saviour, as your celestial Father is perfect.* (Matt. v. 48)

In order to make Himself known to us in a manner suited to our nature, God has sent us His Son, Whose example is our rule. Let us imitate it: *Let us learn from Him that He is gentle and that He is humble.* (Matt. xi. 29) By becoming like Him, we shall become like God, and then we shall live of His life, and His image will be re-established within us. Then, too, we shall attain life, *where we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is.* (I John iii. 2)

While bearing His image and performing the works of our Father, let us show ourselves true children of God. Therefore, let us not do the work of the devil, for fear that we might hear the hard sentence that Jesus Christ pronounced on the Jews: *You are the children of the devil, and you wish to do his works; he was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him.* (John viii. 44) He inspires sensuality, he fires concupiscence in order to make the spirit serve the flesh, to efface within us, the image of God.

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY

The terrible punishment of the corrupters of the image of God (Matt. xxii. 20).

This image, which is our soul, will pass one day through the hands and before the eyes of Jesus Christ. At that time, He will again say to us: *Whose image and inscription is this?* (Matt. xxii. 20) And our soul will answer: *God's*. It is for Him that we were created. We are to bear His imprint. Baptism cleansed our soul of original sin and imprinted an indelible character on it. But what has become of those divine traits which we were to bear? The image of God was to be within your reason, oh Christian soul! Yet, you have drowned it in wine. You found this drunkenness unworthy and vulgar, but you became intoxicated with another sort, even more dangerous, when you plunged yourself into the love of pleasures. You have given your reason over to ambition. You have rendered it a slave to gold, *that which was idolatry*. (Eph. v. 5) You have sacrificed it to your *belly*, which you have *made your God*. (Phil. iii. 19) You have made your reason an idol of vain glory. Instead of praising and blessing God night and day, it praised and admired itself. *Verily, verily, will say the Lord, I do not know you* (Matt. xxv. 41); you are not my work, and I no longer see what I have put there. You have wished to make yourselves in your own fashion. You are the work of pleasure and of ambition. You are the work of the devil, whose works you have done, whom you have made

a model by imitating him. Go with the one who knows you, and whose suggestions you have followed. Go to the eternal fire *which has been prepared for him*. (Matt. xxv. 41) Oh just Judge! Where shall I be? Will I know myself after my Saviour will not recognize me?

THE THIRTY-NINTH DAY

Blind guides are attached to little things, and undervalue the great (Matt. xxii. 23, 24).

What error of the human mind causes men to observe the law in part, and not to observe it entirely, to observe it in little things, like paying tithes on the most worthless things, and yet to omit the greatest—justice, mercy and faith? (See Matt. xxiii. 23) Perhaps it is because in the former there is an ostentation and an air of correctness which extends to the slightest observances.

Let us pause here to recall something much more familiar. We readily observe the law which does not inconvenience us. We make this sacrifice to God easily, for we do not wish to have to reproach ourselves that we are not within the law, that we are reprobates. Rather, we fulfill our duties in little things, and then flatter ourselves that we have made the proper satisfaction. But the eternal light overwhelms us: *These things you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone*. (Matt. xxiii. 23) We must not attach ourselves to these little observances as if they were the chief things, nor undervalue them either because they are little things.

Rather, let us see what Jesus values: *judgement, mercy, faith.*

Blind guides, who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel! (Matt. xxiii. 24) How full of false piety people are! They would not wish to miss a single Hail Mary on their rosary, but plundering, detraction and jealousies, they swallow like water. Scrupulous in the observances of small obligations, they do not bother to measure the others. *They widen their parchments, where they write the sentences of the law of God* (Matt. xxiii. 5), conformably to the precept of Deuteronomy. (See Deut. vi. 8) Whether this be a kind of allegory, or an effective obligation, they wished to have sentences smooth and easy before their eyes, but were not concerned with having love in their hearts. The Israelites, in order to distinguish themselves from other peoples, were ordered to have fringe on the edge of their robes, which they knotted with purple ribbons. (See Num. xv. 38; Deut. xxii. 12) This was to be a sign to them that they were to be attentive to the law of God, and not to allow their eyes and thoughts to wander from the things they were defending. The Pharisees, in observance of the law, made themselves long fringes, or widened the edges of their robes. To convey the impression of being most attentive to the law of God, they enlarged what was intended to be a reminder. This is all that God will have of their professed piety; a vain parade, a big show, a correctness apparent in petty, easy precepts, but a manifest scorn of the great ones, and a heart given to cheating and avarice.

Observe the symbols of the religious; a veil, the habit of the order, the fasts of the rule. But what does this veil

mean? Why does it cover the head if not as a sign of modesty and of retreat? One has to remember this, and not scorn the little things, which are, in fact, the covering and defense for the greater. Also, however, do not imagine that God pays Himself with this shell and with this cant.

THE FORTIETH DAY

Whitened sepulchres (Matt. xxii. 26, 27).

Blind Pharisee, continues Our Lord, *who cleanses the outside of a cup, and leaves within, all the filth where one drinks. Clean first the inside in order that the outside too may be clean* (Matt. xxiii. 25, 26), for purity comes from within, and must spread over the outside. Otherwise, in spite of your hypocrisy, the infection within you will spread in all directions. Your life will belie itself. Your hidden ambition will be discovered. You will appear in different colors and figures, and, with the infamy of your ambition, that of your hypocrisy will attract the hatred of all mankind.

The terrible conceit of a hypocrite! He is an old sepulchre; everything belies it: *it was whitewashed again, and it appears beautiful on the outside; it even appears magnificent. But what is inside? Infection, rottenness, bones of dead men* (Matt. xxiii. 27), with whom contact was an impurity, according to the law. Such is the hypocrite: he has death in his bosom. What will he be and where will he hide himself when God reveals the secrets of the

heart, and those things that are done by them in secret (of which) it is shameful even to speak. (Ephes. v. 12)

THE FORTY-FIRST DAY

Jesus relates the punishment of the Jewish doctors who were the persecutors of the prophets (Matt. xxii. 29–36).

Behold here the height of hypocrisy: actions of piety to give color to crime, like building the sepulchres of the prophets. How easy it is to honor them after their death, in order to acquire the freedom of persecuting them while they live! They can no longer talk to you, and you can honor them without it costing you any of your passions. It is easy to perform acts of piety which are painless. We shall decorate an altar. We shall place relics upon it. All will be proper and ornamental. We shall build churches and monasteries. Far from rejecting signal acts of piety, we give ourselves a great deal of credit for them. Let us come to the practice of piety, and to the mortification of the senses.

The Jews were ready to put to death the Prophet of superior merit and also His apostles. These are they who said: *If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been accomplices in the blood of the prophets. Thus you are witnesses against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who killed the prophets (Matt. xxiii. 30, 31),* since you wish to do as they do. You wish to have all the glory of detesting crime, and yet also the pleasure of satisfying yourselves in committing it. But you will not

deceive God. Instead of accepting the vain excuses which you seem to make for the prophets, He will punish you for all the crimes which you have imitated, beginning with that of Cain whose murderous jealousy you have imitated. The way to disavow your fathers is to cease to imitate them. If you continue to follow their example, however, the tombs which you erect to the prophets will serve as monuments, to preserve the memory of the crimes of your ancestors, rather than serve as a means of avoiding them. For this reason St. Luke says: *On building their tombs, while in your heart, you desire to do as much to the prophets whom you have among you, you show that this exterior piety tends only to cover your dark designs, and to execute them more surely while hiding them.* (Luke xi. 48)

Fill up the measure of your fathers; and may all the just blood of Abel come upon you. (Matt. xxiii. 35) We deserve the sufferings of those whom we imitate. God does not only ascribe the sin of the fathers to the children, but also that of Cain's, when we follow his example. So it is that there will be a society of sufferers among the wicked who shall have imitated one another, as there will be a society of recompenses among the good who shall have lived in a unity of spirit.

Jesus then predicted a terrible suffering for the Jews, one, in fact, unlike any the world had ever experienced.

Amen I say to you, all will come upon this generation. (Matt. xxiii. 36) The time was approaching, and those who were living would see it.

Let us consider what we have just seen. Each one of us persecutes the just when he opposes him, when he slanders him, and when he torments him in a hundred dif-

ferent ways. And yet, while reading the *Lives of the Saints*, wherein we see the persecution of the just, we say: "I would never do that." Nevertheless, we do it and we do not notice it. In this way, we attract to ourselves the sufferings of those who have persecuted the people of God. *Behold it is written before me: I will not be silent, but I will render and repay into their bosom; I shall place in your bosom your sins, and together the sins of your fathers, and I shall place in their bosoms, in full measure, their first work.* (Isa. lxxv. 6, 7)

THE FORTY-SECOND DAY

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (Matt. xxii. 37, 39).

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou who killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent to thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not! Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, you shall not see me henceforth until you shall say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

How Jesus wept over Jerusalem! With what tenderness did He present His maternal wings to His children who chose to perish! A hen is the most tender of all mothers. She would wish to take back her little ones, not under her wings, but even into her bosom, if it could be done: a worthy symbol of the divine mercy.

In the following lamentations Jesus exceeds the tenderness of a Jeremiah. First, at his entrance into Jeru-

salem, He said: *If thou hadst known, in this thy day, even thou, the things that are for thy peace!* (Luke xix. 42) Secondly, as we have just observed, in his meditation on the fate of Jerusalem. (Matt. xxiii. 37) Lastly, going to Calvary: *Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, days are coming, in which men will say, blessed are the barren, and the breasts that never nursed!* (Luke xxiii. 28, 29) Oh unhappy Jerusalem! Oh, souls, called and rebellious! You who have been bitterly wept over! Come back to the eager cries of this charitable mother: her wings are still opened to you. Ah! why will you choose death, Oh House of Israel? (Ezech. xviii. 31)

You shall not see me henceforth until you shall say: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (Matt. xxiii. 39).

This is the second time that Our Lord has said this to His apostles. The first time, prior to His entrance into Jerusalem, He meant that they would not see Him again until the day of His entrance. Now the day of His entrance was here, and He wished to tell them that He was going away until the last judgement, which would not take place until the Jews had returned to Him, and recognized Him as the *Christ*.

The Saviour had accomplished what He wished. He had made men see all their abuses. He had explained their punishment. Yet, He had not forced them to listen to Him at the expense of His kindness, and they chose to perish. Oh what regret for these unhappy men! Oh what augmentation of their suffering!

Let us learn to praise the divine mercy in the most

rigorous judgements, for they have always been preceded by the greatest mercies.

How many times I have wished! This isn't the first time You have called me, oh most tender of Guardians! And yet, I have not listened to Your voice.

THE FORTY-THIRD DAY

Our Lord predicts the misfortunes of the doctors of the law (Luke xi. 37, 38).

The occasion of this discourse was a dinner which Our Lord attended with the Pharisees. The pride of one of these Pharisees caused him to blame the Saviour in his heart, *because He had not washed before the meal.* On this occasion, Our Lord reproached those *that make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but your inside is full of rapine and iniquity.* (Luke xi. 38, 39)

The comparison of the sepulchre is used differently here than it is as found in St. Matthew. In the latter, Jesus speaks of *whitened sepulchres*; here, He speaks of *sepulchres that appear not, and men that walk over are not aware* (Luke xi. 44); that is, that which shows them to be hypocrites is completely hidden in their conversation and so we do not know them for what they are, so subtle is their malice. All of this will be revealed on the last day, however, and the more secret their licentiousness, the greater their shame, which appearing all of a sudden, will be striking.

A doctor of the law interrupted this pressing invective against the Pharisees, and was presumptuous enough to believe that the Saviour would keep still, when he would have shown Him the part that he was taking is His discourse: *Master, said he to Him, in saying these things, thou reproacheth us also.* (Luke xi. 45) His pride brought upon him these just reproaches: *Woe to you also doctors of the law* (Luke xi. 46) and all the rest.

That which is stated in Saint Matthew, *I am sending you prophets* (Matt. xxiii. 34), is explained in St. Luke: *The wisdom of God said: I will send to them prophets and apostles* (Luke xi. 49) in order to show that the Saviour is the wisdom of God.

Woe to you, lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge. (Luke xi. 48) They distinguished the key of knowledge from that of authority. The doctors wished to appropriate to themselves, alone, the key of knowledge. They did not make it available to all the people because they deceived themselves and deceived others. Not content with keeping silent, which would have been sufficient for their ruin, they were the first to authorize false doctrines.

And as He was saying these things to them, the Pharisees and the lawyers began violently to urge Him, and to oppress His mouth about many things. Lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch something from His mouth, that they might accuse Him. (Luke xi. 53, 54) These are they who were caught in the traps which they set for the Saviour, and who believed that they could not be freed except by ruining Him. Thus a just man perished for having done His duty in reproving the proud and the hypocrites.

THE FORTY-FOURTH DAY

What is the real value of money? The parable of the widow and her mite (Mark xii. 41-44; Luke xxi. 1-4).

Jesus Christ had just spoken to the Pharisees of their clever stratagem in taking money from widows. Now He intends to show what one must esteem in money, and what its real value is.

Jesus sat down and looked at those who placed money in the treasury: a poor woman gave two small pieces of money: She has given more than all of you. (Mark xii. 41-43). How rich man is! His money is worth all that he wishes it to be: his will gives it the value. A penny is worth more than the richest presents. Do you lack money? Haven't you a glass of water to give? A desire, a sigh, a word of kindness, a show of compassion? If these trifles are bestowed sincerely, they are worth eternal life! Oh, how rich is man, and what treasures he has in hand!

Happy the Christians for having a master who knows so well how to value the good intentions of His servants! As soon as He sees this widow who has given only two small coins, He is so overjoyed with her liberality, *He calls together His disciples, Amen I say to you, this poor widow hath cast in more than all they who have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance: but she of her want cast in all she had, even her whole living (Mark xii. 43, 44),* abandoning herself with faith, to divine providence.

Behold the alms that Jesus Christ praises, those which we give of ourselves. Such alms are the only ones which deserve the name of sacrifice.

THE FORTY-FIFTH DAY

The fall of Jerusalem, and the end of the world: Why are they predicted together? (Ibid.).

And when He was sitting on Mount Olivet, the disciples came to Him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the consummation of the world? (Matt. xxiv.

3) This is the question that His principal apostles, Peter, James, John and Andrew put to Jesus, while He was seated on the Mount of Olives. (See Mark xiii. 4)

Notice that in their demand, they confused the ruin of Jerusalem with that of the universe, at the end of the centuries. This is what gives occasion to Jesus Christ to speak to them of both of them.

One may ask why He did not wish to distinguish these things that were so remote. First, perhaps, because there is an intimate connection between the two since one is the figure of the other—the ruin of Jerusalem prefigures that of the world, and of the last desolation of the enemies of God. Secondly, because several things were to be common to both. And thirdly, because when God discloses the secrets of the future, He does it always with some mysteriousness; He reserves the secret of it to Himself, since He does not wish to satisfy mere curiosity,

but to edify faith. Indeed, He wishes that men be always surprised in some direction. This is the reason that while warning them in order to oblige them to take precautions, and again to make them see that the event which He predicts is the work of His hand and prepared for a long time, He never fails to keep in reserve, something which may surprise, and inspire a new terror, when the evil arrives.

That is the reason that the prediction of the ruin of Jerusalem is, in some ways, confused with that of the world. Oh Christian! Learn through the obscurity that Jesus Christ Himself wished to leave in His prophecy! Learn to moderate your curiosity, not wishing to know more than is told you, not advancing beyond the bounds, and entering with trembling, into the divine secrets.

Although Jesus Christ confuses these two events, He does not fail in the following discourse, as we shall see, to set forth some characteristics to differentiate the two.

Behold great things are contained therein, but yet, in confusion. Let us consider them somewhat in detail, and try to draw from each one all the instruction that Jesus Christ wished to give us concerning it.

THE FORTY-SIXTH DAY

The particular characteristics of the fall of Jerusalem, and of the end of the world (Ibid.).

According to what we have just said, it is necessary that there be in these two events—in the last day of Jerusalem,

and in the last day of the world—some things that are proper to each one, and also others that are common to both.

That which is proper to the desolation of Jerusalem is that it will be clothed with the authority of an army. Also, the abomination of desolation will be in the holy place. At that time, the people will be able to take flight, and to run away from the evils which will threaten Jerusalem. This city will be reduced by a prodigious famine, a fact which causes Our Saviour to say: *Woe to mothers; woe to those who are with child; woe to those who nurse children!* (Luke xxi. 23; Matt. xxiv. 19; Mark xiii. 17) Because the anger of God will be terrible against these people in particular, that is to say, against the Jewish people, there will never be another disaster like it. This nation will perish by the sword, will be dragged into captivity by all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles. The city and the temple will be destroyed, and there will not remain stone upon stone, as we have already seen. This generation, the one in which they were, would not pass away, until *these things be accomplished, and that those who are living, will see it.* (Luke xxi. 32; Matt. xxv. 34; Mark xiv. 30)

That which will be particular to the last day of the universe is that the sun will be obscured, the moon will not give light, the stars will not behave consistently. The whole universe will be out of order. These will be the signs that the Son of man will appear. Also, He will come in all His majesty, and the angels will gather His elect from the four corners of the earth, etc. Moreover, the day and the hour are unknown; everybody will be surprised. (See Matt. xxiv. 27, 36, 37)

These are the great differences between these two events, that Jesus Christ wishes us to observe. As we have noted, He positively identifies that which concerns Jerusalem: *When you shall see Jerusalem compassed about with an army* (Luke xxi. 20); and that which is, as we shall see, the same thing: *When you shall see the abomination of desolation, standing in the holy place, standing where it ought not, then know that the desolation thereof is at hand* (Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14; Luke xxi. 20); and make good your escape. One could escape from the first event sad though it might be. As for the other, which concerns the end of the world, however, the evil will not be as in the fall of Jerusalem, a particular evil, but a complete and inevitable universal upheaval. Jesus, therefore, does not tell us to escape from it, but to prepare for it.

The factor common to both days will be the spirit of seduction and the false prophets, the persecution of the people of God, the wars throughout the universe, and a universal commotion in the empires, with a terrible apprehension of what will happen. (See Matt. xxiv. 4; Mark xiii. 5; Luke xxi. 8, etc.)

Let us consider these things in a spirit of humility and astonishment. Oh God, how terrible is your hand! Through how many terrible effects do you display your justice against men! What miseries will precede the last and inexplicable distress of eternal damnation! *Who shall not fear Thee oh Lord, and magnify Thy name! For Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come, and shall adore in Thy sight, because Thy judgements are manifest.* (Apoc. xv. 4) *For every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall swear.* (Is. xlvii. 24) Some will feel

your mercy; others will be subjected to your implacable and inevitable justice.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH DAY

Reflections on the end of the world (Ibid.).

Without reading, without studied reasoning, I ask here only that you consider on one side, the powerful hand of God Who provokes beyond endurance all of nature, the stars, the lands, the seas, and the courage of man whom He causes to dry up with fear (See Luke xxi. 25, 29); and on the other side, contemplate the same hand which, in the universal upheaval, uplifts the courage of His children in such a way that, not only are they not lost in this disaster that the world is suffering, but they rise above the ruins. (See Luke xxi. 28) Far from hiding in this tempest, like another Jonas, come out into the open and consider this tumult with an assured glance. Far from allowing yourself to be overwhelmed, *raise your head*, and look about you.

The faithful man who raises his head in the midst of great waves, or one who remains firm in the midst of a falling house, is always immovable and unshaken. He is calm in the midst of troubled nature, and of its disconcerted movements, because the God of nature is holding him by the hand. You fear, Peter, in the midst of the waves. Do you not know Him Who is holding you? *Oh thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* (Matt. xiv. 31)

They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion.

He shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth in Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it; so the Lord is round about His people, from henceforth now and forever. (Ps. cxxiv. 1, 2) The holy mountain of Sion, unshaken by the power of God Who strengthens it, communicates its immovability and its tranquility to its inhabitants.

THE FORTY-EIGHTH DAY

These predictions are certain; their accomplishments close; but their day is unknown (Matt. xxiv. 34-36; Mark xiii. 30-32).

Verily, I say to you; this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished; heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away. But for this day and that hour, neither the angels themselves who are in heaven, nor the Son know it not, and nobody except my Father. (Matt. xxiv. 34-36; also, Mark xiii. 30-32)

Behold two periods well defined. *Haec* and *illa*, in Greek as in Latin, mark two periods: one, close; the other, farther away. *This generation will see all these things accomplished. Generatio, Haec: Omnia Haec: Omnia Ista: But for that day, for that hour: De die autem illa et hora: Nobody knows it.* It is as though Our Lord said: I have spoken to you of two things, of the ruin of Jerusalem, and of that of the entire universe on judgement day. That which must happen in this present

generation, and of which men who are living must be witnesses, I point out the time to you, and this generation will not pass away until it is accomplished. That much for the first event. With regard to the other day, however, that day when I shall come to judge the world, nobody knows anything about it, and I am not to disclose it to you.

Christ, therefore, clearly foretold that the fall of Jerusalem was close, and the Church was to know it. But for that day, the last day, when the entire universe will be in disorder, and when the Son of Man will come in person, we were to know nothing about it. We do not know whether it is far away, or whether it is near at hand. The secret thereof is impenetrable, to the angels who are in heaven, and to the Church itself, even though it is taught by the Son of God.

It is necessary, therefore, to understand here, by the things that the Son knows not, those which He knows not as regards His Church, or within His Church, and that He is not to reveal in order to comply with this word: *You are my friends, and I have revealed to you all that I have heard from My Father* (John xv. 15); all that I have heard in your behalf, all that was understood in my teaching, or as He says here: *I have predicted everything to you* (Mark xiii. 23), meaning, all that I was to predict to you. The rest, I know it well through the narrow intimacy which exists between My Father and Me, but I may not speak of it to you, according to the part I am to play among men.

Let us adore the impenetrable secret of God then, and confine ourselves within the boundaries to which He wished to limit the wisdom of His Church.

The Son of God is to come like a thief. A thousand

years of delay, is the delay of a day for Him. (II Petr. iii. 8, 10) It is not in guessing the moments that you will avoid His surprise; *He will come by night, in the dark, and without noise, like a thief* (I Thess. v. 2, 4), two things which render His course impenetrable. Do you wish, therefore, to be taken by surprise? If not, always be on the watch. Never neglect your salvation, *and live like the children of light, without participating in the fruitless works of darkness.* (Eph. v. 8, 11)

THE FORTY-NINTH DAY

The end of the world: a time of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and extreme evils (Ibid.).

There will be a great upheaval in the world. *Wars, rumors of war, pestilences, famines, earthquakes* (Mark xiii. 7, 8; Luke xxi. 9–11), will be the sad forerunners of these events. (Matt. xxiv. 6, 7) These things happened a short time before the war in Judea, and in the last year of Nero; they will happen again in a manner far more formidable as the last day approaches.

Wars, rumors of wars: great wars in effect; greater apprehensions of new movements; it will seem that the spirit of war, hatreds, jealousies, nature itself will wish to give birth to something baneful to the great states; a spirit of universal upheaval will be noticed in the world. In the midst of all this tumult, Our Lord says: *See that ye be not troubled: For these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* (Matt. xxiv. 6)

With what then shall we be troubled, if these things

are not to worry us? The answer is with nothing at all. For the Christian is troubled by nothing except his sins which provoke the anger of God Who must punish him. *See that ye be not troubled.* You will inquire about what is happening, not only with curiosity, but again with fear; what will become of those great armies facing each other? What ravage, what conflagration, what carnage, what a flood of evils, if once the dam is broken! Ah! I will die of fear. You will not, O Christian. The destiny of empires is in the hands of God; they will die when their time comes, like the rest of human beings. Pray for your country. Abase yourselves. Do penance, but fear not. Do not be troubled; it is necessary that this happen. It is necessary, not through a blind and fatal necessity, which would drive us to despair, but through reasoning, through wisdom, through a kindness which prepares great blessings in spite of all these evils. *Fear not little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom* (Luke xii. 32) which is beyond harm. All these enemy powers, visible and invisible, have no hold over it, and it cannot be taken from you.

Now all these are the beginning of sorrows. (Matt. xxiv. 8) Like the sorrows of child bearing, we will suffer until we feel that we cannot endure any longer, only to discover that this is not the end of it, but only the beginning.

What! This frightful upheaval of kingdoms clashing, these famines, these pestilences, these earthquakes are only the *beginning of sorrows*? Oh God! how redoubtable will your last blows be, if these, which are so terrible that we cannot even bear to hear of them without being seized with fright, are but a prelude! It is thus, Lord, it

is thus. Through all these great calamities our bodies alone are threatened. Here is what is terrible beyond all other terrors: *But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him.* (Luke xii. 5) Oh Lord! if I can but learn to fear this evil above all, I shall fear nothing else, and I shall see all the elements intermingle, and all nature confounded, without fear. Ah! I must fear only what kills the soul. I have nothing to think of but penance, nor anything to fear except dying in my sin. Death itself is nothing, no matter how painful, unusual or unforeseen it may be. To die in sin is the greatest evil, and the only one to be feared. Woe to you, ingrates, hardened sinners. *For I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, return ye and live.* (Ezech. xviii. 32)

THE FIFTIETH DAY

The end of the world will be preceded by a terrible persecution of the Church. There will be betrayals; charity will grow cold (Ibid.).

Another forerunner of the end of the world will be persecution. It will have these terrible characteristics: an implacable hatred of all of mankind against the Church; fury outside, betrayal within; men will betray one another; brothers will betray their brothers, and a father even his child; children will rise up against their fathers, and even families will be divided; scandals will be hor-

rible, on account of the frequent falls of those believed to be the strongest. In the midst of all this, seduction will be redoubled, and false doctors will win over those whom violence could not have beaten down; cruelty and seduction will move together to the last hour. This is what happened to the newly born Church, beginning toward the last years of Nero, a short time before the war in Judea. This is what will happen in a far more terrible manner at the end of the centuries. (See Matt. xxiv. 9-13)

This persecution of the Church was not as easy to predict as one might think. At first sight, it did not seem that such hatred against the Church could be possible; one could not have foreseen that the world, which left all religions in peace, even to the most impious sects, like that of the Epicurians, would not tolerate Christianity. Jesus Christ wished to predict this, however, and to warn His faithful of an event so singular, and one which, until that time, was totally unheard of.

As was His custom, however, Jesus promised there would be consolations with the evils. *And you shall be hated by all men for my sake. But a hair of your head shall not perish. In your patience you shall possess your souls* (Luke xxi. 17-19), not in fighting, but in suffering. *You will be dragged before kings and governors for my name's sake, like criminals; but it shall happen to you as a testimony.* (Luke xxi. 12, 13; Mark xiii. 9) You will appear as witnesses to the truth, like masters of the human race: *I will give you a mouth and wisdom which no impudence, nor violence will be able to close, a wisdom, a force against which all your adversaries will not be able to resist nor to gainsay.* (Luke xxi. 15) *Take no*

thought of how or what to speak; the Holy Spirit will speak through your mouth. (Matt. x. 19, 20)

That which will be the most deplorable is that, *because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. (Matt. xxiv. 12)* This is what happened to St. Paul when he said: *For Demas hath left me, loving this world, and is gone to Thessalonica. Only Luke is with me. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; may it not be laid to their charge. (II Tim. iv. 9, 11, 16)* But this charity grown cold in his brothers did not change the heart of Paul toward them. This cooling of charity will appear much more at the end of the centuries; for, *when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth? (Luke xviii. 8)*

At the height of all these evils, there will be but one remedy: *He who will persevere until the end, will be saved. (Matt. xxiv. 13)* Notice this word: *until the end.* Ten years, twenty years, thirty years, fifty years, it is nothing; we must persevere until the end. Do not allow yourselves to tire of working, for the harvest that you will gather, will be eternal.

The Gospel must be preached throughout the land (Matt. xxiv. 14) for fear that it be thought that the persecution halted the course of it. *Paul was bound; but the word of God was not. (II Tim. ii. 9)* *Pray that the word of God may run (II Thess. iii. 1),* says the apostle: the rumor of it resounded throughout the world; *the faith of the Romans was announced (Rom. i. 8); The Gospel which is come unto you, as also it is in the whole world, and bringeth forth fruit and groweth, even as it doth in you. (Col. i. 6)* Thus the prediction of the Saviour was already being accomplished in some fashion before

the dissipation of the Jews, but its great accomplishment is reserved for the end of the centuries, and the preaching of it will have pierced throughout the world before it ends.

Oh God! give vigor to your world: bless the apostolic preachers. Send Your workmen into this great harvest, which Your enemy ravages. Oh Lord! I join in spirit with these heralds of Your Gospel, and with those who will believe in You through their word. Sanctify them in truth, and may their dawning sanctity repair the ravages that sin causes in Your kingdom. Let us save ourselves. Let us flee from the corruption of this wicked race. My soul, save thyself. Oh God! save me; I perish.