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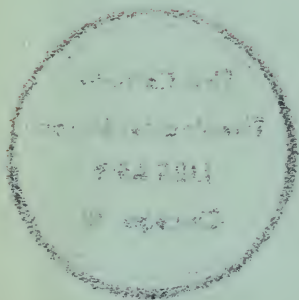
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HOLY SPIRIT CONVENT,  
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BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS. C.15

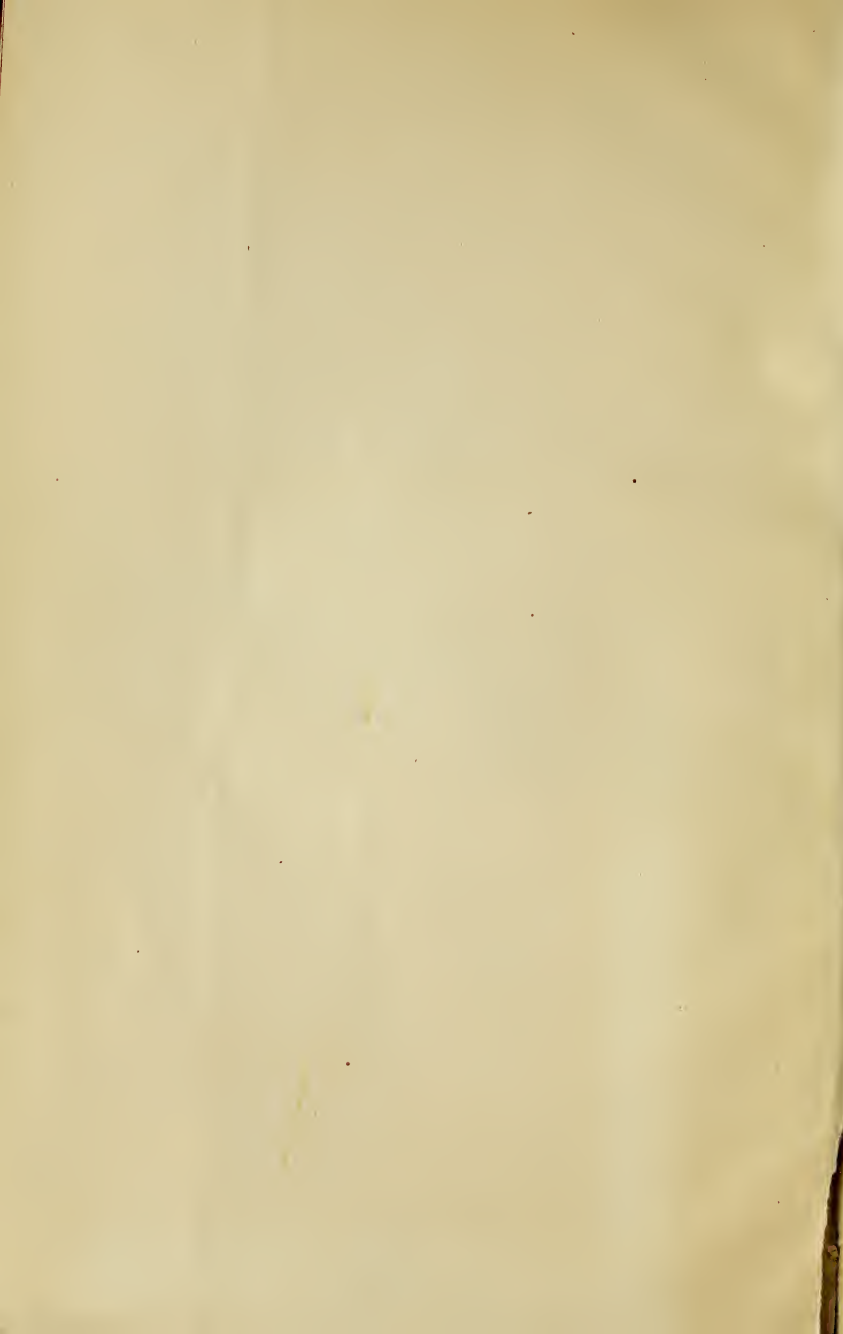
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# RELIGIOUS LIFE

Nihil obstat,

FR. ARTHUR L. McMAHON, O. P., S. T. L.

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Revisores deputati.

Imprimatur,

✠ Carolus Eduardus,

Epus. Brooklynensis



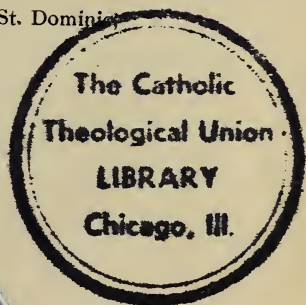
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# TRANSLATION OF THE LETTER

OF THE

MOST REV. FATHER CORMIER,

Master General of the Order of St. Dominick



ON THE



*St. Henry's East St. Louis*

*Fundamental Principles of the Dominican Life with fifteen short Conferences on the same subject.*

1494

## PREFACE.

This little private publication is intended principally for the religious to whom we had the privilege and pleasure of giving a retreat. The spirit of gratitude for favors and prayers, as well as the desire to help, and to be helped, to attain the end of our sublime vocation prompted us to propose it.

The practical, instructive, beautiful letter of our Master General made a deep lasting impression on the whole order. It has been translated into many languages. The present English translation was made, at our request, by Miss Olga Bieroing, a member of the Third Order. It is not offered as a strictly liberal rendition, but as an attempt to make the reading of the great truths and thoughts of the Master General easy and pleasant in our language.

The conferences on the same subjects religious vocation, rule, vows, prayer and the Blessed Sacrament may help to a better understanding and a higher appreciation of them. We have tried to keep the simple forms and expressions that we used in giving the retreats. They may then remind us better of the happy days we spent together in silence and prayer, of the holy promises we made, and the good resolutions we formed. May they be for us the "Star" leading us to Bethlehem helping us to find the Blessed Mother with the Divine Infant. *Nos cum Prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria.*

Fr. Thuente, O. P.

Epiphany, 1907

A LETTER  
ON CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL  
PRINCIPLES ON THE DOMINICAN  
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

TO OUR WELL BELOVED BRETHREN  
IN CHRIST,  
The Very Rev. Provincials, Ex-Provincials, Priors,  
And others of the Order of Friars Preachers,  
WE FR. HYACINTH MARIE CORMIER,  
Professor of Sacred Theology,  
AND HUMBLE MASTER-GENERAL AND SERVANT  
Of the Same Order,  
Wishes health and a hundredfold multiplication of  
THE GIFTS OF NATURE AND GRACE.

The canonical visit which we recently made among you was not made solely to comply with a most onerous duty, nor was it undertaken to receive a sweet, personal consolation in being able to be near our much loved Brothers, to speak with them to live in their midst, and to mingle our prayers with theirs both day and night: but it was undertaken rather that we might learn by practical experience the best means of furthering the cause of Religion.

By this means alone, are we able to gain a personal knowledge of the conditions of the different countries of the habits and character of the population, and the best method of preaching Christ among the people.

We are able, on the other hand, to examine the religious atmosphere of the Convents, so that we may know to render all things more comfortable to the laws of the cloister, poverty, regularity, and the spiritual advancement of the Brothers.

Moreover, it is the duty of the Visitor to listen to each one in particular, beginning with the humblest, that all may be able to tell him their wishes, their desires, their doubts, their troubles, and even their complaints, if they should have any.

Once more, we feel the primitive spirit pervading the garden of our holy Religion, and the plants, which God in His mercy has transplanted from the world, gaining new strength from the dew of grace so abundantly showered upon them, are yielding to the heavenly Husbandman, the most excellent fruits of perfection and sanctity.

Who is there then, who would not rejoice in his heart? In order to further, in our humble way, the cause of our holy Faith, we have written, during our journey, certain instructions, on various

matters which we have later on sent to many Convents and Provinces. It remains for us now to give some instructions to all of you on those principles which form the basis of our vocation, and which aid in bringing forth the richest fruit. We shall therefore consider: 1. The Spirit of Religion, 2. Devotion to the Community Life, 3. Constant Zeal for the worship of God, 4. Diligence in the Acquisition of Sacred Doctrine, 5. Charity prudently applied in the work of the Apostolate.

## THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION.

In trying to define the Spirit of religion we are reminded of the words of Thomas a' Kempis in the Imitation. "I had rather *feel* compunction than know its definition."

However, it behooves us to give some explanation of this Spirit of Religion of which we are speaking; for it is not, as one might suppose, a mere speculative knowledge of the nature of our vocation, and the extent of its obligations, nor a wise interpretation of the laws of our Order, nor a profound study of its traditions.

It is rather a certain just, prompt, comprehensive and adequate intuition, which exercises itself constantly, though almost unconsciously, and which extends its activity to all that pertains to the religious life.

It is not a distinctive attribute of the intellect; the will also acts in order to accomplish the duties of our vocation, and to accept its manifold burdens.

It is an inborn propensity, a spontaneous tendency, an immovable firmness, a satisfaction and an interior joy, mingled with a certain sadness, a sadness not bitter but profound; for it beholds at times the ideal waning, and perfection yielding to imperfection.

This Spirit of Religion, a precious gift from the Lord, is obtained by prayer and strengthened by exercise, fostered by the good example of fervent brethren living in the community.

But as it waxes stronger by constant exercise; so, on the other hand, it at least wanes, and is finally lost by a dread of sacrifice, by a neglect to examine the conscience, and by the absence of good example in the community; if, indeed, by these



circumstances, vows are not forgotten, and the desire to forsake the religious calling is not awakened.

First an indifference in the observance of the rule sets in, which brings its just and inevitable punishment in a blunting of the religious sense, a hardening of the heart, and a dulling of the conscience.

But this is not the only evil to be dreaded. This indifference in the outward observance gradually leads to doubt, and thus scepticism is developed, especially among those endowed with a keener intelligence and having an overconfidence in themselves. Such may not dare to attack openly the first principles of the religious life, but they will criticise the value of the means adopted to reach the end; they will argue that the examples of our fathers are antiquated and no longer to be imitated; they will scorn outward observance and will do nothing to excite within themselves a love for their own advancement. Neither will they be shaken by the fear of God, nor dread at all the consequences of an abuse of grace.

Far from lamenting the loss of their first fervor, they will distort the words of the Apostle and cry out in their folly: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." (I Cor. XIII—12.)

Pitiable manhood, which already displays the weaknesses of old age, drying up the sources of life and leading man into the shadow of death!

How hast thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer who didst rise in the morning! (Isaias XIV—12). And how hast thou fallen, O thou young Brother, who wast favored with a gift so precious, a vocation



so privileged! And why hast thou deceived so soon, and with such a lack of filial piety, the hope of Religion, thy Mother?

But there is a greater evil to be dreaded.

For scepticism not only ruins man himself, but soon engages him in active proselytism; for there is progress in vice as in virtue.

He who thinks and acts evil dislikes seeing others living well, and so the sceptic soon begins, with system and method, to preach rationalism under the name of reason, cowardice under the name of moderation, and laxness under the name of broadmindedness.

Pretexts and excuses are not lacking in such a teacher. Now he condemns the ardor and fervor of some of the Brothers as indiscretions or frailty; now he turns to derision the sweet simplicity of others, who give themselves up entirely to the religious life; or he approaches adroitly the young Religious, speaks to them with assumed affection, and by deceptive reasoning, induces them to open their eyes to the corruption of human nature (Gen. III—7); or again he cites as a cause of the destruction of the religious state, the firm desire on the part of the Superiors to maintain the regular observances.

In a word, were one to believe him, all is depraved, and all must be renewed, not according to St. Dominic, the man of God (Tim. VI—11), but according to the natural man, for "I the Master, have said it."

When hearing these things, well beloved Fathers and Brothers, you, who have ever followed the better way leading to perfection, may perhaps imagine that we are calling up vain phantoms, and alarming you unnecessarily. But forgive our solici-

tude, and may God grant that our words, though they seem alarming, may yet let you see the threatening dangers more clearly and keep you from faltering in the way of holiness.

Render thanks unto God that He has preserved you in the fulness of His holy faith, having opened your understanding that you may understand (Luc. XXIV-45). "Serve ye, therefore, the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with trembling" (Ps. II-II), "for the candlestick will be removed for the destruction of him who left his first charity." (Apoc. II, 4-5).

In praying, say then, with the Apostles: "Lord, increase our faith." And when your humble petition shall be granted, we will add, full of consolation: "Your faith is spoken of in the whole world" (Rom. 1, 8), in all the provinces of our Holy Family.

## DEVOTION TO THE COMMUNITY LIFE.

In order to understand more clearly that which we ought to practise, and that which we ought to desire or dread, it is of importance to distinguish among the Brethren those who live *outside* of the community, those who live *in* the community, those who *pretend* to live *for* the community, and those who *really* live *for* the community.

The first class embraces those who, having grown weary of the regular life, of obedience, of silence and of penance, imagine without ceasing that some new motive, either zeal, or their bodily welfare, or consideration for those living in the world, compels them to leave the cloister, and so it becomes almost impossible for Superiors to place curb or check upon their wanderings.

If, from time to time, they return to to their Brethren, what will the Convent be to them? Certainly not a temple where they may eagerly contemplate the Divine Mysteries, nor a father's house where they may come to accuse themselves of their many faults, or where they may make a spiritual retreat, of which they stand so much in need, nor a place where they may take an active part in all exercises, in compensation for their long absence.

Nay, it will rather become a hostelry, whither, forced by necessity they may return in passing.

Of such one may say with St. Bernard: "They serve the choir with there *lips*, but there *hearts* are in the world."

How soon do such become estranged, and, filling the convent with vain news, begin little by little to think, to speak, to clothe themselves and to

eat like those living in the world. Yes, they even forget their vow of poverty and ornament, or rather disfigure, their cells.

Superiors and Pastors it is for you to guard against such evils!

Then there are those who live in the community, who in truth do not dislike the cloister, nor refuse to take part in the ordinary duties; but they follow the daily routine as a sheep follows the fold, encouraged by a desire to be well taken care of in a regular life.

They are men of ease, who love their own personal comfort; they hate discord rather from sheer apathy than from any motive of charity; their nature renders them incapable of opposition toward their Superiors, and they never give scandal.

But where is the community spirit? Where the holy intention necessary to enlighten and vivify all external acts? Where the art of arriving at perfection by the aid of small things? Where the heartfelt joy in the variety of regular exercises? Where the love of sacrifice? Where the aspirations of zeal?

Of all great things these religious have not the least conception. No, rather may we say of them, what St. Paul said when writing to the Corinthians: "There are many infirm and weak among you and many sleep" (I Cor. XI—30).

But more dangerous still are those who *pretend* to live for the community, taking as their principal rule the law of selfishness.

They know by heart, and interpret wrongly, the words of the Constitution; or affirming their rights, they develop a most imperious character.

If anything is given to, or imposed on, others, they look upon it with a jealous eye, and seek to

determine whether perhaps this one or that one is less heavily burdened, or if this one or that one has received some favor. They do little, spare themselves as much as possible, and some always seek rest from their work.

You will often hear them complain of community life, even if they are those who were not blessed with this world's goods, while living in the world.

Never will you find them rejoicing in their vocation; rather will they cry out with the ungrateful Israelites: "I will *not* serve" the community, it is for *them* to serve *me*. Let us weep for these "bondsmen", for thou canst not be free unless thou wholly deny thyself". (J. C. L. III, ch. XXXII, 1). And above all let us pity the religious houses charged with these heavy burdens.

How much happier and more worthy of our praise is he who lives and works *for* the community. He gives himself up to all the duties of the house however humble and irksome they may be; he does them carefully, quickly and with joy; for he applies the words of the Scripture to himself; "He puts his feet into her fetters, and his neck into her chains. He bows down his shoulder and bears her, and is not grieved by her bonds. And in the latter end he shall find rest in her, and she shall be turned to his joy." (Eccli. VI, 25, 26, 29. )

Gladly will he imitate B. Reginald who, when the Brethren were astonished, that he who had enjoyed so many worldly advantages, was now able to follow such a hard life, not only with patience, but even with joy and consolation, and that one unused to work, or to suffer hunger or thirst or cold, was so happy, said "I deserve no merit for I have always found it a great pleasure."

Moreover, such a Religious will remember the words of Scripture: "When you shall have done all these things that are commanded, say: 'We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought.'" (Luc. XVII, 10).

He desires to do more than is commanded him, to accept, to pursue, to choose spontaneously such works as are optional purely from a motive of love for the community life, and of affection for his Brethren; and whenever the occasion presents itself he is ever ready to cry out: "Lo, I am here" (Gen. XLVI, 2):



## CONSTANT ZEAL FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

The shield of our Order bears the device: "Laudare, Benedicere, Praedicare." How often have we not heard these words and engraven them upon our armor.

St. Dominic is our great model in praising, and blessing and preaching; yet perhaps he excelled in *praising* our Lord.

Those who were with him hesitated to say whether he was more worthy of admiration when he recited with fervor the Lord's Prayer, or shed tears of love at the elevation of the Host, or when he chanted the Divine Office, going from one Brother to another, encouraging each in singing the psalms.

And this fervor remained with him even to the end. We see him at Bologne on returning from a long journey made on foot, and warned by an angel of his approaching death refusing to take any rest, but rather discussing with the Fathers the interests of the Order.

And when his strength was almost exhausted he desired to be present for the last time at Matins. It was then that, racked by a violent fever, he was obliged to go to his cell and lie down upon his rude couch to die.

Let us imitate Our Holy Father St. Dominic, and if we are seized with a desire to take too much care of ourselves, let us remember *that the work of God* is not a heavy burden which we must strive to lighten as much as possible, or that we have done our duty when we avoid the gravest sins. Such slaves should heed the words of Our Lord to the Samaritan woman: "If thou didst know the gift of God."

It is indeed a *gift* and not a *burden*; and many are the graces that flow from this source, grace to praise God, to comfort our hearts, to brighten our path, to renew our strength and to edify and sanctify the faithful.

And our theoretical instructions must correspond to our lives, in which our minds and hearts and lips and bodies should become one great tetrachord of marvelous harmony "singing wisely to the Lord" (Ps. XLVI, 8).

Thus the worship of God will become as an inexhaustible fountain throwing out its refreshing waters to gladden and quicken the entire convent.

And let those who must be absent in body because obedience calls them to perform some other duty, be present in spirit when the office is chanted, that they may participate in the Divine Graces.

And when the time comes for them to return to unite themselves once more with the others let all, especially the Lectors, join in saying the office both day and night on Sundays, the weekly office of the Dead and daily Compline.

And let the formal students be obliged to chant the choral Mass daily, and let them be so disposed that they will hasten to the choir anticipating the sound of the bell, and vying with one another in their fervor.

The daily meditation, which should be made in common, is equally meritorious, although the obligation may be of a different character.

Let us pause for a moment to weigh the solemn words of our Constitution. "It is certain that we are called by our state to aspire to religious perfection, and this not superficially, but seriously."

It is no less certain that we strive but vain-



ly for this end, if we give more attention to other things, and abandon the royal road of prayer.

Let each one consider with fear the evident peril of his soul, if he neglects a means so necessary to his progress. (Cap. Gen. Rom. 1670).

The Chapter of Viterbo held in 1904, inspired by these words, added the following instruction:

"We desire that the law be faithfully observed where it is prescribed (Const. N. 105), that in all our Houses of Study mental prayer be observed daily by all assembled in the same place and that it be continued uninterruptedly for half an hour."

In consequence, we declare that the indulgence granted by the Chapter of Ghent in 1871, and formulated in the following terms, be extended to Convents where meditation is held not once but twice a day. Namely that: "In those places where the laudable custom prevails of reciting the Rosary in common each evening, or of taking part in some other exercise of devotion, this time be counted as one quarter of an hour of the prescribed meditation."

"Moreover, we desire that, in those Houses of Study where a stricter regulation has prevailed of obliging the Lectors and formal students to assist *twice* a day at meditation, this laudable custom be continued. (Decl. Ia)"

To disdain these regulations, to regret the time allotted by right to mental prayer, to confound meditation with the contemplation of the mysteries which are celebrated according to prescribed rights, during the office of Mass, in the course of the year, would be to pretend to drink simultaneously from two different sources of virtue, to pay with the same price of money two distinct tributes.

Shall we not rather call that which we are disposed to call an *economy of time*, or a *benefit to preach-*

*ing and study*, a deplorable *loss* of great spiritual graces, a cruel *starvation* of souls which are thus deprived of the air and dew and sun of Heaven, and of the very bread which the Superiors as Fathers and Mothers break to their children?

Happy among us the great Convents, where a large number of Brethren, animated with fervor for souls, and with zeal to fulfill all observances even to the smallest detail, do all things with fidelity and without evasion! Performed with unanimity these exercises elevate the community into a very temple of the Lord agreeable and useful unto a Christian people.

And thou too art happy, O Bethlehem, thou small community, humble still in numbers, but rich in fervor and in the hope of growth! For "Thou Bethlehem art not the least among the princes of Juda." (Matth II, 6); for thy people, thanks to a wise division of time between oral and mental prayer, are ever ready "to pay their vows to the Lord" (Ps. CXV, 14) without any "robbery of the holocaust" (Isai. LXI, 8)

They compensate by their devotion for the loss in exterior solemnity, and cry out by their acts: "I also in the simplicity of my heart have joyfully offered all these things." (I Paralip. XXIV, 17).

And Our Lord is pleased by these homages, for through them the faithful suffer no want.

They even enjoy an advantage, for whenever we may be, we merit not by the quantity of the work accomplished, but by its quality; and our object must be to give to others "that which we have obtained by meditation" (Const. N. 13).

All this will be more fully explained in the remaining chapters.

## PRUDENT JUDGMENT IN THE ACQUISITION OF SACRED DOCTRINE.

The Chapter of Viterbo has wisely decreed that a course of studies, more fully adapted to our present needs, be drawn up by our most competent Teachers.

But it is not less important to adapt our intelligence to our doctrine, than our doctrine to our intelligence; and it is this fact which we desire to impress more strongly upon you.

First of all it is necessary to possess a thoughtful and reflecting disposition.

Such a mind seeks not only to grasp facts from a particular view-point, which may change at any moment; but it views these facts collectively as a harmonious whole. It not only retains them in memory, but it also seeks to know their causes.

Far from confining itself to the low-lands of the present, it climbs to the very mountain tops of time in search of hidden truths, and seeks to possess them.

Some are endowed by nature with this quality in a greater degree than are others; and we find that by a special disposition of Providence, many such are called to a religious Order particularly destined to study, defend, and propagate truth, as is our Order, the Order of Truth, the Order of Preachers.

This thoughtful and reflecting spirit if rightly directed, will guard itself from running after vain phantoms of the present; it will form no rapid judgment, but will gradually develope into a *studious spirit*.

This studious spirit seeks its nourishment patiently and in an orderly manner, not in clouds

and fancies, nor in poetic fictions, but in solid arguments; and may be likened to a tree which sends its roots into all parts of the soil, yea, into the very fissures of the rock, thus drawing up into itself the vital sap.

This studious spirit appears in a striking manner in our great Patriarch. After having applied himself for many years to holy things, after having meditated on the sublime mysteries of heaven and the profound misery of man, lamenting the one and admiring the other, being transformed into a humble student, he desired to frequent the schools of Toulouse, that he might bring the erring back into the way of truth. Hither he not only wended his own way, but brought with him some of his former companions, who may well represent us, and whose example teaches us a great lesson.

In our Order this studious spirit gradually transforms itself into a *theological spirit*.

In there novitiate the students are influenced little by little by the very structure of the monastery, by its massiveness, by the cloistered walks, by the austere cells, by the holy intention which animates all.

Here silence reigns supreme, that silence which the ancients called the "Creator of Orators", but which we may call the "Creator of Students".

Here are arranged with wisdom and prudence the numerous exercises, which succeed each other during the day; here dwells not only Christian temperance, but also voluntary mortification, by which the senses of the body, the imagination and the heart are purified so that God may be seen more clearly.

Here the incessant and manifold modulations of the Divine Office resemble the harp of David

appeasing the wrath of *Saul*, calming the troubled passions and engendering a sort of relationship between ourselves and the heavenly mysteries to be studied now, and later to be expounded to a Christian people.

Who, then, in such surroundings will not be made more like his Creator, and consequently more *theological*.?

This theological spirit is soon transformed into the *apologetic*. For the true disciple of the Incarnate Word seeks not to know for the sake of knowing, neither does he seek his own merit, nor even the enjoyment of finding truth. He guards jealously that which he has learned without guile; he communicates it without envy; and her riches he hides not. (Sap. VII, 13).

Those whom indifference has led astray, those who are kept aloof by prejudice, those whom hatred of truth arms with lies and calumnies, he seeks to enlighten and lead back, or at least to confound for the honor of God and the Glory of souls.

From this we may see that the study of apologetics, which fortifies simultaneously by its researches into the past, and by its knowledge of the present, becomes as a two-edged sword. (Hebr. IV, 12).

It will serve little indeed to discover truth in itself, if one does not find means to convince others of it, and thus dissipate the clouds of error.

Therefore, it is well ordained in our Constitutions, that the Brethren should speak openly and courageously against heresies, and that they should teach constantly and explicitly the dogmas of faith: and make protest against existing evil conditions,



ever remembering however that their zeal must be prudent, that they must avoid introducing anything which pertains to politics, lest our enemies may find motives for assailing us.

It now remains for us to explain just how far the apologetic spirit may intrude into the realm of *science*, and adopt its methods while avoiding vain curiosity, empty words, flowery commentaries (Cap. Gen. Bonon. 1564, Gadan 1871), the positions of knowledge falsely so called (Tim VI, 20.)

In this, prudence is to be observed by the Superiors and Teachers. For it is dangerous to allow young students not yet fully grounded in Theology, and who are over-confident in themselves and apt to depreciate the value of tradition and the superior principles of their doctrine, to venture out into this vast ocean of science, which no doubt holds vast treasures, but also abounds in storms and tempests, in rocks and shoals and frequent shipwrecks.

Yet these *young students* will say that they alone are able to determine the confines of Theology, its spirit and prerogatives, and the needs of modern society, and that they alone ought to be saluted as *saviors* of the Catholic cause placed in such dire peril; whereas the *Superiors* do not understand these questions, and do by condemning the part which they take, forbid all legitimate progress;

Great Heaven! What *Saviors*!

But if there be found a modest student, sincerely attached to the traditional doctrine, faithful to his mental prayer, distrustful of these new lights, dependent upon his Superiors for the direction of his work, then shall he be permitted to apply himself to scientific studies, that by these

means he may win success. The more he applies himself, the more will he be carried with love, beyond all things, to Him who is God, the Lord of all science. "For the Lord is a God of all knowledge and to Him are thoughts prepared." (1 Reg. 11, 3).

And then, after having studied diverse languages, their origin and growth, after having dug into the ruins of antiquity, after having gazed upon the heights of heaven and beheld the very depths of earth, and studied the forces of nature, he will finish by saying: "I judge not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, Jesus unto the Jews indeed a stumbling block and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but unto them that are called, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. II 2, 1, 23, 24).

This true scholar has then understood that the first of all sciences is the knowledge of God and the knowledge of oneself. This constitutes the science of the saints. (Sap. X, 10), which is our guide in the paths of this earthly life, meriting a heavenly crown in the life everlasting.

## CHARITY PRUDENTLY APPLIED IN THE WORKS OF THE APOSTOLATE.

Charity must be regulated in all things (Cant. II, 4.) This is true especially in our holy Order, which God has favored with such particular graces, which the Holy See has enriched with such numerous benefits, which the faithful cherish with such marked friendliness, and which we must render helpful to all souls, in virtue of our vocation given to us from on high.

Let us consider first the Apostolic worker taken individually; second, the religious institution of which he is a member, finally the different persons among whom he is to labor.

I. The Apostolic worker as an individual, whoever he may be, and whatever may be his capabilities, ought never to forget this sentence: "Guard yourselves at all times, lest perhaps having preached to others, you yourselves should become castaways." (I Cor. IX, 27.)

Moreover it must always be borne in mind that the apostle is not bound to minister to his neighbor more than justice demands, if thereby he ceases to render glory to God by fidelity to the duties of the spiritual life, the examination and just direction of the movements of his heart, and by a firm devotion. An ill-regulated activity besides destroying spiritual life causes premature exhaustion of intellectual as well as physical strength.

He who avoids these dangers by watching himself closely, will in the end accomplish a greater number of zealous acts and will gather more precious fruit; for he will be able to work longer, more strenuously, more usefully and with



better method.

II. Let us now consider the worker who has enrolled his name under the banners of one or the other of the various orders charged to defend the cause of Christ, and in particular in the Order of Friars Preachers. This worker will not claim for himself the titles, the glory and the privileges of his Order, nor will he take for his guide his personal liberty nor his own inspiration.

The holy society of which he is a member has a mission, a character, a special devotion ordained in view of the worship of God.

It is not lawful, then, for each member, under pretext of some exterior ministry, though praiseworthy in itself, to deprive the community of his help, thereby endangering its existence, to the detriment of the glory of God, and the discouragement and injury of his Brethren.

Moreover, we must not forget that these works which we perform are for the whole world and for all times.

In the Divine plan we, who are "but an atom, and live but a day", become a power, by filling the place assigned to us by Providence and by corresponding to the graces given to us.

Again, as we have already stated, our merit lies not in the number of acts performed, but in the manner in which they are done.

Therefore, if we desire to help the people, it follows that our lives must be in accordance with our ministry. Let them be striking examples of charity, of humility, of recollection, of penance, and let us appear before the faithful as eloquent examples of Christian perfection, careful to remove from ourselves all that may tend to detract from our virtue.

Let us quote B. Humbert, a just man and of wide experience; "Although the Friar Preacher ought as far as possible to manifest zeal for the salvation of souls, it is by far preferable for the Order, that less fruit be gathered, if thereby an occasion of danger or scandal is given to its members as is often the case when Brethren not well fitted are sent indiscreetly to preach, to give counsel, to hear confessions and perform other works of a like nature.

Let us take for example a worker in the vineyard of Our Lord, who, alleging the supreme rights of charity, argues that everything must be attempted, even if thereby regularity, community life, and the spirit of obedience are imperiled. Let us cite another example of one, less zealous perhaps, who works more moderately, who devotes himself to study and prayer, who strives to follow the exercises of community life, and who, with a simple and sincere heart, depends upon the wishes of his Superiors. If weighed in the balance his works will outweigh by far those of the injudicious worker.

III. Let us now consider our ministry in relation to the souls unto whom we must minister, their different characters and their needs, that we may escape as far as possible the danger of perversion and loss of time.

For in our day, there is no lack of men, Christian in name, worldly at heart, who, willingly seeking the conversation of religious distinguished by talent, by eloquence, by grace of good manners, draw them little by little from their habits and ideas, instead of being themselves drawn by this frequent communion into the humility of the faith and the love of the Cross.

It is best to have no intercourse with them, and to give more attention during these times to the ignorant who must be instructed, to the poor, who must be consoled, to sinners who must be reconciled to God.

Are not these the ones whose company we should rather seek, and who have a first right to our sympathy and our assistance?

There is another type of person, pious in appearance filled, apparently, with aspirations for a higher life, who loves nothing better than to call upon priests, distinguished by their asceticism, or to assail them with letters, under the pretext of seeking their counsel and spiritual direction, and to ask them to determine whether they have a vocation.

It is well for the Friar Preacher to remove himself as far as possible from such persons, from their admiration, their praises, and their persistency, which foster nothing but vanity and sensual pleasure.

Better is it silently to show them a Crucifix. It is preferable to render assistance to persons recommended by their real piety, their honorable name, their zeal in works of charity, their munificence toward our churches and monasteries.

But be careful even in your intercourse with them, and do not condescend to enter too frequently into conversations, or allow them to enter into any confidences regarding the affairs of the Order. Do not receive too easily little presents, nor recount with complacency to others their merits, their good qualities and the special good-will which they bear towards you.

The Apostolic worker will further their advancement and preserve his own dignity much

better, if he will give them some simple firm direction, thereby elevating their religious plans, and promoting their domestic virtue.

Other sheep there are straying from the fold which call us to bring them back to Christ, the only Shepherd. Let us hearken unto them.

Finally one encounters, my dear Brethren, among men, (and their numbers increase daily) persons, rich perhaps in this world's goods and in talent, but who are totally in need of the glory of God. (Rom. III, 23). The true apostle who surrounds himself with holy persons belonging to the ministry and finds peace there, will have nothing to fear from such men; but if the occasion presents itself he will issue forth to defend his cause, acting like a true disciple of St. Dominic, who left his cloister and even his country to bring back to Jesus and Mary, the Albigensians, who like wild beasts were striving to destroy the blessed work of Redemption.

No one expects us to convince all of them, but charity demands that we refrain from all harshness and disdain, that the name of God may not be blasphemed among the Gentiles. (Rom. II, 24).

Nay more, we ought to listen with patience to all their incensed and impious assertions, to recognize willingly the good qualities that they still preserve, to applaud the work that they are able to accomplish, although only in the purely natural order, to praise their aspirations toward the Unknown God (Act. XVII, 23), to encourage the progress that they have already made, in the path of virtue.

Let us strive to edify the whole world by a sincere humility, by the odor of chastity, by a detachment from earthly things, by a tender assist-

ance and fatherly lavishness toward the poor and afflicted, in fact, by all good works of our ministry.

And adding to all this our prayers and secret offerings of mortification we shall bring to God, in time, many of these people, and thus create great joy in heaven and do our small part toward the furtherance of the Catholic Church on earth.

This zeal, manifesting itself in many ways, yet ever striving toward the one goal, the salvation of souls, each one of you, my dear Fathers and Brothers, possesses in some degree; you have already shown it, not only in giving all you have, but in giving yourselves for the good of souls. (II Cor. XII, 15).

We have beheld your works, we have seen your churches, filled with people who prayed in silence, or listened attentively to God's holy word, or chanted the praises of God with piety or enthusiasm.

We have seen the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order eagerly throng about us, we have seen their happiness because we were with them, we have witnessed their filial love.

We have heard the Bishops of the various dioceses praise your thorough instruction, your zeal, your love for the cloister, your modesty, your desire to edify the people.

"But he that is holy let him be sanctified still" (Apoc. XXII, 11,) that as he sanctifies his neighbor he also may be sanctified.

This is the fruit which we have seen in our visits, which we desire, and which we ask of God in our prayers.

We hope all of these things from you too, Brothers and Sisters, whom we have not been able to visit, notwithstanding your entreaties.

We know that you prize your vocation, the beauty of your institutions, your desire of personal sanctification, your regard for the example of St. Dominic and other saints of the Order, your duty to help the Church, by defending its sacred doctrine, by spreading it, by bringing back to the fold its erring sheep, and by furthering the progress of the just in Christian perfection.

And now that these wishes may be realized, we commend you to God and the word of His grace, (Act. XX, 32), we commend you to the Mother of God, the Immaculate Virgin, in whom we bless you, imploring in turn your prayers for us, for our associates and for the entire Order.

Given in Rome at the House of the Master General, on the 15th of February, a day consecrated to the very sweet memory of Blessed Jordan of Saxony, in the year of our Lord, 1905.

FR. HYACINTH MARIE CORMIER,

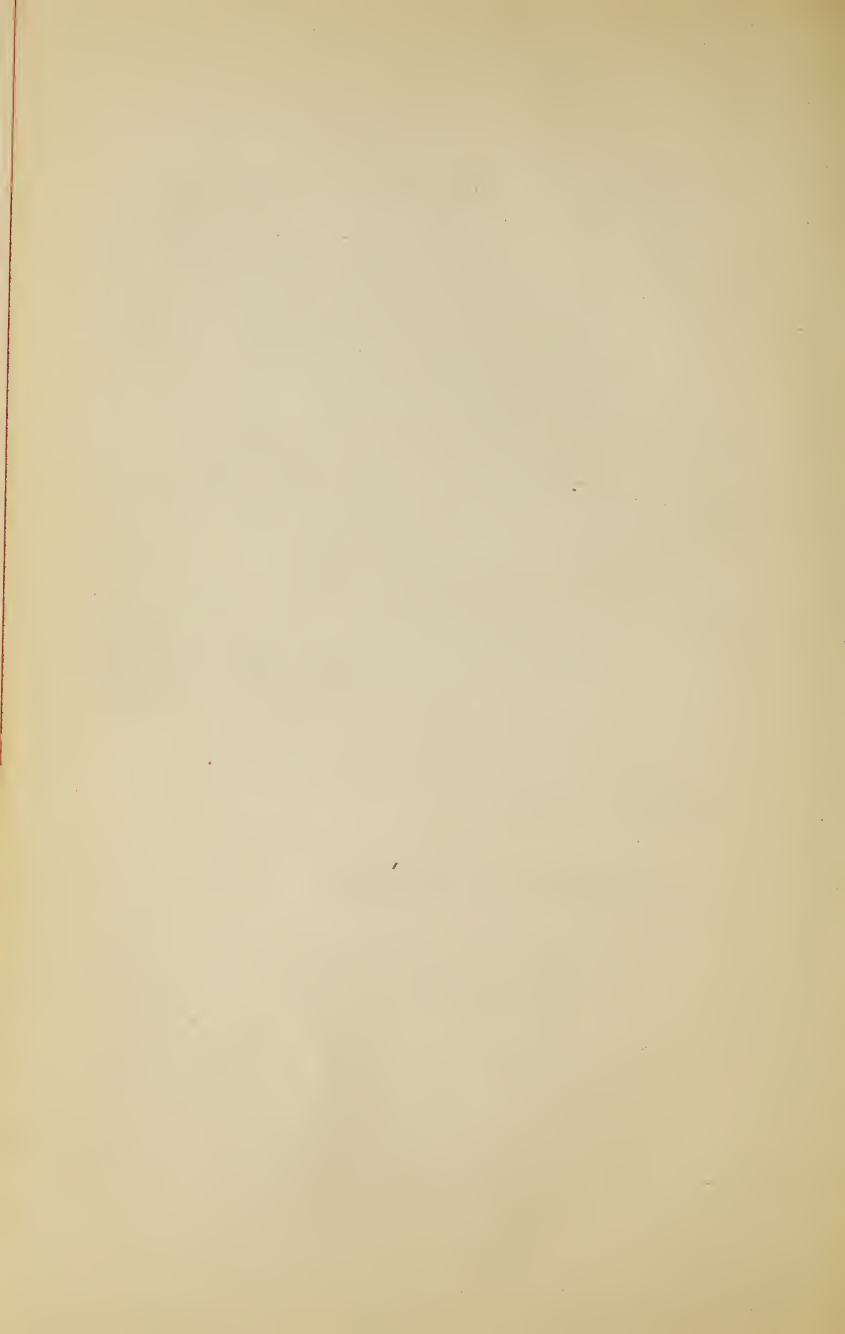
*Master General,*

FR. ALAIN VAN BESOUW,

*Socius.*

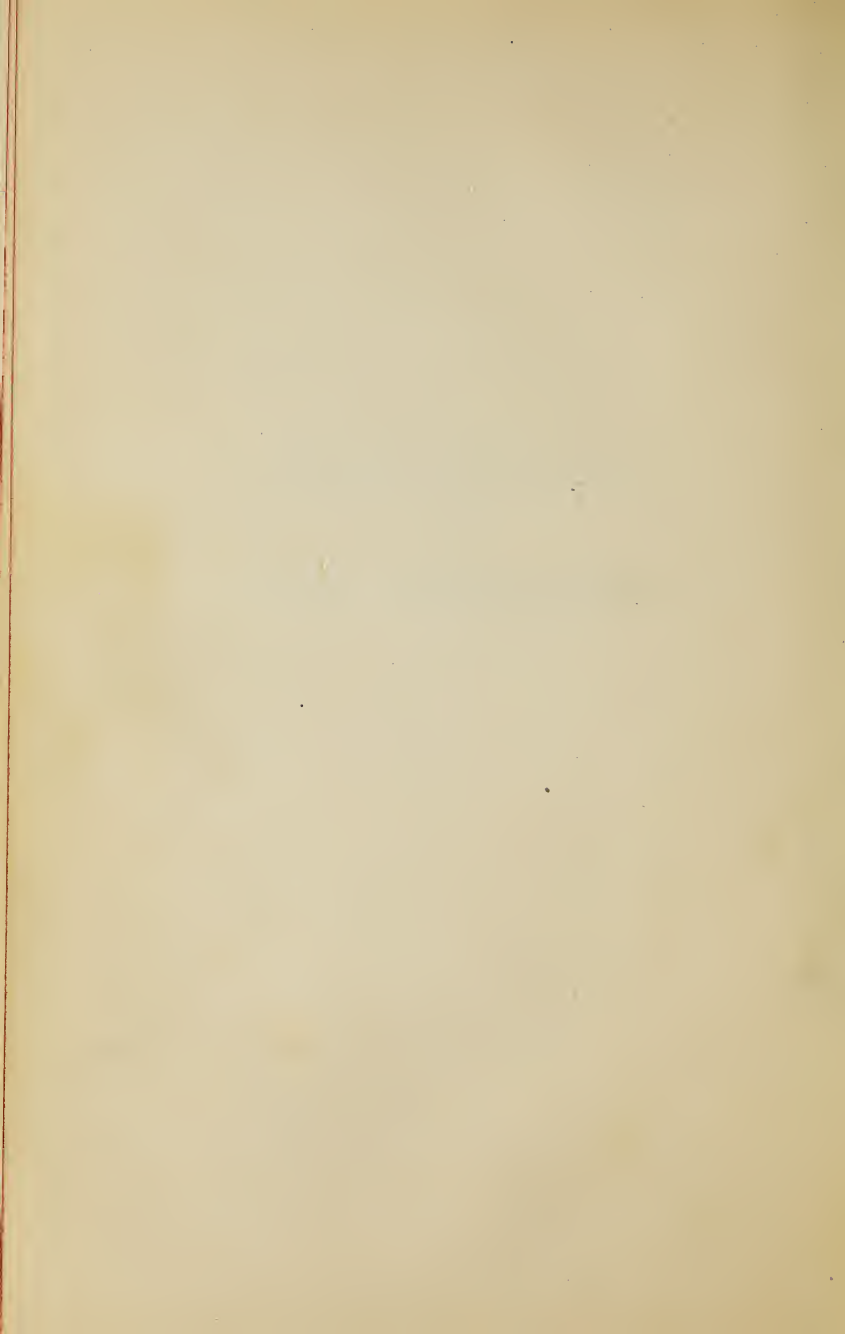








CONFERENCES  
ON  
RELIGIOUS LIFE



## “WHY I AM A RELIGIOUS.”

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*“I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.”*

We meet here as religious to make our annual retreat. We have the name and habit of profession of religious. As religious we hope to live and die, and as religious we shall be rewarded or punished on the day of judgment. Let us therefore try with the assistance of the Holy Ghost to understand better the meaning of the words “I am a religious.”

Religious life has a divine origin. Jesus Christ instituted it by His doctrine and His example. “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come follow Me.”

Perfection is the end of religious life. Jesus is the very incarnation of perfection. He was without sin.

“Who can accuse Me of sin?” He was full of grace and full of truth. “I am the way. Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart.”

To be a religious therefore, means to follow Jesus in the most perfect possible manner.

Well did the fathers of the Church call religious life the evangelic life, the apostolic life.

As religious life is of divine origin, thus the call to a religious life comes directly from God. It is a gift of God. A religious is a person called by God in a special way. Even as Jesus called His apostles and disciples, thus He calls His religious. “You have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you”

To every religious soul may be applied the words of the royal prophet; “Hearken, O, daugh-

ter, and see and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty, for He is the Lord thy God." How wonderful and mysterious is a religious vocation? Men of learning and experience, students of history and theology may praise and admire religious life, and yet look upon it as far beyond and far above them.

Good, innocent, devout souls may meet religious, be encouraged by parents, friends and teachers to join a religious community, and yet not fulldrawn toward it.

Even those who enter may have only a very imperfect and obscure knowledge of religious life.

Their parents and friends, not understanding a religious vocation are often opposed to it, the austerities of the life and its many sacrifices are pictured to them in an exaggerated way; yet they feel that they must go. Such a vocation comes not from without; it comes from within. It is God dwelling in the soul, enlightening the mind and moving the heart with the fire of His love. A religious vocation is a gift of God. "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was."

To be a religious means to have received that precious gift. Here let us pause, reflect and see, what a distinction, what an honor, what a grace it is to be chosen by God. He chose us not because we are better than others, but because He loved us more. Why His love toward us was greater we do not know. Let us thank Him for His love.

Let us also call to mind all the particulars of our vocation.

First we heard the voice of God. That Voice grew clearer and stronger. We encountered op-

position. We triumphed. Then we felt ready to bear all things and to suffer all things.

The memory of those days is sacred and must be kept alive.

I am a religious—these words mean,—I am one chosen by God. They mean, I am one who chose God.

Although God's voice is powerful and strong, it can be resisted. God does not destroy free-will. God does not want forced love. Neither does He desire slaves in His convents.

God desires free and generous souls, souls who choose Him as He chooses them.

The young man mentioned in the Gospel, "having heard these things became sorrowful, for he was very rich." He walked away, while we, with God's grace have followed Christ joyfully.

The word religious, says, St. Thomas, is derived from the Latin word "re-eligere," to choose again, to choose a second time.

We chose Him first in Baptism, when we renounced the world, the works and pomps of Satan, and promised to follow Jesus Christ. Our souls were changed, transformed. We became Children of God and heirs of Heaven. God sealed the contract by impressing upon the immortal soul an indelible mark, an unalterable character.

And now we have chosen Him a second time by entering the religious state. The word state implies stability. The vows have made our choice lasting. yes, lasting forever.

"The state of perfection", says St. Thomas, does nothing save impose a perpetual obligation to accomplish those things which pertain to perfection. No state of perfection can exist without perpetual obligation.

The state of perfection consists in fulfilling the great commandment "Love your God". "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

By striving for perfection, by keeping this commandment, we honor and worship God, which is the end of religion and the aim of those consecrated to religion. The one model and master of perfection for all times and all places, is Jesus Christ. Therefore all religious must learn from Him, study Him, and be His followers.

The object of our lives must be to shape ourselves according to that Divine Model, in making our hearts like that Divine Heart, in being Christ-like. The end of the life for which God has chosen us, and for which we have chosen God, is sublime.

To understand its sublimity, let us compare it with the other vocations in life.

How noble are the arts of painting and sculpture, of music and architecture.

To illumine the dull canvas, to make the cold, hard marble speak, to combine sounds into one great symphony, to cut and dress the rude blocks until they are fitted together into some great temple reared for the worship of God, is wonderful and sublime.

But greater by far, and infinitely more sublime is the work of the religious. Her duty and privilege it is to mould and fashion her immortal soul until it becomes like unto its God.

The masterpieces of art decorate His world and must perish with the world. The soul of the religious made perfect and Christ-like is destined to shine in the Kingdom of God eternally.

Therefore the religious takes and keeps the

three evangelical vows—Poverty, chastity and obedience—the three nails which fasten every religious to the cross of Christ.

The observance of these vows means the casting out of sin. Sin is directly opposed to perfection. It destroys God's image in the soul. The three great causes of sin, the three strong, heavy chains that enslave the soul and keep it in bondage are, as the Apostle says: "Concupiscence of the eye, concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life."

There is that strong, inborn desire in the heart of man to gain wealth, to seek pleasure, be it lawful or unlawful, to be the master and not the servant.

But by taking the vows, the religious breaks the chains, releases the soul, protects it against temptation and the snares of the devil, that it may devote itself undisturbedly and undividedly to its heavenly profession—the attainment of perfection, the worship of God, union with God.

But to become perfect, that is Christ-like, the religious soul must not only avoid sin, it must advance in the practice of virtue.

Christ stands before us, as the living personification of poverty, of chastity and of obedience. He hangs on the most holy Cross deprived of everything, His immaculate body bleeding, obedient unto death. By taking the vows, and practising the virtues contained therein, the religious soul slowly approaches Christ, and by degrees unites itself to Him.

The word religious may also be derived from the Latin "re-ligare," to tie again, to tie fast. A religious is therefore one who ties herself to Christ with the three vows, these three perpetual, inde-



structable, everlasting bonds.

A religious is, moreover, one consecrated to religion. The end of religion is the worship of God. God is worshipped essentially by the offering of sacrifice. In the old law they sacrificed to God the fruit of the fields, and lambs of the flock.

In the new and perfect law the sacrifice is new and perfect. It is the sacrifice of self. Jesus Christ sacrificing Himself on Calvary attained most perfectly, the end of religion. A religious must therefore sacrifice herself. The more she sacrifices herself, the more justly and truly may she be called a religious.

St. Thomas explains this beautifully when he says: "These vows well beseem a religious life. "For," as St. Augustine says: "The word religion means not any sort of worship, but the worship of God. Now the worship which is due to God alone consists in the offering of sacrifice. When a religious dedicates to the Almighty all that he has all that he takes pleasure in, even his entire life he is offering a holocaust. This he does most perfectly, by the three religious vows. Hence it is clear that the name of religious is strictly applied, according to the very meaning of the word, to those who pay their vows as a holocaust to God."

None, says St. Augustine, sacrifice so much as they that sacrifice themselves.

Reflect then on the many and profound meanings of the words "I am a religious", and you will better understand that there is nothing more salutary than to be a religious. We give ourselves wholly to God. By giving ourselves thus wholly to God, we imitate Christ and perpetuate His work.

Religious life is the life of the Apostles and the greatest saints. It is the safest and most direct

way to Heaven.

Let us then thank God, as we have never thanked Him before, that we are religious. And let us promise Him, as we have never promised Him before, that we will be true religious, well worthy of our vocation.

# CONFERENCE ON POVERTY,

BY

THE VERY REV. C. M. THUENTE O. P.

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*"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

A religious is a person consecrated to religion. Religion is the worship of God. A religious worships God by sacrificing herself like Christ on the Cross, and by imitating Christ, that is by making herself Christ-like.

This she does by keeping the three sacred vows. The vows therefore are very essential to a religious life.

The first of the three vows is the vow of poverty. To understand the meaning of this vow and virtue, we must study Christ, our model and master.

Jesus Christ was poor; He lived and worked as the poor did; He loved the poor. It is interesting and edifying to study the simple, charming way in which Christ entered this world. The angel appearing to the poor shepherds described Him well: "Behold I bring you tidings of great joy," he exclaimed, appearing in the brightness of God, "for this day is born unto you a Saviour, who is Christ the King. And this shall be a sign unto you, you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger."

The words "infant", "swaddling clothes" and "manger" helped the shepherds to find and recognize the king of heaven and earth.

As Christ began His earthly career in poverty, so He remained poor unto the end. When He was

presented to God in the great rich temple of Solomon, St. Joseph brought the offering of the poor. In Nazareth during His long private life, He was known as the Son of the carpenter. When engaged during His public life in preaching and teaching, He describes Himself well, by saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." "What have you to eat?" He asked His disciples on one occasion, and the answer was, "We have but five loaves and two fishes."

As He lived, so He died. At the last moment, even His garments were taken from Him. They left Him nothing but a Cross, and a Crown of thorns.

Thus Jesus was poor, and poor in spirit. He wished to be poor. All things have been made through Him; all things belonged to Him. He could have possessed them all, if He had so desired, but He wished to be poor, that He might give us an example. Let us imitate Him.

We cannot follow the poor Jesus without being poor. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me."

The heart of man is naturally strongly attached to the unjust goods of this world. The noble youth who could say to Christ, "I have kept all the commandments from my childhood," could not conquer his love for his riches, and he left Christ to enjoy them. As long as the heart is thus tied down to the material world, the soul cannot lift itself up to God, and things spiritual. We take the vow of poverty and that vow like a sword, must sever the cord that binds us to the world.

In the first place, a religious must not possess anything as her own. She must give up everything; and the word "mine" must have no meaning for her.

The things given to her by the community, food, dress, or whatever it may be, must be regarded as sacred and holy; for these things are given by the faithful to the community, in the name of religion, as alms. As alms therefore, a good religious must accept them thankfully, and use them with care.

A religious must be satisfied with what she receives, and not desire more. She must be poor in spirit, and this poverty in spirit, is blessed poverty.

There are hundreds and thousands of people in the big cities poorer than religious; fathers who have no bread for their children; families that have neither shelter nor fuel. Their poverty is misery, and though it is bitter and painful, it is often far from meritorious because it is not voluntary but forced; it is not cheerfully borne, but is endured with murmuring and complaint; whereas they have nothing, they desire to have much.

The perfection of religious poverty, therefore, does not consist in being extremely poor, but in being so detached from all material things, so free from the anxious and distracting question, "What shall I eat, what shall I drink," that it is forgotten, and our thoughts are lifted to something nobler and higher. The care of these things in religion, is given to a few, so that the rest of the community may give themselves undisturbed to God. St. Dominic, a perfect religious, understood full well the importance of this vow of poverty.

Where there is not the spirit of poverty, there

is like-wise no spirit of religion. As soon as the love of wordly things and comforts enters the community, the love of prayer, and work and sacrifice leaves. (When St. Dominic saw some of his brethren fail against the spirit of poverty, he began to weep. On his deathbed he emphatically recommended poverty.)

(St. Francis of Assissi is known in the Church as the great advocate and apostle of holy poverty. An historian tells us that, as regards poverty, St. Dominic differed in no way from his companion and friend, St. Francis. Both were extremely poor, both loved poverty, both recommended poverty; both laid down the laws of poverty as fundamental principles of their orders. If there was any difference between the two as regards poverty it consisted in this, that St. Francis, the Apostle of Poverty, made poverty the constant theme of his sermons and instructions, for through poverty he wished to reform the world; while St. Dominic, who was also poor, preached less on holy poverty and more on the other great mysteries of his religion.)

(In private life therefore, the followers of St. Dominic must be as poor as the poorest of the religious.)

Jesus our Master manifested His spirit of poverty by loving the poor. He loved all men, but He seemed to love the poor more than others.

For His Mother He chose Mary the Virgin, the daughter of a queen, but reduced to poverty. St. Joseph although a descendant of David belonged to the poorer class. The first invited to enjoy His divine presence were the shepherds. The shepherds in Palestine were the poorest of the poor. For His disciples and companions, for the apostles



and princes of the church he chose the poor fishermen.

Jesus loved to preach the gospel of peace to the poor.

When the disciples of St. John came to Christ and asked Him the question "Art Thou the Messiah," Jesus gave the beautiful answer, "tell John what you have seen, the lame walk, the blind see, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. On another occasion He said: "I have compassion on the multitude," that is the poor people.

Preaching to the poor, He did not teach them to become rich; but He taught them how to love and bear and appreciate their poverty. Ascending the mountain, Jesus preached from its top to the whole world, the sublime doctrine, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

In this respect also the religious having the vow of poverty, must imitate Jesus. A religious must prove to the world that she has the spirit of Christ, by the fact that she loves the poor. To teach the ignorant poor, to help the suffering poor is the proper work of religious.

This does not mean that the religious must exclude the rich from her benign influence; Jesus excluded none.

The wise men from the east were rich. Jesus invited them to come, and was pleased with their adoration and their offerings. But the wise men, in order to find Jesus, had to humble themselves and enter the stable. Jesus did not go to meet them in a palace. He was the same to the poor and the rich. He saw their souls and tried to save them.

And therefore a religious must never be influenced by riches. She is poor and must try to



make all poor in spirit.

Jesus being poor, loved the poor, and performed the work of the poor. At Nazareth they looked upon Him as the son of a carpenter, for as a young man He went forth daily with St. Joseph to work as such.

Religious having the vow of poverty must work. Work, a universal duty, becomes a special obligation for them. No one enters the convent saying: "God free me from the cares of the world, give me to eat and drink, that I may be idle," but by the vow of poverty she says: "God, if you free me from the ordinary cares of this temporal existence, I will employ all my time and talent according to Thy Holy Will.

Little depends on the kind of work we do. Work receives its worth and nobility not from its nature, but from the intention with which it is done. Jesus worked as a carpenter. Mary, the Blessed Mother, performed the ordinary work of the household, and yet this work was most perfect and most meritorious because it was done for a holy motive, for the love of Jesus.

Blessed in a community are the sisters who have to perform the domestic work. It is the work of the Blessed Mother; it is the work that frees them from distractions; it is the work that has the least responsibility.

To some is assigned the work of teaching. Let the teaching sisters rejoice and fear. They have a splendid opportunity of doing good. The church confides unto them her innocent children to teach them Christ, and to shape their tender hearts according to that divine model.

The church builds and supports the great parochial schools, and calls upon the sisters to

conduct them. The parochial school must equal and even surpass the public school, otherwise it does not fulfill its mission.

The child coming from the parochial school must feel that it knows as much as the child coming from the public school, otherwise it will blame its religion for its ignorance and its little knowledge of religion will bear no fruit.

In order that the school of the sisters may reach and enjoy this high standard, the sisters must work. They must prepare themselves carefully and then work in unison, with one heart and one soul. Sisters who live according to the spirit of poverty, forgetting all worldly cares, devoting all their time to their work, looking upon work as sacred and holy, will enjoy a special blessing of God and will succeed in their work.

Behold the meaning of the vow of poverty. The world fears poverty, the religious loves it, for it makes the soul happy. Poverty frees the soul from unnecessary cares caused by inordinate love for personal possession of the unjust goods of this world, and having set the soul free, the soul enjoys them in a religious way.

Religious poverty enables us to find Christ, to follow Christ and to belong to Christ. Christ takes good care of His poor.

Toward the end of His life, He asked His disciples, "Was there ever anything wanting to you?" They answered Him, "No Master". Likewise all true religious can answer, "No Master, we have lacked nothing."

No human being ever enjoyed the sunshine, the starry sky, the birds, the air, the flowers, the fields, all nature, more than did St. Francis, the patriarch of the poor.

A religious poor in spirit realizes the truth of the words; "Every one that hath left house, or father or mother, or sister, or brother, or wife or children for My sake shall receive much more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

# CONFERENCE ON CHASTITY,

BY

THE VERY REV. C. M. THUENTE O. P.

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*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."*

The vow of poverty, prepares the soul to follow Jesus. The vow of chastity is necessary to remain with Him and to belong to Him.

To follow Jesus means to imitate His private life, to go with Him to Nazareth, to become as it were a member of the Holy Family.

If we enter that sacred home, the first ideal convent, we find there, above all, angelic purity; Mary the immaculate spotless virgin, the queen of the virgin saints: St. Joseph holding in his hand the lily of virginity.

To show his love for purity and virginity, Jesus chose this virgin for His mother, and chose her virgin spouse St. Joseph for His foster-father. He wished to live with these pure souls; He desired to reveal Himself to them. These pure souls were to be the first to know Him, to love Him, to enjoy His divine presence, to contemplate His infinite goodness and wisdom.

When Jesus left that angelic home and began His public life, He again manifested His love for purity and virginity by making St. John, the virgin disciple, His favorite beloved follower.

It was St. John who was with Him on Mt. Tabor and again in the Garden of Olives. It was St. John who was privileged to sit near Jesus at the Last Supper, and who rested his head on the Master's Sacred bosom. St. John, and he alone,

had the courage and strength to ascend Calvary and stand under the cross.

To St. John Jesus confided His greatest and dearest treasure, His Blessed, Sorrowful Mother.

It was St. John who penetrated more profoundly than any of the other disciples the mysteries of the love of God. He had a pure heart and he saw God. He saw "His glory, the glory as it were of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

As the beginning of the history of our Church is thus charming in its angelic purity, so the beginning of the history of our order invites us to practice this virtue in the highest degree.

St. Dominic, when dying, allowed his charity to conquer his modesty. He declared for our instruction and edification, that with God's grace he had kept the lily of virginity undefiled. His white habit expressed well the purity of his soul.

This spiritual treasure of the holy father was inherited by his children. All the saints of the Dominican order stand before the world decorated with the crown of virginity, and not only all the canonized saints, but, with few exceptions, the beatified of the order as well.

Our St. Thomas of Acquin, the angelic youth, the angelic saint, the angelic doctor, has been declared the patron of this beautiful virtue.

St. Catharine of Sienna and St. Rose of Lima are perfect models of a perfect life. They were angels in flesh.

The examples of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Joseph and of St. John, the origin and history of the Order of St. Dominic invites us to take the vow of chastity and to practice the virtue in an eminent degree.

To encourage ourselves in, the lively warfare we may meditate with profit some of the reasons we find in Scripture. Jesus Christ tells us that "we shall see God", if we have a pure heart. To see God in as far as God can be seen by the soul in this world is the end of religious life.

To be with God, we came to the convent; His divine presence must keep us in the convent. To know our God, we have our prayers and meditations and spiritual exercises.

But all is in vain unless we possess purity of heart.

A religious who has not a pure heart will never be at home in the convent. She cannot be happy. She has neither God nor the world. Without purity of heart, a religious cannot persevere to the end.

Purity is the source of supernatural strength. It helped St. John to follow Jesus to the top of Calvary. It must help us to follow Jesus to the end of our lives.

Samson was powerful against his enemies. The secret of his miraculous strength was his long hair. When it was cut off his strength was gone. The secret of the saints' miraculous strength is purity of heart. It makes them see and feel God. If purity of heart is lost, the strength of a religious is lost too.

Inspired by the Holy Ghost, St. Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles recommended to the Christians purity and virginity. He says: "You are not your own, for you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.—Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give counsel, as having obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. It is good to be in this



state."

The apostle then gives us a new reason why it is good to be in the state of virginity. The unmarried woman and the virgin "thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

We come to the convent to serve God with a whole and undivided heart. For that reason we leave the cares and distractions of the world, but in order to think on "the things of the Lord", in order to be "holy both in body and in spirit," in order to attend upon the Lord without impediment, we must have a pure heart.

St. John, who knew His Master and His Master's love for this virtue, preached virginity to the world, and gave the world a new inducement, a new encouragement.

He opens unto us the gates of heaven and shows us the Lamb standing upon Mount Sion, and with Him a hundred and forty four thousand, having his name and the name of the Father, written on their foreheads. He tells us that they sang, as it were, a new canticle before the throne and that no man could say the canticle but these chosen ones, for they were virgins. These virgins follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They are the first fruits to God and the Lamb.

Purity and virginity are therefore privileged by God, not only in this world, but even in the heavenly home throughout all eternity. The pure of heart see God in a special way on earth and in heaven. The vow of chastity makes the religious soul truly consecrated to Christ. The vow of chastity makes the religious soul, as the beautiful



language of the Church tells us, a spouse of Christ.

Well does the virgin repeat the words of the psalmist, "I have despised the world, and its vain ornaments, for the love of my Master. I have seen Him, I have loved Him, I have believed in Him, I have chosen Him for my inheritance."

The fact that religious practise this virtue and are consecrated to Christ, makes the whole world, Christian and Pagan, respect and honor them.

What can we do to keep this sacred vow?

In the first place we must pray frequently and fervently for this gift. In the book of Wisdom we read, "as I knew I could not otherwise be continent, except God save it, I went to the Lord, and besought Him."

At our daily prayers especially in Holy Communion, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we must ask our heavenly Spouse to keep our hearts pure: He will not abandon us, if we do not abandon Him.

The vow of chastity implies the duty of mortification. The flesh must be mortified and kept in subjection. Jesus on the cross is our model. And we must mortify more than our flesh, we must mortify our senses, especially our eyes and our ears. Purity, by its very nature, is like a tender flower. It is easily blighted and killed.

In order to keep this vow, we must keep the rule. The rules were made to protect the vows. If the rules are neglected, the vows are broken.

How beautiful is the rule prescribing that religious should never go out alone, but always in the company of another sister. One sister thus becomes the guardian angel of the other, the observance of this rule gives great edification to the people. By their modesty religious, like an-

gels, preach this virtue to the corrupt world, encourage the weak, and move unfortunate sinners to repentance.

Here it may be proper to remind ourselves of the words of Christ: "Be simple as doves, but wise as serpents." The serpent, Scripture tells us, is more subtle than any of the beasts of the earth. In religious, simplicity must be combined with great prudence. Her vigilant eye must detect dangers even if hidden. Religious who thus watch and pray need not fear. Temptations and dangers may come, but the Lord will be there to protect His own, with His mighty arm.

Living and dying they will sing with the inspired writer: "I will give glory to Thee, O Lord, my King, and I will praise Thee, O, God, my Saviour; I will give glory to Thy name, for Thou hast been my help and my protection, and hast preserved my body from destruction."

# CONFERENCE ON OBEDIENCE,

BY

THE VERY REV. C. M. THUENTE O. P.

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*"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."*

*"He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."*

The third vow which we take in our religious profession, is the vow of *obedience*. It is the greatest, most important and most sublime of the three religious vows.

It is the *greatest*, because by taking it, we offer to God the greatest gift, our will.

Poverty sacrifices external goods, chastity delivers our bodies; but obedience offers up our self-will. It completes the sacrifice in so far as we can make it complete. It makes our sacrifice a holocaust.

Obedience is the most *important* vow. It makes us leave our own selfish way, to follow Christ. It makes us truly religious. Without obedience, poverty and chastity have little meaning. Obedience includes them and directs them unto God.

Obedience is the most *sublime* of our vows. It lifts us poor, fallen children, to God. Jesus Himself taught us to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven," "Thy will not mine be done."

Obedience makes us fulfill that petition. It makes us do His holy will here on earth, as the angels do His will in heaven.

By taking the vow of obedience, I promise to live according to the plan Infinite Wisdom and Goodness has laid down for me. I cannot well

plan my own future. I am too ignorant and too selfish. Therefore I rise above my ignorance and selfishness, lift myself up to God, and say; Thy will be done, always and in all things. Obedience makes God's will our will, and therefore it is sublime.

Obedience being so great and important and sublime, is difficult to understand, and still more difficult to practise. To understand it, let us again study the obedience of Jesus Christ, whom we follow.

In studying the life of Jesus, we find that He obeyed His Heavenly Father. "Father not My will but thine be done," He said repeatedly. And again, "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me."—"I seek not my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."

Therefore in all things, we too must obey God and Him alone. God gave us our free will. It is so precious that we cannot give it to a creature, we can only return it to God.

How do we know God's will? God speaks to us directly and indirectly. Directly through the ten commandments; indirectly through our superiors. The authority remains the same. It is always divine, and must always be respected as such, no matter in what person the authority may be invested.

This fundamental principle we again learn from Jesus Christ. "He who hears you, hears Me, and he who despises you, despises Me."

And Jesus practised what He preached. When twelve years old, He returned home with the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, and was subject unto them. Jesus, the Son of God obeyed His own creatures because they had authority over Him;

they represented God, His Heavenly Father.

Not only did Jesus obey His holy and immaculate Mother; He obeyed the unjust and cowardly Pilate. Pontius Pilate exercised authority, therefore when he publicly contradicted himself and condemned the innocent Jesus, Jesus obeyed, and in obeying fulfilled the will of His Father.

If religious could only grasp, and constantly bear in mind, this divine lesson, how many objections and difficulties against obedience would not be solved?

So many complain and say, "my superior has faults; she does not like me, she has an evil intention in commanding me."

The faults and intentions of superiors do not influence their authority when they command that which is not sinful even if they possessed the faults of a Pontius Pilate, their subjects must obey, for the subjects have promised to obey God, and God's will be done, and they will receive their reward.

God and God's authority must therefore always be the ultimate reason for obeying. If we obey simply because we like a superior or desire to please her, our obedience is human and unworthy of a religious.

Jesus obeyed God, and obeyed Him in all things, "becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."

Sometimes obedience is easy and sometimes it is very difficult. "It is easy," says a great writer, "to follow Jesus to the Last Supper; it is difficult to follow Him to the top of Calvary. There even the Apostles failed Him."

No one ever found obedience more difficult than Jesus. In the Garden of Olives, when He

saw that His Father willed that He should drink the Chalice, He began to tremble, He feared. Blood oozed from His pores. He prostrated Himself. He pleaded with His Heavenly Father; "Father take away the Chalice." It was a great trial, a fearful struggle. But obedience conquered. "Thy will, not mine, be done."

And so religious obedience is often difficult and demands heroic sacrifice. It is useful and holy. It kills our inborn selfishness, and makes us self-sacrificing. It forces us to leave the broad way of destruction, and guides us on the narrow way of the cross that leads to Heaven.

Religious life is a sacrifice. The poor mortal who dares to follow Christ Crucified must be prepared for great, heroic sacrifices.

Very often when obedience demands sacrifice, superiors are blamed. This is a very sad mistake. Jesus was certainly a kind and good Master. Yet He sent His disciples into the world to be despised and hated, to be persecuted and killed. No religious superior ever demanded such sacrifices from his subjects. There is, therefore no fault to be found. The reason of the sacrifice lies in the very nature of things. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence."

The fact that we find obedience difficult, is not necessarily a sign that our obedience is imperfect. If we conquer our rebellious nature struggling against the will, as Jesus did our obedience resembles His perfect obedience.

It is good, however, to remember that the vow of obedience does not extend itself to every rule and every order of the superior. There is a great difference between the vow of obedience and



the virtue of obedience. We vow obedience according to the constitution of the order. The constitution tells us distinctly when disobedience is sinful and when it is not sinful.

However a good religious will never ask herself, is it sinful or is it not sinful? She came to the convent to perfect herself, and to become perfect we must obey in all things. Obedience in all things does not mean that we cannot ask for dispensations, or that we cannot make our wishes and inclinations known to our superiors. "Our following," says Scripture, "must be rational."

God gave us reason and judgment, and obedience must not destroy, but direct and perfect them.

If a religious, because of particular circumstances, as ill health or hard work, realizes that some rule given to the community is not good for her, it is not obedience to follow blindly and stubbornly, and suffer the consequences; rather it is obedience to humble herself and ask for a dispensation.

Jesus obeyed in all things and at all times. He was obedient unto death. He was obedient to the death of the Cross.

When He was presented in the temple as an infant, He made His profession, He offered Himself to His Heavenly Father and promised to fulfill the great and difficult mission the Father had planned for Him. At the end of His life, hanging on the cross, reviewing the past He could say; "It is consummated." I have kept my profession, I have fulfilled my mission to the last letter. Therefore He died peacefully. "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

So too a religious makes profession unto death.



There is no moment between her profession and her death, in which she can do her own will. She may remain in the Mother House or be sent on mission, she may live in a large community, or spend her days in a small community; she may assume the duties of a superior, or remain a humble subject, it is all the same; she has taken and must keep her vow of obedience, and she must live according to it. The more she advances in her community, and in years, the more perfectly obedient must she become. The convent is a school of perfection; in it we must progress. From the living example of older sisters, the younger sisters must learn the way of perfection. Hence it is of importance that the older sisters give good example and not scandal.

How blessed is the death of a religious who can die like Jesus, and say, it is consummated; I have been obedient; I have kept my profession; I have done God's will. God's Holy Will is to bring us to heaven in the most direct and meritorious way. Such a religious, when dying, is at the very gates of heaven. Death opens the gates unto her. "Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints."

The glorious death of Jesus, teaches us the important lesson that obedience does not destroy free-will. Jesus died on the cross because His Father willed it, and Jesus died on the cross because, as Scripture says, "He Himself willed it."

Obedience does not destroy the freedom of the will, but makes the human will free and strong. The human will is submitted to the divine will. They are united. They become one. Thus there can be no sin, no cross, but only blessing and happiness. No human being is as free as a perfect

religious. The rich man is tied down to his millions; the passionate man is a slave to his passions; the married are not free. Only a poor, pure, obedient religious is free. She alone can say to God: "What wilt Thou that I shall do? Command, O God, and Thy servant will obey."

Well did St. Antonius express this happy, religious freedom by saying, "To serve God means to reign."

## RULE AND CONSTITUTION.

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*“Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy.”*

As there is no religious life without religious vows, thus there is no religious life without a religious constitution and religious rules. The rule must regulate the life, and work of every religious.

The church would never allow us to take the vows, if we did not promise her to keep the rule. Without the observance of the rule, the vows cannot be kept. The rule is for the religious what the fortifications are for a city, what the nervous system is for the human body.

All things in Nature work and live according to rule. The more perfect the life, the more perfect the rule. Religious life is the life of perfection, and the religious rule is as far as possible perfect, and must be kept perfectly, as far as it is possible.

The sacred vows of all religious communities are the same. The rules of the various communities, societies, and orders differ. The rule gives to each order its specific spirit, character and end. If the rule is kept, the spirit and character remain, and the end is obtained. If the rule is neglected all is lost.

To every religious therefore, the rule is sacred and holy. A religious will say about her rule, what the prophet said about the law of God. “Set before me for a law the way of Thy justification, O Lord, and I will always seek after it. Give me understanding and I will search Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart. I lifted up my hands to Thy commandments which I loved. The

law of Thy mouth is good to me, above thousands of gold and silver. Thy law is my meditation. Thy law is immaculate."

A religious must love her rule, meditate upon it, and keep it with her whole heart.

Wisely did St. Augustine ordain, that his rule should be read publicly, once every week, and well did he call the rule a mirror in which our life is clearly reflected.

In order to love and respect the rule, it is good to study not only what it prescribes or forbids, but also how it originated and grew.

The foundation stone of every rule is the life of Christ, as it is pictured to us by the inspired writers. Learned, saintly, god-like men as St. Augustine and St. Dominic spent year after year meditating upon this divine Life. Then they tried to imitate it. First they practised the rule; then they gave it to others. Having proved the rule and found it useful for a holy life, and helpful for fruitful labor, they bequeathed the benefit of their knowledge and experience to their spiritual children.

And how careful were these saints in giving a rule. St. Dominic did not trust to his own individual opinion, but humbly consulted with his brethren. Nor did he finish the rules, but gave to the order the great, broad solid foundations combining the active with the monastic life. He founded an order for the whole world; he founded a learned order, sending his students to the universities; he founded an order for the people, building the convents in the great cities, and not in remote country places.

After the death of the Holy Founder, his followers carefully and slowly continued his work.

Year after year, the most learned men, masters of the great universities assembled in Bologna and Paris to consult and pass judgment about every little law, that was laid down in the constitution. We may well ask whether there is another constitution, either civil or religious, framed by equally learned men or with equal care and attention.

The Church having the experience of the world and of all ages, and enjoying the light of the Holy Ghost in a special way, examined, corrected and finally approved these regulations. Thus the rule is justly called holy in origin.

Again the history of the rule is holy. It has sanctified thousands. For more than six hundred years it has united thousands of members scattered throughout the entire world. It has guarded and directed each and every member of the order, in public and in private life; it has helped a pope to rule, it has aided the angelic doctor to teach; it has helped zealous and eloquent preachers to convert sinners and to save souls; it has led countless multitudes to martyrdom; it has helped all to avoid sin, to do penance, and to practise virtue; it has filled the Church with brave and valiant soldiers, and the heavens with great and glorious saints. Thus the history of the rule is holy indeed.

Let us thank God, that it is ours, and let us cry out with the inspired writer: "The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places, for my inheritance is goodly to me."

The religious who have succeeded in life, a Father Burke, a Pere Lacordaire, a Father Jandel, have loved and kept the rule, while those who have ignored and neglected the rule have fallen by the wayside.

The observance of the rule has made the order, the order of truth, the order of saints, a holy order, the order of Friar Preachers.

The rule is observed in different ways. Almost all begin well. Some continue and make constant progress, while others relax as they advance in years. In heaven among the angels there was a St. Michael and a Lucifer. In Palestine, among the disciples of Christ we find a St. John and a Judas. In religious life there are those, says St. Bernard, who are indeed angels in flesh, while others imitate a Lucifer.

The faithful and regular practice of the rule, is a great help to advancement.

By repeating frequently one and the same act, we create a habit, and habit becomes second nature. A novice studies the rule and practises it, more or less, mechanically doing violence to nature. By and by, if she perseveres, the rule becomes natural to her.

It is no longer a written law, but a law in her own heart. For the just, says St. Paul, there is no law. For the good religious there is no rule. She does all that the rule prescribes, and even more. When she observes the rule she is peaceful and happy; when she violates it herself, or sees it violated in others, she is disturbed and sometimes provoked to just anger.

She realizes the full meaning of the words of the apostles; "Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them, and mercy." When such a religious dies, she can truly say with Christ: "It is consummated. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

Another great help for advancement in the



observance of the rule is the association with good fervent companions.

It is difficult, heroic, almost impossible to remain faithful while living among the unfaithful. But it is easy, encouraging, and inspiring to live in a community of fervent religious. The living exemplification of the rule draws us, almost forces us to imitate. Almost every community, says a saintly writer, has some such saintly model of a perfect life.

The force of good example is seen in the history of the saints.

Like St. Dominic, almost every saint is surrounded by holy disciples. It is the duty of a religious to observe and imitate the best, and not the worst in the community.

It is because of this potent influence of example, either for good or evil, that Christ said; "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven." And again, "Woe to the world, because of scandals. For it must needs be that scandals come, but nevertheless woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh."

Thus some religious ascend the mountain of the Lord, the mountain of Christian perfection gradually and safely, following the example of the just, and heeding the advice of the saints, laid down in the rule; while others walk carelessly and heedlessly on the dangerous roads, falling sooner or later into the deep precipice, causing temporal and eternal ruin.

To break a rule, is in itself no sin, for the rule does not oblige under pain of sin. Still the breaking of the rule, almost always, either directly or indirectly, leads to sin.



The rule is not like an iron pillar that cannot be bent or broken. It can be dispensed with. Every rule is made for the welfare of the community in general. There may be some member in the community, for whom the rule is not beneficial, because of ill-health or hard work. Such a one need not stubbornly obey the rule. "Our following must be rational."

But she may humbly ask the superior for the necessary dispensation. The rule is not adopted for a certain time, or for a certain place, but for life. Therefore, at all times and in all places a religious must try to live, as far as possible, according to the spirit and letter of the rule. These fundamental principles are often misunderstood or ignored, and cause laxity and neglect.

The sad and constant decline and final fall of religious is clearly and closely traced by the Master General in his letter on the fundamental principles of the religious life.

This decline begins with self indulgence and weakness of the will. "By dread of sacrifice, by a neglect of examen of conscience, and by the absence of good example in the community, indifference in the observance of the rule sets in." This indifference, may at first, from time to time, trouble and distract the conscience, causing remorse, and if it is not promptly corrected "be justly and inevitably punished by a blunting of the religious sense, a hardening of the heart, and a dulling of the conscience."

Habitually neglecting the rule, such religious will soon try to justify their way of living, by offering the old excuse, "times have changed, and we must change with them."

They will argue that the examples of the

fathers are antiquated and no longer to be imitated. Far from lamenting the loss of their first fervor, they will rather distort the words of the apostles and cry out in their folly: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child."

Religious who do not observe the rule hate to see others observe it. The good example of others is a constant reproach to their indifference. Moved, therefore, by an evil spirit they try to, prevent the good by ridiculing and criticising the fervent; and by teaching their false, lax religious principles, instead of conforming themselves to a St. Dominic and his rule, they try to conform a St. Dominic and his rule, to their own natural dim light and natural evil inclination. They introduce the principle of private interpretation, the principle of Martin Luther into religious life.

Religious who observe the rule are happy, blessed by God in every way.

Religious who do not keep the rule are unhappy and always in trouble.

Let us therefore keep the rule as we have promised to do until death, that we may enjoy God's peace and attain His mercy.

## "CONVENT LIFE."

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*"Better is one day in Thy Courts above thousands.  
I have chosen to be an abject in the House of my God,  
rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners."*

Ps. 83.

We begin our religious life by saying: "I will leave the world and go to the convent."

The world and the convent contradict each other. This contradiction was clearly expressed by St. Paul, when he said: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world."

The careful consideration of some of the principal contradictions between the world and the cross or the convent will help us to understand better the religious life with its advantages and obligations.

The world, which the religious leaves, and which Christ referred to so frequently in the Holy Gospels, is not this universe, not this earth, or mankind in general. It is human society, in so far as it is godless, in so far as it disregards, theoretically and practically—God, supernatural life and eternal reward or punishment. In so far as society is thus godless, it is an instrument in the hands of satan against God.

Therefore Christ notwithstanding all His gentleness and mildness, condemned the world frequently and most emphatically: "I do not pray for the world. Woe to the world because of scandals. *You* are not of this world, therefore the world

hateth you." "The whole world is seated in wickedness" says St. John. This godless world, this tabernacle of sinners, the religious leaves.

As the world is the house of satan, so the convent is the house of God. Its walls exclude the spirit of the world, and are filled with the spirit of religion. Its corridors are decorated with the pictures of the saints; its cells with the image of the Crucified Savior. And in the center is the chapel, the tabernacle, Emmanuel, God with us.

There is no convent without the Real Presence.

This "Priceless Pearl", This "Hidden God", is the great power, which draws the youthful heart away from the world to itself. This Bethlehem, this House of Bread, this Food of Angels sustains the life of the religious in the convent and fills her heart with delight. There never was, there never will be a true convent in which there dwells not Emmanuel—God with us.

The God of Heaven being with us, it becomes our duty and privilege to take the place of the angels in honoring and praising Him.

"Blessed are they that shall dwell in Thy house, O Lord. They shall praise Thee forever and ever." It is because a convent is the House of God, and because God in the convent is thus honored and praised, that the Church has always encouraged and protected convents; and that the faithful have always considered it a most religious work to build and support convents.

"I will leave the world and go to the convent." By this I declare that I will give up selfish, private life, and begin a life of self-sacrifice in the community.

The world is essentially selfish. All seek the

things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's; All repeat the words of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The man of the world seeks wealth. He adores it, and becomes its slave. He is willing to sacrifice his conscience, his soul, yea, even his God, to acquire it. Wealth is for him a means to obtain power. And power means to rule over others. "The Kings of the gentiles lord it over them." Having wealth and power, he demands praise and honor. "All these will I give Thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me."

But convent life is essentially self-sacrificing. The individual becomes a member of the community to serve that community.

The first purpose for which you have been brought together, says St. Augustine, is that you dwell in unity in the house, and that you have but one soul and one heart in God. And call not anything your own, but let all things be in common. The union between the members of the community must be close and intimate. There must be union in life, union in work, union in prayer, union in heart and mind.

All must imitate the first Christians of whom St. Luke says: "The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul." They must realize the desire and prayer of Christ, "that they all may be as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee." St Paul demands great union among the Christians. "We being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of another. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body."

If the union of Christians must be so great because of baptism, how much stronger and more sacred must be the bond which unites religious, who

have not only one baptism, but one and the same sublime calling, one and the same aim and end, that of perfection, one and the same name, one and the same habit, one and the same rule.

The advantages of community life are many and great. When we entered the convent we knew little, almost nothing, of the religious life, of the religious rule, of the religious vows. All that we know now, we have learned through the example and instruction of members of the community.

Individual work is always small and of short duration. By uniting our talents we can do work which will spread over the entire world, and will last for centuries. The prayer of an individual may be devout, but weak. But when many unite their voices in praising God, the prayer becomes as powerful as the alleluias of the angels in heaven.

"I say to you that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in Heaven. For when there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

It is because communities of religious are so powerful in work and prayer, that the Church has always sought and found her protectors and defenders in them. From convents and monasteries have issued forth almost all of her great apostles, doctors, and confessors.

Even the enemy knows and understands this. Whenever he persecutes the Church, he begins with the destruction of convents, and the banishing of religious.

The world which the religious leaves is a place of noise, distraction, and sensual gratification. The



convent to which a religious goes is a place of silence and solitude, a place of penance and mortification, the mother of all virtues.

A worldly person is a distracted person. He loves and seeks excitement and distraction. If left alone even for a short time he is unhappy. He is afraid to think, to reflect, to occupy himself with himself. Therefore he always desires something to distract him, to call his thoughts away from himself to the outer world.

The distractions, which he seeks, consist in flattering and gratifying the senses of the body. His body rules supreme, his spirit becomes a slave. His eye feasts on the stage, he delights in books and papers that veil but lightly vice in its most attractive form. His ear must be delighted with music and song, that stir up and feed the lower passions of the heart. His palate must be served with all the delicacies which the world can produce, money can buy, and art can prepare. The man of the world is a man "whose God is his belly."

"The world," says a pagan philosopher, "consists in being corrupt and in corrupting others." "The world" says St. John, "is concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life."

A good convent is the very opposite. It is a place of silence and of solitude. There the soul freed from the distractions of the world thinks, reflects and studies itself—God's masterpiece.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you." The spirit must rule the flesh, and not the flesh the spirit. In order that the spirit may rule, the flesh must be mortified. "Subdue your flesh by fasting and abstinence from meat and drink, as far as your health permits."



The Crucifix is placed before religious in the chapel, in the cell, even in the dining room and room of recreation. But Mortification is only one of the virtues to be practised. It is the school of every virtue. The convent has helped to purify and sanctify many of the greatest saints in heaven. A true convent becomes the vestibule of heaven.

Let us therefore be in earnest when we say: "I left the world; I have gone to a convent." Let us leave completely all that is godless, all that is selfish, all that which is of the flesh. Let us forsake worldly occupations, worldly pleasures, worldly amusements. Let us be faithful. Let us live in the convent, heart and soul, with God and let us live for the community.

Then shall we indeed be able to cry out with the Psalmist; "Better, O Lord, is one day in Thy courts above thousands; for I have chosen to be an abject in the House of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners."

## CONFERENCE ON MENTAL PRAYER.

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*"What is the food of Angels? It is the desire of God, which draws to itself the desire that is in the depths of the soul, and they make one thing together."*

Religious life is a supernatural life. We cannot begin it and we cannot persevere in it without a special grace of God. To enjoy that grace of God we must pray. Ask and you shall receive. Only those who begin every day, by praying with Christ in the Garden of Olives can take up the Cross with Him and follow Him, to the top of Calvary.

Oral prayer leads to mental prayer. The end of religious life is perfection. Perfection consists in shaping one's own heart according to the Sacred Heart. To reach that end, long and frequent meditations on one's own infirmities and on the virtues of Jesus Christ are necessary.

The end of our whole convent life and convent rule is in one respect, to meditate. We leave the distractions of the world, of home, of worldly companions, to meditate. We live in silence and solitude to meditate. We listen to instructions, read and study to learn to meditate. It is difficult to meditate, but as important as it is difficult.

To meditate on things in the order of nature is easy. The farmer while he walks behind the plow meditates how to cultivate the soil, sow the seed and reap the harvest. Go to the artist, be he a painter or a musician, you will find that he is distracted in his conversation, because all his thoughts are given to his art. In all things they

behold, flowers, plants, scenery, mountains and rivers, they see their art. It is meditation that makes their art perfect. Go to the financier and you will find that he meditates day and night, giving himself no rest. He is reflecting how to make a dollar, how to add dollar to dollar. Unless he meditates thus, he will not advance much. It is the secret of his success. It is easy to meditate on things in which we are deeply interested.

To meditate on supernatural things is difficult. In the next world it will be easy. The angels do nothing but meditate, they see God face to face, and enjoy His presence. The sight of Him fills them with joy and inspires them to sing again and again the song of praise. The saints in Heaven do nothing but meditate. Like the angels, they enjoy the Beatific Vision, and they cannot turn their minds from God to creatures.

But for earthly creatures tied down to the world as we are, for us to join the angels in adoring and meditating, is difficult. And yet we must learn, for we are religious, we are in the school of perfection. Perfection is the greatest of arts, and we cannot succeed in our art, unless we are absorbed in it, as the painter in his painting, and the financier in his money. The saints who have excelled in sanctity have excelled likewise in meditation. Our Blessed Mother, Scripture says, "Kept the words in her heart and pondered over them". What else was that but meditation? Mary Magdalen knelt at the feet of the Savior, while Martha did the work. What else was this but meditation? The hermits in the desert spent their days and nights in meditation. They made the desert a Paradise. St. Anthony complained of the sun in the morning, because it arose too early and inter-

rupted his meditation. St. Rose and St. Catherine slept and rested perhaps two or three hours out of the twenty-four, spending the rest of the day in meditation. Thus we see the secret of success in the religious life. If you wish to succeed, apply yourself to learning how to meditate.

St. Catherine wrote a beautiful letter to her niece, a cloistered nun, on meditation. She calls meditation the food of angels. "I write to thee with desire to see thee taste the food of angels, since thou art made for no other end. "This is the food that makes the soul angelic." It satisfies the soul in such wise that she longs for no other thing, nor can desire aught, but what may help her more perfectly to keep and increase this food. The soul rises above herself, that is, above the gross impulses of the senses, and with angelic mind unites herself with God by force of love, and sees and knows with the light of thought. She is made the sister of angels, she abides with the Bridegroom."

This food of angels, so precious and so necessary, is taken, says St. Catherine, on the table of the most Holy Cross. The table of the Most Holy Cross is practically nothing else but the strict observance of a religious Rule. The observance of the Rule will make us habitually recollected, and the neglect of the Rule will make us habitually distracted. Therefore, the Saint insists especially on loving and guarding the cell in silence, on renouncing conversation with fellow beings, and avoiding the parlors as much as possible.

In order to eat this food of angels, to meditate, St. Catherine gives the further advice to say the daily vocal prayers well. We must pray and ask God to help us. In vocal prayer we speak to God, in

meditation God speaks to us. A good, devout, oral prayer leads to mental prayer. "Vocal prayer is ordained to each mental prayer; your soul reaches this, when it uses vocal prayer with prudence and humility. Whenever one feels one's mind to be visited by God, so that it is drawn to think of its Creator in any wise, it ought to abandon vocal prayer and fix its mind upon that, wherein it sees God visit it." This is a most important remark. Let us not be anxious to say many and long vocal prayers. God does not reward us according to the number of prayers, but according to the devotion with which we say them. Whenever God favors us with special light and pious thoughts in our vocal prayers, let us pause and reflect. Thus we please God and learn to meditate. In meditating we must apply all our faculties. We begin with the memory. We call to mind some event of the life of our Saviour or the Blessed Mother or whatever the subject of the meditation may be. With our imagination we try to picture to ourselves the sacred persons.

For instance, the Annunciation: We see the Blessed Mother in Nazareth in a garden of flowers, absorbed in prayer; we see standing before her, an angel; we see the angel bow in reverence; we listen, we hear him utter the "Angelic Salutation." What a beautiful picture! And be not afraid to dwell too long on the picture of the imagination. We cannot be too anxious to fill our minds with these most beautiful and divine thoughts. The imagination having thus grasped the picture, the intellect will have as its work to examine and analyze the words of the angel, "Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women." God will help us and give us a clear insight into the meaning of these words.

Thus meditation is the source of knowledge. When St. Thomas was asked where he had received his knowledge, he pointed to the crucifix and said: "I learned there, by meditating." When thus the imagination and the mind have their food, the will cannot remain passive, it must be awakened. We cannot, for instance, see the angel come from Heaven, saluting Mary as full of grace, without desiring with our whole heart to join the angel and sing with him, "Hail full of grace!" We cannot see there the Incarnation, Christ coming down into this world, without falling down and adoring Him in spirit. If the imagination is occupied with God, the intellect grasping the meaning, the heart must be filled with love. That is the most important part. We meditate not so much in order to learn as to inflame the heart and fill it with love. If the whole soul memory, imagination, intellect and will are united in prayer, good resolutions will follow, resolutions inspired by God.

In speaking of resolutions, St. Catherine again uses an expression, that is deep in meaning. She says meditation, mental prayer, is the mother of virtues. "This prayer is truly a mother, who conceives virtues by the love of God, and brings them forth in the love of the neighbor."

If you meditate thus, you will learn two things. First, yourself. You will see yourself to be so small, so weak. You will see your needs and your dangers. Secondly, you will see God, His goodness, His love and His mercy. And seeing these two things in meditation, you will pray; seeing your own wants, seeing God's goodness, you will pray that His mercy may supply your wants.

A saint says the key of prayer is found in the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God.



Another good result of prayer is contrition. When you have thus raised your mind to God, have been in conversation with God and have been "sister of the angels", you will see clearly what sin is. You will realize what it is to offend such a God, and you will end your meditation with a perfect act of contrition for your sins. It is this contrition which made saints bewail for years and years some venial sin they had committed.

"Meditation of this kind", says a saint, "is the mother of the love of souls". We cannot see God's love for souls on the Cross or in the Blessed Sacrament without imitating Him, without being filled with that love and desire to do something also for those souls of God. It is this meditation that will inflame the heart with such love that the heart longs for and desires nothing else but to die with Christ for them.

Meditation is the mother of the observance of the Rule of religious life. For a person who does not meditate, the observance becomes mechanical. It soon becomes an observance of the letter, not of the spirit; for the life has fled. Constant meditation will keep the spirit alive and make us observe the Rule not because we must, but because we see that it is God's will. The saints meditated on God, and, having meditated, wrote down the rules. Meditation will make us understand and observe these rules. Without this food of angels, even the religious vows, in the course of time, become meaningless to us. If we do not meditate, the hour will come when we will say: "Why, after all, did I choose this life? Why did I take the vows?" This is a sign that the light of faith is dim; the heart has grown cold. The light would not be dim and the heart cold, if the soul had been



feeding on the food of angels. It is a sign that the soul has come down from the table of the Cross to the table of the world.

Meditation is the mother of silence and solitude. You will no longer desire to converse with men, if you have learned to converse with God and the angels.

If you cannot meditate on the subject given you, do not think that you are dispensed from meditation. Choose your own subject. There are a few that are easy and familiar, the Passion of our Lord or the fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary. If you cannot meditate on them, take your rosary and say "Mother of God, pray for me now that I may meditate." Say a full decade and perhaps you will succeed better.

Since vocal prayers said with prudence and devotion lead to mental prayer, meditate often on the daily vocal prayers, that you may understand and say them well. Meditate on every word of the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary", meditate on the beautiful hymns of the office—the "Magnificat", "Benedictus", the "Dominus Deus Israel". Meditate on the liturgical prayers and hymns, the "Tantum Ergo Sacramentum", the "O Salutaris Hostia", the prayers of the Mass. Such meditations give a new life to the spiritual exercises.

Such meditations are good and immediate preparations for our public prayer, the recitation of the Office, when all the members of the convent assemble before the Blessed Sacrament and sing the immortal psalms to praise the greatness, goodness and mercy of Jesus Christ. Of this prayer the Master General writes beautifully when he says: "It is indeed a gift not a burden." (P. 33 to end of 34).

## CONFERENCE ON CHARITY.

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*"Before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves for charity covereth a multitude of sins."*

These words of Scripture remind us of the beginning of the rule of St. Augustine. There the saint tells us, above all things to love God and neighbor, that the love of God and neighbor is the very reason why we live together in a community, that we must have "one heart and one soul" in the Lord as the early Christians had.

To love God "with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind", we must remember how God loves us. "God is love", says St. Catherine, and all His works whatsoever are love alone, for they, are not wrought of anything save love." We are bound to Him, and not He to us, because before He was loved, He loved us, and therefore created us in His Image and Likeness.

The greatest manifestation of God's love for us is the Incarnation. "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son". The Son of God loved us so much that He gave His life for us. "A greater love no man can have than to give his life for His friend." For nails would not have held God-and-Man fast to the Cross, had love not held Him there". In giving us the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus "loved us unto the end."

Being filled with the love of God, we can begin to love our neighbor. The love of our neighbor will then spring from the love of God. We can do nothing directly for God; but if we are filled with

the love of God we will naturally love God's creatures and the love of God in us will make us servants of His creatures, whom we will serve in His name and for His sake. Therefore at the last supper Christ emphasizes nothing more than the love of our neighbor. "I give you a new command." "Love one another." "As I have loved you do you also love one another." He could have said, "I have loved you, I have knelt down and washed your feet. I, the Master, became as the least among you. I gave you My flesh to eat and My blood to drink, I thus poured My divine love into your hearts."

Behold then how God loves us. He became our servant, our food, our victim. Thus He wants us to love one another. A sublime command; A holy command; We must love as a God loves. How can we fulfill it? In order to fulfill that command, love of neighbor, we have in us the charity of God received in Baptism. We have received His spirit in Confirmation. We received the Bread of Angels; it is this that nourishes this charity.

To co-operate with divine help, we must in the first place look upon our neighbor in the right way. Here is the great difficulty. Many see in their neighbor only some being in their own way, interfering with their work and happiness; and since that being is in their way, they hate it. This is a great mistake. We must look upon our neighbor always in the pure light of faith. Thus Christ did. He saw in every human being the immortal soul. He saw in every human being the image of His Father. He saw in every human being a masterpiece of God, destined to live eternally in Heaven. Therefore He never judged by the ex-

terior, by the appearance, it was always the soul. Whether it was the poor robber hanging on the cross, that he looked at, or whether it was the poor sinner at the well, He saw a soul to be saved. When He saw Judas come to the Garden, He saw the soul. In Peter after the denial, He saw the soul. He saw in every human being God's image, or rather He saw in every human being God Himself. He said, "Whatever you do to the least of Mine, you do it to Me." If we would see God's image or God Himself in all His creatures, then in all sincerity and without affectation we would be willing to descend and become their servants, and in serving them, we would think we are doing nothing extraordinary. God has done more than this for us. Behold then an important point, that we retain respect and reverence for others.

Secondly, Christ's charity was universal. It excluded no one. The Crucifixion is a wonderful picture; wonderful in many respects. There at the foot of the Cross are represented all nations. There are Mary Magdalen, the Blessed Mother, St. John, praying; there were blasphemers and robbers. Christ's charity went forth to all. Here He practised what He had preached. "Love your enemy". "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you." If our charity springs from the love of God, if we see how God on the Cross loved us, we shall love Him and express our love for Him by serving all His creatures. I cannot make one exception. As soon as I make one exception I say "I love not for you, but for my own satisfaction."

Thirdly: Christ loving all, gave to all, because He loved all. He gave to all nations His kind, consoling doctrine. Going from town to town, from

land to land, He made all feel His almighty power. He gave not only food to eat, multiplying the bread and changing water into wine, He gave not only His Flesh to eat, and His Blood to drink; He gave His Mother to all nations as He was hanging on the Cross. "Behold" He says, "your Mother." And when He had given all these things He cried, "I thirst." He thirsted to give more. "What can I give?"

Behold how Christ loved His own to the end. If our love for our neighbor is true and spiritual, that is for God, we must not place a limit in doing good. As Christ had compassion on all, and as His compassion was in deed and not in word; so must we have compassion for all not only in word, but in deed, becoming willing to sacrifice ourselves, to become ourselves servants and slaves. Behold these general points. Apply them to yourselves.

There is no virtue more difficult to practise in community life than Charity. I heard a person say: "I fail more against charity since I came into religion than before." Why? In the convent you are brought into close contact with others; living together, working together, praying together, we cannot but notice the faults of others for we all have faults. In noticing the faults of others we are apt to make one mistake,—that of losing sight of their good qualities. When we first came and met religious, what reverence we had for them. Have we lost it? If we have lost it, we have made a great mistake. This reverence should have grown; for since we are in the convent, we know better what a Sister is. Each one of us has been called by God. Each one of us came with a good sincere will. Each one of us is a tabernacle of



God, where God comes in Holy Communion, where He dwells. Therefore, even as Elizabeth saluted the Blessed Mother, saying, "Hail full of grace;" and so may we say to every one of our fellow Sisters, "Hail". O, let us behold in our fellow Sisters the bright lights and not the shadows, then we will not fail so often in charity, as we are tempted to do.

Secondly, living together we not only notice the faults of others, we suffer because of their faults. If a Sister is impatient, unkind, unjust, our lives become unhappy. Here again we must remember that we were brought together by God, to join our voices in praising Him, to unite our hands in working for Him, to unite our talents in serving Him. If I see faults in others, I may be sure that I have faults. St. Catherine understood this better than any of the Saints. No matter how great the sin was, she considered it her fault. If therefore we notice the faults of others, let us remember that we were not sent here to judge. We were brought together by God to agree, to help one another, to be happy. If we meditated more frequently on why we live together, the danger would not be so great.

Again we make another mistake. It is this: We try to serve God in a certain way, we try to pray in a certain way, to do penance in a certain way. And being by nature very narrow, and being too, very selfish, as we all are, we begin to think that every one else must be just like us, and every one who is not like us is wrong. This is a serious mistake. Christ says, "In the house of My Father there are many mansions." He means many characters, a great variety; but they are all good. In the garden there are many flowers. He

would indeed be a poor gardener, who would plant all the flowers alike. "Star differeth from star in magnitude"; it would not be beautiful, if they were all alike. Thus God makes creation beautiful by placing in it a variety of flowers, of plants, of trees, and of creatures.

Our fellow Sisters may all be very good, but we are too small, too narrow to see and understand their goodness. Let us broaden our minds. If a person does wrong, it is not good. But there are many ways of doing good. One may be silent at recreation, another may be talkative; one may speak about God, another may be silent on that subject; still all may be pleasing to God. Therefore let us not condemn others for the simple reason that they are not just as we are or as we think they ought to be. Leave judgment to God.

Again to practise charity, let us not condemn others because they do wrong. Who appointed you to judge and criticize? And in criticizing and judging what a sad mistake you make. Examine your own conscience. You do wrong and may wrong others. And notwithstanding the wrong you do to others, you have asked God to forgive you, and God has forgiven you. Why not suppose that others also ask God to forgive them? If God has forgiven, why do you not forgive? We will find that nine times out of ten we judge and criticize, not because others have done wrong to God, but because others have done wrong to us. That little "I".

No matter how great a sin may be committed against God, we are willing to forgive it. But if one commits a fault against us, it must not be so easily pardoned. It just shows how little we are. Therefore let us not judge.



A priest one day wrote to St. Catherine condemning her way of living, and St. Catherine answered in a humble way, confessing her faults, but adding: "I beg of you if you see any remedy you will write me of it; and, provided it be for the honor of God, I will accept it willingly; also I beg of you not to be light in judging, if you are not clearly illumined in the sight of God."

A religious wrote to St. Catherine and said that she had been criticized by a certain person. In reply St. Catherine wrote a beautiful letter. She said; "I reprove thee, dearest daughter, because thou hast not kept in mind what I told thee—not to answer any one who should say to thee anything about myself that seemed to thee less than good. Now I do not wish thee to do so any more; but I wish thee to reply to any one who narrated my faults to you in this wise—that they are not telling so many that a great many more might not be told. Tell them to be moved by compassion within their hearts in the sight of God, as they appear to be with their tongues—and to pray the Divine Goodness earnestly for me that it will correct my life." How much better would we be if we would answer thus. It shows how humble the saints were and how proud we are; how great the saints were and how little we are; they were above all these troubles and we in our pride are small and fail in them.

Therefore charity is important. "Love one another as I have loved you." Charity begins at home. It must be practised in the first place among members of the community. Only when it exists in a community, and makes the community one in spirit and one in deed, only then can that community take up the work of charity and help

others. Help others in that same spirit, that holy spirit of charity with which God helps you. With your hearts filled with that spirit and your lamps lighted with that fire, go forth and work for the salvation of souls.

The last great commandment of Jesus was love one another, and according to this commandment Jesus will judge us on the day of Judgment.

If we have not been charitable we shall according to His own words stand to His left and hear the sentence. "Depart ye cursed into fire everlasting". If we have been charitable we shall stand to His right and enter with Him the Kingdom of glory to adore forever God who is charity.

# CONFERENCE ON THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

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*"Jesus having loved His own, who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."*

The cornerstone of every convent is "Emmanuel", God with us; The love of Jesus in the tabernacle is the mysterious power which draws youthful, generous hearts unto Himself. To buy, to possess, to enjoy that "Priceless Pearl", religious sell and leave all they have.

The chapel is the main and central cell of every convent. It fills the whole place with a heavenly spirit; it makes it holy.

As the great God in heaven created nine choirs of angelic spirits to surround His throne, to honor and praise Him, so the Son of God residing on His altar gathers about Him, pure, angelic souls, to dwell in His presence, to love and adore Him.

As God in heaven manifests His goodness and generosity by communicating to the adoring angels His own perfections, glory and happiness, so Jesus on earth shows forth the love and mercy of His Sacred Heart by making happy the religious who remain with Him.

To understand the importance and necessity of the Blessed Sacrament for convent life, we need only recall the fact that without it there never were real, successful convents. Well meaning and noble-minded members of religious denominations have banded together and tried convent life,

at various times, but they have always failed; while the Catholic Church has ever been justly proud of her convents. The convents of our Order have lived without interruption or substantial change for seven hundred years. "Emmanuel, God with us," is the explanation of this surprising fact.

A religious leaves the world and her home, not to be alone, but to be with Jesus. A religious who finds and appreciates the Real Presence will not feel lonely in a convent. She will realize the full meaning of the words; "I shall not abandon you, I shall not leave you orphans; I shall remain with you all days even unto the end of the world."

The Blessed Sacrament was the great consolation of our Holy Father St. Dominic. At the foot of the Altar, the saint spent many a night, weeping and praying. There he sought and found help.

The Blessed Sacrament was truly the life of the soul of St. Thomas of Acquin. With his angelic mind he penetrated deep into its mysteries, and his angelic heart was filled with its love. The beautiful thoughts and sacred sentiments he expressed most beautifully in the immortal hymns of the office and Mass of the feasts of Corpus Christi: the "*Pangue Lingua Gloriosa*," ending with the "*Tantum ergo Sacramentum*", the "*Laude Sion*", ending with the "*O Salutaris Hostia*."

There is no doubt that the example of St. Dominic and the works of St. Thomas have caused the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament to become the special devotion of the members of the Dominican Order.

To appreciate better this incomprehensible mystery of divine love reflect on the beautiful words of St. John: "Jesus having loved His own,

He loved them unto the end". St. John uses these words in speaking of the Last Supper. There he not only saw and heard what Jesus did and said, but he rested on His bosom and felt what Jesus felt. Love, divine love, was the motive spirit and soul of all.

In the familiar term "His own", we religious are certainly and especially included. According to the same St. John, Jesus had said on a previous occasion: "I am the Good Shepherd, I know mine and mine know me." The sheep hear His voice, He calls them by name, and they follow Him.

We have all heard this Good Shepherd call us by name, we have recognized His voice, we have followed Him; therefore we are "His own"—"His own", whom Jesus loved unto the end. The words "unto the end," have no reference to time, for Jesus' love is eternal, it is endless. "Unto the end" means that Jesus giving Himself in the Blessed Sacrament went as far as love could inspire Him to go. There He gave us the greatest manifestation of His infinite love. There and then He created the masterpiece of divine love.

Let us analyze this divine love. Love, whether human or divine, seeks union, close, perfect, perpetual union. It is this divine love that unites three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost and makes them one, one God, one in essence, one in operation, one from all eternity, one throughout all eternity.

And this divine love sought union with men. "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son" into it. When the Son of God dwelt on earth, He longed for a more intimate union with His children. Therefore He prayed in the valley of Cedron saying: "Holy Father, keep them

in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as we also are one. And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us". Behold the blessed union which exists between God the Father, and God the Son. It is the very model of the union which Jesus desired to establish between Himself and us. Such love "unto the end", we must not only admire, we must adore.

How could Jesus unite Himself with us in the manner in which He was united with His Father? We could not go to Him; He came to us. We could not ascend; He descended. His love knew no obstacle; it feared no sacrifice. "Like a giant," says Scripture, "He ran His course".

The first step towards us was the Incarnation—a step from heaven to earth, from the glory and majesty of God to the simplicity of a child. "He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant."

But union was still not possible. He takes a second step from Bethlehem to Calvary. There His blood washes away our sins. He offers up His own life to give us a new, spiritual life.

But union is still impossible, Christ's dignity is too great. Then the loving Jesus takes a third step. It is the transubstantiation. He hides Himself; He dwells in perpetual silence; He becomes obedient forever to the commanding voice of the priest. "This is My Body, this is My Blood;" eat and drink that I may be in you and you in me.

The burning desire of the infinite love of the Sacred Heart is fulfilled. Jesus loving His own unto the end, sacrificed all. I am the object of



His love. In His love He has united Himself to me.

Let us love Him, and love Him unto the end. It is what we must try to do here in the convent. Inflamed with the fire of that infinite love, we have learned to love Him a little. Seeing Him coming to meet us, we have walked a short distance to meet Him. Seeing Him sacrifice all to unite Himself to us, we have sacrificed a little to unite ourselves with Him.

Our three vows correspond to the three steps of Jesus.

As He left heaven, so we have left our home. As Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross, so we have sacrificed all pleasures of the body, whether lawful or unlawful. As Jesus hides Himself and becomes obedient in the Holy Eucharist, so we in the convent hide our own personality and become obedient unto death.

The convent is the blessed place where Jesus and the religious find and meet each other, and where they remain united forever and forever.

There the spiritual nuptials are celebrated by the Church in the most impressive way. "Harken, O daughter," says Jesus, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people, and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty: for He is the Lord thy God." And the religious soul answers: "I have despised the world and its vain ornaments for the love of my Master, Jesus Christ. I have seen Him, I have loved Him, I have chosen Him for my inheritance."

Meditating thus on the Real Presence, we understand that the convent is a sacred place; meditating thus on our profession, we understand that religious life is a holy state.



Living in the convent with Jesus, being consecrated to Him, we must be entirely given to Jesus.

When He gave Himself in the Holy Eucharist, He made just one little request: Remember me. "Do this in memory of Me." A religious must be ever mindful of Him. She must often call to mind how Jesus lived and suffered and died, so that having in her mind and imagination that sublime, divine ideal, she may imitate it.

To imitate Jesus, she must constantly call upon Him for help. He said, "without Me ye can do nothing, through Me ye can do all things." "Fear not, it is I." "In Him, and with Him, and through Him", we must live, and work and suffer.

The apostles sailing across the waters in a little boat, were overtaken by a mighty storm, and when they felt that they were sinking they called for help upon Jesus who seemed to be sleeping.

Jesus rose, stretched forth His almighty hand, and commanded the waters to be still and there was a great calm.

This world is the deep water, the convent is the boat. Jesus is with us. Though He may seem to be asleep and little interested in our daily trials and troubles, when the storm of temptation comes, when there is danger of sinking, He is with us.

Let us ever call upon Jesus, with faith and confidence, to arise and help us.

Jesus will command and there will be a calm, and safely and happily we shall sail on, and reach the eternal shores, there to behold our Emmanuel in His true glory, there to adore Him and there to enjoy Him with the angels and saints forever and forever.

# CONFERENCE ON THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

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*"From the rising of the sun even to the going down, My Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation."*

The Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest consolation of religious living in a convent. Jesus Himself becomes the constant companion of the religious soul through this valley of tears to the heavenly Home. What a friend is to a friend, what the Angel Raphael was to Young Tobias, that Jesus is to the faithful religious.

The adorable Presence of Jesus becomes doubly precious by the fact that He renews for us every morning the Holy Sacrifice of the Cross. Sacrifice as we have seen is the end of religion. Sacrifices were brought at all times, but the victims were always small in value and stained with sin. Jesus Christ became the very personification of religion the worship of God by "choosing for His temple, the world, for His altar the Cross, for His victim Himself, stainless and of infinite value, for His sword His own will, for His fire His divine love and offered Himself to God for all mankind." Mass is nothing else but the continuation of that Sacrifice.

This sublime act of worship religious must imitate. They sacrifice no more the fruits of the field or the lambs of the flock, but they sacrifice

themselves, nailing themselves with Christ to the Cross by taking the three vows.

To understand it, let us meditate on the four-fold end of the Mass. Theologians tell us, in the first place, that Christ instituted the sacrifice, and that we renew it daily in order to *honor* and *worship* God. We must not forget that we were created and that we exist to worship Him, as the angels in Heaven worship Him. This is our first duty and unless it is fulfilled no other duty can be well done.

How can we worship God? All we can offer Him remains incomplete and unfinished. We are stained with sin, therefore Christ comes and says:—"Sacrifice Me". "Unite your little sacrifice with Mine". How beautifully is this idea expressed in the prayers of the Mass. When you have time meditate upon it. Study and meditate upon the prayers, because they are most significant and most profound.

When Christ began His sacrifice in Bethlehem the angels sang: "Glory to God and peace to men." The priest, also when he renews the sacrifice sings:—"Gloria in excelsis Deo", "Glory to God". And he continues saying: "God, we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee."

This idea of worshipping is expressed still more clearly immediately after the Consecration. Seeing before him the Body and Blood of Christ on the altar, the Priest lifts his eyes and hands toward Heaven and says:—"We offer up to Thy Divine Majesty this Pure Host, this Holy Host, this Immaculate Host, this Bread of eternal life and this chalice of perpetual salvation. Deign to accept it O God, as thou didst accept the offering of Abel, of Abraham and of Melchisedech." Hav-

ing offered up to God a Host so holy, so pure, so immaculate, we can truly and justly say as never before; "Our Father, Who art in Heaven." Indeed He is our father because we have offered an offering worthy of a child of Him. With this Host, pure and immaculate, unite then your own offering. Remember no sacrifice is pleasing, unless you sacrifice with Him. Therefore the priest turns to you and says:—"Orate Fratres—Brethren Pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God."

Secondly: We offer up the Sacrifice of the Mass to thank God. It is an offering of thanksgiving. The whole world must thank God, for gratitude is a natural virtue. We feel that when some one bestows benefits and favors upon us we must thank him. But who is better to us than God? Especially to us religious is He eminently good: for He has given to us not only what He gives to the children of the world, not only what He gives to all members of Holy Church, but He has chosen us, He has called us in a special manner, and has given us the exceptional grace of a vocation, and the grace of perseverance in it. We, therefore, must be the first in the world, the first among all people, to cry out with David:—"What return shall I make to the Lord, for all He has given me?" We can give ourselves, but this gift, separated from Christ, is incomplete. Hence we must give ourselves in union with Christ in the Mass.

This idea is well expressed in the prayers of the Mass, for instance, when, "Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro,"—"Let us thank the Lord, our God", comes from the lips of the priest, and the people answer, "Dignum et justum est"—"It is just and holy to thank Him". The priest continues saying, "Yes indeed it is just and holy and

salutary to thank the Holy Lord, the Almighty Father, the Eternal God”.

And how shall we thank God? Through Jesus Christ: because through Him the angels praise and thank God. And therefore we unite our voices with the nine choirs of angels and sing:—“Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of Hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory, Hosanna in the Highest. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.” What a beautiful canticle of joy and gratitude do we thus sing every morning with the angels, to thank God, through Christ our Lord!

And if we thus unite our little sacrifice with the Sacrifice of Christ, it becomes holy and must be acceptable in the eyes of the Almighty. Therefore be not satisfied with assisting at Mass, and saying your private prayers. Mass is holy. Unite your intention with that of the priest, offer your sacrifice with him in union with Christ, to thank God for the many gifts of a religious life.

The third reason why we have Mass, why we assist at it, is to *atone* for our sins. “My sin stands always before me,” says David. And thus it is with us. Not only original sin, which has corrupted our nature, but our personal sins, committed not only in our youthful days, but committed even in the convent, stand always between us and God. And how can we atone for them? Our penance does a little, but even if we scourged ourselves three times a day, until the blood flowed from our wounds it would not be sufficient, because the Divine Majesty has been offended, and our blood is stained. Therefore our sacrifice, in order to be complete, must be offered with Christ, through Christ and sanctified in Him.



Nothing is more clearly expressed in the ceremonies and prayers of the Mass, than this idea. Nothing is more beautiful, as a beginning of the Mass, than the dialogue between the people and the priest. The priest stands at the foot of the altar with bowed head, and says to the people; "I confess that I have sinned, and sinned often. I have sinned through my own fault. Pray for me." And the people taking up the petition say: "May God have mercy upon thee and forgive thee thy sins." Then the people as it were, invited to speak by the humble confession of the priest, cry out; "Father, we confess to you that we have sinned". And the priest says; "God have mercy on my people and forgive them their sins". Thus together, as sinners, they stand before the altar and begin the Sacrifice.

Hardly has Mass begun when we hear the cry; "Kyrie eleison". The people understand this and answer; "Christe eleison"; and it is repeated by the priest and people together. No sooner has the priest pronounced the most sacred words; "This is My Blood", then he adds; "This is the Blood which shall be shed for many unto the remission of sins". The priest prays in silence, but one *word* he desires to be heard by all. It is "Nobis quoque peccatoribus"—"To us sinners, God grant grace and union with thy saints".

At the end of the Mass comes the most touching scene. The priest taking the sacred host in his hands, elevates it, bends his head and implores mercy, saying:—"Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us, have mercy on us, give us peace."

O, try to understand how beautiful Mass is how consoling and with what attention it should



be offered up. It is the offering up of a Sacred Victim to God for our sins. If you will remember this it will help you to assist at Mass, and if there is one exercise you will find too short, it will be the Mass.

A fourth reason why we have the Sacrifice of the Mass is to ask for grace. The future is always dark, always uncertain, and always fearful; and just because it is so dark, and so uncertain, and just because our past has been so sinful, we are afraid of the future. Reviewing the past, we see that we have sinned every day. We have learned to know the power of evil habits, the power of the world and the temptations of the devil. We have lost confidence in ourselves, we are timid, we are almost afraid to promise to avoid sin in the future. We have promised so often and have always failed. Why have we failed? Because we have not learned to grasp the mighty sword to fight against the enemy. It is the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To understand the Mass in this respect, study the prayers of the Mass and see that it is a cry for help.

During the Mass, you often hear the priest say: —“*Dominus vobiscum*” and you answer: “*Et cum spiritu tuo.*” It means “The Lord be with you” and you answer: “And with thy spirit”. The priest means, to call your attention to something important that is to follow. Then comes the “*O-remus*”. We are to pray for the absent ones who are not assisting at the Sacrifice, for the souls who have gone before us, and for sinners. Pray for all. We are to pray for our daily bread, for peace of mind, for health of body, for the salvation of the soul, for everything. Ask everything from God through Jesus Christ, Whom you sacri-

fice. If we could only assist at Mass in the morning and pray thus, according to the intention of the Church, with our whole heart, and unite the vows and sacrifices of religious life, with the Sacrifice of Christ, each day would be blessed and full of grace. But we are so small, so little, that the most sublime things pass before our eyes, and we cannot grasp them. Let us therefore learn, to assist at Mass, by meditating on the prayers of the Mass.

Study also the ceremonies of the Mass. Every step, every motion of the hand has a meaning. They remind us of Christ's Passion and Death. Let us penetrate the meaning, we who have the blessing of assisting every morning. If there is one thing that children must learn to know, and to know well before they face the world, it is the Mass. Most people do not understand the Mass. All they know is: "The Church says we must go". The hidden meaning of the Mass they know not. They are quite ignorant. They know not what to do at Mass. They understand not what is going on. They get tired, and wish it were over. Therefore if you wish people to attend Mass, be not satisfied by making the children learn that it is a mortal sin *not* to go, but make them appreciate Mass and understand the prayers.

Promise Christ, who is so good to give us the Mass, that in order to show your gratitude, you will explain His loving mercy to others that all may understand the Mass, that all may bless and worship God; that all may thank God for His mercy and goodness, that all may atone for their sins, and thus obtain all graces necessary, through the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

## CONFERENCE ON HOLY COMMUNION.

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*"Panem de coelis praestitisti eis, Omne delectamentum in se habentem."*

Religious give themselves to God, and God gives His religious a Bread that contains all the delights of heaven. This delicious heavenly Bread is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

To receive Holy Communion is not the sole privilege of religious. The Catholic Church invites all her members to receive frequently, even daily. But it is the special privilege of religious to have an opportunity of preparing themselves for a worthy reception of this Sacrament of Love, to profit by it, and to enjoy it to a fuller extent. The entire life of a religious should be one preparation and one thanksgiving.

The words Jesus used when speaking about Holy Communion help us to understand its nature and meaning. He always speaks of it as food; "I am the bread of life." "My flesh is meat indeed, my blood is drink indeed." These words become still more significant when we remember that they were spoken shortly after the miracle in the desert where Jesus, who had "compassion on the multitude", multiplied the five loaves of bread and fed the five thousand who had followed Him.

They were spoken to the very people who had partaken of the miraculous bread. Again at the Last Supper Jesus chose bread and wine to be changed into His body and blood, to indicate, evi-

dently, that His body and blood in Holy Communion are for the soul what bread and wine are for the body.

This bread, this food, Jesus tells us, is not only useful, but absolutely necessary for our spiritual life. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you."

Everything that lives must have food; the nature of the food corresponds to the perfection of life. The flower in order to bear its fragrant blossoms must have fertile soil, sunshine and rain. The bird flies about seeking worms and insects. Man enjoys a more perfect life and therefore needs more perfect food. He cultivates the soil to have bread; the fruits of the trees, the birds of the air, the fishes of the sea, the beasts in the field, all serve him as food.

More perfect than the mortal life of man, is the life of grace. It is something spiritual, something heavenly, something that comes directly from God and makes the soul a child of God. This life, this perfect participation of eternal life, must have food, perfect food. Behold the food of this life of grace, leading to the life of glory, is the Body and Blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

To show us the excellency of this food, Jesus compares it with another miraculous food which came directly from heaven. "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead." "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven that if any man eat of it, he may not die." "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." "He that eateth this Bread shall live forever."

This is indeed a marvelous food. Even as the butterfly receives the colors of the flowers upon which it feeds, so the soul nourished by the food of angels, receives its divine perfection, even life everlasting. It is therefore above all the food of a religious soul. Religious need strong faith; their life is a life of faith. Jesus in Holy Communion is the food.

And He is light. "I am the light." He enlightens the soul with a supernatural light.

Religious need great charity. The fire of charity must consume their daily sacrifice. Their whole work is a work of self-sacrificing charity. The soul needs food. Jesus in Communion is the Bread of Charity. He is love itself and inflames the heart with love.

Religious need purity, a purity which is above nature and cannot be defiled by corrupt nature and the corrupting world. Jesus in Holy Communion is the food of purity and virginity. He makes the soul angelic. He sustains and nourishes the life of supernatural virtues and leads the soul thus elevated to life everlasting.

How can we sinful mortals receive this food of heaven? Not all profit by it. For some we know it is bread; for others poison. Some are led to life, others to death.

To receive Communion with profit, we must prepare our souls. This is one of the great advantages of Convent life. Everything helps and invites us to decorate the soul with "the white lily of purity, the sweet violet of humility, the red rose of love, for the coming of the Bridegroom Jesus Christ."

The prayers of the Church before Communion indicate well the spirit in which we should receive



it. The communicant comes to the altar and says the "confiteor". We come therefore as penitent sinners and not as saints. We come because we need that Bread, not because we judge ourselves worthy of it.

The priest gives general absolution; then taking the Sacred Host in his hands, he says: "Ecce Agnus Dei." The priest is the minister, the representative of God, and in the name of God he speaks and tells us, that it is not bread which we are about to receive, but the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world—the Lamb whom St. John beheld.

Having reminded us of this truth as the representative of God, the priest now, as the representative of the communicants, pleads for them and says: "Domine non sum dignus." "If you are the Lamb of God, then, O God! I am not worthy." He uses the words of the centurion, and reminds us of his faith and humility. For the centurion would not allow Jesus to enter his house, and was rewarded for his faith and humility by the miraculous cure of his servant.

The priest gives us Holy Communion saying: "May the Body of Jesus Christ preserve your soul for life everlasting." This is the end of Holy Communion to preserve life in us and to preserve it for eternity. It is the greatest blessing a priest can wish the immortal soul.

The moment in which we receive Holy Communion, the moment in which Jesus and the soul meet each other, is sacred, and must be spent in undisturbed, profound adoration. We receive Jesus, not as a stranger, not as an enemy, but as a friend. When friends meet they enjoy each others presence.



The inspired words which came from the lips of the Blessed Mother shortly after she received Jesus into her immaculate womb, may well express our sentiments after Holy Communion. She sang: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum—My soul honors, praises, makes great the Lord, for He that is mighty hath done great things in me." She consecrated her whole soul to God. In Holy Communion Jesus Christ hath done great things in us. Knowing that He has given Himself entirely to us in Holy Communion, let us give ourselves entirely to Him. That seems to be the meaning of the words: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum."

Some religious are accustomed to repeat after Communion their profession. It is a good and pious custom. Jesus being in us, we may well cast ourselves in spirit at His Sacred feet, and promise Him, with increased fervor, obedience, perfect obedience, obedience unto death. It is the greatest gift we can bring to Him, and we cannot bring it too often.

Having consecrated to Jesus we may begin to ask for favors. He comes to help us: "Ask and you shall receive." Let us not begin with petitions for little material things; let us ask for something spiritual, something great.

The church obliges the priest to ask, first of all, for light. "Quod ore sumpsimus pura mente capiamus—Grant, O Lord, that we may grasp with the mind, what we have received with the lips."

To know Jesus is heaven on earth. Ask to know Him in a more intimate, more religious way. Ask for love, the fire of divine love, for Jesus is love. He comes to bring love. We are by nature so selfish. We stand so much in need of

His love. Therefore let us ask for it. Ask for strength for a new life. We need strength of body, and strength of soul. Health is a great gift. Ask for it, that enjoying it you may serve God. Ask for strength to resist temptation, to keep good resolutions, to remain faithful unto the end.

Communion in the morning must sanctify the whole day. After Communion we can truly say: "I live, but not I for Jesus lives in me." If Jesus lives in me, He must manifest Himself in my words and works.

How careful ought we to be of our conversation after Communion. Our lips have touched the Body of Jesus, even as it has touched the consecrated chalice and the anointed hands of the priest. They are sacred and must remain sacred. They must not be defiled by unbecoming words. They must not be used to offend Jesus.

Communion in the morning must manifest itself during the day in our actions. We go to the sanctuary to receive Jesus and take Him with us to work, that we may perform all in His name.

Communion gives life and a divine character to our charity. It unites all members of the community and makes them one. Jesus is present in each one of them. He makes them all equal. His divine love must make them all love each other.

Frequent, if possible, daily Communion, obliterates the destructive influence of nature and the world and makes the soul grow in virtue, until it reaches perfection, until it reaches heaven. Frequent Communion becomes constant communion. Jesus no longer veiled, but in His full glory, feeds the mind with His Beatific Vision, and rejoices the heart with His infinite love and goodness.

## CONFERENCE ON PRAYER.

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*"This is the confidence which we have in Him, that, whatever we shall ask according to His will, He heareth us."*

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is our Companion, our Victim, our Food, our all. Being with Him we must speak to Him and listen to Him speaking to us. To speak to Him means to pray, and to listen to Him speaking to us means to meditate. Let us reflect briefly on prayer and meditation, two important fundamental essential duties of a religious.

Christ in His lifetime preached nothing more than prayer. He preached by word and example. He Himself prayed much. When He accompanied His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph to Jerusalem, He remained for three days in the Temple, to pray. He prayed when He went into the desert for a long retreat of forty days. He spent the hours of the day and night in prayer.

How significant are the words of the Evangelist concerning Christ in the Garden of Olives—"He went there according to His custom." Christ was *accustomed* to pray during the silent hours of the night.

In His agony in the garden He seems to forget everything. He rises three times, goes to His own and says: "Watch and Pray". "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." "Could you not watch one hour with Me?"

The effect of prayer is evident from the following: Christ prayed and was heard, He was

consoled and He was strengthened. Peter would *not* pray, and although he said, "Others may be scandalized in Thee, but I will never be scandalized", yet before the morning dawned, he had denied His Master *three* times.

See what human nature is. We all make good resolutions, but if we do not pray we shall not be able to keep them. How true the words of Christ: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak". The priest in saying Mass turns to you every morning and says: "Orate fratres", thus inviting you again and again to pray with him. St. Paul tells us to pray always, to pray without ceasing. He calls prayer a helmet which wards off the attacks of the enemy.

Prayer is a natural law. Every intelligent being receiving the light of reason sees that he is dependent upon God, and feels, "I must kneel down and adore Him, I must pray." Therefore no matter how degraded man is, he prays. The savage in the desert of Africa as well as the Indian in the prairie, prays. That law is planted deep in the heart of man.

The spirit of prayer is a gift of God. It unites us with God, it unites us with the saints, we become their companions. Our conversation is with them. It unites us with the just on earth. No matter how we may be separated, prayer unites us all and gives us a powerful means of helping others, and of being helped by them. What a gift is prayer! And how happy is the soul that has learned to pray and converse with God, thus rising above worldly things and uniting itself with the angels in praising and worshipping God.

Now let us ask—How must we pray? Here is the great difficulty. We all love to pray. We

all feel the need of prayer. We all understand that prayer is powerful. But to pray well is difficult. Well did the apostle say:—"Master, teach us to pray."

The school of prayer is the Garden of Olives. There we see Christ praying, and thus giving us an example. Christ as a good Master, not only commands us to pray, He also teaches us how to pray. When Christ came to the gates of the garden He said:—"My soul is sorrowful unto death: remain you here while I go and pray." Being alone He knelt down, prostrated Himself and said: "Father, if possible take away this chalice, but not My will, but Thine be done." Three times He repeated this prayer. Thus the Savior prayed for hours. Analyze that little prayer and you will find the necessary qualities of true prayer.

In the first place Christ *prepared* Himself for prayer. He did not rush from the table at the Last Supper into a very distracted prayer. He prepared Himself by saying to His own, "Rest you here, I will be alone." He saw nothing, heard nothing, He was free from distraction. Here is our first difficulty. We begin to pray without preparation. We rush into prayer, we rush through it and we end our prayer before we have begun to pray. Therefore let us always say with Christ to our worldly cares and distractions: "Rest you here at the Chapel door, this hour is for prayer. This hour I mean to give to God. Now I must be alone." And when we are alone praying, let us take a becoming attitude. We are speaking to God. Let us not see and hear everything.

In the prayer of Christ there are two words, two ideas that make the prayer, or help to make the prayer, *devout*. The first is: "Father", the sec-



ond is "Chalice". "Father" indicates that He understood to whom He was speaking. "Chalice" indicates that He realized and understood for what He was praying. Therefore if we wish to pray well we must understand to whom we are speaking and for what we are pleading. Oh! could we see God as the angels and saints or as Christ saw Him we could not be distracted. The angels cannot turn their faces away from God. We creatures must pray to a God whom we cannot see: this is our difficulty. Sight must be supplied by faith. With the eyes of faith we must see that we are in God's presence, and then we must say with confidence, "Our Father" or "Hail Mary". The words must come from the heart.

Secondly, we must try to realize *for what* we are praying. Christ beheld the chalice standing before Him, and felt the bitterness of the chalice, therefore He cried with His whole soul. "Father, take away this chalice"! The more we realize our needs, our temptations, the good we cannot do, the soul we cannot reform, the more will we cry out with fervor. "Father take this chalice from me." Therefore, before prayer form your intention or renew the intention formed for all the public prayers of the year. The priest before he ascends the altar in the morning is asked to fix his intention, and thus religious before they begin to pray should ask themselves, "What am I going to pray for?"

In forming your intention for prayer, be generous; include many persons and many things. There are some who are afraid to pray for others. They think they deprive themselves of personal benefit. This is a mistake. God loves generosity and charity. If we are generous and charitable to others, God will be good to us. A saint says: "It



is with our prayers just as with the light of the sun." If you enjoy the light of the sun and others enjoy it, you are not deprived of it. And thus it is with our prayers. If you include many, you will profit by it.

This generosity in praying for others we learn from the Mass. From the "Sanctus" to the "Agnus Dei" every word is so fixed that no word can be changed without committing sin. Every word of the Canon is the same day after day; be it a Mass for the dead or for the living. But even in the Canon there are two places where the Church gives the priest full liberty to pause. These are before the Consecration, at the Memento for the Living. Here the priest pauses to mention the names; he may mention as many as he will. It shows us that the Church is generous. And then after the Consecration comes the Memento for the Dead. Here the priest must pause again and mention the names of as many as he will. Thus also when we say our prayers let us include many, that many may benefit by them.

Many have asked our prayers, let us not deprive them of the benefit. The more we pray for others the more God will reward us. Converse with God, ask for some special intention, be it for your own wants and temporal difficulties or be it for others. The apostle himself, in all humility asked for the prayers of others. As he desired to be remembered by them, although he was an apostle, so we must recommend ourselves to the prayers of others, and we must remember others in our prayers.

The prayer of Christ in the Garden was *humble*. O, how beautiful it was! "Not My will, Father, but Thy will be done." This is a lesson for us.

It teaches us how to pray. Prayer is a petition, not a command. We ask of God in prayer, we must not command God to give. Our prayers are generally for temporal gifts, because after all we are small and we feel our temporal wants most of all. We ask for health, we ask for help in work, we ask for long life, we ask these favors for others also. Whenever we ask for such favors let us ask conditionally, "Father, Thy will be done!" If it is good, Father, give it. If it is not good, Father, give it not.

Often these things are the cause of sin. Divine Providence is so good. It deals with us so gently, and prevents us from running into danger. If God had granted us in our youthful days all we asked for, we should not be here today. Many would be among the worldly and wicked. He knows where the danger lurks: the poison we ask for is hidden and God does not give. Therefore let us be humble always. God loves an humble prayer.

Christ *persevered* in prayer. The same prayer was repeated for hours. Here is a lesson for us. It is not sufficient for our prayers to be humble and devout, they must be persevering.

Let us take the example of the apostles. With the Blessed Mother, the Scripture tells us; they persevered in prayer for ten days and ten nights, and then the Holy Ghost came to them. We know the beautiful history of St. Monica who prayed for seventeen years, with tears in her eyes, for one and the same favor, a spiritual favor, the conversion of her son. For seventeen years it seemed useless. Suddenly it was granted, and more than she asked for was given. She asked for the conversion of Augustine; he was converted,

but more, he became a great saint. The prophet Simeon, prayed for the coming of the Messiah. Year after year he went to the Temple, hoping to see Him. "Today I will see Him." Years passed, he grew old and feeble, and then one day his petition was granted. He saw His Savior.

We may begin to ask for a favor in our youth, and it may not be given to us until, we sink into the grave. Yes, we may ask for a favor in our youth and it may not be granted until we rest in the grave. Therefore be not disappointed in prayer and say, "God never hears me." God hears a good prayer, and always rewards it.

Consider another very consoling point. God sometimes hears a prayer by giving us what we do not ask for. If we ask for poison, He will not give; but He will give us that which will be good for us. Therefore we must not say, "God did not grant my prayer." We do not know. Christ prayed, "Father, take away the chalice." Did God remove the chalice? No. He could not do it. The salvation of the world depended upon it. But He sent an angel to console Christ. Christ being consoled, no longer desired to have it removed. We hear Him saying to His apostles: "Come let us go and meet the enemy." God is good. He answers prayer in His great and generous way. Mary and Martha prayed for their brother Lazarus. Did Christ hear their prayer? No. Their brother died. Perhaps they felt as we sometimes feel, "This prayer was useless." But because they had prayed, Christ wept with them. He goes to the grave, seeks Lazarus and gives him back to his sisters, healthy and strong. They have more than they asked for, although they have not received what they asked.

Thus many examples might be given to show that God hears our prayers. We will find that we have asked for many things we never received, yet the happiness we enjoy of being religious is greater than all the things we have asked for. Therefore never say, "God did not hear my prayer." God always gives more than we pray for. Meditate on the example of Jesus Christ. Be not like worldly people, who, when they are sad give up church and prayer, but like Christ, go straightway to the Garden of Olives and pray like Jesus.

Pray devoutly, pray humbly, pray perseveringly. Pray for all, and God will bless your prayers, and you shall receive in abundance. "Watch and pray that you fall not into temptation."

# CONFERENCE ON OUR BLESSED MOTHER THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS.

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*"After that He said to the disciple: Behold thy Mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own."*

In order to help us to become good and true religious Jesus gave Himself to us to point out the way and to assist us on the way. "I am the way—follow me." "I am the life—through me you can do all things."

Jesus also gave us the Blessed Virgin as a model and a Mother. Mary is the Mother of all christians, but she takes the religious, the spouses of her divine Son, under her special protection. To Mary are well applied the words of the psalmist: "After Her shall virgins be brought to the King." Who can tell how many young men and women upon hearing the marvelous life of the immaculate Virgin Mother of God, received the inspiration to imitate her and to become religious. And certainly no one becomes a religious without kneeling down and asking her help. She is therefore the Virgin Queen that leads the long procession of religious souls to the King, Jesus Christ.

This Blessed Mother of all religious has become the special advocate of the Dominicans. In Her, St. Dominic took his refuge, saying so often, "Hail, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness



and our hope—our advocate, turn thine eyes of mercy upon us and show us Jesus.” Mary often appeared to St. Dominic, consoled him and promised to protect him and his Order. She helped him as a mother in his missionary work by revealing unto him the Rosary, that perfect and powerful form of prayer.

This tender devotion of the Father was imitated by all his children. We begin our religious life by promising her obedience, and end our life by singing once more the *Salve Regina*, asking her to show unto us Jesus. At all times we wear her habit, her uniform, and carry her sword, the Rosary. To be faithful therefore to the spirit and tradition of our Order we must have a tender filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mary is the model of all religious; she is the Mother of all religious. From her example we must learn perfection, and through her intercession we must obtain perfection. Our Blessed Mother is indeed a “Mirror of Justice”. She like a mirror reflects all the virtues of God; she is the Queen of all virtues.

This is one reason why we must honor her. She is the first in perfection. We wish to be religious, we wish to serve, honor and worship God. What better example have we than that of our Blessed Mother? Having said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” inspired by the Holy Ghost she sang: “Magnificat anima mea Dominum”. “My soul makes great the Lord”, and from that day on, all her thoughts, all her words, all her actions were consecrated to Christ, devoted to Christ. For Christ she performed the humble works of her household. She never went forth teaching or preaching. We never hear of miracles coming



from the hands of our Blessed Mother. Her life was simply a life of retirement, a life with God. It was simply the life of every religious, of every good religious. Christ was there. All was for Him, everything. Her every action was worship of God. It was her joy to be with Christ and not with worldly people. We cannot imagine the Blessed Mother finding joy in conversation with any human being but her God and Savior. It was her sorrow and grief to be separated from Christ. Meditate on the loss of the Savior in the Temple and you will understand how Christ was her all. How great a sorrow! She went about weeping and sorrowing, trying to find Him. How great was her joy when she found Him in the Temple. And to see Him mocked, scourged and crucified, pierced her heart. To see Him in His glory in His Kingdom filled her heart with heavenly joy. See then a soul consecrated to Christ, see a soul devoted to Christ, see a religious soul. And if we wish to be religious, Christ must be our joy, the end of all things.

To be religious, we have seen we must practise the virtues implied by the vows, poverty, purity and obedience. We will not find a better example than our Blessed Mother. She had a little home in Nazareth, a garden of flowers, but when the sacred moment came for the birth of Christ she was not permitted to remain at home. She was compelled to go to Jerusalem; and there she, a queen's daughter, the noblest of that noble family of David went from door to door finding no shelter. She the queen's daughter had to enter a stable. There she was surrounded by shepherds, the poorest of the poor.

Mary is our model of purity. She is immac-

ulate. There was no shadow or stain of sin on her soul. She is the immaculate Mother, of purity itself, Christ. It is strange that Christ was accused of blaspheming, breaking the Sabbath Day, of sinning, but even the vilest never accused Him of sin against that angelic virtue. With the virgin saints following her, Mary, the Queen leads that beautiful procession, for nineteen hundred years to the Virgin King, Jesus Christ.

Mary is our model of obedience. Christ loved His Mother; and, loving her as no child ever loved a mother; He did all He could to make her happy, but Christ did not free her from the yoke of obedience. How hard it must have been for Mary to have the angel come in the middle of the night and say: "Take the child and go into Egypt?" She might have answered: "My Child is God. Can He not defend Himself? Why do you angels tell me to flee? Can not you protect me?" But no. She goes into Egypt. Obedience makes her stay in exile away from her home and country. Christ tested her and made her suffer, when He was lost in the Temple. He might have said one word: "Do not trouble about Me, I will stay." But He foresaw all. He saw what He would do, and He suffered more than His Mother. She was suffering; but God let her suffer, and in suffering He let her win her own crown. As Christ chose the Cross for Himself, He chose His Blessed Mother to be the one to help Him to carry the Cross. Standing under the Cross, she became obedient unto the death of the Cross. What more perfect picture of obedience can we find?

We have seen that to be religious, we must be humble. Here again we find an example in our Blessed Mother, who said: "I am the hand-

maid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word"; in her who sang: "God has regard for my humility. He exalts the humble." Humility implies humble work. Where can we find a better example than that of Mary? Humility implies that we suffer all insults, calumnies and misrepresentations, all that for the love of Christ. Where can we find a better example than in Mary? Every insult thrown at Christ was flung into the face of His Blessed Mother. The blasphemies of the robber on the cross caused her anguish. Not a word ever crossed her lips that was not gentle and humble. Behold then an example of humility. In Mary the "I" was completely ignored. Self was destroyed. It was all Christ.

If we wish patience in suffering, patience in difficulties, patience in carrying our crosses, patience unto the end, let us follow our Blessed Mother. From the time she presented her child in the Temple until the last day of her life, her daily path was the way of the Cross, but she carried her cross with patience. As Christ on the Cross could say: "Ye who pass by, see if there is any suffering like unto Mine." So Mary standing under the Cross, could well address all religious and say: "Child, come and see whether there is any suffering, like unto my suffering." There is none. And yet Scripture says so beautifully and so well; "She stood under the Cross." Some artists try to improve on Scripture and represent the Blessed Mother as fainting. But she was spiritually strong. She stood and beheld with patience. Thus Mary is indeed the Mirror of Justice reflecting perfectly all the attributes of God even as the pure water reflects the starry sky. She is the first religious and the model of all religious.

Mary is not only our model, she is our Mother. She is the Mother of Christ and the Mother of all the spouses of Christ. She has the love of a mother, the knowledge of a mother, the power of a mother. She has well given us proof of her love. Since she was immaculate, we might expect to find her in Paradise. But we find her in the valley of tears, a sorrowful Mother, the Queen of Martyrs. It is all for us. All her tears and all her sufferings are for us. Well did Christ wait until that moment, when He saw her in such suffering, and then say to us: "Behold your Mother." Through her suffering she helped to atone for our sins. Well, then, did St. John take her unto his own and consider her his Mother. And well may we, seeing her love for us, take her unto our own, take her for our Mother.

She has the knowledge of a Mother. We must not imagine her forgetting us or ignoring us. She is the Mother of Wisdom because she enjoys the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the fullest extent. She is the Mother of Wisdom because she is the Mother of Christ, the Eternal Wisdom. She is the Mother of Wisdom because she is with God in Heaven and sees all things; and seeing all things, she sees our wants and our needs, and knowing them she has care for us.

How tender was her charity in this world! When there was no wine, it was not of much importance, no one was starving, yet it touched her so much that she said to the Master: "They have no wine." What attention must she not have given the Apostles when they were left without their Master? The Scripture says so well; "They persevered in prayer with Mary." She was the Mother. She was the Mother of the Disciples, taking

care of their smallest wants. Thus she cares for us.

Mary loves us, Mary knows us, Mary helps us as a mother helps her child. She is not only the Mother of Good Counsel, because she can help us, but because she gives us all the help we ask. She is powerful. Well do we call her Queen, for she is a queen. The end of this life will come. We must pass away to the glorious Kingdom of Christ, the Eternal King. And in that Kingdom of eternity she stands there as queen. She has the power of a queen because her merits make her powerful. She is powerful because her Son is powerful, and she knows the King will give her all she asks. The Church calls Mary the Mother of Grace. She is our sweetness, our hope and our life, because through her intercession we receive all graces.

To remember Mary our model and to invoke help of Mary our Mother, use faithfully and devoutly the Rosary, meditating on the mysteries of the Rosary; or meditate on her beautiful life from the time the angel said to her; "Hail, full of grace", until surrounded by angels she was crowned by the Blessed Trinity. By reciting the Rosary we honor Mary, the Queen of Religious. We respect constantly the angelic salutation which is truly divine. Thus God the Father honored and saluted her. By reciting the Rosary we implore her protection, saying: "Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." If we repeat such words fifty times a day and more, Mary will always pray for us now in our present difficulties that we may imitate her example, and she will pray for us in that awful solemn hour of death. After this our exile she will show unto us Jesus. The consoling vision of St. Domi-



nic will be fulfilled in us. With an army of Dominican saints we shall be under the glorious mantle of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, our special advocate.



# CONFERENCE ON RELIGIOUS WORK.

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## *"CONTEMPLATA ALIIS TRADERE."*

The Order of St. Dominic is both contemplative and active. It stands between the strictly monastic communities of the earlier centuries, and the active congregations of the later times. It combines the two. First, pray, meditate and contemplate, filling your soul with the spirit of God; then go forth and deliver the message which you have received in contemplation to others.

St. Dominic divided his time between prayer and work. He was a man of prayer, and an apostle. The first nine years of his priesthood were spent in retirement. When engaged in his mission labors, he worked during the day, and prayed during the night.

Realizing the importance and necessity of prayer, he founded a convent of perpetual prayer. It is significant that the first Dominican convent was such a convent. He converted heretics by teaching them to pray. He prescribed for his brethren the choir duties of monastic life. This example and rule was faithfully imitated and diligently kept by his spiritual children.

The Order of St. Dominic "which God has favored with such particular graces, which the Holy See has enriched with such numerous benefits, and which the faithful cherish with such marked friendliness," has always rested on the solid foundation, "*contemplata aliis tradere.*" Its

great men and women learned their eloquence, wisdom and charity in prayer. Its saintly heroes and heroines spent almost as much time in prayer as in work, and almost as much time in work as in prayer.

It is encouraging and inspiring to see in this country alone, over three thousand Dominican Sisters engaged in all works of charity and mercy: some adoring perpetually the Blessed Sacrament, others reciting without interruption the Holy Rosary; some giving tender care to the sick and infirm, and abandoned cancer patients, others sheltering and caring for the orphans and neglected children with a mother's love and solicitude; others instructing the children in great cities, in poor country places, in elementary schools, in academies and colleges. It is a great, brave army of the Lord continuing in His name the manifold works of charity which He taught the world.

The danger which threatens is, that being interested in the good work and influenced by the rushing spirit of our century and country, we may forget the good old motto, "*contemplata aliis tradere.*" We neglect the contemplative side of the Dominican life. Work is good, but work without prayer is useless.

"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." St. Peter worked hard all night, and caught nothing. Casting out his net in the name of Jesus it was filled.

The assertion so frequently made in our times, I owe myself to my neighbor, is false. We owe ourselves to God, and may help our neighbor by working for him.

Since we owe ourselves to God we must give

ourselves to God in our religious exercises. "Guard yourselves at all times, lest perhaps having preached to others, you yourselves should become castaways." He who avoids ill-regulated activity will in the end accomplish a greater number of zealous acts, and will gather more precious fruit; for he will be able to work longer, harder, more usefully and with better methods.

The superiors of communities, small or great, should see to it, that silence is kept, that the office is said, that meditation is made in common and that spiritual reading is performed. No member of the community should be dispensed habitually from these exercises.

We are religious, first and foremost, to perfect ourselves, and secondly to work. The better religious, the more perfect religious we are, the happier and more successful shall we be in our work.

In going forth to work, we do not go in our own name, we go in the Glorious name, and holy habit of the order.

How much do we not owe to this name and to this habit? What should we be without them?

A soldier fighting in his uniform under the flag of his country, forgets his individuality, marches and fights as commanded, bleeds and dies for his country. Religious working in the sacred, historical uniform of the order must forget their personal opinions, feelings and interests, and work as commanded in perfect unison with the others for the order, which means working for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Every order, even every congregation, has its own character and spirit: that character and spirit we must try to make our own and express it in our work.

Members of a community, belonging to the same family, having the same training, observing the same rule, aiming at the reward, must work together in perfect harmony: "one heart and one soul", as the Christians of old.

In such a union there is naturally strength, and upon such a union rests the blessing of God. It is this unity and harmony which makes the work of our religious, be it in education or in charity, so effective.

One selfish member sometimes destroys this blessed unity, and thus does more harm than good.

In working, religious must try to promote the honor and good name of the community. We can never realize what we owe to our Mother house. There we received our early, fundamental instructions; there we received our habit and made our profession; there we were directed by able superiors and assisted by faithful friends. All we are in religion, we owe practically to the Mother house, and to our congregation, therefore we must not forget that Mother house as soon as we go on missions. It must remain dear to us, as a home remains dear to a child. By our good conduct and religious work we must reflect honor upon it.

Our name and habit being strictly religious, we must represent our order, religion and the church well when we go forth to work. People will judge the order and the work by our conduct. Religious are closely observed. They can easily give great scandal, just as they can be edifying models. "Therefore", the Master General says well, "if we desire to help the people, it follows that our lives must be in accordance with our ministry." Let them be striking examples of

charity, of humility, of recollection and of penance, and let them appear before the faithful as eloquent examples of Christian perfection. Let us be careful to remove from ourselves all that may detract from virtue.

In dealing with people, as we may be called upon to do, we must show great prudence and discretion. As a general rule it is good to avoid the parlors. It is a dangerous place for religious. Blessed Henry Suso feared the parlor as the hare fears the hunter. St. Catherine gives good advice to a sister saying: "Let thy first rule be to flee the conversation of every human being, in so far as it is simply conversation, except as deeds of charity may demand; but love people very much and talk with few of them. And know how to talk in moderation even with those whom thou lovest with spiritual love."

Some people come to the parlors to entertain the religious and some come to be entertained by the religious. Neither should be welcomed. Good religious need no such entertainment; they have the company of the Blessed Sacrament and of the sisters. That is quite sufficient for them. They understand, moreover, that they are not religious to entertain people. Such people, "christian in name and worldly at heart", draw the religious little by little from their habits and ideas, instead of being themselves drawn into the humility of the faith and the love of the cross.

Instead of losing time and exposing themselves to danger by conversing with such, religious should rather give their attention "to the ignorant who must be instructed, to the poor who must be consoled, to sinners who must be reconciled to God."



"But be careful even in your intercourse with them, and do not condescend to enter too frequently into conversation, or allow them to enter into any confidence regarding the affairs of the Order. Do not receive little presents too easily."

Such things seem small and trivial, yet they lead us far from our motto: "*contemplata aliis tradere.*" They distract us in our convent life, and in our meditations, and consequently the heart, being without the spiritual food, becomes unhappy, weak and empty. Instead of going to the sanctuary devoutly to speak with Christ, to receive Him, and to bring Christ to others, we bring to those whom we are sent to help, our own human misery and troubles and make them unhappy.

A religious must work in a religious way. "*Omnia ad salutem animarum*" is another device which expresses well Dominican zeal. The immortal soul, God's image and masterpiece, bought by the blood of Christ, destined to live forever, in heaven or in hell, we must save, and try to save in every neighbor. To save that soul every opportunity must be utilized, and every means employed.

St. Dominic could not sleep while resting in the house of a heretic. He prayed all night and converted the man in the morning. Led astray by a false guide he offered up his blood and prayers in patience for him, and converted him before the end of the journey.

That is the meaning of "*Omnia ad salutem animarum*". The zeal of the holy father must burn in the hearts of his children. Our prayers, our penances, our time, our work, all must be



offered up for the salvation of the souls confided to our care.

Then God will give His grace and bless the work, and reward it, surrounding us in heaven by the glorious company of souls saved by our ministry.

# CONFERENCE ON THE ORDER OF ST. DOMINIC.

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*"The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places;  
for my inheritance is goodly unto me."*

As Dominicans it is our duty to love the Order of St. Dominic. Other religious orders may be older and greater; we must not compare, but we must love our own best.

Even as a patriot loves his country without asking whether it is the wealthiest and most powerful; even as a child loves its mother without inquiring whether she is the kindest and most accomplished among women; even as a husband loves his spouse without daring to consider whether she is the fairest and most virtuous of her sex; so also must we love and cherish our order, to which we owe in a large measure our spiritual life, which we have chosen freely, and to which we have promised fidelity even unto death.

Fortunately God has called us to an order, which is charming, almost immaculate in its origin; glorious in its long uninterrupted history from the golden age of faith, the thirteenth century, to the present time; rich in spiritual treasures, religious customs, and devotions; rich in the merits of the blood of martyrs, the purity and chastity of virgins, the wisdom of doctors, the eloquence of preachers, the zeal of sacrifice and missionaries, the intercession of an army of saints. Alexander IV, a Vicar of Christ, compares the Order of St.

Dominic, to a tree which the heavenly Father, the author and protector of faith, planted in the paradise of His Church, to charm the eyes and stir the hearts of the faithful with the example of a virtuous life, and to feed their minds with the fruit of the preaching of the word of God. The work of its members, he continues, like the sound of triumph has passed over the whole earth, and re-echoes from the corners of the world. Their wonderful virtues and piety make them shine like bright stars in the firmament of the Church.

As members of the Church have to contemplate her birthplace, the crib of Bethlehem, with the divine Infant adored by an immaculate Mother, protected by St. Joseph, the lily of virginity, so we as members of the order, should love to look back to its cradle, a little Church under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, in a quiet country place called Prouille in the southern part of France.

There St. Dominic brought together nine of his fervent converts, separated them from the world, consecrated them to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and by his example and doctrine led them onward to God, through religious perfection.

This obscure chapel of uninterrupted prayer, and perpetual adoration is the cradle of the Order of St. Dominic. In that sanctuary our holy founder was inspired with the idea of creating a religious family, as universal as the Church, as firm and indestructible, if possible, as the Rock of St. Peter, and always and everywhere rich in virtue and fruitful in work.

Next to the grace of God, the Order owes its greatness to St. Dominic—the great saint, the master preacher, the wise and prudent legislator.

He communicated his pure, noble, holy soul to his work. He filled it with his spirit. St. Dominic was a saint from his cradle to his grave. Blessed Joanna of Aza, his mother, taught him to know and love God; and with Blessed Mannes his brother he served and loved his Creator. In silence and solitude, in innocence and prayer, he prepared himself for his holy work. The first nine years of his priesthood were consecrated to study, meditation, and the divine praises as a canon of St. Augustine.

About eighteen years were spent as a missionary of God in the midst of the greatest moral wickedness and corruption; but by means of an austere life, a life of penance, mortification, and almost constant prayer, he preserved his baptismal innocence.—At the hour of death, lying on the floor because of his love of poverty, surrounded by his weeping spiritual sons, he was able to declare in open confession, for their edification: “My children, the mercy of God has kept my body pure, my virginity undefiled to the present day.”

It is the practice of this virtue, which makes a servant of God pleasing to Christ, and helps him to find favor in the eyes of men. Well do we sing every day: “*O, lumen ecclesiae*”—O, light of the Church; O, doctor of truth, O, rose of patience; O, ivory of purity.” St. Dominic, the learned saint, the ardent lover of souls, the eloquent preacher, the fearless champion of truth, had not only learned to know and love God during his long secluded life, but had mastered the second commandment—the love of neighbor.

Dressed in the simple, white tunic and scapular, and coarse black coat, he daily left his Bethany, the little convent in Pruille, to argue with the

preachers of heresy in learned, public disputations, to instruct the ignorant and misguided ones, and to pray with all, for all.

"Speak either with God or about God", was his motto, and he was faithful to it. Wherever he met a fellow being, whether privately or in public he spoke to him of God, and tried to bring him nearer to his Maker. During his travels he encountered many dangers, but he feared nothing. Gladly did he suffer all for the word of God, and greatly did he yearn to shed his blood, slowly, painfully, for his God. As evening came, he would return to his sanctuary, tired often and sad, perhaps discouraged. Many hours of the night he spent in prayer. He prayed much—day and night. He founded at Prouille the convent of prayer. He converted the people by teaching them to pray. He taught them the Rosary. His favorite invocation was the *Salve Regina*.

The divine office speaks most beautifully of the soul of our holy father: "He was a man of apostolic heart and spirit, a pillar of truth, the trumpet of the Gospel, a light of the world, a lamp of Christ, a second precursor, a great lover of souls. Now he stands crowned with the crowns of these many virtues, in the heavenly kingdom." "He shone in his day as the morning star in the midst of a cloud; and as the moon in its brightness, and as the sun in its glory, so did he shine in the temple of God."

His missionary life added great practical experience to his theoretical experience. Traveling through Italy, Spain, and France, he saw the bleeding wounds of the Church; her afflictions became known to him. Frequently he met, worked and associated with members of other religious orders.



He became an intimate friend of the great general Simon of Montfort, and Foulk, the saintly bishop of Toulouse. In Rome he consulted with Pope Innocent III, a true type of the deep, broad, Roman character. All this helped to prepare him to produce his masterpiece—a new religious order.

Although deeply interested in his work of preaching, he was not lost in it. The extirpation of the Albigensian heresy, and the preaching of the gospel in a part of France, made him realize the importance and necessity of an army of preachers for the whole civilized and uncivilized world.

In the laying of the foundation of the order, we clearly see the greatness of the saint. There he manifested his whole soul, his great, noble ideas, his sincere piety, and his undaunted, superhuman courage. His idea to combine the contemplative with the active life was original with him, and he made it fundamental. Well did the saint understand that the heavenly seed, the word of God, cannot take root and bear fruit, without the heavenly rain and sunshine.

Well did he understand that the preacher without the fire of charity, which needs its daily fuel to keep it alive, becomes as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Therefore he kept the three religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, retained the old monastic rule with all its austerities, and insisting much on the recitation and chanting of the divine office by day and by night, with the observance of all the beautiful ceremonies of the Church.

As a canon of St. Augustine he had considered the singing of these divine praises as his first and main duty. He bequeathed it to his order.



In all the early documents we read that the preacher kept the title, and consequently the duty of canon.

To the convent life, to the angelic work of praising God in the Blessed Sacrament, he united the truly apostolic work of preaching. Where St. Benedict, in his rule, prescribes manual labor or spiritual reading, St. Dominic prescribes study. This new duty is so essential, that the learned Cayetan does not hesitate to say, that a Dominican who does not study four hours a day commits mortal sin. St. Dominic and his first six companions attended daily in the city of Toulouse learned conferences given by the great master Alexander Stavensly. His first Convents were founded in university towns. Every convent was a school. In every convent a professor lectured daily, and every member of the community, the prior included, was obliged to be present. St. Dominic wished his order to be a learned order. That the apostolic life might not be injured by the strict observance of the convent rule, the saint laid down another new fundamental principal, that of granting freely dispensations, never to the whole community, for that would destroy all discipline, but to individual members of the community. Up to that time dispensations had been granted to the sick and feeble, but St. Dominic granted them when study or preaching required it.

His preachers were to be rich in virtue and learning, but poor, extremely poor, in dress and way of living. He loved poverty. He literally interpreted the words of Christ. "Do not possess gold, nor silver in your purses."

With St. Francis, the patriarch of the poor, St. Dominic went beyond the founders of religious

orders, which had preceded him. Not only individual members, but even communities were forbidden in the beginning to have temporal possessions. A document bequeathing an estate was destroyed by St. Dominic, in the presence of his brethren. The religious who came to the chapter meeting with horses, were severely admonished, their horses taken from them and sold. When the saint saw a father building a convent too richly, he wept.

Poor, learned religious the saint sent into the world. He did not merely build an abbey or a monastery, he founded an order for the whole world to be governed by one head. This again was something new in the history of religious life. In this one head, resided all power and authority, to secure absolute unity and stability.

The second branch of the great tree, the cloistered nuns, occupies an essential part in the plans of the Holy Founder.

Preaching can never bear fruit without prayer. The prayers of the fathers, without preaching could never be sufficient. Therefore St. Dominic desired to have religious who would pray, adore, sigh and supplicate, giving thereby the words of the preachers, the power of penetrating, and the grace of converting.

A second convent of the cloistered nuns was opened in Rome, and in Bologna the building of the fathers' convent was interrupted to insure the completion of the sisters' house. The nuns enjoyed his tender care and solicitude. He gave them the well-merited, significant title of "sister preachers."

To carry the advantages of the religious life to the very houses of the faithful, to enlist the hearty

co-operation of the zealous in his missionary work, to establish a religious union between the convent and the home, St. Dominic conceived the happy idea of a third branch—that of the third order.

Thus the great new order in the Church of Christ was founded. Its private life, its public work, its organization, differed from all the Church had known in the first twelve centuries of her existence. The plan of the order is that of a saint and a genius. His methods were as simple and humble as those of a child. He did not impose his rigorous conception of religious life and apostolic work upon his disciples, but humbly consulted with them, and together they chose and accepted this strict way of living and working.

Everything in the Order was to be democratic. The members chose their own rule, and their own superiors. The latter were not to be abbots, standing as it were above the subjects, and holding office for a life time, but priors, the first among their own, remaining on the same level, and holding office for a few years.

The constitution was drawn up slowly and carefully, St. Dominic and his companions legislating, not for all times, but simply drawing up an outline and wisely ordaining that representatives should be chosen yearly by the various communities, to meet, continue and perfect the work. In this the great saint's humility and prudence are greatly to be lauded.

The laws having been passed and approved of by the Pope, the Master insisted upon their execution with a firmness and determination which nothing could resist.

When the brethren found it had to go forth

upon their long, arduous journeys, without means of support, St. Dominic admonished them, prayed with them, and helped them to conquer.

Many pastors, professors and bishops opposed the new order, and impeded its progress but the general obtained brief after brief from the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and thus forced his way through all obstacles.

And God confirmed all of his holy, courageous steps by endowing him with miraculous power.

Our Blessed Mother, ever his consoling advocate, in heaven, bestowed upon Blessed Reginald for the entire order, the white scapular, encouraged him by promising to remain the advocate of the order and showed him the great heavenly glory of his numerous spiritual children.

When the saint had thus laid the foundation of his order, interpreted its laws by his own life, and introduced it to the Church and to the world, he was ready to die, ready to receive the eternal crown of glory. "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints." And the saintly death of our Holy Father is precious in the sight of his spiritual children, too.

Since the feast of the Assumption 1217, when St. Dominic sent forth the first seventeen disciples, five years had passed. Instead of seventeen he now counted over five hundred members, sixty convents divided into eight provinces, and spread over Spain, France, Italy, Germany, England and Hungary. How the thought must have consoled him in his dying hour! He had lived for the order; he died for it.

The choir had always been his favorite place; and now once more, in his dying hour, we hear

him intoning the midnight office, with his brethren, to be finished with the angels of God in heaven.

Lying on the floor, he gave two parting exhortations, made an open confession, received the last sacraments, and expressed the humble wish to be buried beneath the feet of his children.

Then, desiring ardently to communicate to his brethren his own spirit, with which to animate and perpetuate his order, he gave it to them in three words: Poverty, Humility, Chastity. This is the spirit of the order. While it exists the order will flourish, when it dies, the order will die with it.

His remains were laid to rest, according to his wish, without ornament, without inscription, without a tombstone. He was buried "in the sweet odor of his virtues."

He was a good father, for he taught us to live, to work, and to die. O, wonderful hope, with which thou didst fill the hearts of thy weeping brethren, when thou didst promise them at the last moment that thou wouldst continue to help them, Father, fulfill what thou hast promised, help us by thy prayers.



# CONFERENCE ON THE ORDER OF ST. DOMINIC.

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*(Continued)*

St. Dominic, living in the bright light of the days of Christian faith and chivalry, laid the solid foundation of a life and work truly heroic and sublime. He was succeeded by men of his own character. If the order is singularly blessed in having such a spotless, virtuous founder, it is likewise singularly blessed in having had for its first masters learned saints.

Blessed Jordan of Saxony succeeded St. Dominic in office as Master General. The very fact that this young man, thirty years of age, at the end of two years as a member of the order, was chosen as a leader by great men, proves his exceptional greatness. A late historian rightly terms him the most saintly, the most eloquent, and the most amiable of all generals of the order.

As a student at the great University of Paris he distinguished himself by his bright, keen intellect, his boundless charity, his happy, cheerful disposition, and his winning manners. Having heard St. Dominic preach he was won over to him. He went to confession to the saint, opened up his heart to him, and received in return supernatural love and burning zeal from St. Dominic.

After much prayer, together with his intimate friend and constant companion Henry of Cologne, he received the white habit from the hands of Bl.



Reginald. This important step increased his piety, happiness, and cheerfulness.

As general of the order he grasped the whole plan of St. Dominic, with all its details. He saw the beautiful foundation, and he realized that his mission consisted in building the edifice. Well did he fulfill his mission.

The best young men of the world at that time were students of the Universities of Bologna and Paris. Blessed Jordan needed such young men to fill his convents, to spread the Order, to attain its aim and end—the preaching of the Gospel to all nations.

Yearly the saint walked from Bologna to Paris, and from Paris to Bologna to preach the Advent and lenten sermons. His goodness and eloquence moved the hearts of the professors and students, and drew them to God and to the Order.

His many beautiful letters to Blessed Diana, whose prayers and the prayers of whose community, he constantly implored, according to the idea of St. Dominic, for the success of his work, indicate well the number and calibre of the vocations which he won.

“From Advent to Easter”, he writes, “forty novices entered the order; many of them are professors, others are well advanced in their studies. We expect many more postulants.” In another letter to Bl. Diana we read: “I must inform you about the blessings God bestows on our Order. Everywhere our brethren grow in number, and in virtue. Since my arrival in Paris, I have received twenty-one novices. Six of them are Masters of Art, others Bachelors of Art, all men well prepared for their mission.” Thus the energetic, always active Bl. Jordan gave the habit of

St. Dominic to over a thousand men, eminent among their fellows.

As the order grew in numbers under the guidance of this General, so also it waxed in perfection. Fifteen times in sixteen years Bl. Jordan presided over general chapters, two of them being what the constitution terms, "most general chapters."

Year after year the learned, experienced definitors met to work at the constitutions. Rules were made regulating the formation of novices, the education of students, the silence of the convent, the recitation of the divine office, the rites and ceremonies. Everything was determined upon most precisely, and with the greatest care and attention. The saint understood that the unity and preservation of the order depended on the uniformity and regularity of the observance of the constitution.

In the year 1228 he made a second publication of the rule, which is still in existence. The first publication made by St. Dominic has been lost.

Under Bl. Jordan the order continued to spread with marvelous rapidity. New provinces were established in Poland, Dacia Greece, and in the Holy Land. From these new centers, men like St. Hyacinth, Bl. Ceslaus, and Bl. Sadoc, went forth to preach Christ crucified in Russia, Scandanavia, Norway, Sweden, Greenland, almost every country of the world.

An expression of his devotion to our Lord is recorded in his office of the Holy Name; an expression of his devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the advocate of the order, is perpetuated in the beautiful custom of singing every day after compline, the sweet prayer "Salve Regina."

He even had occasion to express his undying love and veneration for his Father and friend St. Dominic. The tomb of St. Dominic had been sadly neglected, and the Church having been removed it was not even protected from the destructive elements of nature. Pope Gregory IX reprimanded the order severely for it, and ordered the remains to be transferred to a more becoming resting-place. The solemnity was great, worthy of the saint. The pope, cardinals, bishops, kings and princes attended in great numbers.

When the old grave was about to be opened Bl. Jordan and his companions felt the fear of Martha, when she said: "Lord he is now of four days," at the resurrection of Lazarus.

But the joy of the brethren was like Martha's when the grave was opened, for, says Bl. Jordan, "I myself perceived that delicious odor, to which I can testify. For hours I remained near the corpse, and its perfume sweetly embalmed my soul."

What must have been the joy of his heart, when soon afterwards St. Dominic was canonized, and Bl. Jordan was permitted to sing the divine office, and to offer up the holy Sacrifice of Mass, in honor of the saint, who had won his heart, heard his confession and guided his youthful steps.

When Bl. Jordan reached the age of forty-six, the prime of manhood, the great cares, the hard work, the long journeys had broken down his health. Tears of joy and woe had dimmed his vision. But ever faithful to duty, he visited his brethren in the Holy Land. On the return voyage the ship was wrecked and the second, "the most saintly, the most eloquent, the most amiable,

Master General of the order of St. Dominic was drowned. His body was recovered and buried in holy ground.

The Church has immortalized his name; and has placed him on her sacred altars for our edification and veneration.

Blessed Jordan of Saxony was followed in the office of Generalship by Saint Raymond of Pennefort, another immortal name in the history of the order, the Church, and the world. A son of noble, wealthy Spanish parents, he excelled in humility, love of poverty, and compassion for the poor.

He remained in office only two years, ill-health and a desire to lead a secluded life causing him to resign.

Being one of the greatest masters of canon law in the history of the Church, he prepared and published an exact, logical and systematic edition of the constitution. St. Raymond gave our constitution its present form, and is therefore justly called its author. At the resignation of St. Raymond, the venerable John Leutonic was unanimously chosen his successor. He was a noble, stony character and ruled the order for eleven years with a broad mind, kind heart and firm hand.

Every year he presided over a general chapter, where the most prudent, learned members of the many provinces assembled to continue the work of legislation.

Under him our Dominican rites and ceremonies were fixed for all places and all times. The general houses of studies were organized. The chapter made the laws, and the General enforced them. Although an old man, he constantly traveled on foot, visiting the provinces, punishing delinquents, encouraging all.



The venerable John Leutonic finished the Constitution in all its essential points, and his successor Bl. Humbert published an official interpretation. Together these two great men completed the edifice of which St. Dominic had laid the foundation, and which Bl. Jordan had begun.

They had the privilege of leading the order to the highest degree of glory, of power, of sanctity, to the highest degree of perfection in its long history of seven hundred years. They well represented it, and ruled it with supernatural energy and wisdom, during its golden period.

It is difficult for us to get a good idea, and draw a true picture, of this golden age. Yet these words may serve to give the outlines. The order merited the glorious titles of "Order of Preachers," "Order of Truth," and "Holy Order."

Preaching was and always remained its essential mission and history. The constitution, the work of Bl. Humbert, clearly proves that all care and attention was given to it. Prayer, convent life, and study were preparations for preaching.

To be sent to preach was considered the greatest honor and distinction. Popes found it necessary to choose Dominicans for the honors and burdens of a bishop. In eleven years under the venerable John Leutonic thirty-five Dominicans became bishops, nine archbishops, one a Patriarch, and one a cardinal. In six years Alexander IV raised twenty-two of the order to the dignity of bishop, two to the dignity of archbishop and one was made a patriarch.

The Dominicans did not accept these positions with joy. They were forced to accept. Significant is the answer given by Cardinal Hugo, when nominated. He wrote to Pope Gregory IX, "St.

Dominic did not found an order of bishops; but an order of preachers. Let us be preachers, doctors, apostles, martyrs if you wish, but not prelates."

How touching and beautiful is the letter Bl. Humbert wrote when Bl. Albert the Great was nominated bishop of Ratisbon. He concludes the long exhortation not to accept the dignity by saying; "We would sooner see you in a grave, than on a bishop's throne. We prostrate ourselves before you, begging you in the name of humility, in the name of the Bl. Virgin Mary, in the name of her Divine Son not to give up your humble state."

Bl. Albert was forced to accept, but having accepted he soon resigned, returned to the humble state of a Friar Preacher, and died in it.

Dominicans were called to be preachers, they prepared themselves for it, and have ever excelled in it. God gave His special graces and blessed their words; the names of St. Hyacinth, St. Vincent Ferrer, Savanorala, Las Casas, Lacordaire and Father Burke show how they preached at all times, in all countries and to all classes.

The Order of St. Dominic is the Order of truth. "Veritas" is one of its mottoes. The sons of St. Dominic investigated eternal truth with intellect and heart, as scholastics, and mystic theologians. They loved and tried to acquire a simple, plain, frank, truthful character. They made known the truth as doctors, university professors, eminent writers, great artists. They defended the truth fearlessly, as the inquisitus and the martyrs did, with their blood and their lives. The leader and light of all Dominican doctors, preachers, and ascetics is St. Thomas of Acquin, the illustrious disciple of Bl. Albert the Great, the glory and honor of the Dominican Order.



This angelic saint and doctor standing at the beginning of the history of the Order has given all the sons and daughters of St. Dominic an abundance of intellectual and spiritual food, and thus has contributed much to the unity, stability and greatness of the order. Because all members of the order have stood firmly on the solid rock of his doctrine, the order has been for more than six hundred years a pillar of the Church, a powerful weapon against all heresies, an inspiration for artists, a guiding hand for ascetics.

The entire learned world of today speaks of a Fr. Denifle, a friend of truth, and its brave defender. In his last work, his masterpiece, which so violently shook the foundations of Protestantism, he was guided by the angelic doctor.

St. Thomas is also a father of the interior life of the Order. The order of St. Dominic is called the holy order. Holy is the greatest title it could aspire to, because personal sanctification, perfection is the first end and aim of religious life. It is called holy, because it has helped so many to attain perfection.

The prophetic vision St. Dominic had, when he saw so many of his children under the glorious mantle of the heavenly queen, has certainly come true. The number of beatified Dominican saints is remarkably great, and is growing almost every year.

Every one of the three branches of the great tree planted by St. Dominic bore fruit. Among the companions of St. Dominic we find no less than sixteen, whom the Church has publicly honored with the crown of sanctity. Three of them, Bl. Diana, Cecilia and Amata, belong to the second order.

The second order grew apace with the first.

In the year 1277, it counted fifty-eight convents. More than half of these were in Germany. The marvelous sanctity of such cloistered nuns remains hidden from the world. Only in exceptional cases do we hear of it. Of this secluded life St. Agnes of Montepulciano is the great saint.

The third order, of which the glorious seraphic St. Catharine of Sienna is justly called the mother and model, gave many saints to the Church. Conspicuous among them are St. Catherine de Ricci, and St. Rose of Lima, the first canonized saint of America. To these beatified saints, over two hundred in number, must be added the great legion of Dominican martyrs. In the first century of its history, over thirteen thousand, and during the Reformation over twenty-six thousand Dominicans died for the faith.

St. Peter and St. John are the leaders of this army. Add to all this the two universally beloved devotions the rosary and the Holy Name and we can readily understand why the Church calls the order of Preachers the order of truth and holiness, and why special permission has been granted by the Church to celebrate a special feast in honor of all Dominican Saints.

It is good to consider frequently the fundamental principles of our order; to contemplate that which with the grace of God they have accomplished. Not to be vain and proud and boastful of our saintly forefathers, as the Jews and the Pharisees boasted of their patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but to appreciate the goodness of God, who has called us to such an historic, venerable, holy order; to understand the meaning of the habit we wear, sanctified by the prayer, the mortification, the virtues and the blood of many

saints, to be encouraged by their successes, and drawn by their example to observe the rule, to practise their virtues, and continue their work. In us living in the twentieth century, it must be a source of unspeakable joy to see the order, the sacred temple designed by the almost inspired St. Dominic, and built up by the greatest masters of the greatest century, still standing. It may not be what it used to be. Religious life in general is only a shadow of its former self in the days of faith. Persecutions, revolutions and reformations, have weakened its spirit and crippled its work. Still the old, sacred tree stands spreading its three-fold branches over the whole work and bearing fruit. The fathers teach and preach, the sisters pray day and night, and the members of the third order continue their great mission in the schools and institutions of charity.

Its democratic constitution seems to have been made for our day, the very constitution of our government seems to be an imitation of our constitution.

The names of St. Rose, St. Louis Bertrand, Bl. Martin, Las Casas, Diego Dega, Louis Cancer; San Domingo, Manila, Porto Rico, Santiago, all remind us that Dominican learning, Dominican sanctity, Dominican toil, Dominican sacrifice, Dominican blood have helped to discover this land, to protect and convert the aborigines, and to establish the church. Dominican and American are closely related to each other. The prospects for the Order in this land of liberty and religious freedom are bright. By living, praying and working as our forefathers lived, prayed and worked, we may revive its golden period "*ad salutem animarum.*"

We little boys of the Nazareth Trade School ask the kind Order to pardon the mistakes we made in printing this little book. We begin our trade with a good will and assisted by the Dominican Sisters we hope to master it soon.











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Cormier, Hyacinthe-Marie,  
1832-1916.  
Translation of the letter of  
the Most Rev. Father





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