

# **Instructions for Novices**

For the use of the Friars Preachers;  
may be useful also for novices of other Orders, ecclesiastical students,  
and pious individuals.

Assembled from ancient manuscripts by

Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier, O.P.



**INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR  
NOVICES**

**Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier, O.P.**

Translated by  
George G. Christian, O.P., and Richard L. Christian

Introductory Essay by  
Ezra Sullivan, O.P., and Basil Cole, O.P.

The original edition of this work was published as *L'Instruction des Novices: a l'usage des Frères Prêcheurs* (Paris, France: Librairie V<sup>ve</sup> Ch. Poussielgue, 1880). This edition includes Parts I, II, III, and chapter 3 of Part IV.

Quotations from Sacred Scripture: Cormier's paraphrases of Biblical verses are translated directly from the French; where Cormier provided only a Latin quotation, the translation has been adapted from the Challoner edition of the Douay-Rheims translation.

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Cover designed by Dominic Joseph Bump, O.P.

This edition is dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, through the hands of St. Joseph and St. Dominic.

Cover image: Dominican friar writing in a cell of St. Maximin convent, France.

Photo: Maurice Gillet in *Fils de Lumière : La vie des Pères Dominicains dans le couvent Royal de Saint-Maximin* (Sadag a'Bellegarde, 1951).

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**Letter of Very Reverend Father Emmanuel Suarez,  
Master General of the Order of Friars Preachers**

The venerable Father Hyacinth-Marie Cormier of blessed memory, our predecessor in the office of Master General of the Order, was, in all truth, a great master of the spiritual life, an eminent and revered director of souls.

The novices whom he formed in the Dominican life with all the zeal and care with which his soul was capable, benefitted especially from his superior gifts and his profound experience. In addition, how many uncounted others, whom he did not know, did he form by his precious work: *Instructions for Novices*.

The Very Reverend Father Emile-Alphonse Langlais, himself also a religious of great merit and long experience in the formation of novices to the Dominican life, we entrusted with the administration of the School for Masters of Novices and of Student Brothers of the Order. He had the excellent thought of publishing a new edition of this work by Father Cormier, thus allowing the venerable Father to preside once again in the formation of young religious and to continue these great works of his life.

This edition is a simple reprint of the book. The first and the fourth sections of the previous edition contained the general truths that are easily found today in other works; accordingly, they were omitted. The new edition has kept only the sections proper to our Dominican training and to the traditional practices of the Order. To be sure, certain practices have grown old: the rules for Communion, confession, and the direction of conscience are not very appropriate to actual legislation. But these issues are easily identified; some footnotes call attention to them. Furthermore, with a guiding light, the ancient practices still reveal the spirit which called for them.

The novices, the students, and the Dominican religious — even those of other Orders and Institutes — will find in this book great spiritual profit. They will bless the memory of the holy Father Cormier, and will be grateful to Father Langlais for having placed in their hands this treasure for their religious discipline and the advancement of their interior life.

Father Emmanuel Suarez, O.P.

*Master General (1950)*

## APPROBATION

We the undersigned, by order of our Superiors, have examined the volume entitled: *Instructions for Novices*, and have judged it worthy of publication. We believe that it could be very useful not only for Religious but also for Seminarians and, in general, to all other persons who know or seek to know the path to perfection.

Salamanca, Convent of San-Esteban, this Holy Monday, 3 April 1882  
Fr. D. Albert Gerhart, O.P., Lector in Sacred Theology, Master of Novices.

Marseille, 28 April 1882, feast of St. Peter Martyr  
Fr. Emmanuel Manuel, O.P., Examiner of Books.

Imprimatur:

Fr. Raymond Bianchi, O.P., Procurator General, Vicar of the Master of the Order

Nihil obstat:

Fr. Hyacinthe M. Héring, O.P., Master of Sacred Theology  
Fr. Paul Philippe, O.P., Master of Sacred Theology  
Rome, 26<sup>th</sup> day of May 1950

Imprimi potest:

Fr. Emmanuel Suarez, O.P., Master General  
Rome, 1 June 1950

Imprimatur:

Fr. Gabriel Monti, O.E.S.A., Secret. Vic., Vatican City  
Given in Rome, in Vatican City, 1 September 1950.

## NOTICE

This work, *Instructions for Novices*, is composed in large part from manuscripts in use by the Province of Toulouse during its better days, namely, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, after the reform of Father Sebastian Michaelis, of learned and saintly memory. It is with great confidence, therefore, that we present it to our novices and to all our religious.

So as not to be too unworthy of its title, may this work also contribute to the sanctification of men and women religious of other Orders, and of members of the clergy. May it even offer some help to the faithful, still rather numerous in society, who wish to advance in perfection, and to atone to God for the negligence of a great number of Christians. True, many chapters do not pertain to them; but they will easily recognize those and be able to omit them, with no prejudice to the rest. If they take the effort to peruse those chapters, it may not be without some benefit to them. In fact, the details of their life in the world are more closely related to those of religious life than appears at first glance. The form varies, the foundation is the same; the same spirit must animate them. It is especially the spirit behind things that, in the whole work, we attempted to make understood and loved.

The name and the examples of St. Dominic or of the Blessed of his Institute will be mentioned often in these pages. The reader will attribute this to the particular character of virtues and religious observances therein recommended, rather than to a spirit of exclusion. Besides, on reading certain passages, everyone will easily be able to evoke in his thoughts other names, other examples, equally relevant to the subject but more treasured for their devotion. The result can only be a more abundant light.

To establish a certain order in the diverse matters of this volume, we have divided it into four parts.

The 1<sup>st</sup> deals with vocation, the means to recognize it, to shape it, and to remain faithful to it.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> deals with the Rule and the manner in which to perform religiously the principal actions involved.

The 3<sup>rd</sup>, describes the principal obligations which constitute the base of the religious life, in particular the meaning and spirit of the three vows.

The 4<sup>th</sup> is a collection of pious readings intended to train the novices in the holy exercise of contemplation, which is the soul of our Dominican and apostolic life.

Monastery of Our Lady of Prouille, 21 November 1880,  
the feast of the Presentation of the B. V. Mary.  
Fr. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier  
Provincial of the Friars Preachers,  
Province of Toulouse





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# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

Ezra Sullivan, O.P., and Basil Cole, O.P.

## Historical Context of *Instructions for Novices*

During the Nineteenth Century, the Order of Preachers was declining and on the verge of disappearing; its troubles and its hopes were centered on France. Before the 1789 French Revolution, the Order had fifty-two provinces and nearly 20,000 friars, with numerous congregations of sisters and monasteries of contemplative nuns.<sup>1</sup> After the Revolution, Napoleon made it a state policy to destroy Catholic religious Orders that he deemed useless. Surveying the situation in 1840, through a study of Dominican thought and history, John Henry Newman was unrealistically optimistic about the Order's immediate future. He believed that, within a short time, "the sap could flow once more through the branches and that the French branch could renew in time the whole trunk."<sup>2</sup> Newman's insight was real, but his timing was off. Henri Dominique Lacordaire, through heroic efforts, had begun a renewal among a few individuals. But by itself, this did not effect an institutional change. In 1844, there were forty-seven Dominican provinces with as few as 4562 friars, with many monasteries of nuns closed and some congregations extinct.<sup>3</sup> The numbers bespoke an international problem: most Dominicans did not want to live as Dominicans.

While touring Italy in 1846, Newman was initially encouraged by reports of a flourishing convent of friars in Florence; what he found instead was a burgeoning business in which the Dominicans concocted "good rose water" for *eau de Cologne*.<sup>4</sup> The general state of the Order of Preachers at that time led Newman to express an appre-

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<sup>1</sup> William Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 151.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans*, 156.

<sup>3</sup> Angelus Maria Walz, *Compendium Historiale Ordinis Predicatorum* (Rome: Libreria Herder, 1930), 524.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to J.D. Dailgairns, December 31, 1846, in *Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Vol. XI, ed. C. S. Dessain (London, 1961), 305.

hension that has since become famous: “I am doubting whether the Dominicans have preserved their traditions — whether it is not a great idea extinct.”<sup>5</sup> What Newman did not know and could not have predicted was that Bl. Pius IX, to save the Order, would appoint Alexander Vincent Jandel as Vicar General in 1850 and as Master General in 1855.<sup>6</sup> In 1859 Jandel, in turn, appointed Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier as his secretary. These appointments would benefit the Order for many years to come.

With his first-hand knowledge of the persons and issues involved, Cormier at a much later date could see that Jandel was providentially chosen “to fulfill completely the work of God” initiated by Lacordaire, namely, the restoration of the Order of Preachers.<sup>7</sup> In Cormier’s estimation, Lacordaire had the character of an initiator, a “conqueror” of souls in whom a “bolt of inspiration was found.” Lacordaire’s “virtues were equal to the height of his genius,” such that he drew men to himself, to the Order of Preachers, and ultimately to Jesus Christ. It was his mission to re-establish the Order and to lay a new foundation principally through his preaching and writing. It was for Jandel to build upon that foundation; his mission was “to restore the *interior of the Order*.” Although both men lived out the active and contemplative dimensions of the Dominican vocation, Cormier saw Jandel’s work primarily as one directed to “the interior man”; Jandel was “to get the hidden sap flowing again, to re-invigorate the life-giving spirit.” This was possible, Cormier observed, because Jandel’s effort was a matter of “faith operating through charity.”<sup>8</sup> Faith was the principle from which all fruitful apostolic action would come; without faith enlivened by charity, all activity would be an empty shell, a clanging cymbal. Hence, Jandel

applied himself to the traditions of the Order as the basis for its revival . . . because he wanted to preserve and take the advantage of the principles of the mystery of Redemption which they contained. If, then, he had surrounded with his care the cloister observances and the divine offices, it was because he discovered under their exte-

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<sup>5</sup> Letter to J.D. Dailgairns, July 6, 1846, in *Letters IX*, 195.

<sup>6</sup> This was not unprecedented; popes had previously appointed friars to rule the Order: Pius VII appointed Joseph Gaddi as Vicar General in 1798, 1806, and 1814; Leo XII appointed Joachim Briz as Master General in 1825; Gregory XVI appointed Benedict Olivieri and Thomas Cipolletti as Masters General in 1834 and 1835. Hinnebusch, *The Dominicans: A Short History*, 151-3; and Ashley, *The Dominicans* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 191-3.

<sup>7</sup> Cormier, *Life of Very Reverend Alexandre-Vincent Jandel*, trans. George and Richard Christian (French, Paris: Librairie Ch. Poussielgue, 1896; English, n.p., 2012), Bk VI, ch. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Cormier, *Life of Jandel*, Bk. VI, ch. 3.

rior an abundant vigor suitable to nourish and embellish that spirit of faith.<sup>9</sup>

Cormier's assessment accords with the judgment of Daniel Antonin Mortier, one of the greatest chroniclers of Dominican history, author of the seven volume *History of the Masters General of the Order of Preachers*. Although well aware of the conflicts between Jandel and Lacordaire, Mortier does not see their fundamental visions as irreconcilably opposed. Their agreements were broader than their disagreements. He writes:

Père Lacordaire had the honor of being the fearless initiator of the renaissance of the Order throughout the world; Père Jandel, the glory of having magnificently realized it. All Dominican provinces are indebted to Père Jandel, either for where he has re-established them, or where he has given them a more vigorous vitality.<sup>10</sup>

Significantly, Mortier also includes Cormier as a central figure in the restoration of the Order. Considering how the character and holiness of these three men led to the great renewal, Mortier explains:

Père Jandel himself, by his sanctity of life and by his universal work for the Dominican restoration, is the most beautiful jewel of the Order in France. In the same current of sanctity and universal action for the Dominican family, Père Cormier ranks with him. His work is known by all. The two are French, the two are born from the vocation of Père Lacordaire. Through them, his vocation produced all its fruits, fruits more abundant than those for which he could have legitimately hoped. . . . The restoration of Père Lacordaire, both for France and for the other provinces of the Order, is the most glorious and the most fertile in all Dominican history.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> D. A. Mortier, *Histoire Abrégée de l'Ordre de Saint-Dominique en France* (Tours: Maison Alfred Mame et Fils, 1920), 381.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 381-2. Alfred Wilder comes to a similar conclusion: regarding Jandel and Lacordaire, "[T]he dispute between the two was not trivial. . . . [Nevertheless], in my opinion, the favor of reason should go to neither over the other. In fact, both figures seem to me to set forth attractive and important aspects of the renewing tradition of which they were so important a part. . . . [I]n his treatment of Jandel, Cormier did not think at all that he had to be against Lacordaire." Alfred Wilder, O.P., "Master of the Order Hyacinthe Cormier on Master of the Order Vincent Jandel" in *La Formazione Integrale Domenicana: al servizio della Chiesa e della società* (Bologna, IT: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1996), 333-56 at 336, 338-9.

Having been grafted onto the vine re-planted by Lacordaire and watered by Jandel, Cormier was rooted in Dominican tradition. His *Instructions for Novices* was as much an instrument of renewal in his day as it was a product of a reform in previous centuries. In his prefatory “Notice”, Cormier indicates that much of the material originated from “manuscripts in use by the Province of Toulouse during its better days, namely, in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, after the reform of Father Sebastian Michaelis, of learned and saintly memory.” With the example of Bl. Raymund of Capua in mind, Michaelis had sought “nothing short of an exact return to the spirit and discipline of the first ages.”<sup>12</sup> Like his spiritual predecessor, one of his chief means of reform was to establish convents of strict observance within existing provinces. His efforts were largely successful: “the communities reformed by him, especially that of Toulouse, became, as in olden times, the nurseries of saints.”<sup>13</sup> He founded the convent (priory) of the Annunciation as a model house of reform, with Anthony le Quiou as the master of novices. Many of those novices would “eventually revive the spirit of religion throughout the Order,” for, in relatively short time, the reform would spread throughout the continental European provinces, such that “the reformed convents restored the regular observance of the Rule with a severity and zeal which is truly extraordinary.”<sup>14</sup>

Approximately two hundred years later, the documents of the Toulouse reform—precisely which ones, we are not told—would provide crucial insights and direction for Hyacinthe Cormier while he worked in a reviving province. He published *Instructions for Novices* in 1880, during his term as Provincial of Toulouse, over two decades before his election as the seventy-sixth Master of the Order. The main source of his work gave him “great confidence” in presenting it to his readership, and justifiably so. Cormier’s book about Dominican life and spiritual practice—part explanation, part instruction, and part exhortation—was to be one of the most comprehensive and respected works on the topic to come from that period of the Order’s renewal.

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<sup>12</sup> J. S. Alemany, *The Life of St Dominic and a Sketch of the Dominican Order* (New York: P. O’Shea, 1867), 354. In this work Alemany draws largely upon Antoine Tournon’s *Histoire des Homme Illustres de l’Ordre de S. Dominique*, ed. Paris, 1743–49. See also, Raphael-Louis Oechslin, “Frères Prêcheurs en France” in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Tome 5, cols. 1471–79, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 354–5.

### Audience, Aim, and Content of *Instructions*

From the outset, Cormier indicates that different readers may benefit from his work in different ways. He states that *Instructions for Novices* is meant to form Dominicans, to “contribute to the sanctification of men and woman religious of other religious Orders,” and even to “offer some help” to the faithful “who wish to advance in perfection.” Cormier recognizes that, although Dominicans can derive the most immediate use from the book, it is also useful for others. He goes so far as to say that other religious or consecrated persons can easily think of examples of their own saintly members who illustrate the virtues mentioned; laymen and women can omit the sections which do not pertain to them or adapt them to their own state of life. The laity have more in common with religious than it may seem at first glance: “The form varies, the foundation is the same; the same spirit must animate them,” he notes. Helpfully, he attempts to make the spirit behind the observances understood and loved.

According to Cormier, laws, observances, and legitimate customs carefully followed are all meant to direct and shape the interior life, from which the apostolic life should flow. Hence he emphasized the monastic side of the Order without necessarily undermining its apostolic side. This is key to understanding his approach to forming novices in the authentic Dominican life. Because Cormier wrote primarily for novices and “student novices,” that is, friars in vows who were studying for ordination, he attempted to inculcate a culture of virtues and manners that would help a beginner friar to remain faithful to his calling as he matured.

The in-text citations show that Cormier was immersed in Sacred Scripture and the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. After the Angelic Doctor, whose virtue-theory is a constant touchstone of Cormier’s exposition, St. Augustine has pride of place. Following him are other Fathers and Doctors of the Church; we find many references to St. Bernard, St. Basil, and St. Jerome. Additionally, he cites such figures as St. Gregory the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. John Climacus, and St. Bonaventure. These authors represent the great tradition which Cormier appropriated for himself and passed on to those whom he instructed. To help the reader discover these sources for himself, the citations have been updated wherever possible. For example, where Cormier had as his citation “(St. Thomas)”, the citation now reads “(ST II-II, q. 186, a. 8)”.

The original French edition of *Instructions for Novices* in 1880 was broad in scope and precise in application, running over seven hundred pages long. Because the work was so well respected, it was

reprinted in 1950 under the auspices of Emmanuel Suarez, Master of the Order at the time. The new reprinting omitted sections valuable in themselves but less specifically Dominican, such as a long, beautiful exposition on the titles of Christ. The abbreviated version was considered more suited for printing and wide distribution to Dominicans throughout the French-speaking world. In the present English edition, the 1950's edition in its entirety has been translated along with other parts of the original edition.

Part One of the 1880 edition has been added: chapters I and II on Vocation and Principal Maxims for the Religious Life, or how one's moral life relates to salvation, penance, sin, and the Four Last Things—death, judgment, Hell, and Heaven. The purpose of a novitiate is discover if this “calling” or vocation to religious life is from God or self. It is a time of testing; the novice master tests the men under his care, and the novices also must test themselves. Cormier discusses what distinguishes a true calling from a false calling. The trials that occur in the novitiate either bring out a true vocation and shape the Dominican character of a friar, or they show him that he does not have a vocation. Formation is not something done exclusively by formators. One is also responsible for developing one's calling because one must cooperate with actual graces and inspirations of the Holy Spirit. This leads a friar to reveal himself to confessors and the novice master during periods of self-examination and the trials, difficulties, and disappointments that come in the religious life. Religious life is not a series of delightful picnics; the pleasure of doing something new at the beginning wears out with time. Crosses of various kinds do not indicate either a rejection by God or a sign that no vocation to religious life exists.

One's vocation is especially tested in light of the last things: the goal of salvation can spur a person to enter religious life; the presence of sin can motivate penance; the threat of Hell can prevent sin; the delights of Heaven can inspire heroic dedication to God. These chapters are extremely well crafted. Cormier reminds the novices that our knowledge of both ultimate ends—one of bliss, the other of misery—is beyond our comprehension to appreciate. Belonging to the state of perfection does not mean one is perfect. Rather, it means that one belongs to a way of life and intends to keep a religious Rule faithfully in order to become more perfect, principally in charity and the other virtues, which are rewarded with a high degree of glory in Heaven.

Part Two, entitled “Regulations,” concerns the practical details of how a novice is to live with regard both to his interior life and to his exterior actions. Cormier demonstrates and explains the importance of fidelity to meditation, the rosary, the Divine Office, the



Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary (obligatory at that time), the Office of the Dead, keeping silence, the common life of interaction with one's brothers, study of sacred truth, various penitential exercises including the chapter of faults, preparation of homilies and talks, and above all obeying the master of novices. All these exercises were necessary in that day to shape the character of a contemplative preacher. As the novice, so the priest. Cormier continually shows his reader how to relate all actions to God so that every exterior movement is accompanied by an interior movement of prayer, for example, "My God, I offer you this recreation out of love . . ." In a later chapter, Cormier gives a strong and balanced view on how to begin one's day in the novitiate from getting up in the morning, going to Mass and receiving Holy Communion, praying the Divine Office, preparing oneself for the sacrament of confession, and the supreme importance of mental prayer. Afterwards, he then takes up the vital work of study and includes a letter attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas on the subject that is still relevant to anyone who would grow in their faith. He concludes by outlining certain formal structures of preaching, but with a focus on the moral qualities of a preacher. Cormier's exposition about regular observances could seem to be making a monk rather than a friar, but he emphasizes that these daily exercises are foundations for what is to come later in one's religious life.

Part Three, "Instructions on the Vows and Obligations of the Religious State," contains many beautiful and useful insights. It concerns the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience and their relationship to the Rule, which in this case is not the *Rule of St. Benedict*, but rather the *Rule of St. Augustine* and the Dominican *Constitutions* that interpret and specify it. The virtues which flow from the vows and reciprocally lead to them require time and dogged perseverance to master oneself so as to give oneself to God and eventually to the salvation of souls. All of this takes much sacrifice of ego, desires for marriage and family life, and love of material things. Pride and vainglory, lust and avarice lurk in the hearts of all future religious and often are never completely eradicated even though diminished. It takes a certain depth of grace and personal effort to dethrone these forces so as to become filled with divine love based on divine hope and faith together with a thirst for souls. The perfection of virtue grows in a spirit and practice of silence because silence is the mother of recollection, study, and prayer.

Devotion, the virtue by which one gives himself to the service of God promptly, is the fire produced by meditation and contemplation. As one grows in this virtue, it in turn produces a heartfelt fervor for the things of God, so that the person desires to grow more and

more in perfection of the virtues. A good superior manifests the mercy of God tempered with justice and guided by prudence. He knows what novices are up against and he teaches them how to endure personal discouragement or the imperfections God allows in one's life and circumstances. Moreover, a good master or superior knows that the life of perfection will often seem dreary, impossible, or just plain boring. These trials come to beginners and they need encouragement so as to steady their course along the way.

Part Four is the briefest but perhaps the most important of all parts in this edition; it contains "Prayers to Jesus Christ, the Model of Virtue." This was chapter three of Part Four of the original edition, the chapter that most directly related to religious life. Here we discover a more personal side of Cormier. Throughout *Instructions for Novices*, we receive hints of his spiritual life, but here we see Cormier's holiness shine forth more fully. For Cormier, a "perfect religious" is "one animated ceaselessly by the spirit of Jesus Christ." To achieve this state, religious must have "fully internalized the spirit of prayer," which is the "soul of all their life." Cormier insists that "prayer is the source of all grace." Not content with providing the principles of holiness in religious life, he discusses the concrete practice of it, even to the point of showing us how to pray from the heart. Hence, in providing us with prayers to Jesus Christ, the exemplar of all virtue, Cormier shows us his own profound and interior union with God. In this way, he also gives us the opportunity to practice what he preached earlier on. This is the culmination of the work, for, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else, it shows the soul ascending to God and it invites the reader to do the same.

### Context and Adaptation

There are two kinds of difficulties that the contemporary reader may find in Bl. Cormier's *Instructions for Novices*: those that are outdated and those that seem too strict. This section will consider issues of context and adaptation; the next two sections will consider issues regarding strictness.

Reams and reams of paper have detailed the history and theory of religious life; far fewer have discussed how one should concretely practice it. One of the chief advantages of Cormier's approach is that he writes as a novice master, a friar dedicated to forming others not merely to *know* about the life of perfection, but to *live* it. He is not content merely with providing abstractions and generalizations; he wants to show his readers how to incarnate the idea in the day-to-day aspects of their lives. This approach is both risky and beneficial.

Cormier's precision provides many benefits for his readers. Over and over again Cormier insists that the perfection of charity lies in both thought and action. He demonstrates that the virtues are developed and perfected through concrete and often minute practices that have both interior and exterior aspects. His advice shows how to become a more perfect follower of Christ in specific ways. Thus, the particularity of his recommendations is a vigorous affirmation that, as Benedict XVI has said, the saints "desire to incarnate the Gospel in their own lives."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Cormier relates valuable historical data regarding what was normative in the reform province of Toulouse under his direction. In doing so, he indicates certain practices that for the most part have been lost in our contemporary scene, such as solemn processions and a monthly retreat, the recovery of which could prove quite enriching.

At the same time, the concreteness of Cormier's work could prove to be a stumbling block to those who see it as a series of inviolable rules intended to remain unchanged through the ages. Such a naïve view could prove inimical to authentic fraternal charity and contrary to prudential judgment.

In his 1950 prefatory "Letter," Suarez, the Master of the Order, noted that "certain practices" in Cormier's work had "grown old" since 1880. Hugely influential was the 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon law, which affected the content and organization of the Dominican *Constitutions*. For example, in light of the new Code, the friars adapted their rules for communion, confession, and the direction of conscience. Suarez judged that, despite legislative changes, obsolete passages in Cormier's work remained useful, for "the ancient practices still reveal the spirit which called for them." This remains true in our time, when the differences between our culture and Cormier's are even greater than they were in 1950. There have been vast changes in secular culture; radical changes in Dominican culture and legislation stemming largely from the 1968 General Chapter at River Forest; and significant changes in the Church's culture and law, not least in the new 1983 Code of Canon law, which formally incorporated into the exterior life of the Church many developments of the Second Vatican Council. Despite the vast difference between his historical context and ours, Cormier's practical suggestions retain a depth and wisdom that can instruct readers in every age. They have been included in this translation precisely because of their perennial value.

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<sup>15</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily at Holy Mass in Lisbon's "Terreiro do Paço" (11 May 2010): *Insegnamenti* VI:1 (2010), 673.

Granting the value of Cormier's exposition, not all practices are equally applicable in our time. Some obsolete matters are "easily identified" as Suarez noted. For example, in 1880, a Dominican made an annual retreat of ten days (see Part Two, ch. I); by 1950, the typical retreat was eight days; under the 1983 Code of Canon law, the requirement has been reduced to six days. Such differences are negligible compared to Cormier's valuable recommendations on how to make a retreat spiritually fruitful. Or again, Dominicans no longer hold a cup with both hands while they drink. Legislation no longer requires this, probably because the practice is not considered necessary for courtesy or moderation. Providing details regarding etiquette or civility, Cormier is clearly trying to help unmannerly, unthinking, rude friars become formed in the etiquette of his day, an etiquette that is often unsuited for our time.

Other matters are more difficult to identify as entirely obsolete. Much of Part Two contains practical recommendations in which tradition, virtue, legislation, custom, and nineteenth-century French manners and circumstances are intimately intertwined. For example, convents no longer have "warming rooms"; modern heating technology has eliminated them. But technology does not eliminate the need for virtue, which directs a person to be courteous while he relaxes, to relax so that he might work harder, and to occupy his mind with holy thoughts while relaxing. Thus, much prudence is required in order to determine when to apply, adapt, or eliminate recommendations based on customs, manners, and time-bound circumstances. Cormier recognizes this, and states that common sense should govern all interpersonal conduct:

It is the task of common sense and good judgment to apply the rules of good conduct; the rules can be disregarded any time that following them rigorously would bring upon us ridicule or embarrassment. Obstinacy in following them slavishly is oftentimes more unbearable than the very lack of politeness.

Should a friar entering a room bow to those occupying it? For contemporary cultures, this would be unnecessarily formal and stiff. Should a friar in the company of others avoid lifting his habit above his knees? This is more reasonable.

Our Lord describes the work of tradition when he says, "every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (*Lk.* 13:52). The more general a rule is, the more universally applicable it is. Correlatively, the more particular a rule is, the less significance it has for every age. Anyone can obey the commandment,

“Do not covet.” But not every Dominican may follow the rules regarding the tonsure; such rules would apply only if the Dominicans had retained integrally the traditional Minor Orders. Every age in the Church is confronted with the question of what practices from the past should be “brought out of one’s treasure” and what should be left behind. Not all practices should be followed to the letter merely because they are old; but neither should they be neglected solely because they are unpopular at the moment. Often what is most up-to-date is a return to time-honored tradition.

### Penance

For Christ and his first followers, penance was a constant theme in their preaching and their practice. From the beginning of his public ministry, Christ preached: “the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel” (*Mk.* 1:15). He showed us that penance is necessary for this fallen world, going so far as to say, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (*Lk.* 14:27). This teaching was developed by the Apostles. St. Peter exhorted: “Abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. . . . Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps” (*1 Pt.* 2:11, 21). St. Paul made the teaching his own: “I chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (*1 Cor.* 9:27). St. John summed up the fundamental issue, saying: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him” (*1 Jn.* 2:15).

With this venerable tradition in mind, St. Dominic and his brothers from the beginning intended to impart a penitential character to the Order of Preachers. Bl. Jordan of Saxony reports that “the future preachers chose the Rule of St. Augustine, who had been an outstanding preacher, and added to it some stricter details about food and fasts, as well as about bedding and clothing.”<sup>16</sup> Bl. Humbert of Romans provides more background, noting that the friars at first petitioned Pope Innocent III to accept “a new and strict Rule according to the fervor conceived within them” but, being refused, they chose the Rule of St. Augustine instead.<sup>17</sup> They added to the Rule parts of the Constitutions of the reformed Praemonstratensian Canons, choosing “what was austere, what was beautiful, what was wise, and what they thought was suitable for themselves”; and they added to these many

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<sup>16</sup> *Libellus*, no. 42.

<sup>17</sup> *Expositio Super Constitutiones*, 1.17.

other practices as well.<sup>18</sup> Along with a wise policy of dispensation for study or preaching, these observances were for St. Dominic “a direct preparation, the point of departure for the imitation of the apostles and the condition of a ministry *verbo et exemplo*; from which sprang the severity of the observances he chose, more rigorous than the strictest of the canonical observances.”<sup>19</sup> This was the spirit that has inspired all reform in the Order of Preachers, including the nineteenth-century reform of Lacordaire, Jandel, and Cormier.

If *Instructions for Novices* is demanding, it is only because self-love inclines a person to be demanding on everyone but himself. For an Order whose laxity had made it grow flabby and lethargic, strict observance was the exercise regimen necessary to prevent a deadly heart attack. Jandel explained the basic principles in this way:

We need to embrace [the spirit of mortification] in everything, in the flesh as in the spirit; that is the unanimous teaching of the saints. St. John of the Cross tells us: ‘Do not believe him who teaches you not to mortify your flesh, even if he should confirm this teaching by miracles.’ And St. Teresa [of Avila]: ‘It is folly to believe that God admits into His intimate circle persons who love their comforts.’<sup>20</sup>

Objections to this position could arise from “worldly people who live in a very comfortable environment.” They argue that we have no duty to perform mortification. Additionally, they might pretend that, if austerity and self-denial was useful in ancient times, our modern understanding shows that it is unnecessary. Jandel’s response could have been written in our time:

Are we less susceptible than our ancestors to the influences of evil? On the contrary, do not the advances of a corrupting civilization require of us greater prudence to guard against their attacks? . . . Is there not a need for greater energy to row against the current which dominates today, in order to develop personal habits marked by the sign of mortification, and to protest loudly against widespread moral weakness?<sup>21</sup>

On this point, Jandel and Lacordaire were in complete agreement. When a woman was accused of Jansenism for following the path of austerity, Lacordaire responded to her:

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.18-19.

<sup>19</sup> M.-H. Vicaire, *Saint Dominic and His Times*, trans. Kathleen Pond (Green Bay, WI: Alt, 1964), 210.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Cormier, *Life of Jandel*, Bk II, ch 5. See John of the Cross, *Letter 24*; Teresa of Avila, *Way of Perfection*, 18.2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* The following quotations from Lacordaire are from the same source.

You should not be surprised in being judged somewhat Jansenistic. This has become the fashionable word to designate those persons who attempt to set their morals in harmony with the spirit of faith and of charity with which they are imbued.

Lacordaire, in his defense of Jandel's principles, goes on to explain that many Catholics think that holiness requires merely avoiding mortal sin, frequently receiving the sacraments, and making acts of devotion from time to time. These are good but insufficient, he insists:

Many persons, through ignorance of the truly Christian life, are . . . greatly astonished when someone tells them that, in addition, one has to imitate Jesus Christ in His poverty, His humility, His penitence, His abnegation of self, His scourging, and His crucifixion — the only actions which really cost our corrupt nature. And yet, the Gospel is filled with this need to live just as Jesus Christ did; the lives of saints are so filled; the writings of the Fathers repeat it to every reader. But it is much easier to fashion for oneself a Christianity which allows *living like the world but without mortal sin*.

Granted, many souls, especially beginners, can do very little. One must treat their weakness with kindness and sympathy, teaching them that one must not become scrupulous; that the commandments are different from the counsels; that we are called first to endure the sufferings present in our daily life; and so on. But this should not affect the underlying principle that “we are all held to perfect ourselves in the Christian life — which requires a certain effort to detach ourselves from the world, subject to the duration and continued action of grace.” The people who complain of Jansenism, Lacordaire notices, are the ones who have been convinced that they are saints though they remain fastidious, silly, belligerent, haughty, vain, and all too ready to indulge in little pleasures. Often people who are morally weak transform their condition into “a system which encourages them to remain where they are” in mediocrity rather than to “advance slowly on the narrow way.” His conclusion is incisive.

Jansenism was a deplorable heresy, a reversal of all the Christian ideas about the liberty of man, the goodness of God, the relevance of the blood of Jesus Christ to all men. Those wretched thinkers shockingly feared that God was too good! But what does this hateful doctrine have in common with the dogmatic and practical conviction that we should love Jesus Christ as He has loved us, not with our lips but with our heart, and not only with our heart but with consequences, indeed all the way to the Cross, and to Calvary? . . . This is indeed the teaching that we find in the Gospel, in the Epistles of St.

Paul, in the *Imitation of Christ*, in the letters of St. Jerome, in the lives of the Saints, and in our very own hearts, sustained by divine grace.

There can be no doubt that the life and work of Lacordaire and Jandel were infused with these principles.<sup>22</sup> They in turn passed them on to the houses of strict observance which they established and governed, thus paving the way for Cormier's own appropriation and application of such teachings in his life and work.

Cormier often reminds his readers that, like St. Dominic, they too must be willing to do penance not only for their own past sins but also for the sins of the world. Moreover, he reminds them that we do not know the quantity of the penances we owe for having insulted God by our grave sins in the past and our venial sins of the present. Like St. Dominic, he teaches that the novices must cultivate a desire or disposition for martyrdom yet without losing both a sense of joy and one's humor. From this perspective, penance is only a means, but a *necessary* means to grow in perfect charity, with joy as its fruit. For a Dominican, the main penance is a life of "strict observance," a term indicating the entire daily regimen in a typical priory.

### Strict Observance

There is an old truth that can be summarized in the following way: law without love leads to harshness, while love without law leads to softness. No one can reasonably fault Cormier for having wrong priorities; his entire teaching is founded on a truth that he happily repeats: the perfection of man consists in union with God, and charity achieves this union. By means of the evangelical counsels, we can obtain the goal of perfection more easily, more surely, and more completely with the help of God's grace. Chief among the counsels is obedience, which is always made according to a specific "Rule", which guides both superior and subject. Strict observance of a recognized religious Rule is thus a sure and straight highway to God.

Thomistic virtue-theory guides Cormier's understanding of the place of law in a life aimed at perfection. Law exists not for its own sake, but rather for the sake of preventing vice and developing virtue. Using images employed by Sts. Augustine and Bernard, Cormier describes the advantages of a religious Rule:

As the wings of a bird . . . serve to make it lighter and to be able to fly higher, and, as the wheels of a chariot are a great help to the ani-

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<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Chocarne, *The Inner Life of Père Lacordaire*, ch 14, "Lacordaire's Love of the Cross."



mals who pull it, so too the Rules for religious. Far from being a burden for them, the Rules are formed according to the evangelical counsels and supply them with wings so as to rise more easily to a higher perfection. They are like the wheels which help them to carry more easily the yoke of the commandments of the Lord.

The only way a Rule can have this wonderful effect is when a religious keeps and enlivens them with an interior spirit of charity. Merely going through the motions will not bring a person to perfection. Man is both body and soul; accordingly, there must be exterior and interior aspects of his religious observance: the soul must make the body live. Whether the task is to sweep a floor or to recite the Psalms, the action is spiritually alive only when it is referred to God. Interior union with God, especially through prayer, is the animating principle of strict observance. Cormier wanted a strict way of life to begin in the novitiate because he knew that, in time, the demands of the apostolate would require much discipline from a friar who was also to remain assiduous in prayer, study, and the common life.

Once a person has vowed to keep a religious Rule, his perfection is bound up with his observance of that Rule:

There are means of salvation in all states of life; but everywhere these means are closely linked to the fulfillment of the duties proper to each of those states. . . . The duties of state for religious are summarized in the fulfillment of their Constitutions, to which Providence has attached their salvation.

Recognizing the centrality of the vow of obedience, Cormier goes so far as to say about approved religious Rules: “After the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, they are the principal channels which divine goodness uses to spread its graces upon them.” This is because religious Rules require the religious to have recourse to prayer, the sacraments, and many opportunities of grace. Furthermore, Rules are expressions of God’s Providential will. God’s providence was manifested in the founder’s original charism, in the Church’s recognition of that charism, in the Church’s formal development of a way of life expressing that charism, in the survival and growth of the Order or Congregation through time. These insights anticipate the teaching of the Second Vatican Council:

In docile response to the Holy Spirit, the hierarchy accepts rules of religious life which are presented for its approval by outstanding

men and women, improves them further, and then officially authorizes them.<sup>23</sup>

Because an ecclesiastically-approved Rule has origin in God and its effect is to lead to God, Cormier sees a Rule as “the great and infallible means of salvation.”

A careful thinker and a delicate soul, Cormier was sensitive to the value of little things. This led him to study carefully the tradition of the past. In the “Preface” to Part Two, Cormier informs his readers that many of the minute regulations he proposes are not his own.

Although these instructions, whether dealing with the interior or the exterior, contain almost no Latin citations, they are nonetheless often taken from Sacred Scripture and the holy Doctors, especially St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, Blessed Humbert, and St. Vincent Ferrer.

He says this because he wants to avoid that fault which can beset anyone who grasps the importance of law: the sin of arbitrariness. Rather than relying solely on his own good judgment, Cormier consistently turns to solid tradition to form his thought regarding what will truly advance a person along the road of perfection.

While salvation is his main concern, sin is not a subject that Cormier shies away from. On the one hand, he readily recognizes that the Dominican Constitutions do not bind under mortal or venial sin. This was St. Dominic’s intention from the beginning.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, he follows the teaching of St. Thomas (see ST II-II, q. 186, a. 9, ad 1), noting:

Even though the Constitutions by themselves do not bind under penalty of sin, nonetheless, one can sin venially or mortally when he transgresses them by contempt, negligence, or a disordered passion (as by sensuality, greed, sloth, pride, lack of self-control, vanity, human respect, curiosity, anger, vengeance). As for the transgression inspired by contempt, it is always a mortal sin. Moreover, the frequency of all transgressions is a preparation for contempt.

Along with his emphasis on the need for strict observance of the Rule, Cormier often references the importance of the superior’s

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<sup>23</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, no. 45.

<sup>24</sup> “The Dominicans are the first religious institute to state explicitly that breaking their laws does not constitute a sin. . . . When Franciscan confraternities are warned that it is at least a venial sin to break their rules, the Dominicans are quite explicit that not even venial sin is involved.” Simon Tugwell, Introduction in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist Press, 1982), 22.

ability to dispense a friar from points of the Rule for legitimate reasons. This unique Dominican approach to dispensations was demonstrated in the 1220 Chapter. There the friars determined that dispensations could be given not only as “a concession to human weakness” but, more importantly, “as a concession to the job that their members have to do,” specifically study and preaching.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Cormier stresses that sometimes one has the obligation to ask for a dispensation: “diminishing or exaggerating nothing, requesting humbly and frankly the [thing] he needs.”

While nineteenth-century French spirituality tended to over-emphasize a servile fear of God and His justice, the general trend of habitual sin tends toward laxity, overly emphasizing confidence in our own goodness, presuming on God’s mercy. In a remarkable way, Cormier distances himself from both legalism and anti-nomianism while insisting on the importance of keeping the law exactly. His demanding position is amply supported by divine revelation and the saints. Among such holy witnesses we can include Bl. John Henry Newman, who likely would have been pleased with the Dominican revival whose flourishing he never witnessed. Newman demonstrated that “plainly we are taught in Scripture that perfect obedience is the standard of Gospel holiness.”<sup>26</sup> Christ indeed came to save us: “not that He relaxes the strict rule of keeping His commandments, but that He gives us spiritual aids, which we have not except through Him, to enable us to keep them.” Therefore, “instead of making obedience less strict, He has enabled us to obey God more strictly.” As St. Augustine insisted: “The law was given that grace might be sought, and grace was given that the law might be kept.”<sup>27</sup> Grace and virtue, then, are not the *abolition* of the law, but rather its *fulfillment*.

## Conclusion

In his tireless work in the Order of Preachers as novice master, Prior, Provincial, and eventually as the seventy-sixth Master of the Order of Preachers, Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier authored many works of spiritual and historical value. Much of Cormier’s wisdom was encapsulated in his work, *Instructions for Novices*, a thorough exposition of spiritual instruction, the result of his extensive prayer, study, and experience. It is a unique and valuable work in many ways, for it was

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<sup>25</sup> Tugwell, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> “Obedience to God the Way to Faith in Christ,” in *Parochial and Plain Sermons* VIII.14.

<sup>27</sup> Augustine, *De Spiritu et littera*, 19, 34.

written by a man who has been recognized by the Church and his own Order as a reliable guide in the path of sanctity. Much has changed in the world, in the Church, and the in the Order of Friars Preachers since the book's original publication in 1880, but Cormier's fundamental principles and his keen prudential sense have lost none of their power. Cormier gives authoritative answers to questions regarding what constitutes authentic Dominican spirituality and practice. Because Cormier wrote in view of the restoration of the Order after it had nearly dissolved, philosopher Alfred Wilder maintains that Cormier's wisdom has especial significance for the Order of Preachers today. It paves the way for a "reform in the Order that needs no elaborate defense" once one reflects on "the documents of Vatican II and perhaps even more . . . the experience of Dominicans living today."<sup>28</sup> Cormier points the way toward

a reform which rediscovers the content, the richness of Dominican life as it has for centuries been proposed in Dominican traditions of revitalization and legislation . . . a reform which encourages Dominicans to do things together in their conventual life and in their work, not a reform which, under an arbitrary pretense of adaptation to "changed conditions" in the "modern world", merely eliminates things from Dominican life.

This is because, throughout his work, Cormier maintains a steady focus on the one thing necessary: God Himself. Because a focus on God should be present in every walk of life, Cormier's work helps address what is often characterized as a post-Vatican II concern, namely, what religious can teach the world about answering the universal call to holiness. "For God, nothing is enough," Cormier tells us. God has given Himself entirely to us; we, in turn, ought to give ourselves entirely to Him.

February 2, 2013, Feast of the Presentation

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<sup>28</sup> Wilder, "Master of the Order Hyacinthe Cormier on Master of the Order Vincent Jandel," 356.

# **THE INSTRUCTION OF NOVICES**

## **PART ONE**

### **VOCATION**

## PREFACE

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the religious life to represent and spread among men the perfection of Christian life, the genuine spirit of the Gospel. He upholds it by His grace so that over the centuries it might remain faithful in fulfilling its destiny. But the cooperation of religious with the intentions of the Savior is not found everywhere and in all ages — although He has the right to expect it. Laxity easily slips into communities, slowly weakens them, and sometimes unexpectedly brings about defects which holy Religion long deploras. The damage comes especially from two causes: one enters religious life without a true vocation, or, after having received that gift from God, one does not know how to preserve it faithfully. This is why the Holy See has mandated that those persons designated to examine postulants strive to penetrate their minds well, and inquire of them why they wish to embrace the religious state, what purpose they have in entering it, whether they are motivated by an attraction to a life more perfect and more freely consecrated to God alone, or whether it is by frivolity, by some human motivation, by some disordered movement of their own mind. *Debent inquirere quo spiritu qua mente et voluntate id regularis vitæ genus elegerint; quem sibi finem proposuerint; num zelo perfectioris vitæ, et ut Deo liberius famulari possint; vel humano affectu, aut inordinatio animi motu ducantur* (Clem. VIII).

Accordingly, it is very appropriate to dedicate the first part of the *Instruction of Novices* to the question of vocation. The considerations therein contained may be useful to postulants, to novices, and to the superiors themselves. Indeed, those with more experience always see results which exceed their expectations. We can understand those ancients who, every time a decision was needed about vocation, called for public prayers, to insure that a decision of such importance and of such difficulty be arrived at only after earnest prayers for divine light. In this work we are far from claiming that we have foreseen or resolved all individual cases, but we did attempt to recall the general principles which can offer insights.

If, after having reflected and prayed, superiors notice that some vocations respond poorly to their hopes, they should not on that account become discouraged. They should consider that, before God, it is sufficient for us to have used in good conscience the lights at our disposal and that the saints themselves have formed some subjects who subsequently turned out badly, while some others who seemed unsuited for formation ended up becoming good religious. We must, therefore, take care, observe, pray, and place the rest in the hands of God with humility and confidence.

# CHAPTER I

## On Vocation

Considerations which can help in identifying and forming a vocation

In this first part we will consider vocation in its roots and follow it up to the moment when it is definitely completed, namely, at profession. Accordingly, we will treat in four articles:

- 1° the need for a genuine vocation to aspire to the religious life;
- 2° entrance into religious life;
- 3° the manner of responding well to vocation during the novitiate;
- 4° the excellence of profession.

### ARTICLE I

#### **Need for a genuine vocation to aspire to the religious state**

In the three sections of this article, we will study the need for vocation; then, we will examine the signs of a false vocation, and discuss the signs of a genuine vocation.

#### § I – *The need for a vocation*

To embrace any state, one needs a calling from Heaven. Since God is the sovereign master of creatures, it is up to Him to assign them to the different states which He established in the world and in the Church. He is that father of a family of which the Gospel speaks, who employed a large number of workers for his estate, but who reserved it for himself, according to his good pleasure, to choose them and to divide among them the various tasks of his estate. “I know, O Lord,” said Jeremiah, “that the way of man is not his: neither is it in a man to walk, and to direct his steps.” *Scio, Domine, quia non est hominis via ejus, nec viri est ut ambulet et dirigat gressus suos* (Jer. 10:23).

Salvation depends in large part on the state one embraces. It belongs only to God to predestine us to glory. But on taking up the state to which He calls us, we have a certain kind of assurance that we

will be saved, provided we remain faithful in fulfilling the duties of that state. Indeed, by assigning us to the kind of life in which He wishes our sanctification, God prepares for us the graces needed to perform there the actions appropriate to make us saints. It is by fidelity in using effectively the graces attached to our state, and in fulfilling the duties connected to it, that we insure our predestination. If, on the contrary, we enter a state without a calling we assume a great risk concerning our salvation, because to be saved we must do the will of God who is the measure of our holiness, as St. Paul said: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." *Hæc est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra* (I Thess. 4:3). Now the one who embraces a state without following there the call of the Divine Master, is not fulfilling the will of God. He is, in fact, in a continual estrangement from that will which had destined him for another state. Thus, he is unable to perform acts of piety which are pleasing to his Lord; or, if he does perform some, it is not with the grace required. For God does not give His special graces except for us to fulfill the duties to which He has called us. Under those circumstances, these actions do not work for our salvation, as they could have, because they fall outside the scope of the divine will.

A calling is even more necessary to enter the religious state. Because this state is so sublime, in order for us to maintain ourselves in it, we need very special helps to fulfill all the consequent obligations. Those who have embraced the religious state are obliged to tend continually toward perfection, to carry daily their cross, to discipline themselves incessantly by the practice of mortification, humility, poverty, chastity, obedience, patience, charity, silence, and the other regular observances. To live up to these various duties, one needs much help to supply for the weakness of nature, to enlighten the mind on the advantages of religious virtue, and to inspire in the will a sincere desire to practice them for a lifetime. This grace, to be sure, is a consequence of the call from God Who offers strength, understanding, tendencies, and consolations proportionate to the state to which He calls us.

Religious, like clerics, are a special group that God chose for Himself, to serve Him in a more perfect manner than the other people of the world. They praise Him, adore Him, pray to Him, and act, in some way, as mediators between Him and mankind. This is why, following the law of nature, Patriarchs and Prophets, destined to offer worship pleasing to God, also received from Him a special vocation. So too the Levites, following the written law, busied themselves in serving God in the Temple only after having been especially chosen, according to His will. Likewise, religious and priests — successors of the Levites and Prophets — destined to offer God much more perfect worship, have need of a genuine calling to embrace their state and to



live up to all the obligations attached to it. "The Lord your God has chosen you, so that you should be unto Him a peculiar people of all the peoples who are on the earth." *Te elegit Dominus Deus tuus, ut sis ei populus peculiaris de cunctis populis qui sunt super terram* (Deut. 7:6; Lev. 1 & 17; Num. 17).

Now what is most deplorable for religious and clerics engaged on the path which they follow without a calling from God is that their going astray is simultaneously harmful to themselves and equally prejudicial to people in the world because of the bad example it gives them. Just as lay persons are inclined to embrace virtue, to practice piety, to control wisely their behavior, and to carry out all their obligations when they notice good priests and saintly religious marching ahead of them, so too they tend to stagnate in their vices, to neglect their salvation, and to disdain holy things when they perceive priests and religious living in disorder. Their disastrous examples give rise especially to indifference and to discouragement which spread among Christian people and bring so many tears to the eyes of God's Church.

## § II – *The signs of a false vocation*

Consequently, those who wish to enter the cloister, and those who are already serving their year of probation, must, above all, ponder if their vocation comes from God, because the desires one has to become a religious are not always the sign of a valid calling. We should not believe every spirit nor think that all aspirations which appear good come from Heaven. They need to be tested, studied, as St. John noted, to see if they really come from above: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God." *Nolite omni spiritui credere, sed probate spiritus si ex Deo sint* (I John 4:1).

To ascertain whether the vocation to the religious state is genuine or not one must first consider the reasons which lead to embracing it. If these are purely human reasons, mean and worldly opinions, the calling is not really good. But if the reasons are loftier, this is already a presumption that one is really called to that state, because it is from God that all good gifts come. "Every perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights." *Omne donum perfectum descendens a Patre luminum* (James 1:17).

Many human motives can produce a desire to become a religious without containing any sign of a vocation.

1° It is a human and disordered motive to enter the religious life in order to uphold a project of one's parents. Indeed, it sometimes happens that parents themselves dare to decide on the vocation of their children, without consulting them and without consulting God. Some, even from their childhood, are destined to be the support of the

family, others to be its honor by becoming religious. Such parents are sacrilegious insofar as they usurp the rights of God, the sole arbiter of vocations. They are truly cruel who condemn their children to carry here below an unsupportable yoke, to live in religious life as if in a perpetual prison; moreover, on making them transgressors of their promises, or on throwing them into despair because of the weight of the burden, such evil parents risk condemning their children for eternity.

2° It is a poor sign of a vocation for someone to become a religious because of some distress brought about by his parents or by the world. It is often the case that we have some annoyances while in the world, and that, instead of bearing them with patience, we allow ourselves to fall into spite and into a kind of dislike. While this emotion is causing us pain, we come up with the idea of leaving the world and of retiring to the cloister; we can brook no delay and we act hastily on our intention. This vocation does not arise from a movement of grace, nor from a genuine detachment from the world and its riches, its pleasures and its honors, but from a nature that is passionate, impressionable, impatient, and proud. Those who use this reason to become religious remain unhappy their entire life. They receive no consolation from God because He has not called them to that state. The first grief that makes them dislike the world is followed by another, that of having abandoned it. Nonetheless, by reason of human respect, they do not dare return to it. Consequently, they live in distress, bitterness, worry, and discouragement the rest of their lives. Instead of busying themselves in religious life to serve the Lord more perfectly, and to do penance for the sins they had committed while in the world, they lead a very natural life. Their every thought is to avoid or soften the austerities of the Rule; they are horrified of all penitential activities, and they fall into sins that are greater and more scandalous than those they had committed before embracing recklessly a state of perfection.

3° It is a poor sign of a vocation to enter religious life so as to insure an earthly future, and to find there all the comforts of life. There are some persons who cannot find in the world an institution appropriate to their condition and to their refinement. They hope to find the one and the other more easily in religious life and so seek admission there. Whoever acts on this motive seeks only to satisfy his nature. Instead of loving and practicing poverty, he thinks of obtaining not only necessary things but also superfluous ones. When he imagines that he lacks certain things, he falls into turmoil, into agitation, and often complaining; and he obtains those things sometimes at the expense of his conscience. In his behavior is found no sincere desire to renounce himself as well as the goods of the world. He is thus in contradiction to his state: he does not have its spirit because he did not receive a calling to it.

4° Another sign of a false vocation is to embrace the religious state to enjoy there a calm and peaceful existence. In the world, bitterness and trouble are often found because of the obstacles which take over life. There are persons who are disgusted with this bustling and stormy life; driven more by a spirit of laziness concerning the worries of the world more than by a desire to work more effectively at their salvation and to arrive at a supernatural peace by victory over their faults, they think rather of retreating to the cloister, there to enjoy effortless peace. But those who abandon the world for this very human motive will find their hopes dashed, because in the cloister there is genuine tranquility only if one is disposed to suffer. All that is practiced in religious life, such as vigils, abstinence, poverty, chastity, silence, humility, is contrary to nature. Religious life is but a permanent cross, a voluntary death, a continuous martyrdom. Now, there can be no cross without a burden, no death without agony, no martyrdom without suffering. It would be an error to believe that the difficulties of religious life disappear when one gets used to them. Quite the contrary, the longer the cross, death, and martyrdom last, all the more does nature often feel the pain. Only the consolations and the joys which God pours into the soul can soften whatever pain the observances inflict on nature. Moreover, God provides these consolations only to those who choose to suffer for love of Him, and to meet the requirements of His justice by penance. If someone pines after a soft and pleasant life, one exempt from self-discipline, in religious life he will drag the heaviest chain, and will find in the cloister more bitterness than in the world. In a word, whoever seeks gratification in religious life will find only suffering; and whoever seeks suffering there will find fulfillment.

5° Finally, it is to lack a vocation to the religious life to enter it recklessly. Many young persons, with no evil intent, but without sufficient reflection, and moved by no serious consideration, hastily enroll in the religious life. Stray movements of momentary piety, the cordial reception given them in a convent, the companionship of a friend who is already there, the charm felt at the first glimpse of the cloistered life — all these are enough to push them with much enthusiasm to the religious life. But, after this natural fire and this impression of piety fade away, leaving behind only cold reason and a nature antagonistic to self-discipline, they regret bitterly the hasty step they took, become disgusted with religious life, and leave the cloister to return to the world. Or else, if they persevere, it is only out of fear, by habit, or by human respect. If they have an energetic nature, they risk falling into sacrilege, despair, and unrepentance. If their nature is soft and tolerant, they live in continual indulgence, and in perpetual transgression of their Rule and their Constitutions.

Nonetheless, we call attention to the fact that human motives can be mixed in with vocation without the latter being radically flawed. But these earthly motives ought not be the principal ones, nor should they last forever. While using them as temporary helps, one must work little by little to rectify, to purify, and to improve them by more holy motives. God is so good and so powerful that He sometimes uses our emotions, and even our sins, to make of them occasions for our conversion and for our being called to religious life. Thus it is that a sharp sorrow, the pleas of parents, the desire to find a peaceful life, an impulsive youthful decision, etc., sometimes drive us to leave the world. Subsequently, God, touching the heart by His grace, moves us to disdain those ignoble perceptions — like a step-ladder which at first we used — now to lift ourselves up to spiritual thoughts, with the result that we live in a holy way the rest of our life.

### § III – *The signs of a genuine vocation*

There are many praiseworthy reasons to embrace the religious life and are signs of a genuine vocation.

1° It is a holy reason to enter religious life, there to insure one's salvation, which is greatly at risk in the world. To save one's soul is the only task we have here below. We must work at it eagerly because of its importance, with trembling, because of the danger of not being successful. Now, in the world, there is a great risk that we will not carry this important task to a successful conclusion. Even though we can absolutely save our soul everywhere, there are occasions, in practice, where this is more difficult to achieve. This is the case in the world, whether because of the continual occasions we have to offend God, whether because of the obstacles we meet in trying to live up to the words of Jesus Christ, whether because of the bad examples which lead to sin and of the harmful customs in vogue, contrary to the spirit of Our Lord. To exchange the world for the cloister, for fear of losing one's soul, to flee from the occasions to offend God, to encounter good example and holy customs which favor the service of the Lord, is indeed a praiseworthy, holy, fitting motive for a truly wise and enlightened individual.

2° The desire to embrace the religious state to make better atonement for one's sins and to practice more surely the counsels of the Gospel is indeed an appropriate reason to enter the religious life. All of us are sinners. "In pretending that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Since we are sinners, we have to do penance. Unless we produce *good fruits of penance* (Mt. 3:8), proportionate to the malice of our sins, we shall all equally perish. Every one of us is also held to follow all the counsels of the Gospel,

such as to carry our cross daily, to maintain poverty of spirit, humility, etc. Now, as we have already observed, it is difficult to do penance in the world and there to live up to the clear words of the Gospel, because everything tends to pleasure and vanity. Accordingly, it is a good idea to wish to leave the world so as to embrace freely in the religious life that narrow road which leads to Heaven.

3° Yet there is an even better reason to embrace the religious life: in order to devote ourselves to the service of God more perfectly than in the world. True, in whatever state, one is bound to serve God; ordinary Christians can achieve this simply by keeping the commandments: *Serva mandata* (*Prov. 7:2*). Nonetheless, there is a life in which one serves God more perfectly than in the world: the religious life — where, besides observing the commandments, one follows the counsels of the Gospel. One is not satisfied with giving himself to God in an ordinary manner, but, as St. Bernard stated, he adheres to God perfectly by love. “It is for others to serve God; it is for you to cling to Him.” *Ceterorum est servire Deo, vestrum est adherere*. When, therefore, as is often the case, a religious vocation begins with fear of losing oneself in the world and with a desire to do penance for one’s sins, it should be raised to a higher level so as eventually to achieve the motive which gives it its true excellence, namely, to serve God with love and to offer oneself daily as a voluntary offering for His glory.

In sum, it is a praiseworthy and holy motive to become a religious so as to work more effectively for the salvation of souls. It is often with that goal in mind that clerics, already very exemplary, leave the world to enter a monastery; they aspire to exercise better the fervor which they feel for the glory of God and the salvation of neighbor. That, in effect, is the principal goal of our Order, and why popes have called it the Order of Preachers. While remaining in the world we can also work actively for the salvation of souls, draw sinners away from their vices, and lead the just into the way of perfection; and yet, we succeed much better when we enter a state which is intended for that goal by Providence. This state brings appropriate strength to carry out apostolic duties, and special helps to avoid the dangers surrounding them. Indeed, God has reserved to each state fitting graces for their specific functions and lavishes His graces abundantly on those who are faithful to the duties of their vocation. This is why we have among the saints of our Order such a large number of apostles, preachers, and zealous missionaries, who converted to God an uncounted number of sinners, heretics, Jews, and infidels. They had become even more powerful in activities and words insofar as they followed all the virtues of the interior life and all the exercises of life in the cloister.

## ARTICLE II

### Entrance into religious life

In this article, we will explain the qualities which superiors must look for in candidates for vestition and profession, and the manner in which the novices should examine themselves the better to prepare to pronounce the vows.

§ I – *The qualities necessary in those who are to be received among us for taking the habit and making profession, with two letters to a postulant, to enlighten him about his vocation.*

To have a genuine vocation to the Order of St. Dominic, other than a sound reason, certain additional dispositions of mind, of body, of behavior, and of nature are needed. Since our Order was specifically established for preaching and the salvation of souls, an individual who would not be suitable might better address himself to another religious institute uniquely vowed to penance, to poverty, to manual labor, to solitude, etc. For our Order, the need is for fervor accompanied by knowledge, prudence, and other fitting virtues to work effectively for the salvation of souls.

1<sup>o</sup> Regarding nature, we are strongly recommended not to receive those unable to study, nor those who, having some defects of character, offer little hope of correcting themselves. *Summo Perecavendum est ne recipiantur ignari aut inepti ad litteras, vel qui habent quædam vitia quasi insuperabilia et naturalia, sicut est innata iracundia, ebrietas, debilitas nature ex vitiosa consuetudine, et dispositio ad furorem et hujusmodi, de quorum correctione vix spes potest haberi.* Accordingly they must be excluded: (1) Those who have a natural, brusque, and ferocious anger. They easily become impatient with everything, they are always worried, follow only their whims and what pleases them, with the result that no one can converse peacefully with them and they disturb the community, for this harsh nature increases in religious life because of the trials and loneliness found there. (2) They must also be excluded who have a flighty and thoughtless nature, for they commit all kinds of imprudent, immodest, and indiscrete actions, and do not pay attention to what they are saying or doing. In everything they follow only the bursts of their disordered imagination and do not apply them-

selves at what is reliable, such as piety and knowledge. Their habitual tendency is toward indulgence and bantering which is entirely contrary to the regular life, which demands a spirit of thoughtfulness and of compunction. For all that, one must be able to distinguish between the levity which, inherent in early youth, disappears with age, and that flighty temperament which increases along with the individual's growth. (3) One should receive with difficulty those who have a nature which is extremely melancholic, sad, and scrupulous, for their mind is given over to dark thoughts which disturb and burden them; their behavior follows upon that unfortunate, sad, and bizarre mood that overcomes them; they become suspicious and victims of their imagination, believing that everyone is out to get them. Eventually, they become unbearable to themselves and to others. Melancholy, sadness, and scruples are likely to increase in religious life because of its solitary nature as well as the abstinence and the vigils in force; sometimes, they can degenerate into serious illnesses of body and mind. A bit of melancholia, however, is not an obstacle to virtue nor to study, if submissiveness to superiors and application to works of charity serve as correction and remedy. (4) They should not be admitted who have a nature that is disobedient, haughty, and proud. Instead of submitting with obedience, they rather object to everything that is done; instead of practicing humility, they seek only honors; far from profiting from counsels and corrections, they become angry and grumble at them. Instead of loving and respecting their brothers, they love and esteem only themselves. (5) Neither should those who are extremely lazy, soft, and sensual, be received. They make no effort to practice virtue; they think only of drinking, eating, sleeping, taking walks, talking, and wasting time. All their actions are performed very carelessly, which opens them to continuing transgression of the Constitutions, and perhaps of their vows, especially the most delicate one. God would desire that they not become for others an opportunity for downfall!

Blessed is the man who received at birth a kind soul, gently leaning to the good. Such was that of Solomon. "I had received a good soul." *Sortitus sum animam bonam* (*Wis.* 8:19). Natural goodness is a great gift which God gives to certain of his children; St. Augustine rightly calls this: *Divinum naturaliter munus*, "a gift naturally divine." (*De Dono Pers.* 14, 35). Sometimes it is the effect of a particular grace which Heaven bestows on these children; at other times, it serves to increase that grace because it acts harmoniously over them, finding almost no obstacles to its divine activity. Those who benefit from this auspicious nature and who cooperate with the kindness of the Lord easily become lovable by God and men, as was Moses. We must note, however, that Providence sometimes leaves the elect with a difficult nature, one with evil inclinations, either to humble them more in the

midst of the virtues which they practice, or to oblige them to resort more often to Providence, continually praying for the grace whose need they realize all the more, given the permanence of those wayward inclinations.

2<sup>o</sup> It is important that those whom we are to receive in our Order give evidence of a mind that is sound and discriminating, and who have some aptitude for intellectual work. Indeed, the purpose of our Order, as we have just noted, calls for each one of us to apply himself according to his talent for the salvation of souls by preaching, by teaching, by hearing confessions; it is clear that we cannot carry out those duties without knowledge. Of little use in the holy ministry, those who have no aptitude for studies are often harmful to the interior life of a convent. They show themselves as more intemperate, they waste time, not knowing what they should be doing; instead of remaining in their cell, to pray or study, they leave it continually to run here and there and to distract their brothers from silence and from prayer. This is not to say that everyone has to have an exceptional and very sharp mind; we should be pleased to find a mind sufficiently open to acquire the knowledge needed for the common functions of our Order. As for those with a flighty mind, who lack dependability and good sense, even though they remain open-minded, sharp, and astute as regards studies, we must be wary of them because the more seductive brilliance they have, the more their lack of judgment will render them capable of making major errors because of their haste and lack of insight. In like manner, one must respond against those with a deceitful and lying personality, because one can never trust them, and because they are capable of sowing division without knowing it. For those whose mind is troubled by some weakness, even though they are rather suited for instruction, prudence opts for their rejection because study and the austerities of the Rule would finish off weakening them and would perhaps go to their heads.

3<sup>o</sup> The subjects whom we wish to receive must have sufficient health to follow the common life. Those who have such a delicate and unsteady health that, according to expectations, they will be habitually unable to follow the life of the Order, such as abstinence, attendance at choir, wearing woolen clothing, study, and other general obligations, are not at all for us since, after their profession, it would be necessary to dispense them continually from the Constitutions. Those who are struck by a dangerous illness, drawn out and habitual, or by some other calamity, which would subsequently become contagious, must also be turned aside; they would simply become a burden, they could not acquit themselves of the duties of their state, and would open themselves up to temptations beyond their abilities.

4<sup>o</sup> Those who request entrance in the religious life must also exhibit good behavior so that they tend to virtue and have some dis-



position for piety. If someone has such a strong tendency toward vice with little hope of his correcting himself, it would not be prudent to admit him, given the absence of guarantees concerning the observation of the vows. It would be better for him to live an honest life in the world than to enter religious life where he would offend God more because of his defective inclinations and the loftiness of his new obligations.

Nonetheless, to become a religious, it is not necessary to have preserved baptismal innocence. Undoubtedly this is to be desired, since God bestows many graces on those who leave the world with an untarnished heart. The latter enter religious life as if into a blessed haven where they are protected from the troubles of the world, before experiencing any shipwreck, as in a garden well enclosed wherein they know nothing about the serpent and his bite. There, seeing their soul as a blossoming lily, God showers them with all his blessings. And yet, we should remember that one does not become a religious because he is a saint, rather, because he wishes to become one. And so, it is sufficient that on embracing this state, one be well disposed to wash away the sins of his youth, to mourn for them, to be on guard against renewed failures, to battle against tendencies to evil, to regulate one's behavior, and to live a more perfect life from then on.

5°. As regards birth, decrees of the Holy See have set up certain very wise rules which must be followed. A candidate whose parents are so poor that they could not do without his help to survive is not to be accepted. Likewise he should be rejected who does not come from an honorable family, lest the dishonor attached to the names of the parents should fall on the Order and harm its ministry. If, however, among those who have some defect on that score, one is found who stands out by nature, intelligence, and piety, he could be received, as an exception, because of significant hopes he would give for the future, preferably by employing his good qualities in countries where his ministry would present no problems. — It is also forbidden for us to receive anyone who has worn the religious habit in another Order, except by dispensation from Rome. Experience has shown that generally such subjects are not successful, even though it sometimes takes years to have proof of this.

It is on these good or undesirable qualities that one must decide to accept or reject those who present themselves for the novitiate or for profession. Superiors in religious life cannot act in the Order as if it were their property or their personal work; they are there simply as commissioners for the Church. Accordingly, they would be equally guilty before God if they received those who are not qualified for religious life, or if they rejected those who were appropriate. In the latter situation, the Order would be harmed by being deprived of an apt subject who would have endured the regular life and contributed to the

glory of God; moreover, the individual would have been deprived without reason of some graces of perfection, perhaps even of salvation, that he would have received in the religious state. In the first case, the Order would suffer great harm by being burdened with subjects damaging to piety and the regular life. Furthermore, those who would be accepted would also suffer great harm since they would be exposed to the danger of losing their soul in a state too elevated for them, consequently becoming a cause of continual deception. In vain would it be said that such subjects are needed to increase numbers and that without them, religious life would die out. What is needed is not that this or that body remain standing but that he be worthy of occupying a place among the works of God by being inflamed with the spirit which Our Lord gave him. If God wishes that this Institute continue to glorify Him, He will know, after having chastened it, how to send it genuine vocations, especially when those who are already enrolled will strive to merit this grace through prayer and sanctification. Other than these, the efforts we would make to increase the number of subjects would multiply in the Order elements of ruin rather than principles of restoration.

Useless also would be the objection that if those who had already been admitted to the novitiate were dismissed, their parents, persons of quality, would raise a great fuss, would no longer support the Order by their influence, nor provide the temporal help hoped for. By supporting religious life, the rich and the prestigious are simply fulfilling their duty; they use their elevated position wisely, and attract divine mercy on their houses. A religious institution should not scorn their enthusiasm, on condition that the supernatural principles on which it is founded are not disturbed. Now among the first of those supernatural principles is the need for a vocation. On the supposition that these influential persons are so irrational as to be offended in having a relative rejected for lack of a vocation, we ought to try, through reason and kindness, to calm them down. Failing that, we are left with bearing peacefully their anger and its consequences. Besides, God has promised not to abandon those who fear only Him and serve Him faithfully. He will always provide observant religious, if not with significant riches, at least with what is needed to live in poverty, to work for His glory, to do penance, and to practice freely the Christian and religious virtues. It would be to no avail to say that those who do not at the moment appear apt could perhaps later become so, as has happened with a few. In His omnipotence, God can do as He pleases, but He desires that we judge according to the rules of ordinary prudence. Prudence, in fact, does not entertain a serious probability that such individuals who today are not apt for religious life will become so in future. To someone who cites an example of the change from bad to

good, we can counter with ten who went from bad to worse, to the distress of superiors and everyone else.

From all the above has come the venerable and wise maxim, that *to establish and increase the religious life, one must be particular in accepting novices, even-tempered in sending back those with a questionable vocation, and extremely meticulous in nurturing those whom you decide you ought to keep.*

## TWO LETTERS

### **To a postulant on the calling to the religious state in general, and on the particular characteristics of the Order of Friars Preachers.**

When a candidate approaches to request information concerning our Constitutions so as to learn about the regular observances of our Order, we can have him read these two letters, which summarize what we have said about vocation. We can also supply him with extracts, if he is at a distance, provided that this be done thoughtfully and prudently.

## FIRST LETTER

### *The signs of a vocation to the religious state*

Sir. . .

In your letter you call my attention to the fact for some time you have had the desire to become a religious, and that you feel a preference to the Order of St. Dominic. Accordingly, you have asked me: 1° How can I learn if this desire comes from God? 2° What are the regular practices observed in the Order of Friars Preachers? Here, I will limit myself to answering your first question.

Surely you are not unaware that it is necessary to have a genuine calling to embrace any profession: marriage or the military state; the bar or business; the clerical state or the religious state, etc. Our eternity depends in large measure on awareness of our vocation and vigilance in following it. Accordingly, it is very important not to make an error on this matter. If God were to call you to the religious state, my dear child, it would be for you a significant blessing, because this state is very holy and favorable for salvation, the only reason for which you were placed in this world. But one must have a genuine vocation and embrace an Order which is completely traditional, namely, an Order wherein are observed exactly the vows, the Rule, and the

Constitutions. Not every desire one has to become a cleric — religious or diocesan — comes from God and is marked as a genuine vocation to those states, especially when it is fleeting and arises from some purely human motive. Before anything else, then, it is important to test and study your inspirations to learn if they really come from above.

In order to perform this examination, I offer you some advice. 1° With all fervor, pray to God to make His will known on the state that you ought to embrace, and to give you the strength to apply yourself to it as soon as you have learned it. He does not refuse what we ask with fervent prayer, accompanied by humility, trust, and perseverance. You can also consult a well-informed and prudent person, but especially one who is disinterested, namely who seeks only the divine will concerning you, without introducing his own opinions, his tendencies, and his aspirations to the designs of Providence. To God belongs the right to call; to the director the care of discerning the divine voice; to man, when it is verified, the obligation of responding to it generously. You ought to consider attentively before God whether your desire to embrace the religious state arises from holy and supernatural motives, as, for example, the better to insure your salvation, to follow more freely the counsels of Jesus Christ, to do better penance for your past sins, to preserve yourself from occasions of relapse, to persevere until death, to watch over your senses more easily, to devote yourself to prayer with greater fervor, to practice certain special virtues whose beauty delights you, for example, chastity, obedience, fraternal charity; more especially to give witness to Our Lord of a greater love in your embracing irrevocably a state of perfection which pleases Him, and working for the sanctification of souls for whom He deigned to die.

2° If, after you have thus prayed God for enlightenment, you find yourself more and more strongly moved to embrace the religious state for some of these appropriate reasons, do not wait for Heaven to dispatch an angel to reveal to you His will. Find a superior of a community, the Master of Novices, or someone else, and make known to them your intention. They will evaluate not only if you are motivated, in general, by worthy motives, but also if you have the particular dispositions needed to succeed in the Order which pleases you. In fact, an individual could be apt to embrace a community devoted exclusively to a solitary life, and be not at all suited for an apostolic Order, either because he does not have the requisite qualities for ministering to souls, or because certain of his failings and leanings — which, in total solitude, would correct themselves, or, at least, have no great consequences — in an apostolic ministry would be for him a cause of ruin, and for souls an occasion of scandal. This is why, in the various visits you will have with these Fathers, you will so do with much simplicity

and openness; you will allow them to question you about your entire life, to determine your mind and your aptitudes, so as to allow them to give you a more prompt and sure answer. They are obliged to inquire: (1) if you have a natural tendency to be mild, happy, relaxed, and docile; (2) if you are gifted with a mind open to study the sciences and letters, reliable, and discerning; (3) if your health is strong enough to live up to community life; (4) if you have positive inclinations to virtue and a certain facility for matters of piety.

After you have made yourself known and have pondered the points set out for you, if your attraction remains, and if the Fathers consent to accept you into their community, your desire for a more perfect life indeed comes from God. You have there sufficient signs of a vocation; there is every reason to conclude that you will find in the religious state great advantages during your life, at the hour of death, and after death. St. Bernard has encapsulated all these advantages in these words: "He who embraces the religious life lives more purely and in a more holy manner than in the world; he falls more rarely into sin; he rises more promptly from his falls; he walks with greater attentiveness on the road to salvation; he receives more Heavenly graces and consolations; he rests in God with greater security; he dies with greater trust; in Purgatory, he is purged more quickly of his faults, and he receives a more abundant reward in Heaven." *Nonne haec est religio vera et immaculata, in qua homo vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit velocius, incedit cautius, irroratur frequentius, quiescit securius, moritur fiducius, purgatur citius, praemiatur copiosius* (*Hom. in illud Matth. XIII, "Simile est"*).

These are the counsels I felt I needed to give you first of all concerning the religious state in general. I pray that the Lord may enlighten you concerning His most holy will. If He allows you to hear His voice, do not block the ears of your heart, but follow the insights and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, in spite of the reluctance of nature. Tell yourself very seriously: What would I wish I had done at the hour of my death; on the day of my judgment? Right now, do what you need to so that later you will have accomplished it. It is a question of a happy or an unhappy eternity; at any moment, you could die and appear before the Supreme Judge! Do not delay too long, and do not be stingy concerning your soul.

I am, etc. . .

**SECOND LETTER***Concerning the particular observances of the Order of St. Dominic*

Sir,

I have already answered your requests in part by offering you some general considerations concerning the signs of a genuine vocation to the religious state. Now I respond to the desire you have for a more detailed knowledge of what is observed in the Order of St. Dominic. I will be pleased to present the following particulars which could interest and enlighten you. They encapsulate what concerns the institution of this Order, its essential goal, and the practices or means which are ordered to that end.

The Order of St. Dominic (which Popes have called “the Order of Friars Preachers” and the people “the Order of Dominicans,” because of the holy Patriarch its founder) was established by the Church to work for the salvation of souls. The religious who compose it do not leave the world only in order to occupy themselves with their own salvation and perfection, but also to occupy themselves, under the impulse of charity, with the salvation and perfection of their neighbor. This is a very noble goal, because it was to save souls that God came down from Heaven, became man, endured great toil during His life, shed His blood on the cross, and sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel throughout the world. This is why the Order was regarded by the Church as fully apostolic, because its religious members, in imitation of the first Apostles, are cooperators with Jesus Christ and dispensers of His mysteries.

Among the numberless means available to the ministers of Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls, the sons of St. Dominic are bound to those that were traced by the examples and the precepts of their holy founder. Accordingly, throughout their lives, they apply themselves to penance, to prayer, and to study. (1) By study, they seek to make themselves capable of knowing God more clearly, so that, knowing Him better, they will love Him more ardently and serve Him more generously. This knowledge prepares them to instruct their neighbors by preaching, hearing confessions, teaching theology and philosophy, giving spiritual conferences, counsels, and decisions of conscience, etc. (2) Prayer is a powerful help for their sanctification and for obtaining for their neighbors the graces of docility to the teaching contained in sermons and to the advice given in the holy Tribunal [i.e., confession - Trans.]. (3) Through penance, they atone for their personal sins, satisfy the justice of God for the sins of their

brothers, gain an augmentation of Heavenly help, and attract new blessings over their apostolate.

Penance, as practiced by the religious of St. Dominic, consists principally of abstaining from meat all their lives, except in case of illness; of fasting during seven or eight months of the year; of maintaining rigorous solitude and silence when they are not engaged in apostolic activities; of wearing wool instead of linen, even in illness; of traveling on foot, except in cases of dispensation; of rising during the night during ten months of the year in order to recite Matins and Lauds of the Office. These mortifications will appear austere; yet they are not at all proportionate to the sins we have committed, nor to the sufferings which Jesus endured for our love, nor to the eternal rewards for which they prepare, nor to the graces which they gain for their neighbor, nor to the interior consolations which accompany them.

The principal prayer of the religious of St. Dominic is public prayer or the choir. Its extent stretches from five to six hours per day, but in different segments. This time is used to sing or recite the canonical Office, to sing the High Mass, and to engage together in two periods of meditation, each one for a half hour. The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin is added to the major Office on certain days; and once a week, the Office of the Dead is recited. With permission, the religious are free to add voluntary prayers to these common obligations, according to their piety, such as a third period of meditation, and especially Mary's rosary. After having expended efforts in apostolic activities, what a consolation to return to choir to sing the divine praises, to rekindle devotion on seeing the piety of the brothers, to rest the mind in a holy manner and effortlessly to open one's heart to God, by a collection of exercises which befit so well our nature and unite all the attractions of exterior prayer, offering the opportunity for the uplifting of interior contemplation, and providing the whole day with a reflection of the life of Heaven.

In the Order of St. Dominic we promote a tender and reliable devotion to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Virgin. The religious consider Mary as their protector and mother; it is through her intercession that they obtain many graces.

As to study, it lasts as long as life; whatever time is left after prayer and apostolic activities is devoted to study. The young professed brothers attend classes three hours every day, for two years of philosophy and four or five years of theology. They also engage in presentations and other scholastic exercises destined to clarify questions and to keep the mind sharp. After the studies, each one is occupied, depending on his talents, in preaching, teaching, or hearing confessions, or else they take part in apostolic missions. Study provides the mind with genuine pleasure when one becomes accustomed to en-

gage in it with purity of heart; it gains much merit in the sight of God, provided it is stimulated by a spirit of penance, obedience, and charity.

During the year of probation, however, the novices do not study the fields of knowledge. A year, well applied, is barely sufficient to form them to piety, prayer, solitude, silence, obedience, humility, the regular life, and to decide the matter of their vocation. Nonetheless, they attend classes in which they learn the chant of the Church, the Constitutions of the Order, and the rubrics of the Divine Office. At profession, they pronounce the three vows of religious life, which grant them the principal means to arrive at perfection toward which they will be bound to tend during their entire life. Moreover, by profession, they will bind themselves to keep the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of the Friars Preachers, as being the means to observe the vows more easily. The brothers promise to live up to them, not as observed here or there, but just as they are written with no contrary usage allowed. Nonetheless, this Rule and these Constitutions do not oblige them under sin, either mortal or venial, which protects them against unease of conscience — a major obstacle in the soul's progress. They observe them willingly, out of mortification and of love, and to acquire additional merit; should they fail in some way, they agree to submit to the penance imposed by their superiors.

Above all, one ought to notice and admire that St. Dominic united in his Order the contemplative life, which rests peacefully with God in prayer and study, and the active life, which deals with the neighbor, to deliver him from eternal death and obtain for him the glory of Heaven. In addition, St. Dominic assembled also the advantages and the merits of many other states, namely: the zeal of clerics who work for the salvation of souls; the public prayer of canons and other clerics who devote themselves to singing the praises of God in choir; the penitential practices of hermits and other religious persons, which is to say, solitude, fasting, vigils, and poverty. These diverse elements together make the life of the Friar Preacher something lofty and difficult; but since he carries them out by reason of his state, with the mission received from above in the person of the founder, and confirmed by the approbation of the Church, he receives also the special graces to do this effectively. Moreover, he is helped in these holy activities by the good example of his brothers, by their charity and by the joy which it radiates, by the sound advice of his superiors, by the solicitude of the government of the Order, by spiritual reading, and by frequent reception of the sacraments.

For more than six hundred years since its foundation, this Order has provided significant services to the Church. It has given Heaven many saints, beatified and canonized, not to mention the many others for whom legal steps have been taken so as one day to honor them publicly. The Order has given the Church four popes and a large



number of cardinals, bishops, archbishops, and patriarchs. In all parts of the world, it includes thousands of martyrs, teachers, confessors, enlightened directors, and zealous preachers, all the way to Orient, China, and the Americas. We owe to it the conversion of an almost infinite number of pagans, heretics and lapsed Christians.

The Church has rewarded such services by blessing the Order of St. Dominic with many benefits. The Supreme Pontiffs declared that the Friars Preachers were the stalwart defenders of truth and the right arm of the Church. In Rome, they entrusted them with the important duties of Master of the Sacred Palace — theologian of the Pope, without whose permission no book can be published; the Commissioner of the Holy Office, who examines all matters of doctrine before submitting them to the congregation of cardinals; the Secretary of the Congregation of the Index, where all works which contain questionable teaching are examined and censored. This Order is respected as the guardian of solid doctrine, thanks to its inviolable attachment to the teaching of St. Thomas, itself taken from that of Jesus Christ, the Apostles, and the Fathers of the Church.

Here you have a brief but faithful sketch of the character of our Order and of the regular practices therein observed. It would be a great blessing to you if God called you to it. But, before anything else, may His holy will be fulfilled in you as well as in us.

I am, etc.

§ II – *The manner in which the novices ought to test themselves to prepare for holy profession*

While superiors carefully study the vocations of novices, the latter, for their part, ought to test themselves during the novitiate year. It is called the year of probation, so that one may learn that it was not established solely to teach and form the novices, but also for the religious life to test them and that reciprocally the novices test what is the religious state. No doubt, the applicants have already examined their vocation before entering, but they have to repeat this examination according to more serious bases after they have received the habit; — one could not entertain too carefully so important a question. Here are several steps which they will use to undertake this task.

The first is prayer. Every day, they should pray God fervently to let them know if they are in the state of life which He wishes for them, sometimes echoing the blind man in the Gospel: “Lord, that I may see,” *Domine, ut videam* (Lk. 18:41); sometimes the young Samuel: “Speak, Lord, for your servant heareth.” *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus* (I Sam. 3:10); sometimes David: “Teach me, Lord, to do your will; my heart is ready, O my God; yes, my heart is ready,” *Doce me facere voluntatem tuam* (Ps. 143:10); *paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum* (Ps. 57:7). If the novices are careful to address God thus, in humility, trust, and ardor, He will grant them the insight necessary to know their vocation and the indispensable strength to follow it well.

The second means that the novices need to use to test themselves is the exactness in carrying out all the exercises of the religious life. We are aware that an Order suits us more by performance than by speculation. Before entering, we are aware of the exercises only from a distance and in an abstract manner; but when we reduce them to performance, we appreciate through experience all their weight and their extent, and so are better able to judge if they fit our character, our temperament, our mind, and the other powers of our body. Those who are experiencing the year of probation must therefore observe exactly all the exercises of the religious life, not like the professed, by reason of obligations already contracted, nor uniquely in view of offering a good example, but by reason of wisdom, so as to learn whether this state suits them. Besides, by this strict exactness to all the religious observances, the novices will not only assure themselves of the goodness of their vocation, but they will be preparing themselves to remain faithful to it throughout their entire life, because of the graces which they will merit and the good habits they will acquire. Indeed, when one has been fervent and exact during the novitiate, it is easy to con-

tinue in this fervor and exactness after profession. Accordingly, the novices need to determine if they are sufficiently docile to submit forever to superiors, in conformity with the vow of obedience; if their heart is pure enough to dare to make the vow of perpetual chastity; if they are sufficiently detached from all the goods of earth to embrace poverty with all its austerities; if they have a temperament sufficiently gentle to bear with the different and often contrary moods found in communities; if their nature is fit for solitude, for them to remain enclosed in a cloister and a cell, with no other occupation than prayer and study; if their health can support the abstinence, vigils, travels, the chant of choir, and the other austerities of the Constitutions, whose difficulty lies especially in their continuity.

Nonetheless, it is not necessary for novices to be free of discomfort in all those exercises; there is within us such a store of pride and such a leaning for pleasure that our nature must inevitably suffer from all these things, painful, austere, and disturbing in themselves. It is enough that, with the help of usual grace, one knows how to restrain himself and to bear these troubles for the love of God.

It is also essential to determine if, in the religious life which one wishes to embrace, the Constitutions are kept perfectly because God only calls to the religious state so that He be served better. Experience teaches that in those communities which do not maintain regular observance, a worldly spirit and indulgence gain the upper hand. With the disturbance of the economy of God's graces and the bases of perfection subverted, God is served more badly than in the world; in such a setting, salvation is more difficult than among simple Christians; one's neighbor is more scandalized because of the disorders into which the lax religious fall. This is why, in plain words, it is better to remain in the world than to enter into a lax community, and, if we already belong, to try to find another convent or another Order wherein observance is carried out vigorously.

It must be admitted, however, that in Orders which have fallen short, there can often be found religious who joined according to the rules of prudence, observe their Constitutions as much as this depends on them, and steel themselves against the torrent of indifference. These latter merit greatly and earn, in some way, the graces which others squander. Besides, God could also be calling someone to those Orders by an extraordinary act of His will so as eventually to reestablish regular observance there. In general, however, it is too difficult, with a disordered nature such as ours, to resist effectively the flood of laxity and not to allow ourselves to be enticed by the large number who live in indifference, especially when it is a question of religious who otherwise do enjoy some human respect, and who have won the esteem of the world because of their talent in preaching or

because of some other qualities especially recognized and appreciated on the outside.

A third means which the novices can use to test their vocation is a consideration of the interior motives underlying their actions. Specific reasons which underlie actions in the novitiate ordinarily reveal the general motives which impelled one's entering religious life; they are but a continuation and application of the details of life. If then, after serious and extended reflections, the novices realize that in their actions, despite daily failings, more often than not they are following the movements of grace rather than those of nature, and that they fulfill their exercises from religious principles and to show God their love, they can rest assured that their vocation is excellent. Indeed, when God persistently grants appropriate graces to live up to the duties of religious life in a holy manner, this is an almost infallible sign that He has called to that life. On the other hand, if we usually follow movements of nature; if, for example, we obey because of a servile fear of punishment; if we remain faithful to our duties simply to attract the esteem and friendship of the Master or of other religious; if we are gentle and docile only by natural temperament; if we display fervor simply not to appear lazy — by living at the mercy of such inferior motives, they betray a lack of religious spirit and that they are not prepared to tend toward perfection.

The fourth means by which novices will learn whether God is calling them is the great openness to the Father Master. It is easy to deceive ourselves in what touches us deeply because our own pride flatters us. How difficult it is to plumb the impenetrable depth of our own heart and to distinguish between the movements of grace and those of nature! So as not to be mistaken concerning such an important matter, the novices are to address their spiritual Father in all confidence, reveal to him all their past life, let him know with sincerity their passions, their inclinations, the natural distastes, their good desires, their good impressions, and to tell him in all innocence the reasons which made them leave the world and which attracted them to the religious life. Since God uses superiors to make His will known to subjects, if the novices had for their Master this complete openness of heart, they will succeed in discerning through him their genuine vocation. But if they hide themselves from him, that is truly a very bad sign; in deceiving him they only deceive themselves.

The help of the Master is necessary, not only to discover one's vocation, but to accommodate to it well — as we will mention in spiritual communication (Part II, Chapter IV, Article VII). — God pours out His grace onto humble, frank, and sincere souls, who reveal even the most hidden folds of their heart, and He anoints the lips of his minister to provide consolation, courage, and insight into the hearts of those who follow his direction trustingly. With that support, one will

be able to resist the temptations which often permeate the novitiate. However slight they may appear at first if we hide or ignore them, they keep growing to the point of being able to cause the complete loss of a vocation — much like those thin mists which gather in the air and form thick clouds only to spawn storms and uproot the most beautiful trees; or, like the small drops of water which fall on the mountains, join together in the valleys, and become torrents which ravage the most fertile plains.

These are the principal means which the novices need to use to test themselves during the year of probation. It would also be to their advantage to address some prayers to the Blessed Virgin, whom they will adopt as their loving Mother from their entrance to the novitiate; to their guardian Angel and their holy Patron, of whom they should ask the gift of knowing the will of God and of living up to it to the end.

If, after having used these various means, the novices conclude that their vocation is not genuine, they will have to remove the religious habit and, without any qualms, return to the world. Someone may mock them, perhaps, but they should ignore his scorn, and rightly so, for where is the shame or fault in having passed several months among honorable persons who aspire to perfection? Quite the contrary, in seeking to embrace a life of sacrifice, they did honor to the generosity of their desires; in prolonging the trial for a while, they obtained insights into Christian virtue which will always be useful to them. In spite of the mocking of the world or of the regrets they experienced on their leaving religious life, they in fact bear witness to strength as well as to wisdom. Indeed, although less excellent in itself, the life of a simple Christian will lead them more surely to salvation than the religious life would have. Thus did David try on the armor of Saul, to fight Goliath; on realizing that it did not fit him, he set it aside, oblivious of human respect, and boldly picked up again his sling and some ordinary stones; the giant was nonetheless killed.

But the novices must be wary of trying too hard to test themselves, lest in having excessive doubts about their vocation, they in fact would be lacking in fidelity to it. If it is a fault to enter religious life without having been called, it is also a very great fault to leave it after having entered with a calling. The latter would constitute a disobedience to God, a disdain of His graces, and a danger to salvation because of the animosity of the world, against which no help has been prepared for us. Jesus Christ condemned such timid persons when He said: “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” *Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum, et respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei* (Lk. 9:62). Moreover, we occasionally see that those who left the religious life for no reason or for alleged illness,

subsequently live a very unedifying life in the world, and even fall into disorderliness. It has even been noted that often they came to a sad end, despised by men and abandoned by God. A case in point is that young man who, having taken off the habit in one of our convents against the advice of his director, found himself attacked on the street, under the very windows of the convent, and mortally wounded. Leaning against the wall, he asked the novices for prayers, stating that he already regretted having left, and called for the Master to hear his confession and help him in his last moments. But he could not obtain this consolation, and died before he could receive help. Another case concerns two young brothers who left at the urging of their mother. She herself had come to the door of the convent to retrieve them and was happily taking them back home when, in town, they met a long-time enemy of the family. First, he attacked the elder brother and killed him, and when the younger brother sought to defend himself, he in turn was killed. Thus did both of them die tragically in front of their mother, before ever reaching their dwelling. Not long after, that unfortunate mother herself died of sorrow.

What sometimes discourages novices and convinces them that they do not have a vocation are the difficulties which they experience in the religious life. These difficulties arise either from regular practices which they find too severe or from superiors who humiliate, test, and punish them; from devils who tempt them; from God, who lets them remain in aridity; from equals who behave in an unfriendly manner; from themselves because of the passions which upset them and the interior battles they wage. Yet, in spite of all these difficulties, those novices should not blame themselves nor become disgusted with their vocation. They would do better to have recourse to God in prayer, and to beg Him for the graces to bear with all these sufferings in love for Him. They need to remember that they entered religious life with the goal of assuring their salvation through penance. Accordingly, instead of complaining and whining, they will thank the Lord for having given them the opportunity to find in the convent what they had sought and convince themselves that with the consolation of grace the work which having become lovable will no longer be a pain. "Either work will not be done or the work will be loved." *Aut non laboratur aut labor amatur* (St. Aug., *De Bon. Vid.* 22). This is what St. Dominic used to do when he experienced some particular suffering, such as when walking barefoot on his journeys, he stubbed and bloodied his toe on a rock. When his traveling companions sought to express their compassion, he responded politely: "This is part of our penance." *Hæc est pænitentia nostra*. In the same way, when novices find it difficult to get up for Matins or Prime, or to fast, or to discipline their own will,

they will refresh their courage even through the difficulties and will tell themselves: "This is part of our penance." *Hæc est pænitentia nostra.*

The novices who were young when they entered religious life sometimes imagine that it is the only place where one suffers; thus, they become disenchanted with their vocation. A major error! There is much more to suffer in the world, even when restricting oneself to what is necessary for salvation. Sometimes it is a question of opposition from family members, sometimes scorn and insults from dissolute persons, sometimes contradictions from the corrupted sayings of the times. By shaking off the yoke of God, even wicked men do not relieve themselves of the need to suffer; on the contrary, they intensify it. To experience pain is a common fact in all the states. Nonetheless, there are some important differences between them: worldly persons suffer under constraint, with complaints on their lips and spite in their heart; good Christians suffer with resignation; fervent religious test themselves by suffering out of love, that is to say, with satisfaction.

Novices should not expect to be assured of the soundness of the vocation that God will provide them with extraordinary signs, such as revelations, the apparition of an angel, or very strong inner feelings and helps. He has sometimes used such extraordinary means, but they are rare and not at all necessary; often, indeed, these should be taken as suspicious and dangerous because of the fantasies encountered in them.

There are two usual means by which God makes His will known to those whom He calls to the religious state. One is a calling of noticeable attraction which one experiences even from childhood to embrace a certain Order — an attraction which is accompanied by a contempt for the things of the world, an esteem for those of religion, and a constant desire of giving oneself wholly to God. The other is a calling of reason and of convictions. One begins by considering more seriously than before the obligation of working out his salvation. Since this conviction is well-founded, he reflects that to save himself means to fulfill the counsels of the Gospel, and he desires this strongly. Yet it does not take long to study matters before someone realizes how difficult it is to practice those counsels while living in the world. And so, the thought of leaving the world and of isolating oneself in a holy retreat, to live there according to God, becomes more and more apparent in the soul; it will eventually become very clear and the individual will regulate his behavior accordingly. The insight which grows slowly through a series of convictions, one arising from the other, and which produces even in a life in the world significant progress toward the good, is certainly a light from God; if the director sees no particular obstacle, one must follow it, even though it had never been accompanied by noticeable attractions. What is worth even more, it is in conformity with the principles of sound reason directed by faith.

## ARTICLE III

### Faithful compliance with one's vocation

In this article, we will briefly indicate how necessary the compliance with vocation is; we will describe how to comply faithfully, especially during the novitiate, with this very critical grace

#### § I – *The need to comply well with one's calling*

It is not sufficient to be reassured that we have a valid calling. The major issue is to apply oneself carefully to comply with it and to confirm it through good works, as the Apostle St. Peter indicated: “Brothers, labor the more, that by your good works you may make sure of your calling and election.” *Fratres, magis satagite ut per bona opera certam vestram vocationem et electionem faciatis (II Pet. 1:10)*. Many are called, but few are chosen, thus said the Lord. *Multi enim sunt vocati, pauci vero electi (Mt. 22:14)*. Saul was chosen king of Israel by God and anointed by the prophet of God. Nonetheless, since he did not comply with the grace of his anointing, he was condemned. The calling of Judas to the apostolate was genuine since it arose from the immediate choice of Jesus Christ; and yet, not having measured up to the grace of his calling, Judas became a villain and a demon. “One of you is a devil.” *Ex vobis unus diabolus est (John 6:70)*. The wife of Lot was rescued from Sodom by God Himself, Who sent angels to move her away, with all her family, from that city condemned to fire; alas, after such a propitious beginning, she was transformed into a pillar of salt because, instead of always moving forward toward the mountain, she had looked backwards. More than six hundred thousand men, not counting women and children, left Egypt in the midst of miracles and wonders; and yet, of all this multitude of people, only two of them entered the promised land: all the others died in the desert, having been unfaithful to the grace of the Lord, and having allowed themselves to be carried away by complaints, disobedience, and other sins. Given these numerous and very frightening examples, what religious person would dare to remain quiet while telling himself: I am sure of myself; I do not fear being unfaithful to my vocation?



§ II – *How to comply well with the call, and how to use effectively the time in the novitiate, before and after profession.*

All the advancement of religious in good or evil depends, as a rule, on the effective or poor use of time in their novitiate; indeed, first impressions are so deeply etched in the mind and in the heart that they are practically never erased. "The form which one first receives is not easily laid aside." *Formam quam primo quis recipit vix deponit*, said St. Bonaventure (*Speculum Disciplinae ad Novitios*, prol.). If then, the young religious accustom themselves to developing well their interior life and their external behavior during the five years they have to remain in the novitiate, they will maintain all their lives that air of modesty, that store of piety and of regularity which they will have acquired there. Yet, supposing that some of them become forgetful for a while, there is always the hope that they will eventually regain their fervor, thanks to the impressions received during their early education.

On the contrary, if, during their novitiate, they neglect the spirit of regularity and acquire habits of pride and laxity, it will be very difficult for them to change during the rest of their lives, just as the same saint observed: "He who neglects discipline in the beginning of a new way of life, afterwards will apply himself to it with difficulty." *Qui disciplinam in novæ conversationis initio negligit, ad eam postmodum difficile applicatur* (ibid.). A twisted shrub is easily straightened while it is still pliable; but if we let it grow with its defect, it will always retain it, and our later effort to straighten it will only break it. In the same way, from the good or the evil bent which the novices develop, depends in large part the direction of the rest of their lives. The time will come when we will break them rather than correct them; and, in order not to come to that, we will resign ourselves to abandon them to their wicked nature.

Later, in Part II, we will offer detailed instructions to teach the novices how to regulate well their interior life and their exterior behavior. It is not without benefit, however, to offer even now an abridged version of what should principally occupy their time during the year of probation so that they acquire a reliable and durable piety.

First of all, they need to regulate *their thoughts, their words, and their actions*. — 1° The supreme guide, very simple, very sure, very consoling among all their *thoughts*, is the presence of God. One of the greatest misfortunes which could happen to a novice is to amuse himself with useless and illusory ideas which injure the mind and subsequently makes it incapable of serious application to prayer and to study. The devil often begins by attacking from that direction the be-

ginner in the religious life. Too clever to tempt them at first in a crude manner, he brings up useless remembrances about their parents, their homeland, old acquaintances, accidents that happened to them, what they would be doing if still in the world. Then, their imagination, fired up with all these useless and illusory ideas, suggests disastrous thoughts of pride, impatience, anger, impurity, vengeance, which they neglect to repel. The significant means to avoid such temptations is to get into the habit of placing oneself often in the presence of God, as, for example, every time the clock chimes, when one enters or leaves a room, or begins a task. When faithfully practiced, the presence of God regulates effectively and easily all thoughts and judgments. 2° They must control their *words*, and in their language, strive to respect the spirit of silence, by observing this saying of St. Vincent Ferrer: "Never speak unless interrogated, or unless held by a just need, by obedience, or by some pious usefulness." The chapter in Part III relating to silence will better explain this point. 3° They must control their *actions*, and for that purpose, enliven the fervor of their intentions, and that of their fulfillment — a fervor brought about by a desire to glorify God, and augmented by the consolation we experience in pleasing Him.

The second point with which they must very much busy themselves during the novitiate is regular observance. This is what identifies the religious. The observance of the vows is essential for salvation, their transgression in serious matters being a mortal sin and a sacrilege. But the fulfillment of the Constitutions is also very necessary for novices, because they are destined by God to become, in religious life, the significant means to gain Heaven. This is why disastrous daily experience reveals that the religious who become accustomed to transgressing their Constitutions, with no efforts to correct themselves, end up breaking their vows and the Commandments of God.

The third point which the novices must generously follow to remain faithful to their vocation all their lives is the practice of Christian virtues, especially humility and charity. Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues; charity is their queen, their form, their soul, and their perfection. Moreover, when we see some men, who, after having passed ten, twenty, or thirty years in the cloister practicing the fasts, vigils, and abstinence, sleeping on a hard surface, maintaining silence, reciting long prayers, are nonetheless filled with pride and arrogance, become impatient at the slightest disagreeable thing said or done to them, speak badly of their brothers and of their neighbor at all occasions, we are obliged to admit that they have gotten little benefit from the graces of their novitiate and that they are quite distant from the spirit of their state. Indeed, a good religious is none

other than a perfect Christian: a perfect Christian is a perfect imitator of the perfections, the virtues, and the examples of Jesus Christ. Is it necessary to indicate that far away from this imitation are those religious upon whom pride has such dominance, while charity has so little?

The fourth point on which the novices must strive constantly during the time of novitiate and all the rest of their lives is the practice of mental prayer and of mortification. Without prayer, they will never acquire a reliable piety, because they will never arrive at knowing themselves, or at knowing God; their interior life will be for them entirely unexplored territory. Never will they enjoy those sharp insights, those strong resolutions, and that consistent behavior which are necessary for perfection. As for mortification, one cannot advance in mental prayer without it, because its purpose is to eliminate the obstacles between the soul and God. So that the novices remain faithful in mortification and in all the other holy exercises of which we have just spoken, they should foster a great devotion to the Most Holy Virgin, as their very loving Mother, reciting every day, as often as possible, her Little Office and her rosary. At the same time, they must foster significant worship for the Holy Trinity, the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, St. Dominic, St. Thomas Aquinas, and the other saints of our Order. The latter are our models in our vocation; they will also be our support by the prayers which they will offer on our behalf in the heights of Heaven.

## ARTICLE IV

In this article, we will explain how profession offers to God a perfect sacrifice; how it brings to man significant merits; after that, we will present for the piety of the religious a paraphrase of Psalm 115 (116), to encourage gratitude for their profession.

### § I – *Religious profession offers to God a perfect sacrifice*

To God alone belongs the honor of the sacrifice because He alone is the Supreme Arbiter of life and death. From the beginning of the world, in the law of nature, a great number of sacrifices were offered to Him. Among those, the holocaust was the most perfect one, because the entire victim was consumed, to affirm that God alone is worthy of Being and that the creature is nothingness.

Religious profession is a perfect holocaust. There is a holocaust, said St. Thomas, following St. Gregory, when one offers to God all that he has: *Holocaustum est, cum aliquis totum quod habet offert Deo* (see ST II-II, q. 186, a. 7). Now, by the three vows, as we will learn better elsewhere, man offers to God all the goods he can have.

The sacrifices which people in the world offer to God are imperfect sacrifices. They often act like Pharaoh — their prefigurement — did with the Israelites when they demanded to leave Egypt to go sacrifice to the Lord in the desert. At first, Pharaoh allowed them to sacrifice, on condition that it be in Egypt: “Sacrifice to your God in this land.” *Sacrificate Deo vestro in terra hac*. Then he allowed them to go sacrifice in the desert, provided that only the men would go, while the children and the flocks remained in Egypt: “How shall I let you and your little ones go? Let only the men go and sacrifice to the Lord.” *Quomodo dimittam vos et parvulos vestros? Ite tantum viri, et sacrificate Domino*. Finally, he allowed them to go to the desert to sacrifice to the Lord with their little children, but on condition that their flocks remain behind: “Go, sacrifice to the Lord; but let your sheep and your herd remain.” *Ite, sacrificate Domino; oves vestrae, et armenta remaneant* (*Ex.* 8:25, 10:7, 10:24).

This is how the world acts regarding Christians who remain attached to it. It does not absolutely forbid them to offer some sacrifices to God because its irreverence is not always complete. But it wishes that they accomplish these sacrifices without leaving worldly culture; and so, their sacrifices are mixed and imperfect, because of propriety,

human respect, preoccupations, and the distorted sayings that reign in its bosom. "Sacrifice in this land." *Sacrificate in terra hac*. If, on occasion, it allows them to move at a distance, it intends to keep them restrained by some visible links; now this attachment of the heart prevents them from giving themselves completely to the Lord and makes them return quickly to what they had appeared to abandon. "Let your sheep and cattle remain." *Oves vestrae et armenta remaneant*. All these sacrifices are imperfect, divided, and please God little. Religious, on the other hand, in the sacrifice of their profession, enter into no composition with the world and accept no condition of sharing in their consecration to the Lord. Like Moses, they tell the world what the sacred legislator answered to Pharaoh: We cannot sacrifice in Egypt because we need to offer to the Lord our God the abominations of the Egyptians; and if we destroyed in their presence what they adore, they would stone us. That is why we go to the desert, there to sacrifice to the Lord our God, as He told us to; and we will go with all we own. "A hoof from them shall not stay behind." *Non remanebit ex eis ungula*. Just so, religious must immolate to the Lord all the abominations of the world, namely, the riches, the pleasures, the honors, the attachment to self-will, all the things which the world adores. Accordingly, religious wisely seek to leave the world and to withdraw in the desert of religion, so as to offer their sacrifice in peace, and to avoid everything which could decrease its perfection. Now, in leaving the world, they must abandon it entirely, and in no way remain attached to it, not even by the minutest things: *Non remanebit ex eis ungula*. Thus, their profession will be a perfect holocaust; and their actions, on binding themselves to the promises of profession, will share in their excellence and will be like so many acts of religion, so many sacrifices. "This pertains to the divine worship, as it were some sacrifice." *Jam pertinent ad divinum cultum, quasi quaedam sacrificia*.

This perfection of the sacrifice which the religious offer to the Lord by their profession has been prefigured, according to the thought of St. Augustine, by the turtledove and the pigeon which Abraham sacrificed to the Lord. God had commanded this holy patriarch to offer Him as victims a heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. The Scriptures note that Abraham separated into two the ground animals and that he offered the birds without separation. *Aves autem non divisit* (*Gen. 15:10*). These ground animals stood for the people of the world who sacrifice to God only halfway, and whose mind and heart are almost necessarily divided by a thousand worries regarding riches and pleasures. But the sacrificed birds stand for the religious, who by their state, rise above worldly matters, like birds who rise above the earth, and brook no separation in their sacrifices. Whether they remain in their cherished solitude to moan like turtledoves, whether charity calls

them out of their isolation, sometimes to lead them to the world like pigeons, they are nonetheless never divided between God and the times, because they sacrifice themselves to the divine will wholly and everywhere. "Religious are those who consecrate themselves entirely to God, offering themselves as holocausts." *Religiosi sunt qui se totaliter Deo consecrant, quasi holocaustum offerentes* (see ST II-II, q. 186, a. 1).

This is why the Church Fathers called religious profession a second baptism. In fact, by the whole consecration made therein, one divests himself completely of the former man to live only as the new man, and receives the remission of all sins. As a result, if those who had just received baptism were to die and would immediately enter Paradise without passing through the flames of Purgatory, so too those who make profession with the required dispositions obtain the remission of all their sins and would go directly to Heaven if death would strike them soon after. "The same grace is acquired by those entering religious life as those who are baptized," said St. Thomas, condensing and confirming the opinion of other saintly teachers. *Eandem gratiam consequuntur religionem intrantes, quam consequuntur baptizati* (see ST II-II, q. 189, a. 3, ad 3). And he gives the reason: If a man atones for his sins by giving alms, as the prophet Daniel stated in these words: *Redeem your sins by alms* (*Dan. 4:24*), with greater reason does the one who consecrates himself entirely to God by profession satisfy for all his sins, because this consecration surpasses all kinds of atonement, even that of public penance, just as the holocaust surpasses all other sacrifices.

From this, it also arises that the Holy Fathers compared religious profession to martyrdom, because it makes the religious die to himself and continually immolates him to God. Accordingly, since martyrdom is the most heroic and the most excellent act of love, and because of that it removes all sins with the penalty due to them, leading the witness to the faith directly to Paradise, so too the offering which the religious makes to God by his profession through the vows is so heroic that there could be none higher, since there is nothing left to give after one has given himself entirely. The martyrdom of religious, which is a martyrdom of perfection, has two advantages over the martyrdom of faith: that of duration, since it lasts as long as life, while the other often ends by a single blow from a sword; that of the fully voluntary choice, because, while the martyrs sometimes needed to make the sacrifice of their lives so as not to apostatize and condemn themselves, the martyrs of religious profession choose immolation willingly, without being constrained by any law, circumstance, or necessity. Blessed are those victims always ready to be sacrificed to the Lord through the hands of their superiors! They differ from the martyrs in that they offer themselves deliberately to death, but they re-

semble them in that they did not themselves choose the kind of trial, and yet were always disposed to die by whatever means, more or less crucifying, that obedience would require of them.

§ II – *Religious profession obtains for man a state of perfection and special merit for all his actions*

At the same time that profession, considered in relation to God, is a complete sacrifice, when considered in relation to man it raises him to a state of perfection and opens for him a source of special merit for all his actions.

According to the common understanding of all the saints, religion, in fact, is “a state of holiness in which religious adore the celestial Father in spirit and in truth.” Now it is profession that gives the religious life this quality of perfection by means of the vows. The state of perfection requires a perpetual commitment to accomplish what is perfect according to God, since the very word *state* signifies something stable, fixed, and permanent. Consequently, religious life cannot be a state of perfection without the perpetual obligation of observing poverty, chastity, and obedience, which belong to the perfection of Christian life. This obligation, which religious contract by their vows, does not diminish their liberty, as remarked St. Thomas; on the contrary, it enhances it. If we consider what liberty entails in its better quality, such as it is found in God and in the holy angels, it is summed up in the power to do good. Now the characteristic of vows is found precisely in confirming the will towards the good, and in binding it to practice perfection. “Blessed need,” said St. Augustine, “which sets up the obligation to do what is better. Therefore, do not regret having pronounced your vows; on the contrary, rejoice that you are no longer able to do what you might have done to your detriment.” *Felix necessitas, quæ ad meliora compellit! Non te novisse pæniteat, imo gaude, jam tibi non sic licere quod cum tuo detrimento licuisset* (Ep. 127.8, *ad Paulina et Armentarius*).

If, then, the vows are in some way like chains, far from being bonds of shame or slavery, they are glorious bonds since they honor the courage of the religious, and are signs of his perfection, just as those which David speaks of: “The lines are fallen unto me in goodly places.” *Funes ceciderunt mihi in præclaris* (Ps. 16:6). They are auspicious chains since they eliminate the unfortunate servitude of sin and the very offensive ties to the world. They are beneficial chains, since they stabilize a natural inconstancy, strengthen its resolutions, fortify it in temptations, and empower it in the good, as St. Thomas noted: “The will is strengthened in good through a vow.” *Per votum voluntas firmatur in bonum* (see ST II-II, q. 88, a. 6). Finally, these are bonds of love

which raise the religious closer to God, and bring to him an ornament more than a burden, as St. Ambrose masterfully explained when speaking about the yoke of Christ: "They are ornaments to your neck, not onerous burdens." *Ornamenta sunt cervicis tuæ, non onera.*

Furthermore, the vows pronounced by religious give special worth to everything they do. St. Thomas proves this by three reasons which deal with the quality of actions, their quantity, and the perfection of the will which carries them out. 1° As to quality, actions are all the more excellent and praiseworthy when they belong to a virtue that is more noble and more eminent. Indeed, by means of the vows, all the actions of those who have pronounced them belong to the virtue of religion, which is the most excellent of all moral virtues, as we will say elsewhere. Accordingly, these actions have a twofold merit: one from the virtue to which they belong by their nature, the other, from the virtue of religion, whose characteristics they share. For example, the privation of sensual pleasures belongs to the virtue of chastity; but by profession, it is further honored by the dignity of the religious act, our very persons being consecrated to God. This latter excellence, according to St. Augustine, is more eminent than the former. As he said, "Virginity is praiseworthy, not so much because of itself, but because it is consecrated to God." *Neque ipsa virginitas, quia virginitas est; sed quia Deo dicata est, honoratur* (*De Sancta Virginitate* 8).

2° As to the quantity of merit and of the donation, the actions that the religious accomplishes by vow offer more to God than those which he carries out on his own, without being obliged in any way. In fact, by profession, the religious offers up not only his good works, but also all the power he has to accomplish them or not, to fulfill them for a while and later to leave them. Willingly does he place himself in the impossibility of discontinuing those holy works which he had vowed to God. "He subjects himself to God, not only with respect to particular acts, but also with respect to the power, since in the future he is not able to do otherwise." *Subiicit se Deo, non solum quantum ad actum, sed etiam quantum ad potestatem, quia de cætero non potest aliud facere* (see ST II-II, q. 88, a. 6). Accordingly, this offering acquires considerable worth in the eyes of God, first because of the definitive act of renouncing the self, which it includes, as well as by its positive and fruitful results. In fact, far from chaining our faculties into inaction, the vows increase our strength and gather all the resilience of our soul, to place them completely and perpetually under the hand of God, so that by them and in them, He can produce something integrated and exalted. The privative and destructive side of the vow is especially noticeable in poverty and chastity. To obedience belongs more especially the role of creator; it is its task to draw out the best from our faculties, for the glory of God. This truth is made apparent in the estimation common



to spiritual authors. Just as the man who would give to his benefactor the fruit of one of his trees along with the tree itself would be giving more than if he offered only the fruit and kept the tree for himself, likewise religious give more to God than the people of the world, because they offer Him not only their good works but also the fruitful root which produced them and could produce more — greatly convinced that no one better than He is able to harvest fruit always more numerous and more choice.

3° Finally, as to merit, this is all the more impressive in that the actions arise from a more perfect will. The goodness of exterior actions depends, above all, on the principle which underlies them. Well, the actions which flow from a vow arise from a more perfect will than those, otherwise similar in quality and quantity, which are produced without a vow. Indeed, the will enjoys increased perfection in that it is firmer, more constant, and more unshakeable. It is precisely the characteristic of a vow to give the will that firmness and that powerful energy for the good, as St. Thomas said: *Per votum immobiliter voluntas firmatur in bonum.* — How many advantages are assembled in profession! How good of God to share these with souls who are hungry and thirsty for perfection! How good of Him to have included us in that number and to have opened wide for us the treasury of all His goods!

§ III – Paraphrase of Psalm 115 (116)  
as an expression of thanks for religious profession

Since profession is so excellent, religious ought to thank the Lord continually for having given them such a benefit. To express their gratitude to Him, they can be inspired by the words of David and repeat often with all the warmth of their heart: “How can I thank you, O Lord, for all the benefits with which you have filled me?” *Quid retribuam, Domino, pro omnibus quæ retribuit mihi?*

From all eternity, you have kept me in mind. In time, You formed me into your own image and resemblance; You gave me a body and a soul capable of knowing and serving You; You had me born in the Catholic Church, while You left so many false Christians in heresy. Since my baptism, I have sinned, but You purified me of my sins through penance. For many long years, I continued to abuse your mercy, to resist the innumerable interior inspirations which You were giving me. But, O merciful God, far from abandoning me, You filled me with new kindnesses by calling me to religious profession — the greatest blessing which You can bestow on your creature, after the call to Christianity. What acts of thanksgiving could I offer You, O

Lord, for all your former benefits and for that of the religious vocation, which crowns them so well? *Quid retribuam Domino?*

The gratitude you ask of me, O Lord, is fidelity to that remarkable gift of my vocation. Therefore, I embrace the religious life as a chalice of salvation. *Calicem salutaris accipiam.* A chalice filled with tears and mortifications, like the chalice of the agonizing Jesus, but also the incomparable drink which exhilarates my soul and assures me of celestial consolations. "My chalice which inebriates me, how goodly it is!" *Calix meus inebrians quam præclarus est! (Ps. 23:5).* Indeed, the austerities of my state are followed by spiritual peace; the tears which they provoke extinguish the flames of Hell; the fasts nourish the soul; the vigils fortify it; everything there contributes to receiving a superabundance of the interior delights of grace. Willingly, then, do I take up this chalice of salvation, containing bitterness and sweetness, in thanksgiving for all the benefits which You have bestowed on me. *Calicem salutaris accipiam.* In creation, it is our human life that You have given us; in redemption, You have given us divine life through Your Son. If, then, as St. Bernard said, I owe everything to you for having made me with a single word, what could I give you for having remade me in redemption by the marvels of goodness and the mysteries of suffering? *Si totum debeo pro me facto, quid addam pro me refacto?* Even if I were able to multiply myself a thousand times, to begin my life again a thousand times, and each time to offer myself again to You, what am I in your eyes, O Lord? The best that I have to acknowledge all your blessings is the joyful acceptance of the duties of my profession. I take them, then, all of them, and I offer them to you. *Calicem salutaris accipiam.* But this state is so elevated that to carry out faithfully all its duties I cannot rely on my own strength which is in fact but weakness. Accordingly, I will rely only on the help of your divine grace; and, to obtain it, I will invoke your holy name every day. *Et nomen Domini invocabo!*

All-powerful Lord, supported by the strength of your arm, I will hold this chalice up to the end; I will drain it to the dregs, until death. O death of the holy religious, how precious you are in the eyes of the Lord! *Preiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus!* Yes, religious life is truly a death, *mors spontanea*, as it was called by St. John Climacus. It is a bodily death, because by sufferings, it slows the descent into the grave. It is a spiritual death, because those who embrace it die to the world and to their passions, with the result that, like the dead, they no longer have movement of their own, no feelings, but depend totally on the grace of God. This death by religious profession appears humiliating and terrible to the eyes of carnal men, but it is precious before the Lord! *Quam pretiosa!* It is precious because it redeems the immense debt of our sins; it is precious because it obtains

infinite blessings. It is the passage from death to life, from work to rest, from fear to security, from poverty to abundance, from sadness to joy, from war to peace, from affliction to consolation, from life in time to life in eternity. *Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus!* Blessed are they who die to the world and to sin by religious profession! They are assured, then, of dying in the embrace of the Lord. *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur* (Rev. 14:13).

The happiness belongs to me, O Lord, because this profession is my share. I am doubly your servant. *O Domine, quia ego servus tuus.* I was a servant, even at my birth, since it was You, O my Master, Who created me and redeemed me; but I am also your servant under another claim, because I chose it by my profession. I gave my word solemnly, and so, it is impossible for me to contest Your laws. That I will never attempt to do. On the contrary, I consecrate them to You anew by my love. *Ego servus tuus.* Blessed bondage which, while binding me to You, makes me at the same time the son of your servant. *Et filius ancillæ tuæ.* By baptism, I was a son of Your Church; by my vocation, I have given myself more fully to Her. But I have also become the son of the Virgin Mary, who named herself the servant of the Lord. *Et filius ancillæ tuæ.* O Mary! The Order of Preachers, of which I am a member, has proclaimed you truly its Mother. It is you who, in your motherly care, obtained from your Son its establishment. Day and night, you used to visit its first children to shower your blessings upon them. You marvelously protected them against the enemies who persecuted them. Even now, you watch over their calling; you help them persevere; you dispel their temptations; you console them in their afflictions; you help them in their weakness; you soften their sorrows; you enliven them to repentance; you encourage their zeal; you make their ministry fruitful, and you reserve for them, even in Heaven, a remarkable fondness. O Immaculate Virgin, see to it that I love you tenderly all my life as my very kind, my very dear, my very lovable Mother, and that, having the honor of being numbered among your children, I show myself worthy by imitating your virtues up to my death.

O God of hosts, it is now that You have struck down my enemies and have broken my chains. *Dirupisti vincula mea.* I was bound by too great an attachment to myself, to my parents, to useless pleasures. And yet, O my God, you have broken all those bonds. Nothing can hold me back; in this condition of holy liberty I wish to offer You a holocaust of praise. *Tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis!*

Lord, God of virtues, You do not want us to immolate heifers and bulls to You, as in the old law. The genuine sacrifice that you love is that of the contrite and humbled heart. O my heart, prepare this sacrifice of which you are at the same time both victim and priest. *Tu victima, tu sacerdos!* Yes, my God, I wish that all my thoughts, all my

prayers, all my offices, all my actions form an ensemble of praise. *Tibi sacrificabo hostiam laudis!*

I make this sacrifice before your altar and your holy angels; I renew it in the depths of my heart; and, so that it be more pleasing to You, I call on the power of your holy name: *Et nomen Domini invocabo!*

And now, what is left except for me to offer my vows to the Lord during all the days of my life. *Vota mea Domino reddam.* Moreover, from now on, I will despise the pleasures of the body, I will trample on its riches, I will bury my will in obedience. *Vota mea Domino reddam.* However harsh, however incomprehensible, and however embarrassing what is asked of me may be, I will carry it out with hallowed fidelity. *Vota mea reddam.* I wish that this fidelity be an example to all the Christian people. *In conspectu omnis populi ejus,* so that everywhere it will be known that the yoke of the Lord is light, and that the works of the religious life provide the strength to observe the divine commandments. By this means, the faithful in the world will be enlivened to serve the Lord better, to practice repentance more courageously, and to imitate more faithfully the virtues of Jesus Christ. I will fulfill my Rule and my vows in all the convents where I am sent, all of which are the portal of the house of God, namely, Heaven. *In atrii domus Domini.* O Lord, how often have I sighed for that sacred portal! How many tears I have poured; how many prayers said that I might dwell there; and I am blessed to find myself at last received among the number of your children, settled in your dwelling! Never allow me to leave it. On the contrary, give me the grace to grow from virtue to virtue until I reach Mount Zion; until I enter the very interior of your holy Temple, and until I dwell eternally in the celestial Jerusalem.

O holy City! When will I stand within your walls, in the company of the saints and angels? *In medio tui Jerusalem!* It will be on that eternal day that I will have fulfilled my vows according to whole the extent of their perfection. At that moment, my obedience will be complete, and my will transformed into the will of God; my chastity will become all celestial, like that of the angels; and my poverty will find itself transformed into possession of the kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed, then, and a thousand times blessed are the religious who observe faithfully the promises of their profession, since their reward will be to see God face to face, to love Him without tiring, and to possess Him forever! Amen! May it be so! Amen!

## CHAPTER II

### **Principal maxims and significant truths of the Gospel upon which religious ought to establish fidelity to the duties of their vocation**

How many religious quickly forget their initial fervor and, after several years of profession, have not yet acquired a solid virtue! This is because not enough care was taken during the novitiate to imbue them with the significant truths of the Gospel. It was deemed sufficient to form them to some religious observances which are good and even necessary but not enough on which to anchor a stable virtue and to bestow an interior spirit.

The pleasure of novelty, which is found at the beginning of the different exercises of the religious state, made them zealous for a while. But after they had become accustomed to these activities, their fervor died and they fell into dissipation. Let care be taken to establish virtue in the novices concerning the principal sayings of the Gospel, to engrave deeply into their minds the principal maxims of the Gospel. With experience, it will be seen that they contain a hidden but permanent virtue, capable of always preserving one's initial fervor, or at least, of recalling one to duty. We shall, therefore, explain these important truths and demonstrate the relationship they have with fidelity to the obligations of the religious life. By meditating on them, everyone — novices and professed alike — will acquire an increase in fervor and find in them firm support for their perseverance. These sayings will be summarized in seven articles that will treat of: 1° the importance of salvation; 2° the need for penitence; 3° the horror of sin; 4° preparation for death; 5° fear of judgment; 6° the pains of Hell; 7° the delights of Paradise.

ARTICLE I  
**The importance of salvation**

1° Salvation is a sublime and unique matter; 2° one must work for his salvation with vigilance, fear, and trembling; 3° religious cannot work for their salvation save by observing their Rule exactly.

§ I – *Salvation is a sublime and unique matter.*

Salvation is the sublime and unique matter that every man is entrusted to carry out in this world. Thus, the first instruction given to us in our childhood is that God created us and placed us in this world to know, love, and serve Him, and in this way, to acquire eternal life. Our salvation is nothing other than the blessed life we will enjoy in Heaven, if, here on earth, we apply ourselves to serve God with all our hearts. Consequently, man is not here below to enjoy good health, to amass riches, to shine because of his talent, to achieve distinguished status, but to earn his salvation by fearing God and by keeping His commandments out of love. This is the duty of every man. “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is all to man.” *Deum time et mandata ejus observa; hoc est enim omnis homo (Eccles. 12:13).*

According to the Church Fathers, it is about salvation that Jesus spoke when He said: “Only one thing is necessary: *Unum est necessarium*” (*Lk. 10:42*). The conclusion of that maxim is clear: everything else is extra; everything passes, everything is lost except that which helps to save us. “For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?” *Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur; animæ vero suæ detrimentum patiatur? Aut quam dabit homo commutationem pro anima sua? (Mt 16:26)* But if there is nothing useful outside of salvation, in the order of salvation what is insignificant can become a gain for man. Poverty, illness, sadness, insults, reversals of fortune, prison, and even the cruelest death: everything can help to save us. Everything leads to eternal riches, to infinite honors, to inefable pleasures, to an incomprehensible glory. “[You] shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and [be] glorified.” *Exultabitis lætitia inerrabili et glorificata (I Pet. 1:8).*

Salvation is such an exalted matter that God has thought of it

for all eternity. To that goal He has referred the creation and the conservation of the universe as well as everything marvelous He has done in the order of nature as in the order of grace. If He created Heaven and earth and all they contain; if He preserves them every day, it is for the salvation of man. If He formed angels at the very beginning of the world, one of the principal duties He entrusted to them is to contribute to the salvation of man. If under the ancient law He sent patriarchs and prophets, it was to teach His people the way to salvation. If He allowed the fall of so many empires and dynasties; if occasionally He made unexpected events spring up; if He allowed difficulties and persecutions in the Church, it was for the salvation of men. In the end, it is for us all that God sent His only Son into the world and delivered him to death. *Proprio Filio suo non pepercit (Deus), sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum (Rom. 8:32).*

O, how the salvation of man must be something valuable since God Himself came down from Heaven to bring it about! “Who for us men and our salvation descended from Heaven and was incarnate.” *Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de cœlis, et incarnatus est (Nicene Creed).*

We are Christians solely to work out our salvation. If in baptism we were adopted by the Eternal Father, incorporated into His Son, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, it was so that we might achieve that goal. Moreover, that unique matter is so much ours that we alone, after God, are capable of bringing it about. A king works carefully to make his subjects happy; a bishop applies himself to direct and save his flock; the father of a family amasses riches for his children. In all this, they do not work directly and exclusively for these others. But when someone is busy with the work of salvation, he is working altogether for himself, and the direct gain is in no way for his neighbor. In other matters, when they do not succeed, there are still some resources: if someone is sick, he can alleviate his suffering with medicine; when someone fails in an undertaking, he can take up another to lift himself up; if we have lost the protection of a friend, we go to meet others who will take care of us; were the misfortune to be irremediable, at least it will end with life. But if we fail in the matter of salvation, no one can supply it for us: all would be lost; and that failure, far from ending with life, will at death become eternal.

## § II – *One must work at salvation with vigilance, fear, and trembling.*

Since the matter of salvation is so decisive, one must work with all application and vigilance possible. Indeed, it is elementary in wise actions to bring to activities a diligence proportionate to their importance, and when necessary, to omit secondary matters so as to

insure the success of those of greater consequence. Besides, many difficulties are encountered in this sublime effort; accordingly, utmost watchfulness is needed to overcome them. Jesus Christ Himself told us: *The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!* (*Mt.* 11:12; 7:14). The parables employed by Jesus Christ are consistent with these important sayings. Salvation is compared to a precious stone that has to be bought at the price of someone's entire possessions, and one that cannot be found except after having swept the whole house (*Lk.* 15:8-9). It is a treasure hidden in a field; one has to dig very deep to find it (*Mt.* 13:44). It is a vine which has to be carefully tended so as to give fruit (*Mt.* 21:33, 41). It is a field that must be tilled without stopping and without looking back (*Lk.* 9:62). It is a business transaction in which the talents received have to be increased with care (*Mt.* 25:14, 29). Everywhere, under these different figures, the same teaching lies hidden: the work of our salvation requires all our application and all our care, especially because these intrinsic difficulties are superadded to the oppositions erected by our enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. What violence, then, must we exercise against ourselves to overcome these obstacles, which sometimes follow one after the other, or sometimes befall us at the same time! If one considers that this work is for all times, all ages, all places, and under all situations, how can we imagine that we could attain salvation without a great application?

After someone has seriously applied himself to the matter of salvation, he must nonetheless remain in fear and trembling. It is St. Paul who orders us: "with fear and trembling work out your salvation." *Cum metu et tremore vestram salutem operemini* (*Phil.* 2:12). He himself preaches to us by his example, protesting that, in spite of his raptures, he fears to be rejected! He, the great Apostle, he who had long been chastising his body and had subjected it, he who had gone up to the third Heaven, he trembled when thinking of his eternal fate! How much more should be fear, we who are so feeble, so evil, so corrupt! "My salvation is in peril, my eternal happiness is in question, my damnation is still possible!" This is what we need to tell ourselves regarding the future and in recommending ourselves to God.

Far from discouraging us, the serious difficulties that we encounter in the matter of salvation should, on the contrary, stir us to work with greater diligence and vigilance. "It is difficult, and yet we must succeed! Therefore, I will apply myself to it with courage." This is how the prudent man reasons in the manner of God; he rouses himself to work by considering the many obstacles here below that human prudence knows how to attack and to overcome. For a modest advance and glory, the soldier endangers his property and often his very life.



In order to gain riches, the merchant works all day long, watches through the night, crosses seas, risks shipwreck, and often perishes. How much does it not cost the ambitious, the licentious, and other sinners to satisfy their passions! They sacrifice their consciences, their goods, their fortune, their health, and their reputation. The least we can do is to devote as much activity to saving ourselves as they do to losing themselves. Besides, we enjoy better circumstances from the point of view of difficulties, because, even if they are numerous, they are nevertheless considerably smoothed out by the means of perseverance which God gave us, and sweetened by the consolations He distributes abundantly to those who serve Him.

This diminution in difficulties and this sweetening of pains are more noticeable among religious than among simple faithful. Despite all the divine graces, the world remains ever corrupt and corrupting, full of intemperance and apathy. In the religious life, one is far away from this corruption and these obstacles, as we have explained above. But the advantages that the religious find in their state, to work out their salvation, ought not to prevent them from working with fear and trembling. On the contrary, they should experience these feelings more deeply, because the more grace they receive, all the more culpable would they be in abusing them, and the greater the torment when the justice of God seizes them. This is what the Holy Scriptures tell us: "The earth that is often watered and does not give the fruit it should produce is not far from being cursed" (see *Heb.* 6:7-8). May God, in His goodness, turn away from us that irreparable misfortune!

### § III – *Religious cannot effectively work at their salvation except in observing their Rule.*

There are means of salvation in all states of life, but everywhere these means are closely linked to the fulfillment of the duties proper to each of those states. Whatever our vocation, we should not allow ourselves anything that opposes salvation, but, on the contrary, we should refer to that goal all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions, and all our sufferings. This fidelity to the duties of the state is the easy and simultaneously indispensable means to attain Heaven.

The duties of state for religious are summarized in the fulfillment of their Constitutions, to which Providence has attached their salvation. After the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church, they are the principal channels which divine goodness uses to spread its graces upon them. St. Bernard has said that he who keeps the observances of his religion will be saved by them, as it is written in the law of God, *it preserves him who keeps it*. This is why, in the early years of the founding of an Order or of its reform, we can see holiness

flourish in so many souls, because, at that point, we see the Rule observed with fervor and exactitude even in its smallest details.

O religious! Follow your Constitutions, since your salvation is linked to them. If you are clerical brothers [*frère de choeur*], study a lot; if you are cooperator brothers [*convers*], work continually; if you are priests, apply yourselves to the salvation of souls, using the talents God has given you. All of you, be faithful to prayer, to spiritual reading; recite your Office with devotion; keep exactly the abstinences, solitude, dependence, and you will save yourselves. But if you are unfaithful to your Rule, God will withdraw His graces from you and you could fall into hardness of heart.

When negligent religious are at the point of death, what fidelity they would wish they had retained in keeping their Constitutions! What regrets will they not have for having transgressed them! Of what use, then, will be those pointless conversations, those useless visits, those violations of silence, that eagerness for news, that slander, that sharp banter, those undignified pleasantries, those acts of sensuality, those absences from choir, that lukewarmness in the service of God, those confessions without improvement, those fruitless communions or Masses? Religious have been seen almost in despair, so strongly were they moved, at the moment of appearing before the sovereign Judge, because of the habitual transgression of their duties! And if we could penetrate into Hell, we would find a great number whose damnation began with these same infidelities! Let us forestall these dangers. Let us keep our Rule with fear, fidelity, and gratitude. This is the great and infallible means of salvation that God has prepared for us from all eternity.

## ARTICLE II

### The need for penance

- 1° Penance is necessary for everyone;
- 2° It must be severe and proportionate to sin;
- 3° The penance of religious consists in the exact observance of their Rule.

#### § I – *Penance is necessary for everyone*

Penance is necessary not only for those who are still in sin, but for those who are already converted, and even for those who have preserved their innocence.

1° The sinner must do penance or risk damnation. Jesus Christ declared it: “Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” *Nisi pœnitentiam habueritis omnes similiter* (Lk 13:3). There is no middle ground: either weep and suffer in this world, or weep and suffer for all eternity. “Every sin,” said St. Augustine, “must be punished, if not by the repentant man, then by an avenging God.” *Aut ab homine pœnitente aut a Deo puniente*. Indeed, sinners have offended the divine majesty; they will never be saved unless they repair that injury by repentance. They shipwrecked after baptism; they cannot return to the land of the living except on this plank of salvation: *Secunda post naufragium tabula* (see ST III, q. 84, a. 6). They have aroused the anger of God; they will be crushed by it unless they appease it, and they will not achieve this except by repentance. They are accountable to divine justice for the eternal punishment that their sins merit. If they do not satisfy their debt in this world, by voluntary penitence, they condemn themselves to forced penitence in the other world, and it will be unending. Indeed, God necessarily and eternally rejects sin. The disposition of the sinner will not change after death; he will be fixed and immobilized in his revolt. Consequently, God will eternally and necessarily loath it; that is why He will punish the sinner with unending agony.

2° Even if we have already been converted and assured of pardon, we must nonetheless do penance. Informed by a prophet that his sin had been remitted, David nonetheless continued to punish himself rigorously and stirred himself to compunction. His sin was always before his eyes; his entire nights were spent in tears and prayer; his body was weakened by fasting, and he consumed ashes as if bread. Saint Paul found nothing in his conscience to reproach him, and yet

always he reduced his body to servitude in order to do penance. The Magdalen had been assured by Our Lord that her sins had been pardoned; nevertheless, for the rest of her life, she continued to weep and to atone for them. This is because, in fact, there are two elements in sin: the fault or injury made to God, and the penalty that one must suffer to repair that injury. In the sacrament of penance, divine mercy remits the fault and the eternal penalty due to the fault. But His justice leaves us with the obligation to undergo, in exchange, a temporal punishment, either in this world by painful works of Christian atonement, or after death by the suffering of Purgatory. Now, even though our penance might have lasted for several years, have we adequately satisfied the justice of God? We could not prove this to ourselves except by a private revelation; we can be rather sure that this will amount to nothing. Therefore, we must continue to do penance for our entire life.

3<sup>o</sup> Even were we to have the assurance of having atoned for our past sins, we would remain obligated to do penance to protect ourselves from future betrayals, because even remitted sins leave us with much weakness that allows us to fall at the first occasions: experience proves this only too well. It is therefore just to add to a penance of expiation a penance of precaution, which will be a defense against a new fall. According to the striking comparison of St. John Chrysostom, in this it is like bodily illnesses. Even after recovery, they leave behind a weakness which is difficult to overcome during a lifetime and a permanent disposition to fall again into the same illness. It is not sufficient, then, to use a remedy along with a strict regimen while one is bothered by a painful ache; one must continue the treatment for the rest of his days, lest the enfeebled temperament be newly disturbed and overcome by another illness of the same type, but one more devastating, that leads to the grave. This is the condition of the sinner. He is a convalescent for a lifetime; a new fall remains a constant menace, which can only be guarded against by perpetual penance. This is why the Council of Trent said: "The entire Christian life ought to be a perpetual penance." *Tota vita christiani perpetua pœnitentia esse debet* (Conc. Trid., sess. 14, *De extreme unctionis*, prol.).

4<sup>o</sup> Even they who have had the happiness of maintaining their baptismal innocence need penance to continue to protect themselves from the corruption of the world, for original sin, after having been remitted by baptism, nonetheless leaves within us a haven of evil. The flesh rises up against the spirit; the passions are continually born in the heart and threaten to drag along the consent of the will. Now, it is the task of penance to ward off that danger, to humble the spirit, to subdue the flesh, and to mortify the passions. He who neglects penance, however just he is, will soon become guilty. This is why we often see the most innocent of saints reveal themselves as the most penitent.

The love of Jesus could have given this disposition, in part, but one should recognize an act of prudence in this. The more the saints loved their innocence, the more they feared for it and strove to place it under the safeguard of severe mortification. For example, St. John the Baptist, sanctified in the womb of his mother, nonetheless lived a very strict life. His clothing consisted of a coarse hide; his fasts were so strict that Jesus Christ was able to say of him: "John came neither eating nor drinking." *Neque manducans neque bibens* (Mt 11:18). The ground and stones were the bed of his rest; the desert and mountain caves served as his dwelling; indeed, everything in him longed for nothing but penance. "With food, clothing, sleep, and home, John did penance." *Joannes victu, vestitu, cubitu, loco pœnitens* (St. John Chrysostom). This was the life of the Precursor, this should be the spirit of penance of the just who hope to prepare the paths in their heart for the reign of perfection, in imitation of the Divine Master.

## § II – Penance must be severe and proportionate to the sins

If penance is not severe and proportionate to the sins committed, it does not deserve the name. Indeed, as St. Augustine remarks, it takes its name (*pœna tenet*) from the pain that ought to seize the soul and the body of the sinner because of his misdeeds: *Pœnitentia a pœna nomen accepit qua anima cruciatur et corpus mortificatur*. It does not, therefore, consist in a simple cessation of sin and in a change of conduct. It must have the positive character of chastisement; it needs to produce the effects of punishment in proportion to the extent and the seriousness of the injury. God requires this in the name of justice: *Divina exigente justitia* (see Conc. Trid., sess. 14, *de Sacramento Pœnitentiae*, c. 2). Were someone to have committed in all his life only one mortal sin, that is enough to open in his heart a stream of unending tears: *Semel peccasse satis est ad fletus æternos* (Tertull.). An entire life, even spanning several centuries, would hardly be sufficient to atone worthily for the faults committed, not even a single one. This is why, when the Holy Scriptures speak of penance, they reduce it to painful actions, requiring effort: Rend your hearts and not your garments; return to God with all your heart, give witness to the sincerity of your return by your fasting, by your tears, and your groans (see *Joel 2:13*). Clothe yourselves with a hair-shirt, cover yourselves with sackcloth and ashes; by the violence of your groans and your sighs, imitate the tears and the cries of a woman who has lost her only son (see *Jer. 6:26*). The Fathers of the Church teach us the same truth when they call penance a painful baptism: *Baptismus laboriosus*.

On this point, the severity of public penance among the first Christians gives us serious lessons. The penitents remained for several

years in the vestibule of the church, deprived of the sacred mysteries. There, the body covered in tattered clothing, as well as in a hair-shirt, hair disheveled and covered with ashes, prostrate on the ground and sighing, they implored the faithful to pray for them so as to obtain mercy for them. During that period, they engaged in fasts of bread and water, other mortifications and humiliations, up to the day of their reconciliation.

It is true that the Church has relaxed some of her early severity in deference to our weakness. But even if the methods of unalloyed discipline have changed, the nature of repentance, its spirit, its essential austerities have experienced no change. We adore and serve the same God as did the first Christians; sin injures Him just as it did formerly. Even though reconciliation with our Mother no longer requires that we have already satisfied divine justice in full, here on earth, the obligation of atoning for the misdeed persists after the pardon. Lest someone deceives himself on the subject, the Council of Trent reminds confessors that they must impose penances proportionate to the sins, and warns them that if they fail to do so, they take upon themselves the same burden that they unjustly acquit in others.

On considering more attentively again the nature of penance, we will understand better why it needs to be austere. According to Tertullian, it serves as substitute for the indignation of a God angered by the sinner: *Pœnitentia Dei indignatione fungitur*. Now indignation, and especially the indignation of a God, is a strong sentiment that is not calmed by light reparation. What is needed to appease it is an appropriate satisfaction, one worthy of disarming it. Penance is also, according to St. Bernard, an abbreviation of the pains of Hell: *Compendium gehennæ æternæ*. Now, are the pains of Hell very mild, so that the soul can bear them without violent strain? Penance, as we have noted, must be proportionate to the sin; and so, it must be equal in seriousness and spread the atonement everywhere the evil has worked its ravages. In order to atone for notable misdeeds, it is evidently not sufficient to recite short vocal prayers; there is need, as St. Augustine says, for difficult works, tears, groans, significant alms, and long fasts. *In satisfatione ingentium peccatorum non verba tantum, sed et opera quærentur; addendæ sunt lacrymæ, gemitus, uberiores elemosynæ, continuata longo tempore jejunia* (Serm. 255.1, *De Pœnitentia*). This is also what St. Cyprian prescribed: "Let our groans and tears be proportionate to our bad conduct. The deeper the wound in the soul, the more care and time are needed to heal it, so that our penance be not too much inferior to the gravity of the crime." *Quam magna delinquimus, tam grandia defleamus, alto vulneri diligens et magna medicina non desit, pœnitentia crimine minor non sit* (Serm. *De Lapsis*).

The penance must be proportionate not only in quantity but

also in the quality of sins. This is why it is necessary to strive to serve in penance all that contributed to offend the Almighty: the spirit, the heart, and the body. The spirit roused itself against the God of truth; accordingly, it must first humble itself, and then use all its resources to comprehend the seriousness of the offense, to remind itself of the magnificence of the eternal goods lost by its folly. It is from the heart that all sins come, as Our Lord said (*Mt. 15:19*); thus, the heart needs to be rigorously punished by interior and spiritual grief, so as to have it lament unceasingly. This grief is called *contrition* and *compunction*, precisely because the heart of the genuine penitent is fully contrite, fully broken, filled for life with the most bitter anguish. The body is ordinarily the accomplice and the agent of sins; it is appropriate that it, too, receive mortifications proportionate to its misdeeds. From all viewpoints, the penance must be full and severe. This is what St. Paul understood when he wrote to the Romans: "For as you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity, unto iniquity: so now yield your members to serve justice, unto sanctification." *Sicut enim exhibuistis membra vestra servire immunditiæ et iniquitati ad iniquitatem, ita nunc exhibete membra vestra servire justitiæ in sanctificationem* (*Rom. 6:19*). And he adds: *Humanum dico*; I demand this in the name of simple human reason and in that of strict justice! What, then, should be required of the religious who serves God with a special love, in the way of His counsels, and follows the rules of perfection?

### § III – *The penance of religious consists in the exact observance of their Rule*

Religious are even more obliged to practice penance than people in the world; moreover, they have more means to apply themselves at it. Among those means, we rank as first the strict observance of the Rule.

First of all, the spirit of their Rule is to dedicate them by the condition of penance, because religious are established in the Church to maintain and there expand that virtue, by continuing on earth the sufferings of Jesus Christ and by working for the conversion of sinners, either by mortification, which disposes God to grant them graces, or, in addition, by works of zeal, as is the case in our Order. Thus, religious must not only lament their sins but also the sins of their neighbor. The faithful who give them alms for their support, occasionally even by depriving themselves of something necessary, are moved to this generosity under the persuasion that, in the convent, someone will pray for their intention, appease the wrath of God, and satisfy His justice for them, for their parents, and for all sinners, by the austerities practiced in the cloister. Therefore, religious are, in some way, public

penitents who share in the sins of the people and live only to reconcile them to God, by means of tears and atonement. "The life of a good religious," declares the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* with the same intention, "must be a cross and a martyrdom." *Vita boni religiosi crux et martyrium* (lib. I, c. 19).

Secondly, the ability to do penance is one of the principal reasons that lead Christians of the world to embrace religious life. To be sure, there are in the world certain means of doing penance, because the ordinary penance that God demands of everyone is to suffer, with a repentant love, the difficulties inevitable in each state. The father of a family who takes great pains to rear his children, to manage his household according to the spirit of the Church, is performing a penance very pleasing to God. The craftsman and the worker who work night and day for their sustenance and who offer their work to the Lord as satisfaction to His justice, perform a significant penance. The loss of a lawsuit, the death of a friend, a bankruptcy that ruins the family, a change in seasons that takes away the harvest, a calumny, a long sickness, and other similar misfortune that God allows, are occasions for genuine penance if we accept them in conformity with the very just will of God and with a resignation full of love.

But, besides these penances which are inseparable from all the states of life, there is need to practice others that are proportionate to the sins of each individual, to their dominant passion, and to their habits — such as fasts, prayers, retreats. Admittedly, it is very difficult in the world to practice these special penances, either because one cannot easily know those that God demands, or because one does not know how to fulfill them. For religious, their penance is not only general but personal: it is the strict observance of the Rule. In this lies the satisfaction that the justice of God, manifesting itself through the intermediary of Holy Church, has accounted to them. It demands that they should purify themselves from the sins committed, forestall those they could later commit, and preserve their innocence.

Do we need to atone for what regards the virtue of purity? Our abstinence, our vigils, our studies, the obligation of continual modesty of the eyes in the convent and outside: all these are very beneficial penances for mortifying the body, reforming the senses, and leading an angelic life.

Is the sin of pride the one that must more especially be punished? Our Rule has wisely provided for that, because obedience of the spirit and of the will continually hold us in dependence, like children, and poverty opens us to many humiliations, outside the convent and inside. In short, all our observances contain many painful and humiliating practices, like the unceasing work of hands by the cooperator brothers [*frères convers*], study for preachers, and for everyone, dili-



gence in all the activities of the community.

Does our conscience reproach us for words against charity as regards our neighbor? The Rule imposes on us the penance best adapted to this kind of sin in prescribing strict silence in five places of the convent, namely: the cloister, the dormitory, the cell, the refectory, and the oratory of the brothers. In addition, it adds the prohibition of speaking, even elsewhere, without special permission; fidelity to recollection; the practice of many acts of fraternal charity; frequent prayer, which refreshes us with the love of God and of neighbor, and, seven times a day, to praise the Lord with a mouth so often occupied formerly with words against charity and humility. What more excellent reparation could we invent?

How many religious are to be pitied if they do not follow their Rule in this spirit, who, every day, seek some pretext to dispense them from keeping it, and spend their entire life in exercises of penance without ever becoming genuine penitents, having all the discomforts of their observances but never their pleasant rewards! Blessed, on the contrary, are the religious who are entirely animated with the spirit of compunction and love of God. By their fidelity, they atone every day for their sins, appease the anger of the Divine Master, satisfy His justice, extinguish the flames of Hell and of Purgatory, attract to themselves new graces, and merit an eternal reward. Nothing discourages them, neither the length of their penance, because they expect to die tomorrow, nor its strictness, since it is proportionate with the penalties from which it delivers them and with the rewards it guarantees them. Moreover, God graciously deigns to pour upon them some consolations that are a foretaste of the joys of Heaven.

## ARTICLE III

### The horror of sin

The horror of sin is the first basis for virtue. The stronger that horror is in us, all the more lively is the fear of committing sin, of the sorrow for having committed it, and the desire of growing every day from virtue to virtue. — The most sure indication we have that we are in the love of God remains the witness of a conscience seized with horror for sin and fearing nothing as much as offending its Lord. In this chapter, we will attempt to arouse an appropriate horror of sin. To that end, we will speak of: 1° the malice of mortal sin; 2° the malice of venial sin; 3° we shall explain how the horror of sin is necessarily connected, in religious, with the observation of their Rule.

#### § I – *Malice of mortal sin*

This malice arises from two elements: 1° the injury to God;  
2° the evils that it causes in man.

##### 1° *The injury to God*

The injury that mortal sin causes to God is measured first by the greatness of Him Who receives it. Indeed, the extent of an injury is measured, before everything, by the dignity of the person offended. The offense made to a king is much more serious than that to one of his servants. Now mortal sin is an injury made to Him Who is infinite majesty and perfection. Therefore, in a certain way, this injury is infinitely great, as St. Thomas said: “a sin committed against God has a kind of infinity from the infinity of the Divine majesty.” *Peccatum contra Deum commissum quamdam infinitatem habet ex infinitate divina majestatis* (ST III, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2).

Indeed, the sinner injures the supreme authority of God because he violates brazenly His formal orders. He insults His justice, because he scorns even the most severe threats. He offends His goodness, because he prefers the pleasure of the senses and the love of a creature. He attacks the omnipotence of God, because he has the audacity to rebel against it at the moment when it could crush him. He rises up against His wisdom by opposing the plans for sanctification

that it has for man. It outrages His holiness, which has infinite hatred for iniquity. He rebels against His sovereign domain, by drawing everything to himself and to his own satisfaction. Finally, he struggles, in a way, against the divine being, because he often wishes there were no God so he could sin more boldly. God, it is true, laughs at those ineffective efforts. And yet, just as in the matter of injury one considers more the perversity of the intention rather than the success of its execution, mortal sin, considered as a struggle, is a kind of deicide, according to the judgment of St. Bernard: "Considered in itself, it kills God by a particular intention . . . for it plainly desires by a cruel malice that the power, the justice, the wisdom of God should die." *Ipsum, quantum est de se, Deum propria perimit voluntate... crudelis plane et execranda malitia, quæ Dei potentiam, justitiam, sapientiam perire desiderat* (Serm 3 de Resur.).

The greatness of sin arises not only from the infinite perfection that it offends, but also from the ingratitude of the miserable individual who commits it. Now the one who dares to sin is a man. Man, ashes and dust, earthworm, corruption, nothingness — but ashes that rise up against God, dust that insults Him, worm of the earth that stands with insolence against His majesty, corruption that wishes to prevail over the Holy of Holies, nothingness revolting against the Almighty!!! The sinner is nothingness, and yet he is powerful in his revolt because he is armed with the benefits of the Creator. The mind which he uses to form his guilty thoughts still carries the traces of the supreme intelligence which made him in its image. The heart that conceives evil desires and plans is a masterpiece of divine goodness. The eyes, the hands, the feet that this rebel employs in offending God, the air he breathes and the light that directs his footsteps, even the darkness that envelops the horror of his crimes: everything he has comes from the wisdom, the power, and the mercy of his Author. And he dares to turn everything against Him! Can we imagine a more wicked ingratitude? Can anyone inflict a greater injury on God?

If anything more telling and more compelling is needed to confirm the idea of the magnitude of sin, considered as an offense against God, one need only to look at the dying Christ. The Father, following the order wisely established by His providence, did not want, in order to pardon us, any less a satisfaction than this death and these wounds of the Savior. O sin, O wound of souls, how incomprehensible is your malice! "Recognize, O man, how grave are your wounds, that it was necessary, according to the order of divine providence, that Christ should be wounded for them." *Agnosce, homo, quam gravia sunt vulnera, pro quibus, secundum divinæ providentiæ ordinem, necesse est Christum Dominum vulnerari* (S. Bern.).

2° Evils that mortal sin causes to man.

The first injury that mortal sin causes to man is to deprive him of infinite benefits, namely grace and the virtues. As soon as man commits a mortal sin, he loses sanctifying grace, habitual charity, the friendship of God, the right he had to the Heavenly realm, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the infused and supernatural virtues, except for faith and hope. This sin removes from the Christian his resemblance to his Creator and imprints on him the image of the devil; the child of God is transformed into a slave; the vessel of honor into a vessel of wrath; the object of love and the kindness of the Holy Spirit into an object of horror and aversion on which He prepares to inflict His vengeance. From then on, the soul loses all the beauty of its spiritual life, because grace is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body. The soul without grace is therefore a ghost that moves and a specter that seems to be alive, but that, in reality, is dead before God, just as are bodies enclosed in a grave. *Vita corporis anima, vita animæ Deus* (see ST II-II, q. 23, a. 2, ad 2). It is even more horrible than corpses because those are not objects of aversion to God, while He detests the soul in mortal sin and does not hesitate to condemn it to frightful torments.

Mortal sin deprives the sinner of all past merits, and renders him unable to acquire others in the future. All the commendable works previously performed under grace before offending God, such as fasts, vigils, alms, confessions, communions, prayers, etc., are lost because of a single mortal sin. If one were to die in that state, he would be damned forever. Should one give all his possessions to the poor, practice the most rigorous penances, perform miracles, speak in the tongues of men and of angels, deliver his body to the flames, but lose charity by a single mortal sin, he is nothing, he deserves nothing, and has no right to claim the glory of Heaven. "I am nothing . . . it profiteth me nothing." *Nihil sum..., nihil mihi prodest* (I Cor 13:2-3).

Sin is the cause of all the sufferings that we endure in this world and in the other. The deluge that covered the earth, the fire that reduced Sodom, Gomorrah, and other cities to ashes, the defeats of so many armies amidst streams of human blood, sudden deaths, reversals of fortune, tempests of the sky: all these disasters are a punishment for sin. To be sure, they are also the effects of nature or the consequences of man's hostility. But God makes use of these events to punish the sinner; their very cause is a consequence of sin, without which there would be no such disorders in nature or in man. On this point, the prophet asks: why these calamities that ruin Jacob and Israel? Is this not because we have offended the Lord? *Quis dedit in direptionem Jacob et Israel vastantibus? Nonne Dominus ipse cui peccavimus* (Is. 42:24).

## § II – *The malice of venial sin*

### *1° Malice of venial sin as regards God*

We ought to be horrified not only by mortal sins but also by venial sins because of the offense they give to God. To assess this offense exactly, two kinds of venial sins must be distinguished. Some are due to complete weakness, such as those we commit by surprise, by inadvertence, by hastiness on an unforeseen occasion. Our intention and habit, however, are to be aware of them; we detest them as soon as we notice them; they are a continual reason for lamentation and humiliation before God. The saints have been subject to these kinds of faults, and it is about them that Scripture said: “A just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again.” *Septies cadet justus, et resurget* (Prov. 24:16). The other venial sins proceed from a fully engaged will. They are venial sins that arise from full knowledge of their cause, those that result from a long-standing habit that we have no concern to correct and to which we are perhaps so attached that we deliberately commit them with the delayed purpose of starting over again later. These are the sins of which we wish to speak here and now, to illustrate that they offend God more than is generally thought. It is about these that St. Thomas says: “One should choose to die rather than to commit a single venial sin.” *Debet prius homo sustinere mortem, quam ut peccet venialiter.*” (see ST Suppl., q. 23, a. 3, ad 1). It is to these sins that we need to apply the words of St. Gregory: “It often happens that a light fault is worse than a great crime, because when we realize more easily the enormity of the crime, we correct ourselves more quickly. Whereas the light fault, appearing so trifling, is all the more dangerous in that we commit it without remorse and remain in sin longer.” *Nonnunquam in parvo deterius quam in majori peccatur. Major enim quo citius culpa cognoscitur, eo etiam celerius emendatur; minor vero, dum quasi nulla creditur, eo pejus quo etiam securius in usu retinetur* (Homil. 52).

Venial sin, understood in this way, offends the supreme majesty of God, for it scorns His commandments, which we ought to obey even on those points that appear to have lesser importance. Indeed, everything that goes against the sovereign Master and displeases Him contains a certain gravity, even though when compared to greater offenses we consider these as light. Not only the one who plots against the life of the prince but also he who offends him by deed and word, who remains indifferent to his glory and does not fear to go against his orders at every moment, commit a detestable fault and deserve a

rigorous punishment. And so, even though venial sin does not attack the attributes of God as mortal sin does, it remains always a disobedience of His orders, an act contrary to His will; no more is needed to conceive a sharp horror of it. This is why St. Paulinus asks himself how someone can qualify as light a fault which betrays such a contempt of God. The genuinely wise man pays less attention to what is commanded than to the dignity of the one commanding (*Epist.* 14). And in the same vein, St. Jerome says: "It is never a slight failure to offend God, even in the littlest matters because He pays less attention to the nature of the sin than to the scorn of His person." *Nunquam leve est Deum etiam in exiguo contemnere, qui non tantum ad qualitatem peccati respicit, sed ad personæ contemptum.*" (*Epist. ad amicum.*)

Venial sin offends the sovereign goodness of God. The Lord is infinitely generous and kind; at every moment, He fills us with His favors. Yet, instead of acknowledging his benefits and of loving Him wholeheartedly, he who commits a venial sin offends His sovereign goodness by an intolerable ingratitude, and in a number of circumstances, for insignificant reasons, he divides the love of his heart between the Creator and the creature. When one cherishes his father, one is not content to avoid attacking his life and to obey him in essential matters; when one is devoted to a friend, one does not wait until he is in extreme hardship before offering him help. One pleases them on all occasions, the minor no less than the major; one avoids all that could cause them the slightest discomfort; one anticipates all their desires; for their well-being, one uses all manner of solitudes and kindnesses; one is always ready to express respect and affection; indeed, one finds nothing unimportant in all that could please or displease them, because we love them. Is God not our Father and the best of all fathers? Is He not our principal and sole Friend? It is therefore horrendously ungrateful to offend Him so often, deliberately, by one's negligence, and by not seeking to please Him in all things. This disorder, especially when habitual, can entail serious consequences. This is what made St. Augustine say: "There is no sin so slight that does not become greater when neglected. For one should not consider the fault committed, but Him Who was offended: that God so good, so merciful, and so holy." *Nullum peccatum adeo parvum, quod non crescat neglectum: non enim considerandum est quod fecerit, sed quem offendat, quam bonus est, quam benignus, quam pius* (*De Pœnit.*).

Moreover, venial sin is opposed to the glory of God, so that it unceasingly diminishes Him. Furthermore, it offends Him more than all men and angels can honor Him by all their worship and their tributes throughout eternity, since those tributes are always measured according to the limited being of those who give them, while venial sin is measured by the incomparable dignity of Him Whom it offends.

This is why if it were a question of forestalling the overthrow of an empire, of facilitating the conversion of all sinners, or even of withdrawing from Hell all the damned, not one of these advantages should be bought at the price of even one venial sin. Moreover, St. John Chrysostom assures us that the saints, who are good judges of matters, have greater horror of the slightest offense committed voluntarily under divine eyes than of Hell itself.

It is quite clear, then, that the lightness of the matter does not prevent venial sin from being a great evil with regard to God. One could even say, in a sense, that this even augments the seriousness of the offense. If one were to yield to the fault in order to avoid a cruel torment like the gallows or the stake, or to preserve one's life in an extreme peril, or to prevent a great fortune from being lost, or to satisfy a violent passion, there would be, if not justification, at least an explanation of the habituation of the sinner. But here you have a Christian who, benefitting from the fact that God does not command a thing under penalty of damnation, has the audacity, for a trifle, to neglect chasing away a thought, to suppress a desire, to hold back a word, to mortify a look of curiosity, to animate an action by motives of faith — has the audacity, I say, of disobeying his Master, offending His goodness, diminishing His glory! What shameful conduct! God therefore has every right to complain bitterly about it, just as He complained that His people, who, for some wheat and a piece of bread, did not fear offending Him: *Propter pugillum hordei et fragmen panis* (Ezek. 13:19).

### *2° Injuries of venial sin as regards man*

Even in this world, venial sin brings man very great afflictions. Sacred Scripture gives many examples that make us tremble. In a moment of defiance, Moses and Aaron, those two great servants of God, struck the rock twice instead of once, to draw from it a stream of water: the Lord deprived them of entering the promised land (*Num.* 20:5, 12). Miriam, the sister of Moses, was struck with leprosy over her entire body for a slight grumbling against her brother (*Num.* 12). Fifty thousand Bethsamites died for having looked on the Ark with too little respect (*I Sam.* 6:19). Seventy thousand Israelites died of the plague because David had desired, in a goal of proud arrogance, to take a census of his subjects (*II Sam* 24:15). For his slight human respect towards a friend who invited him to his table, a prophet was killed by a lion (*I Kings* 13:11-33). Forty-two children were devoured by bears for having insulted Elisha by taunting him (*II Kings* 2:23-24). According to the saints, many of God's punishments were, for those who experienced them, a sign of mercy because they replaced the more

strict chastisement of the other life. But, at the same time, God wanted to give us a lesson about what His justice has a right to expect for the slightest offenses. As for the penalties of the other world, the just have the flames of Purgatory. The damned, besides the torments they suffer for their mortal sins, suffer others no less intense, but no less eternal, for their venial sins. If, therefore, someone commits a venial sin, could it be said, in an indifferent tone, that the fault is trivial?

Another less apparent penalty, but a very frightening one with which God punishes venial sin, is the withdrawal of graces. Our Lord has a partiality for the souls who serve Him out of love and who carefully avoid sin so as not to sadden Him. He makes them feel the effects of His tenderness, strengthens them against temptations, and makes everything that concerns service to Him not only possible but also delightful. Venial sin, as it chills and reduces the love of God, brings about, by a contrary effect, the withdrawal of His favors of predilection and of that special providence. Consequently, souls habituated to committing venial sin fall into a great insensibility and in an unhappy inertia for spiritual things. They pray without fervor, fulfill practices of piety without joy, and prepare for activities without merit. In the spirit, no more of those ardent lights of faith that often leads one to think about God; in the heart, nothing of the ardor of charity that propels one to relate everything to God, nor of the sprightliness of hope that excites the desire for eternal goods and the disdain of the vanities of the world. Little by little and quietly all these injuries sadden the soul and are a result of the withdrawal of particular graces. And so, as St. Augustine said, even though each venial sin does not bring death to the soul, nonetheless all those sins taken together end up forming a horrible wound that disfigures its beauty and distances it from the sacred caresses of the celestial Spouse: *Quamvis quotidiani defectus, singuli non lethali vulnere ferire sentiantur; tamen omnes simul congregati, velut scabies nostrum decus exterminant, et ab amplexibus speciosissimi sponsi nos separant* (Hom. 50).

Another very serious penalty that venial sin causes to man is to deprive him of many of the merits in his actions. The benefit of our good works depends on the fervor of the charity that inspires them. As we have said, venial sin reduces the fervor of charity, although it does not suppress the habit. This is why those who deliberately commit sin and take no violence to correct themselves lose almost all the profit of their actions. From morning to night, rarely do they perform any action purely for God and which does not contain something to displease Him. When they rise, it is with laziness; if they pray morning and evening, it is with distraction; if they hear Mass, it is with unseemliness and irreverence; if they attend public prayers, it is with intemperance; if they sing, it is with sluggishness or vain self-



satisfaction. When they dine it is with sensuality; if they work, it is with laziness; if they speak, it is with curiosity, without charity, without humility; if they perform some good work, it is with pride. When they confess their faults, it is without sorrow and without firm purpose of amendment. Indeed, with them, neither thoughts, nor words, nor actions come to merit the considerable degree of grace and glory that would belong to all these works had they been inspired by the fervor of charity.

In the end, venial sin leads to the danger of falling into mortal sin, which is the most serious of all evils. It is not that several venial sins coalesce into a mortal sin; nonetheless, it is certain that the former incline to the latter. Unlike mortal sin, venial sin is not a complete straying from the final goal, but it is a detour that little by little tends to that straying. It is not a complete break with God, but it is a chilling and an indifference that often end with a separation. It does not entail the loss of sanctifying grace, but exposes it to deprivation. Indeed, when someone deprives himself of the choice graces spoken of above, he inflicts a series of wounds to the soul, weakening it; furthermore, by the repetition of actions, one increases the tendency to do evil; once rolling down that incline, there is no stopping: "They begin with little things and they rush forward to large ones." *A minimis incipiunt et in magna proruant* (St. John Chrys.). Thence the saying of the Holy Spirit, so strongly justified by experience: "he that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." *Qui spernit modica paulatim decidet* (Sir. 19:1). Those terrifying failings of persons who seem to be so virtuous and holy began with venial sins, just as large fires arise from an ember which one neglected to extinguish. Thus did David, after observing Bethsheba too long in his curiosity, fall into adultery, and from adultery to homicide, of which he was never thought to be capable. Again, to take more common examples, one gets used to bantering, to slandering and to muttering about insignificant matters, thereby acquiring the ease of doing the same for important matters; one grows in anger towards persons being attacked; one scandalizes bystanders greatly; and this bantering, slander, and muttering can easily become mortal sins. Or again, one is negligent in rejecting distractions during exercises of devotion, thus disposing oneself to do the same during prayers of obligation. By an imperceptible seduction and without any need for a positive act of will the neglect of minor matters thus succeeds in making us fall in important matters: *Si curare parva negligimus, insensibiliter seducti audentes etiam magna perpetravimus* (St. Greg., *Moral. in Job* 10, c. 11). Let us not be like those who say without thinking: "It is only a venial sin; I will not be damned for so little." What do you think; could not someone respond about the gravity of sins? A question that holds the most capable spir-

itual directors in suspense: "Who can understand sins?" *Delicta quis intelligit?* (Ps. 19:12). But were you certain of the insignificance of your sins, St. Augustine could always answer you: "Look not with disdain on venial faults; if the weight of each one does not frighten you, let their number, at least, terrify you." *Ista levia noli contemnere; si contemnis quando appendis, expavesce quando numeras* (In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus, 1, 6). In sum, let us fear all sins; let us be horrified at the most insignificant up to the most serious; let us flee from them as from a serpent that has the teeth of the lion and that kills souls: *Quasi a facie colubri fuge peccata..., dentes leonis dentes ejus, interficientes animas hominum* (Sir. 21:2-3).

### § III – *The horror of sin in the religious measures his observance of his Rule.*

There are some religious Orders in which a large number of transgressions of the Rule are mortal or venial sins. The religious of those Orders are obliged by their profession to follow their Constitutions accordingly, for those religious believed that nature, tending so much to laxity, had need of this check and that, held back by the fear of the offense, they would better fulfill their duties and arrive more surely at perfection. Our [Dominican] Constitutions judged that it was more in keeping with the character of our observances, with the spirit of our vocation and with the dispositions of those who embraced it, not to oblige under any sin, venial or mortal. Nonetheless, it rarely happens that someone deliberately breaks them without incurring some fault: 1° because of the lack of requisite intention; 2° because of defective circumstances that accompany the action; 3° because of the detrimental results that follow and that one was bound to prevent.

Regarding an infraction of the Rule, the defect of requisite intention results in a sin. Indeed, putting aside all question of religious perfection, there remains for a simple Christian the genuine obligation of making all his actions deliberate for an upright purpose: pleasure as one's end is characteristic of mindless beasts. This obligation is founded on the first and the greatest commandment of Our Lord, which is to love God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength (Mt. 22:37). St. Paul tells us clearly: "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). Words which, according to St. Augustine and St. Thomas, do not express simple advice but a genuine precept: *Non est consilium, sed præceptum* (Collationes in decem præceptis, a. 1). To satisfy that precept, the most reputable of theologians require that all deliberate action should be linked to God, actually or virtually. According to other less demanding theologians, it is sufficient but necessary that every action

by its intrinsic goodness be capable of being referred to God. Any action that is not, as they say, *referable to God*, is an abuse, a step against the sovereign Master; it is evil, it is sin.

And so, can a transgression of the Constitutions be performed for God and in relation to His glory? For example, can we seriously say to God: "Lord, it is for You that I break the silence; it is to please You that I secretly break the fast; it is to glorify You that I dispense myself from wearing wool; I offer you my neglect to study; to please You, I will be absent from choir without legitimate permission; and since I am doing all this for Your interest, I hope also that, for each activity, You will grant me an increase of glory in Heaven"? Would this not be mocking God to speak to Him in this way? Therefore, since these kinds of transgressions and other similar ones are not directed to God actually or virtually, and are not even capable of it, the conclusion is that they are ordinarily wrong and opposed to His glory.

Ordinarily, the violation of the Rule contains some sin because of the culpable circumstances that accompany it. Earlier, the evil arose from the absence of being directed toward God; now, it arises from the presence of causes contrary to His law. St. Thomas specifies three of these causes as being the one most frequently found, namely: negligence, passion, and contempt. *Qui tamen adssunt peccare venialiter vel mortaliter ex negligentia, vel libidine, seu contemptu* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 9, ad 1). The reason for this is that all negligence, all passion, and all disdain are causes and circumstances that corrupt an action while accompanying it. Now in practice, it is very rare, so to speak, and morally impossible for someone deliberately to transgress the Rule without there being mixed in one of these three circumstances.

For example, it would be by negligence or laziness that, without a dispensation, someone would miss going to Matins during the night, or assisting at the conventual Mass during the day. In these, one would fall under the condemnation of St. Bernard: "All negligence is culpable. *Omnis neglectus culpabilis* (see *De Praecepto et Dispensatione*, c. 8). If someone were to eat or drink between meals, without permission or necessity, would not the genuine causes be gluttony, sensuality, and intemperance? If we act, not out of gluttony, but to follow others of whom we fear to be mocked for being scrupulous, are not the motives of human respect and vanity sins? Thus we can say about many other transgressions of the Rule: sometimes it is curiosity, sometimes scorn, sometimes immodesty that carries them along; always, a venial sin is the result.

As for contempt, St. Thomas defines it in this way: "He transgresses by contempt who does not wish to submit to what is called for by the law or by the Rule; and, by this cause, he is moved to do something against that law or that Rule." *Tunc committit aliquis, vel trans-*

*greditur ex contemptu, quando voluntas ejus renuit subjici ordinationi legis vel regulæ; et ex hoc procedit ad faciendum contra legem et regulam* (ST II-II, q. 186, ad 9). This is how Sylvius explains it: "One directly violates a Rule or precept who acts directly against it or who makes it clear that he will not perform the precept or Rule." *Qui directe eo fine violat regulam, vel præceptum, ut contra illam agat, vel ut ostendat se nihil facere superioris præceptum aut regulam.* This contempt is mortal sin because it is directly contrary to the authority of God and to the essential laws of religious perfection in profession. In the soul, it utterly destroys both the idea of the Rule and esteem for it. Exteriorly, it destroys the guiding power indispensable for execution, namely, the principle of authority. Moreover, all the authors have adopted the saying of St. Bernard: "Contempt is a cause for damnation." *Contemptus damnabilis.* But, note carefully, aside from explicit and formal contempt, there is a construed or virtual contempt that consists in deliberately violating the Constitutions, continually, with no desire to correct oneself. Some teachers of our Order consider this contempt to be mortal sin, because, they say, having no respect for the Rule and maintaining habitually the will to transgress it is not only to neglect this or that means of perfection, confining oneself to this or that observance in particular. It is to renounce the collection of means provided by God to journey toward perfection itself; it is to block with one move all the pathways that could lead the religious to his obligatory goal. Whoever acts in this way can no longer say that he always has the intention of tending to his end while maintaining in himself the will to make this morally impossible. Whatever we may think of this reasoning, it is clear that, if nothing else, the frequent transgression of the Rule predisposes to formal contempt, as St. Thomas said: "The frequent repetition of a sin leads dispositively to contempt." *Frequentia tamen peccati dispositive inducit ad contemptum* (ST II-II, q. 186., ad 3).

The transgression of the Rule is often a cause of sin by reason of its results. We have just indicated one of those results, which is to dispose one to contempt. We must add to this the violation of the vows, which flows very easily from the violation of the Constitutions. For example, against the vow of poverty someone begins to receive small gifts, without permission. They are loaned and given without the superior's knowledge; after that, the individual himself gives similar presents in secret, and finally, one becomes an owner. The same can be said for the vows of chastity and of obedience. Another result is to render us incapable of performing the works of our vocation that regard the salvation of souls. Our entire Rule prepares us to fulfill these duties well, in the spirit of our Father St. Dominic. If we violate it on some point; if, for example, we break silence, the dissipation and the waste of time that follow harm the preparation and the holy dispo-

sitions that the apostolate demands of us. According to the noted Domingo Báñez, this would contain matter for a great sin, because it involved duties of our state for the accomplishment of which God has charged us by name and counts on us: "Religious are held by office and profession to dispose of their things that they might be administered by the foremost qualified person of their Order under the obligation of mortal sin. From this it follows that a religious is held under a particular obligation of keeping the letter of the law." *Religiosus tenetur ex officio et professione sua disponere se ut sit idoneus ad exercenda potissima sui ordinis munia sub peccato mortali. Hinc sequitur quod religiosus tenetur peculiari obligatione ad studium litterarum.*

Ordinarily, however, the most serious transgression of the Rule is the scandal given to one's neighbor. This sin is easily committed in community where we continually see each other, with the result that a troublesome example is quickly known and easily imitated. There is a particular malice when this is caused by older and influential religious. But it is especially outrageous when it comes from superiors, because they are responsible before God for all the faults of those who follow their bad example. By their office, they are obliged to have all the points of the Rule observed strictly and to punish those who break them. The regular observance of the community, with which they are entrusted before God and before men, depends on fidelity to many details which appear trivial in themselves. At their death, they will be judged on all the laxity that they allowed to be introduced by their fault. The pious and learned Domingo Báñez, whom we have just cited, affirms that according to the common view of the professors of his time, superiors sin mortally if they neglect to have the regular practices and ceremonies observed strictly, even though, in other respects, it is a question of matters that do not oblige under pain of mortal sin: *Sententia est communis quod si prælatus negligat cæremonias quæ alias non obligabant sub mortali ipse peccat mortaliter.* Even though we do not share this opinion entirely, it gives us much on which to reflect. Accordingly, let us have a great horror for the slightest infractions of our Constitutions, out of love for our soul which their practices should sanctify, and out of fear of the sin that we would be committing each time we violate them. — May the Virgin Mary, called "the faithful Virgin," *Virgo fidelis*, grant us fidelity to our sacred Rule and to the orders of superiors. In this is found our salvation.

## ARTICLE IV

### Preparation for death

- 1° How we should think about death;
- 2° how we should prepare for death;
- 3° genuine preparation for death for a religious  
is the faithful observance of his Rule.

#### § I - *We must think of death*

On this subject, we can offer three reflections: 1° death is certain;  
2° its hour is uncertain; 3° its consequences are irreversible.

We all must die. A day will come when our soul will separate from our body: the body will be consigned to the earth, will decay, be eaten by worms, reduced to dust; and the soul will go before God. That is certain. The ancient patriarchs lived seven, eight, and nine centuries, then they died. We have seen kings whom flattery placed among the number of gods; but of those so-called divinities, there remains only a bit of dust. In a short while we will be nothing more than a handful of dust. O man! Remember! *Memento!*

The Holy Scriptures strive to remind us about the certitude of death. If we gather their sayings together, we will clearly see that this is a judgment inflicted against all the children of Adam: everyone will enter the path common to all men. They exit naked from their mother's womb and will return naked to the bosom of the earth (see *Job* 1:21). Every man will go to the house of his eternity; he has only to await the grave. No one lives forever, nor does he dare think of this empty hope. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (*Heb.* 9:27). To fulfill these verdicts, the Scriptures show us the Son of God Himself reduced to the state of death, even though He is life, for He clothed himself in the flesh of man and took it upon Himself to atone for us to the justice of His Father.

In the absence of divine revelation, our everyday experience is enough to remind us of the certainty of death. Our body is composed of joints that are continually wearing out and of opposing humors that fight each other and destroy each other little by little. We are born only to die; each one of our moments takes away a portion of our life which is never to return. At every instant, we take another step towards the grave. Everything around us makes this known. In the

dwellings where we live, how many others have passed through and had to leave the earth! The pictures of our Fathers under our eyes, while telling us who they were, also tell us that they no longer are. The sight of an elderly man reminds us of the tomb toward which he is descending. The child himself is wrapped in swaddling clothes as if to prepare him for burial: *Panni initium sepulturæ* (Tertullian). If he grows, his energy stands in contrast to the infirmities that begin to afflict us; we understand, then, that in the ordinary course of events, we will die before he does. In the churches where we pray, how many funeral services follow each other! And when, at night, we enter our dwellings, is not our sleep itself a striking image of death? Accordingly, while we see only uncertainty in the world, death alone affirms itself and is assured of ruling over us: "What is certain in life except death?" *Quid in hac vita certum est nisi mori?* (St. Aug.)

A frequent consideration of this certainty is very beneficial to the Christian. "Think of your final end, and you will never sin," has said the Holy Spirit: *Memorare novissima tua, et in æternum non peccabis* (*Sir.* 7:40). The proud man who arrogantly raises himself above others and who is concerned only about his greatness would understand humility better and would practice it more easily if he considered that he had to die and that in his grave, he will be tread upon by everyone and be combined with the most reprehensible men. The ambitious man, fully occupied with obtaining for himself an extraordinary position and building sumptuous mansions would adopt Christian moderation and would abandon his magnificent projects if he thought that in the grave he will be reduced to utter poverty, to a shameful nudity, that only a shroud, some earth, and darkness will constitute his entire fortune, his companionship, his residence until the end of the world, while his riches will pass into the hands of strangers. All of this will happen, and perhaps this very night: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee. And whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" *Stulte, hac nocte animam tuam repetunt a te; quæ autem parasti, cujus erunt?* (*Lk.* 12:20) Finally, there is no vice that the thought of death, meditated on continuously, will not eradicate; no sin that it will not prevent; no passion that it will not weaken; no penance that it will not impel one to embrace; no suffering that it will not help to bear; no virtue that it does not cause to blossom.

2° Yet, even though it is certain that one has to die, there is nothing so uncertain as the time and place of death and the manner in which one meets it. "You know neither the day nor the hour," Jesus has said (*Mt* 25:13). "Man," adds the Holy Spirit, "does not know what his end will be like; just as fish are caught by a hook and birds by a net, thus will men be surprised by death when, suddenly, it overwhelms them" (*Eccles.* 9:12). "It will come like a thief, and one does not

know at what hour it will arrive" (*Rev.* 3:3). Indeed, death knocks continuously at the door of the elderly to take them away; and it hides in ambush near young people to surprise them. There is no age, no health, no temperament that can promise a moment assured of life. Every day we see people die in the flower of life and in lively health. Ordinarily, one anticipates the fall of a building by exterior signs; but the building of our body is composed of so many parts, so hidden, and so delicate that we think it well safeguarded, and it is then that it falls all at once. One man dies in the street, another at home; this one is swallowed up by the sea; that one is broken in the midst of stones and mountains; actors have been known to die on the stage — each of them was taken on a day and at an hour he did not know. *Nescitis diem, neque horam*. There is almost no one who is not surprised in this way. This is a truth about which Jesus Christ Himself has warned us: "The Son of man will come at an hour you do not expect." *Qua hora non putatis Filius hominis veniet* (*Lk.* 12:40). We can even say that almost always death has something unexpected about it. It is sudden when we die immediately from an attack or an accident. It is sudden, from the viewpoint of salvation, when one is afflicted with a misfortune that, until the end, takes away the use of reason. It can be called sudden when it allows the dying person only a few days to prepare himself for the solemn passage to eternity. It is sudden even in extended illnesses when the sick person, filled with delusions, does not see it coming, and when, out of so-called compassion, the thought of the sacraments is put off until he has nothing but a glimmer of consciousness and a breath of life.

3° What is most frightening about death are the circumstances that accompany it and those that follow. The body will perish; its destruction begins on the deathbed by the convulsions of agony. Already the head cannot be held up, the face is covered with a cold sweat and turns pallid, the lips are ghastly, the cheeks lower and tighten on the bones, the mouth becomes misshapen, the tongue dries, the eyes sink, are extinguished, wander, stare and open in a frightening manner; the chest can no longer breathe; the arms fall in weakness and the feet are icy cold. Finally, the dying person takes his last breath; everyone who is there, in fear, keep a cheerless silence and end up leaving with a sad and beaten demeanor, not even daring to look at the corpse. In the grave, it continues to decompose. A multitude of worms reproduce themselves; they devour the same flesh that brought them about; their number is so great that they cover the deceased like a garment: "Worms shall be thy covering." *Operimentum tuum erunt vermes* (*Is.* 14:11). After having consumed everything, the worms consume themselves. There remains nothing save a dreadful skeleton, which little by little dissolves into dust. This is the end of the body that was so gently



caressed. This is how man's great talents end, his important occupations, his delightful possessions, and his vast projects. "In that day all their thoughts shall perish." *In illa die peribunt omnes cogitationes eorum* (Ps. 146:4).

Before the last breath, the dying person has given up his soul. From that fatal moment, the sinner can no longer hope for any mercy, and the faithful can no longer acquire merit. The justice of God reasserts all its rights. There, where the tree will fall, in the south or in the north, it will remain. *Si ceciderit lignum ad austrum aut ad aquilonem, in quocumque loco ceciderit ibi erit* (Eccles. 11:3). O my God, this will happen to me shortly! O terrible moment of death, how your consequences are irreparable! You last but a moment, a moment on which an eternity hangs: *O momentum a quo pendet æternitas!*

## § II – One must prepare himself for death

One must prepare himself for death without delay. We may have other concerns but this one is the most necessary and the most urgent. It would be imprudent to delay it even for one day, since death comes quickly and perhaps there will not be a tomorrow. Frightened by this thought, a great number of kings and emperors abandoned their throne so as to retire in cloisters. Every day we see people of all ages and sexes leave the world to embrace the religious life, the better to prepare themselves for death, in a solitary and mortified life. Despite this long preparation by an austere life, we can meet some who still have fears when their end approaches. St. Hilarion lived a holy life from his childhood, and yet, at the moment of dying, he trembled and had to encourage himself with these words: "Depart, my soul; what do you fear? Depart without hesitation. You have served Jesus Christ for almost seventy years and you would tremble in the face of death?" *Egredere, quid times? Egredere anima mea quid dubitas? Septuaginta prope annis servisti Christo, et mortem times?* (St. Jerome, in *Vit. S. Hilar.*)

This constant vigilance is so necessary to avoid being surprised that Jesus Christ applied Himself to warn us often in the Gospel to keep ourselves ready: "Stay awake because you know neither the day nor the hour." *Vigilate, quia nescitis diem, neque horam* (Mt. 25:13). "Be ready because the Son of man will come at an hour that you do not anticipate." *Estote parati, quia qua hora non putatis Filius hominis veniet* (Lk. 12:40). He uses several parables so we can understand better this same truth. He sometimes compares Himself to a master who pretends to go on a long trip and suddenly calls for an accounting from his servants, while they think him far away; sometimes to a spouse, who, having delayed his coming, arrives when least expected (Mt. 25; Lk. 21). He does not tell us: "Prepare yourselves as soon as I arrive," but

rather, "from this moment on, be ready." *Estote parati*.

The example of people of the world could also animate this vigilance at every moment. A soldier does not wait to learn how to use his weapons until the enemy begins fight; he exercises long beforehand. An administrator of a place does not begin to repair the walls of the city and to store supplies when it is about to be invaded; he takes his precautions long before, lest he be surprised. A man who handles public funds and who every day could be asked for an accounting of his administration does not begin to straighten out his books when the inspector is already at his doorstep; he keeps them constantly ready. Will it always be true that the children of this dark era be more prudent than the children of light? (*Lk.* 16:8) And the matter of salvation which deserves primary attention, will it always be the most neglected? At the hour of death, a powerful, cruel, and cunning enemy is to launch an assault that is more severe and more difficult to endure than ever before. A severe, inflexible Master will come to ask us for a strict accounting of our entire life. And we would neglect to keep ourselves ready at every moment? Let us begin, at least today, to prepare ourselves for that fearful moment. With the *Imitation of Christ*, we should endlessly tell ourselves: "If now you are not ready, how will you be ready tomorrow? Tomorrow is uncertain and who is assured of seeing it? *Si hodie non es paratus, quomodo cras eris? Cras est dies incerta, et quis scit si crastinum habebit?*" (I, c. 23)

One needs to prepare for death very carefully, because it is not as easy to die well as one might believe. In order to die well, it is not enough to go to confession, receive Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, shed a few tears, and die while kissing the crucifix. Indeed, such an ending is very edifying and greatly desirable, but those external signs are misleading in a person who has lived wickedly. To die a holy death, precious in the eyes of God, is to die in His grace, with a lively faith, a firm hope, an ardent charity, and a genuine contrition. It is to die after having done penance for one's sins, having corrected one's disordered passions, rid oneself of bad habits, practiced Christian virtues, and repaired the harm done to one's neighbor. Now it is difficult to take care of all that in the agony of a final illness, either because one does not have the time, having been taken by surprise by an unforeseen and violent misfortune; because God sometimes refuses the abundance of his graces in punishment for past sins and for the negligence shown in the work of salvation; or because the invalid, absorbed by the fear of death, makes only a hasty, imperfect confession, with no supernatural sorrow. Moreover, this experience reveals that many of those who did not work at their salvation while they were healthy, even though they confess their bad habits during sickness, fall back into their earlier disorders as soon as they are healed: a very likely sign that their con-

version was not sound. This is easy to understand. It is very difficult for the heart to change suddenly, for ingrained passions to be extinguished in a flash, and for bad inclinations to be uprooted, as if by magic. This led St. Augustine to say: "It is exceedingly rare for anyone to die well after having lived badly." *Vix bene moritur, qui male vixerit* (*de Civit. Dei*, I; see *Serm de Disciplina Christiana*, 12).

Listen, then, to the counsel of the Divine Master. He says to us all: "Stay awake." *Omnibus dico: Vigilate* (*Mk. 13:37*). Out of mercy, He wished to hide our final day so that each day we would be on guard and prepare ourselves. *Latet dies ultimus ut observetur omnis dies* (*S. Aug.*). Let us cooperate with His mysterious plans, prepare ourselves carefully. Let us prepare ourselves not only to assure actually the matter of our salvation, but to work it out more righteously, more gloriously, in order to be closer to God after death. May the Virgin Mary do us this favor, she to whom we pray so often in these words: "Now and at the hour of our death." *Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.*

### § III – *For a religious, faithful observance of his Rule is genuine preparation for death*

Three elements are necessary to prepare oneself for death: 1° reparation for the past; 2° good use of the present; 3° anticipation of the future by thinking often of death and of eternity. They who leave life after this kind of preparation could experience a sudden death, but it will not have been unexpected. For them, to die is to enter into the rest they were wise enough to obtain for themselves: "The just man, if he be preoccupied with death, shall be in rest." *Iustus, si morte præoccupatus fuerit, in refrigerio erit* (*Wis. 4:7*). To be sure, religious have an easier time than lay-persons to attend to these three elements. For this, it suffices them to keep strictly their vows and their Rule.

The first condition to prepare oneself for a saintly death is to make reparation for the past, so that at the last moment, the old sins may be as if they never existed. Now the religious who is faithful to the duties of his state lives only to correct his failures in the continuous practice of mortifying his mind or his body, as we have explained elsewhere. From the very beginning of the novitiate, he is to work hard at observing all the points of the Rule, with no dispensations except for a legitimate reason. Thus, after having begun to atone at an early time, he will continue to do so with fervor all his life and be always prepared to die. This fidelity is the atonement determined for him by God Himself. What a consolation! What security! And what a powerful reason to urge him to keep the Rule exactly!

In order to dispose oneself to atone for past sins, it is very advantageous to make a general confession right at the beginning of

one's conversion, while one is in good health and that one's mind enjoys perfect liberty, so as to repair all the faults committed in previous confessions since early childhood. Religious life prescribes this practice to novices before they take the habit. In this way it prepares them to engage in their penances night and day in the state of grace and with excellent interior dispositions. After having accepted the first time in a spirit of sacrifice all the hardships of religious life, they have the opportunity of renewing every day, in the morning and oftentimes during the day, to offer all the observances painful to nature. Thus, the measure of their satisfaction increases more and more. But when they break a certain point of the Rule, such as silence, etc., this is as much a curtailment of the satisfactions God demands of them, as it is a loss for the preparation of a good death. Instead of finding pretexts to obtain dispensations, they should be delighted at finding themselves in the position of fulfilling all their Constitutions to the letter, in a spirit of atonement. Thus will they have some right to say to God: "Do not remember, Lord, the sins and the mistakes of my youth." *Delicta juventutis meae et ignorantias meas ne memineris, Domine* (Ps. 25:7).

To prepare oneself for death, one must then use the present time to live a disciplined and holy Christian life. As St. Augustine said, one can hardly die in a bad state when one has lived well: *Non postest male mori, qui bene vixerit* (*De Civit. Dei*). Now it is difficult to find a more holy life than that of a religious who is a fervent observer of his Rule. The goal is saintly, because it is the continual exercise of charity, atonement, chastity, obedience, humility, and other virtues. Freed from the dangers and the sorrows of the world, the religious enjoys a deep peace that furnishes him the means to have the intentions and goals worthy of the holiness of his external actions. Everything that surrounds him — the example of fervent religious, the warnings of superiors, the public prayers — contribute to keeping him in that interior and exterior saintliness. Moreover, if he needs additional intimate graces to support him in the perfect way, the spiritual consolations that he receives from God bring him each day an increase in fervor. Religious life therefore helps him to live well and prepares him to die well: *Disces bene mori si didiceris bene vivere* (St. Aug., *de Disc. Christ.*, 12).

Thirdly, to prepare oneself for death, one must anticipate the future. This is why St. Anthony of the desert, St. Basil, St. Benedict, St. Bruno, St. Bernard, and the other founders and reformers of monastic orders recommended to their disciples, as an essential element, to think often about death and eternity, and to perform all their actions as if each would be the last. "At every action," St. Bernard said, "one ought to ask himself: Would I do this if I were to die a moment after?" *In omni operesuo dicat sibi ipsi: Si moriturus esses, faceres istud?* (*In*

*Spec. Monach.*) St. Basil equally tells us: Keep your final end always before your eyes. When you get up in the morning, doubt that you will survive until the evening; and when you retire at night, do not promise yourself to see the morrow; thus you will more easily prevent all kinds of vices: *semper ante oculos versetur ultimus dies*. How salutary will this simple reflection be when it is continued throughout life! If, for example, when one approaches the sacred tribunal, he could believe that it would be his last confession, with what sorrow, what humility, and what lamentations would he not do it? If, when one came forward to the Holy Table, he foresaw that it would be his last communion, with what faith, what humility, what fear, and what love would he not approach Our Lord? If, when a priest were to say Mass, he considered that this would be the last day that he would offer the sacred Mysteries, what spirit of religion and sacrifice would he not maintain at the altar, and with what solicitude would he not complete his thanksgiving? If we employ this practice for all our other actions, how could we calculate what a single day would be worth for eternity?

Our Rule helps us maintain this thought about death. It is to remind us of it and to invite us to prepare ourselves for it that we are commanded, on finishing the Divine Office, to terminate with this prayer: "May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace." *Fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei requiescant in pace*. It is for the same reason that before taking our meal we recite the psalm *De profundis*, not only to pray God to relieve our brothers in Purgatory, but also to remind us of death in the very action that we undertake to sustain life, and to place before our eyes our own grave, in which we will soon be devoured by worms. Again, it is for this reason that we are recommended to recite the *De profundis* or some other prayer for the dead when we pass by the cloister destined for the burial of brothers. Moreover, the sacrifice of the altar itself, while reminding us each morning of the Passion and death of the Savior, recalls the thought of our own personal end. If we chant *Requiem* Masses, if we assist at funerals, if we hear the bells rung for the deceased, if letters announcing the death of some brother or religious sister are read to the community, if we recite the Office of the Dead, etc. — all these things, remind us of what will shortly happen to ourselves. In a word, our entire religious observance is an extensive meditation on death.

Should we fear that this thought will plunge us into a harmful sadness? Not at all, for the remembrance of death is neither hard nor bitter except for those who have not prepared themselves for it by an honorable life, and who do not wish to correct their immoral attachment to pleasure. But it strengthens and consoles those who have regulated the state of their conscience. If it causes them some sadness, it is a sanctifying sadness that further detaches them from themselves

and preserves them from eternal death, the only truly overwhelming thing.

To better prepare ourselves for death and to make it meritorious, it is often useful to accept it ahead of time. We accept it first by a spirit of submission to the will of God, the Sovereign Master, the arbiter of life and of death. Every moment of our existence depends on Him, but our last moments, in a way, depend on Him in a more special manner. "Of the Lord, the Lord, is the departure of death." *Domini, Domini exitus mortis* (Ps. 68:20). Thus, so that death may be meritorious for us, we will place ourselves in perfect interior dependence on His sovereign domain, as did Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, we will accept death in a spirit of justice, for God has condemned to death all the children of Adam by reason of the first sin, and His judgments are righteous: *Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum* (Ps. 119:137). In that regard, so that our immolation may be more atoning, we will unite it to that of Jesus Christ, who shed His blood for the remission of our sins.

More especially, we will accept death in the spirit of charity, for God deserves that we love Him perfectly and that we suffer everything for His love. But in this life, only with difficulty does one arrive at perfect charity. Hence, we must be eager to accept the great sacrifice of life by a generous love, hoping that thereby we will please the Lord in the land of the living: *Placebo Domino in regione vivorum* (Ps. 116:9). This is how Jesus Christ, in everything our model, gave His life out of love and placed His soul in the hands of His Father.

Religious who have not been faithful to their Rule die in confusion and in fear. Indeed, at the approach of death, faith reawakens and grasps the sayings of the Gospel and the obligations of holy religion in a very different manner from how we used to think of them when we enjoyed health, and were unsteady because of passions, carried away by natural activity, blinded by false prejudices, bound by bad habits and harmful examples. With the fervor of the novitiate quickly extinguished, obedience accepted without a spirit of faith, grace received only to be abused, holy matters transformed into occasions of sin, an entire life forming a long chain of voluntary venial sins, and perhaps numerous mortal sins — what an abridged but striking and dreadful picture before the eyes of the religious about to die! What confusion for a preacher to have preached atonement so often to others and not to have practiced voluntary penances himself, not even the essential penitence that God demanded of him by the fulfillment of his duty! What trouble for an instructor who taught others the law of God and the principles of perfection, to find himself without a spirit of prayer, humility, and charity towards God! What fear for a brother who entered religious life so as to work constantly with his hands, to

realize that he spent a good part of his life in uselessness and that, instead of using his free time outside of his occupations to recite prayers and to offer good edification, he wasted it badly in useless and dangerous conversations with secular persons or with other unoccupied brothers. Finally, everyone who has not fulfilled the obligations of his state and has not tended to the perfection of charity and the other virtues will be seized with great fear in reviewing what his past has been and in asking himself what his future will be.

On the other hand, the religious who have faithfully observed their Rule enjoy exceptional peace and soothing confidence at the hour of death: "The just hath hope in his death." *Sperat autem justus in morte sua* (*Prov.* 14:32). Past sins do not trouble them because they fulfilled the penance God demanded of them, and they regard their sins as cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ. They are surprised only by the goodness of the Lord Who withdrew them from a corrupted world, filled them with His graces in the religious life, and prepared an eternal reward for them in Heaven. On realizing this, they recite acts of faith, hope, contrition, and love. Instead of being weighed down by the sorrows of death, they regard them as gain: *Mori lucrum* (*Phil.* 1:21). They are not distressed by the thought of judgments by God, placing all their confidence in Jesus Christ, from whom they expect a favorable sentence. For He is their father, pastor, brother, advocate, protector, mediator, savior, victim, and eternal pontiff. If the thought of the Redeemer does not reassure them sufficiently, they can confidently implore the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Dominic, and all the saints, especially those of our Order, whose footsteps they have faithfully followed. They enter into the attitude of David, crying out with him: Lord, take my soul out of its mansion where it is set so that I may bless your name unendingly; woe to me that my exile is so prolonged! When will I come and appear before the face of my Savior! All my desires will be met when I see your glory! (see *Ps.* 142:7; 17:15) With St. Paul they lament: "Wretched am I; who will deliver me from this body of death? I die every day, I desire to be free from the bonds of this passing life, and be united with Jesus Christ." *Desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo* (*Phil.* 1:23).

Lord, grant that I may live as a genuine religious, faithful to all my obligations. Let me die the death of the just, and let the end of my life resemble theirs. *Moriatur anima mea morte justorum et fiant novissima mea horum similia* (*Num* 23:10).

## ARTICLE V

### Fear of the judgments of God

1° The strictness and the depth of the judgments of God should make all men tremble, even the most upright; 2° the severity of an individual judgment ought to frighten all men, especially sinners; 3° religious cannot expect a favorable judgment unless they have observed their Constitutions exactly.

§ I – *The strictness and the depth of the judgments of God should make all men tremble, even the most upright*

The fear of God is the principle and becomes the fullness of wisdom: *Initium sapientiæ timor Domini; plenitudo sapientiæ est timere Deum* (*Sir.* 1:16, 20). Indeed, it is fear of God that begins the conversion of sinners, by frightening them as they realize the celestial threats and vengeance. It is fear of God that sustains converted sinners by carrying them to God, the preserver of innocence: “The fear of the Lord chases away all sin, protects the innocent, and gives every help to the good.” *Timor Domini fugat crimina, innocentiam servat, omnis boni tribuit facultatem* (S. John Chrys., *Serm. de S. Bapt.*).

God is to be feared, not only when one considers the grandeur of His majesty, before which the Angels tremble, and the scope of His power which nothing can resist, but also when once thinks of the infinite strictness of His judgments. That He hurled from the heights of Heaven to Hell a multitude of deceitful angels for a sin of pride, not leaving them a moment to do penance; that He chased Adam from the earthly Paradise for a sin of disobedience, and condemned him to death and to unending troubles along with all his posterity; that because of its corruption, He destroyed the human race, except for the family of Noah, by means of the deluge; that He censured the Jewish nation, the holy nation, the chosen people, because of its ingratitude; that every so often, He let burst His vengeance on the powerful of this earth and on empires by frightful punishments in which one is obliged to recognize His hand; that He went so far as to deliver to a most cruel and shameful death His only and consubstantial Son, recipient of His kindness: on seeing these effects of His justice, one is always bound to cry out: “Truly God is awesome, beyond all powers.” *Terribilis super omnes deos* (*Ps.* 96:4).

But above all, what should arouse fear and make even the most righteous tremble is the depth of that extraordinary judgment



that will one day decide our eternal lot. Oh! How the uncertainty of our salvation can cause us great anxiety! Will we be among the elect, or will we be rejected along with the people of perdition? Will we have the share of Jacob or that of Esau?... We know nothing about it. Two will work in the fields, one will be chosen, the other left behind; two will turn the same millstone, one will be accepted, the other rejected (*Mt. 24:40-41*). Accordingly, we do not know on which side we will find ourselves. Isaiah compares the elect to the small number of olives left on the tree after the harvest, and to the few grapes forgotten on the vine after the gathering. This uncertainty about eternal destiny made even the great saints tremble, not excepting the great Apostle of the nations [*i.e.*, St. Paul], although he was raised up to the third Heaven. Even David, after his long penance, was troubled. He used to tell himself: "I thought of my former days and I considered the eternal years; will God abandon me forever? Will He forget to have pity on me?" *Cogitavi dies antiquos, et annos æternos in mente habui... Numquid in æternum projiciet Deus? aut in finem misericordiam suam abscindet? Aut obliviscetur misereri Deus?* (*Ps. 77:6, 8-10*) Truly, more than the King-Prophet, we have the right to cry out: "God is terrible in His counsels over the children of men." *Terribilis in consiliis super filios hominum* (*Ps. 66:5*). Never will we be certain about our final perseverance. The columns of Heaven and the cedars of Lebanon will be toppled, while sometimes God has granted a blessed death to sinners who had fallen into iniquity their whole lifetime. O the depth of the treasures of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible His judgments. And yet, His dispositions are always adorable and full of reason, since they are inspired by a light without limits and a justice without miscarriage. *O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei! Quam incomprehensibilia sunt judicia ejus et investigabiles viæ ejus!* (*Rom. 11:33*)

For all that, this fear should not plunge us into despondency. Quite the contrary, when we experience fear, it provides us with a reason to hope for final perseverance, provided it is accompanied by confidence, humility, vigilance, and a spirit of prayer. 1° Our fear must be supported by confidence in the infinite mercy of God, and in the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the Holy Spirit deigns to assure us that divine mercy is eternal and will flow unceasingly on those who fear Him; that the Lord loves those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy; that He delights in them; that He directs their volition and will save them: *Misericordia Domini ab æterno et usque in æternum super timentes eum* (*Ps. 103:17*). *Beneplacitum est Domino super timentes eum et in eis qui sperant super misericordia ejus* (*Ps. 147:11*). *Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et salvos faciet eos* (*Ps. 145:19*). The more virtue grows in a soul, the more it fears being separated from God. And

as this fear penetrates the soul, so God is more greatly pleased in it and protects it with greater tenderness. Thus, while charity banishes servile fear, which concerns itself solely with punishments, it increases filial fear and confidence. This is why David, even though he was afraid when considering the eternal judgments, nonetheless asked the Lord to increase this fear in himself, and to imprint it even into his flesh, because he regarded this as a strength and a pledge of salvation. "Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear: for I am afraid of thy judgments" *Confige timore tuo carnes meas, a judiciis enim tuis timui* (Ps. 119:120). 2° Our fear will be a sign of predestination if it is accompanied by humility, for God saves the humble: *Dominus humiles spiritu salvabit* (Ps. 33:18). *Populum humilem salvum facies* (Ps. 18:27). He spreads His graces on those who do not trust in themselves, who fear when considering the depth of their misery, tremble when meditating on His judgments, and rely only on His infinite mercy. *Deus humilibus dat gratiam* (James 4:6). 3° Let our fear be accompanied with vigilance and it will be another pledge of our salvation. He who fears God neglects nothing in good works. *Qui timet Deum nihil negligit* (Eccles. 7:18). *Qui timet Deum faciet bona* (Sir. 15:1). 4° Finally, in order to lead us to our goal, our fear must be accompanied by prayer, for God attaches to prayer His diverse graces, especially that which crowns all the others. Let us pray, then, fervently and untiringly, to obtain final perseverance.

After having applied ourselves to surround our fear with those four dispositions, let us entrust ourselves with a very strong hope to the all-powerful help of God. Even though He does not grant the blessing of a happy death to many sinners, yet He never refuses it to those who have lived in the practice of Christian virtues and who have served Him faithfully to the end. The terrible falls of certain high-ranking men were preceded by some pride long nourished and developed secretly in the heart, or by some other hidden fault even more serious. "A fall that happened in secret preceded the fall that happened in public." *Illa ruina quæ fit in occulto præcedit ruinam quæ fit in manifesto* (St. Aug., *De Civ. Dei*, 14, 13).

Grant us, O Lord, to fear You as the saints feared You; and we will be happy at the end of our life; we will be blessed on the day of our death: *Timenti Dominum bene erit in extremis, et in die defunctionis suæ benedicetur* (Sir. 1:13).

§ II – *The severity of the particular judgment ought to frighten all men, especially sinners.*

Extreme fear will overcome all men, even the most righteous, when they must appear before the particular judgment, right after the soul leaves the body. “O my God!” St. Augustine used to say, “woe even to the honorable life if You examine it without mercy.” *Vae etiam laudabili vitæ hominum, si remota misericordia discutias ea* (Confess. IX, 13). “What will I do,” Job asked himself, “when the Lord comes to judge me? What will I answer when He questions me?” He had such a great fear of divine judgments that he felt they were like waves stirred up against him, overwhelming him by their weight: *Quid faciam cum surrexerit ad judicandum Deus? Cum quæsierit quid respondebo ei? Semper quasi tuentes super me fluctus timui Deum, et pondus ejus ferre non potui* (Job 31:14, 23). David, a man after God’s heart, cried out: “Lord, enter not into judgment with your servant, there is no man alive who could justify himself before You.” *Non intres in iudicium cum servo tuo quia non justificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens* (Ps. 143:2). St. Agatho, whose life was very innocent, was overcome by the same fears of death. When asked where this apprehension came from, he replied: “The judgments of God are very different from those of men!” St. Gregory of Nazianzen confessed that when he meditated on the coming of the Sovereign Judge, he was barely able to breathe (*Oratio VI*). And St. Ephrem, when thinking about it, fell faint and felt trembling overtake all the members of his body. The holy man, Job, was therefore speaking accurately when he cried out: “The Heavens are not pure before God; how much more then should men fear, being abominable and unprofitable, who drink unrighteousness like water!” *Cæli non sunt mundi in conspectu ejus. Quanto magis abominabilis et inutilis homo, qui bibit quasi aquam iniquitatem* (Job 15:15-16).

What ought to arouse great fear of the judgments of God is the severity of the judge, the rigor of the examination, and the severity of the sentence. As soon as the soul has left its body, it appears before the supreme tribunal. What fear it experiences. Here it is, a sinner, alone before God alone! It appears before an unyielding Master who will have no partiality to qualities, ranks, or dignities. “God is not a respecter of persons.” *Non est personarum acceptor Deus* (Acts 10:34). He has warned us of this in advance: “My eye will not spare you, and I will be without pity towards you.” *Non parcet oculus meus super te, et non miserebor tui* (Ezek. 7:4). In His presence, the devil will rush to be the accuser. The human conscience will become the most dreadful witness, because, enlightened by divine light, it will depict to the sinner all the

evil he has committed and oblige him to recognize the appropriateness of the verdict: *Testimonium reddente illis conscientia ipsorum* (Rom. 2:15).

The strict examination will overlook nothing. The sinner will render an account of all his words, even the simply trifling ones! What will it be for words of slander, libel, lies, impurity, cursing? What will it be for wicked desires? For activities? Even our righteousness will be judged, which is to say that God will examine if there had been in our good actions some hidden self-satisfaction, some desire to be esteemed by men; whether they were performed by whim, by habit, by human respect, with negligence or laziness: *Cum accepero tempus ego justitias judicabo* (Ps. 75:2). But what of sins of omission, so numerous as they are, which often pass unnoticed? And as if that were not enough, we will also have to account for the faults of others, those we did not prevent when we ought to have, either in charity or in justice. The use of graces received all during life, the benefits we could have obtained from illnesses, the use of natural gifts of body and of mind: all this will also be part of the frightful examination. It is an abyss where the soul loses itself; all foresight is taken aback there! "Thy judgments are a great deep." *Judicia tua abyssus multa* (Ps. 36:6). And yet, this examination will take place, and it is I, O Lord, who will be subjected to it!

How frightful will be the verdict of the judge against the sinner! "Depart from me, accursed ones, to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." *Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem æternum, qui paratus est diabolo et angelis ejus* (Mt. 25:41). *Accursed!* This word is a lightning bolt, a declaration that from then on the soul becomes repulsive to God and to all His creatures, that it has no longer has a possible share in the salvation brought by the Redeemer. *Depart from me!* Words of separation and exclusion! The soul ceases to have its creator as father; He recognizes in it only an enemy and a victim! *Depart to the eternal fire!* What a dreadful, irrevocable decree! *To the fire prepared for the devil and his angels!* What companionship! And those words, at the same time as they are a verdict, contain an executive power that plunges the damned into Hell. Now all of that examination, judgment, and condemnation takes place in an instant. The question asked around the deceased is whether the soul has really left the earth. The priest says: "Depart, Christian soul"; already it has been sentenced! The priest adds: "May your dwelling be today in the peace of Holy Zion"; but it is in the place of punishment. The priest continues: "May the holy angels come towards you and lead you to the Heavenly Jerusalem." And a band of demons, sometimes garbed in a visible form, have already taken this unfortunate soul to the abyss where there are tears and grinding of teeth! O my God, how incomprehensible and awesome is the severity of your judgments!

So the last judgment must add the full measure of fear and of

confusion to unrepentant sinners. This fear will be so great on the day of God's anger that men will wither away on anticipating the troubles that will menace all the earth: *Arescentibus hominibus præ timore et expectatione* (Lk 21:26). The sun will become dim, the moon stained with blood, the stars will fall from the sky, the powers of the sky will become unsettled. The sea will make the agitation and the din of its waves heard; the entire earth will quake and the mountains shake to their very roots. After these harbingers, the angel of the Lord will sound the trumpet, for, as St. Paul says, it is quite certain that it will resound: *Canet enim tuba* (I Cor. 15:52). Throughout the world, a mighty voice will pronounce these words: "Arise, you dead, and come to the judgment." And all the dead buried in the bosom of the earth or in the depths of the sea will resuscitate and assemble together to await the coming of the sovereign Judge. Then the banner of the Holy Cross will appear, and the Son of God will come on the clouds with great power and majesty, accompanied by a multitude of Heavenly spirits ready to execute His commandments. He will be as severe in punishing ungrateful sinners as He was gentle and merciful on earth to make their path to salvation easier. All the nations of the earth will groan; everyone will strike his breast; men will find themselves in a puzzling consternation; they will weep with horrible groans for their past sins, for their present bewilderment, and for the torments to come. But those tears never will prepare the way for pardon. It is too late!

Afterwards, the angels will separate the good from the bad. The book of life and the book of death will be opened. All the sins of thought, desire, speech, action, and omission will be displayed before the entire human and divine assembly, in order to justify publicly the conduct of God concerning the elect and the reprobate. All the angels and all the men will then see clearly what sinners thought they had hidden in darkness: those secret impurities, those hypocrisies that, under an ordered exterior, hid an evil heart; finally, all the mysteries of immorality will be unveiled before the entire world! At that moment, sinners overcome with rage and unable to bear the presence of their judge will beg the mountains to fall over them, the hills to envelop them. They will curse the day of their birth and utter all kinds of blasphemies against God. But then His verdict falls on them: "Depart, you accursed ones," and He hurls them body and soul into Hell. "They shall cast them into the furnace of fire . . . these shall go into everlasting punishment" *Mittent eos in caminum ignis . . . ibunt hi in supplicium æternum* (Mt. 13:50; 25:46).

§ III – *Religious cannot expect a favorable judgment from God except by observing their Rule strictly.*

We still have time to reflect on the anger of our Sovereign and to obtain a favorable judgment for ourselves. This goal includes three important points that are made easier by the practices of religious life.

1° One must judge himself. Indeed, St. Paul informed us that if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged: *Si nos ipsos dijudicavimus, non utique judicemur* (I Cor. 11:31). The same crime is not atoned for twice; and so, when a sinner has taken care to examine himself severely and to punish himself without leniency, instead of punishing anew on the day of his judgment, God will be merciful to him. This is what led St. Bernard to say: "I wish to appear before the judge as agitated as a man already judged and not as a man who is about to be judged; it is a beneficial judgment which withdraws me and protects me from the strictness of the judgments of God." *Volo vultui iræ judicatus præsentari, non judicandus; bonum judicium quod me illi districto divinoque judicio subducit et abscondit* (In Cant. Serm. 55, 3). Now our Rule, with personal examinations several times a day, frequent chapters, and the public or private mortifications that it prescribes, is nothing else but an anticipated judgment, a voluntary punishment of our faults. This is why, when novices attended chapters held by St. Louis Bertrand, they were so touched with fear, with compunction and the desire to do penance, that they seemed to be attending the last judgment and that they experienced most sanctifying impressions. Accordingly, let us remain faithful to the daily prescriptions of our Rule, and God will grant us His mercy on the day of His eternal reward.

It is with this outlook that religious, strongly imbued with the severity of God's judgments, are eager to do penance to forestall their dreadful consequences. St. John Climacus tells of an ancient hermit named Hesychius who was somewhat lukewarm in the service of God. He received a rapture in which the Lord gave him a glimpse of His judgments. Hesychius was so struck by this that he had the door to his cell sealed and remained there for twelve years, having bread and water as his only nourishment. He meditated continually on what he had seen, his eyes fixed on the same side, as if the frightening vision were always there, and remained continually in tears. On the eve of his death, the hermits assembled in his cell, requesting some edifying words from him. He answered them: "My brothers, if men only knew how strict the judgments of God are, how well they would keep themselves from offending Him and hasten to atone for their sins!" There is no doubt that all religious are unable to undertake a life as strict as that of this hermit. But they at least ought to remain faithfully observant of their Constitutions and of the regulations painful to nature

that they contain, without grumbling about their duration or their rigor. Blessed are they in being able to mitigate in advance the severity of their Judge by this light penance. But what is to be thought of him who, far from enduring the rigors in keeping with the spirit of his vocation, would not even wish to observe silence, modesty, inclinations, and other practices of this type, which are easier to bear than the mortifications, abstinences, and vigils? For reasons of infirmity, one can sometimes omit to rise at night, and not continually be bound to fasting; but what reason would there be not to observe those other practices of the Rule that are so easy and so sanctifying? For our part, let us practice the easy things, and, as far as we can, the more demanding ones. More blessed are we if God deigns to accept these diverse penances as expiation for the many sins we have committed. It is much better if our bodies are weakened by privations for a while, wilted by study and work, than that they be the object of an eternal condemnation on that terrible day.

2° To attract a favorable judgment, one must have carried out some good works that deserve divine approbation. This is why Jesus Christ has said to us: "Watch and pray at all times so that you may be found worthy of being protected from the calamities that are to come, and so that you will be able to appear fearlessly before the Son of man." *Vigilate omni tempore orantes, ut digni habeamini fugere ista omnia quæ futura sunt, et stare ante Filium hominis (Lk. 21:36)*. Religious life is certainly a continual occasion for good works. Not only does the Rule permit these, but it presents them to us already prepared, and places us in the beneficial necessity of devoting ourselves to them if we do not wish to become disobedient. Moreover, observant religious will appear before the judgment of God with a humble reassurance and be there filled with an abundance of joy. Unfaithful religious, however, who mock the former and their observance, will be confounded, dismayed, plunged into despair: "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them." *Tunc stabunt justi in magna constantia adversus eos qui se angustiaverunt (Wis. 5:1)*. This saintly reassurance on its own will be for the just ones a pleasant reward for all the trouble they took to remain faithful to their Constitutions, not to mention the infinite reward that Heaven will allot them after death.

3° In order to obtain a favorable judgment, one must act and think as if, shortly thereafter, one were to be summoned before God. This is the advice given to us by the apostle St. James, when he says: "Speak and act in the same manner that you would if your judgment had already begun." *Sic loquimini et sic facite sicut incipientes judicari (James 2:12)*. This is also what David suggests by telling us that the sinner commits many crimes for allowing the divine judgments to dis-

appear before his eyes: "His ways are filthy at all times: Thy judgments are removed from his sight." *Inquinatæ sunt viæ illius in omni tempore: auferuntur judicia tua a facie ejus* (Ps. 10:5). If religious regulated all their actions and their words as if they were due to be instantly judged by God Himself, what purity of intention, what caution would they not display in all their actions and their trivial desires! After having excluded vicious intentions, they will apply themselves to substitute for them noble and supernatural intentions. They will accomplish everything solely for God, so as to satisfy His justice, and to fulfill the promises they made to Him. This is why St. Ephrem taught that the ordinary subject of thought and conversation of religious ought to be the judgment of God. "In whatever place you find yourself," he said, "on the road, at table, in bed, think continually of the future judgment and the arrival of the just Judge. Say to each other: 'What will be that external darkness, that fire which will never be extinguished, that grinding of teeth?'" (Serm. 1 *de Compunctione*). St. John Chrysostom expressed himself in the same way: "Everyday and every hour of our life, we need to place ourselves before our eyes the eternal judgments." *Singulis diebus et horis, oportet ante oculos nostros proponere Dei iudicium* (Homil. 4 in Gen.). But religious are not the only ones who need to think about this seriously. The most fervent persons should also think of it so that, by reason of this holy fear, they may stand firm in their love of perfection; for "Blessed is the man who is always in fear." *Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus* (Prov. 28:14).

The story is told of a hermit named Stephen who had led a very penitential life in the desert, and had reached such a sublime innocence that he fed leopards by hand, and he had a kind of rapture before his death. During that time, with eyes wide open, he looked to the right and to the left of his bed and answered many accusations leveled against him. Sometimes, one could hear him say: "That is true; I concur; but for that fault, I fasted many years; for that other one, for a specified amount of time I served my brothers." On other occasions, he would say: "No, that is false; I did not commit that sin." This examination made the religious around him tremble, but they were especially frightened, when at the last fault of which he was accused, he answered: "This I admit; I have no excuse! Only in divine mercy do I place my hope." After this, he died, leaving his assistants wondering about the verdict concerning him. After having related this story, St. John Climacus added these words that are more appropriate for us than for him: "Wretched that I am, what will I become, since this deep friend of privacy and solitude, after having passed forty years in the monastic life and obtained the gift of tears, was left without a rejoinder before the accusation of some sins!" Should we be given to see in this story the exaggeration of a poorly informed hermit, listen to the



doctor of the Church, St. Jerome: "Every time," says he, "that I think about that great day, my entire body trembles. Whether I am eating or carrying out my duties, I seem to hear resonate unceasingly in my ears the sound of the terrible trumpet, and recognize these words: 'Rise, you dead, and come to the judgment of God.'" *Quoties diem illum considero, toto corpore contremisco, sive enim comedo, sive bio, sive aliquid aliud facio, semper videtur illa tuba terribilis sonare in auribus meis: Surgite, mortui, venite ad iudicium* (Ep. 7, 3).

Let us fear, then, the depth and the severity of the divine judgments. Let us fear because of the uncertainty of where we stand concerning salvation. Let us fear because of the strictness of our judge. May this fear bring us to place all our confidence in God, and to fulfill exactly all our duties as good religious. Because, now, we have understood and from now on we will think about it more often; this is the means to assure us of a favorable judgment, and to bring us infinite mercy forever!

## ARTICLE VI

### The pains of Hell

1° The pains of Hell are incomprehensible and eternal; 2° they are dreadful in their number and in their duration; 3° the religious who strictly keep their Constitutions will avoid the pains of Hell.

#### § I – *The pains of Hell are incomprehensible and eternal.*

The pains of Hell are so great that in this world we cannot imagine anything that could give us an exact idea of them. The cruellest torments invented by the furor of tyrants, the sword, the fire, the teeth of wild beasts, are only a symbol and a pale shadow of them. *Pone ferrum, ignem et bestias, et si quid his difficilius; attamen non umbra sunt ad illa tormenta* (St. John Chrys.: *Hom.* 49). Moreover, it is said that all sorrow will flood the damned: *Omnis dolor irruet super eos* (see Job 20:22). St. Thomas affirms that nothing of what sorrow can cause will be lacking in their torment: *Nec aliquid quod potest ad tristitiam pertinere deerit* (ST *Suppl.*, q. 98, a. 7). To understand this, we have only to consider the omnipotence of the Lord Who strikes them. He acts as God in all his works: it is as God that He rewards; it is as God that He punishes. He wishes that the chastisements have some proportion to the seriousness of the offense, and the offense being in proportion to His infinite grandeur, is incomprehensible. Accordingly, there is something incomprehensible and mysterious in His hatred for sin and in the manner in which He ultimately takes vengeance. Just as it is said that no eye of man has ever seen, nor the ear of man ever heard, nor his heart ever understood the grandeur of the eternal reward (*I Cor.* 2:9), similarly, as St. John Chrysostom said, neither the eye, nor the ear, nor the heart of man is capable of grasping the true notion of Hell “that God has prepared for those who offend Him.” *Nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascenderunt quæ præparavit Deus offendentibus se.*

The manner in which God punishes sin in this world can, without giving us an exact notion, help us to form a certain idea of it. If in this life, wherein justice is always tempered with mercy, He has punished many sinners even to the point of having the earth open up under their feet to swallow them alive into the deepest of chasms, as it is reported about Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their accomplices:

“they went down alive into Hell,” *descenderunt vivi in infernum* (Num. 16:27, 33); and, if He sends frightful and prolonged illnesses to the just, to innocent virgins, to young children who carry within themselves only the distant consequences of sin, what, then, will it be like when He punishes impenitent sinners in the other world?

Will we deceive ourselves to the point of believing that the dispositions brought by His goodness on this earth to the acts of His justice give us any hope for the same treatment in the next life? Would we not be deluding ourselves with some fatal illusion? On the contrary, the more God has exercised His mercy and His forbearance against sinners during this life, that much more does He have the right to punish them severely in Hell. The bursts of His anger, delayed and growing day by day, will only fall with greater violence. In a way, the delays obtained by His forbearance will only make His justice more impatient to exercise His rights freely, and the abuse of grace will authorize Him to punish with greater authority. “Oh! What a horrible thing it is to fall into the hands of a living and vengeful God.” *Horrendum est incidere in manus Dei* (Heb. 10:31).

§ II – *The pains of Hell are terrible  
in their number and their duration.*

Even though the pains of Hell are incomprehensible, they can nonetheless be reduced to two principles, that theologians call the pain of **Sense** and the pain of **Loss**. The first affects the faculties of sense; the second, which signifies damnation properly speaking, consists in the condemned persons’ privation of seeing God, and in eternal separation from Him. The first corresponds, as punishment, to the pleasures of the flesh that sinners enjoyed in creatures; the second, to the contempt they had for their Creator by offending Him.

First of all, as regards the penalty of Sense, we can do no better to get an idea of it than by meditating on the language of the Scriptures as explained by the Church Fathers. On speaking of Hell, the Scriptures use some expressions that are figurative, others that are to be taken literally. The figures are numerous and frightful. Even though they are metaphorical, it is certain that if the Holy Spirit chose them, and the holy doctors commented on them, it is because they designate genuine penalties, equivalent to those embraced by the symbol, except that the manner is different and the degree more onerous. Accordingly, these figures express certain truths, worthy of meditation. The spiritual writers strove to recommend them to us, as can be seen in the writings of St. Teresa [of Ávila] and others with greater influence in Holy Church.

Indeed, it is literally true that, to carry out His vengeance in

Hell, God has chosen fire, that is to say, all the most active and most violent agents. We have an idea of the material fire which man uses on earth. And yet, however consuming it may be in its nature, it has no equivalence with that which torments the condemned. The first was created to be our servant, the second to exercise over us the office of avenger. This moved St. Augustine to say: "Everything we suffer in this world, however insupportable it may be, when compared with the eternal fire, not only is it trivial but can be accounted as nothing." *Quæ quisque gravia patitur in comparatione æterni ignis, non tantum parva, sed nulla sunt* (Serm. 109 *de Temp.*; see Serm. 22, 3 *de Psalmo 57*). This fire is not metaphorical but real, genuine, material. Hence, every time the Holy Scriptures speak of the pains of Hell, even though the expressions are often varied, they return constantly to the word "fire", and to "eternal fire", as expressing a reality that constitutes the principal characteristic of the pain of Sense: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." *Discedite, maledicti, in ignem æternum* (Mt. 25:41). This fire, ignited and maintained by the breath of God's anger, will encircle and envelop the condemned; and yet, far from consuming them, it will preserve them so as to continue their torment, just as salt preserves the objects it penetrates: *igne salietur*. (Mk. 9:48). My God! Who will be able to stand that devouring fire? *Quis poterit habitare de vobis cum igne devorante?* (Is. 33:14)

The fire of Hell will not only torment the bodies of the damned after the resurrection; even now it torments their souls, before they rejoin the bodies. By a supernatural power received from God, the fire makes them suffer inconceivable pains. These souls are linked, attached, and held back by the flames, but unable to free themselves. This captivity brings them indefinable punishment, either because such a constraint is contrary to the dignity of their spiritual nature, which is independent of corporeal substances and destined to be united to its Source; or because it deprives them of the liberty about which they were so jealous, preventing them from thinking what they would like, of doing what they would wish, and constrains them, like the devils, to think continually, necessarily, and invariably, about the miserable state to which they are reduced. From this, there arise sorrows so real and so unutterable that our present condition does not allow us to form even the remotest idea of them: "They are tormented in a way that is extraordinary and ineffable, but nevertheless real." *Torquentur miris et ineffabilibus, veris tamen modi* (St. Aug.).

And yet, this exceedingly frightful fire will not prevent the condemned from enduring also an intense cold: "The damned will pass from the most intense heat to the most intense cold without this giving them any respite." *Damnati transibunt a vehementissimo calore ad vehementissimum frigus, sine hoc quod in eis insit aliquid refrigerium* (ST

*Suppl.* q. 97, a. 1, ad 3). Indeed, even though the cold and fire are incompatible by nature in the same subject, the omnipotence of God will oblige them to join together in order to punish the crimes of sinners more severely.

The other senses of the damned will also suffer special torments, and in particular the sense of sight. Through the shadows of Hell, the damned will see demons and be horrified. On earth, these evil spirits appear under hideous guises, as we see regularly in the lives of the saints; how much more will they delight in making the damned suffer by frightful apparitions! The eyes of these unfortunate ones will also be tormented by the sight of their own body, and that of their companions, especially of their enemies and of the accomplices in their crimes. Just as the souls of the blessed who are confirmed in grace spread to their body a startling beauty, so the souls of the condemned, confirmed in malice, will spill over their miserable bodies with frightful ugliness and hideousness. Finally, their eyes will be harassed by the gloom which in Hell is often mixed with a dim light to add more horror to the spectacle.

The hearing of the damned will have its special punishment. They will hear the groans and the cries that the other damned persons will utter throughout eternity from the impressions of pain, rage, and despair which they will experience in the devouring flames. They will have to bear with reproaches coming from all sides for the many sins they committed or led others to commit; they will hear the blasphemies ceaselessly addressed against God, because of the severity of His justice. Furthermore, they will hear the spiteful words by which the demons incite each other to torment their victims, and the invectives with which those evil spirits will assail them by reminding them, in irony, of the means of salvation they had despised. Finally, Holy Scripture leads us to suppose that the noise of storms and whirlwinds, agitated by the anger of God, will be a portion of their cup: *Spiritus procellarum pars calicis eorum* (Ps. 11:7).

In their sense of smell, the condemned will experience an insupportable stench. Even on earth, when the devil is expelled from the body of one possessed, he sometimes seeks revenge by leaving a foul stench after himself. This torment would certainly not be lacking in Hell, to punish with a special penalty the pleasures that the condemned took in fragrant and pleasing odors. "Instead of a sweet smell there shall be stench." *Erit pro suavi odore fœtor!* (Is. 3:24) Their bodies, like cadavers, will be the seat of this stench: fumes mixed with the eternal flames will increase it; through a thousand artifices, the demons will make them smell it more. To give an idea of this penalty, Scripture speaks of the odor of pitch and of sulphur. But these figures pale beside the reality!

The sense of taste also will have its punishment. This will be to punish their sins of gluttony and all their pursuit in using food. They will experience continuous hunger, similar to that of rabid dogs: *Famen patientur ut canes* (Ps.59:7). The sick who have experienced this ravenous hunger, accompanied by weaknesses, sluggishness and convulsions, will imagine the harshness of those the damned will endure in Hell since they will be caused by divine justice, the effect of which will be infinitely stronger than anything nature could make us suffer in this world. This hunger will be accompanied by thirst, whose torment, experience shows us, is even more insupportable than hunger, and will be increased by the braziers kindled by the breath of divine anger. Scripture seems to tell us that the gall of dragons and wormwood will be their only refreshment: *Fel draconum vinum eorum* (Deut. 32:33). *Cibabo eos absinthio* (Jer. 23:15). Our Lord Himself wished to make us understand that thirst in the parable of the evil rich man. "I am in agony in this flame," he cried. *Crucio in hac flamma* (Lk. 16:24). A single drop of water would have been great relief for him; but he was refused one. It is, therefore, with all the strictness of truth that St. Augustine tells us: "None of the pains that we know can compare with those of the damned." *Ei nulla tormenta quæ novimus possunt comparari* (*Ench. de Fide, Spe, et Car.*, 29, 112).

And yet, however frightful the pains of the damned in their exterior senses might be, those they will suffer in the interior powers of the soul will be incomparably greater, for their soul was the principal cause of the sins they committed, their body being only its instrument. It is just, then, that they experience intense pains in the imagination, the memory, the understanding, and the will.

Their imagination will be so strongly affected by the punishments they are to endure in Hell, and will have such a strong fear of them, that no other object will be able to draw its attention away. This permanent scene will increase their punishments. Reciprocally, these punishments, thus increased, will disturb their imagination even more. As a result, their sufferings will only serve to aggravate each other.

The damned will also suffer in their memory, when they remember the criminal and fleeting pleasures for which they now have to atone by punishments so merciless and irreversible. They will suffer in their understanding when they consider the glory of Paradise lost by their sin, the folly of their love for vanity, and the ease they once had to save themselves. Then they will feel that undying worm, that interior shame, those reproaches of conscience, those angers and the sterile regrets joined to despair because they lost a great good for so little gain: *Vermis eorum non moritur* (Mk. 9:48).

In their volition, they will experience a grievous hate, an implacable envy and jealousy against God and His saints because of their

happiness and their glory. They will have an obstinacy hardened in evil. If they show any regret for their sins, it will not be as a sentiment of love for their Creator, but, on the contrary, out of personal interest: they would wish to have sinned even more, and never to have incurred their punishment. They will desire to be freed from their penalties or be reduced to nothingness, but their desires will not be fulfilled: "They shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them." *Desiderabunt mori, et fugiet mors ab eis* (Rev. 9:6). From all this, there will arise in them perpetual despair, as they see themselves in the inevitable condition of never obtaining what they desire, and of suffering always what they would rather not: *In aeternum non obtinebit quod vult; et quod non vult in aeternum sustinebit* (St. Greg. [see St Bernard, *De Consideratione* 5, 12]).

For all that, these penalties have little in common with the pain of Loss which the condemned will endure in Hell, and which consists of being eternally separated from God. Indeed, every penalty arises from the pain caused by the privation of some good we possessed or that we had hoped to acquire. Therefore, the greater the good denied, the more intense is one's awareness of that privation. This is why, with God being in Himself an infinite good and capable of making man infinitely happy, separation from Him necessarily causes in the damned a pain exceeding all others. In the present life, the soul does not feel this pain very strongly, for it is not destined in this mortal flesh to see God and to possess Him. Busy as it is with creatures, and surrounded by objects that satisfy the passions, it does not even recognize the great happiness that results from this possession. But in the next life, after the soul has been freed from the fetters and the burden of corruptible flesh, no created object will divert it from God. From then on, it will have a very clear and a very keen idea of the unending happiness which consists in possessing Him forever. It will understand perfectly that being deprived of Him is the ultimate misfortune and contains the source of all other troubles. This is why even the damned soul will experience infinite yearnings to possess Him; it will continually spring toward Him with intense desires of the heart and with all the ardor of natural inclination. But it will continually and strongly be rebuffed by the decree of divine justice, and by the strength of the omnipotent arm. Here again is what will make the condemned soul feel sufferings greater than all his other afflictions: *Innumeris majus est pœnis hac sorte privari* (St. John Chrys.).

Beside these punishments common to all the damned, each one will suffer individual punishments depending on the quantity and the quality of the sins that has committed. The justice of God will grant to each one what he deserves, and will make him endure chastisements proportionate to his crimes. The proud, who especially loved glory, will have more shame and confusion. The gluttons, who sought good

food, will experience a bitter hunger and thirst. The lazy, who did not want to make efforts to fulfill their duties, will be more constantly agitated and exhausted by demons: "As much as she hath glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her." *Quantum glorificavit se et in deliciis fuit, tantum date illi tormentum et luctum* (*Rev.* 18:7). The torments will also be proportionate to the number of faults, so that, he who will have committed a thousand mortal sins will undergo in Hell a chastisement a thousand times more severe than the one punished for a single sin. Finally, these torments will be proportionate to the graces received and abandoned without fruit. Unfaithful Christians who had learned the truths of the Gospel will be more strictly punished than the pagans; unfaithful religious and corrupt priests, more than ordinary Christians.

But the most frightening ordeal of the damned is the eternity of the penalties. "They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever." *Cruciabuntur die ac nocte in sæcula sæculorum* (*Rev.* 20:10). God is just; He must punish His enemies to the degree that their sins deserve. Because those sins committed an infinite offense to His Majesty, the chastisements would not suffice for its reparation. Already, on earth, reparation was powerless without divine assistance. After death, the time for meriting has passed; the condemned no longer have the same freedom or facility to correspond to the graces of God; they are obstinate and immobilized in their malice. Because of this, the cause of their punishment becomes permanent; it is just that the punishment likewise be endless. Accordingly, their grief will be everlasting: *Usque ad supremum desolabuntur* (*Wis.* 4:19). Their punishment will never be mitigated by any consolation! The sufferings we endure in this world are occasionally softened by the thought that we do not deserve them, or by encouragement we receive from charitable persons, or by the hope that they will soon end. But the reprobate understand perfectly well that their punishment is justified and that their sufferings will never end. Far from mitigating their sufferings, those who surround them will increase their sufferings: "This pain is made more acute by fellowship." *Fit pœna ex societate acutior* (St. John Chrys.). O justice of God! O folly of sinners! O tragedy of the damned! Let us lament for them; let us fear for ourselves.



§ III – *Religious who strictly keep their Rule  
will avoid the pains of Hell.*

Everything we have said about the usefulness of following the Rule to prepare the religious for death and the judgment of God could be applied here, without the need to add any new reason. The result is that a religious, faithful to his Constitutions all his life, provides himself with a guarantee against eternal punishments. One would be deceiving himself if he took a consideration of Hell as useful only to those who lead a corrupt life. Even the just person, who displays piety and controls his passions must not lose sight of this nor exempt himself from a certain terror. Would he not become like to those who prophesied, chased demons, performed miracles in the name of the Lord, and yet were rejected? Would he not be abandoned by God before death, because of his infidelities caused by a hidden vanity? Therefore, we must often think of Hell, so that this consideration produce in us a just fear, which is the principle of charity and which will preserve us from falling into impenitence. This is what led St. John Chrysostom to say: “Not one of those who think seriously about Hell will fall there; and not one of those who disdain the thought of Hell will avoid it.” *Nullus qui gehennam habet ante oculos in gehennam invidet: nullus ex his qui gehennam despiciunt, effugiet gehennam* (Homil. 22 in I ad Tim.). This is why one of the fathers of religious life, St. John Climacus, counseled his disciples to think of it night and day: “Let the thought of the eternal fire sleep beside you every night,” he said, “and let it watch with you during the day.” *Memoria æterni ignis tecum singulis noctibus dormiat, tecum vigilet* (Grad. 70). In his turn, St. Jerome admitted that he had embraced a very difficult life out of the fear which eternal punishments inspired in him (*Epist. ad Eustoch. 22, 7*). What a consolation for religious to be assured that God will forgive all their sins and preserve them from Hell if they walk in the footsteps of those saints and if they observe faithfully all the regulations pertaining to their state! If their duties entail painful elements, what proportion dare we establish between the penances of the cloister and the torments of the damned? With what effort should we not practice faithfully the little things to assure ourselves, in a question so grave, of all the means that could contribute to the goal and bring to mind the danger of damnation: “Security is not good enough where eternity is in danger.” *Non satis magna est securitas, ubi periclitatur æternitas* (St. Jerome).

In Hell, the unfaithful religious will suffer greater punishments than those of the other damned, since they had received more graces. “Wretched are we,” they cry in their despair, “for not having benefitted from the holiness of our state, in which we could have tended so easily to perfection! Accursed forever be those superiors who did

not instruct us in our duties and who did not correct us when we did not observe the Rule! Accursed be those who gave us bad example and who led us to imitate their laxity, thus disposing us to breaking our vows and precepts and leading us imperceptibly to scorn them! Wretched are we for not having observed the vow of poverty, for having received presents and disposed of them without the permission of superiors! Forever unfortunate for not having been obedient to the representatives of divine authority, for having grumbled against them! Wretched are we for not having observed chastity well; for having had curious and imprudent eyes, for having written letters and paid visits by following the weaknesses of our hearts, on the pretext of doing works of zeal! Imprudent were we for having had familiarities contrary to the austerity and to the holiness of the religious state! Wretched are we for having badly recited our office, of having poorly heard holy Mass, of having poorly approached the sacraments, for having profaned holy things by coming to them without attention, devotion, or deportment! All the more wretched are we that our situation is without remedy and without end!"

Let every one of us profit from their disgrace and fear being added to their number. Let us often think of Hell so that this thought may inspire in us a saintly horror accompanied by confidence and humility, and give us great fervor to fulfill all our duties in the spirit of penitence.

O Lord Jesus, kindle in our hearts the fire of Your divine love; let it burn always and never be extinguished, since it alone can resist the eternal fire and protect us against its intense heat: *Domine Jesu, hic solus qui a te est igni resistit æterno* (St. Paulinus, *Epist.* 63).

## ARTICLE VII

### The delights of Paradise

- 1° The delights of Paradise are indescribable;
- 2° they are universal and eternal;
- 3° it is by faithfully observing their Rule that religious will merit the delights of Paradise.

#### § I – *The delights of Paradise are indescribable.*

The delights of Paradise are so great that they surpass all that we could think or imagine. This is why St. Paul, after having been lifted up to the third Heaven and enjoying its ravishing sweetness, addressed these memorable words to us: “The eye of man has never seen, his ear has never heard, and his heart has never known nor tasted anything like what God has prepared for those who love him.” *Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit quæ præparavit Deus iis qui diligunt illum (I Cor. 2:9)*. St. Augustine said that what God has reserved for his friends surpasses anything we could believe. Hope could not extend that far; even charity cannot understand it; this is something over and above all our hopes and all our desires. We can acquire this happiness but we can never value it adequately. That glory, that beauty, that splendor, that magnificence, that majesty which will constitute our happiness: all these are beyond our words, our senses, and all our thoughts: *Omnem sermonem, atque sensus humanæ mentis excedit decus illud, illa pulchritudo, illa gloria, illa magnificentia, illa majestas (Serm. 37 de Sanct.)*. All that we know about this, in an obscure manner, is that the happiness of the blessed includes an exemption from all evils and the possession of all the benefits of which man is capable. In Heaven, the occupation of the saints will be to gaze upon God, to love, praise, and adore Him everlastingly, because there they will taste unalterable peace and joy: “We will see and we will love; we will love and we will praise: behold what it will be in the end without end.” *Videbimus et amabimus; amabimus et laudabimus: ecce quod erit in fine sine fine (St. Aug., de Civit. Dei 22, 30)*.

Holy Scripture uses figurative expressions to give us some idea of this, insofar as it is possible in this world. And since these figures are generally inferior to reality, especially considering such elevated subjects, Scripture varies and accumulates them, so that their collection forms something not too unbecoming of reality. Let us con-

sider a few of them.

First of all, St. John represents the beauty of Heaven under the name "the holy city of God" and "the New Jerusalem." *Vidi sanctam civitatem, Jerusalem novam* (Rev. 21:2). Its extent is immense; its foundations are twelve kinds of precious stones, its walls of jasper, its roadway is gold pure and transparent as crystal; and its doors, twelve in number, are also very precious stones. Heaven is called the city of God and the New Jerusalem, because, just as the city of Jerusalem, adorned with its temple, was the place where God would make His glory shine, so Heaven is the place where God dwells in a special manner, where He manifests His majesty and gives Himself unreservedly to the blessed. The holy city is built with precious stones, which are what is most beautiful in the world, so as to make us understand the magnificence of that celestial Jerusalem in which the elect enjoy all spiritual riches. "Admirable city, it is therefore very appropriate that glorious and excellent words are said of you." *Gloriosa dicta sunt de te civitas Dei* (Ps. 87:3).

St. John also calls the abode of the blessed "Paradise." *In paradiso Dei mei* (Rev. 2:7). Because, just as the earthly Paradise wherein God placed the innocent Adam was a place of delights, so Heaven, where the blessed will be located throughout eternity, is the place where they will taste all the delights prepared for them. David presents Heaven to us as "the house and the tabernacle of God" because this is where He lives and resides in a special way, and gives Himself intimately to His elect. As High Priest, Jesus Christ was the first to enter into that tabernacle by reason of his blood, and all the saints are to be introduced there by him. "O Lord of hosts, how lovely are your tabernacles! My soul ardently longs to inhabit your dwelling, and is almost faint from the intensity of that desire. . . Blessed are they who dwell within your house, O Lord! They will praise you forever." *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua, Domine virtutum! Concupiscit et deficit anima mea in atria Domini... Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine; in saecula saeculorum laudabunt te* (Ps. 84:2, 3, 5).

The grandeur of that happiness has also been expressed to us under different words in the Holy Books. 1° It is presented to us under the figure of a kingdom prepared for the elect since the beginning of the world: *Possidete regnum* (Mt. 25:34). This is not only because the elect are kings who have strong domination over themselves and over other creatures, "he made us a kingdom," *fecisti nos regnum* (Rev. 5:10), but also because, on this earth, royalty is seen as the fullness of glory, whose true summit is attained only in eternity. This kingdom is sometimes called: "the kingdom of Heaven," *regnum caelorum* (Mt. 18:23), because Heaven is the abode of the saints, who are kings; at other times, "the kingdom of God," *regnum Dei* (Mt. 21:31), because the Di-

vinity Itself will be that kingdom and will constitute the glory and the crown of the predestined. There, God will be “all in all”: *Deus omnia in omnibus* (I Cor. 15:28). He will be their wisdom, love, holiness, and happiness, in that they will participate in all His divine perfections. They will be wise by His wisdom, holy by His holiness, great by His grandeur, happy by His happiness. This participation in the perfections of God will produce joy and consolation in their heart, enlightenment in their understanding, the fullness of peace in their will, and the impression of an eternity always present in their memory. *Ipse erit omnia in omnibus, rationi plenitudo lucis, voluntati plenitudo pacis, memoriae continuatio eternitatis* (St. Bern. *Serm. in Cant.* 11, 5). Heaven is also named “the kingdom of Jesus Christ,” *in regno Christi et Dei* (Eph. 5:5), because Jesus Christ is the king and the absolute master of the elect, in whom He finds no opposition or resistance, since they have only one will with Him. His rule and that of the saints will perfectly complete only at the end of the world, for only then will Jesus Christ have fully triumphed over all His enemies.

2° The grandeur of the delights of Paradise is presented in the Holy Scriptures under the figure of a wedding: “Nuptials of the lamb . . . nuptial feast” *Nuptiæ agni... Cæna nuptiarum* (Rev. 19:7, 9). Indeed, in Heaven, the alliance Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, has contracted with the Church and in the souls of the faithful will be fulfilled. The saints will be so intimately united to his heart that they will be one with Him: *Ego in eis, et tu in me, ut sint consummati in unum* (John 17:23). Moreover, since in this world there is hardly an opportunity for carnal men to allow themselves more contentment than in a marriage feast (even though the food offered is corruptible, and that the feasts end in a few hours): so, in eternal life, we will find our feast in God; all sadness will be banished, and the food offered will be delicious and incorruptible. The Well-Beloved himself will seat them at table, wait on them, and be their nourishment: “God will be our food and our drink.” *Deus erit cibus noster et potus noster* (S. Aug., *In Ps.* 9). This banquet will never end, and those who attend will always be satisfied. They will no longer be hungry, thirsty, suffer, or be troubled. On the contrary, they will always taste new pleasures, and they will remain so intimately united to God as the spouse of their soul that they will be transformed into Him.

3° The happiness of the saints in Heaven is also shown under the name of a flood of delights and of a source of life: “They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure, for with thee is the fountain of life.” *Inebriabuntur ab ubertate domus tuæ, et torrente voluptatis tuæ potabis eos, quoniam apud te est fons vitæ* (Ps. 36:8-9). It is a torrent, it is a fountain, because like the waters of a torrent rush forward rapidly, and like

the waters of a fountain run in unpolluted streams that never dry up, so the delights of Heaven will abundantly fill the bosoms of the blessed. They will be overwhelmed with celestial pleasures; they will be satisfied, as if inebriated and carried out of themselves. This torrent of delights is God: God making flow from His heart into the heart of the saints the inexpressible joys with which He is filled; God overwhelming all the capacity of their soul and even expanding it by splendid qualities so that it can contain a greater fullness of His benefits. Moreover, since the heart of the blessed, thus expanded, will still not be big enough to contain the totality of these delights, it will be allowed to enter into that ocean of joy of the Lord: "Enter into the joy of your Lord." *Intra in gaudium Domini tui* (Mt. 25:21). There, the heart will be wholly penetrated interiorly and wholly surrounded exteriorly: *Ibi erit gaudium justo intus et extra, sursum et deorsum* (St. Bernard).

A fleeting consolation that God sometimes offers the just, in this vale of tears called the world, brings them joys so great that it exalts them in wonderful ecstasies, makes them see earthly pleasures as bitterness, and renders all crosses light. What, then, will be those spiritual delights that the blessed will taste in Heaven, where consolations will not be doled out drop by drop but in torrents, and where they will be swallowed up into the very source of all happiness which is God! O sovereign Master, if You do so much for us while we are in the prison of this world, what will You not do when we will be in your palace! If You fill us with such an abundance of consolations in this vale of tears, with what joy will You not fill us on the day of nuptials and rejoicing! *Si tanta facis in carcere, quid ages in palatio! Si tanta solatio in hac vita lacrymarum, quanta conferes in die nuptiarum!* (St. Aug., *Solil.*, 22)

4<sup>o</sup> Finally, in Sacred Scripture, the happiness of Heaven is sometimes called a hidden treasure, sometimes a possession, an inheritance, a land, a precious stone. It is compared to a hidden treasure because it contains riches whose value we cannot imagine in this world. It is a possession, since by it, we live a life that is happy, durable, and permanent, just as the owner enjoys his property in peace. It is an inheritance, because the Heavenly Father grants it only to those who love Him like genuine children and who become co-heirs with Jesus Christ by resembling Him. It is a precious stone, because it warrants that we give all we own to acquire it, and devote ourselves entirely to God to possess it. "O men, such a kingdom cannot be obtained at any other price save by the gift of your entire self. It is worth as much as you; give yourself wholeheartedly and you will possess it." *Res ista, O homo! id est regnum caeleste, aliud non quaerit pretium quam te ipsum, tantum valet quantum tu es; te da, et habebis illud* (St. Aug., *Serm.* 37 *de Sanctis*).

In addition, we can still imagine something of eternal happiness if we consider attentively that God has principally chosen Heaven to uncover His glory and that of the elect there. His glory is very lofty; the beauty of the place where He manifests it must be proportionate. If divine goodness has adorned this passing world with such marvels as the grandeur of the skies, the brightness of the sun, the expanse of the seas; and if He has filled sinners with so many blessings, what must He have not prepared for the just and for their Heavenly dwelling! What will He not give to those He predestined to eternal life, He who is very generous to those whom He has to condemn to death! *Quid dabit iis quos prædestinavit ad vitam, qui hæc dedit etiam iis quos prædestinavit ad mortem!* (St. Aug.) But God has not decorated the sky solely for His honor and for His glory; He also did this for the glory of His elect, since He promised to honor those who honor Him: *Quicumque glorificaverit me, glorificabo eum* (I Sam. 2:30). He honors them even in this life, to the point of submitting to their control all the things of this world, even sickness, death, and demons: what, then, will be the glory that surrounds them in Heaven! That glory will infinitely outshine all other glory. It will be a glory worthy of God. It will also be a reward for the good works the blessed will have done and for the services they will have rendered to God on this earth. O what generosity does He not show to men in this life, even for the most trivial of works! This generosity, then, will be extraordinary toward the just in Heaven, which is, properly speaking, the place intended for reward. Celestial glory will again be the price of Jesus Christ's blood. To be sure, the merits of the Savior are infinite in His actions and in His sufferings; the glory that God has prepared for the blessed in Heaven will be equally infinite and incomprehensible. God Himself will be their reward, sublime to excess: *Ego merces tua magna nimis* (Gen. 15:1). "The reward of God is God Himself." *Præmium Dei, ipse Deus est* (St. Aug. *In Ps.* 72).

## § II – *The delights of Paradise are universal and eternal.*

The delights of Paradise are not only ravishing and ineffable; they are also universal and eternal. All the powers of the soul of the blessed and all the senses of their body will share in those delights. Their soul will enjoy essential happiness, which consists in seeing God clearly and eternally, in loving Him perfectly and without aversion, in praising and possessing Him without weariness: *Ipse Deus finis erit desideriorum nostrorum, qui sine fine videbitur, sine fastidio amabitur, sine fatigatione laudabitur* (St. Aug., lib 22: *de Civit. Dei*).

1° The understanding of the blessed will see God clearly, face to face, unveiled, as He is in Himself. The blessed will contemplate the

divine essence, in all its glory, its splendor, and its other delights. And since the understanding of man is too weak to bear this divine brightness, it will be strengthened, elevated by a light of glory which is a participation in the divine light. In addition, it will be able to look upon this admirable object without being blinded. In contemplating such a glory, the saints will be transformed into the image of God; moreover, they will see all things in His essence: "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image." *Nos omnes revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eamdem imaginem transformamur (II Cor. 3:18).*

The blessed will be able to distinguish among all the perfections found in the unity and the simplicity of God. They will see His sovereign majesty, on which the entire universe depends; His omnipotence, which brought things out of nothingness; His goodness, which has spread so many benefits on creatures; His justice, which punishes sin severely; His mercy, which so loves to forgive; His wisdom, which has regulated the harmony of creatures so well; and His providence, which leads all of them to their end. In the divine essence, the blessed will uncover all the mysteries of religion, in particular, the venerable mystery of the Trinity, with the unity of nature in the distinction of Persons; the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Word; all the riches of the mystery of the Eucharist, in which Jesus offers Himself on our altars as a victim of love and gives us His flesh as the nourishment of our souls. They will understand even the decrees of the incomprehensible judgments of God upon men, and all the other mysteries that, on earth, they grasped in the shadows of faith alone. Finally, in God they will see all the external works of His power in the natural order, and they will understand these in a more perfect manner than if they saw them in themselves. The marvels, the prerogatives, the perfections, and the excellences of the humanity of Jesus Christ, the particularities of His life, the infinite happiness He enjoys in Heaven, the prerogatives and the perfections of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and the saints, the glory of the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins: all of this will appear to their eyes as a consequence of their happiness. This is what led St. Gregory to say: "What will they not see, those who see all things?" *Quid non videbunt qui videntem omnia videbunt?* (Homil in Ev.) On seeing so many admirable matters, the blessed will be filled with delights that we cannot comprehend or imagine.

2° Their volition will love God perfectly, and all their desires will be satisfied. We have seen that the soul has a natural bent, a weight, a love, that leads it to the good, especially to the sovereign and universal good, namely, God, Who alone is capable of making it truly happy. But being tied to the body here on earth, and distracted



by different objects that impress and absorb it, its love for that unique Good is limited, and it does not direct its entire ardor to Him. But after death, released from the weight of corruptible flesh, and no longer diverted by created objects, it will hasten to the supreme Good with all the more impetuosity since it will understand it better and have nothing else to desire. Moreover, since the blessed will see God clearly, they will love Him with perfect love and consummate charity. Each one will possess Him completely; each of His perfections in which they will share will produce a variety and an excess of consolations altogether inexpressible.

3° This clear vision, this consummated love, and this eternal possession of God will put the saints in unimaginable rapture. In the midst of these ecstasies, this contemplation, this love, they will continually sing a new canticle, a canticle of praise, admiration, joy, gratitude, and blessing, of which St. John spoke: *Cantabant quasi canticum novum* (Rev. 14:3). It will always be new to them, even though they will repeat it eternally, because the sweetness and the satisfaction it offers them will never satisfy them but will have a greater loveliness. No, never will they tire of seeing, loving, and praising that unique object and of enjoying the Heavenly pleasures. Indeed, the spirit in ecstasy is ceaselessly suspended in admiration; and for its part, admiration always carries the spirit to consider the object it admires with renewed happiness. Additionally, because the object which the elect enjoy is the supreme, universal, and infinite Good, it will necessarily surpass their desires and their faculty of loving; therefore, it will never cease to render them perfectly satisfied. This is why they will never be repelled by the pleasures, the beauties, and the delights of Heaven. "What being is happier," cries St. Augustine, "than he who enjoys unchanging truth, and who cannot be unsettled by his happiness?" *Quid beatius eo qui fruitur inconcussa et incommutabili veritate?* (Lib II, 13, 35 de Lib. Arbitr.)

4° After the resurrection, the bodies of the blessed will share in the glory and the pleasures of the souls to which God had united them. Those bodies, as vile and abject as they are by nature, will become, by the power of Jesus Christ, transfigured and conformed to His glorious body: "Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory." *Reformabit corpus humilitatis nostræ configuratum corpori claritatis suæ.* (Phil. 3:21). In fact, it is fitting that the body should share in the reward, after having been the instrument of repentance and the cooperator in good works on earth. This is why the beatified soul will radiate upon the body the four glorious qualities of which St. Paul speaks (see I Cor. 15:42-44).

With *impassibility*, glorious bodies will not only escape the reach of death and of corruption, but also all kinds of sorrows, pains,

and miseries, which led St. John to say in his *Revelation*: "God will wipe away the tears from their eyes; their mourning, their cries, their hardships will cease, and death will be no more." *Absterget Deus omnem lacrymam ab oculis eorum, et mors ultra non erit, neque luctus, neque clamor, neque dolor erit ultra* (*Rev.* 21:4). *Subtlety* will make the body, which is animal and material on earth, to be as if spiritual, for it will resemble the spirits by the facility with which it will be able to participate in their activities, without being diverted by the need for sleep, nourishment, and other similar things that take place in this world. They will also be able to penetrate other bodies by a divine power united to this subtlety. *Agility* will dispose the glorious bodies to follow the movements of the soul with all the speed and ease that it would like, without effort, weariness, or difficulty. To indicate this glorious quality, it is written: "The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds. They shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." *Fulgebunt justi, et tanquam scintillæ in arundinetis discurrant* (*Wis.* 3:7). *Assument pennas sicut aquilæ: current et non laborabunt, ambulabunt et non deficient.* (*Is.* 40:31). Inwardly they will be transparent like pure crystal, so that one will be able to see clearly the admirable cohesion and all the perfections in them.

5° But these qualities of the glorious bodies will not be the only reward of the elect; all their senses will enjoy other indescribable pleasures. Their eyes will be ravished by the splendor of Heaven, the beauty of the renewed world, and especially the glory of the body of Jesus Christ surrounded by all the bodies of the saints. Since the number of the blessed is incalculable, and each of their bodies is a prodigy of beauty, the result will be an admirable spectacle for the eye, a source of indescribable delights. At the same time, the ears of the blessed will be enchanted at hearing the melodious voices of angels and of saints who will not cease to celebrate the praises of God: "The high praises of God shall be in their mouth." *Exaltationes Dei in gutture eorum* (*Ps.* 149:6). This is why St. John reported that he had heard something like the voice of a great number of persons in Heaven who said: "Alleluia, salvation, glory, and power to our God." *Audivi quasi vocem turbarum, multarum in cælo dicentium: Alleluia, salus et gloria, et virtus Deo nostro est* (*Rev.* 19:1). Those voices will be a thousand times more beautiful and more harmonious than those heard on earth. Moreover, they will stir the heart of the blessed with feelings of joy, love, and rejoicing so extraordinary that it is useless to try and present an idea of them. Their sense of smell will be flooded with the most pleasing odors for, if here on earth the bodies of the saints sometimes exhale pleasant odors that seem to come from Heaven, what will it be like in Paradise where God wishes that everything be delight and sweetness? Their taste also will be rewarded with the most agreeable

and refined savors, in a manner infinitely superior to that which the manna gave to the Hebrews: "To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna." *Vincenti dabo manna absconditum* (*Rev.* 2:17). Finally, by touch, the blessed will feel the chaste delights of which that sense is capable. What joy for the saints to consider that, for having watched over their senses and courageously mortified them on earth, they are filled with such bountiful happiness in these very senses!

But that which consummates the felicity of the blessed is the fact that it is eternal. After so many millions of years that stars have been in the sky, that drops of water have been in the sea, that grains of sand have been on the shores, these delights will continue to exist since God, Who is their source, is eternal! The blessed will surely enjoy them in proportion to the charity they had on earth and to the good works they will have accomplished, for "there are many mansions in the house of the Heavenly Father" (*John* 14:2), and "one star differs from another in glory" (*I Cor.* 15:41). But what is common to all the saints and absolutely equal in each one is the duration of their reward. What satisfaction they will enjoy when they consider that their understanding is assured of seeing God eternally; that their volition will love Him without end, and that they will always be tenderly loved by Him; that their memory will be unable to lose the remembrance of the admirable things that delight them; that never the senses of their bodies will cease to receive the feeling of happiness that completes the Heavenly reward!

Not only will the blessed be assured of possessing each one of these divine pleasures for all eternity but they will always preserve them together, so that the presence of one will in no way diminish the feeling of the other, as happens here with the possession of things. Even more, in some way they will experience this beatitude for all eternity, concentrated in each instant, either because of the confidence in their eternal future, or because of the very nature of eternity, which is "entirely at once," *tota simul*. And, as if that were not sufficient, along with their individual happiness they will taste by the union of charity the eternal bliss of God, all the angels, and all the saints! Therefore, their happiness is perpetual for various reasons. The power of God amasses in the heart of man, naturally so small, several eternities, so to speak: *In perpetuas æternitates!* (*Dan.* 12:3)

§ III – *The religious who observe their Rule faithfully  
will enjoy the delights of Paradise.*

What must be done to gain Heaven? One must work to think of it often and prepare oneself to merit it by good works.

First of all, one must try to think of it continually. We are in this world as pilgrims and exiles; for we have here no lasting city, but we seek the one which we are to inhabit one day: *Non habemus hic manentem civitatem, sed futuram inquirimus* (Heb. 13:14). Now the traveler and the stranger continually think about the goal of their travel and the choice of the roads that lead there with certainty. We must, therefore, unceasingly think about the eternal happiness which is our goal, about Heaven that is our dwelling place, and we should lament that we are so far from it: “In this we groan.” *In hoc ingemiscimus gravati* (II Cor. 5:4). “He who does not lament as a pilgrim will not rejoice as a citizen,” tells us the great Doctor of Hippo: *Qui non gemit ut peregrinus non gaudebit ut civis* (In Ps. 145 [see In Ps. 148, 4]). But this comparison between our present misery and the happiness of Heaven must not only produce groans, for it is also able to excite ardor and courage to bear the pains of life and to overcome the difficulties one finds on the path to perfection. This is what moved the same St. Augustine, that unlimited font of striking thoughts, to exclaim especially on this topic: “If you want to sustain the labor, consider the reward.” *Si vis sustinere laborem, attende mercedem* (In Ps. 36, serm. II, 16). Indeed, all the difficulties and tribulations of this life will have no proportion with the glory that one will enjoy in the blessed City. The slightest degree of that glory which we await will be enough to compensate us abundantly for all the most sensory difficulties experienced in the practice of virtue: “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.” *Non sunt condignæ passiones hujus temporis ad futuram gloriam quæ revelabitur in nobis* (Rom. 8:18). This is why St. Jerome addresses these words to us: “If you pay attention to what was promised to you in Heaven, there will be no weariness that will not seem light, because hope for the reward is very fitting to console you for the difficult work that prepares for it.” *Respice quod promissum est: omne opus leve solet fieri, quando ejus pretium cogitatur, et spes præmii solatium est laboris* (St. Jerome [attr.], *Epist. ad D.*). To teach us the same lesson, St. Gregory tells us: “If we consider what has been promised to us in Heaven, we will find that everything on earth is worthy of scorn; indeed, all the good here below, compared to the felicity above, is more a burden than a help.” *Si considerentur quæ nobis promittuntur in cælis, vilescunt omnia quæ habentur in terris; terrena*

*namque substantia supernæ felicitati comparata, pondus est, non subsidium* (St. Greg. Hom.).

To gain Heaven, it is not sufficient just to think about it; good works have to be practiced, for the law given by the Divine Master is that we are to possess eternal life by way of reward. It follows, then, that the measure of our beatitude will be that of our merit and of our benevolent actions, as the Apostle tells us: "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor." *Unusquisque propriam mercedem accipiet secundum suum laborem* (I Cor. 3:8). From this, it follows that, without faithfully corresponding with grace, without strictly following the duties of one's state, and without undertaking great works for Jesus Christ, one could not gain the crown of Paradise: "One cannot reach great rewards except through great labors." *Ad magna præmia perveniri non potest, nisi per magnos labores* (St. Greg. Hom. in Evang. lib. II, 31, 1).

Once firmly established, this dual principle of the thought of Heaven and the practice of good works are the two great means to ensure eternal happiness. It is easy to see, then, that the religious who is faithful to his Rule is in the best position to obtain unutterable delights.

The thought of Heaven is easy for him, for in the cloister he is separated from the world, withdrawn from its glamour, habituated to paying no attention to its vanities. Accordingly, there is nothing surrounding him that can prevent this thought from strongly imprinting itself in his soul. Quite the contrary, the things he studies, the instructions he receives, the meditations he makes, even his external life — everything reminds him by the dignity, orderliness, silence, perpetual praise, and the spirit of charity that animates his life of the beauty, the harmony, the sweetness of the Heavenly home.

Regarding good works, the religious who is faithful to his duties does not cease, from morning to night, to increase them to an enviable level, by following exactly each point of his Constitutions, and by enlivening his efforts and his sufferings with the most noble of intentions. As has been said and often repeated, even his actions have a dual merit: one, on account of the particular virtue from which they proceed, such as humility, penitence, etc.; the other, on account of the obedience that rules them all, and which is itself linked to the virtue of religion. What consolation for a devoted religious to realize that the observance of all his practices, even the most trivial — such as inclinations of the head, attention to the details of poverty, the slightest manual labors, etc. — merit a new degree of glory in Heaven! What a powerful reason for him to accomplish them with fervor and exactness, and to enliven them ceaselessly with motivations of love, repentance, and conformity to the adorable will of God! No task will seem

too arduous, no time too protracted, to acquire such glory that will never end: *Nullus labor durus, nullum tempus longum videri debet, quando gloria aeternitatis acquiritur* (St. Jerome).

This observant religious will experience a special joy whenever he thinks of the particular grace that Our Lord gave him when He called him to perfection. He will be completely overcome by love and gratitude when he considers the ineffable goodness that withdrew him from the corrupt world wherein there were so many opportunities for him to lose his innocence, and where, perhaps, he had already committed so many mortal sins. Moreover, should he see some of his friends and colleagues in the midst of the flames of Hell, his gratitude, all the more enlightened by this contrast, will have no limits. He will cry out: "O my God! How unbounded is your mercy for me since you have kept me from falling into the depths of Hell! I will bless you always." *Misericordia tua magna est super me, eruisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori* (Ps. 86:13).

Religious, do we think about this? "We are children of the saints, and we await that life which God wishes to give to those who never betray the fidelity they promised to Him." *Filii sanctorum sumus; et vitam illam expectamus, quam Deus daturus est his qui fidem suam nunquam mutant ab eo* (Tob. 2:18). Like the saints, then, let us faithfully follow our Rule and our vows. Every day, let us ask God to preserve us in this practice until death. Let us entreat the Holy Virgin and to all the blessed, especially St. Dominic and the other saints of our Order, to obtain this grace for us, so that one day we may join them in Heaven. Even though we may have to bear every day a thousand deaths, and suffer a Hell by walking in their footsteps and in those of innumerable martyrs, we should wholeheartedly accept this, so as to merit to see Jesus in His glory and to be placed among the princes of His kingdom, as St. John Chrysostom clearly declares to us: *Si quotidie foret millies moriendum: si gehennam, tormentaue omnia conveniret sustinere ut videre posses Christum venientem in gloria sua, et adscribi ordini sanctorum, nonne omnia illa ferenda essent?* (*Ad Theod.*) But to earn that reward, God will be content if we follow our saints and blessed in the practice of the ordinary virtues and the daily duties. They seem to tell us, in one voice, along with a pious author: "Write, study, chant, observe silence, pray, bear manfully whatever bothers you: everything in light of eternity. The life of glory merits doing all these things to gain it; it is worthy of even greater sacrifices." *Scribe, lege, canta, geme, tace, ora, sustine viriliter contraria: digna est his omnibus et majoribus praeliis aeterna vita* (*Imitatione Christi* III, c. 47).



**INSTRUCTIONS FOR NOVICES**

**PART TWO**

**REGULATIONS:**

**How to Perform Actions with Regard to the  
Interior and Exterior**





# HOW TO PERFORM ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR

## PREFACE

A vocation needs to be formed with attention to details, and that formation is precisely the work of the novitiate. As the novices are during the first years of their entrance into religious life, so they will usually remain for the rest of their lives. The first impressions which they receive are hardly ever completely erased from their spirit and their heart. They are like young plants which need to be watered and which, from the very start, need to be set in the direction desired. They are new earth that needs to be prepared and cultivated carefully, because from this preparation depends the success of the good seed to be planted. Indeed, “train a young man in the right way, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (*Prov. 22:6*).

It is not simply a matter of teaching the novices concerning what could regulate their interior life in relation to God, but also their exterior in relation to their neighbor. The formation of the interior has great influence, it is true, on that of the exterior; but this latter, in turn, profoundly acts upon the former. Accordingly, the exterior should not be neglected, even though it is not as essential as the interior. Indeed, one must start with the exterior, since the Creator began by forming the body of the first man and then gave him a soul. What left His hand, then, was perfect — both inside and out. Thus, the true novice should be irreproachable under both aspects; at least, he ought not to harbor within himself any voluntary defect, and should aspire to make himself perfect before long.

In this second part, we have assembled numerous instructions, the aim of which is to regulate the interior and the exterior of novices. We have even lingered on certain details concerning Christian and religious civility. Indeed, the sons of St. Dominic are not destined to live forever hemmed in their cloister; sometimes they will have to

leave to talk to secular persons, to whom they might offer their services regarding matters of salvation. In order to do that effectively, one need not be a saint or a sage, but does need civil, affable, and trustworthy manners. To be sure, we often find subjects who were formed religiously by their parents, and who already display noteworthy manners, but we also occasionally encounter some who lack that kind of education — either because they have never received it, having always lived in the countryside, or else they lost it in boarding schools or in contact with poorly raised individuals. This is why we propose certain recommendations appropriate to teach young persons, so that those who never learned as well as those who have forgotten may become proficient in them.

Although these instructions, whether dealing with the interior or the exterior, contain almost no Latin citations, they are nonetheless often taken from Sacred Scripture and the holy Doctors, especially St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor, Blessed Humbert and St. Vincent Ferrer. These saints and learned personages descended into more complete and more minute details than one will find herein. We refrained from noting on every page the borrowings we made, either to avoid interrupting the flow of the presentation by too frequent citations, because often we adopted the germ of an idea from those authors, without reporting their exact words, or, most especially, because, as St. Vincent Ferrer said, we assume that those whom we address have within themselves a sufficiently religious spirit to receive with confidence and openness these prescriptions and counsels coming from their superiors, the representatives of God, and that they desire nothing so fervently as the sanctification of their souls.

This second part is divided into four chapters.

- 1° The schedule, properly so-called, relating to exercises of the day, the week, the month, and the year.
- 2° Rules of conduct within the convent.
- 3° Rules of conduct outside the convent.
- 4° The manner of fulfilling the principal acts of the religious life.

## CHAPTER I

### **Regulations for the different exercises of the day, the week, the month, and the year**

#### ARTICLE I

#### **The exercises of each day**

##### *§ I - From midnight to noon*

At midnight, or at the other night hour designated for Matins, the novices should rise eagerly and promptly. With great decorum, they should put on those items of clothing which they usually take off for sleep while reciting some short prayers which they like. At the agreed on signal, each one should leave his cell and go to the door of the novitiate, occupying his mind with some holy thought. As soon as the church bell begins ringing the second signal, the brothers should leave the novitiate. One of them carrying a lantern should advance first, to light the way for the community. Another should carry a second lantern, if the arrangement of the convent requires two, and will be the last in line. They should enter the choir, make the genuflection together, and during the office, should carry themselves with decorum, respect, and devotion as prescribed in Part II, Chapter II, article I.

While Matins is recited, all ceremonies must be observed, none being neglected. Whoever has been designated must, at the end of the last psalm of the nocturne, prepare the lantern either for himself or for another for the reading of the lessons.

When Matins is close to ending, the same brothers who lit the way on approaching should prepare to perform this same function on the return. They should return to the novitiate two by two and should retire in their cells without making any noise, lest they wake up the

religious who, with dispensation, are resting, whether in the novitiate, or the floor below, and especially under their cell. In the winter, when it is very cold, those who need to warm themselves should be able to go to the common warming room. There, they should keep silence and behave with seriousness and recollection. After entering their cell, they should prepare themselves to take their rest; this should take no longer than a *Miserere*. Those who delayed, even for reasons of piety, should be punished sternly.

At the second rising, as soon as the novices hear the first signal, they should do what is indicated at Article 2, Chapter II of this Part II, preparing themselves for meditation or holy communion; and, if they have time, they should put their cells in order.

On returning from choir, the student novices should review their lesson for class. The simple novices, after having tidied their cell, should read a chapter of the New Testament, on their knees. At the beginning of this reading, and now and then while continuing it, they should place themselves in the presence of God and lift up their heart and their mind to Him, to ask Him for the grace to benefit from it. They should do this with great respect and in a spirit of adoration. If some passage touches them, they should pause for a moment to reflect on it, and they should adore even words which they do not understand, as all of them as have been dictated by God Himself and filled with His mysteries. Subsequently, they should read the life of a saint chosen for them by Father Master. After reciting the little hours of the Blessed Virgin in common in the oratory, they should do some spiritual reading in their cell.

At the sign for High Mass, the novices should assemble at the door of the novitiate. While waiting for everyone to assemble, they should keep themselves in the presence of God, and should do what is indicated in Article 3 of Chapter II. Then, they should exit and walk through the dormitories and in the stairs with the seriousness and recollection recommended in the same place. They should recite the Office with much exterior modesty, attention, and devotion, as it is explained in Chapter IV; they will assist at the Holy Sacrifice with great respect, in a spirit of self-giving and adoration. When the High Mass and all other prayers are over, the novices should leave modestly, eyes cast down, arms crossed under the scapular, and two by two in the manner previously indicated. On leaving, they should take holy water and make the sign of the Cross; on heading for the novitiate, they should recite the *De profundis* with seriousness and contrition, without turning their head to one side or the other.

On their return to the novitiate, the professed novices should busy themselves until noon with all the occupations prescribed by the plan of studies. The simple novices should meditate in their cell, and

be ready to answer for their activity to the Father Master, should he summon them about it. In the morning, they should also have a class about the Constitutions or rubrics and for ten minutes an examination of conscience.

## §II *From noon to midnight*

Shortly before noon, the novices should assemble at the door of the novitiate, recite together the *Angelus*, and while reciting the *De profundis*, leave for the refectory. The reader and the server at table should walk a bit ahead of the others in order to prepare for reading and serving. While going to take their meal, the novices should offer this action to God and recite some prayer, if they have time, in the manner suggested in Chapter II. After having washed their hands, they should await, sitting on the benches of the *atrium*, for the superior to begin the *De profundis*. From there, they should go to the refectory in a serious and recollected manner. They should eat with much seriousness, cleanliness, and decorum, keeping a deep silence, listening attentively to the reading, and carefully avoiding all acts of sensuality; they should mortify themselves in something or other, if obedience allows them. They should be neither laggard nor too hasty in eating; when the signal is given for the end, they should fold their napkin; at the sound of the bell, they should get up noiselessly and take their place for the thanksgiving, which they should sing with much decorum, in a spirit of thankfulness, repentance, and humility.

After having arrived in choir, the antiphon of St. Joseph having been completed, they should immediately mark out the Office; then they can take recreation. At the beginning, the brother who has been designated to report on the reading at table is to present what struck him. The novices need to accustom themselves to retain always something serious and uplifting from the reading, so as to repeat it before all the others, when they are asked. It would be a lack of respect for their Father Master and their brothers to respond with a pleasantry and an attempt to provoke laughter. It is only a spirit that is flighty, trifling, dissipated, or even very narrow-minded which would dwell upon something comical, critical, or vulgar during the reading. He who, when questioned, remembers nothing about what he heard will humble himself for it before the Father Master.

If the weather is propitious, the novices will take recreation in the garden. There they will refrain from crying out and from talking too loudly — as much as to preserve simplicity as to avoid making themselves heard by people on the outside. When the weather does not allow for walks in the garden because of rain or intense cold, rec-

recreation will be taken under the cloister walk or, if necessary, within the novitiate.

During the time of recreation, the simple novices must always be separated from the professed ones. Indeed, the former need to discuss frequently some rubrics, Constitutions, and ceremonies that the professed have already learned. Moreover, it could sometimes happen that some too-outspoken religious, who scandalize them instead of uplifting them, would hint at tendencies which they ought always to ignore or reject, and thus would trouble them rather than console them. The way for both groups to remain in peace and in fervor is to have no contact between them. The professed who speak to the simple novices without leave do them great harm, and often cause the latter to be divested of their religious garb and sent back to the world. Nonetheless, it is praiseworthy sometimes during recreation to send to the simple novices a professed novice who is wise, sober, and enthusiastic, to teach them how to engage in conversation seriously and becomingly, or to explain to them the difficulties that they might have concerning the Constitutions, the rubrics, and other ceremonies, or again, to moderate them lest some minor disputes or animosity arise between them: this is more likely to happen since they have so recently left the world, and have not had the time to learn religious conduct.

From the very beginning of recreation the novices should place themselves in the presence of God; and, from time to time, while recreating, they should arouse this action within themselves by an act of offering to Jesus and Mary, in the manner to be explained in Chapter II, Article V.

At the first sound of the bell that indicates the end of recreation, they should kneel down for a few moments, as at the beginning; then, all should return in silence to the novitiate, where they should make a short examination of conscience, as will be explained later. The bell-ringer should signal the end of this exercise with his little bell. Then the brothers should read, write, study, or rest, if they have permission, until the hour of the Office.

At the second signal which will mark it, they should go to Vespers. For the simple novices, these should be followed by manual labor, either in the novitiate or the garden. Then they should have a class in chant, during which they will also have to learn the ceremonies and rubrics concerning the offices of acolyte, thurifer, versicle chanter, etc., when appropriate. The novices are expected to apply themselves to learning plain chant, so as to prepare themselves to celebrate properly the praises of God during their whole life. In order to be successful at this, they must make the effort at first to learn the notes, the keys, the intervals, the nuances, and practice singing in solfege, before applying the words. Whenever a brother chants alone, the

others must listen attentively, or follow him in a soft voice, the better to form their ear to the tones, and practice at the same time as him. When they sing together, they must neither force their voice nor hold it back, but rather maintain it gently, so as to develop their vocal cords gradually, and to accustom themselves to praising God constantly.

When the novices are not at all trained in chant, they must not practice alone, lest they acquire false intonations which they will later have much difficulty in correcting, when with less difficulty they could have learned the right ones with the help of someone who could have taught them. While singing the note or the letter, one should not hurry so as to lose his breath, but inhale from time to time, following the cadence of the melody. It is better to sing a single antiphon several times and well rather than many only once but poorly. During the chant class, the novices should act with great seriousness, especially in the general classes which precede Sundays and feast days, during which times there is more opportunity for distraction. They should speak only when necessary, and only on matters which they absolutely need to learn. They should avoid contradicting one another, bantering, criticizing, and mocking each other if they should make an error. To achieve that, they must always keep themselves in the presence of God or, at least, place themselves there from time to time. They should also be careful not to damage the books; at the end of class, they should close them gently and return them to their place. It is a sign of a spirit of faith to be solicitous regarding breviaries and chant books.

At the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, those who, by penance or by humility, wish to kiss the feet of their brothers during the *Magnificat* should seek beforehand the permission of the Father Master; when the canticle begins, they should prostrate before each one to perform this act of virtue. They should complete this in a spirit of regret, of repentance, of sorrow, of shame. While they humble themselves on the outside in the presence of the servants of Jesus Christ, they humble themselves even more before God Himself, in the example of Mary when she said: "for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." *Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ* (Luke 1:48). They ought to consider that their sins deserve not only that they fall at the feet of the religious, but also to the lowest depth of Hell with the devils — while their brothers perhaps deserve to be in Paradise with the angels, because of their innocence and their virtue. On the contrary, those whose feet were kissed ought to consider within their mind that the novices who humble themselves before them no doubt possess many virtues, especially that of humility, which is the foundation of all the others, while they themselves are still full of vices, especially of pride.

The simple novices should then retreat to their cell, where they should read from *l'Année dominicaine* [The Dominican Year Journal], or from another life of saints given to them by Father Master. At the hour designated for the regulation of studies, the students should attend the evening class, after diligent preparation. Then, at the hour indicated by the particular regulations for studies, they should enjoy a quarter of an hour of free time, during which they should go out together to the garden or to the cloister for fresh air, but while observing strict silence. For the rest of the evening, the simple novices should recite in the oratory the Matins of the Blessed Virgin. After this Office, the instruction of the Father Master should take place, or, in his absence, spiritual reading for half an hour. Together, they should recite in common a third part of the rosary, if that is the custom. Then, each one in his cell should engage in an examination of conscience for about ten minutes and after that have at his disposal any free time until the community meditation. As soon as the bell for meditation rings, the novices should proceed to choir while preparing in thought; and, if the season requires, the brothers assigned to this work should light the way for the others in the stairs and the cloisters.

After the half-hour of meditation, they should go to the refectory with great decorum while reciting the *De profundis*, when the distance allows for it. When there is no fasting, they should follow what has been said regarding decorum at dinner when they enter the refectory. If it is a day of fast, they will go directly to the refectory for the collation. They should take care to offer this action to God in a spirit of repentance, for the remission of their sins and for those of their neighbor, from time to time putting themselves back into the presence of the Divine Master, and listening to the table reading very attentively, as will be said in Chapter II.

After leaving the refectory, they should stay together during the time before Compline, and should take advantage of this time to make arrangements for Matins or other matters for the morrow. Indeed, they should never have to speak during the profound silence.

They should sing Compline with much attention and fervor. The early religious of the Order had a strong devotion for this Office; they looked forward to it with a certain impatience and prepared themselves for it with fervor, as St. Antoninus reported. All those who are not otherwise impeded are expected to attend this solemn and final prayer of the day. We know there are indulgences for those who assist at the *Salve Regina*. During the chanting of this canticle, the novices should renew the attention of their spirit and will stir up in their heart a loving and filial devotion to our kind, loving, and very sweet mother, the Virgin Mary. After Compline, they should return to the novitiate where they should recite the usual invocations then go to their cell.



Everyone should be in bed and have extinguished his light at the sound of the little bell which is given after the signal of profound silence; no excuse can be allowed to contradict this law. The other daily exercises of the novices, whether in fast times, or outside of them, like the recitation of the office of the Blessed Virgin, the various classes and instructions, etc., are indicated in the schedule of the novitiate.

## ARTICLE II

### The weekly exercises

#### § I – *Cleanliness, distribution of clothing*

Every week the novices should sweep the dormitories of the novitiate, the common room, etc. They should perform this work in silence, in a spirit of humility and of repentance. After they have completed it, they should dust the tables, statues, paintings, and walls. Friday is ordinarily the day the dormitories are swept, during the last quarter hour of recreation. If, because of some impediment, this is not possible, another earlier day needs to be designated, so that the work is never postponed beyond one week.

On Saturday, the brother in charge of habits should place at the door of each cell the packet designated for each novice. When something needs mending, it should be brought to him for transmission to the brother in charge of linens. A note is to indicate what needs to be done, so as to refrain from breaking the silence at the door of his cell and to keep him from forgetting what is being requested. He should then arrange to satisfy the needs of each one, without losing too much time from his studies or from running around the convent — unless a pressing matter is involved. He should complete all these services in a spirit of charity, and they should be received with humble gratitude.

#### § II – *Theses and classes*

When attendance at theses or classes is required, the novice students should leave their cell at the first ring of the bell and assemble at the door of the novitiate, to leave together. They should wait only a few moments for the others to catch up; but they should leave behind the lazy ones, if any remain. They should proceed to the classroom for school exercises and return in silence. In class itself, they should remain silent and not speak unless they have been questioned by the lecturers, or when it is their turn to repeat the lesson and to participate in a discussion, or, finally, when they have to bring up a difficulty to their teachers. They should be attentive to the explanations given by the latter, and will never interrupt him, nor those who are repeating or discussing. During classes, they should from time to

time place themselves in the presence of God, offering Him their study for His glory and their sanctification. They should accept in the spirit of repentance the corrections and humiliation which they may sometimes receive. As soon as the bell rings, class is over; that is why they must return quickly to the novitiate in order to leave together for the choir to sing the Office, or to attend to the other occupations fixed by the Rules. One lack of precision leads to another, and the insignificant advantage in prolonging by several minutes a scholarly exercise would not compensate for the inconveniences of disorder and distraction caused by the delay. The students always owe much respect to their teacher, for he was given to them by God; much submission, because this is the means to make their studies meritorious, and to benefit from knowledge no less than from piety; much gratitude, because the benefit of the sacred sciences is a great grace, and teaching demands great sacrifice and application from him who devotes himself to it. The details about scholastic exercises will be found in their entirety in the rules of the school.

### § III – *Chapter and Penances*

On different days of the week marked in the regulations the novices should go to the room where the Father Master holds the Chapter. After the latter has addressed them with a few words of encouragement, if he judges it useful, he has them recite their faults. If the simple novices assist with the professed, they must withdraw before the latter accuse themselves and are proclaimed.

The novices must attend the Chapter with great seriousness and listen with great respect to the instructions or the corrections which are given. One day, the devil was obliged to confess to St. Dominic that the Chapter was the one place in the convent for which he had the most horror, because it was there that the religious confessed all the faults they had committed everywhere else, did penance for them, and took back all that he had gained from them in the rest of the monastery. When someone accuses himself, he must do so with feelings of humility and contrition; the penances imposed are to be performed exactly and completed as soon as possible. When the Father Master addresses general observations concerning one fault or another, care should be taken not to attribute the reprimand to others, even interiorly, but rather one should apply it to oneself. When a particular individual is corrected, one should think that this is to test him, or that he exaggerates his faults. The spirit of charity should always lead to positive respect for one's brothers, even when they have committed some fault and are undergoing correction for it.

If one had genuine humility, when entering the Chapter room, one would hope to receive some discomfiture; interiorly, one should ask this of God and thank Him when it happens in some way. A profound silence must reign during this exercise; no one has the right to speak except to acknowledge his faults and to answer when directly questioned. One should never excuse himself when accused of a particular fault. After having expressed his fault, all which is left is to listen with respect and seriousness to the corrections made by the superior, if he deems it appropriate to attend to some of them; then one returns to his place.

The greatest benefit to be obtained from Chapter is to correct the faults one has been accused of and to follow faithfully the counsels given for one's growth. This is the aim which the Fathers of monastic life had in mind when they set up this wholesome practice of humility and repentance. Our Order, in particular, obtained such great advantages in its early days that the superiors held Chapter almost every day, after Matins or Prime. For its part, in order to encourage our zeal, the Holy See has granted an indulgence of three years and 120 days to those who confessed their faults. Here is the ordinary manner in which, formerly, one used to express himself:

*Pater, peccavi. Silentium fregi. Male legi, male cantavi. Male feci inclinationes et prostrationes. Mox ut signum jactum fuit, non relicta omnibus distuli me preparare ut ad Ecclesiam ordinate et composita venirem. Ad Gloria primi Psalmi non interfui; in choro male legendo vel cantando offendens non statim me coram omnibus humiliavi. Divino non intentus officio vagis oculis et irreligioso motu, levitatem mentis ostendi. In dormitorio et cella aliquid inquietudinis feci. Lectiones statuto tempore non prævidi. Locutus sum de rebus vanis. Dissolute risi, et alios ad ridendum dictis factisque meis concitavi. Oculos frequenter ad vanitates direxi. Ecclesie ornamenta male tractavi. Vestes et libros non honeste deposui. Aliquid utensilium fregi vel perdidi. Aliquid cibi et potus effudi, et absque benedictione sumpsi. Communia mandata dimisi. Aliquid cum juramento negavi vel affirmavi. Negligens fui circa mihi commissa. Non fui vobis obediens, nec reverens cæteris Patribus ac Fratribus. In his et multis aliis, Pater, peccavi; sed Deo dante, me emendabo.*

Reverend Father, I have sinned. I have broken the silence. I read poorly; I sang poorly. I made the inclinations and the prostrations poorly. Next, when the signal was made, I did not leave aside all distractions so that I might prepare to go to the church calm and composed. I was not present for the first *Gloria*; in choir, offending by poorly reading and singing, I did not immediately humble myself before all. Not attentive at the

Divine Office, I displayed shallowness of mind by wandering eyes and irreligious commotion. In the dormitory and cell I made some disturbances. I did not make use of the time established for study. I spoke about vain things. I laughed dissolutely and stirred up others to laugh at my words and deeds. I directed my eyes frequently to vanities. I spoke poorly about things of the Church. I did not honorably care for clothes and books. I lost or broke some utensil. I threw away some food or drink, and I ate without a blessing. I ignored community rules. I affirmed or denied something with an oath. I neglected things committed to my care. I was not obedient to you, nor respectful toward other Fathers and Brothers. In these and many other things, Father, I have sinned; but with the help of God, I will improve.

The lay brothers confessed their faults in a similar manner by saying: “My Reverend Father, I have sinned. I have broken the silence. I made the inclinations and the prostrations poorly. I have not taken sufficient care of the common good. I have spoken about vain and useless things. I have not sufficiently kept my eyes lowered, and I have looked around from one side to the other, when walking through the city and within the convent. I have been immodest in my conversation. I have wandered around the convent without necessity. I served poorly at the altar and in the refectory. I neglected to rise in the morning to assist at the Office and common prayer. I was negligent in doing what I was commanded. In my speech, I have not shown sufficient respect for the Fathers and the Brothers. I was slow in completing my work. I have not been sufficiently obedient. I have sinned, my Father, in all this and in many other things; but, with the help of God, I will correct myself of them.”

This formula contains nothing optional; in every novitiate, the established tradition is to be followed. There are many other faults in which we could fall, and which we have to confess. A careful examination is indispensable to fulfill this duty in full.

Besides the penances of the Chapter, the novices should perform others every week, on the days assigned and the times fixed in the Rule. They will do this for the expiation of their sins, for the conversion of sinners, and for the relief of the souls in Purgatory. These penances are very helpful in maintaining fervor and piety. While one is inclined to do something beyond obligation, one is also more careful not to overlook one's duty. To say that these practices are very old and good for another age is to pretend that today nature is less fallen,

less impressionable to the influences of evil than formerly; that today we have become more spiritual and greater masters of our senses. Experience shows that quite the contrary has happened. To pretend that these austerities are reserved for persons who walk on an extraordinary road would be to desire that a father not correct his child except when the latter has reached a high level of virtue. Nor should the austerities be omitted out of fear that indiscretion or vanity enter in, given that they are followed with permission from the Father Master. It is his role to allow an individual no more than his state requires and his strength permits; in seeking to control fallen nature, he may not compromise, neither for the present nor for the future, the stamina necessary for apostolic ministry and for the practice of regular observances. These activities, in fact, are our first and most excellent penances, appropriate to subdue at the same time both the body and the spirit.

#### § IV – *The Mysteries of the Rosary*

On every day of the week, the novices could choose a mystery of the Rosary to occupy their thoughts during the day and, now and then, to place themselves in the presence of God. Thus, they will have something to engage their soul for fifteen consecutive days; while soothing their spirit, this variety will increase their devotion. They should frequently remind themselves of the mystery during the day, like a painting hanging before them, especially when they hear the clock ring, on entering their cell, while walking through the convent or in the city, while eating in the refectory, and even while assisting at the Office, so as to keep themselves more easily in the presence of God. While contemplating interiorly this scene, they should think of Our Savior and of the Most Blessed Virgin, study the virtues which Jesus and Mary practiced there, and should pray God for the same virtues, through the merits of Our Savior and the intercession of His holy Mother, especially humility, purity, charity, poverty, obedience, fervor, mortification of the senses, and, more importantly, of their will, of their personal opinion, and of all their other passions. To imitate the perfections of Our Lord, to go to Jesus through Mary, and to Mary through her rosary, this is genuine spirituality. Moreover, every week they should recite an entire rosary, and more, following the advice of their Father Master. The fondness one has for a religious practice and the attitude of order which one brings to everything multiply their repetition, improve the skill, the taste, the peace, and the perseverance to remain faithful to the practice, to complete properly this favorite prayer, without interfering with religious duties.

## ARTICLE III

### Exercises of each month

#### § I – *Processions of the Rosary, of the Holy Name of God, etc.*

When one assists at the various processions of the Order which take place on certain Sundays of every month, one should have learned well the ceremonies, which differ on certain points, according to the layout of churches and cloisters. One must maintain great outward decorum, having the eyes always downcast and maintaining a very reverential posture. One also needs to maintain a deep interior contemplative state, now and then reciting acts of faith, humility, love, contrition for sins, and confidence in the mercy of Our Savior. One should not walk too closely to another but keep apart by a few steps and remain attentive to his companion so as to remain in position. When the Stations of the Cross are held in the cloister, participants should not be too close to the cross but remain apart one from the other, so that the last religious are near the officiant, rather than leaving him isolated.

#### § II – *The crown* [tonsure]

On those days of the month when the hair is cut into a crown, two novices go to the room destined for this purpose. They will carry with them a book, so that the individual waiting in line will be able now and then to read something uplifting, softly or in full voice, if possible, for the benefit of others. When the brothers return, they carry back the book, lest it be lost when left behind. He who goes to the doors of the cells of the religious to alert them that their turn is approaching, must avoid dissipation and unnecessary talk. When the bell rings for Office, the novices immediately leave the room and go to the choir. When the Office has more importance, such as the first Vespers of a great feast, before beginning a shave, the time involved is to be calculated to be sure it can be completed in time to arrive at the beginning of the ceremonies; any disturbance in choir on those important days mars the solemnity. When the crown is being made, the novices will remain silent, not speaking among themselves, nor with the Fathers, nor with laybrothers, not even with the barber. They will refrain from giving the latter orders on how to arrange the crown.

Dissipated and vain individuals are the only ones who speak and act in this way. Accordingly, everyone will keep silence and listen attentively to the reading; or else, while awaiting their turn, they will busy themselves with studying their class notebooks, or reciting some prayer, or reflecting on an easy subject. In particular, they could consider the meaning of the crown to be traced on their head. It is a sign of the spiritual royalty they need to acquire over themselves; the hair removed to give the crown its circular form reminds them of the restraint they need to practice constantly to master themselves and to reign in peace.

### § III – *Confessions, Communions, and directions of the Rule*

The Constitutions direct the novices to make frequent confession, *frequenter*. The commentary taken from the general chapters, in explanation of this passage, states that those who are not priests ought to make confession *at least* once a week, even though they were then allowed to receive communion only every two weeks. How much more faithful to frequent confession ought one to be when frequent communion is allowed with such prodigality! Besides, the great advantages which the novices can obtain from the frequency of the sacrament of Penance, established by God to erase the traces of sin, to weaken evil inclinations, and to adorn souls, are sufficient to make them appreciate frequent Confession.

The simple novices should have a spiritual conference with their Father Master twice a month, in the manner which will be described in Chapter IV. The professed are bound to do so only once a month. Members of both groups could do this more frequently, according to their needs.

They should receive communion on all the days indicated in the general rubrics. No one can stay away from the holy table on those days without express permission. Those who are outside the convent are also held to this obligation. Besides the Communions prescribed in the missal, certain others are in general usage in the novitiate, namely: the third Sunday of each month, dedicated to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Sacrament, for which a plenary indulgence is granted; all the feasts of the Apostles; the feasts of St. Joseph and of St. John the Evangelist. During the octaves of Christmas, of Easter, and of Pentecost, communion is taken on the first and the third days of the feast. There is to be no general communion on the second day; ordinarily, general communions are not scheduled three days in a row.

General communion is held for theologians on the feast of their patron; for philosophers, the feast of St. Catherine Martyr, their patron; and for the laybrothers, the feasts of St. Martha and of the



Conversion of St. Paul. It is also appropriate for the theologians to receive communion on the feast of St. Catherine, and for the philosophers to receive on the patronal feast of the theologians, in order for the students to participate spiritually in each others feasts, as a sign of charity. Communion is also generally taken on the Translation of St. Thomas and of St. Dominic, when there are First Masses, on the octave day of Corpus Christi, on that of Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on that of St. Michael, on the dedication of the conventual church, on that of St. Mary Magdalen, and on other days determined for the use of the novitiate, according to the countries and the principal devotions which flourish there.

Besides these habitual communions, the novices will engage in others, out of devotion, with permission from Father Master, for instance: during the fifteen Saturdays in honor of the Blessed Virgin; during the fifteen Tuesdays in honor of St. Dominic; during the fifteen Wednesdays in honor of St. Thomas; during the fifteen Thursdays in honor of the Most Holy Sacrament; during the fifteen Fridays in honor of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ; during the fifteen Mondays in honor of some other saints of the Order, of their holy patron, of their guardian angel, or of any other. Aside from the advantage attached to each communion, the application involved to do all this for fifteen weeks in a row for a specific goal — to honor a particular saint, to obtain this virtue or that grace — gives greater continuity to prayer, cultivates an understanding of prayer in the soul, and is the source, for a long period of time, for beneficial influences on all the spiritual life, which it unites, strengthens, and roots in God. It is also appropriate to receive communion as an individual when one seeks to obtain a special grace, or when one experiences many temptations, in order to obtain greater strength to resist them, or when one wishes to escape a certain lukewarmness into which one has slowly been falling, or when one is ending a retreat.

When one receives communion out of devotion on class days, this should in no way interfere with study but rather move one to work with greater love and energy. A recollected mind can more easily ponder the truth and penetrate its secrets. These individual communions are taken at the High Mass or at some Low Mass; nothing ought to be neglected in faithfully observing all the ceremonies. This is necessary because of the respect owed to the Blessed Sacrament and common edification.

§ IV – *Recreation of the month*

Every month, except during Advent and Lent, recreation is held outside the convent for the professed novice students; the same opportunity can occasionally be offered to the simple novices as well. Other than this recreation, the superior may sometimes, as a favor, offer another for exceptional reasons.

On the eve of recreation days, everything necessary will be prepared, so that on the following morning there be no confusion, no delays, no need to talk during the profound silence. The novices should pass through the choir to adore the Most Blessed Sacrament, to offer to God their recreation the better to serve Him subsequently and to pray for the grace not to offend Him during the whole time they recreate outside the convent. After that, they should head for the door, not stopping to talk among themselves nor with other religious, but exiting peacefully from the monastery; only then should they be able to speak.

To continue the ancient devotion of our fathers, on leaving they should recite the antiphon *Laudemus Dominum* with the verse *Adorate Deum* and the prayer,

*Deus qui miro ordine angelorum ministeria hominumque dispensas: concede propitius, ut a quibus tibi ministrantibus in caelo semper assistitur, ab his in terra vita nostra muniatur, etc.,*

O God who after a marvelous order didst dispose the ministries of angels and of men: grant in thy mercy that our life may be defended on earth by them who stand forever before thee and minister unto thee in Heaven, etc.,

or the prayer

*Deus, qui ineffabili providentia sanctos Angelos tuos ad nostram custodiam mittere digneris, largire supplicibus tuis, et eorum semper protectione defendi, et aeterna sociate gaudere, per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum. Amen.*

O God, who in Thine ineffable providence hast deigned to send Thy holy Angels to watch over us, grant to us, Thy supplicants, to be always defended by their protection and in eternity to share their joy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

so as to place themselves under the protection of the holy angels, especially of their guardian angel. While going along the streets of the city, they will walk calmly, two by two, with much decorum. Whatever

er words they might exchange while walking must be limited and spoken in a soft voice. Ordinarily, the recreation consists in strolling civilly in some countryside, along a river, in some grove, or other place apart, so as to repair gently and interiorly the strength of the body, as it was directed by one of our early chapters: "Our recreations are respectable walks." *Recreationes nostrae sint honestae deambulationes.* To climb steep hills and to walk quickly so as to arrive earlier in a kind of bravado is to tire oneself, not to recreate; it is running instead of leisurely walking. When it rains or when the cold or the heat is excessive, recreation is to be taken within the convent, but in a section that will not disturb the community.

They must return to the convent early enough, unless a special permission was granted, so as to join the community in the refectory. During the walk, the hours of the Office not recited with the community are to be said together, as well as the rosary.

On entering the convent, there is to be no stopping at the door to speak with anyone, but rather they must go in silence before Our Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament to adore Him and to ask pardon of Him for faults that might have been committed during this period of relaxation. After this short prayer, all should return to the novitiate decorously, two by two, and in silence. The simple novices are not to take the monthly recreations with the professed students, unless the Father Master sometimes allows them as a favor, and only when he himself is to join them, so that his presence be a safeguard.

### § V – *Retreat of the month*

Every month, the novices should have a day of retreat. The simple novices should engage in this on the day indicated by the Father Master; the students should do this on a feast day or on another day without classes. On that day or on the following morning they should receive communion. On their knees, before their crucifix, they should read again the resolutions they made on the last retreat. They should reflect on whether, instead of advancing toward perfection, they may instead have fallen back. Consequently, they should determine to live better during the next month so as to walk in the divine presence, to keep the silence more rigorously, to be more attentive in meditation and spiritual reading, not to leave their cell so easily without reason, to focus on God alone in all their activities, and, in regard to their brothers, to practice humility, gentleness, charity, etc.

Great advantages are obtained from these private retreats. Complete changes have been noted following even a single one. Sometimes an individual will recover his early fervor. Almost always he will emerge in a reflective state lasting for a rather long time. It is said

that in his life St. Arsenius, not only every month, but also every week, took a whole day for this interior recollection. Those who make the monthly retreat will profit by asking to serve or read at table, to let the novices who would have done it enjoy the entire recreation period. But they will not engage in any corporal penitential exercise without specific permission.

## ARTICLE IV

### Exercises of each year

#### § I – *Fifteen Saturdays*

The simple novices should complete the fifteen Saturdays once during their novitiate year, that is to say, they should receive communion on fifteen consecutive Saturdays in honor of the Most Blessed Virgin, to ask God, through her intercession, perseverance in grace and in their vocation. Indulgences have been granted to those who practice this devotion; experience shows that the Queen of Heaven obtains very special favors for those who complete it in a holy frame of mind.

The professed novices may also complete, each year, these fifteen Saturdays with the permission of Father Master, to ask God, through Mary, to help them fulfill more perfectly their duties and to harmonize with the graces of their profession, to fulfill their vows and their Constitutions well, to grow in the sacred sciences, and especially to correct the one fault which is the greatest obstacle to their perfection. The Most Blessed Virgin, properly regarded as the Seat of Wisdom and as Mother of our Order, watches over the vocation of those who enter it, and is concerned about the progress of those religious who are already members.

#### § II – *Annual retreat*

Every year, the novices should engage in spiritual exercises for ten days: the simple novices before their profession, the student novices before the opening of classes or at some other time set by the superiors. They are to follow the regulations posted each year, if the retreat is held for the group. If it is individual, they should follow the rules given by the Father Master and should choose books suited to their tastes for meditation and reading. During their retreat, the professed novices should arrange for time to say in whole or in part the Office of the Blessed Virgin.

During the span of the holy exercises, recreation is not to be taken with the other novices. Those who, by exception, would need relaxation — for example, because of a headache — need to begin with five decades of the rosary and a prayer to our Father St. Dominic; then

they can converse with their brothers, but on holy and uplifting topics. However, those who have no need of this dispensation constantly remain silent, in order to keep themselves more recollected. They should walk alone in the garden or in the cloister, while reciting prayers or reflecting on a topic which will not distract them. Pope Pius V has awarded a plenary indulgence to religious who, during the ten days of retreat, attend to spiritual topics, apart from the conversation of others: *iis qui in cella commorabuntur aut ab aliorum conversatione separati*.

This holy practice of spiritual exercises offers great advantages to those who engage in it. We have often seen religious leave from it transformed, who persevered in this holy frame of mind the rest of their lives. However exact one is in fulfilling his duty, his original fervor slowly wears down because of the tendency of fallen nature to grow slack and to fall into sensuality. That is why it is necessary to allot a certain amount of time to renew oneself and to recover what has been lost of the former regularity. Often enough, the most fertile grounds have need of extraordinary rains and dews, which penetrate them more deeply, or of a rest of several months to bear more fruit later. And so, for at least a few days, our soul needs to take an interior rest, attending more to prayer, to spiritual reading, and to other exercises of piety, in order to advance more and more in perfection.

One should begin a retreat just as Our Lord Jesus Christ entered into the desert, that is to say, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and he should occupy himself according to that divine model during His forty days there. Just as He thought only of what would bring about the honor of His Father and our sanctification, just so we must, during retreat, think only of glorifying God and of working at our perfection. One should not be discouraged in such a holy endeavor if at first one does not have all the satisfaction expected, or if, on the contrary, one experiences interior anxiety. Since Jesus allowed the devil to tempt Him even three times in the desert, it is not surprising for us to have temptations during our retreat. Nevertheless, just as our Divine Master resisted the devil and was subsequently visited and ministered to by angels, so too, by showing ourselves faithful in resisting temptations, will we merit a visit from God Himself, bringing His blessings and consolations. Like Jesus Christ, who, withdrawn in the desert, fasted during forty days, so those on retreat could practice some penance, on the advice of the Father Master, according to their inclinations, their needs, and their abilities.

In order to extract from these exercises all the benefits hoped for, it is necessary:

1° to apply oneself to performing his ordinary actions well; to be more fervent on rising and on retiring and while attending all

community activities, to give more attention and piety to prayer, meditation, the Office, and all other prayers as well as the Holy Mass; to be more precise in silence, deportment, mortification of the senses and of the passions; to walk more continually in the presence of God, etc. Thus, having instituted the holy habit of practicing ordinary actions with fervor, one will then be able to continue during the rest of his life. Even though the exercises last materially for only ten days, their spiritual effect should remain throughout life, by maintaining the same generosity for advancement in perfection that one had in the middle of the retreat.

2° One must apply himself to recognize well the defects to which he is inclined and the imperfections into which he falls most often, in order to take the most efficacious means to correct them, to pull them out by the roots, to prevent them from reappearing, and to implant in their place the opposite inclinations.

3° One has to apply himself to acquire the virtue which is the most necessary. For example, if one suspects an inclination to pride, often having thoughts of vanity, of good reputation, and of self-satisfaction, freely uttering roundabout words to one's advantage, feeling a secret pleasure in being praised, etc., one needs to work at acquiring humility. If one is inclined to give in to gluttony and to satisfy his comforts, not wanting to miss out on food, religious garb, etc., being too eager in acquiring possessions and often spending time thinking about them, one needs to give himself to the virtues of poverty and of mortification. If one feels himself attached to his personal opinions and his own will, so that he is inclined to wish that others would always agree with him, to uphold his positions obstinately, and to be disappointed when others resist, he needs to acquire obedience and forgetfulness of self; similar examples can be found for all other virtues. The light of grace and the decision of the director should guide us in this choice.

4° During the retreat one also has to be aware of those faults which, while less serious in themselves, nonetheless could present more scandal to his brothers. One must take the means to correct them, working efficaciously to acquire the virtues that are contrary to them.

The one who is faithful in following all these points will reap much reward from his spiritual exercises, will divest himself of the old man and put on the new man, and will become a perfect religious, that is to say, one animated ceaselessly with the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is good also to specify the resolutions decided upon and to carefully keep them in mind, to set them down in writing. One should then read them, from time to time, during the course of the year, especially on those days given over to the monthly retreat. Since these resolutions

are the result of the positive aspirations that grace gave us when we were entirely God's, they are capable, on being read again, of reviving similar aspirations and of touching the heart. Moreover, by cultivating and developing them, one works according to perspective of the Holy Spirit; the results are therefore easier to obtain, more abundant, and more certain. At the end of a retreat, one can also make an extraordinary confession; for instance, covering an entire year, so as to arouse a greater fervor. Finally, it is of sovereign importance to spend and complete those holy days under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, invoking her often and striving for daily recitation of her Little Office, her entire rosary, and her litanies, so as to obtain through her intercession the grace to benefit greatly from the spiritual exercises and the supernatural effects received from them.

### § III – *Annual Processions*

In practically every city where convents are located, general processions are held every year, which the novices are obliged to attend. While waiting at the church for their turn to leave, they should behave with great respect in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ and some relics of His saints; they should not amuse themselves in watching the passers-by nor engage in conversations among themselves or with others; they should remain kneeling in the holy place, giving themselves over to meditation, prayer, or spiritual reading. If the wait is to be long, however, after a period kneeling, they could either stand or be seated, continuing their prayers or their reading of some uplifting book which they had the foresight to take with them.

Attendance at processions demands an interior spirit of repentance, contrition, and humility, so as to divert the justice of God, to appease His anger, and draw His mercy to us. Since processions are a kind of penance and public supplication, for them to be pleasing to the Lord, they must above all be enlivened by these interior dispositions. Moreover, one should attend with great exterior decorum, looking only a few steps ahead of himself, never looking around from one side to the other, to the paintings, the tapestries, or the decorations in the churches or along the streets, nor to the persons in windows or passers-by. This decorum is owed to God, to oneself, to one's Order, to one's neighbor.

1° - It is owed to God, because, since these processions are public prayers, it is fitting to demonstrate respect for His Majesty; this respect cannot be maintained except by visible signs, by keeping exact decorum. Besides, whether these ceremonies were established to ask of God some special favor, or to thank Him for a favor received, He



would not accept these requests and thanks unless they were accompanied by solemnity, respect, and recollection.

2° - One should also be decorous out of prudence, so as not to open oneself to some temptation. Indeed, if we look around from one side to the other without restraint, the fear is that, among so many different scenes and within such a crowd of people, there might be some object capable of arousing troubling impressions in our spirit or in our imagination.

3° - The religious state, which is a state of penance and of mortification, demands equally that we practice this wariness while following a sacred procession. To be sure, knowing how to restrain one's glances and to keep them cast down, in order to deprive them of the pleasure they might enjoy in seeing attractive objects, is a mortification that is very difficult, meritorious, and salutary. The opportunity for growth comes with every step.

4° - Finally, our neighbors expect this decorum of us. Secular persons, even the most inattentive, cannot understand nor fail to notice when religious lack this virtue. They are so scandalized that they mention it out loud during the procession. However, they are very moved on seeing the communities which practice it. Sometimes they are so moved as to be led to conversion, to disdain the false maxims of the world, and even to leave the world completely in order to enter into religious life. It is by such means that a fervent religious becomes the sweet odor of Jesus Christ and causes the edification of his neighbor, while the immodest and negligent easily become the subject of scandal.

In order to preserve great decorum, but without affectation, during the course of the procession one can be occupied interiorly with some uplifting thoughts, such as the presence of God Who fills us deeply, or one of the four last things, or again some mysteries of the rosary, or the subject of reflection which was read in choir on that day. One could also occupy himself with vocal prayers, such as the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, the Office of Eternal Wisdom of Bl. Henry Suso, the fifteen gradual psalms, or the *Miserere*, while meditating on the sentiments of repentance found in each verse. One will especially find great reward in reciting the rosary. If one is careful to recite it seriously and to pause a little while to meditate on each mystery, there is much therein to occupy oneself interiorly for a long time, even up to the return to the church, without becoming bored, and without wanting to look around. In taking these means, one is sometimes likely to be more reflective in the middle of the streets, during the procession, than when kneeling deep in his cell.

The decorum which one must maintain should not keep him from noticing whether he is walking too fast or too slow with respect

to the companion next to him. A distance of several steps should be maintained between each religious. If there is no order in the pace of the procession, it will jolt rather than uplift. Those who watch it pass by receive a bad impression in seeing several religious practically on top of each other, while further ahead there are long empty spaces. This frequently happens when those who are close to the cross keep walking without paying attention to those who follow and are closer to the celebrant, resulting in an exaggerated distance between them, as if they were two different groups.

It is appropriate that at processions, whether general or particular, the Father Master remain close to the novices, to keep an eye on their fidelity to the rules, to keep them from talking to each other or with the young fathers, or with the religious of another Order. When they allow themselves to be led into faults, he should call them back to God with a glance. If that is not effective, he should approach them calmly to recall them to their duty.

#### § IV – *Vacations outside the Convent*

During the long vacations, permission is granted to the student novices to pass, in turn, a few days of recreation in the country, in some vicariate of the Order, or in another house where they are alone and separated from laypersons.

On the day of departure, they must rise early, say their prayers, and take their meal so as to be ready to set off while it is still cool and to arrive before the major heat of the day. They should consider this outing from the convent as a kind of pilgrimage to ask God, through the intercession of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, or of St. Mary Magdalen, depending on the place where they are going, for the grace to bless the recreation they will take. That is why all dissipation is to be banished from their trip; everything should take place in a religious spirit. After they have walked for a half-hour, while amusing themselves calmly, they could recite together the Minor Hours and the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, if they have not already done so before leaving the convent. A little later, they should recite a third of the rosary and the litanies of the Blessed Virgin. As soon as they arrive at their destination, they should seek the blessing of the Father Vicar, if they are in a house of the Order, and they should greet the Blessed Sacrament to thank Our Lord for having preserved them from any unfortunate accident, and to ask Him for the grace of taking advantage of the time they are to spend in this place of relaxation. Later, they could take some refreshments or rest, if they have need of them.

While they remain in the country, they are not to leave the house to wander around unless they have been given permission. If the

superior should give them a general permission, they should use his favor in moderation and only when he is absent or when he cannot conveniently be found. Each time they return to the house, they should ask for a blessing.

When they are out on a walk, it should be, as we have said elsewhere, to amuse themselves and not to wear themselves out. Accordingly, they should not go to places that are too far away nor walk as if running.

Those who are stronger should, in charity and thoughtfulness, take into account the weakness or the fragility of their weaker brothers. Under the excuse of rambling, no visit is to be made, no entering of any house, without special permission. Nor should the brothers become separated, some going here, others there, or these remaining in the convent with those going out. As much as possible, recreation is to be done together; those who by nature may be indolent or melancholic must make some efforts by motivation and by virtue so as to remain in friendly companionship with their brothers.

In the morning, they will rise early at a set time. One of them will be charged with giving the signals and with following the schedule prepared by the Father Master. After having completed their pious exercises, or even before Holy Mass, if allowed, they can enjoy the cool air by taking a walk. This recreation of the morning is the most useful one of the day for good health. During that time, no one should remain in his cell on the pretext of wanting to study; if anyone attempted to do this, he would be going against the wishes of the superiors. This relaxation of the body and of the spirit, which occurs by setting aside for a time the exercises of the cloister, is precisely intended to improve study and to serve God better; it is therefore His will that one takes advantage of it naturally and thankfully.

After dinner, they should not tarry with the Fathers, insofar as they can get away politely. Right after thanksgiving, they should go for a walk outside the convent, if it is not too hot. Each day, they should attend Compline and the *Salve Regina*, then together they should spend a half-hour in meditation. After supper, they should recreate by taking a walk in the neighborhood of the house; after prayer and an examination of conscience in common, they should retire to their cells. There, they should keep the profound silence all the more faithfully for having had permission, with greater indulgence, to speak during a considerable part of the day.

On Sundays and free feast days, they should avoid going out into the country and should attend faithfully the religious exercises at hand; if it is a day set to take communion, they should not miss doing so. They can easily recite together the entire rosary: a third at the morning walk, a third at the noonday walk, and a third at the evening

walk. It should also be for them a great consolation, while they enjoy so much relaxation, to pass a few moments in the chapel from time to time, to adore Our Lord Jesus Christ, to pray to the Blessed Virgin, their loving Mother, and to place themselves under her protection.

They should never touch the fruits in the garden of the house where they are lodging or of those houses where they might walk, even if the fruit has already fallen from the trees. On the days when they recreate inside because they cannot go outside, they should avoid making noise by shouting or by singing in full voice, especially during the profound silence; all this noise will disturb those who are in their cells and will scandalize strangers.

When the students are due to return to the novitiate, either definitively, or to refresh their piety, they should leave early if they have to travel in the morning or after the heat of the day if they must leave in the evening. They should ask the Father Vicar for his blessing, if they had not done so the previous evening, thank him for the kindness he showed them, and ask pardon for the faults they might have committed against him. As soon as they arrive in their convent, they should go adore the Blessed Sacrament and thank God for having protected them on the road and for having given them a more pleasant and generous period of rest than that often enjoyed by the world's wealthy. They should ask His pardon for the faults which they committed during their absence from the novitiate, and implore Him for the grace to use for Him alone the energy which they acquired in the countryside. Then they should approach the Very Reverend Father Prior to obtain his blessing. They should not delay reporting to the Father Master their conduct during their absence, and should strive to repair the spiritual damage which it may have caused them.

#### § V – *Ordinations; priest novices; the dean and sub-masters*

Each year, novices who have been called, examined, and prepared, are sent for ordination to the priesthood or to the other orders. Those who hope to be admitted to the priesthood without having long prepared themselves do not know what they are asking, unless they have been moved by a special attraction and strong piety. The sacrament of Orders, which is a sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, is awesome to men who reflect on it, as it would be even for angels. Some great saints never dared to receive it. It would be shocking pride and presumption for anyone to consider himself worthy; and absent this foolhardy belief, why seek the priesthood, ask for it, and act cleverly in order to obtain it? Nonetheless, this does not prevent an individual from presenting himself for the Minor Orders, and even for the priesthood when the superiors find him suitable; for one must let him-

self be directed by them. When someone is uncertain, he may present his doubts to them, and then submit himself without obstinacy or rejoinder. The obedience practiced while advancing in the Orders following the will of the superiors is the first disposition to receive them properly; moreover, it is more meritorious than the humility shown by not receiving them because of feelings of unworthiness.

While priests remain in the novitiate to complete the time period fixed by the Constitutions, they must comply with everything like the other novices. They should ask permission to exit the cloister reserved for the novices, even to go say Mass; nonetheless, they should leave without a companion. In everything, they are bound to give good example and to uplift their brothers by their spirit of simplicity and great observance; should they fail in these matters, they should be punished more severely than the others. This is because their priestly character would make their faults more reprehensible and their bad example more contagious. Just as they are older and raised above their brothers because of their awesome dignity, all the more must they surpass the latter in fervor, punctuality, obedience, humility, and observance. Since they receive communion every day and sacrifice Jesus Christ to His Father on the altar, they must also grow every day in perfection and live in the very life of Our Lord: a life of prayer, of mortification, of silence, of humility, and of charity. A priest who offers the Holy Sacrifice every day and who, far from growing in virtue, becomes more lax, less obedient, less constant in prayer, ought to fear that the lukewarmness and the dissipation into which he is falling represent a grave peril for his vocation, and consequently for his salvation. Perhaps these faults do not become exteriorly visible because of a certain reserve from education and prudence. Nonetheless, young priests need to apply themselves wholeheartedly to fulfilling scrupulously and in an interior spirit the duties of novices and to benefiting fully from the Masses which they celebrate as the most efficacious and most powerful means available in the Christian religion to advance from virtue to virtue.

In the novitiate, there is a dean, sometimes called the *circulator*; the functions of the dean are to give the signal, in the absence of the Father Master, when the novices need to leave as a group; to say the *De profundis*; to start the Office of the Blessed Virgin; to ring the small bell as a signal to extinguish the lights in the evening; to lock the dormitory; to ring the bell for profound silence after dinner and supper; to report to the Father Master those who did not get up with the community; to follow the exact times for meditation and for recreation; and, finally, to complete faithfully all the tasks entrusted to him by the Father Master. The latter could spare the dean from one or another of the tasks mentioned by distributing them among several

novices who are careful, mild in temperament, discrete, and exemplary in all observances.

Everyone should respect the dean, since the Father Master has shared with him part of his authority. If anyone were actively to seek this duty, he would merit to be punished as severely as if he had disrespected the Father Master. For his part, the dean should not misuse this confidence and semi-authority; he will use them to exercise charity toward his brothers without worrying or annoying them, to implement the regulations without haughtiness or pride, to warn those who are negligent, without contention or bitterness. In everything, it is more appropriate for him to request rather than to command. For example, he should avoid saying very bluntly: "Go over there," but prefer instead this turn of phrase: "Please go there." If, when he speaks in this way, his request were to be refused, he would need to inform the Father Master, who is to severely punish the disobedience, the dishonesty, and the arrogance of any novice who would dare to be defiant. When the Father Master is not present in the novitiate, no one — not even a priest — is allowed to leave without having first obtained permission from the dean.

But besides the dean, it is even better that in the novitiate there be a wise and observant priest as sub-master. Many general chapters have called for this, an observance followed in the regular provinces. In fact, it is difficult for a the Father Master to handle everything; the nature of the work requires the constant attention of two persons, especially when the novitiate is crowded. Continuous vigilance is required for perfection in all details and is of the greatest importance for the proper fostering of vocations. If only one person is charged with teaching the chant to the novices, explaining the rubrics, teaching the Constitutions, listening to their grievances, holding chapter meetings, often hearing their confessions, teaching them, preparing them to meditate and to live the interior life, accompanying them to recreation and elsewhere — and if to these regular occupations there were to arise, day or night, unexpected troubles — it is very likely that this one man would soon wear himself out. During his illness or absence from the novitiate, everything would fall apart. Simple novices would have neither supervision nor instruction, the professed no consolation. All of them would waste their time or become disheartened like sheep without a shepherd, an army without a chief. However, if there is a sub-master, in the absence of the Father Master, everything will continue as usual; they will help each other by apportioning the tasks; while one is supervising the brothers who are outside, the other will be able to care for those inside. In the end, they will complement each other by the diversity of their abilities and of their duties. There are a thousand advantages in having a sub-master

who has over the novices all the authority entrusted to him by the Father Master, as long as he is wise, observant, and agrees in everything with the one whom he is destined to serve humbly in all things, with no desire to replace him in anything.

## CHAPTER II

### **Interior and exterior behavior in the principal places of the convent**

Since God is present everywhere, the novices must behave everywhere with much external decorum and an internal recollection. There are, nonetheless, certain places where they meet each other more often; detailed explanations will be given about what they have to do there, and how they need to behave in order to practice that exterior decorum and preserve that interior recollection which form their distinctive character and constitute the beauty of the novitiate.

#### ARTICLE I

#### **Behavior in church**

In church, the novices must behave with great respect and holy fear. God commanded the Israelites to tremble and to be seized with fear when they were in His sanctuary, to indicate thereby the respect and the veneration which they were to show in that sacred place; how much more veneration should we have for churches, of which the sanctuary of the ancient law was but a shadow and a symbol! Indeed, it is in the church that the majesty of God resides in a very special manner. It is especially there that He hears the prayers addressed to Him. It is there that He lavishes His blessings with great abundance. It is there that Our Lord Jesus Christ is present as truly as He is in Heaven, surrounded by angels, always ready to receive our homage and fill us with His blessings. This is why St. Dominic and the other saints of the Order gained all their consolation by passing the hours of the day and even those of the night in church, there to pray on their knees, often prostrate on the ground, as a sign of deeper adoration.



Following the example of these great saints, the novices must find their delight in the sanctuary, there to muster as much respect as if they were in Heaven, to mutter no word, to occupy their mind with no thought that touches the earth. They will call to mind Jacob's exclamation on waking up after he had seen in a mysterious dream a stairway which touched the earth and the sky, with angels ascending and descending. Seized with fear because of the presence of God, and trembling, he cried out: "How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of Heaven" (*Gen.* 28:17). The church is indeed the house of God, from which angels continually climb to Heaven to carry our prayers, and in which they come down to bring us celestial blessings. The novices could also recollect the feelings of David when he exclaimed: "But as for me in the multitude of thy mercy, I will come into thy house; I will worship towards thy holy temple, in thy fear" (*Ps.* 5:8). Or again: "I will sing praise to thee in the sight of the angels; I will worship towards thy holy temple, and I will give glory to thy name" (*Ps.* 138:1-2).

Imbued with such sentiments of respect and of holy fear, the novices should enter choir with much decorum and in a spirit of adoration. They should proceed two by two, heads uncovered, eyes cast down, arms crossed under the scapular, walking calmly, with a serious countenance. They should make a profound inclination and a genuflection before the Most Blessed Sacrament with much uniformity. At the same time, they should adore Jesus Christ truly present on the altar and should ask of Him the grace to celebrate the Office properly, while reciting interiorly: "My Savior and my God, I believe firmly that You are present here; I adore you with all my heart; I ask You for the grace to recite this Divine Office well."

Having arrived at their place, if the second signal is still ringing, they should in the meantime recite some prayer, whether mental or vocal, without in any way becoming bored that they are not beginning quickly enough. They should recite the Office with decorum of body, attention of the mind, and devotion of the heart, as will be explained in another chapter.

Every time they come from the novitiate, they should pass before the altar where the Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved. After having made a genuflection and profound inclination together with their companion, they should stop for a moment of adoration of Our Lord. If they have the time and the inclination, they could recite the strophes: *Tantum ergo sacramentum* and *Genitori genitoque*, or the strophes: *Memento, salutis auctor* [Compline hymn for the Office of the Blessed Virgin], and *gloria tibi, Domine*, or a *Pater* and an *Ave*, or an antiphon, verse, and prayer from the Office of the Blessed Sacrament. They should not, however, stop in front of the tabernacle, when dur-

ing the Office they move from the church to the sacristy or from the sacristy to the church.

When they are standing in the middle of choir to sing hymns, invitatories, antiphons, or certain parts of the High Mass, they should keep their body standing tall and at attention, capuce over the head, eyes cast down, hands crossed under the scapular, feet almost joined together. When standing at their place in the stalls, they should maintain a similar posture. When they are sitting during the readings, the responses, the martyrology, the epistle at the High Mass, and a section of the psalms from Lauds, they will also have their head covered, their hands under the scapular, eyes cast down, knees together, and the whole body at attention. When they are kneeling during meditation, the elevation of the Sacred Host, and during a few strophes or verses of the Office, they ought to keep their head and body straight, eyes cast down or piously fixed on the altar. Finally, they should always maintain great decorum, all the while avoiding awkwardness or affectation.

When sitting down, they should be careful not to rumple their scapular; to that end, they are allowed to draw it back modestly beside themselves. At those Offices when the cappa is worn, they should be satisfied to fold it over on their knees. If they are seated during a psalm, they should stand up at the mid-point of the last verse so as to be ready to make a profound bow at the beginning of the *Gloria Patri*. They should stand up also after each lesson, at the moment when the versicularian repeats the end of the response, for all to begin the inclination together, when the hebdomadarian gives the blessing before the other lessons.

It would show a lack of decorum to enter the choir like a flighty individual, head held high, eyes wandering, arms flailing, moving forward hurriedly without uncovering his head, or without waiting for his companion, if there is one, and without making a bow and a genuflexion, or making only incomplete ones, or making both in one movement, that is, without rising completely from the first to undertake the second. It would also be a lack of decorum when standing up to look around from one side to the other, to bend one's head onto one's shoulders, when wearing the capuce to pull it excessively forward over one's forehead, or to push it back only halfway when one is to be bare-headed, to have one's arms hanging down, to place a hand on one's face very often, to keep one's body in a slouching posture, to bend to one side, to rest on one's elbows of the stalls as if nonchalant, to keep one's legs apart too widely, to move them frequently, or to place one foot in front of the other in a cavalier fashion. It would also be indecorous when sitting to rest one's head and shoulders on the back of the stall, as if wanting to sleep, to gaze unnecessarily on those

in front of oneself, to leave one's arms hanging outside of the scapular, or allowing the latter or the two front ends of the cappa to drag, and to place one foot over the other in a worldly manner. It would be a very serious lack of decorum to speak in choir, to laugh, to make signals. This type of fault injures God more than we realize, scandalizes our neighbor, distracts the brethren, profanes the holy place, and reveals a total lack of the spirit of faith.

After the novices have recited Office or attended Mass, in a manner which we will explain later, they should leave choir decorously without haste. They should make the profound inclination and the genuflexion in the same way as when they entered, and should express inwardly thoughts such as these: "My Savior Jesus Christ, I firmly believe that You are present here; I adore you with all my heart, I thank You for all You have made me endure in Your presence during this office, and I ask pardon of You for all the faults I committed in my recitation." They should walk calmly two by two, eyes lowered, arms crossed under the scapular. As they leave thus, they should recite the *De profundis* or a decade of the rosary. If they pass before the Reverend Father Prior or the Reverend Father Subprior, they should bow to them respectfully.

In order for the novices to accustom themselves to behaving in choir in a very serious external manner, they should often think of themselves surrounded by the thousands of angels present in our churches, near to some Saints, especially those of our Order, as well as those whose relics the church preserves. They should especially strive to fill their minds with the presence of Jesus Christ, remembering that He is the judge of the living and of the dead; that He will reward a hundredfold respectful and heartfelt prayers, while He will punish severely the indecorous actions which we allowed ourselves in His sanctuary; that, in addition, He punished and chased with a whip those who desecrated the temple of Jerusalem instead of making it a place of prayer.

## ARTICLE II

### **Behavior in the cell**

In their cell, the novices should behave with much propriety. Even when they cannot be seen by anyone, they always have God and their guardian angel as witnesses of their actions. That is why they should never voluntarily think of anything or do anything that deviates from the holiness of their state. God, Who is always present to them, perceives the most subtle thoughts of the mind and the most hidden desires of the heart. They should cherish their cell as the place where they can cultivate all sorts of good fruits and avoid all kinds of evil. It is there, protected from the tumult and the corruption of the world, hidden from the eyes of men, that they can establish an uninterrupted relationship with God through prayer and reading, listen at leisure to the words that the Savior addresses to their heart in the depths of solitude where He leads them, and work efficaciously at their conversion and their perfection. This is why the early religious of our Order were always either in choir or in their cell, as reported by St. Antoninus. If the novices wish to become saints like them, they need to follow their example and enter into the sentiments of St. Jerome when he said: "The cell is for me a Paradise, and the city is as unbearable to me as a prison."

While the novices are in their beloved cell, they need to be suitably occupied. Idleness is the source of all evils; accordingly, they will avoid idle thoughts and accustom themselves to think always of something uplifting. If one allows himself to listen to useless thoughts, he will presently have bad ones; as soon as one allows his mind to indulge in idle fancies, one is no longer master of his imagination; much time is lost in that kind of deviation. Moreover, when one wishes to recollect oneself for study or prayer, it is no longer possible. The imagination goes from one ramble to another, and hours pass by without being able to fix the mind on the intended subject. To avoid such grave evils, the novices will accustom themselves, while they are still young, to keeping busy with something holy or useful, especially praying, studying, and writing.

It is this fortunate alternative of prayer and reading that St. Jerome and St. Bernard strongly recommended to religious. By prayer, the soul maintains a holy interchange with God; indeed, just as we speak to God in prayer, so does He speak to us in reading. But for these occupations to be more useful to us, we need, at the very begin-

ning, to offer them to Him very carefully, by placing ourselves in His presence, by adoring Him and consecrating to Him all our undertaking. These acts of faith, of adoration, of offering should be repeated as often as possible, especially when we hear the clock strike. We should act in the same way when we finish the task undertaken, and ask God to forgive the faults we may have committed while working. Elsewhere we will deal with the manner of engaging properly in prayer, in reading, and in studying; at this point, we say no more.

In the cell of the brethren there is to be nothing superfluous, nothing unusual, nothing precious, nothing of affectation or neglect — everything there should reflect poverty and neatness. These two virtues go well together and bring honor to a religious. One's head should remain covered, and looking out the window should not be done unnecessarily. Such glances are a sign of curiosity or of fickleness, or of boredom at the solitude. The bird which sets its head outside the cage shows that it would like to get out. Once a cell has been prepared for us and assigned to us, nothing should be moved around, not even pictures, nothing added, and nothing removed. Such changes would betray the fickleness or the anxiety of the one who occupies it.

If sometimes one falls asleep while reading or while studying in his cell, he should never lie on the bed outside of the time permitted; this would be the sign of great laziness. One should attempt to dispel sleep, for instance, by taking a few steps, without leaving the cell, by writing something personal, or by saving for those times the reading of something which interests him greatly. No noise should ever be made in a cell; this would disturb one's neighbors. If it should happen that one must engage in a somewhat noisy task, this should be done, with the Father Master's permission, while the other novices are at recreation. Moreover, entering or leaving should be done quietly since, for instance, if the door were closed or opened hastily, that could disturb an inattentive or impatient individual.

The novices should remain in their cell as often as they can and rest there in a deep silence. If from the start of their conversion they accustom themselves to doing this faithfully, the cell will then become the place where they will find the most calm, tranquility, and consolation. On the other hand, if they accustom themselves to leaving it often, whether because of thoughtlessness, unsteadiness, laziness, or restlessness, later on they will experience only boredom. Accordingly, they should make it a precept for themselves not to leave the cell except out of obedience or necessity. Necessity must truly be such. As for obedience, it imposes itself every time the bell rings for some community activity, such as choir, class, refectory. Wherever they wish to go, and however close to their cell, they should never leave

without wearing their complete habit. A religious was possessed by a devil for having gone out of his cell without wearing the scapular.

Every time the novices leave their cell, they should take some holy water; for that, their font should always be filled and kept very clean. After having made the sign of the cross, they should kneel at their prie-dieu, if they have time, recite there an *Ave Maria*, and make an act of faith in the presence of God along with an act of adoration, saying: "My God, I adore You with all my heart, and I offer You the action I am about to undertake." If one is going to choir, he offers the Office at which he is about to assist; if going to class, the current study; if to the refectory, the food to be taken. Finally, whatever else one might do outside the cell, should always begin with an offering to God for His greater glory, to please Him, to exercise obedience and penance, to obtain the remission of one's sins and those of our neighbor, and to obtain the graces one needs to work at conversion and perfection.

The novices should return to their cell as soon as they are no longer kept outside, without stopping to talk in any place. They should learn to find in this amiable solitude what they perhaps had lost by being far from their cell, especially their recollection of spirit, repentance, and affection of the heart. Every time they enter, they should take holy water and should kneel at their prie-dieu to recite an *Ave Maria* and to make acts of faith in the presence of God followed by acts of adoration and of offering. In particular, they should ask for help with the new activity in which they are about to engage.

In the morning, as soon as they hear the first signal for rising, they should make the sign of the cross and say: "My God, I give You my heart." They should get up with fervor, lest, by remaining in bed beyond the fixed time, they offer to the devil of laziness the beginning of the day for which the Divine Master is so jealous. If they feel a certain repugnance to rising during the night or in the morning, they should consider that their sins deserve even greater punishment; that the difficulty they have in interrupting their sleep is part of their penance, chosen by the Lord Himself; that St. Dominic and many other great saints slept only on the floor or spent the whole night at prayer in church; finally, that the more it costs them to get up, the more merit they will have if they do it promptly for love of God.

While putting on the clothing they removed for sleeping, they should place themselves in the presence of God and offer Him the first moments of the day for His greater glory and for the remission of their sins. Then, they should entertain interiorly some wholesome thought, especially that of death, considering that perhaps they are beginning their last day. They could also offer a vocal prayer like this one: "Lord, clothe my soul with Your grace and adorn it with Your

virtues." Or the psalm (62): *Deus, Deus meus, ad te de luce vigilo*, or the litany of the Blessed Virgin, or the hymn: *Ave, maris stella*, or the *Veni, creator spiritus*, or some other prayer to which they are attached. In the external care needed for their bodies, they should have such innocence as never to look at their flesh, lest they offend purity, even in the most insignificant manner. They should kiss the scapular, a gift of Mary, and say: "Holy Mary, show yourself to be my mother; make me show myself to be your son." *Sancta Maria, monstra te meam esse matrem; fac monstrem me tuum esse filium.*

As for retiring, it will take place, like rising, at the precise hour indicated. The novices should never stay up beyond that time under pretext of praying, studying, or reading further. This kind of wakefulness displeases God, harms the soul, weakens the body, and compromises health. If someone needs to retire early or to rise after retiring, he will give his reasons to the Father Master and accept the permission or the rejection. Before retiring, the examination of conscience needs to be done, in a manner to be explained later, unless, so as not to lose time for sleep, another time has been indicated. A short vocal prayer may then be offered, such as a few verses of the *Miserere mei, Deus*, or the response: *O spem miram*, or some invocation to Mary. The novices will get into bed very chastely, watching especially over their eyes, respecting the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and remembering that purity, as much as it is fragile and discreet, is wary even of one's own glances. That is why they will extinguish their light when it is no longer necessary, and will lie down with the decorum that the saints maintain even in their rest.

In lying in bed, they should take a modest posture, arms crossed on the chest, the rosary around the neck, if they have this praiseworthy devotion. Before falling asleep, they should think of death, of which sleep is the image, and they could recite the *De profundis* for the souls in Purgatory.

They should also entertain some other good thought, like the subject of meditation, or of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or some mystery of the rosary, or a psalm, or another pious subject likely to make the sleep more holy and undisturbed, and which will give rise to worthy inspirations during the night or on awakening in the morning. A servant of God should be horrified at sleeping like the beasts, during which the mind and the body are enveloped in a kind of lethargy. While falling asleep, they can picture Jesus on the cross looking at them, that they have the Blessed Virgin on one side of their bed, St. Joseph on the other, the guardian angel at the feet, and St. Dominic at the head. And yet, they should not allow their imagination to harbor representations to excess. Each one is to choose the practice which brings on a sleep that is more prompt and more sweet.

If sometimes they should wake, they should immediately place themselves in the presence of God, adore Him, and offer Him their heart. They could also pronounce the name of Jesus or of Mary, make the sign of the cross, or say: *Jesu, fili Dei vivi, miserere mei*, or *Sancta Trinitas, unus Deus, miserere mei*, or some other short prayer, so long as it does not prevent them from falling asleep again. In the case of insomnia, they should take care not to think of anything that will bother their mind or excite their imagination, as would be the case if considering some punishment or a question about their studies. Rather, they should reflect on the passion of Jesus Christ, especially of that painful night when He was so outrageously treated or the torments of the damned who have only flames as their bed, or some other simple and edifying topic which could bring sleep back and keep them from worrying while they wait for it.



## ARTICLE III

### **Behavior in the dormitory and in the warming room**

The dormitory and the cloister are places given over to silence, as much as the refectory, the cells, and the church. All the religious are bound to maintain continual silence in those five areas, as our Constitutions require; no authority can grant dispensation on this matter. The regular character of a house is determined by its silence. If it reigns perfectly, the conclusion arises that the community is well ordered; if silence is easily broken, one is led to believe that the interior spirit is absent, and that there is a certain laxity that will only increase. This is why the novices must never speak in the dormitory, and if a question is asked, that they reply only by signs. When they need to ask something of another novice, they should write down their request and present it; in waiting for the response, they should not wait at the doorway but a bit to the side, until such time as they receive an answer on the same slip of paper or on another.

As soon as they hear the signal for some community activity, they should attend to it speedily, since a special blessing is reserved for the one who arrives first. While walking in the dormitory, they should avoid making noise, lest during the night they awake those who are sleeping, or during the day they disturb those who are studying. Their demeanor must be calm and marked with a certain simple dignity. That is why they should not walk in a lackadaisical or effeminate way, nor by swaying the shoulders from one side to the other, nor by stooping, nor by lifting up the head, nor being too slow or too fast; all of this betrays levity, vanity, or affectation. While passing by the dormitory of the Fathers, they should not look at those who are there or what they are doing, but should continue their walking in a discreet way, eyes downcast, and the heart united to God alone.

As soon as they leave their cell to go to some community activity, they can begin with several decades of the rosary, which they should continue before the door of the novitiate, until the *De profundis* is recited. Thus, they will accustom themselves to reciting the rosary whenever they are circulating through the convent or awaiting some community activity. In this way it will be easy for them to finish it before the end of the day; even though they would not gain certain indulgences for this manner of recitation, nonetheless they will certainly gain great advantages for their union with Our Savior. When

they are obliged to wait at the door of the novitiate or elsewhere for the novices to gather, they should refrain from giving any sign of impatience or of levity. Rather, they should keep themselves in the presence of God and await their brothers with much calm and serenity, offering to the Divine Master the exercise in which they will take part.

When the Father Master begins the *De profundis*, they should alternate verses with him in an articulated and reverent manner, pronouncing in full voice. This prayer is recited for the benefactors of the Order and for all the souls in Purgatory, in particular those of their parents. The *De profundis* completed, they should continue to pray or meditate, if time remains. Every time they meet another religious in the dormitory or elsewhere, whether lay brother, novice, or priest, they should greet him suitably, uncovering the head more or less, according to the individual's standing. It is just and uplifting to recognize each other by these signs of respect and charity; even secular persons are impressed by this conduct. On their walks, the novices should also uncover their head when they meet a stranger of high standing.

While passing the dormitory, they should not, in curiosity, look on one side or the other, to identify those they find there or those who are passing through. Rather, they should always keep their eyes modestly cast down and should look up only when necessary. St. Bernard forbade religious when they were walking, standing, or remaining seated, to hold their heads too high like the proud, too bowed like the lazy, or bent pretentiously like the hypocrites. He wanted the religious to keep the body standing straight and tall, and the face slightly bowed toward the ground, moved by thought that we are dust and unto dust will we return. As for the heart, it should be constantly directed to Heaven, where Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father. Their face should reveal no sadness, posing, or animosity. On the contrary, wherever they may be, and especially in the convent, they will show a holy cheerfulness on their face and hold back the sorrow which they might be feeling.

On the days when the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin is said in the dormitory, the novices should recite it with all the decorum, attentiveness, and reverence they can muster. St. Vincent Ferrer suggested singing it with as much care as if Mary were really present and one could see her with the eyes of the body. It would be outrageous, while the mouth is singing praises, to allow the heart and the mind to be occupied with vain desires or useless thoughts. That is why this prayer must be said calmly, articulately, and all the words distinctly. It would be a very great unseemliness to laugh, and even more to engage in joking or banter so as to make others laugh, and to lead them astray from the diligence they ought to have. They should even avoid leaning against the wall. Rather, they should keep the body

straight, eyes cast down, arms crossed under the scapular, maintaining appropriate decorum in everything. Whenever they recite a prayer to the Virgin, while walking from the choir to the novitiate, they should have an even greater decorum, convinced that, even if they had the devotion of an angel, they would still not be able to praise Mary as much as she deserves.

The novices should never leave the novitiate area without the permission of the Father Master and without a companion. The two should walk together, keeping silence until they arrive at the place where they will be occupied under obedience. While coming and going, even though they ought to bow to all the religious before whom they pass, they will nonetheless not speak to them without permission. And if the Fathers or others wish to stop them to say a few words, they must make known to them charitably by signs that they do not have permission to answer. If it were a matter of serious and pressing consequence, they could answer briefly, in a low voice, then leave immediately. On returning to the novitiate, they are to inform the Father Master of the presumed permission which they took.

When they go to the garment room, they should speak no more than necessary, that is to say, to ask the brother for the things they need. They must ask in few words then immediately leave, because silence is obligatory in the garment room. Should they come across a religious who is engaged in a conversation or who is bantering, they should keep from imitating him; that they were led by bad example will not excuse them before God. At the very least, this kind of trifling conversation will have to be accounted for on the day of judgment. Sometimes the words are gossip, grumbling, and slander, which are more grave sins. To avoid breaking the silence at the garment room, they should go there rarely and only when necessary. They could avoid going there altogether by asking the novice in charge of this service to obtain for them what they need. In general, it is better to ask through another rather than by oneself for articles of clothing and things of that nature, to avoid a natural hastiness and the temptation to want to choose them and to have them tailored or repaired according to one's taste or refinement.

They should strive to keep their clothes clean, all the while avoiding affectation. Untidiness is usually a sign of laziness. Affectation is an indication of arrogance and vanity. It would also be unbecoming always to have one's clothing askew, soiled, shabby, dusty, and covered with stains. There would be some vanity in continually changing one's clothes, to have them washed more often than those of the community, unnecessarily and without permission, to look for those made of a certain cloth or in a particular style, to have them dragging, and to wear shoes that are too polished. To be attached to

such lowly things is to betray a littleness of spirit. It is necessary to avoid both extremes and, as St. Augustine said, "not attempt to please men by our clothes but by our well-ordered manners." Among religious, cleanliness must be inseparable from poverty. However shabby one's habit, whether because it is worn or because it has been patched, it is always appropriate for a religious, as long as it has this quality of cleanliness. Secular persons are edified by such poverty when it is joined to cleanliness without ostentation.

When the novices need to warm themselves during the winter, they can go to the warming room at the times allowed, or even at another time with special permission. It is appropriate to seek this mitigation when one is too cold, so as to be able to work more effectively. It is useful, especially after Matins, so as to fall asleep more easily. In general, however, one would do better not to become accustomed to go there often to warm himself because heat makes one lazy. When settled close to the heat, one finds it difficult to leave and much time is lost. While there, the novices should remain silent and busy their minds with wholesome thoughts, such as the presence of God, some mystery of the rosary, the pains of Purgatory which many souls may be enduring because of a single infraction of their Constitutions, for example, the rule of silence or the effective use of time.

In the warming room, they should be sufficiently steadfast so as not to reply to those who would want to make them talk by questioning them. If they were to come across a dissipated individual who would dare to banter, they should avoid following his bad example, and imitate, rather, the proper religious who keep themselves recollected in the presence of God. Never are they to look around at others with curious glances, nor exchange with them glances that are like words and give rise to thoughts that are useless, ridiculous, or malicious. They should also avoid stoking the fire unnecessarily, bending too close to the fireplace, turning their back to it, and lifting the habit above the knees.

On entering, they should bow politely to those who are in the room, and should not hasten to take the best places, but take those that are less convenient, reminding themselves that there are recluses in their grottos and poor persons along the roads who are chilled to the bone without having the same ease to warm themselves, although they might have less need than we to do penance.

When other religious come to the warming room, they should cede the better places to them. On leaving, they should bow with a sign of the head to those who remain, close the door noiselessly, and return promptly to their cell lest they lose to the outside the heat which they have just absorbed and which could become detrimental if exposed to a draft.

## ARTICLE IV

### **Behavior in the refectory**

When the novices go to the refectory at mealtime, they must reflect on the need to make this action very holy, so that, although animalistic in itself, it becomes spiritual. To that end, they should offer it to God with the intention of taking nourishment so as to have increased strength to serve to Him. It is in that sense that St. Paul speaks when he says: "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (*I Cor.* 10:31). As for natural pleasure, it ought to be rejected. That is why St. Bernard hoped that we could go to the table with the repugnance of a man being led to the rack. St. Augustine said that God had taught him to take food as one takes medicine. One must never eat simply for pleasure, but out of necessity. It would be a venial sin to eat only for the sensual pleasure to be found therein. Although it is not wrong to savor the taste and enjoy the food, this pleasure must not be the aim of the action; it should be associated with God in thanksgiving.

On going to the refectory, the brethren should say some prayer to ask of God the grace not to offend Him in the action to be taken. They should consider His goodness in intending to give them necessary sustenance despite all the sins which they have committed against His divine majesty and which would have merited them to be condemned by starvation. Everyone is free to choose such thoughts as to keep him more recollected and faithful to the demands of temperance.

Before entering the refectory, they should wash their hands. When they hear the signal given by the superior with the refectory bell, they should get up and proceed two by two, heads uncovered, eyes politely cast down, arms crossed under the scapular.

Arriving in the middle of the refectory, they should bow before the image in the front, then stand facing each other. They should sing the prayers with much seriousness, sharpness, fervor, and gratitude. When the prayers are completed, they should sit at table and observe the greatest decorum. Thus, they should keep their body straight, not resting their shoulders against the wall or the woodwork, without bending over the table or resting on their elbows to eat. They should keep their eyes lowered, without watching either those who enter or those who leave, those facing them, or those performing some

act of repentance, and without checking what others are eating. Nonetheless, if they see something is missing to the brothers beside them, they should ask for it in their place. When the Reverend Father Prior or the Father Subprior or some elderly friar passes before them at table, they should bow respectfully to them; for the former, they should not only uncover their head but also stand up.

On sitting down, they should carefully place the scapular on their knees. They should not cross their legs but keep their feet together. They should not hasten too quickly to eat, but before unfolding their napkin, they should listen first to the verses of Scripture, and they could say a *Pater* and an *Ave* for the souls in Purgatory, so as to have the consolation of completing a good work before allowing themselves to taste the food.

If there is a delay in the serving, they should keep from becoming impatient and making any noise at table with their hands, plate, or knife, or playing with their fingers. Rather, they should listen attentively to the reading, and if it is sometimes stopped they will occupy their mind with some pious thoughts. They should consider especially, with holy astonishment, that they must consume, so to speak, the sins of the people. During the service, they should not eye with a kind of eagerness the plates being presented and should not choose the best one, but should accept the portion they find before them. To act otherwise would be to display gluttony, poor upbringing, and scant virtue. If the portion offered does not appear adequate, they should show no dissatisfaction, whether by word or by signs; on the contrary, they should receive everything that is presented to them with gratitude and thanksgiving.

When they experience an aversion to certain foods, they should not make this known nor should they exchange them. They should accept them quietly and politely and make some effort to overcome little by little this kind of repugnance, which is often imaginary. If the aversion and distaste are too strong, or if what is being served would be injurious to health, they should not send it back to obtain something else. Rather, they should place it at the edge of the table and replace the portion of which they are depriving themselves with bread and with whatever else they have to complete their meal. If the brother next to them would like to request something else for them, they should indicate by signs that they need nothing. If, despite that, another dish were brought, they should gently put it at the end of the table so that the server could pick it up while passing, unless this was sent under obedience. In that case, they should simply take it.

The novices should freely take their food according to their need to restore their strength. Certain temperaments require more

nourishment than others. Nonetheless, whatever their appetite, they should never eat hastily, but calmly, observing all social conventions.

If they come across something unfit, they should not call it to the attention of those around them. Instead, making little of it, they should place it on the edge of the table so that the server can remove it as soon as possible, lest the sight of it disgust others.

Before drinking, they ought to pour the wine and the water in their cup gently, lest they spill some on the tablecloth. They should not overfill the cup, so as not to spill anything on their habits. They should hold the cup with both hands, and not drink too slowly, as if they were tasting wine, nor too rapidly and noisily. They will be careful to put enough water in their wine. If it is strong, St. Vincent counseled cutting it at least by half. In itself, wine is healthful when used in moderation. It contributes to a certain equilibrium of body and spirit. But it is also the source of great evils, especially in young people, when taken without self-control. It numbs the mind, hardens the heart, dehydrates the body, gives rise to bad thoughts, inflames concupiscence, and promotes frivolity. That is why all the saints and all those persons who work seriously for their salvation have been overly cautious on this point. Our Holy Father St. Dominic, in particular, spent many years without tasting wine. When he was obliged to take some because of his weariness, like Timothy long ago, following the counsel of St. Paul, he ordinarily had but one glass, which was almost two-thirds water, as is reported in the acts of his canonization.

While the novices provide their body with all the nourishment it needs, they should also be alert to give the soul its bread. Accordingly, they should be concerned about the reading, even more than about the food, because the soul is the most noble part of man, and therefore deserves the most attention even as we are busy reviving the body. In the refectory, St. Thomas was so absorbed with God that, on leaving it, he could not remember what had been served. Even while eating, he was not aware that the taste of food was agreeable or distasteful. In addition, the brothers should, from time to time, place themselves in the presence of God, turning to Him the aspirations of their heart, especially when they move from one dish to another, or when they feel moved to interior reflection. In particular, the sight of bread and wine should remind them of the holy mysteries of the altar.

They should avoid all sensuality and resolve ahead of time that they do not wish to consent to it. When tempted to it, they should think of the gall and the vinegar which Our Lord Jesus Christ was given to drink, of the awful penalties of the damned, of the extraordinary abstinence of so many saints who spent many years on bread and water, or of their own personal sins for which they should hasten to do penance. They would be wise to mortify themselves each

day regarding something or other of the meal. Religious are vowed by their state to penance. If they are zealous for their salvation, they will not let pass any occasion to practice it in order to gain some benefit. David mixed his bread with the tears of sorrow which his offenses brought about. Some noted saints seasoned what they were to eat with gall, wormwood, or ashes. To follow such notable examples, the novices could leave a part of their meal, especially something which pleases them the most. Nonetheless, they should never deprive themselves beyond the permission obtained in advance. An indiscrete mortification, done on a whim or by self-will, is not pleasing to God: it could be subject to illusion and bring about significant weakness of body and of spirit. "Obedience is better than sacrifices" (*I Sam 15:22*).

After the novices have taken all the nourishment they need, they should fold their napkins and listen in silence to the reading. Silence at table is one of the most recommended practices by our holy Constitutions. It needs to be observed not only in the refectory but also outside when we eat together, whether on land or at sea. No superior is empowered to dispense from silence in the refectory. When some words are required, they should be expressed by signs or in a soft voice, with a whisper, *oratione imperfecta*, as the ancients put it.

The brothers should take sufficient time for their meals, avoiding making them too short, or too long, but keeping a just mean.

On rising from the table, they should return to the place they took for the *Benedicite*. There, they should sing grace with much decorum and attentiveness, avoiding the expression of any levity, such as laughing or speaking, which would betray an interior dissipation. On going to choir with the community, they should recite the psalm *Miserere* and the other prayers in a spirit of supplication and repentance, asking from God graces for the benefactors who provide them with daily bread, and pardon for themselves on account of the sins they might have committed during the meal. Indeed, it is very difficult not to fall into extremes either by eating too much, or by not eating enough, or by abandoning the purity of intention and the other circumstances necessary to ground this action properly. They could also bring to mind the Communion of the morning, all the more so in that the prayers at table contain many verses of psalms which the Church employs in the office of the Most Holy Sacrament.



## ARTICLE V

### **Behavior at recreation**

Recreation is granted to religious so as to repair the moral energy of their mind without dispelling spiritual energy. Many great saints deprived themselves of it completely, in a spirit of penance. For our early fathers, recreation consisted in going to the church after the meal to adore the Blessed Sacrament, to visit the chapels, and to recite some prayers, as reported by St. Antoninus; or to engage among themselves in holy conferences, as a means of enlivening them in promoting the glory of God, in working for the salvation of their neighbors, in learning how to acquire a certain virtue and avoid a certain vice. Nonetheless, by a merciful tolerance, the practice was introduced that one devote a certain amount of time each day for recreation, lest the energy of the mind, which is limited, be used up quickly if one were always to keep it occupied seriously, or lest, by not allowing a fixed time for recreation, the religious be exposed to the temptation of recreating a little during the whole day and everywhere in the convent.

To be sure, there is a certain relationship between the mind and the body. Just as the body that works overly long without rest weakens itself little by little, with attendant consequences on the mind, so too the mind that works too long on serious intellectual occupations weakens itself gradually and thus undermines the vigor of the body. When a bow is always bent, the strings slacken and are in no condition to function when one has need of them. It was with this example that St. John the Evangelist replied to those who were scandalized in seeing him engaged in some recreation with his disciples (see Cassian, *Conferences*, XXIV, 21). Indeed, as soon as one has enjoyed moderate relaxation and has busied himself with some uplifting topic, he finds himself recollected, completely ready to study more attentively; he could even be in a state to pray deeply.

Nonetheless, for the novices to gain these advantages from their recreation, the subject of their discussions has to be worthy and uplifting. Decorum must regulate their voices, their glances, their gestures, and the entire demeanor of their bodies. Charity and humility, which are the foundation of civility among people who are well brought up, must inspire overall kindness and decorum in their words and in their behavior. But they should forget all the purely secular

habits which they had before leaving the world. Since they have entered into a new land, they are bound to learn its very holy customs. If, before entering religious life, they had manners that were civil, honest, and in good form, inspired by right reason and by excellent upbringing, they should retain them and give them new life by a principle of religion. One should always show politeness directed by good taste, decorum, charity, and humility. Upon these virtues rests all Christian and religious good manners.

At the beginning of recreation, the novices should place themselves in the presence of God and offer Him this action for His greater glory. While it unfolds, they will renew their interior disposition several times, without letting anything show, repeating in the depths of their heart: "My God, I offer you this recreataion; it is for love of You that I take it, to serve You better. I ask for the grace of not offending You in it."

From the very beginning of recreation, the simple novices should separate themselves from the professed novices, and should speak in Latin for a fixed amount of time, if this laudable practice is in force. Since languages are better learned by usage than by study, they will thus acquire a greater facility for the one which they will use during their studies in philosophy and theology. They should be careful to avoid improper or vulgar expressions. To use those by carelessness or by affectation betrays a spirit that is ill-bred and little concerned with religious dignity.

They should maintain a cheerful and relaxed countenance, accompanied by self-control and prudence. St. Paul wanted the servants of God to combine joy and self-control, lest the first without the second degenerate into dissipation, and the second without the first change into an overly austere seriousness. Here are his words: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again, I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh" (*Phil.* 4:4). It is important, then, to have a decorum that is neither constrained nor pretended, but which comes from an interior feeling that God is near us, that He is within us, and that we take our recreation under His eyes. Accordingly, our decorum should conform to that which, according to the definition of St. Thomas, regulates all exterior activity of man, to the degree that there is nothing in his actions and in the demeanor of his body that can offend Our Lord or fail to uplift his neighbor, but that everything befits the time, the place, and the people with whom he engages (see ST II-II, q. 168).

This is why we should remind ourselves during recreation that we ought to love and respect our brothers out of charity, and to consider ourselves below them out of the principle of Christian humility. Thus we should meditate on St. Paul's commands for us to be one

step ahead of each other in granting signs of respect and in mutually considering ourselves inferior to each other. In order to achieve this, here is how one should behave in everything.

While speaking, one should hold his head gracefully, naturally, effortlessly, avoiding a stilted, feigned, or pretentious air. One's face should be mild, calm, and cheerful, so as to inspire in others that expansion of the heart which should prevail during recreation. There should be nothing like the sadness of melancholy persons, the frivolity of prodigals, the hard-heartedness and peevishness of ill-humored individuals. Even though one should always exhibit a mildness on his face, it should nonetheless be proportionate to the subject being discussed. If it is serious or sad, one would avoid cheerfulness; if it is simple and pleasant, one should not show excessive seriousness.

In order to maintain a peaceful countenance, one's forehead should be marked by composure so that no harshness or frowning appears. One's eyes should be welcoming, peaceful, and modestly lowered; they should not be raised too high, opened too wide, too closed, too wandering and unstable. One's glance should be dignified and controlled so as to see sufficiently all the persons in the group, without, however, fixing one's eyes on any individual. All disagreeable pursing of the lips should be avoided. Nothing in the countenance should reflect audacity, astonishment, or confusion.

Decorum should also manage the other parts of the body and all its movements. One's shoulders should be straight but not stiff or bent. If this latter habit is contracted in youth, one will be unable to correct it later or will appear hunched-over like an elderly man who stoops under the weight of years.

Even in recreation, the brothers should keep their arms crossed under the scapular as our regulations demand, so as to remind ourselves that we are crucified to the world, but also that we have God in our heart. In this way, we should avoid having the arms hanging down, stretching them out, contorting them from one side to the other, or holding them behind the back. One should also abstain from leaning on elbows when listening to those who are talking to us; from touching, while gesticulating, those we are addressing; from pulling them by the capuce or the scapular; from clapping hands as a sign of joy; from tapping the foot on the floor, and from playing with one hand or the other. If one is talking about someone at a distance, one should not point him out. Walking should be done moderately, neither too fast nor too slow, nor by dragging one's feet; nor, in another excess, by walking on tiptoes as if dancing.

The subjects of conversation for simple novices could be the chapters of the Scriptures that they had read that day or the day before. Each one would indicate what he found most striking. They

should then speak about the rubrics, the Constitutions, and the spiritual readings done on their own, which treat the manner of acquiring some virtue or of avoiding some vice. Never should they reveal what they saw or did while in the world, unless this were appropriate to uplift their brethren, such as something concerning the glory of God, the honor of the saints, and the good of the Church. On leaving the world, they say adieu also to all topics of worldly conversation, which are often useless if not actually detrimental.

The professed could also occasionally deal with questions of philosophy or of theology. And yet, they should avoid treating them in a constrained way, which would require too much understanding and would tire the mind rather than rejuvenating it; or of becoming too animated and gesticulating, of uttering cries in a way that resembles the heat of a dispute rather than a normal conversation. They should discuss with ease and with suavity, without dispute or obstinacy. They should avoid ever speaking of what they drank or ate, unworthy topics for any man of reason, but more so for a religious engaged in the supernatural life.

While conversing, one should exhibit an enunciation that is distinct, mellow, comfortable, natural, and pleasant; accordingly, the conversation should not be drawn out, hurried, slow, brusque, coarse, flat, or exaggerated. The voice will be calm, the tone moderate yet strong enough to be heard by the participants without tiring them. Variations of tone will be used only to the degree necessary to express the appropriate and reasonable movements of our heart or of our mind, for which the voice is the interpreter. Those who have difficulty in enunciating distinctly must, while they are still young, force themselves so as to bring about improvements. Far from being careless or hasty in speaking, they should emphasize the syllable before the letter that troubles them and should not be afraid to make an effort in accenting the letter. By this perseverance, they will correct themselves, perhaps altogether, or at least enough to make themselves more intelligible.

After decorum has mastered all the members of the body and their movements, charity and humility must inspire the words spoken and all the mannerisms used in dealing with one's brothers. Charity, which moves us to love God above everything and our neighbor as ourselves, banishes from conversation all that is or could appear to be against God or against neighbor. Thus, it helps avoid terms that lack respect regarding religion, the saints, the holy books; when we speak, it also keeps us from making mean comparisons or ridiculous applications. Moreover, it allows us to avoid the irreverent mixture of profane and holy things.

One should never utter an oath, under pretext of giving more credibility to one's words. One should be content to say, "That is it," or, "That is not it," just as Jesus Christ has enjoined. One should even avoid certain expressions which are diminutives of true oaths. Some respected ethicists call these venial sins, even in the mouths of secular persons; the world would be scandalized to hear such expressions in the mouth of some religious. Nor in conversations should one ever speak against truth and sincerity, namely, or affirm as certain what is false or controversial, or advance something contrary to his genuine feelings. We are not obliged, however, to say everything we think or know to be true. One can remain silent out of discretion when speaking openly would offend prudence or charity and hurt our neighbor or matters under our care. Yet we should never have resort to equivocation. Dissimulation and lies are signs of a soul that is shameful, weak, and unworthy of the religious character.

Charity also moves us to respect and love our brothers as ourselves. Indeed, they are images of God, members of Jesus Christ, destined to possess with us eternal happiness. This is why, if we should lack regard, respect, and affection concerning them, that fault would, in part, reflect on us. Accordingly, during recreation nothing should be said or done except that which is a mark of the respect and the Christian love which we have for them. It would be to fail in that duty to speak to them with an imperious and severe attitude, in a haughty tone with words that are caustic, bitter, scornful, brusque, and coarse.

Nonetheless, all kinds of particular friendship are to be avoided because they are dangerous in monasteries, where they lead religious to communicate with each other suspicions, dissatisfactions, and rash judgments. From these, there often arise serious divisions which sometimes have manifestations even on the outside. To avoid such companionships, one should not separate himself from others at recreation but ought to join those who are closer and more numerous. If one feels a certain inclination for a particular brother over others, he should never make this known nor walk more often with him. When one has something private to tell a novice, after having spoken briefly, he must very quickly rejoin the rest of the novitiate.

It is to display a lack of respect to speak disparagingly of the brethren. To avoid this fault, one must establish an inviolable rule of never speaking ill of anyone, but rather, as far as possible, to speak well of everyone. Only a mean, proud, and jealous character disdains others. In general, this kind of person is more contemptible than the persons whom he despises; he himself becomes the target of conversations. When speaking of an absent person, one should remain silent about all the evil he knows but mention all the good. If one has nothing good to say, it is better to remain silent than to speak and risk of-

fending charity. Besides, there is almost no one whom we could not praise for something, whether for his nature, his virtue, or the qualities he developed. If it is a question of an action that is not praiseworthy, one will try to attribute good intentions. All actions can have two aspects. Just as slanderers and grumblers are prompt to see the defective side of others, the better to blame them, so too those who are charitable and were well-reared prefer to see the positive side, so as to be able to praise others as much as they deserve or at least to excuse them. If they find nothing at all to excuse, they ought to be content to remain silent.

One should always speak with regard and respect, not only about his brothers, but also about the religious of other Orders and diocesan priests. All the religious institutes have been approved by the Church; therefore they deserve respect. If some of their members commit faults, it would be unjust to blame the entire body. There is no Order, however low it may have fallen, in which many excellent persons could not be found. Likewise, there is none, however devoted it might appear, in which one could not find some lukewarm, prodigal, and perhaps evil individuals. Even if we do not share the feelings of certain Orders on some point of doctrine, we must nonetheless be united to all in charity which approves, values, and praises virtue wherever it is found. Diocesan priests are equally to be respected because of their holy character and the sacrifices demanded by their ministry, even though a particular individual might lack the qualities which inspire respect. That is why one must never speak of them except with esteem.

When one has heard some preacher, one should not be inclined to belittle and criticize him, even in an indirect and spiritual way. If he preached well, we have to give him justice, whatever his status, and praise him as much as he deserves. If he preached mediocly and we have need to talk about it, we should moderately express what he said that was good. And if we wish to praise him, we should do this temperately, lest in exaggerating we give someone the opportunity to disdain him openly and to list his faults. If he preached badly, one should remain silent about it, or, if someone presses us to reply, we could express some generality, such as "He had good intentions," or, "God did not give remarkable talents equally to every man, but the word of God is always worthy of respect."

Finally, it is a failure in respect and regard toward the brethren to give them nicknames or certain ridiculous epithets, even though this may be done in jest or in banter. There is little difference between deriding a person and insulting him, except for the fact that by insulting one mocks him overtly, while in deriding the mockery is more subtle and disguised. When one gets into the habit of insulting, he

becomes insufferable to everyone. Indeed, very few people like to be mocked. They may willingly accept it once but will not be so well inclined on another occasion. The offender will be guilty before God for the impatience and the anger, interior or exterior, provoked in the target. Nonetheless, there is a certain kind of insult that can be allowed; it consists in saying something in a certain way, with a certain turn of phrase which makes it outstanding and pleasing without offending anyone. But we find so few men with such a quick mind who are able to find this turn of phrase and who have, at the same time, sufficient prudence so as not to offend anyone, that it is really better to avoid this kind of insulting.

In particular, we ought not joke about holy things, nor about any matters that could offend decency and honesty. Personal jests are absolutely to be avoided, that is to say, remarks which attack individuals personally, such as having fun at the expense of their involuntary and physical defects, mocking them by gestures, or laughing at their disgraces and misfortunes. God forbids us to insult our neighbor, for which even the world sees us as cowards.

If someone is so rude and dishonest as to mock us, we should call upon our upbringing, our gentleness, and our humility to take everything in stride, keeping ourselves from becoming disrespectful or angry. If, however, the mockery was so strong as to cause us some emotion, we could inform the individual that he has done something that does not please us. The serious look on our face would call for him to be silent.

One should be extremely controlled in laughing. The sign of a foolish person is that he laughs for no reason. It is impolite to do so while speaking, or with outbursts, or with such excess as to lose one's breath and self-control. A calm and prudent man is recognized by his laughter, since he rarely lets it fall from his lips. Some renowned saints even abstained from it completely. Although we often read in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ wept, nowhere do we find that he ever laughed. St. Louis Bertrand sometimes left recreation to lament. He could not understand how one could laugh so easily while being uncertain about his eternal salvation.

While showing easy, gentle, and open behavior towards our brothers, we should nonetheless avoid familiarity, for familiarity breeds contempt. It is an injurious familiarity that makes one casual at the expense of others or by which one lacks propriety. There is, however, a freedom among equals who know each other well that can be used, and which is called honest familiarity. It moves them to please each other in all things. They avoid becoming angry about anything, accept in good humor what could wound if taken strictly, forego formalities, and offer each other only the honor of friendship. But such

freedom would be levity of spirit and excessive casualness with persons we do not really know.

There should never be familiarity between a subject and his superior. Even though the subject knows his superior well, decorum demands that in speaking to him, he should always use terms of respect. For example, he will say, "Please; kindly do me this service," and not, "Do this favor for me, out of friendship", because the words *favor* and *friendship* are appropriate only among peers, or by superiors in regard to subjects. One should say, "N. . . did me the honor.,, was kind enough to... took pains to... etc." One should be even more careful to avoid familiarity with domestic help. Ordinarily, they resent those who become overly familiar with them and usually react with insolence; on the other hand, they treat with respect those who speak to them only when necessary and then with honest charity. This is why we should not address them too familiarly. It would be an even more unspeakable grossness to use informal terms of address between religious. Without being familiar with domestic help, one should nonetheless be good to them, eager to please them, and attentive not to treat them in a wearisome, brusque, or injurious manner.

A superior should be kind, personable, and polite with regard to his subjects. There is nothing more disagreeable than to have a superior who everywhere, even during recreation, puts on airs of haughtiness, of pride, and of arrogance: he will never be liked by anyone. Quite the contrary, he who recognizes his subjects as his brothers, as images of God, as members of Jesus Christ, and who considers them as having as much or more worth than he, that superior makes himself loved and respected by everyone. He must, however, beware of being too soft and of having with his subjects a kind of common casualness which would make him hated rather than loved.

Humility is one of the foundations of religious civility; it moves us to have low esteem of ourselves and to prefer others instead of ourselves. Anyone who possesses it will never do anything during recreation that resembles vanity, pride, self-love, high regard for self, or that slights others. It would be a vulgar conceit to praise or applaud oneself. When one is obliged to speak of personal actions, it should not involve comparisons, such as "As for me, I would not have done that... As for me, this is how I go about it, etc." This kind of parallel is irksome and calls attention to the fact that one has an excessive regard for his skills, since he presents himself as an example to be followed by others. One should also avoid comparing other persons among themselves, because such comparisons are usually offensive to one of them.

When finding oneself in the company of a superior who has done something laudable, one should not take credit by saying, "We had gone some place, we did such and such." Rather, one should give



all credit to the superior or to the person of rank whom we met, by saying: "Father N., or Mr. N. went to a place and did this good work, etc."

One should never directly or indirectly boast about his birth or his nobility, if one is born of parents of title. One should refrain from praising relatives. When one is obliged to report some trait that will make them valued, it is appropriate to relate this with much modesty, without exaggeration. If someone praises them in our presence, we should not applaud such praise nor exaggerate it, but maintain great reserve. If someone is praising us, we must not take delight in it, nor should we use the words, "You are making fun of me... you are joking," because it would show a lack of civility and respect to suppose that someone is mocking us when he speaks a good word about us. But one should respond modestly by saying, "It is a result of your goodness to me," or, "I only did my duty, etc." If one has some pain or an indisposition, he should avoid constantly complaining about it during recreation and describing all the details as if addressing a medical doctor. Such conduct would indicate self-love. If someone asks us about the situation, we should answer by thanking him for his charity, and by diminishing the discomfort rather than exaggerating it.

When a person is named, the name must always be preceded by some term of honor or of deference, according to his status. If we answer someone to whom we owe respect, we should not say simply, *yes, no*, but rather, "Yes, Reverend Father; no, my brother, etc." However, we do not repeat the names of *Father*, etc., every time. The status of the person to whom we are speaking for then the sign of respect would become wearisome.

The politeness that is grounded in humility leads us to use proper language, not only with superiors, elders, and persons of rank, but also with our equals. That is why when speaking, one should not use words of command, as if to say, "Do that, come here; go to that place," but rather, in a more humble way, "Please do this; it seems to me that it would appropriate to do that." It would also be impolite to ask the person to whom we are speaking, "Do you hear me? ... You have not understood me." But if you notice that the person to whom you are speaking did not comprehend, you will repeat or explain the matter in few words, as if you had explained yourself poorly the first time.

It is a defect of humility and of civility to interrupt someone who is speaking, to improve his answer, or to contradict him at every moment. When someone has the floor and another would like to take it, he should wait until the first finishes; then the other could take his turn. When whoever we are listening to attempts to repeat a story which we have heard, we should not indicate that we have heard it

before but allow him the pleasure of repeating it again, without interruption. If the speaker makes a mistake in his story and confuses one thing with another, one will refrain from saying, "You are wrong," or, "I guarantee that it was not as you are stating," or, "I know that story better than you do." Such words would offend the person to whom they are addressed and would call attention to the fact that the arrogant interrupter has few manners. One should wait for the speaker to correct himself. If a natural occasion should arise for the interrupter to speak in his turn, he could offer clarification and supply unpretentiously the missing elements, unless there were the concern of embarrassing the original speaker. In that case, it would be better to say nothing and allow him to believe what he will. But there is an exception: when there is a need to establish the truth in the interest of a third party. Charity then demands rectification, but only if done in a manner so open and circumspect as not to injure the reporter. When the speaker makes an error, we should not smile or shake the head, for others to notice our displeasure. If a person hesitates in trying to find the exact word that he needs or forgets a point in his narration, one should not be hasty in suggesting the word or the point, as if to soothe his memory, but should wait until asked.

Any spirit of contrariness is to be banished from conversation. What is more insufferable than to hear someone who always objects to everything anyone says? This manifests a badly reared and conceited spirit. With such a spirit of contrariness, conversations would endlessly turn into disputes, sometimes even into quarrels. Far from contradicting others at all times, one should simply provide additional details from personal knowledge, so as to keep the conversation moving. If sometimes one holds a different opinion from that of the speaker, he should make this known openly, but in a manner that will not displease anyone nor appear as a provocation. Thus, one should not say, "If what you affirm is true, etc.," for this would be an indirect contradiction. Rather, one should take a more impartial turn of phrase, such as "From what you relate, etc. - What the Reverend Father has presented allows us to . . . , etc." Nor should one say, "You are reckless to say that, etc.," but rather, "It would be to make fun of, etc." When the status of the person we are obliged to correct is to be considered, an even more delicate turn must be taken, "Pardon me, N., if I take the liberty of calling to your attention, etc. - I ask pardon of you if I dare to tell you, etc."

It is a fault against humility to be the first to begin a speech, to correct, or to question, when one is among the younger participants in the group. At the beginning of recreation, when the Father Master is present, it is his prerogative to speak first. The novices should do so only after him, and in their turn. They should willingly listen to each

other and avoid speaking all at once and bursting out in loud cries. When it is a question of a particular topic, one should not be in a hurry to state his opinion but should let the older ones speak, as well as those who have greater authority. Afterwards, if one is questioned, he can present his opinion with gentleness and self-control, without commotion, obstinacy, or stubbornness. Being in a group, one ought not to speak to anyone in private, nor to whisper words to another and smile afterward. This would be offensive to all present. Should one have something private he is anxious to tell another, he should take the other aside, with permission from the group.

When a superior or other noteworthy person raises a question — even if it concerns something trivial as, for instance, to learn what the time is — the youngest ones should not be the first to answer. They should leave that to older or more honorable persons, unless one of them is addressed personally.

If someone displays a remarkable and precious object, one should not be in a hurry to inspect and praise it. The more qualified persons in the group should examine it first; afterward, one could inspect it in turn and commend it. If, however, we are first asked for our opinion, we should reply without show. Indeed, it is right to appreciate things, to the extent that they are worth it, but it is against good taste to prattle in admiration for everything and to run out of praises. This would betray irrational flattery, giving the impression that one has never seen anything. It would also be contrary to good manners to appear indifferent, while everyone else is applauding. Those who find nothing beautiful or good reveal their self-centeredness; their hidden vanity is the cause of their indifference or disdain of everything else.

When one finds himself with older men or with noteworthy persons, he should listen with greater attention and respect. Young persons should not speak in their presence unless questioned; nor should they ask them questions as easily as we do to our subordinates. When one needs to ascertain something of these persons, for instance, to see if they are aware of a particular event, or if they will be going here or there, one should not speak in familiar terms, "Do you know that? Will you be going to a particular place?" Rather, a more reserved tone should be used, that will bring them to answer without their feeling questioned, saying for example: "Probably, N., you have heard of this matter being talked about. - No doubt, N., you will be going to such and such a place." If in these words there remains a bit of rashness, the humble formula being used will temper it.

When a person telling a story speaks in veiled terms, or leaves out the name of the one who related the words or the fact being told, the hearer should be wary of pushing the speaker, of plying him with

questions. Such behavior would betray a lack of civility, of respect, of shame, sometimes even of prudence and charity.

Even though we ought to show honor and respect not only to superiors but also to the elderly, to priests, and to all religious, prudence should determine the marks of deference, according to the differing qualities of the persons with whom we are speaking. For instance, it would be embarrassing for a young religious to be addressed with the same signs of respect due to a superior or to an older Father.

There are several ways one can show respect for another, such as by rising when he passes; by giving up one's place when he would like to sit; by uncovering one's head when speaking to him; by being helpful when he needs it; by allowing him the first place, whether to walk or to speak or pass through a door; by not walking too close to him; and by many other actions, appropriate to the status of persons and to circumstances. The idea of respect and of social conventions will teach more about this subject than all regulations.

Charity and humility must not only regulate words and actions in our concern for others, but also lead us to suffer with patience the rudeness of those with whom we are obliged to interact. "Charity is patient, is kind," says St. Paul, "It bears all things" (*I Cor.* 13:4, 7). Humility leads us to suffer peacefully any lack of attention and even makes affronts agreeable. St. Dominic did not delight in anything more than insults and, by preference, he chose to travel in areas where he foresaw the greatest mistreatment. This is why, when certain individuals speak to us rudely or arrogantly, we should not be angry at their lack of respect for us. Nor should we reply in kind. Their incivility would not excuse ours. "Be not overcome by evil: but overcome evil by good" (*Rom.* 12:21). If we receive biting words, we will not pay attention to them. If we are corrected for some fault, however severely, far from excusing ourselves or getting angry, we should thank the one who warned us and acknowledge kindly that we hope to profit from his counsel. It is clearly a sign of poor character to criticize others and to set oneself up as public censor.

Recreation is not only for us to relax, but also for us to bring some satisfaction to others. We should, therefore, be very obliging toward our brothers and follow their wishes rather than ours.

When we are asked about our preference for something that in itself is unimportant, we should not express our desires strongly. Rather, we should reply politely by saying, "I want what you want; I seek only to please you; you are the master, etc." If, however, we are asked for something that we cannot do, or that is contrary to our life, we should answer in another way, but always with kindness, by saying, "Pardon me, but I am unable to do this. Relieve me, I pray you, from doing this. I am distressed at not being able to obey you, etc."

As soon as the signal indicates the end of recreation, the novices should resume silence, without completing a story, a phrase, or even a word. Their first concern should be to place themselves in the presence of God. Once back in the novitiate, they should examine their conscience, starting with the morning. They should especially examine themselves about recreation, whether they engaged in it in a religious manner; whether they failed in charity, humility, modesty, patience, or social conventions, etc. They should ask God pardon for the faults committed, make a firm resolution to correct them, and take the means to repair the wrongs they may have committed against their brothers or against absent persons.

When novices from another province visit, they should not, absent special permission, take recreation with the novices of the convent. When bringing them some refreshments, the Guest Master will partake with them and remain with them. If they speak only to the superior or to the Guest Master — always chosen from among the most observant in the community — they will undoubtedly be edified by the words they hear. If they converse with all the religious, however, as even in the most observant houses some prodigal and imprudent religious can be found, they are likely to be scandalized and carry a bad impression back to their own convents. From another viewpoint, since their instruction in principles and practices may be good, but different from those established by tradition and the will of superiors among us, it could prove worrisome should they disseminate their thoughts to those with whom they came into contact. The latter could imprudently spread these ideas among the brothers and give rise to that source of disunion which Blessed Humbert called “the diversity of wisdom,” *diversitas sapientiæ*. That is why, if one of those religious, after leaving the refreshments, were perchance to follow the novices to recreation, the Father Master or the oldest Father will take care to assign him one of the most prudent novices as a companion who should keep him from joining the others and conversing with them. Or the visitor could politely be informed that it is not the custom of the house to allow novices of other provinces to recreate with all the local novices. Only the Father Master may allow exceptions to this rule.

## CHAPTER III

### Behavior outside the convent in conversations with secular persons and other strangers

#### ARTICLE I

#### **Behavior when making visits**

For religious, visits are a stumbling block and an occasion for dissipation, because everything they hear or see fills their memory and their imagination with thousands of impressions which return to them during the Office and meditation, thus presenting them with many opportunities for losing the spirit of their state. This is why some notable saints never wanted to make visits. St. Jerome used to say that the city was for him a hell, while he regarded his bitter solitude as a paradise. Thus it is that the novices undergoing their year of probation visit no one, not even their parents. During that period, they need to consider their salvation, and let the world, which is like a corpse in their eyes, bury its dead (see *Mt.* 8:22).

Professed novices are sometimes allowed to visit close relatives, but only very rarely, unless some extraordinary occasion presents itself. Relatives should not be upset that visits are so rare, knowing that these are our customs which in no way mean a lack of respect, affection, or gratitude towards them. Besides, whatever satisfaction they would gain from having in their house their children or their kin, in the end they are scandalized by these frequent visits and quickly notice that they are dealing with religious who lack recollection and are happier roaming the streets than remaining in their cloister.

The novices will visit only their close relatives. If some other person they know drops by, they must not meet him unless he is a person of great quality, or to whom the family bears an extraordinary obligation. Most of all, they should avoid during their entire life visiting young persons and devoted friends, because there is nothing more

dangerous for purity. For lack of being strict on this point, many religious have lost their vocation. This kind of meeting usually takes place under the pretext of social convention and piety, but what was begun with the spirit ends up with the flesh. When an indispensable necessity requires a visit to these people, one should take along as companion a calm, virtuous, and older religious, from whom one should not separate; with his agreement, one tries to be as expeditious as possible.

A religious is usually judged by his visits. If he makes only those that are absolutely necessary, he can be seen as reserved, interior, a lover of his state, satisfied with his solitude, and occupied with his sanctification. When, on the contrary, he seeks pretexts for going into the city frequently and prefers to engage in conversation with secular persons rather than with his brothers, he is a self-indulgent religious, totally exterior, who loves neither his state nor his community. He is bored by the solitude and neglects his only duty, that of his sanctification, in dragging from house to house his uselessness, and perhaps his slanders and his grumbling.

In vain do some young religious, for their superfluous and dangerous visits, use the pretext that this is how they support some friends who are useful to the community. This is not their concern. It is up to the superiors to visit now and then the principal officials of a city, the friends of the convent, to wish them the beginning of a happy new year, or to inquire about the state of their health; to assure them of profound respect and of continual prayers of the community on their behalf; to wish them a pleasant voyage before their departure; to express satisfaction at their return after a long absence; finally, to express a share in their happiness and in the goods which they gained or the trials which they suffered. Some older religious in the monastery, especially those who are reliable and more sensible, could also pay similar attention to those people, but not young religious, and especially not the novices.

After having established how rare the visits of religious should be, in order to keep themselves in union with God and even in the esteem of secular persons, we recognize that there are, nonetheless, occasions when visits should be made — our state not being to remain exclusively in solitude — especially if we are preaching, hearing confessions, teaching, or accompanying others in their works of charity towards neighbors. Allow us to explain how we must behave in those circumstances, what religious decorum and what Christian conventions one should observe in order to find always in these visits some usefulness to oneself and an occasion of edifying one's neighbor.

Before leaving his cell, one should begin kneeling to ask God for the grace not to offend Him by this visit, not to say anything that

could displease or scandalize our neighbor; not to listen to anything which would make us dissipated or distracted; but that all we will say or do will be for the glory of Jesus Christ.

During the visit, one should, from time to time, raise one's mind and the heart to God, to return to His presence; to find Him in those, His images, with whom one is speaking; to renew interiorly the prayer one had addressed to Him before one's departure.

On leaving the convent, one should say the usual prayers, walk calmly, remain silent or speak little and in a low voice so as not to be heard by the secular persons who might be in the streets. If we should meet persons of rank, male or female, we should greet them and let them pass and not trouble ourselves whether they return the greeting. We should observe this decorum not only with regard to religious of an Order older than ours, but also toward religious of all Orders, considering in this not so much justice or the right of precedence but rather the kindness of charity and of humility. After that, if we are pressed to assume the rank which our Order gives us over that of newer Orders in the Church, we will accept it without arrogance. It is appropriate, however, that the novices, because of their extreme youth, cede in everything to older religious, whatever the Institute to which they belong.

While walking in the street one should exhibit great modesty, especially over the eyes, so as not to fix them on persons in doorways or in windows or who are walking by, especially females. Nonetheless we should not keep our eyes so low that we do not see the people we meet and whom we should greet, as we have said above. Now and then, we should raise our eyes to see a little farther ahead and to learn to whom we should cede the passage or who it is who greets us. We offer this act of politeness to everyone, whatever their station.

On entering a room where a great number of persons has gathered, one should uncover his head and close the door noiselessly, if there is no domestic help to do so. When the person who invited us presents himself, one should advance with an honest but restrained air, greet him first, more or less profoundly, according to his station, assure him of respect, or thank him for the favor of receiving us, or present the request which we ask of him, or react to the significant event of the moment, etc. For the compliments to be appropriate, they should be short, natural, and not hollow. They are taken as annoying when they are too long, ostentatious, stilted, or rich in flattery. Common sense determines how we should express ourselves, with expressions appropriate to the station of the individual to whom we are speaking. It would show a lack of tact to use the same polite words with everyone. An ordinary person would believe he was being mocked in being treated as eminent; a person of high degree would



rightly be offended to receive compliments in general use with everyone.

If the eminent person we are visiting is slow in arriving, one should wait for him respectfully, with good manners and religious decorum, by reciting the rosary or some other prayer, without giving any sign of impatience. If he is busy writing or reading or doing something else, one should not interrupt to speak to him, but wait until he has finished and himself looks up; it is then that we should greet him. If, on entering, we find him with another person of high rank, we should, in silence, respectfully make a bow to the latter and move closer to the person we are visiting. If he continues to speak to the other, we should say nothing. But if he stops and looks, we should indicate our regret in having interrupted his conversation. If subsequently the two persons continue their conversation and we are able to join in, we can politely enter into it. After saying a few words in friendliness, one then remains silent, indicating that one prefers to listen rather than to speak. Should we realize that they have business to take care of, and that our presence makes this awkward, we should tactfully leave after remaining a few moments. On leaving, we will assure the master or mistress of the house that we wish to have the honor of seeing him again at a more opportune time.

When we arrive at a place where there is a group and those who are there stand up out of politeness, one should greet them all, but not take the seat of anyone present, even if offered. Rather, one should choose another place, the last one insofar as possible, even though someone inferior to us were present. We should assume our rightful place only out of obedience and after having been pressured several times (see *Lk.* 14:8-10). In the room, we should not sit down while some persons worthy of our respect remain standing. It is appropriate that we, too, remain standing.

If something is presented to us before our turn, we should receive it politely, without arguing with the presenter and without asking him to serve another. It is enough that, before taking it, we express our discomfort in accepting it.

When we are in a place where there are books, writings, or open drawers, we should never touch anything, nor ought we look at either the writings or the books, without express invitation, unless we were in a library and were sure that we would please the master by observing the works he had assembled.

During the entire conversation, the religious must distinguish themselves by strict fidelity to Christian manners founded on humility and charity. The politeness strongly recommended to them in their conversations with their brothers will serve as an apprenticeship to that which they ought to observe when conversing with secular per-

sons. Since we act and speak ordinarily by habit, we should accustom ourselves to maintain gentle and very courteous manners towards our brothers, and so we will do the same with strangers. If, on the contrary, we acquire coarse and uncivilized manners in community, they will be exposed even in the middle of the world so as to attract to ourselves, our ministry, and our Order, the contempt of secular persons.

Even though one ought to have high regard for everyone, and especially toward persons to whom we owe more respect, one should avoid exaggeration since excess is always vicious. It would be an exaggeration to overburden an individual with outrageous compliments, superfluous formalities, and superficial kindnesses. In addition, it would be to fall into this defect to follow slavishly the rules of politeness. Indeed, to be pleasing, politeness must be respectful; but at the same time, it must be unimpeded, without constraint or ostentation. It is the task of common sense and good judgment to apply the rules of good conduct; the rules can be disregarded any time that following them rigorously would bring upon us ridicule or embarrassment. Obstinance in following them slavishly is oftentimes more unbearable than the very lack of politeness. When a person of rank, for example, wishes to show us honor in his house, such as giving us a seat next to him or a distinguished place at his gathering, and if, after politely rejecting this honor and being pressured several times more to accept, we continued to refuse, this would certainly grieve the one who honors us and distress the group. In the end, propriety demands that we accept.

On visiting a sick person in his room, one should speak in a soft voice and keep the visit short. After expressing empathy and saying a few uplifting words regarding his patience and acceptance of the merciful dispositions of Providence, one ought to express the fear of disturbing him by staying longer and obliging him to speak. If he makes the request that we stay and keep him company, we should do so for a little while, then leave. In such a case, we ought never to bring up the subject of good works, of Masses, of wills, and of other things, which might arouse the suspicion that we harbor a self-serving interest.

In speaking with secular persons, we ought to maintain a serious air mingled with friendliness, so as not to appear either dissipated or too austere. It would be a gross abuse to believe one acquires influence over them by playing the part of a free, playful, or comical person. Those who seem pleased by these actions are the first to criticize us when we are no longer there. When there are females in the group, even though we ought to be very polite toward them, it is nonetheless important for us to maintain great restraint in our words and in our glances. The world would be scandalized by the smallest unseemly word uttered while we spoke to them, or by one glance fixed on them.

If during the conversation, someone introduces an inappropriate subject, or praises a person for his exterior qualities, the side to take is silence, or to change the topic with those close to us, but without interrupting the others if we owe them deference. When they are equals or inferiors, we can skillfully try to turn the conversation around. If in spite of our efforts the discourse would continue and go too far, one ought to leave the group politely at the first opportunity. Not content with avoiding unseemly topics, the religious is correct in bringing to the conversation some uplifting words concerning God and holy things in order to sanctify it. It is also his role to correct those who would attack religion, one's neighbor, or modesty. Generally, though, he should do this by his attitude and his example rather than by words.

When the visit is over and one returns to the convent, he should kneel at his prie-dieu, examine his conscience about what he said and did outside the convent, and ask pardon of God for all the faults committed: in particular, for the loss of time, if it was poorly used. This is a double and a triple fault, since on losing time ourselves, we force our companion to lose his, as well as those whom we went to see. God will require a serious accounting for that offense, for time is precious and He gives it to us so that we dedicate it solely for His glory, for our sanctification, and that of our neighbor. The religious especially will be severely punished for having spent it uselessly.

## ARTICLE II

### **Behavior when receiving company**

If it is to be hoped that novices make no visits, it is also desirable that they not receive any. This is an opportunity for dissipation in their conduct and for distraction in their prayers. An ancient writer, with reason, used to say that “after having spoken with men, he became less of a man.” Likewise, a religious, after having spoken with people of the world, becomes less religious, unless he takes all the precautions which a sensitive and interior virtue needs to sustain and strengthen itself. This is why permission to go to the parlor is given with difficulty. Nonetheless, it is allowed for close relatives and important persons, provided that they come rarely and that they pick a convenient time. Others are sent away, except for very weighty reasons. If perchance the relatives were indiscreet in coming too often, thereby distracting the novices, it would be necessary to ask them not to do so. If they persist, the answer should be given them that the religious are not available. In fact, the novices are always busy with prayer and studies — more advantageous pursuits than to spend their time poorly with people from the outside.

No one is allowed to communicate with them while they are in class or in choir. These are sacred times for them; accordingly, they should not be summoned except in extraordinary cases. The laymen who are thereby dismissed in such circumstances do not become angry. On the contrary, they are uplifted in realizing the care and the precision taken to form our young religious in piety and in knowledge. Neither is recreation time any more appropriate to go to the parlor with secular persons, unless it is a question of some pressing issue. Rather, this is the time to relax with one’s brothers and please them with one’s presence. Those who prefer conversing with secular persons instead of with the community thereby make known that they have little fraternal charity, or that they do not relish solitude. Under their religious habit, they preserve a very worldly spirit.

Finally, Sundays and feast days are not opportunities for the parlor. Those who might come to visit should be so informed. It is not appropriate to celebrate these holy days by using them to receive visits and to speak of temporal matters. Indeed, we sanctify them by assisting at all the Offices of choir, at the sermon, at all the activities of the community, and by using whatever time is left for prayer in one’s

cell, for spiritual reading, or for preparing for one's classes. Any study that we engage in on those days, when offered to God for His glory, for our personal salvation and that of our neighbor, is righteous and becomes a kind of prayer. If, however, the close relatives of a novice come from far away to visit him on a feast day and are not able to return, they should be allowed to see him. The same could be said of similar occasions.

As for religious of other Institutes who come to visit our novices, if they are calm and older Fathers, and especially if they belong to Orders which have close ties with us, permission would be granted them, provided that it be rarely and that they come at a convenient time. But if they are young religious, and especially if they are not the most observant, after they have spoken with someone in the novitiate on one occasion, were they to return and ask for him again, they should be met with a refusal. By this example, they will learn to keep their own solitude and use it to busy themselves in prayer and study. It is not at all fitting for novices to have close ties either with secular persons or with religious of other Orders, unless the latter were close relatives. This is a waste of time, an occasion of self-indulgence and dangerous disclosures.

When the Father Master or his associate finds it proper to allow a brother to speak to the person asking to see him, and has assigned him a companion whom he must accept, if the former is in his cell, he will kneel at his prie-dieu before leaving and offer this visit to God, for His glory and for the edification of his neighbor. He must also ask for the grace not to find there an occasion of distraction and of sin. If he is called when outside of his cell, mentally he will make the same offering to God and the same requests. Novices will never go to the parlor without express permission, and without taking with them a specifically designated brother. If there were no one in the novitiate to grant them permission, they will not visit those who called for them.

Insofar as possible, a simple novice should be given as a *socius* a professed brother among the more reliable and more discreet. It is appropriate sometimes for the Father Master to accompany his novices, principally when he wishes to honor their family or to console them, and when he fears that the guests are trying to create in the novices a distaste for their vocation. Absent a very express dispensation, the companion must never leave the one who is receiving a visit, and so will be able to see all that is done and hear all that is said. If, however, it concerns receiving a father or a mother or discussing some intimate family issue, the brother companion may step out or return to the novitiate. He should not worry that his presence will embarrass the visitors. It is already much that they have been allowed to see nov-

ices who ought to live in complete separation. If they took exception to the rules of prudence adopted to regulate these interviews and decided never to return, there would be nothing to regret. If something notable should happen in the parlor against propriety, the companion is held to report it to the superiors, never allowing a misguided caution to deter him. It is an indispensable saying among us, one observed in the most observant Orders, that it is a duty to act in this way. The common good and the good of the brother himself demand it.

When the novice approaches the person who is visiting him, he must uncover his head, show a gentle and happy face as a sign of the habitual joy of his soul, and maintain a steady and modest demeanor. After the first greeting, he should lead the person into the parlor, if he is not already there, having him take the first place, letting him go first, even though out of civility the visitor finds this honor somewhat difficult to accept. One should receive with much respect not only persons of high standing but also equals or even subordinates.

After making this greeting, one should place himself closer, at a less honorable seat, if possible. Sitting not too close to the person but facing and a little to the side, one should maintain a very dignified countenance, and avoid staring or moving too close. If the visitor is of very high standing, it is his choice to keep his hat on or not. One should always keep his head bared in his presence, unless pressed to do otherwise. If the visitor is an equal or is well known, it is polite to ask him to put his hat on and for one to do the same simultaneously. When news about one's health is sought, one should always reply, if it is good, that it is a gift of God.

When someone comes to offer thanks for a service rendered, in reply one should not exaggerate its importance, but rather diminish it, in a spirit of humility. One should not, however, minimize the services excessively because that would be to blame the person who values them. Nor should one say that he would have done the same for anyone else because that would be to disparage the individual who thought he had received a special mark of devotedness and of honor.

If someone comes to visit to ask a favor, one should indicate that he is anxious to please in all that depends on him. Indeed, it is a sign of a good heart and of a good man to try to be pleasant with everyone. Nonetheless, one should not promise anything lightly nor what would be inappropriate to a true religious. Accordingly, one should refuse discretely whatever is opposed to the glory of God, however minimally, as when being useful would involve using the slightest lie, or to our salvation, in the case of failing in some duty of ours, or to our neighbor, as when something would harm or deceive him. If one

should become aware of having inadvertently made a promise concerning something contrary to religious conscience, it would be a matter of conscience to retract it. But if it was right and appropriate, one should resolutely keep his promise.

If we are complimented when the Order is praised for its knowledge, its piety, its regular life, its austerity, its usefulness, etc., we should not applaud these praises, much less increase them by providing details, since, as members of this Order, when we praise the ensemble, we would seem to praise ourselves. Nor should we minimize the praises by a feigned humility. We should answer the individual moderately, and thank him for the esteem he has for us; adding that all Orders and all states of life have their advantages. And then one could reciprocate by praising the state or the Order of the one who spoke and reminding him of all the good that persons in that state can do, in particular the person being addressed.

If, while being seated with a person, some others arrive to see us, one should first uncover his head, stand up, receive them politely, lead them to appropriate seating, interrupt the conversation, always for oneself the lowest place, and not sit down until everyone else has seated. Only then should we resume the conversation, telling them what we had been talking about and beginning another subject of greater interest to everyone.

Even though one must be very polite, there are some persons with whom we should, on the grounds of politeness, exercise a kind of parsimony. These are the persons who visit us too frequently and who would weigh us down with letters, if we treated them with the same deference we have for others. One should hold back with such persons lest they keep robbing one's time. Should they complain of indifference towards them, it is not worth troubling oneself about it. It is better to hear their accusations than to give God a reason to reproach one for his attention towards persons of the world, while offering no advantage to their souls.

Only in the parlors set up for guests should the novices receive them. Nor without permission can they lead strangers to the garden or in the house, under the pretext of their comfort.

When they have no permission to speak and they encounter, in the sacristy or elsewhere, persons who want to talk, if they are relatives who visit frequently enough, they should bare their heads to greet them politely and should make them understand by a sign that they cannot stop. If it is a question of persons of high standing, or of close relatives they have not seen in a long while, after greeting them, they should tell in as few words as possible that they cannot receive them without permission. Rather, they should encourage them to address the brother-porter or should themselves go to seek permission

from the Father Master. In the meantime, they should ask the visitors kindly to step to the parlor. If it is time for class or choir, they should acknowledge their distress in being unable to speak but their hope in having the honor of doing so another time. After having greeted them in few words, in a soft and muffled tone, they should withdraw. Secular persons are uplifted by this punctuality and this submission.

When secular persons ask to see the convent, they should not be refused, if it can be done conveniently. But the offer should not be made easily: the introduction of strangers into the house always has its drawbacks. If we find ourselves with them in church, one should show great respect, kneel down, or at least genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament, venerate the relics of the saints, keep silence, and answer the visitors in the barest minimum of words, in a soft and moderate tone of voice, or call their attention to something noteworthy. If in the library, they will take care not to speak too loudly, so as not to disturb the religious studying there. When one is in the dormitory, the refectory, and the other conventional places where profound silence reigns, one lowers his voice and speaks to the strangers in very few words and incomplete sentences.

If the persons with whom we find ourselves are pleased to speak about God, religion, the lives of the saints, and other uplifting topics, one should profit from the occasion to direct the conversation to all these topics. When one loves God and is filled with holy matters, it is easy to have long and pleasant conversations, because the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. But if we are with people of the world, who have no great taste for piety, one is certain to tire them in speaking continually about matters of devotion. In the course of conversation, it is better, from time to time, to slip in some proverb or some uplifting ideas. Sometimes, an uplifting word, intentionally placed, but as if in passing, will bear more fruit than an entire conversation on piety.

When we choose to say something pious, it ought to be natural and truly come from our heart, just like the topic about which we are speaking. For example, if someone details the sorrows and trials that he experiences in this world, after listening to him with interest, we should attempt to console him through natural motives appropriate to the circumstances, and then take the opportunity to enlighten him that it is God Who allows all these afflictions; that they are a result of His love; that they encompass a means of meriting Heaven; that, in enduring them under duress instead of in a spirit of faith, one has all the pain without the merit; that the saints, and Jesus Christ Himself, suffered much to encourage us to follow them on this road. If we speak with persons who have given themselves over to worldly life and amusements, we could find an opening in their own thoughts to



slip in a word about the last things, the brevity of life and its pleasures, the decay of the goods of this world, the rewards reserved for faithful Christians, the severity of penalties which evil persons will suffer, the peacefulness of a good conscience, and the troubles of a conscience bitten by remorse, etc. After one has slipped a brief reflection on any one of those matters, the conversation can move to other topics, always leaving the possibility of returning to such thoughts when an opening occurs.

If during the conversation some news is related, one should not distract the secular persons who take pleasure in relating it. But neither should one reveal an eagerness or curiosity for these matters. Were one obliged to deal with similar topics, this should always be done in a controlled manner, without emotion, bitterness, or opposition.

When one speaks of some disputes between persons who are important and invested in dignity, one should show great reserve and respect in his words for all of them, avoid taking sides, and refrain from judging them, since he has neither the qualifications nor the grace for that. The disputes and troubles which occur on all sides in the world help to make us appreciate more our state in life, in which we can enjoy such great peace in our solitude, bearing only sanctifying difficulties which we had foreseen and to which we have submitted voluntarily for love of God.

When one has the occasion to speak of theology or of cases of conscience, unless we have studied these matters, we should be very reluctant to make any decisions. To do so would expose us to making serious mistakes. Oftentimes, an ignorant person who does not know what he is talking about makes a more rash decision than a learned man, because he does not understand the reasons for or against, which are known by the one who has studied them well. It is wisest to remain silent, or, if pressed for an opinion, to admit that one has not refined his knowledge of the topics. A novice suffers no loss in admitting that he does not know everything. One would be more edified by his humble sincerity than by a presumptuous decision, even if he was familiar with the details of the topic of conversation. In all things, he will allow the principal persons of the group to speak, without interrupting or contradicting them. Afterwards, he in turn will be able to say what he thinks. If he disagrees with those who spoke ahead of him, he will speak with such gentleness that the others could not become angry at his words. Using haughty and sharp behavior with persons whom we are visiting would be to lack respect for them in their own home; and to do so when they come to visit us would be to dare to insult them in our home — both of which are blameworthy. Besides, it is

a flaw, wherever we find ourselves, to speak with bitterness and to argue in the presence of someone to whom we owe respect.

When some young persons come to visit us, after we have learned what they wanted to tell us, we will converse with them and inquire about matters of their comprehension, such as their studies; then we can add some uplifting words. Most often, they remember all their lives what a wise and warm religious said in a conversation. It is good to speak to them of contempt for the world; of the danger of losing oneself in it because of pernicious examples and deadly occasions; of the need to flee from dangerous groups; of the pleasure to be found in serving God; of the obligation to do penance and to shrink from sin in order to avoid Hell. It is also a very excellent idea to counsel them to adopt some minor rule of life concerning the following issues: every day, morning prayer with good resolutions and evening prayer with examination of conscience; assistance at Mass; recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, or, at least, a chaplet and some litanies; reception of the sacraments once a month and on principal feast days, especially those of Mary, whom they ought to love tenderly as a good Mother; attendance on feast days and on Sundays at Vespers, or the sermon and benediction; filial obedience to their parents; application to studies; and considerable discretion in all things.

It is up to the individual who receives company to entertain his visitors, unless by his silence he wants to dismiss them politely. This is why, when he notices that the conversation flags and everyone in the group drops the topic at hand, he must skillfully bring up another.

If, notwithstanding the good example of a religious, someone dares to speak against God, their neighbor, or purity, one must, as we have said, put on a more serious and sad face to indicate that one is suffering from hearing such words. This silent correction does not appear as a reprimand. It makes pleasing the virtue of the one who makes it, and causes others more satisfaction than confusion. Oftentimes, it completely achieves the end desired, as Scripture says, "By the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected" (*Ecccl.* 7:4). If, after this discretion, similar conversation occurs, it would be better to leave or skillfully redirect the conversation.

The novices should leave whoever came to visit as soon as the bell rings for silence, the Office, or class. They should offer their regrets for not being able to tarry any longer and pray to be excused because their duty calls them to study, or to sing the praises of God. Secular persons would be scandalized to see the religious remain with them to continue the conversation. On this point, and with good reason, the conduct of the venerable Father Louis of Granada has always been praised. Invariably, he left the secular persons who had come to

see him as soon as the bell for office rang, even if the conversation had been as pious as it was learned. But he never left Office to speak with anyone who asked for him at this time. One can dispense himself from so holy a law only in extraordinary cases, which almost never happen regarding novices.

If the persons who come to visit us stay too long, they should be dismissed politely, without waiting for the signal from the bell. When they are children or young people, we can lead them slowly to the door. If they are frequent visitors or friends, we can remind them gently that we have things to do, which is true. For a religious, to busy himself with prayer and study in his cell is an important matter in which he is always behind. When they are persons of rank, one ends the conversation and does not propose any new topic. They will easily understand by this deliberate silence that it is time to leave.

When several persons meet each other to visit us and one leaves but the others stay, if the person who leaves ranks higher, he must be accompanied to the door. But if the persons who remain are more important than the one who left, one must keep them company and let the other leave, while nonetheless offering him one's excuses.

It is against propriety to have persons who come to visit us wait long — whether because of regulations, memory, or good will — unless we are busy speaking to someone of higher rank, or dealing with indispensable matters. But then, the person waiting must be alerted. It would also be proper, in that case, to ask one of the brothers to keep him company, if that can easily be done.

When the visitor decides to leave, he must be accompanied, even if we are equals. If he is a person of rank, one must lead him out and accompany him farther, while thanking him for the remembrance and the honor given by his visit. If he is a stranger, and we do not know his address to thank him for his politeness, instead of asking him it would be better to inquire discretely from one of his friends.

When the visit is over and one returns to his cell, he should kneel at his prie-dieu, ask pardon of God for the faults he might have committed, and ask Him that what he heard at the visit not cause any distractions or inattention. Far from revealing to other novices some news or other items he might have learned, he himself should try to forget them, keeping in mind only a feeling of gratitude that God has taken us from the world and a prayer that He grant us a greater desire to practice interior recollection.

### ARTICLE III

#### **Behavior when visiting in the country with parents or other persons**

However detrimental it be for religious to make simple visits and to receive any, it is much more harmful for them to stay in the houses of secular persons. The religious spirit is one of inner recollection, silence, prayer, mortification, penitence, humility, and evangelical poverty. In the world everything we see leads to self-indulgence. There, we hear only evil or useless conversations; everything that happens serves only to distract us during petitions and prayers. Moreover, experience tells us that those religious who have the most interaction with the world are usually the most dissipated. Why should we be surprised since the world is the enemy of God, since it is was cursed by Jesus Christ because of its scandals, and since it almost necessarily brings to those who go about in it a spirit opposed to that of the Divine Master?

Secular people despise religious who move about easily in the world. What leads them to value and respect religious is the favorable idea they have of them as persons busy in their solitude with Heavenly thoughts, applied to study, and continuously given to exercises of mortification and humility. But they quickly lose this favorable opinion and develop a totally opposite one, if, when briefly conversing with us, they notice that we like to speak of news and newspapers and hardly ever of God; and that we are frivolous, sensual, self-indulgent, liars, grumblers. All this arouses in secular people a scorn for certain religious individuals and sometimes for their community, and gives them pleasure in relating ridiculous or disparaging stories about them, while they continue to respect and praise the religious and the convents commended for their love of solitude and silence.

He would be conceited, in order to have the ease of going about the world, were he to use the pretext of visiting his parents. A true religious is another Abraham, to whom God said, "Leave your house and your kindred," or like another Melchisedech, whom St. Paul shows us "without father, without mother, without genealogy" (*Heb.* 7:3); or like the daughter of Zion, symbol of the religious soul, whom the Holy Spirit exhorted in this way through the mouth of David: "... Forget thy people and thy father's house" (*Ps.* 45:10). With our parents, we are dissipated no less than with other secular persons. Fur-

thermore, to those who are pleased to visit either [parents or friends] too often should be applied the words David spoke concerning the Israelites: "And they were mingled among the heathens, and learned their works: And served their idols, and it became a stumblingblock to them" (*Ps.* 106:35-36).

Consequently, it is only in exceptional cases that religious should be granted permission to stay with secular persons, such as when one's health has for a long time totally broken down, when all remedies have been exhausted and when doctors believe the place of birth or the countryside to be indispensable for recuperation. Or else, when one hearing confessions and preaching finds himself obliged to go out of town to help a sick person or perform some other act of charity, but is unable to lodge with clergymen or with religious.

When one has the permission or the order to lodge for some time in the country, with a relative, a friend, or some other person, one must remember that he has always – and now more than ever, because he can be a source of edification – the duty to be a true religious, although it will be harder to live this out in practice. In order to be successful, as soon as one arrives, he will devise a plan of life to regulate the Office, mental prayer, spiritual reading, the rosary, meals, recreation, and sleep. One should get used to rising early in the morning and not to staying up late at night. Evenings are very dangerous for health; on rising early, one has more time and solitude to fulfill what has to be done.

As soon as one is up in the morning, he should pray and recite a part of the Office. After that, he can leave his room to greet his relations or the hosts of the house, and spend some time with them, if it pleases them.

Before going to bed, one needs to bid good night to them and to all others present. If it is the custom of the family to have prayer in common, as is done in well-regulated households, one will join the others, and when necessary recite them himself.

When the hour fixed to say the Office has been reached, if in the group there are only relatives or equals and friends, one needs to greet them, take his breviary, and leave without any other word. Lay people are uplifted to see that a minister of God prays from time to time, because that is his calling. On the contrary, they are scandalized to find religious, who have many obligatory prayers and should add more out of piety, remain all day with others. They are left to wonder when the religious have time for the breviary, the rosary, and mental prayer. In the morning, when one realizes that one will be busy during the day, because of some visit or some other necessary matter, it is better to move these various exercises ahead rather than to postpone

them until later, so as not to expose oneself to performing them hurriedly and thoughtlessly, or to omit them altogether.

Every day one should attend Mass, or celebrate Mass if one is a priest, absent complete impossibility. On entering the church, one should kneel to adore the Blessed Sacrament and recite his prayers with much respect and piety, keeping one's head uncovered during the entire Mass, and avoiding looking from one side to the other, lest the congregation be shocked by this irreverence. To converse or speak with anyone in church is to profane a very holy place, and to scandalize those present. Should one meet in church a person one has not seen in a long time, one should neither greet him nor embrace him; rather, one should wait until after leaving the church. If one is asked to help with singing the Mass or Vespers, one need not be reluctant to offer the pastor this service. On the contrary, one should accept the invitation as an honor and fulfill it graciously, so as to favor the bonds of charity which ought to exist between clergymen and religious. When there is a sermon or benediction or some other exercise of piety greatly honored in the area, one should attend when possible and inquire ahead of time as to the hour. If one is unable, he should express sorrow in being unable to do so.

When one is in a group, reciting the *Angelus* should be done calmly, head uncovered, kneeling or standing according to the custom of the church or the practice of those who are with him. It can be recited even while walking along the road, taking care, if possible, to uncover one's head.

As for nourishment, one should, absent a dispensation, abstain from meat in the cases mentioned by our holy Constitutions. Secular persons and even other religious will often press us to eat meat with them, saying that others have done as much; that we need it; that they have nothing else at hand to offer us; that our Rule does not oblige outside the convent. We should thank them politely, remarking that if some our brothers did so, it is apparently because, although exteriorly they seemed to be in good health, their ministry and their state of health made it necessary, and that, no doubt, they had permission or even an order from their superiors; that, thanks be to God, we do not find ourselves with a similar need, and that we will be satisfied with whatever charity would offer us, etc. Fidelity to this point of observance will be much easier with persons of rank. Indeed, being intelligent, gracious, and kind, they do not embarrass anyone at their table; after offering meat to the religious several times, they will make it a point of honor to accept his decision and to praise his virtue and regular observance.

If, during recreation, we are invited to take part in a group game, one generally ought not accept this offer, even though some

clerics or religious have been cited in approval. Nonetheless, there are some harmless games permitted to religious, if not in their austere cloister, at least in the country, as long as spectators are not scandalized.

While relaxing and showing good nature, one should be careful to maintain gentle and peaceful humor. If our companion player is of a difficult character, we ought not correct the cross words which he might utter, but take them without offense. Otherwise, the game will no longer be a way of relaxing, nor of renewing one's skill, nor of glorifying God. We should also take care neither to transform good nature into excessive enthusiasm, nor to spend long hours at it to the detriment of our duties and our spiritual exercises. One must also avoid postures that are ridiculous, grotesque, or very undisciplined. If, in society, certain persons play cards or similar games, one need not follow them eagerly, but rather step aside and talk with another group, or else return to one's cell to recite some prayers, or take a few turns in the garden.

A religious should sing only church hymns, or songs about solitude, the disdain of the world, the vanity of honors, the inconstancy of pleasures, or pious motets, but never operatic airs, romantic songs, or selections borrowed from profane sentimentalism. If, unfortunately, one knew these kinds of airs before becoming a religious, one ought to bury them in an eternal forgetfulness.

When one is in a group, one should not speak in a language that everyone cannot understand. When some individuals talk privately, even though we know them, we should not interfere, lest we interrupt them. You can tell when they are having a private conversation when they withdraw aside to talk, or when they speak softly, or when they change the subject when you approach them. In such a case, you should politely withdraw, lest you embarrass or interrupt them.

Above all, when with lay persons, one should avoid becoming casual with persons of the opposite sex, as, for example, with their wife, their daughter, or some friends of the family — or of talking privately with them, unless they are persons so old and venerable that the conversation could not be suspicious. It takes only one thoughtless incident, even without malice, or an imprudent, repeated, and exaggerated word to bring about the loss of the good reputation which the faithful would have imagined about us.

As soon as one has returned to the convent, he reports to the superior about his conduct, the expenses incurred, the gifts received, and the presumed permissions which one used. The first task, then, is to make amends for the damage inevitably caused by our absence from the regular life and to utilize the advantages which we sought far from our religious family. If we left the convent because of some persistent

sickness, we must use our recovered health the better to serve God, and to follow the common exercises with greater accuracy. This would be the best repentance for the sensual emotions, the unrest, the impatience, and the other faults which we could have committed during the illness. All that we have seen or heard of worldly or self-indulgent matters should be passed over in silence and even erased from the heart. If one has left the convent to preach during Advent or Lent, one should engage in a kind of retreat, in order to restore himself in the spirit of his profession. One will dutifully confess the faults committed during this sacred ministry and the scandal one could have given to one's neighbor by intemperate words, whether dealing with secular persons or with matters related to our religious community. This is how the apostles were led by Our Savior into retreat after their rounds of preaching, so as to renew their energy and to devote themselves more particularly to prayer (see *Mk.* 6:31-32).



## ARTICLE IV

### Behavior during journeys

The ancient saying, “Those who travel a lot rarely sanctify themselves,” is all too often verified in religious who love to travel. In the convent, such an individual was fervent, moderate, silent, a faithful observer of his vows and of the Constitutions; on his return from the outside, we find him dissipated, lazy, a chatterer, a complainer, sensual, worried, a transgressor of all duties — all in all, scandalous.

Moreover, religious who change houses often without doing so for purposes of ministry or by obedience, and without an absolute need, gain an unfortunate reputation. This is how their successive relocations are usually explained: either they themselves asked to change convent, or their superiors requested their removal. In the first instance, they have to have a restless, unstable, and flighty spirit. In the second, it is clear that they are troublesome and unruly individuals, inciters of dissension. It is indeed very distressing to be seen as a disturbing spirit in a religious society, wherein, above all, there ought to be a union of hearts in charity. This type of religious is never happy in whatever convent he resides, even less would others be happy with him. Moreover, since the source of their unhappiness lies within themselves, by changing monasteries, they also carry everywhere with their unpleasant nature the source of their restlessness, to the great detriment of others.

In order to avoid acquiring such an unfortunate reputation and to preserve the spirit of the regular life, we need to have stability in the convents where superiors place us and we ought to depart only under strict obedience. *Pure obedience* is that which comes solely from the superiors, without our asking for it, except for a true need. When something is truly necessary, one could present his reasons to the superior with respect and submission. Subsequently, one should wait for his reply with perfect resignation of will and execute it without rejoinder.

When superiors impose some journey under obedience, one should carry it out as an order from God, following the example of Abraham when he left for a foreign country at the first word of the Lord. We have here on this land of exile no lasting home; we seek the one that we will one day inhabit, the Heavenly Jerusalem. In this

world, the genuine religious seeks only God. Since God is everywhere, He is found in whatever house the superiors send him, as long as he goes there under obedience and seeks only the Lord, just as did Abraham, whose faith was so highly praised by St. Paul.

Before starting the journey, we must be moved by supernatural intentions so that it will contribute to our sanctification and not to our dissipation. To that end, we must offer it to God, in love and in a spirit of penitence, accepting in advance, for the forgiveness of our sins and those of the neighbor, all the hardships and fatigue inseparable from the manner of our traveling in poverty. One should also link journeys with those taken on earth by Jesus and Mary, so that by this union they might become more meritorious.

Each morning and several times during the day, we should remember to renew our intention, saying often, from the depths of the heart, "My God, I offer you this voyage for your love, to do penance for my sins. I unite it to the voyages of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ."

The day or the evening of departure, one must go to confession and receive communion as viaticum. Indeed, during a long trip, one is often exposed to major accidents, either for the body or for the soul. Accordingly, it is better to be fortified against any eventuality. On the point of departure, one asks the blessing of the superior. If he forgets to use the formula for travelers, he should be reminded. It is up to the superior or to another Father to bestow it, following the ceremonies prescribed.

One should be careful not to forget his letter of assignation, signed by the superior of the convent one is leaving, with the date it was signed, so as to present it to the superiors of the convents where he stops on the way and finally to present it to the superior where he will reside. He should be satisfied with the route charted by the superior and accept it thankfully, like a poor man of Jesus Christ. To complain would be to lose the reward of poverty. Besides, if the traveling money proves insufficient, Providence will not abandon us if we have confidence. Our Holy Father St. Dominic and the early religious who used to travel on foot, from one end of Europe to the other, carrying no resources, always received the help of divine bounty, and often in a miraculous way.

One ought to carry only what is absolutely necessary: the breviary, books useful for the ministry, some articles of clothing, etc. Before leaving, he should go to greet the Blessed Sacrament in order to offer and to recommend to Our Lord Jesus Christ the voyage he is about to undertake. On leaving the convent, he should recite the antiphon and prayer of the holy angels, and especially his guardian angel, in order to entreat them to keep him from any unfortunate accident.

This confidence is founded on our traditions: indeed, our Father St. Dominic and many other pious religious were helped in their apostolic trips by angels who took visible forms to lead them.

When barely out of town, the first duty is to recite the prayers for journeys. Every morning, after having prayed and left the convent or house where one passed the night, the canonical hours must be recited, adding, if possible, the Little Office and then some meditation, while inwardly considering God, the passion of Jesus Christ, or some other uplifting topic. After this meditation, in order to get ahead, one could recite a third of the rosary. During the rest of the day, the most convenient time is used to finish the Office, the rosary, or the psalter of Mary. This is how St. Dominic, on the roads he was traveling, sang hymns and psalms and from time to time separated himself from his companions for mental prayer.

During the journey, one should strive to please and uplift his companions in everything. 1° To please them, one should try to follow their will, to follow their inclinations, to be compassionate toward their weakness, and even to anticipate what could please them. Accordingly, one should stop when they decide, and for meals one should try as much as possible to satisfy their hopes. There is nothing so uncomfortable as to journey with a companion who never agrees with others, who wishes to follow his own whims or his spirit of contradiction, and who complains about everything. This kind of company is more troublesome than the physical weariness of the route.

2° To edify one's companions, one should practice regularity, mildness, humility, patience, openness, moderation, and charity. One should therefore strive to be cheerful in spite of fatigue. This is not the time to let oneself get lost in melancholy, in impatience, or in grumbling. One's countenance must radiate peace and tranquility, whereby to bear witness to God and to men that one is pleased with whatever is happening. If one were to lose patience at the sufferings inseparable from traveling, all reward would be lost. But if we accept them in a good mood for love of Him who has allowed them, each difficulty endured in this way becomes part of the penance which we deserve for our sins, and an opportunity to acquire some additional level of glory in Paradise. We should also avoid self-indulgence and sensuality in beverage, food, sleep, and the other reliefs ordinarily needed on voyages.

When one arrives at a certain house for a meal, on entering he will say, at least interiorly, following the counsel of Jesus Christ, "May the peace of the Lord fall upon this house" (see *Mt.* 10:12). The master must be allowed to prepare in any way he chooses whatever he is to serve us, so as not to scandalize him by our demands and to fulfill in a way what Jesus Christ told his apostles: "Eat what is set before you." If

any decision needs to be made on this matter, the simplest and most economical preparation is to be preferred. It is allowed, however, to request some wine and bread to quench one's thirst and to sustain oneself while waiting for the meal. The master of the house will be asked to have everything brought by a male servant rather than a female one, if this can conveniently be done.

Before and after the meal, prayers should be recited in the same manner as in the convent, except that instead of the *Miserere* the *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes* can be used. The meal should be eaten with decorum and propriety, as mentioned above, in silence, as our Constitutions expressly require at table, even outside the monastery, *on land or at sea*. If what is served does not suit one's taste, one should not complain about it. Such complaints are a mark of sensuality and reveal to seculars that religious are more difficult to satisfy than people of the world. One will bear any repugnance with prudence and mortification, taking this opportunity to acquire some merit and to uplift one's brothers or the other persons present.

When one is on a journey and comes upon a fast day obligatory even outside the convent, one must husband his strength and regulate his day very well so as to be able to accomplish this duty. Our Father St. Dominic and the other saints of our Order never failed to do so. If it appears severe for the travelers to fast, they should encourage each other in thinking of what they have promised God at their profession. Perhaps they will die before the end of the voyage; their best preparation for death would be to die while obeying their Constitutions.

When, for reason of illness or necessity, one is obliged to accept the coach of a person of rank, the rules of propriety should be observed while entering, seating oneself, remaining there, and alighting. If it is a female and she wants to travel with us, one needs to thank her very respectfully for the kindness and the honor which she shows us. Then one should decline, so as not to give bad example, nor to give those who would see us travel in such company occasion to talk, nor to expose oneself to some danger. All the more reason should we not join in travel with indiscrete persons, such as hypocritical persons. By their birth and upbringing, persons of high rank have feelings of honor and attract around themselves a certain retinue. But those of a lower class, instead of asking to be respected, gradually by their behavior arouse a certain familiarity towards themselves. One has to be severe and forceful on this point; for having failed, many have fallen into very serious faults. "He that loveth danger will perish in it" (*Str.3:27*).

When one rides in a public coach or on a ship accessible to all kinds of people, one should take a convenient place, and, if he knows no one, should not be in a hurry to speak but should keep himself rec-

ollected and silent. Nonetheless, one should observe the others, so as to learn their character and their ideas. If one observes that there is a loquacious person aboard, another somewhat brash, yet another dissipated, one should take care not to have anything to do with them. Should they attempt to attack us by means of discussions or insults, we should not be disturbed by what they say. Rather, we should let them know by our deliberate silence, or by some honorable, moderate, and religious words that we do not wish to engage in any confrontation or conversation with them. Nor should we dispute with heretics on controversial matters, unless we have been very well instructed, and unless this might contribute to the betterment of these heretics or of the persons in attendance. One should never join or converse in private with any female person. If there are some religious, clerics, or discrete secular persons, they are the ones with whom we should choose to speak.

During the journey, we must edify those whom we meet and especially practice boundless charity towards everyone. If there is a sick person in the house where we have gone, we should be pleased to visit him, console him, and encourage him to bear his sufferings with thanksgiving or at least with resignation, and with a spirit of repentance in reparation for sins committed or in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered very great pains out of love for us, [presenting his sufferings] as visits which God makes to him. It is also good, if the illness is dangerous, after having consoled the patient, to persuade him to approach the sacraments as a source of consolation and even as a means to obtain recovery, God willing. One should not leave without reciting for him and with him, if he is so inclined, some prayers such as those of St. Vincent Ferrer, noted at the end of the breviary.

If some poor people approach requesting alms, one must offer them corporal alms from what one has, insofar as possible, and offer to all spiritual alms, by praying that God fill them with His graces; or by exhorting them to suffer their poverty in patience, since the kingdom of Heaven belongs to the poor; or teaching them how to say the morning and evening prayers and the rosary; or by encouraging them to frequent the sacraments and keep themselves always ready to die well, so as to pass from the afflictions of this life to the consolations of Heaven.

Additionally, with everyone one must demonstrate as much distance from secular conversations as an inclination to converse about salutary maxims. One must glory in knowing nothing but Jesus crucified, in speaking freely of the perfections of the Savior, of the amiable virtues of the Blessed Virgin and of other saints, in particular those of our Order. It will always be easy and advantageous to teach others how to say the rosary, to meditate on its mysteries; to learn the ad-

vantages of the Confraternity [of the Angelic Warfare], its privileges and its indulgences; to bring others to recite together part of the rosary during the journey. They will be so uplifted by this that at another time they will voluntarily resume it on their own.

When one travels with some religious of the Order, it is praiseworthy to pray together, to recite the main and the Little Office and the rosary. Thereby we uplift each other and meditate with greater benefit. If we travel with secular persons, from time to time we need to separate from them in order to pray more freely. One can delight in prayer when contemplating the grandeur, the beauty, and the power of God, Who with a single word created the natural scenery which we admire all along the road; or by thinking that this life is a pilgrimage and an exile; or by considering that the sky over our head recalls the abode of peace which we seek. When coming upon a [Catholic] church along the way, one should hasten to enter it to adore the Holy Sacrament and to recite with David the verses: *Domum tuam, Domine, decet sanctitudo* (Ps. 93:5), or *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua* (Ps. 84:1), or others that are similar. When passing by a cross, one should greet it religiously by baring one's head and reciting some prayers, such as *O crux ave*, etc.

During a journey, one must be very careful to avoid doing anything against his vows. It would be to act against the vow of poverty to use part of the funds provided to buy something which would only satisfy convenience or curiosity, especially if it is likely that the superior would have refused permission: one must wait until returning to his convent before making these purchases. Accordingly, if there is any money left over, it should be handed over to the superior, who will be pleased to use it not only to buy something indispensable, but also to buy something which could be truly useful.

When one approaches a city or a town, one must assume a more becoming and religious appearance, following the example of our Father St. Dominic. Before he entered an area he begged God not to punish it on account of the sinner arriving there; he always kept his eyes lowered, keeping silence in the streets. Having arrived at the convent, the letter of assignation should be presented to the brother porter or father guestmaster, to be shown to the superior. Following that, one makes the *venia* to the superior when appearing before him, and obeys him in all things while one remains under his authority.

Even if the convent we reach is not one of our province, that does not dispense us from seeking lodging there, as our Constitutions formally prescribe. Men of the world, when they see that religious do not join their brothers, conclude that there is no bond or charity between them. The religious of another observance than ours ordinarily receive us quite well. If, perchance, some are found to act differently,

one ought not to grumble, but rather to practice patience and mortification. Our Father St. Dominic was elated when, during his journeys, he lacked everything and found neither nourishment nor lodging. However elaborate the meal served him, he would take only some bread, an egg, and a glass of wine, which, as we have already said, was two-thirds water. If we do not have the same dispositions as that great saint, it is because we are far from his spirit of mortification and penitence as well as his other virtues. At the very least, we should avoid complaining and grumbling when we do not find all that we had hoped for in some monastery or in some other place.

One should not forget to go to confession every week and, if he is not a priest, to take communion on days of general communion. One should also be attentive to reciting the Office of the Dead; and, so as not to risk omitting it or of reciting it with weariness or without piety, it should preferably be said early in the week rather than towards the end. When one journeys on the eve of feasts, it is important to arrive early so as to prepare oneself to attend Mass and receive communion early on the following day, and afterward to take to the road more conveniently. If one is in a convent of the Order, or in any other which has the charity to tolerate us, it is good to remain during the entire feast day, so as to use it in spiritual reading, individual prayers, and other exercises of piety.

When one approaches the place of assignment, as soon as he perceives it, he should sing the *Te Deum laudamus*, etc., with the prayer to the Holy Trinity, to thank God for having led him safely to the place where He wishes him to work toward his perfection. One can add the psalm *Miserere mei Deus*, with the prayer

*Deus cui proprium est misereri, semper et parcere: súscipe deprecationem nostram; ut nos, et omnes famulos tuos, quos delictórum catena constringit, miseratio tuæ pietatis clementer absolvat.*

O God, to whom it is proper ever to have mercy and to spare: receive our humble petitions; and though we be bound by the chain of our sins, yet mercifully free us in the tenderness of thy compassion.

to ask pardon of Our Lord for the faults committed during the voyage; and also the litany of the Blessed Virgin, with the prayer

*Protege (Concede) nos famulos tuos, quaesumus, Domine Deus, perpetua mentis et corporis sanitate gaudere: et gloriosa beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis intercessione, a praesenti liberari tristitia, et aeterna perfrui laetitia. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.*

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord God, unto us Thy servants, that we may rejoice in continual health of mind and body; and, by the glorious intercession of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, may be delivered from

present sadness, and enter into the joy of Thine eternal gladness.  
Through Christ our Lord.

to thank her for her protection. Having arrived at the convent, one must present his letter of assignation to the superior, and to receive, as soon as possible, the blessing of travelers.

One must also go to the church as soon as possible to adore Our Savior Jesus Christ there, and to reflect on the word of the psalmist: *Haec requies mea*, reflecting that this place of our assignment might be the end of our pilgrimage in this world. Consequently, we should make a firm resolution to work effectively at our sanctification by a strict observance of our vows and Constitutions, until death. As soon as one can see the Father Master or especially the Reverend Father Prior, one hands over to him the remainder of the travel funds, if any had to be carried, along with the letters brought for him or for others. One should be satisfied with the cell assigned, without choosing or asking for another that might seem to be more pleasant or convenient. The cell that the superior gives us is the place chosen for us by God in order to go from there to Heaven: *E cella ad caelum* (St. Bernard) [Guigo de Castro, *Ad Fratres Monte Dei*, 4.10].

One of the important sayings that we should always keep before our eyes on arriving at the convent of assignment, or at other convents along our route, is that of the Constitutions: *Always speak well about absent persons*. Thus, when someone asks for news about some religious in the monastery we came from, we should relate all the good we know of and remain silent about the infractions we might have noticed. If someone is so imprudent and lacking in charity as to make us talk about some imperfections or faults believed to exist in a religious, we should attempt to excuse the latter. Wretched are they who, without any scruples, seriously offend charity by their backbiting and who mock almost all the brothers being inquired about. Besides the fact that they open themselves to mortal sin, they make themselves more contemptible than those whom they disparage. One would lack honor, upbringing, common sense, and virtue to complain about the convents from which he came and to grumble against the superiors or other religious he met there. Accordingly, when one has barely arrived at his residence, in order not to lose the benefits and the merit of the journey's fatigue, he should speak well of everyone, except himself. Moreover, from the start, he should strive to accomplish all his duties with perfection. Indeed, this is what is important, since this is what we have promised to our God, Who wishes to be the happy ending of our exile and of our pilgrimage in this world.

May it be thus.



## ARTICLE V

### **Behavior while necessarily eating with secular persons**

The prohibition of eating outside the convent in places where we have one is one of the most important points of our Constitutions to be maintained. Indeed, meals taken at the home of secular persons are significant occasions of intemperance for religious, of contempt for their Order, and of scandal for the world. In fact, what respect could one have for a religious whose sensuality is caught in the act? If that religious wishes to be lively at table — which happens all too often — what is he not capable of saying against his neighbor, against his own brothers, and perhaps against modesty! And if by accident he falls into intemperance, what a scandal for the group and perhaps for a whole countryside!

Nonetheless, one may find himself under obligation to accept an invitation to the outside — for instance, when one is invited by a bishop, or when one goes to preach, or when one is on a journey. We call attention here to the propriety to be maintained in such gatherings.

Before the meal, after one has washed his hands, if it is the custom of the area, the *Benedicite* has to be said softly, standing with head bared. If, out of honor, we are asked to bless the table, we should not be in a hurry to accept when there are clerics present, diocesan or religious, who have an equal right to do so. But if there are none, or if the master of the house insists on our being the one to offer the blessing, we must, of course, do it with much piety and in a moderate voice. If one sees that this leads to interminable ceremonies, the simplest thing to do is for each individual to say the *Benedicite* softly by himself.

After sitting down, one should keep his body straight on his seat, without ever resting his elbows on the table. One should not be the first to unfold his napkin but follow the example of the most dignified persons. The napkin should be spread properly over the habit, so as not to stain oneself while eating, but without spreading it as widely as at the convent, where one is allowed to act with more familiarity.

When the meal has begun, one should refrain from asking for the side dishes before our eyes, particularly if they contain some delicacies: that would resemble sensuality. One has to wait until something is presented. If we are offered the choice of what is on the table, we should not request that which best agrees with our taste, nor say,

“I do not eat this; I cannot tolerate that.” Since these aversions are often imaginary and mark a certain refinement, instead of making them known, one should politely receive what has been served and make an effort to eat some of it, unless there is an insurmountable repugnance.

If, while serving us, the host bypasses someone more elevated than us, we should politely refuse to take what he presents or offer it immediately to the person we wish to honor. If, however, that person himself presents us with this portion, it should not be passed to another but received with deference, to show that one is touched by his attention.

When taking one’s turn in serving oneself, he should avoid taking the better portions or the more exotic ones, even when one is the last to serve himself. One should drink normally, avoiding giving the impression that he does this as a gourmet, observing as much as possible what the Constitutions say, to drink with both hands.

In the presence of persons to whom we owe deference, one must manage to finish at the same time as them. However, when we have invited the persons who eat at our table, we should not cut things short nor hastily clear the table, but let everything happen leisurely, especially if we invited them to eat more. If, after we have taken sufficient food, we are offered something else, we should politely decline.

During the meal, it is unseemly to prattle on about the food we are eating and to show that we are taking too much pleasure in doing so. When the master of the house asks for our impression about the food which he is serving, we must praise his goodness in general terms. This will please him as well as those who prepared it, without obliging us to enter into those details that are completely inappropriate for a mortified man. On leaving the table with the others, one must uncover his head and recite grace with reverence.

Only rarely should secular persons be invited for a meal in our convents. They sometimes make fun of us, even after we have done our best to receive them properly. There are, however, certain persons of rank who invite themselves and certain friends of our Order whom we can hardly neglect to invite occasionally, in order to show them our regard and gratitude.

In that case, it would be better to receive them in the refectory with the brothers rather than in the small refectory. The presence of a large community, in which spiritual reading is done during the meal, where profound silence is kept, and where one is aware of great self-control, cannot help but impress men of the world who are sometimes scandalized by what happens in a small refectory, especially if there is excess in drink and in food. Ordinarily, secular persons who find it an honor and a pleasure to dine with the community are unconcerned

about being treated as special. To be sure, from a material point of view, it is easy for them to find at home or with their friends a table much better than ours.

When one receives another, he should not appear hurried, anxious, impatient, nor flare up against those who give bad service. This would reveal lack of respect for the person invited, and may lead him to presume that one is embarrassed by his presence. It is enough to take all possible precautions ahead of time, and then let things happen as they will. If something goes wrong, forgiveness should be asked of the guests in few words. They overlook our faults willingly when they see our good will in receiving them with dignity and charity.

## ARTICLE VI

### Writing or receiving letters

Novices are not to write or send any letter without permission. The Father Master takes care to read them all before sealing them, not only to see that nothing was written contrary to charity, truth, prudence, or any other virtue, but also to examine whether they are written with the accuracy, politeness, and decorum befitting a religious. He will also read all the letters the novices receive, because he needs to know whether or not they contain anything dangerous for their vocation or some troubling news that he ought to reveal to them tactfully. Our Constitutions forbid us under grave penalty to send any letter or to read those we receive without first showing them to the superior. This rule of religious life is very well advised. If someone broke it in secret, he would show a complete lack of obedience, of regular discipline, of prudence, and perhaps of charity. Why, indeed, would anyone write without permission if what he had to write was proper, reasonable, and in conformity with the spirit of God? One probably hides himself so as to be less constrained, to speak ill of his brothers and perhaps of his superiors, to complain about some and to ridicule others, and to reveal to the outside what even in the convent should be buried in a complete silence.

One must be extremely prudent and circumspect in letters, even more so than in conversation. The words we speak quickly pass, and the faults mentioned in conversation can be immediately repaired; but the faults committed to writing are very difficult to repair, because *the written word lasts*.

Letters must also be very limited. Just as the novices are rarely allowed to visit their relatives when they live in the same country, so too are they allowed to write them very little when they are far from them.

A genuine need and urgent propriety are the only sufficient motives to write letters. Those who write often and without a serious reason waste much time and let it be known that they are vacillating spirits. Not knowing how to occupy themselves in their solitude with the work of sanctification by prayer and study, they love to be involved in many outside matters to which God does not call them, and which do not contribute in a serious manner to the sanctification of

their neighbor. One often repents having spoken or written too much, but one rarely repents having done so with excessive restraint.

The best and most natural way of composing one's letters is to write as one speaks. After all, letters are *conversations with absent persons*. Just as in conversation, even though we always use sincere and polite expressions, nonetheless we choose more serious words when we speak of serious matters and more respectful words when we address persons of high standing, so too when writing, the words we use ought to be related to the topic we are writing about and to the intended recipient.

We can distinguish two kinds of letters: business letters and letters of courtesy. In business letters, one should immediately bring up the subject, explain oneself clearly, use natural and appropriate terms, calling attention to the exact circumstances of place, time, person, and matter, so that the person reading can imagine himself seeing exactly what we are talking about. Only what is relevant to the issue should be mentioned and all useless digressions avoided. If several matters are treated, it is good to distinguish them by topic for greater clarity. For each one, what would help clarify that which follows is presented first, general points before particular ones, the less important before the weightier ones; we keep going in this way by steps, until we come to the last item in order of time, or the item most important and most apt to make an impression on the mind of the person to whom we are writing.

When, in business letters, one wishes to establish a fact or a truth, one must take care to make this fact or truth understandable by expressing it in proper, fitting, and clear terms. After having developed the point one wishes to make, one should take care that his exposition is not destroyed or weakened in the mind of the receiver by irrelevant material. For that, it is necessary: 1° that there be nothing shocking in what one writes, to avoid offending the person one is trying to persuade. 2° That, on the contrary, one should ingratiate oneself in his mind by offering him esteem and confidence, speaking to him with modesty, humility, and respect, or with ease and affability, according to his status and the terms of one's relationship. 3° That one not show any trace of strong emotion, but, if passion does become noticeable, that it be shown to be upright and just, not arising from a fault in the person but from the topic which rightly excites. 4° That one reflect on what could be the strongest objection to what one is proposing, answering it in as few words as possible so as to strengthen the resolve of the one being addressed. 5° That if one remains silent about vulgar and unreasonable objections, it must be made clear that this is because he does not believe them capable of surprising or influencing a person whose judgment he respects. When the letter one is

writing is not the first about the matter, but is in response to one previously received, before anything else, one should note the date the letter was received, respond item by item to all the issues mentioned, add whatever new data needing to be made known, and summarize, if necessary, the thoughts which one had previously made, so as to strengthen the final arguments by an overall view of the issues.

*Letters of courtesy* are especially letters offering congratulations, condolences, or gratitude; or expressions of respect, obedience, and fidelity, in recognition of that authority which placed above us the person to whom we are writing. These types of letters ought to be polite, helpful, and as short as the compliments we generally make by word of mouth. The feelings expressed should not be banal, nor calculated and affected, but genuine and true. There is no need for the mind to shine or for the thoughts to be witty. Not everyone can pride himself on having a sharp mind, but everyone can and should show common sense, a proper disposition, and a sincere heart.

In order to regulate more effectively the manner of one's writing, one needs to remember that the ancients used to distinguish four types of style: the simple, the allegorical, the solemn, and the lofty.

The *simple style* is composed of natural, clear expressions, without affectation or complexity. Words will be used in their common meaning, not in a figurative sense. Terms are correct because they follow the precise arrangement and connection of the most exact rules and usage among intelligent persons. Expressions are clear, sentences short and concise, because the simplicity of words and their placement can only produce great distinctness in the formulation of thought. This style, therefore, reflects a noble, easy, elegant, and delicate simplicity, and it is the basis for all the others. It should not be confused with a certain insipid style, which consists of base thoughts and common expressions, often mixed with inaccuracies and barbarisms.

The *figurative style* consists of expressions taken in their metaphorical meaning, so as to represent one thing under the figure of another, which has some relationship with the first. When these figures are taken from serious matters and the relationship which they have with the idea to be expressed is apt and natural, it is a serious style with concise and pointed sentences. But when the figures are taken from pleasant things and their relationship with the subject is farfetched, disproportionate, or fictitious, it is a sprightly and satisfying style, composed of hyperboles, witty allusions, analogies, and metaphors which excite curiosity and bring a smile. The serious figurative style is the opposite of a certain unpleasant style which undermines all thoughts, unnecessarily turns everything into images, and shows a penchant for certain extraordinary or newly-coined words, good at

most for use in conversation. The playful figurative style is the opposite of a certain unpleasant mocking style which consists only of feeble comparisons, in disagreeable sarcasm with no wit; the only person who laughs is the one who contrived them.

The *solemn style* is composed of the simple style and the serious allegorical style. It must employ expressions and figures that are serious, peaceful, and restrained. Sentences must be neither broken up nor concise as those of the preceding styles. They must be longer, more intertwined, and more united together to reinforce and elucidate one another.

The *sublime style* is made up of the solemn style and the serious figurative style. It calls for noble, strong, and striking thoughts, lively expressions, forceful and meaningful titles, vivid and soul-stirring illustrations, sentences that are sometimes extended, sometimes clipped, according to the topic. This style has as its opposite in its category a certain bombastic and puffed up approach which, while appearing to speak of lofty matters, actually says nothing; or again, it is a certain boisterous and fiery eloquence which favors the world of exclamations rather than that of reasons; one which uses contrasts rather than proofs; one which strikes heedless individuals by the sound and the number of words, and which, by the disturbances and the shadows it produces, confounds matters rather than facilitating their comprehension.

In whatever form we write, we should not move out of character, nor fall into envy and become the mimic of others. Everyone can please with his own personal manner of speaking as long as he develops and perfects it. A melancholic individual will not be successful in his attempt to imitate the style of a lively spirit; the lively individual will not be successful if he tries to immerse himself in an exclusively serious and very formal manner.

When a subordinate writes to a superior, he ought to use the simple style to present the topic and the solemn style to establish the proofs. This style is more polite and greatly marks the respect which moves us, as opposed to the lively style, which shows too great a familiarity, and the studied style, which exhibits vanity mixed with presumption, preventing us from reaching the mind of the person addressed. If, however, the superior would like for the subordinate to deal with him in a familiar way, the latter, when writing about indifferent or pleasant matters, could use in moderation the simple and lively style. When an equal writes to an equal, the choice of style depends on the subject. It should be serious when dealing with religion, a consultation, a letter of condolence, of thanks, etc. If one is writing to a friend, the style will be smooth and natural so that when the latter reads, he will recognize the bent of one's spirit and imagine that he

hears us speaking. If a superior writes to a subordinate, the style will be simple, because that is fitting by nature for lofty persons, whose principal power lies in their strength of character and their authority.

A religious who in his correspondence makes of himself a writer displays that he is better at spending his time in perusing newspapers and in informing himself about what is going on, either in his cloister or among secular persons, than in studying and praying, that is to say, in fulfilling the duties of his vocation.

But it is not sufficient for a man of God to avoid writing anything unpleasant in his letters. From time to time, he ought to write something edifying as well. A spiritual thought, a pious and uplifting word deliberately placed in correspondence, and which arises naturally from the topic he is treating, are capable of producing much good in the spirit and the heart of readers. In this way, one sanctifies himself while writing and contributes to the sanctification of the recipients. There are also some religious who write at the top of their letters some initials recalling the names of favorite saints. St. Bernard said that he did not relish reading pages addressed to him unless he saw the name of Jesus. Such pious uses, when they are not overused, are uplifting and blessed by Heaven.

When one receives a letter, he should not be anxious to learn what it contains; that would indicate curiosity and lack of mortification. Holy personages in more fervent ages chose to delay learning what those letters from their relatives said. Sometimes, instead of reading them they would burn them, saying, *Burn and disappear, thoughts of my homeland.*

When we find ourselves in the presence of other persons and a letter dealing with personal matters is delivered to us, we should not open it in front of the others but calmly continue with our conversation. Nonetheless, if the issue is pressing, one should politely excuse himself, stand a bit apart, read the letter quietly, and provide the appropriate answer. On returning to one's place, it is fitting, if convenient, to report an interesting point from the letter, so as not to appear mysterious or distrustful. If in the parlor we receive a letter which we presume has to do with the person who visits us, we should tell him simply that we cannot open it without permission, and ask him to allow us to give it to the brother porter, for transmission to the Superior. If the brother is not present, we should take it ourselves. It would be impolite and unkind, after one has begun reading a letter out loud, to stop abruptly or to mutter to oneself when coming upon a sensitive passage. When one notices that someone would like to read a letter privately, one should step aside and not approach unless the other calls or returns to us.



## CHAPTER IV

### How novices should perform their principal actions

#### ARTICLE I

#### **How to begin and end the day**

It is appropriate that, in early morning, prayer consecrates to God the beginnings of the day and prepares us for the graces we will need until the evening. As soon as the novices have gotten up and arranged their bed, they should bless themselves with holy water and kneel at their prie-dieu to perform the following actions: 1° An act of faith in the presence of God. 2° An act of adoration, to acknowledge His Supreme Majesty and our entire dependance. 3° An act of thanksgiving for all the benefits we have received from Him. 4° An act of contrition for all the sins we have committed, with a firm resolution not to fall into them again. 5° An act of offering our actions and sufferings of the day, to direct them all to the greater glory of God, and to unite them with those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom they obtain all their value. 6° An act of renouncing the temptations which might occur during the day. 7° An act of invocation to the Blessed Virgin and to the saints for whom one has a greater devotion.

A firm purpose is the most essential disposition of the morning. That is why we should spend more time on it than on the other acts and to delve into details, so as to make resolutions which relate to the particular occasions of the day, insofar as we can foresee them. Accordingly, we should make the firm resolution: 1° To avoid any kind of sin, whether mortal or venial and, far from imagining that one is shielded from it, to conceive a great fear of it. 2° To acquire the Christian and religious virtues which we lack and, in particular, the one for which we recognize the greatest need, such as charity, humility, purity, patience, obedience, or any other. It is good to anticipate the occasions to practice these virtues and the minor difficulties which they might entail. This amounts to what some writers called the *examen of forethought*. 3° To mortify ourselves in something: whether in personal

judgment, by submitting it to that of others; or in personal will, by doing what others prefer, insofar as this is not evil; or in the senses, especially sight and speech, by maintaining great self-control and by avoiding all vain and useless words; or in passions, in particular the one to which we are most inclined, such as laziness, vanity, impatience, exuberance, etc. 4° To really enliven our actions, such as the Office, meditation, study, and the other duties, fulfilling all of them in the presence of God, for His love, in a spirit of penitence, etc. 5° To observe exactly the vows, the Constitutions, and the ordinances of superiors, even in their smallest points, in particular those which were or will be, on that very morning, recommended at the chapter, or those which we often break, such as silence. We complete the firm purpose by asking God for the grace to keep the resolutions made.

It is even more necessary to finish the day well than to begin it well. Accordingly, it is necessary in the evening to thank Our Lord for the graces we received during the day, to ask pardon for the sins committed, and to petition Him to keep us from an unfortunate accident during the night. To do this, we can repeat the same acts of the morning, with the difference that, in place of the firm purpose to pass the day in a holy manner, which is the principal morning exercise, the one in the evening is the examination of conscience concerning the day that has just passed.

The examination of conscience consists of three parts: the petition, the examination of conscience, and the act of contrition. To do this fruitfully, it is necessary: 1° To petition to the Holy Spirit for the grace to recognize our faults. 2° To examine one's conscience for sins by taking a few moments to bring to mind the wrongs we committed during the day, in thought, desire, word, action, and omission; the faults against God, at prayer, holy Mass, the Office, etc., or against the neighbor by a lack of respect for superiors, a lack of kindness and charity towards the brothers, etc., or against ourselves as regards the vows, the practice of virtue, and the obligations of our state. 3° To arouse contrition in ourselves and, to that end, to consider the grandeur of the Master Whom we have offended, the extreme lowliness of the one who offended Him, the extent of the offense that we inflicted on Him after having received so many blessings, and, finally, the triviality of the things for which we revolted against Him.

If one has not recited the prayers of the cord of St. Thomas, these should follow for us to obtain the virtue of purity. Indeed, since this great saint received from Heaven the gift of angelic chastity, he has, in the sight of God, special power to obtain this virtue for those who ask for it through his intercession.

## ARTICLE II

### **The Mass**

The Holy Mass is the *Action* par excellence, that is to say, the principal act of the Christian religion. It is the sacrifice of the New Law, in which Jesus Christ offers Himself to His Father. It encompasses all the sacrifices of the ancient law and procures for the Holy Trinity more glory and honor than all the former ones. Under Jewish law, four principal sacrifices were offered to God, namely, the holocaust, to recognize His sovereign power over creatures; the sacrifice of satisfaction, to atone for the sins of men; the eucharistic sacrifice, or of praise and thanksgiving, in acknowledgment of his blessings; the peaceful or petitionary sacrifice, to obtain the graces necessary in order to walk in the ways of justice. Indeed, the sacrifice of the Mass produces the same effects in an infinitely more perfect manner, having been instituted by Jesus Christ for these very aims, that is to say, to honor the sovereign majesty of God, to atone for the injury to Him caused by sin, to thank Him for His blessings, and to obtain from Him all the graces we need.

One should attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with reverence, recollection, attentiveness, and piety, since Jesus Christ, true God and true man, sacrifices Himself on the altar through the hands of the priest, as He was immolated on Calvary by the hands of the executioners. It is the same Victim, the same Sacrificer. Moreover, this sacrifice is not simply a commemoration and a remembrance of the Passion of Our Savior on the Cross, but a true re-enactment, though in a bloodless manner. This is why we should attend Mass with a lively fear and reverential trembling, as if we were present at the crucifixion of Jesus. We should also enter into the feelings of the Most Blessed Virgin, of St. Mary Magdalene, of St. John, and of the good thief, when they were present before the sacrificed Savior; that is to say, to fill ourselves completely with sentiments of adoration, love, admiration, fear, contrition, respect, and thankfulness.

Just as Jesus Christ sacrifices Himself on the altar to become the nourishment for our souls, one will find no better way to attend Mass than to consider the circumstances of the holy Passion, and to partake spiritually of the benefits of His death, even when one does not have the happiness of receiving sacramental communion. To achieve this, one can recite the rosary while meditating on the sorrow-

ful mysteries. This simple prayer, lifted up by meditation on the mysteries, helps to maintain the attention of the spirit and the devotion of the heart.

Another way of advantageously considering the Passion during the Holy Sacrifice is to meditate on it interiorly, without oral formulas. This is especially fruitful when we experience an inner attraction and a great ability to contemplate the sufferings of Our Lord, or when one has difficulty in reciting vocal prayers. But for this meditation to be most fruitful, we must, at the same time, consider what Jesus Christ suffered for men and excite our heart with holy and pious feelings. For example, we can arouse in ourselves: 1° Feelings of compassion, because the sufferings which Jesus bore, whether in His body or in His soul, are greater than what any human being has endured or ever could endure. What could be more pious than to experience compassion for such great sufferings and to wish to share them with Him? 2° Feelings of love, because love deserves and calls for another love. Indeed it was out of love for us that Jesus Christ suffered so much. How could we not wish to share in His sufferings, in order to prove to Him by some actions how much we love Him? 3° Feelings of sorrow, because, since sin is so great that its atonement required that God become man and suffer the pains of the Passion, nothing is more fitting than to conceive a great respect for it, to detest all the faults we have committed in our lives, and to make a firm resolution not to commit any others. 4° Feelings of confidence, because, since Jesus consented to undergo such great sufferings for love of us and to atone for our sins, it is impossible for us to mistrust Him and not firmly to expect from His infinite mercy all necessary and superabundant graces. 5° Feelings of gratitude, because what heart is hardened so as to remain insensible to such blessings?

But the principal disposition which is important to arouse in the soul, while meditating on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is the will to imitate His virtues. Indeed, the Son of God became man and suffered in His Passion not only to ransom us by His merits, but also to give us an example of all the religious virtues and to make our practice of them easier. First, we consider His humility. Even though He was God, He endured the most outrageous treatment and wanted to be seen as the disgrace of men. This consideration will incite us to show contempt for honors, for the applause of creatures, and to hope for rejection by everyone. 2° Next, we consider His patience and His meekness. With a single word he could have annihilated the judges who condemned Him to death as well as all the barbarians who made Him suffer so much. And yet He endured everything without complaint. What a lesson in meekness and resignation for us when we have occasion to experience pain! 3° We can also consider His obedi-

ence. He submitted, not only to His Father, but also to his tormentors when they inflicted Him with pain during the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of the cross, the crucifixion; and He extended His arms and feet at their will. This example should move us to obey every [superior] in all things, and especially to practice under obedience our Constitutions and the admonitions of our superiors. 4° Finally, we consider His charity which was crowned on Calvary, because there is no greater love than to give one's life for one's friends. Our Lord could not have offered us a more striking example of His love for mankind and of His zeal for the glory of His Father than to spill His blood to the last drop. How much should this thought move us to do and to suffer everything so as to work for the glory of God, for our own perfection, and for the sanctification of our neighbor, just as the Divine Master requires!

It is easy to arouse other similar feelings in ourselves and to consider all the other virtues which Jesus Christ practiced, so as to move ourselves to imitate Him. But to make it even easier to stir up our spirit and to inflame the feelings of the heart, we can, for each mystery of the Passion, consider the following six points:

- 1° *Who is the one suffering?* It is God.
- 2° *What is He suffering?* The cruelest torments ever.
- 3° *For whom did He suffer?* For some pitiable creatures, for His enemies, and his tormentors.
- 4° *How is he responding to the suffering?* With meekness, patience, humility, obedience, and love.
- 5° *Who are the persons who make Him suffer?* His own subjects, whom He filled with blessings and who show Him ingratitude in return.
- 6° *What is the purpose of His suffering?* To give glory to His Father and to bring about our salvation.

It should be pointed out, nonetheless, that to attend Mass well it is not necessary to produce all the different feelings in the order we have enumerated them. It is sufficient to arouse some of them. And when one does touch us, we need not hasten to another, for the heart, once it has been moved strongly by one feeling, develops a stronger resolution to practice its related virtue.

A third manner of focusing on Jesus Christ during the Holy Sacrifice is to enter into the thoughts which led the Church to institute the ceremonies of the Mass, to follow the priest in all that he says and does, in order to arouse similar yearnings and to offer the holy Victim in union with him. Even though the priest climbs to the altar alone as minister of Our Lord, all the faithful present offer the sacrifice, each in his own way, as members of the Incarnate Word. To facil-

itate this pious exercise, we will explain briefly the principal parts of the Mass and their relationships with Jesus Christ Our Lord.

We can distinguish three of them. The first stretches from the beginning to the Consecration; it serves as preparation for the sacrifice. The second runs from the Consecration to Communion; it is the most essential element. The third is made up of all the rest, from Communion to the end; it is a kind of thanksgiving, to acknowledge gratitude to God for the sacrifice which was offered and for the sacramental or spiritual communion which we made.

The very sight of priestly vestments would suffice for preparation, because they remind us of the circumstances of the Passion. One can see in the amice, for instance, the veil which the Jews placed on the face of the Savior before striking Him; in the alb, the white robe which Herod had him wear in derision; in the cincture, the ropes with which He was tied; in the chasuble, the purple robe He was made to wear, or His tunic without seam, stained with His blood, which was removed for His crucifixion. The sacred vestments have many other meanings as well, to serve for our benefit.

As for the Holy Mass itself, its ceremonies also have numerous and profound implications: some recalling the ancient practices of the catacombs and of the primitive church, others depicting various circumstances in the life of Our Lord, still others serving to express the grandeur of the holy mysteries, and to promote in the priest or in the faithful those acts of piety called from them by the very mysteries. If one finds some spiritual benefit in these matters, he could entertain the following thoughts, chosen from a great number of others, for the topic is boundless.

1° The priest, at the foot of the altar, starts by thanking the Lord, then says the *Confiteor*. By this, he makes known to us that the first preparation to hear Mass and to share in its benefits is to thank God for His blessing to us, and to ask Him to pardon our sins, while we move ourselves to a contrition full of humility and sorrow.

2° The *Introit*, which the priest recites twice, marks the earnest hopes of the ancient patriarchs when they asked the Lord to send a Messiah, the Lamb, the Lord of the earth, to save the people of Israel from death (see *Is.* 16:1).

3° The *Kyrie* and *Christe* are said several times, namely, three times when addressing the Father, three times to the Son, who became man and is called the Christ, and three times to the Holy Spirit. These invocations declare the distress of the world before the coming of Jesus Christ. While speaking these words or hearing them, we can ask pardon for our offenses against the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, thereby preparing ourselves to participate in the sacrifice of the altar.

4° The *Gloria in excelsis* serves to praise, to bless, to glorify God, and to thank Him for the benefits He has brought to the nations by sending the Messiah, that the latter might lead to Heavenly glory men of good will.

5° The priest also greets the people attending with the words *Dominus vobiscum*, “the Lord be with you,” and after the response of the people, *et cum spiritu tuo*, he says: *Oremus*, “Let us pray.” This is to make us understand that, in order to raise ourselves to God with more fervor, we must have the spirit of the Lord; that the priest intends to pray for the people in attendance, and that the faithful must pray with him. The *Collect*, which he then recites, takes up again the idea of mystery or of the specific perfections of the saint being honored and indicates the graces we should pray for in accord with the Church, to benefit from this mystery or to walk in the footsteps of that saint. Accordingly, it is very useful to meditate well on the collect and to remember its import during the course of the day.

6° The *Epistle*, which precedes the Gospel, and which is taken either from the Old Testament or from writings of the Apostles, describes for us that all of the Old Law testified in favor of Christ, and that the Apostles prepared the way for His Gospel when they began preaching in an area to bring salvation.

7° After the Epistle comes the *Gradual*, or response and verse, which used to be sung at the steps of the pulpit, followed by the *Alleluia* or the *Tract*. The *Gradual* signified the penance fulfilled by the people after they had heard the teaching of the prophets. The *Alleluia*, which is to say, “Praise God,” indicates the joy experienced on earth after penance has washed away our sins, and the happiness we will taste in Heaven when we shall possess God for eternity. In Paschal time, the *Alleluia* is doubled because it is a time of greater spiritual joy. As for the *Tract*, which is mournful, it reminds us that we ought to be sorrowful for having offended God, and that we need to persevere in penitence.

8° The *Gospel* contains the teachings of Jesus Christ. On listening to it and reading it, one makes the Sign of the Cross as a public profession of one’s wish to know only Jesus crucified, keeping only Him in one’s mind, on one’s lips, and in one’s heart. One stands to indicate a readiness to obey the words of the Gospel, to defend them at the peril of one’s life, to forge ahead to make them known and embraced.

9° After the Gospel comes the *Credo*, in which the Church presents us with the principal mysteries taught by the Divine Master. On listening to it or singing it, one indicates not only belief in the truths proposed by the Divine Word, but also that, for the manner of formu-

lating and interpreting them, one bows in filial assent to the authority of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church.

10° The *Offertory* emphasizes the offering of the bread and the wine which those who are to receive communion formerly presented to the priest for him to consecrate in order to serve as sacramental communion. The catechumens and the penitents used to leave the church before the Offertory. One perhaps ought to admit being less worthy than they to assist at the Holy Sacrifice, and thank to God for having allowed us to remain until the end.

11° The priest recites the *Preface* in full voice to prepare the people to offer with him the adorable Sacrifice. That is why he exhorts them to lift their hearts to God, to thank Him for having given them His Son, and to praise Him through Jesus Christ, and to join their voices to those of the angels, who sing unceasingly in Heaven, *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, the God of hosts.*

12° The silence which the priest maintains after the Preface reminds us how the Redeemer had to hide for a while before His Passion, after having been acclaimed by the people of Jerusalem who sang, *Hosanna.*

13° The *Elevation* of the sacred Host and of the chalice signify the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, when He was lifted up on the Cross at the crest of Calvary and presented to the eyes of all the world. Moreover, the consecration of the Host, done apart from that of the chalice, represents His death, through which His body was separated from His soul, even though divinity remained always united to both.

14° The *Pater* which the priest recites at the end of the canon, after having prayed for the living and the dead, shows us, by the authority of the same Savior, the graces that we ought especially to ask of God in sacramental or spiritual communion. The *Agnus Dei*, which we then say, revives in us by the three repetitions the feelings of confidence in the divine Lamb, of sorrow for our sins, and of the sincere humility which we should have if we wish to share fittingly in the benefits of the Holy Sacrifice.

15° The *Postcommunion*, which formerly was sung while the people received communion, signifies the happiness which the Apostles experienced at the resurrection of Christ. The prayers which the priest adds are acts of thanksgiving to praise God for the blessings He granted us in the Holy Sacrifice, in particular, in communion.

16° The *Blessing* which the priest gives at the end of Mass recalls the blessing which Jesus Christ gave His disciples as He ascended to Heaven, or again, the solemn blessing He will give to the elect on the day of last judgment, when He will tell them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (*Mt. 25:34*).



Those who, while assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, would like to enter into the beliefs of the Church and profit effortlessly from her ceremonies, should inflame in their hearts the following sentiments or others like them. They could, at the *Confiteor*, ask pardon for their sins; at the *Introit*, long for the spiritual coming of Jesus Christ; at the *Kyrie*, beg for divine mercy; at the *Gloria*, rejoice with the angels and to thank God for the birth of the Savior; at the *Dominus vobiscum*, hope to remain always united to Him, then impress on their spirit the thought and ask for the graces which are special to the office of the day; at the *Epistle*, learn some words of Scripture; at the *Gradual* and the *Tract*, ask for the spirit of repentance; at the *Alleluia*, delight in the Lord and ask for the peace of an upright conscience; at the *Gospel*, listen with respect to the teachings of Jesus Christ and to imprint them on the soul; at the *Credo*, make acts of faith concerning the mysteries which it contains, and for submission to the Church which proposes them and defines their meaning; at the *Offertory*, offer Jesus and to offer oneself with Him to His Father for the four ends of the sacrifice; at the *Preface*, raise our heart and mind to God, to praise and glorify Him with the angels, through Our Lord; at the *Elevation*, to adore Jesus truly present under the form of bread and wine; at the *Pater*, ask for ourselves and for our loved ones the graces and virtues we need; at the *Agnus* and *Communion* of the priest, make a spiritual communion; at the *Postcommunion*, and the *Prayers*, thank God for the graces which He has just given us; at the *Blessing*, ask for His blessing to us in this world through grace, and in the other world through glory. During the final *Gospel*, it is appropriate to request pardon for our faults and inattention while listening to the Mass.

After the consecration one should concentrate more interiorly and exclusively on Jesus Christ truly present on the altar. At this point, it is easy to arouse loving feelings in one's heart by forming acts of adoration, of faith, of contrition, of humility, of petition, and of love. If in choir the religious remains for a long time prostrate, how much more must he bow down and abase himself in spirit at the presence of his Savior and his God! While the priest strikes his breast and raises his voice to say, *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, in remembrance of the remorse of the repentant thief, of the centurion, and of the people who, after the Passion, left beating their breasts, how strong one's effort should be to rouse up ardent sorrow for his sins and humbly beg for forgiveness! Following this, he will focus all his attention in preparing for spiritual communion, to make it at the same time as the communion of the priest.

*Spiritual Communion* consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus Christ in a spiritual way through grace and to unite oneself to Him. The practice is excellent for this purpose. It has also been

strongly advised by saints and recommended by the Council of Trent. Its advantages are such that sometimes he who receives Communion only spiritually obtains more benefits than another who truly receives. Indeed, even though sacramental communion is, in itself, of greater merit, and, as sacrament, it produces grace by its own power, nonetheless sometimes the desire to unite oneself with Our Lord can become so strong and be accompanied by such great reverence, love, humility, that, in his holy preparations, one goes beyond the other who is to receive actual communion, but with less perfect dispositions. Given that spiritual communion is entirely interior, it has, in addition, the advantage of not being subject to vanity, and of being able to be done not only once at Mass, but every time we experience the ardent desire to receive Jesus. This is why many persons do so every time they pass before the Blessed Sacrament and often while at work.

Here is a formula one could use: “My Savior, I fervently desire to receive You sacramentally, but since I am not able to have this happiness, give me the grace to receive You spiritually, and to be always united to you interiorly by my actions, my intentions, and my inclinations.”

## ARTICLE III

### **The Divine Office**

The Divine Office, by which we offer to God, in the name of the Church, the praises due to Him, is, after Holy Mass, the most significant act of the Christian religion. God is great; He would deserve infinite praise if creatures were able to offer it. The angels and the blessed in Heaven praise Him unceasingly. Here below, inanimate creatures bless Him in their manner, but it is up to man to fulfill this duty on earth in a manner that is free, intelligent, and much more perfect. Not everyone, however, is able to give himself exclusively to public prayer. Accordingly, the Church has entrusted this obligation and this honor to clerics and to religious who are appointed by their state to praise the Lord, not only in private but also in public, and not just for themselves but for all the people. This is why the faithful contribute to their support by alms, so that, freed from superfluous cares and matters of the world, they can more fully and more uniquely engage themselves in becoming, by prayer, mediators between Heaven and earth.

In order to recite the Office properly, one needs intention, decorum, attentiveness of the spirit, and affection of the heart.

*Intention* is a movement of the will which moves us to reach a desired goal. At the Office, it is not absolutely necessary to have an actual intention and to say: "I intend to recite this office to fulfill my obligations." It is sufficient to have a virtual intention, which exists as soon as we approach the choir to recite the Office with the community, or when we pick up our breviary to recite it in private. Indeed, these acts of the will arise from the intention which one has to fulfill his duty, even though habit prevents one from being aware of it and from expressing it distinctly every time.

This must be especially noted among the scrupulous who imagine themselves having no intention to satisfy the obligations of Office, of the Mass, or of sacramental penance. At the very least, they have the virtual intention contained in that disposition of which we have just spoken, to pray to God, to perform such and such an action, as prescribed to them. Even though they may believe that not only did they not have the intention necessary to satisfy their obligation, but that they had a contrary intention, they do not, on that account, have to repeat their hours, nor begin anew their penance, nor hear another

Mass. The contrary intention which they supposedly had is not real but delusional. It is a consequence that the scruple has left in their mind by troubling and assaulting their imagination.

During the Office, one should have a great exterior *decorum*. In choir, this decorum consists, first of all, in assuming the posture prescribed by the rubrics, so as to be precise in prayer, whether standing or sitting, head covered or uncovered, kneeling or prostrating, at the times prescribed. When recited in private, it is praiseworthy to do so while kneeling, at least in part. This is the most humble posture of the body, the most respectful, and it helps to develop interior piety. One should exercise great restraint in sight, keeping the eyes lowered and not looking around unless truly necessary. The principle of this exterior modesty rests on the great interior respect for God, to Whom we are speaking. If we were truly imbued with His sovereignty and infinite majesty, with the grandeur of the functions we are fulfilling towards Him, and of our complete lowliness — we who are worms of the earth, dust and ashes — we would, in His presence, keep ourselves in profound abasement and holy fear. In order to achieve this attitude, we need to consider our very persons as criminals of high treason, unworthy of obtaining His blessings. Such a conviction will keep us in the humility, fear, and confusion of a wretch who asks pardon of his sovereign after having offended him. We can also see ourselves as poor beggars who lack everything and, as such, remain in the presence of our Heavenly Benefactor in an entreating posture, in order to touch His heart and to call down His blessings upon us and on all those whom we represent.

*Attentiveness of the mind*, just as that of the will, is necessary to fulfill the precept of the Office, because prayer is essentially the lifting up of the soul to God, and this elevation is made only through concentration or application of the intelligence. Being pure spirit, God wishes that those who pray to Him adore not only in body but especially in spirit and in truth. Thus, He rejects the prayers of those who honor Him with their lips but keep their hearts very far from Him. How, indeed, could we expect to make Him attentive to words to which we ourselves pay no attention? We would not dare to address a request to a prince, nor to a gentleman, without careful thought of what we are seeking from him and how he might reply. How could we dispense ourselves from having the same regard for the One Who is the King of kings? Moreover, such an action would not be praying to God. It would be mocking Him for us to recite mechanically words which, instead of obtaining blessings for the speaker, bring him, on the contrary, reprimand and curses. Prayer, indeed, is never empty and without effect. If it does not rise up to God to obtain His blessings, it attracts His anger. Instead of conducing to erase sins already committed, it

becomes itself a new sin. The Holy Spirit warns us: “Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully” (*Jer.* 48:10).

There are three kinds of attentiveness that one is able to have in vocal prayer, according to St. Thomas: 1° Attention to the words expressed. 2° Attention to the meaning of words. 3° Attention to the goal of the prayer, namely, the thought of God and the grace for which we invoke Him.

*Attention to words* is necessary but not sufficient. It is necessary so that he who prays vocally does not expose himself to the danger of saying what is not prescribed, of not pronouncing the words distinctly, or encroaching on the other [side of the] choir. But this attention to words is not sufficient because it is not a lifting up of the soul to God. Without neglecting it, we must additionally pay attention to the particular meaning of the words, or, in general, keep ourselves united to Our Lord. Constant attention to words, taken to excess, can become harmful, as sometimes happens to scrupulous individuals. Being excessive, it prevents us from considering the meaning of words or holy things, and from firing our fervor. It is sufficient, then, that it be strong enough to keep us from saying one thing instead of another, and to make us pronounce our words distinctly.

*Attention to the meaning of words* is useful, without being absolutely necessary. It is useful because it fires up devotion in the heart, keeps us from becoming bored while praying, and facilitates the other kinds of attention. This is what the Rule of St. Augustine speaks of: “When you pray God with psalms and hymns, let your heart be attentive to what your mouth utters” (c. 2, 3). To fulfill this recommendation, one must enter into the emotions of the psalms and excite in one’s heart the movements and affections consistent with the different verses. When it is a question of a penitential psalm, one must bring forth pain and sorrow concerning one’s sins. Does the psalm contain entreaties? One must make himself a beggar. When it rejoices in the Lord, let us be happy; when it laments, let us weep; when it contains thanks, let us be grateful; when it contains topics of consolation and confidence, let us entrust ourselves to consolation and confidence in the Father of mercies. We have indeed said that this attention to the meaning of words is not absolutely necessary. Even without it, the soul can effectively turn to God, which is why many clerics and some male and female religious fulfill the precept of saying the Office even though they do not constantly penetrate the meaning of the words and the verses which they recite. Sometimes it can even be harmful, although rarely, as would be the case if a scrupulous individual, under the pretext of duty or of perfection, sought to penetrate the literal meaning of everything he recites, and, to that end, made such efforts as would destroy his devotion or make any pious thought impossible.

*Attention to the goal of prayer* is the best and the one to which all the other attentions lead. It consists in reciting the Office with the intention and the desire to please, to adore, and to bless God. This attention is adequate to satisfy the obligation of the Office since by it the soul is raised up to God in genuine prayer. In some way, it is necessary, because without it prayer is not an act of religion, the thought of God being treated as irrelevant. Accordingly, when one recites the Office, or any other vocal prayer, if he does not attempt to penetrate the meaning of the words, at least he must pronounce them with the goal of praising God, by thinking of the day's feast, or of the grace for which he is praying earnestly, or of any other pious topic, especially Our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to St. Thomas, this attention has two forms: one actual, the other virtual (see ST I-II, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3).

It is *actual* when one thinks in that moment of God, or of the meaning of the words, or of some mystery. It is to be hoped that one could have this actual attention without interruption because of the wonderful benefits it produces in the soul, and especially because of a certain devotion, meekness, and spiritual consolation with which it fills the heart. Unfortunately, it is not in our power to enjoy this whenever we would like. In fact, it sometimes happens that, when we try too hard for it, we experience more tedium and distractions. One must therefore be resigned to lose it often, and be consoled by thinking that the virtual intention supplies for this defect and persists in the midst of distractions of the mind and aridity of the heart, however long and stressful they may be, as long as they are not voluntary.

*Virtual intention*, in fact, is that which implicitly subsists in the acts performed by virtue of the actual intention expressed at the beginning of prayer. This intention persists, even though not deliberate, in the acts which it influences, until such time as it be interrupted and cancelled by a positive act. If, far from performing this positive act, we renew from time to time the original intention, we can be all the more at peace in having fulfilled our obligation. It would certainly be a voluntary distraction to turn over in one's mind some determined project, some unrelated thoughts, or not to chase them away when noticed, or, while reciting the Office, to busy oneself with an external action which requires particular concentration, such as writing, reading, speaking, conversing with someone. By entertaining these voluntary distractions, one would not at all satisfy the precept of the Office. In fact, one would sin mortally if this voluntary distraction lasted for a notable period of time.

The Office must also be recited with *devotion of the heart*, a devotion, according to St. Thomas, consisting in doing promptly whatever involves worship of God (see ST II-II, q. 82, a. 1). That is why

having devotion while reciting the Office is to say it with faultless timeliness, an ardent desire, and great ardor for praising, blessing, honoring, and adoring God. Moreover, it involves exciting in the heart holy feelings of love, contrition, confidence, fear, or petition, in keeping with the meaning of the psalms and the hymns we are reciting, or according to the nature of the graces and virtues which we are lacking. One sign that we have devotion in reciting the Office is the speed with which we drop all external activities as soon as we hear the first signal calling to it, and the satisfaction we find in singing the praise of God with our brothers. By contrast, it is a sign of a lack of devotion when we delay as long as we can going to choir for the Office, when we look for false pretexts to absent ourselves, and when we become bored in celebrating the praises of the Omnipotent, as if we found them too protracted.

Religious will find their delight in attending choir. Like the angels and the saints in Paradise, who, while singing the praise of God, are continuously in rapture, in ecstasy, in ineffable delight, religious ought to be in a kind of rapture during the Office by the liveliness of their faith, the fire of their love and the intensity of their devotion, because they have the happiness of praising the same Sovereign Majesty as the angels. This is the reason why our Father St. Dominic and his early disciples experienced happiness in attending choir at night as in the day. They found there a furnace of love in which they spent themselves with delight, and where their words like flames rose to the throne of the Eternal to express to Him their love and adoration. These were also the feelings of David when he said: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready: I will sing and rehearse a psalm. I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth" (see *Ps.* 57:7, and 33:2). Why should we not try to acquire similar feelings little by little?

In order to develop attentiveness and devotion while reciting the Office, one must have made appropriate preparation. The Holy Spirit recommends: "Before prayer prepare thy soul: and be not as a man that tempteth God" (*Sir.* 18:23).

*Remote preparation* consists in keeping oneself recollected during the day, walking in the presence of God, meditating regularly, frequently raising the heart and the mind to God, keeping perfect silence, practicing self-control of the senses and the passions. If one is intemperate all day, if one is lively and unbridled in his passions, and especially if before Office he talks about news or other curiosities, it is impossible for him to regain recollection as soon as he would like in order to pray and to gain the attentiveness and reverence necessary. With our unhappy nature, it is easy to pass quickly from fervor to dissipation, but not from dissipation to fervor. In the Old Law, God did

not want one to delay in lighting the sacred fire until one was ready to use it in the censer or to consume the sacrifices and the holocausts. He had ordered that it burn continuously on the altar, and that the priest, every morning, add some wood to renew it and keep it going. Likewise, it is not sufficient to light the sacred fire of divine love when we wish to offer the sacrifice of praise and the incense of prayer. That fire must always be burning in our heart, and be tended each day by our holy thoughts, pious affections, fervent meditations, and continuous recollection.

*Immediate preparation* which we ought to make before beginning the Office, embraces the following five acts: 1° An act of faith regarding the presence and the infinite grandeur of God, Who watches us and listens to us. 2° An act of contrition, to purify our soul of the sins which make it unworthy to speak to Him. 3° An act of offering the Office which we are about to recite, so that it glorify God, provide satisfaction for our sins and those of our neighbor, contribute to the relief of the souls in Purgatory, obtain the conversion of sinners, increase the perfection of the just, and obtain some other particular blessing, according to the intention requested of us. 4° An act of anticipated renunciation for the distractions which could occur during the Office, saying with St. Bernard: "Thoughts of the world, remain here until I return when I will have need of you, then I will take you up again. Alas! You will return to me only too soon!" 5° An act of union with Jesus, linking the prayers we are about to recite with the praises He offered to His Father, and begging Him to inspire us with what we should ask for and how to make the request. It is not necessary to perform each one of these acts. A simple and ardent lifting up of the heart to God can contain all of them to a high degree. Besides, they are all contained in the prayer: *Aperi Domine os meum*, "O Lord, open my lips."

While reciting the Office, everyone should be concerned with what he knows to be more apt to fix his attention and inflame his reverence. Natural inclinations and talents, like attractions and blessings, are very diverse; everyone should use effectively whatever Heaven has given him. Some have the facility for thinking about the divine perfections; others about certain words in the psalms or hymns. Still others are more inclined to reflect on God present in their heart, or to melt away in love and in gratitude before Him because of His grandeur and His blessings, natural as well as supernatural; or again, they offer Him all they have and all they are, and beg from Him the graces and virtues which they need. Finally, others are drawn to think of God without reasoning, in a simple manner, telling Him that they love Him and desire a particular grace, without saying anything particular or coherent, so as not to lose concentration by formulating thoughts, and to deduce from them some feelings and to specify some requests. Regard-



ing these different ways, we can say with the last verse of the psalms, which is neither the least consoling nor the least profound: "Let every spirit praise the Lord!" *Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum* (Ps. 150:6).

The remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ offers very special help and is of almost infallible efficacy in providing the attentiveness and the reverence desirable during the Office. It fixes the imagination by representing for it something sensible. Moreover, it softens the heart by arousing holy affections. At each of the seven canonical hours, one can picture one of the mysteries of the Passion of Jesus Christ which took place at about that time, and ask God, through His Son and by the power of this mystery, to be freed from some vice, as for example, from the seven capital sins, which are the source of innumerable others. One can implore Him, at the same time, for the grace to acquire the virtues which are their opposite.

The seven reflections on the passion of Jesus Christ, which we can make while reciting the seven hours of the Office, are contained in the following verses which are given by the gloss on Canon Law, under the chapter *Presbyter*:

*Hæc sunt Septenis propter quæ psallimus horis:*  
 Matutina ligat christum qui crimina solvit:  
 Prima replet sputis, causam dat Tertia mortis:  
 Sexta cruci nectit, latus ejus Nona bipertit:  
 Vespera deponit tumulo, Completa reponit.

*These are the reasons why we sing the Sevenfold hours:*  
 Matins: Christ is bound who released criminals;  
 Prime: covered in spittle, Terce sentenced to death;  
 Sext: bound to the cross, None his side pierced;  
 Vespers: laid in a tomb, Compline remains in the tomb.

Following this method, during Matins, we could think of Christ, who, at this very hour, after having recited His prayer in the Garden of Olives, was bound by the Jews, betrayed by Judas, abandoned by His disciples, and delivered to His enemies. We should ask to be freed from pride, which is a disordered love of our excellence and of the esteem of men. We should aspire to humility, which helps us to know and to appreciate our abasement. We could also ask for obedience, which leads us to forego our own will in order to submit ourselves to our neighbor for love of God.

At Prime, we consider Jesus Christ led to the house of Pilate, covered with spit, falsely accused, and cruelly flogged. We ask to be delivered from the sin of greed, which is a misplaced desire for temporal goods and a disordered attachment to those we have. Quite the

contrary, we should seek evangelical poverty, which leads us to renounce completely the goods of earth for love of God, or unties our heart from those we now possess.

At Terce, we consider that the Savior, after Barabbas had been preferred over Him, was condemned to death, covered with a purple cloak, crowned with thorns, and weighed down with His cross. Or else, we should ask to be delivered from the sin of impurity, which is a disordered attraction for sins of the senses, and we will promise to preserve with jealous care our religious chastity.

At Sext, we should consider Jesus Christ nailed to the cross, placed between two thieves, made to drink gall and vinegar, and cursed by the Jews. We should ask to be delivered from envy, which is displeasure at the goods of our neighbor and of his good fortune, insofar as these decrease our own glory. Furthermore, we should desire charity, which makes us love God above all things, and leads us to rejoice in all the advantages of our neighbor, as if our own, whether they are endowments of nature or of good fortune, or those of grace.

At None, we could recollect that Jesus Christ placed His soul into the hands of His Father and died on the cross. His side was opened by a lance, while the earth shook and the sun was covered in darkness. We should ask to be delivered from the vice of gluttony, which is a disordered attraction for food and drink, and we should excite fervor for the practice of temperance, which helps us to keep an appropriate balance in their use.

At Vespers, we should consider that, Jesus having died, His body was brought down from the cross while His soul went to Limbo to free the souls of the holy patriarchs. It would be good to ask Him for the strength to vanquish hate, which is a disordered desire for vengeance, accompanied by emotions of the heart. We should seek patience, which helps us to bear our misfortunes with peace and with joy, in view of a future reward. Or, in addition, meekness, which helps us endure injuries and contradictions with much inner peace, without animosity or fits of passion.

At Compline, we should consider how the body of Jesus, having been embalmed and wrapped in a shroud, was buried in a new tomb. The grace to be requested is to be delivered from laziness, which is boredom and distaste for spiritual exercises, because of the difficulty found therein. We should arouse ardent fervor, which makes us prompt and loving in the service of God, and also perseverance, which strengthens us in good behavior in spite of the difficulties attached to the monotony and the duration of the efforts required for it.

One cannot maintain attentiveness and reverence without taking great care to keep one's eyes lowered. A glance cast out of levity or curiosity is able to remove immediately from the soul these disposi-

tions which are always difficult to maintain. The object which we see first paints itself in the imagination. The mind, which has such a strong bond with the imagination, abandons the good thought it had been entertaining to gaze upon the sensible object which strikes it, and in its wake often drags in the will for a long time. From this arise many distractions — voluntary in their cause, and perhaps in their consequences — because we have neglected to reject them. This is why, during the Office, the eyes must be so lowered that we gaze either on the floor or the altar, or the book in which we follow the prayers, or at the ceremonies which lead to God; never the objects on one side or the other, nor the persons who enter or leave the choir, nor anything else. An exception is made for the case when one is charged with regulating the choir, because then concern for the general interest excuses the distractions to which he exposes himself, as long as he renounces them and frequently purifies his intention.

When one has distractions, evil thoughts, or temptations while reciting the Office, he should not allow himself to be troubled or to grieve interiorly. Instead of calming the liveliness of the imagination, which is often their sole cause, these interior disturbances would only increase it. In any case, one must also avoid all tensing of the face, all contortions of the body, all speaking in a low voice. In no way are these means alone able to stop the wandering of the imagination, to control the levity of spirit, and to make the devil flee. It is enough, when we become aware of distractions, to place ourselves back in the presence of God, whom we have the honor of addressing, to abase ourselves before His infinite majesty, to ask His pardon for our troubles, and to bring us back gently to attention. It is good to accustom ourselves to renew [our recollection] at the beginning of each psalm, or at each *Gloria Patri*, or at each inclination we make, in our desire that the Most Holy Trinity be glorified, blessed, and adored by us and by the whole world.

Scrupulous persons must create for themselves an absolute law never to repeat the Office because of the distractions and temptations which they experienced, however long and violent they might have been. On imposing the obligation of the Office, God did not intend to condemn us to all these repetitions and painful efforts. Besides, even if we would submit to this out of principle of conscience, it would be of no use, because our reciting would be worse the second time around. Instead of calming itself, the already troubled imagination would become more irritated, and might end up being distorted forever. The discomfort which those religious feel because of their distractions, because they were not more attentive and were not freed from thoughts, proves that they were not voluntary. The desire they have to become more attentive and to be free of the thoughts which trouble

them is evident proof that they have at least virtual attentiveness, quite sufficient to satisfy the law. This is why we should not believe them, even if they were sure that they were distracted voluntarily, and that they had no attention at all. The best thing for them, after they have humbled themselves in the presence of God because of their distractions, is not to examine whether they were voluntary but to scorn them, to resist them through patience rather than through vain efforts, and not to repeat anything whatsoever without permission from the Father Master. This humble submission will keep them from a great loss of time and protracted troubles of the spirit.

When we have the happiness of reciting the Office in choir, we must do everything possible to sing it harmoniously, with propriety and seriousness worthy of the Lord. When the Office is sung in this manner, God is indeed honored by it, the angels rejoice, men are uplifted and inflamed with reverence. St. Augustine reported that in assisting at ecclesiastical ceremonies and in hearing them sung, he was moved to tears. By contrast, there is nothing that dishonors God more, makes the angels more sorrowful, and men more scandalized than Offices that are sung without fervor, with distraction and haste. The melody and the charm of plain chant do not come from humming or trilling, from bursts of voice, or from prolongations, nor from looking for studied and secular effects. The distinctive beauty and superiority of chant consists in reverence, simplicity, rhythm, and harmony, such that all who chant psalms in choir are so united and of one mind that they seem to become only one animated voice under the gentle movement of the Holy Spirit.

God revealed one day that, among the great number of clerics who had chanted solemn praise of God in a collegiate church, only one voice had pleased Him — that of a sorry layperson whose voice was far from pleasant, but who joined his prayer as well as he could to that of the clerics while he was perfectly uniting his heart to the God of all holiness. The Lord is very unlike Baal, whose priests believed they could touch him more effectively by loud cries and yells, so that he could hear them better from far away or be awakened more easily if he were asleep, as the prophet Elias reproached them.

Any novelty in chant must be banished from choir, as it is ordained by these words of St. Augustine: “See to it that you do not sing anything else than what has been indicated to you” (*Regula*, c. 2, 4). The venerable antiquity, the majestic solemnity, and the noble simplicity of our plain chant render it more respectable and more appropriate to produce reverence than any new chants, devised more to tickle the ear than to touch the heart.

The beauty of psalmody consists in the pauses made in the middle of the verse. They help to inspire fervor. While we make them,

the mind and the heart rise up to God more easily and the body is refreshed by taking a breath. Certain General Chapters have recommended that we make short pauses when reciting the Office in private; all the more reason for us to do the same in reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin in common.

In choir, one should chant and sing in a moderate tone of voice, in order that, each one doing his best, all the voices, the softest as well as the loudest, can easily join together. The solemnity of the Office does not come from shouting in full voice, but by making more determined pauses, always singing at a moderate and harmonious volume which could be raised somewhat on great feasts.

Those who, in choir, recite their Office very softly by themselves, either by nonchalance or by lukewarmness, or recite an hour which they have not yet completed, are guilty, according to St. Antoninus, of a kind of petty theft, because they use their voice against the will of the superiors, whose intention is that they sing along with the others, all in chorus. Besides, this Office, recited softly and privately, in no way pleases God, since it is completed materially only and without benefit — the noise and movement of the choir constituting a permanent source of distractions. Moreover, we scandalize our brothers who hear the murmur of our voice and notice that we complete the common ceremonies badly. This recitation, then, is far from compensated by the few minutes saved for the harm done to ourselves as well as to others. In vain would we pretend that we do not have a good enough voice to offer some help. God asks each one to praise according to his ability and his strength. Besides, the man of good will can do more than he thinks, especially for the chanting of psalms, hymns, and common antiphons.

The choral Office has such dignity that, should one arrive after it has begun — for example, with one psalm already completed — the Church decrees that one immediately join the choir, and, because of its nobility and its superiority, begin at the point at hand instead of trying to recite the beginning of the Office quietly, later to join the assembly. It is only after the Office that one returns to what had been omitted at the beginning, without repeating what was said with the choir. Similarly, when the bell calls to Sext, to None, or to any other hour, and we have not recited Prime or Terce, even if it was our fault for being tardy, then, while asking pardon of God for this negligence, we should conform to the choir and recite Prime and Terce privately.

The dignity of psalmody requires us to be very attentive to the ceremonies and the bows, to stay in place, facing the brother opposite us, and to prevent confusion as much as possible. It is reported in the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis that a religious was severely punished in Purgatory because in his life he had not been exact in

making the inclinations as indicated. St. Vincent Ferrer hoped that before going to choir, everyone would have privately reviewed it to prevent, as much as human frailty allows, the faults which he might commit. Those charged with directing the Office and with exercising some duty who must especially not miss preparing it very carefully, over and above the common preparation, no matter how sure they believe their memory and their knowledge of rubrics to be, so as to avoid the danger of faults from inattentiveness, surprise, or ignorance, or to correct properly and deftly those which could occur.

On reading lessons or anything else, one should be careful to pronounce it in a distinct and intelligible voice, calmly, without haste, stopping at periods and at those places when the meaning of the phrase is complete, to catch one's breath and to allow others to hear more effectively what is read. Listeners must avoid making the slightest noise. As for those who read with apathy in order to spare their voice, or hurry in such a way that they are swallowing parts of words, they are guilty before God for what others do not hear, and for subsequent errors, whether for the obligation of the Office or for the goal of that obligation, which is the growth of reverence in their souls.

Whenever some confusion arises in choir, if it can be remedied without noise by some sign or a whispered word, this ought to be done. But if many get involved and cause a commotion, one should say nothing lest the trouble be increased. A material fault is a lesser evil than a dispute full of obstinacy and bitterness. If a brother happens to commit an error, it is not up to individuals to correct him but to the cantors who have that authority. When someone mispronounces a word or misplaces an accent, it would be an abuse, an act of impatience, and an agitation worthy of blame for a simple religious to correct the blunderers out loud. To laugh when someone makes an error or an omission or when one does this himself would be disrespectful to God.

When such a regrettable disruption arises, one needs to reenter into one's soul, to refocus it onto the presence of God, asking Him to pardon those errors, thinking that perhaps he himself is the cause, or at least that he has made even more grievous errors in the past. In this manner, instead of stirring emotions of impatience and of indignation against the one who stumbled, one should profit from the opportunity by remaining deeply peaceful, embarrassed for himself, and filled with compassion for others. When, during the Office, the poor or the children are noisy, one should not attempt to quiet them with irritated outbursts, but rather with much meekness and self-control, while thinking interiorly that "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (*Mt 5:3*), that the cries of beggars seeking alms provide us with a lesson in fervor and perseverance in

prayer; that, if we do not become as children with simplicity and innocence of behavior, we will never enter the kingdom of Heaven; and that the cries of these lowly creatures, uttered because of physical suffering, teach us how we should tremble and cry before God for our spiritual weaknesses.

After having completed the holy Office, let us thank the Lord for the honor He granted us sustaining us in His divine presence. Let us ask pardon of Him for all the faults we committed by our distraction and our negligence. Even after we have left choir, we should remain recollected for some time, remembering something that touched us, whether in the psalms, in the lessons of Scripture, the homilies of the holy Fathers, the exposition of the mystery and the life of the saint whose feast we just celebrated. What a loss to have consecrated so many hours to public prayer every day, to have recited so many psalms, hymns, and songs, to have read so many lessons of Sacred Scripture and of the lives of the saints with no other result than to complete in a mediocre and doubtful way our grave obligation, and to have received almost no benefit from them to enlighten the mind and touch the heart, when those benefits are right at hand and need only our good will to find life in them!

## ARTICLE IV

### On Confession

#### § I - *Importance of confession and its conditions*

Confession is one of the most essential actions of Christianity. It is by confession that sins are erased and that the penalty for them is forgiven, either fully or in part. It is by confession that we are reconciled with God, that we appease His anger, that we satisfy His justice. It is by confession that the gates of Hell are closed, and that the gates of Heaven are opened. By confession, the soul is cleansed of its sins, regains its original beauty, and recovers sanctifying grace as well as the merits of all its righteous actions, which had been held in abeyance as if destroyed by mortal sin. Finally, by confession we receive a precious increase of grace, if we have the happiness of having preserved it, having committed no mortal sin.

The novices ought to go to confession quite often, as our Constitutions ordain, and as the early religious followed. They should strive greatly to fulfill this duty. Indeed, the benefits able to be produced by a good confession are marvelous. But it can happen that, after engaging in frequent confession for many years, one is almost as irreverent, undisciplined, proud, lazy, impatient, unmanageable, immoderate, and a transgressor of his Constitutions, as when he began as a religious. Perhaps even, rather than growing in perfection, one has fallen back because he goes to confession out of habit and human respect, and without the required dispositions.

Five conditions must come together for the reception of the sacrament of Penance to produce all its benefits: examination, contrition, firm purpose, declaration of sins, and fulfillment of the penance.

I. The *examination of conscience* is a strict inquiry into the sins committed since the last confession. To do this well, one must ask for the grace of God by some act like this: *My God, I ask you, through the merits of Jesus Christ and by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, of my holy guardian angel, and of my patron saints, for the light I need to remember all my sins, and to understand fully their evil nature.* Then, we examine our consciences in detail for the sins committed by thought, desire, word, action, omission, and cooperation. When we make a confession covering a considerable amount of time, we can make the examination by checking the commandments of God and of the Church, the seven cap-



ital sins, the usage of the five senses — which is to say, hearing, taste, sight, smell, and touch — and the particular obligations of our state. But if it has not been long since our last confession, it is sufficient to examine with fewer undue efforts what we have committed against God, against one's neighbor, and against oneself.

On examining oneself, one must also try to discover the number and circumstances of sin. There are, in fact, circumstances which change their species, others which notably increase their malice and can modify the treatment which a soul needs to regain its health. Examination requires a reasonable amount of time, more or less long in proportion to the interval since our last confession. Since the novices go to confession frequently, it is enough to allow a quarter-hour for their examination of conscience. It is a sign of scrupulosity and of laziness to take too much time. The scrupulous waste precious hours which they would do better to apply to spiritual reading, study, or works of mercy.

II. *Contrition* is a sincere remorse for sins committed, with a firm resolution to avoid sin in the future. Every well-instructed Christian knows that there are two kinds of contrition. One is called *perfect*, because it derives from the motive of perfect love of God; moreover, it removes sins even before the reception of the sacrament. The other is called *imperfect*, or attrition, and is ordinarily derived from a consideration of the hideousness of sin, or by fear of the pains of Hell. Although imperfect, it remains useful to prepare the soul to be justified in the sacrament of Penance. In order to make a good confession, it is absolutely necessary to have at least imperfect contrition, because sin cannot be forgiven unless we detest it with genuine and sincere remorse; moreover, for the sacrament to be valid, one must have serious matter. Now the matter of this sacrament are the sins we confess along with the remorse which accompanies them. Nonetheless, it is good to move oneself to perfect contrition, by considering the most pressing reasons which would move us to detest our offenses on account of a pure love of God. This is not as difficult to do as we usually imagine, and it is the most sure course of action for the remission of sins, as well as the most useful for sanctification.

One should beware of spending a long time in recalling sins but, instead, work principally at eliciting remorse, since without it one would not receive pardon from the absolution. This is why it is also necessary for the act of contrition to precede absolution, so that the form of the sacrament of Penance be applied to matter that is authorized and well completed. But for contrition to be genuine, it is not sufficient to protest orally that one is troubled at having offended God. Contrition needs to be within, that is to say, to reach the will, which is the root and the source from which arises all betrayal of trust. It must

also be universal, namely, covering in general all the mortal sins which one committed; supernatural, so as to prepare the soul to receive grace, which is a gift superior to nature. To that end, it must come from God by an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and return to God, having as its motive something divine, taken from revealed truth, such as having offended God, who is perfectly good, or having risked losing eternity. Contrition must also be sovereign, namely, above all other sorrows, in the sense that sin must displease us more than any other temporal evil we may have encountered, since it is, in effect, a greater evil than all others — not to say, the only evil.

It is not necessary, however, for contrition to cause us the most sensible and lively sorrow. It is an act of the will, and the will is a spiritual power raised above the senses. We should not be astonished, then, that the senses do not experience the regret and the pain that reside in the will. Besides, the close union which exists between the soul and the body is such that it feels more sharply the impressions of bodily objects than of spiritual realities. This remark has to be made to reassure those who have a conscience that is too timorous, and the scrupulous, who always fear having made a bad confession for lack of sufficient contrition. It is sufficient that contrition, in practice, leads them to detest and to flee from sin more than any other temporal evil. To rouse this degree of contrition, it is not even necessary to consider this or that temporal evil in particular, as St. Thomas noted. Instead of confirming the presence of contrition in us, this comparison could, on the contrary, make us lose it. Indeed, the consideration of specific evils and the imaginary supposition of certain sacrifices which God is not presently calling for — and that perhaps He never will require — could produce the actual will to prefer sin rather than to accept this sacrifice which has captured the mind.

To achieve genuine contrition, we must ask it of God with great humility and confidence, and kindle it ourselves with the help of grace. In order to do this well, it is good to consider: 1° The principal causes which could produce in us the love of God, such as His supreme goodness, His overflowing love for us, His priceless blessings, and the cruel passion which Jesus Christ endured for our salvation. 2° The terrible injuries which sin does to God, by offending and dishonoring Him for an insignificant pleasure, a miserable creature, a minor interest, vain human respect, an evil thought, a criminal desire, etc. 3° One should consider what he loses by sin, namely: God, His grace, His love, and the infused virtues which accompany it; the right to the kingdom of Heaven, the consolations of the Holy Spirit. In place of all that, one becomes a slave to the devil and deserves Hell for all eternity. What a misfortune!

III. The *firm purpose of amendment* is a strong resolution not to fall back into sin and to flee the occasions of sin. To make a good confession, this resolution is as necessary as regret for having committed evil in the past; indeed, the reasons which make sin worthy of being detested are unalterable and everlasting. Just as they move us to hate and atone for sins committed, they should also make us detest them and flee from them in the future. This firm purpose should be not only on our lips but also in the interior of our soul. Genuine conversion has to take place where true disorder and its first source are found; indeed, the heart is the guilty agent. The firm purpose must also be universal, extending to all sins, at least the mortal ones, because each one, individually and alone, offends God and leads to death of the soul. The purpose has to be steadfast and constituted everlastingly, as we resolve to lose all kinds of goods and to die rather than to offend the Lord. Yet it is not appropriate to single out the loss of a certain good, nor the prospect of a certain kind of death, as we have already noted above concerning repentance.

In order to persevere in a firm purpose, one will avoid relying on his own strength. He will count only on the grace of God, who cannot refuse His grace if our prayer is full of confidence in His goodness and of mistrust in ourselves. For the firm purpose to be unfeigned and efficacious, it must also, as a just consequence, contain the decision to avoid proximate occasions of sin. We consent, in fact, to fall again into sin if we do not choose to avoid all that leads to it and place ourselves in danger of falling. Finally, it must embrace a firm resolution to take the steps necessary to avoid sins, for the sincere desire to reach a goal encompasses the will to take the appropriate means to succeed.

IV. *Confession* is the admission of our faults to an approved priest, in view of obtaining absolution and forgiveness. For the confession to be valid, the declaration of sins must be: 1° Simple, that is, expressed in terms that are clear, sincere, and brief. One should avoid, then, including useless matters, such as worries, unmasking accomplices to those sins or revealing the sins of others, and soliciting untimely advice. If one is looking for advice or consolation, it is better to wait until after confession, or to delay for a while, if the need is not pressing or if other persons are waiting in line, especially on the eve of feast days. 2° Confession must be humble. For that, one must admit his sins, not as a simple list, but with feelings of self-abasement and of shame for having offended a God so great and so benevolent. Accordingly, one should avoid minimizing them, excusing them, or blaming them on temptation, the malice of the devil, the bad influence of the neighbor, or on some other similar cause which would, in fact, be a vain excuse of pride. Quite the contrary, to humiliate and to shame oneself, one must attribute his falls to his lack of good will and to his

own malice, and he must present as much as possible, without misrepresentation, the aggravating circumstances which arise from the time, the place, helpful inspirations from Heaven, and the obstinacy with which he resisted. The humility in this accusation will chiefly bring about the shame of having offended one's God, Benefactor, King, Father, and Spouse of the soul. With how much shame and trembling would a subject guilty of high treason present himself before his sovereign, to ask pardon of him! It was with this kind of emotion that the penitents of the early centuries of Christianity remained for a while at the door of the church, clothed in sackcloth, covered with ashes, head shaved, countenance pallid, eyes lowered and in tears, asking pardon of God, of the priest, and of the faithful. 3<sup>o</sup> Confession must be complete, namely, we must declare the number of mortal sins, insofar as they are known; when we do not know the exact number, we should give an approximation. If one has wallowed in the world though a bad habit, he needs to say about how many times he has fallen by day, week, month, or year.

The most important advice we can give here, for everyone and for their whole lifetime, is that, however perfect and saintly we be, if perchance we have the misfortune of falling into a very serious fault, for nothing in the world should we hide it in confession. We read in the lives of the Fathers of the desert that some hermits, almost wonder-workers, had the misfortune of committing horrible sins. What happened then can still happen today, either for having exposed oneself to proximate occasions, or for having experienced some secret act of pride or of effrontery. The devil seeks to inspire a false shame to prevent the confession of such faults, but we should take care not to listen to him; otherwise we would fall into a horrible sacrilege. It is fitting that we experience shame for having committed sin in the presence of God, but there should be no shame in revealing this evil and expressing our regret before him whose mission it is to forgive us. Besides, if we did experience some momentary shame in confessing our sins, this is part of the penance we need to make for them. Penance delivers us from the dreadful embarrassment we would have on judgment day for having wanted to avoid that of a moment in the sacred tribunal. It exempts us from the terrible remorse which eats away day and night at those who make sacrilegious confessions. Why worry about being looked down on or corrected when addressing ourselves to the confessors whom we have chosen as the most careful, the most virtuous, and the most zealous for our welfare? Quite the contrary, the more the minister of the sacrament is virtuous and saintly, the more sympathetic he is to find us desiring to lift ourselves up by a humble avowal and sincere repentance. As the messenger of God, Who died to wipe away our sins, the priest will enter into the charity and tender-

ness of Him Whom he represents; as the angel of the Lord, he will rejoice at our return to innocence; as the minister of the Church, he will keep inviolable the secret she imposes on him. Being a weak human like ourselves, and seeing himself as our spiritual father, he will not be surprised by either our weakness or our sins. On the contrary, he will be comforted by the sincere and humble confession being made. The more we accuse ourselves with humility, all the more will he consider this conversion precious before God.

The accusation of venial faults, while not absolutely necessary, is very useful in order to obtain more efficacious grace to erase them, to tear out their roots, to heal the wounds they made, and to offer satisfaction for the penalties they deserve. Nonetheless, we must kindle true sorrow for having committed them and a firm purpose to avoid them from now on, so that they be remitted by absolution. If in confession we mentioned only venial sins and did not have genuine contrition, confession would be useless, for lack of sufficient matter. This is why the advice is given to those who confess frequently and who ordinarily have only such sins that, after the ordinary sins, they add from their past life some greater sin for which they have more regret.

In order to elicit sorrow for venial sins, we can consider: 1° Venial sin injures God by dishonoring His sovereign Majesty, by making little of His sovereign authority, and by acutely wounding His love. 2° It causes great harm to man by stopping his advancement in perfection, by impeding the increase of his merits, by delaying his entrance into beatitude, and by condemning him to the pains of Purgatory. 3° It leads to mortal sin by reason of the obstacles which it places before grace, by its wounds which hurt the soul, and by the inclination to evil which it increases in an imperceptible but offensive manner.

What greatly embarrasses persons with a fearful conscience is to confess sins of thought, especially against the beautiful virtue [i.e., chastity]. They fear having offended God mortally, and, to explain themselves better, they sometimes would like to express some useless details which could perhaps be dangerous. Here is what one should follow in this matter: 1° When one of those thoughts arises, if one resists it as soon as he becomes aware of it, there is no sin, but rather reward. The longer the thought torments us, the more merit increases because of the continued resistance. 2° If one is negligent or hesitates in rejecting that evil thought, or entertains it however briefly, in spite of his awareness, he sins venially, more or less according to the length of the pause. In confessing, one should say: "I accuse myself that, in having an evil thought, I did not immediately reject it, but entertained it briefly." Or: "I accuse myself of negligence for the delay in dismissing it." If one had given complete acquiescence, he should accuse him-

self in all honesty, so as to allow for an evaluation of the seriousness and the nature of the sin.

One ought not forget that there is a great difference between *feeling* pleasure and *consenting* to pleasure. It is not entirely under our control for us sometimes to experience sensory impressions, especially when the thought is fiery, the imagination kindled, and the temptation violent. For all that, it depends on our will not to hold on to this pleasure, to disavow it, and to reject it as much as possible, as soon as we become aware of it. If, by inattention, we provided the occasion for these temptations, even though we rejected them shortly thereafter, a venial sin has been committed, because we ourselves have established the cause. It is better to allow the confessor to judge the seriousness of the fault and the degree of consent. With good reason, we presume that there is, at most, only a venial sin when the person is living a regular life, has a delicate conscience, and is in the habit of rejecting that kind of thought as soon as he realizes what it is. What we have said holds also for temptations to vengeance, anger, envy, disobedience — with this difference that, in these latter cases, for there to be a mortal sin, over and above full voluntary consent, the matter must be very grave, whereas in what is contrary to the lovely virtue [i.e., chastity] there is no light matter; everything is important.

To profit well from the sacrament of Penance, the pious and learned Louis of Granada suggested that first, after having indicated the date of the previous confession, one should accuse himself of four failures so common that few persons can avoid them. These are: 1° Negligence in preparing for confession and in making the examination of conscience. 2° Little care taken to kindle sorrow and a firm purpose. 3° Having fulfilled the last penance with many distractions, and having received communion without the attentiveness and reverence required. 4° For not maintaining, after holy communion, the recollection befitting the presence of Jesus Christ. After having confessed these faults, usual among those persons who approach the sacred tribunal frequently, one will accuse himself of other sins committed. It is an even shorter method to recall to memory the thoughts, words, and actions by which one may have offended God, and to accuse himself of them in the same order used in the examination.

After one has completed the declaration of sins, it is good to add: "I accuse myself of all these sins, of any others that I do not know, of all those of my past life, in particular. . . . I ask God's pardon for them with all my heart, and of you, Father, absolution and penance." Then, with no further preoccupation about faults confessed or those perhaps forgotten, one should listen with much submission and abasement to the counsels and corrections of the confessor. Should he ask a question, one would answer with great frankness, for he takes

the place of Jesus Christ, and one would accept wholeheartedly the penance imposed. If one fears not being able to accomplish it, one should humbly call this to his attention. When the confessor is about to give absolution, one will make a new act of contrition with all the powers of his soul, because grace enters at the moment when the priest pronounces the sacramental formula; this grace is more or less abundant, depending on the degree of repentance. After confession, we should hurry to thank God with all our heart for His having pardoned us and prepare ourselves to fulfill exactly what the confessor commanded or suggested.

V. The penance or satisfaction which the priest enjoins is part of the sacrament of reconciliation, just as the arm belongs to the integrity of the human body. Even though the offense against God or the guilt of sin is remitted by absolution, there remains nonetheless the temporal punishment to be undergone in this world or in the next, to satisfy divine justice in relation to the dissolute pleasure one has taken in sinning; that is why one receives a penance. This penance is also a curb against sin for the future, a remedy against bad habits, a trace of resemblance to Jesus Christ, a pledge of eternal life. Finally, it delivers us from punishment we would have had to suffer in Purgatory, should it equal the number and enormity of our sins. This is why the penance should be fulfilled completely within the time allotted. Since penances imposed rarely suffice for the complete forgiveness of our sins, it is appropriate to ask for others or to add some ourselves, such as offering to God, in a spirit of repentance, our usual disciplines, fasts, vigils, study, and regular exercises.

The general confession, in which one accuses himself of all the sins of his life or of those committed within a significant time period, is absolutely necessary when preceding confessions were null and void. Even outside of this situation, it is useful, once in a lifetime, to make a general confession, whether to remedy all the sins and acts of negligence we may have committed during individual confessions and to establish a great calm in the conscience, or whether to lament and atone more successfully for sins of one's past life, to start a new life with renewed fervor, and to prepare for death. The novices make a general confession before taking the habit or making profession so as to consecrate themselves to God with a greater peace and a purer heart, or when they experience a strong inspiration to serve Our Lord with more fidelity. When one has made a sincere general confession, it is not appropriate to begin others. The scrupulous, especially, should not undertake one except for an absolutely indispensable need, and following the orders of a wise director. Otherwise, such a confession would be more harmful than helpful. Instead of obtaining peace of

conscience, they would find an increase of shame and a cause for carelessness on the road to perfection.

## § II - *Suggested formulary for the examination of conscience*

This formulary indicates the faults into which religious ordinarily fall, since the weaknesses of human nature in religion are, alas, the same almost always and everywhere. But it is impossible for us to have specified all the many infractions in which the spirit of evil seeks to drag us. Each individual will supply for this defect by examining his conscience in the light of faith. On the other hand, it could happen that, on repeatedly reviewing the religious life in its diverse aspects under this formulary, one could notice many times, under different designations, the same sin. This is not an inconvenience to regret. It is better to notice the same fault twice rather than to expose oneself to not recognizing it at all, and, consequently, to be unable to correct it.

It is useful to consider first some of the faults one has committed:

### 1 - *In Thought*

1° Whether one has had thoughts against the Faith or against God, thoughts of contempt for ceremonies of the Church and other holy matters; defiance against God, and despair in obtaining His mercy, effrontery concerning His fatherly goodness.

2° Whether one has entertained voluntary thoughts concerning the respect due to religious practices; thoughts of sadness concerning the state which he has embraced; low spirits and discouragement in the works of penance.

3° Whether one has had thoughts of impurity, of pride, of self-esteem and self-satisfaction; whether one has formed desires to be honored, praised, raised in position; whether one hoped to avoid humiliation, corrections, shame for anything at all.

4° Whether one has entertained useless, vain, and curious thoughts, wasting time on them; whether one has given himself over to preoccupations concerning relatives, the world, riches, pleasures, food, doing that even during meditation, Mass, the Office, and other prayers.

5° Whether one has had thoughts of disobedience, feelings of contempt for others or of unfavorable judgments about their faults; thoughts of suspicion and rash judgment, even regarding superiors; thoughts of critique, of sorrow, of complaint and grumbling concerning their manner of governing.



6° Whether one has had thoughts of vengeance, of envy, of aversion toward neighbor; of jealousy that some individual is liked or esteemed more than himself; of disappointment at the praises accorded to others; of hurt at the good that has happened to them; of secret joy at their misfortune, and of resentment that things have not been as successful as one had hoped.

N. B. – One should examine whether he has immediately rejected such thoughts; whether he was negligent in resisting them; or whether he has willingly dwelled on them with pleasure, and for how long.

2 – *In Word*

1° Whether one has uttered derisive words about religious matters; contempt for the sacred liturgy and for persons consecrated to the Lord; joking and humor concerning God, the saints, or the Scriptures.

2° Whether one has praised and glorified himself for bodily or spiritual qualities; whether, to attract esteem, one has boasted about himself and his parents, or of what he did in the world.

3° Whether one has lied, either to amuse, to render a service, or to harm; whether one has used ambiguous questions or answers to disguise the truth; whether one has done this even toward superiors.

4° Whether one has spoken ill of one's neighbor by calling attention to his faults, by divulging his faults, by exaggerating them, by wrongly interpreting his good actions, or by denying them and diminishing their value.

5° Whether one has grumbled against his brothers, and especially against his superiors, by criticizing their behavior, by blaming their manner of acting, and by complaining unjustly. (A complaint is unjust when one does not heed the appropriate time and place; when one complains to a person who is unable to remedy the situation; when bringing a complaint, even to the superior who can correct it, one does not maintain the self-control appropriate for a religious.)

6° Whether one has reported to an individual the disagreeable information others have said against him; by relating the faults of the neighbor to others than the superior, or even to the superior in a spirit of dislike, not one of charity.

7° Whether one has sinned through envy or jealousy, by holding peevish and malicious conversations against the reputation of a neighbor.

8° Whether one has fallen into flattery, by falsely or excessively praising the well-being of a person, by approving the harm he is working or has wrought, in view of pleasing him and worming one's

way into his mind, especially in hopes of winning the goodwill of superiors whose weak side one thinks one recognizes.

9° Whether one has uttered words of contempt against his neighbor, by speaking to him in a haughty tone of voice, or by earthy, sharp and bitter words; by reproaching him about a certain fault and by mocking his imperfections; by contentious discussion, accompanied by shouts and invectives scandalous to hearers; whether one has neglected to speak to superiors with all the respect and obedience owed to them.

10° Whether one has spoken words that were useless, peculiar, worldly, indiscreet, too liberal, and lacking in chastity; whether one has told unedifying stories about matters one learned from persons outside the convent.

One needs to determine whether these words were spoken in levity, in haste and inadvertence, or by deliberate choice, or deliberately with some malicious intention.

### 3 – *By Action and by Omission*

#### Against God

1° Whether one has neglected to animate his actions fittingly by offering them all to God, by making them in a spirit of love, to promote His glory and to satisfy His justice. Whether, on the other hand, he performed those actions lazily, and half-heartedly; by habit, smugness, human respect, hypocrisy, or to attract the esteem of men.

2° Whether one had distractions while reciting the rosary, while hearing Mass, while meditating, while reciting prayers; whether one had set the stage for this levity and impropriety; whether one deliberately entertained them, and for how long; whether one was negligent in rejecting these distractions.

3° Whether one was culpable in regard to the Office by delaying it for too long, by being half-hearted, by reciting it too quickly, by mispronouncing words, by unnecessary interruptions; whether one was negligent in reciting it privately; whether one omitted a certain section; whether one neglected other exercises of devotion, especially those which he had settled on as a kind of duty, by piety, or in gratitude.

4° Whether one made his confession and received communion half-heartedly, with little respect, without sufficient preparation, and whether one obtained almost no benefit from them or from other holy actions, in particular, the sacramentals such as holy water, blessings from superiors, etc.

5° Whether one has been impatient, or at least restless, troubled, sad, worn down and discouraged by trials, illness, other distress of body and of spirit, lacking submission and conformity to the will of God, who, by all these vexations, wishes to punish or test us, to bring about our salvation.

6° Whether one has failed to love the Lord more than anything else, with all his heart and all his soul; whether one has loved excessively the creatures and the vanities of the world, to the neglect of the Creator; whether one has neglected to act in faith and to resist promptly the temptations against the virtue of faith; whether one has kept strong hope and deep confidence in divine power and goodness in the midst of the labors and adversities of this life.

7° Whether one has been half-hearted and negligent in following good inspirations, and whether one resisted them out of fear of hurting himself and of having to endure a bit of work; whether one has neglected to walk in the presence of God, to think of Him, to be ready to act and to suffer for the love of God, and to thank Him for His graces.

8° Whether one has lacked respect and decorum in church, in choir, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and in other holy places, by looking around, laughing, speaking, and not keeping an appropriate posture; whether one has been lukewarm and lazy in coming to choir, and whether one left choir before having completed the entire Office.

#### 4 – *By Action and Omission*

##### Against oneself

1° Whether one was too attached to his own opinions and his personal knowledge; whether, by pride, one has preferred his own feelings to those of his superiors and to those of all others; whether one has given his opinion hastily and upheld it with obstinacy, agitation, and disdain for whoever did not share them.

2° Whether one has been too attached to his own will; whether one did not wish to submit it to that of his superiors nor to that of his brothers even in honest or indifferent matters; whether, when one was obliged to act contrary to his will, he let himself fall into interior distress, and whether he revealed this distress outwardly by complaints, by sullen behavior, by a despondent countenance; whether he showed self-love and smugness when what he was doing conformed to his desires, and when he received the approbation of others.

3° Whether, having had some agitations of pride, anger, envy, hate, jealousy, sadness, useless fear or frivolous delights, one neglected

to do what he could have done to prevent those unruly emotions, or to reject them as soon as they were noticed.

4° Whether one gave too much freedom to his imagination and his memory; whether he willingly allowed his imagination to produce useless and illusionary daydreams, which always entail a great loss of time and which are usually followed by harmful daydreams; whether he used his memory to recall worldly matters: pleasures, honors, riches, relatives, or injuries received from neighbors.

5° Whether one was curious about happenings in the world, looked for and listened to useless matters, sought information on current affairs, was eager for company, walks, and relationships with people of the world.

6° Whether one has given too much freedom to the senses. First of all, as to *sight*: whether one has stared at females in church or elsewhere; whether one has looked around out of curiosity or levity during actions of the community; whether, by lack of decorum, one has given bad example to brothers or scandalized secular persons.

7° As to *hearing*: whether one listened to words of back-biting, grumbling, unguarded conversations with no concern for consequences; whether he listened with pleasure to banter, clowning, jokes, and useless conversations; whether, concerning melodious airs and chants, even those of the Church, he sought pleasure of the senses rather than devotion and the means to lift up the heart to God; whether he was pleased to hear words in praise of himself.

8° As to *smell*: whether one has taken too much pleasure in pleasant odors, and whether one has the attention of others to them; whether he omitted to visit the poor, prisoners, or the sick, because of the repugnant odors that surround them and are the ordinary consequences of their miserable condition.

9° As to *taste*: whether one experienced sensuality in drink, food, sleep, and whether we sought in them our only satisfaction; whether we ate too quickly and with too much greed, without listening to the reading at table; whether we ate outside of meals without need but out of gluttony; whether we complained about the food and talked about it unnecessarily.

10° As to *touch*: whether one has indulged the body too much; whether he overslept and acted lazily at the time of rising; whether one omitted without reason the disciplines called for by regulations or by direction; whether one has not been restrained enough with oneself; whether we have been too familiar with others, on the pretext of friendship.

11° Whether one has wasted time in his cell or elsewhere by prolonging useless conversations, by useless and curious reading, by napping, or by forming illusory thoughts; whether one has neglected

to study as much as required; whether one studied out of curiosity, or vanity, or some other purely human motivation; whether, during the time of sleep, one stayed up without permission, on the pretext of studying longer.

5 – By *Action and Omission*

Against one's neighbor

1° Whether one did not try to love his neighbor out of love of God, to sympathize with his needs, to be touched by his calamities, to help him as much as one could.

2° Whether one had omitted to pray for the conversion of sinners, for the perfection of the just, for the solace of the souls in Purgatory, and for the needs of the Church in the midst of the heresies, wars, persecutions, and other woes which beset her.

3° Whether one has failed to advise his neighbor, in charity, of his faults when one was obliged to, or when one did not receive with humility the corrections and criticisms he offered.

4° Whether one mocked the interior or the obvious imperfections of his fellows; if one gave a negative interpretation to their actions; if one harbored some jealousy; if one provided them with an occasion to become angry; if one did not pardon them quickly and willingly when they had offended him.

5° Whether one had a dislike and a bitterness towards his brothers or others; whether one had revealed this on the outside of the convent by some actions, signs, or words; whether, in so doing, scandal was given.

6° Whether, when one had heard another being blamed, he neglected justifying the other in his heart and outwardly before others, as much as possible.

7° Whether one had a particular friendship and undue familiarity with one of his brothers, to the point of revealing to him temptations, sorrows, suspicions, and rash judgments, running the risk of scandalizing him and causing him similar troubles.

8° Whether one was dissipated and immoderate during recreation; whether one laughed in a shameless way; or, on the contrary, by his own fault became sad and bothersome to others; or whether he preferred to join with one of them, leaving the company without any consideration and scandalizing it by his behavior.

9° Whether, while talking to secular persons or his brothers, one offended them by some curiosity, levity, lack of restraint, or some behavior hardly consonant with monastic seriousness.

10° Whether one indiscretely revealed to outsiders what happens in religious life.

### 6 – *By Action and Omission*

#### Against the vows and points of the Rule

1° Whether one was negligent in fulfilling tasks of obedience; whether one completed with reluctance what superiors had ordered; whether one complied through good nature or by reason of human respect, with no intention of praising God; whether one acted without any permission.

2° Whether one lacked blind obedience, of heart and of mind, informing oneself here and there, examining and seeking other reasons to submit rather than obedience itself, that is to say, the divine will manifested through that of the superiors.

3° Whether, instead of loving his superiors as fathers, one harbored some secret dislike of them, however slight; whether one omitted to pray for them, to show the respect due to them, to speak with candor and sincerity to them; whether one allowed himself to question their actions and to grumble against their behavior.

4° Whether one impatiently received warnings and corrections from superiors, dreading their contempt and accusing them of severity, partiality or indiscretion; whether one was so strongly opposed to do and to undergo what they wished, that one made them follow his inclination rather than to seek after the interests of his soul.

5° Whether one aimed at a true spirit of poverty; whether one gave or loaned without permission; whether one received something from his brothers or secular persons, or kept some object in his cell without the superior's knowledge; whether, by fault, one brought about the loss of some belongings of the community.

6° Whether one had kept for his use superfluous or unusual objects; whether one had an undue attachment to necessary items like books, clothing, the cell, etc.; whether one tried too hastily to obtain them; whether one complained or became anxious when he was without them; whether one dwelt on fanciful plans, such as possessing great riches, building beautiful convents, making delightful voyages.

7° Whether one was ashamed of wearing used and patched habits; whether one took something intended for another; whether one always wished to have something that was of better quality.

8° Whether one had temptations, thoughts, imaginations, etc., against chastity; whether one opened the way for them by dangerous looks on persons, objects, etc., or by unguarded conversations; whether one was negligent in rejecting these temptations.

9° Whether by weakness or having given occasion, one felt movements hardly chaste; whether one was swift enough in rejecting them as soon as they were noticed.

10° Whether one lacked modesty in going to bed and during sleep; whether one easily shook hands, or let himself go about in some very unguarded manner; whether one allowed others to act this way toward him.

11° Whether one was careful or lackadaisical in observing the Constitutions, not recognizing therein the wise means that Providence has given us to arrive at perfection; whether one had ridiculed some provisions, or made fun of those who observed them scrupulously in the slightest details.

12° Whether, by negligence or passion, one broke some of the rules, such as silence or the fasts; whether one broke them by contempt or by a deep-seated habit, which leads more quickly than we realize to scorn and grave sin.

13° Whether one neglected to work towards perfection, as we are obliged by religious profession; whether one came to deplore his state; whether by weakness or laziness one neglected works of piety and failed to keep sound resolutions.

14° Whether one provided occasion for another to break the Rule, the Constitutions, and the advice of superiors, either by transgressing them himself or by treating them lightly, as if some of them had little value, or by approving of those individuals who transgressed them, or in grinning instead of grieving when someone broke them in one's presence.

15° Whether one lacked constancy and accuracy in fulfilling the offices in which he is employed.

It is easy to judge, from the details of this examination, how many faults spiritual persons must avoid, how much they must abase themselves when they become aware of pride, weakness, imperfections, and miseries. If they are not aware of these faults in such great numbers, they will attribute this to their lack of clear-sightedness, and be convinced of the urgency to work seriously at their salvation and their perfection by all means possible, but especially by making very good confessions.

## ARTICLE V

### On Holy Communion

It is principally to work out our salvation that we have left the world; in holy communion we find the graces necessary to save us. When we receive Jesus Christ, the source of all grace is within us. In communion, our soul is nourished with the bread of life, its powers are increased, its weaknesses are healed, its faults are erased; it is enriched with all kinds of virtues. Concupiscence in the soul is weakened and the soul receives a seed of life, a protection against the death of sin, a pledge of its salvation, the deposit for its happiness.

The marvelous benefits we receive in the Holy Eucharist ought to inspire in the novices the desire to receive it frequently, and not only to be correct in general communions, but also to be entitled to individual communions. Many of the early Christians received communion every day. It was this frequency of communion that rendered them so patient in afflictions, so fervent in prayer, so zealous for the glory of God, so resigned to His will, so charitable towards their neighbors, so detached from the goods of this world, always ready to journey to martyrdom. The teachings of the holy Church Fathers confirm that early practice, because they show holy communion as the transcendent and daily bread which Our Lord encourages us to pray for in the Lord's Prayer. Even in these latter centuries, the Council of Trent expressed the wish that the faithful would approach the holy altar at all Masses. Indeed, religious entered the cloister to imitate the lives of the Apostles and reproduce the fervor of the first Christians. Accordingly, they need to approach the sacrament as often as they are allowed. Just as the Israelites in the desert were concerned every day to collect the manna, which prefigures the Eucharist, so too the religious, enclosed in their cherished solitude, which resembles the desert of the Hebrews, will love to harvest frequently in their soul this celestial manna, in order to endure more effectively the works of their penitential life, and to direct their journey to sanctity.

In vain would one justify his estrangement from Holy Communion by vain pretexts. Such excuses turn against us and serve only to prove that we should receive Communion more often. Do we shudder, for example, for not having much piety? Then one must approach the divine Eucharist, since it is a *consuming fire*, capable of kindling the most lukewarm hearts. Do we feel ourselves filled with weaknesses



and imperfections? We should have recourse to Holy Communion: it is the bread of the strong, the milk of the weak, the remedy for the sick, the energy for the traveler who advances in the ways of perfection up to the mountain of God. Do we experience temptations, especially against purity? Do we notice other passions rising up in our soul? The wheat of the elect and the wine which makes virgins flower will produce in us chaste thoughts, well-ordered desires, and affections completely spiritual and angelic. Do we find ourselves too attached to ourselves, to the things of this world? The Eucharist, which is the bread come down from Heaven, will inspire a great indifference to creatures and an ever-growing desire for eternal life.

Do we fear being insufficiently prepared to receive communion? It is precisely to be better prepared that one should receive communion often, because one communion disposes a person for another. Should one wait a full year under the pretext of better disposing himself, he would be less prepared at the end of the year than he was at the beginning. The major preparation must come from God Himself, who alone can adorn the dwelling He has chosen for Himself. Moreover, the more frequently He enters a soul by communion, all the more does He dispose it to receive Him worthily. In receiving communion frequently, would there be the fear of losing the reverence due to this great sacrament? That would be to forget that it increases charity with which reverence, filial awe, and the other virtues develop. Celestial goods are not at all like earthly ones. When one is lacking in these latter, he desires them ardently and, as soon as he tastes them, the passions diminish. By contrast, before having tasted the celestial goods, one has little attraction for them. But to the degree that he knows them better and enjoys them more familiarly, he desires them more strongly and finds their taste more delicious. If it is praiseworthy occasionally, following the example of the ancients, to refrain from communion out of fear and by reverence, it is even better to approach it with affection and with confidence, since actions performed by love are worth more than those in which fear has the upper hand.

Experience lends its support to all those reasons, indicating to us that the religious who approach the Holy Eucharist often become more observant, and those who distance themselves become negligent and dissipated. This is a fact which one must recognize, because the benefits which one receives from frequent communion are an evident sign that it is good to continue the practice. After receiving communion, one will find himself more recollected, more moderate, and more fervent. Then it will be easier to observe silence, to practice gentleness towards his brothers, and to conquer his other passions; it will be easier to do spiritual reading, one's meditation, and other spiritual exercises; it will be easier to overcome temptations, to mortify one's own

spirit and all one's senses. Given all these benefits, one can do no better than to continue to approach the sacrament. It is not even necessary to be acutely aware of progress; it is sufficient to note that one is not regressing. Indeed, just as it is said that "not to advance in perfection is to fall back," it can also be said that "not to fall back is to make progress." The medicine which keeps us from falling sick is as useful as the medicine which heals the illness already contracted.

Nonetheless, by inspiring the novices to receive communion frequently, we suppose that they will do this with the necessary dispositions, because this divine sacrament, as well as all the others, produces grace and its other admirable blessings only according to the state of the souls receiving it. The reason why many Christians, although receiving communion frequently, and why many priests, although celebrating Mass every day, do not become better persons, is that they do not have the necessary dispositions.

To approach the holy altar, one must have: 1° an upright intention, that is to say, one should not receive communion under constraint or on account of habit, human respect, vanity, or any other human motive, but for the sake of uniting himself to the intentions for which Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament, namely, to transform us into Himself, to obtain from Him some graces for ourselves and for others, or again, to perpetuate and resurrect in us the memory of His Passion, as He himself commanded in the Upper Room.

2° A great purity of conscience. This consists first of all in purifying the soul of all mortal sins, if one has unfortunately fallen into them. Absent this condition, receiving communion would be a horrible sacrilege, because "whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of profaning the body and of the blood of the Lord. . . . and he eats and drinks his own condemnation" (*I Cor.* 11:27, 29). Consequently it is only after having tested oneself by a careful and complete confession, and having purified himself at least of all mortal sins that one should approach the Holy Eucharist. Secondly, purity of conscience consists in freeing the soul from every venial sin. It is not only to receive frequent communion that one is required to live without sin. Surely, such a disposition is to be hoped for, since the soul can never be fervent enough, nor the heart pure enough, to receive worthily the Bread of angels and the Holy of holies. And yet, it is not in our power to reach this height: "For the just man falls seven times and rises again" (*Prov.* 24:16). What is needed, at minimum, is that there be no attachment to venial sin, that we never commit one with cheerfulness of heart nor with deliberate intent.

We know we have reached that blessed state when the sins of weakness in which we have fallen displease us; when we try carefully to avoid them, uncovering and uprooting their causes; when, after

having fallen, we take the opportunity to become more fervent, more self-effacing, trembling before God because of them. In order to achieve this lofty purity of conscience, it is appropriate before receiving communion to confess one's sins with sincere sorrow for having committed them and a firm resolution to make amends.

We should especially purify ourselves of every stain opposed to this beautiful virtue, because the Eucharist contains virginal flesh, which is the source of all chastity. Nonetheless, if on this point we have experienced some illusion from the devil, without fault on our part, we should not too easily forego communion. It is written in the conferences of the Fathers of the desert that a young hermit had trials of this sort every time he was to receive communion. The ancients assembled and decided that in spite of his difficulties he should go ahead, and, in fact, by this approach the illusions ended.

3° Actual devotion is the third disposition needed for communion. Since devotion, in general, is nothing other than an ardor and a swiftness of the soul to apply itself to the worship and service of God, then, as regards the Most Holy Sacrament in particular, devotion is simply an ardent concentration of our soul on the supremacy of this divine mystery, accompanied by holy thoughts about these marvels which it conceals and supported by fervent affections which arise. This devotion is necessary, not only because of the equally kind and awesome majesty of Jesus Christ whom we receive in this sacrament, but also in order to draw from it the abundance of its benefits and especially to find therein a certain spiritual nourishment which results in the soul's tasting the ineffable sweetness of the Bread of life and receiving from it an altogether renewed vitality.

In order to achieve this actual devotion, it is good to take some time to prepare for it, because it is very difficult, not to say impossible, to move instantaneously from a state of lukewarmness to this very desirable state of fervor. This is why it is very advantageous, on the eve of communion, to prepare oneself with pious activities, such as more carefully avoiding useless thoughts, keeping from idle words, disciplining one of the passions, being more modest in one's glances, practicing some act of humility, of meekness, of obedience, and of penance. Moreover, on the morning of the day of communion, as soon as one wakes up, he should think of Jesus and ardently desire to receive Him by saying, for example: *O my loving Savior, I adore You. Come, Lord, do not delay in uniting me to You in your noble sacrament. I ask you for this grace with all my heart.*

Shortly before communion, one must immediately perform the actions needed to precede it. When one is about to receive communion, after he has prostrated himself while reciting the *Confiteor*, and that the priest has said the *Misereatur*, this is the moment to form one

last time the most simple and most earnest acts of contrition, of compunction, of fear, of reverence, of confidence, and of self-abasement.

After communion, one should spend at least a quarter of an hour in thanksgiving. This is the most precious time of our life since Jesus Christ really present in us is pleased to fill us, out of unequalled generosity, with His benefits and His virtues. We would show a lack of reverence and acquire guilt for shameless ingratitude were we to occupy our mind, our heart, or our senses with something irrelevant. It is appropriate especially to formulate prayers of gratitude, adoration, offering, and petition.

One should spend the entire day of communion in the deepest interior and exterior recollection, and busy oneself only with exercises of praise, piety, charity, and obedience, striving to perform in this spirit all activities, readings, prayer, and study. This is how the Blessed Virgin, having conceived the Savior, was eager first to give witness of her gratitude for this grace, by a marvelous promptness in following the inspiration of God, by much fervor in crossing the mountains of Judea to exercise charity toward St. Elizabeth, and by exceptional ardor in singing her canticle, the *Magnificat*.

The most excellent fruit to be derived from communion, and the one most available to everybody, is to live a life in conformity with that of Jesus Christ, and to live only for Him. In order to achieve this divine conformity, it is a holy practice — as a supplement to what we are lacking — for us to assume the disposition of the saints who most closely resembled the Divine Master and who best honored the Eucharist. One could also offer to Our Lord, in thanksgiving after each communion, the imitation of one of His virtues and the uprooting of one of our faults, especially the one in which we often fail and which displeases Him more and especially scandalizes our brothers. When we have thus promised to imitate some traits of Jesus in order to live His life and to be transformed into Him, we must faithfully remember that good resolution and complete every day some actions which relate to it in order to prepare ourselves better for the next communion. In this way, we will live continually in thanksgiving for the one we just made and in continual preparation for the one which will shortly follow, saying with the Apostle: “I live, but no, it is not I who live, it is Christ who liveth in me” (*Gal. 2:20*).

Even though actual reverence for the Holy Eucharist and the spiritual hunger for the Bread of Life are very useful motives for frequent communion, nonetheless, one should not stay away from this sacrament for lack of noticeable piety or spiritual sweetness which God may have allowed us to taste in the past. This can happen, it is true, through our fault, such as when we did not prepare adequately before, or when we did not maintain a sufficiently recollected after-

wards. Sometimes, however, it is God Himself Who refuses that spiritual consolation to our soul, absent its fault, so as to discipline the soul and to test it further. At other times, especially on major holidays, it happens that we experience less sensible fervor, either because we tried too hard to enkindle it, drying the soul and depriving it of its holy liberty; or, because on those days we place more emphasis on the Divine Office, and thus only later do we feel the salutary effects of the visit from God; or because the infusion of grace, instead of spreading to our senses, concentrates in the depths of our being in imperceptible habits of enlightenment, courage, and contemplation. When we find ourselves in this aridity of soul, whatever its cause, we should not get discouraged or feel troubled but rather we should abase ourselves deeply before Our Lord. This intense gesture of humility will have the power to supply for all our defects, render us pleasing to God, and attract perhaps greater graces to us than those goods whose deprivation had made us lament.

PRAISED BE JESUS IN THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT!

## ARTICLE VI

### On Mental Prayer

#### § I – *Importance of mental prayer*

Mental prayer, which is also called by one of its principal acts: *meditation*, is a lifting up of our spirit and a raising up of our heart to God, to unite ourselves with Him, to ask for His blessings, and to receive the means to work for our progress in the acquisition of virtues. Mental prayer is morally indispensable for growing in perfection, because, as St. Francis de Sales stated, it is what enlightens understanding by a divine light, and fires our will with celestial love. Nothing is more effective for purifying our spirit of its ignorance and for healing our heart of its depraved inclinations. It is a water of blessing, which, while invigorating the soul, gives birth and maturity to fitting desires, washes away its imperfections, and refreshes them in the midst of the heat of the passions.

St. Teresa of Avila greatly valued mental prayer. Moreover, writing to the bishop of Osma, she dared to tell him that, even though he had already received from Heaven both humility and charity, zeal for souls and for the honor of God, he was lacking the principal element necessary to preserve virtue, namely, prayer (see *Letter 13*). This seraphic virgin had to have a great regard for prayer, since she considered it as a gift somewhat better than humility, which is the foundation of all the virtues, better than charity, which is the queen of virtues, better than zeal for souls, which is the most pure flame of the love of God, and since she believed it necessary for the preservation of these virtues and their complete flowering.

If mental prayer is indispensable for every Christian who wishes to strive for sanctification, it is all the more so for religious, who are obliged to strive for perfection. Without it, we could perhaps arrive at a well-ordered exterior life, but we could never regulate the depths of the soul; now a religious who does not have an interior life is only the ghost of a religious. This explains why our early Fathers were so attentive to engage in mental prayer that, following the example of our patriarch, St. Dominic, they spent all their free time at it, day and night. This saint, in his goodness, was often obliged to visit the church and the chapels at night, to check if one of his children, filled with fervor, might have lingered so as to pass the night in pray-

er. As for him, he often remained from night to morning before the Blessed Sacrament. When sleep turned him away from contemplation, he was content to rest his head for a while against the altar. The Angelic Doctor, inspired by these examples, had such a great love for mental prayer that he recommended it to everyone, especially religious. He himself lived in practically continual prayer; and it was so lofty that he was often lifted up in ecstasy. Questioned one day about how he acquired such enlightenment and knowledge, he answered that he learned more by meditating at the foot of the crucifix than by perusing books. All the blessed of our Order were equally men of prayer, as is reported in their lives, and it is this noble exercise which made them so perfect. In brief, all the other saints of the Church of God had as their watchword: *a religious without prayer is a soldier without weapons*. Indeed, just as an unarmed soldier on a day of battle is exposed to all kinds of wounds and can hardly escape death, so too the religious, who must always be at war against the enemies of his salvation, cannot resist and conquer them if he neglects mental prayer. He will be wounded and vanquished. This may not happen right away, but it will be seen at a later time.

Accordingly, the novices must have much fervor and great fidelity to this exercise. They need to do this in order to imitate their glorious patriarch and all the blessed who are their brothers. They need to do this for their own sanctification, since that is the great business for which they became religious, and because their growth in perfection depends on their growth in prayer. In fact, when one makes his meditation well in the morning, he feels the effects all day long, is more greatly inclined to practice silence and decorum, to maintain recollection during the Office, to spiritualize all his actions, and to discipline all his senses. However, when one begins to abandon this holy exercise, he becomes completely dissipated and falls imperceptibly into indifference, immoderation, sensuality, impatience, grumbling, and an almost continuous transgression of the Constitutions. Little by little, the resultant state leads him to a transgression of the vows and eternal damnation.

By contrast, experience teaches that the young religious who continue to practice mental prayer every day, who set aside for retreat one day a month and ten days a year, grow from virtue to virtue and find in religion the most enjoyable life. Yet if they start to neglect this essential practice, they regress every day, lead an anxious and languishing life. After a few years of profession, they are less fervent than they were in the early days. This is why the great St. Francis de Sales often said: "the most desirable grace for a religious is the spirit of prayer, because, if he had that gift, he could be assured of arriving at perfection, and, if he did not know how to obtain it, he would neces-

sarily fall back instead of advancing.” As a consequence of this, more time is given to novices for meditation. And, although they devote themselves to it twice with the community, they apply themselves a third time in the novitiate, so that, having fully internalized the spirit of prayer, they might obtain greater fidelity and facility to make it the soul of all their life.

Even though the need to correct one’s faults and to acquire the internal life are more than sufficient reasons to recommend mental prayer, another motive obliged our Father St. Dominic and his early religious to give themselves to it with much diligence and intensity, and to counsel it to others very strongly. It was because they knew that in our institute we are obliged to work not only for our own sanctification, but also for that of others, through an intense zeal for the salvation of souls. This ardent zeal is, in fact, the proper character of our Order; it was for that reason that the Sovereign Pontiffs named it the *Order of Preachers*. Now, to work advantageously at the sanctification of one’s neighbor, one must apply himself to a high degree to mental prayer.

Indeed, in prayer we fill spirit with pure and lively lights to be transmitted to others. We kindle in the heart holy affections which make us capable of embracing the hearts of men. For it is in moving ourselves to hate all sins and to practice all the virtues that we become more apt to persuade our neighbors to detest the former and love the latter. In prayer, we understand more clearly that the conversion of sinners does not depend on the weak language of the apostle, but on the goodness and mercy of God; and these latter are obtained from Our Lord through petitions. This is why St. Dominic often said to God, with laments and tears: *My God, be merciful to your people. What will become of sinners? Forgiveness, grace, and mercy for them.* So that the novices will be prepared to exercise apostolic duties later, they must plunge wholeheartedly into mental prayer, following the example of the missionary saints of our Order. To this end, they will especially imitate the Example of examples, that of Jesus Christ, who withdrew to the desert to give Himself over to prayer and fasting for forty days before embarking on His public life, and who, after having preached during the day, spent the nights in prayer. The Apostles, on returning from the missions where the Divine Master had sent them, also withdrew to a place apart to recollect themselves. Subsequently, they transferred the care of the poor to deacons, so that they themselves would be freer to engage in preaching and in prayer. From all these considerations, the conclusion is quite clear: to be a good religious and to work effectively for the salvation of his neighbor, one must be a man of prayer.



And yet, to be a man of prayer, one must be a man of mortification, especially as regards the passions and the senses, which hinder genuine contemplation, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches. These two virtues are therefore linked with each other. Mortification helps us to pray well, while prayer, in turn, helps us more easily practice mortification. When the passions are quieted and the senses under control, the soul enjoys deep calm; now, God is pleased with peace and cannot abide turmoil. Moreover, prayer is a holy interaction of our soul with God. Indeed, He loves to converse familiarly with souls which are pure and mortified, not with souls enslaved to the flesh and blood, which seek to please in everything their will, their judgment, and their sensuality. We must bind ourselves especially to the kind of mortification which helps us to walk in the presence of God, to keep silence, and to be self-disciplined. The presence of God, in fact, is a kind of ongoing prayer. When we apply ourselves to it, it becomes much easier to recollect ourselves at the time of formal mental prayer. Silence, for its part, preserves the recollection which is so necessary for this exercise, because it prevents us from engaging in idle words and useless conversations, which bring about a complete loss of reverence.

## § II – *Brief method for praying well*

Mental prayer can be studied in its three sections: the preparation, the body, the conclusion.

1° The *preparation* contains the following three elements:

1) Placing oneself in the presence of God by making an act of faith, like this: “I believe firmly, O my God, that You are present everywhere; You are also here where I am, and more specifically, in my heart. Give me the grace to keep myself with profound reverence in Your divine presence.”

2) Offering to God one’s prayer and invoking the help of the Holy Spirit to do it fittingly, saying, for example: “O my God, I offer You this prayer for Your greatest glory, in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Come, Holy Spirit, shine over me the light and the anointing of Your grace.”

3) Asking God pardon for one’s sins and abasing oneself before Him, saying: “I ask pardon of You, O my God, from the depth of my heart and out of love for You, for all the sins which make me unworthy of appearing before You at this moment. I am profoundly humbled because of them and I acknowledge that by myself I am but ashes and dust.”

2° The *body of the prayer* also contains three elements:

1) To consider the subject that has been offered, and to reflect seriously on what instructive material it holds for our sanctification, without forgetting that when the mind is usefully occupied on a topic, we should not be hasty in moving to another, however worthy it be; and that, if the subject chosen does not move us, even though we have spent adequate time in reflecting on it, we can meditate on another one more suitable for us, such as one of the four last things or the life and passion of Jesus Christ.

2) To strive to enkindle in the heart some holy affections and pious desires. Indeed, that is the principal end to attain. When we are moved by some holy affection, such as the love of God, praise, gratitude, or sorrow for sins, we ought to allow this feeling time to penetrate the heart deeply, without attempting to rouse others. It is not the number but the quality of feelings and the manner in which they become identified with the soul that God appreciates. Nevertheless, when these feelings and pious desires end, we should immediately return to the topic of the prayer to help bring them back.

3) To make firm resolutions appropriate to the topic of our meditation or of our needs. The resolutions should not be general, but specific, in keeping with the situations which will probably occur during the day — such as avoiding a certain imperfection or practicing a certain virtue, in such circumstances, with such a person. Those resolutions must also be efficacious, that is to say, they need to move us actively to take the appropriate means to carry them out and to overcome all the obstacles which will arise against them.

3° The *conclusion* of the prayer contains these three points:

1) To thank God by saying to Him: “I give You thanks, O my God, for having given me this in prayer good thoughts and holy affections, and for having allowed me to be in Your presence, although I was unworthy to speak to You, and even to listen to You.”

2) To ask pardon of Him for not having performed this exercise very well, by saying to Him: “Forgive me, O my God, for in Your presence I have not maintained sufficient respect, attentiveness, and recollection, and I was negligent in rejecting the distractions quickly. Forgive all the other faults that I may have committed during my prayer.”

3) To ask the help of His grace to benefit well from this prayer, saying: “I beseech You, humbly, O my God, to bless the resolutions that I have just made. Grant me the grace to remember them from

time to time during the day, and to profit from the opportunities to fulfill them.”

In the case when, after having practiced this method for a long time, one would be moved internally to follow some other method, he should speak about it with his director and follow the advice given. If, for example, one needs to learn what the prayer of contemplation consists in when reasoning does not intervene, and to learn when it is time to move from meditation to a higher form of prayer; or again, how one should act when one is so imbued with prayer that he has only a simple gaze upon God, and when the powers of the soul appear to be suspended, he will find appropriate instructions on these points, and on others concerning extraordinary, infused, and supernatural prayer, in the spiritual writers particularly recognized for the reliability of their teaching on these lofty questions.

### § III – *Various advice concerning mental prayer*

These points of advice are intended to help us benefit well from some different methods of prayer we have adopted, and to guide us usefully through the diverse phases which grace may make us pass in order to arrive at perfect prayer.

1° *Advice when facing distractions:* During prayer, when the mind is dissipated and filled with troubling thoughts, one must humble himself in them before God, asking Him for His pardon, and one must reject them as soon he is aware of them, placing himself again in His presence, remembering the topic of meditation. If, after these precautions, the distractions do not disappear, one need not abandon prayer nor be troubled, but should continue during the entire time allotted, or even prolong it somewhat to prove that he is far from being discouraged. During that time, one should offer to Our Lord the desire to pray and adore Him. If meditation is being done privately, one could do a bit of reading to call the spirit back from its wandering; but especially, with deference and self-control, one should maintain feelings of interior lament and of abandonment to the divine will. This desire of the heart, these hidden laments, this respect, and this abasement are in themselves a very worthy prayer as taught by St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and other Fathers, because they form an ineffable and enduring voice that God understands and is pleased to answer.

2° *When one has dry spells* without any worthy affection in the heart, one has only to abase himself profoundly before the Lord, judging himself unworthy to think of Him and speak to Him. After having disavowed the occasions which he may have given to that state of aridity, one should peacefully abandon himself to the will of God, Who allows these interior troubles to punish us or to test us. We should

offer Him our grief and aversions in a spirit of sacrifice and confidence. Even if the dry spells last a long time, one should not in any way abandon the exercise of mental prayer, but persevere at it, following the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, when struck by a mortal sadness and plunged into agony in the Garden of Olives, redoubled His prayer and renewed his acts of abandonment to the will of His Father. David and the other holy saints also experienced in their prayer some continual ups and downs of joy and sadness, and admitted that their heart was sometimes so unresponsive that it seemed that God had abandoned them or that they had become like an animal without reason. St. Teresa of Avila reported that she suffered twenty-two years of aridity in her prayers, never desiring consolation. Her preoccupation during that time was to abase herself, considering how she was not even worthy to think of God, and how the divine majesty gave her a notable blessing in tolerating her presence. To make use of this condition, St. Augustine advised picturing oneself before the Almighty during prayer, as a poor person, a beggar who has need of His help. This is what David used to do, he the king-prophet who teaches us by his experience that the Lord answers the desire of the poor and that He listens to the heart that is fittingly prepared. In fact, the needy who suffer greatly and who are content show to their distress to the rich, with humility and patience and almost without words, sometimes arouse more compassion than those who, by their piercing cries, seek to force others to pay attention to them.

3° *When one experiences sensory consolations*, one must abase himself all the more, considering himself unworthy to receive any visit of grace, and testifying to God that he wishes to serve Him purely for Himself, not for the sensory benefits He gives. If, after we have humbled ourselves the consolations perdure, one should not dwell on them, seek them, enjoy them, much less be troubled by them, but rather, use them with gratitude mixed with wonder to renew one's application to prayer by trying to double piety, attentiveness, and reverence, and to fulfill the duties of one's state with even greater precision, charity, kindness, joy, and courage, given that grace supports us with greater mercy. Sensory joy will pass, but the strength we have gained must remain with us.

The most esteemed religious is not the one who will receive the most consolation in his communication with Heaven, but rather the one who has the most humility and charity, with the result that he always and exclusively seeks the honor of God, that he holds himself in contempt, that he is pleased to be despised by others. As St. Teresa of Avila said, the best prayer and the most pleasing to the Lord is the one which produces the best effects in the soul and which proves the worth of good desires by their complete accomplishment.

## ARTICLE VII

### **Spiritual disclosure**

Spiritual disclosure is one of the most holy and most necessary practices of religion. It must be engaged in not only by simple novices, but also by the professed who wish to make some progress in holiness. Since the latter are obliged more strongly than the former to tend to perfection, they must also strive even more to take all the means leading to it. Now one of the principal means is to reveal to the Father Master their temptations, their interior troubles, and their weaknesses. Cassian reported that the first counsel given by the Fathers of the desert to young hermits was to have them reveal to the oldest hermit all the temptations and vexations which could occur. St. Vincent Ferrer gave the same advice. He taught that, in spite of all the awareness of mind that one could have and all the knowledge one has accumulated concerning virtue, he must allow himself to be altogether directed in big and small matters by his director. According to him, this is the shortest and surest means of arriving at perfection. If we do not use it, we will not receive the graces necessary to live in the spirit of one's calling. St. Antoninus also reported that the early religious of our Order, almost every night after Matins, would go to confession and with simplicity reveal to their spiritual father their weaknesses and their temptations. Moreover, they had much fervor and much sensitivity of conscience worthy of our admiration.

This holy practice brings about many advantages. 1° It draws upon us the grace of God, because He loves to pour it on those who humble themselves. To be sure, this practice is in itself humiliating and repugnant to pride, especially when one has already spent several years in religion. 2° It brings great peace to the conscience, because troubles of the mind, which increase in proportion to the degree to which we hide them, diminish when we open ourselves to another person, and especially to our director, who represents God Himself. 3° It makes it easier for us to overcome the temptations of the devil. Experience proves everyday that when one reveals his temptations to the guide of his soul, they decrease little by little, and often completely disappear. In addition, they sometimes vanish even before we have talked to him by the very fact that we resolved to reveal to him what we feel interiorly. This arises from the fact that the devil, who is a spirit of pride, cannot bear to see us humble ourselves. Consequently,

when he realizes that his temptations have become for us an occasion of humility, he moves away in confusion. All this is happening because God, Who does not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength, supports by His blessings those who rely on Him during their temptations and who keep themselves prepared to reveal them to the representative He Himself has assigned.

It is not surprising, then, that the tempter would use all means to turn religious away from this exercise. Ordinarily, he uses the pretext of false shame. Far from stopping at this feeling, which is an offspring of pride and adds a new temptation to those we already experience, we need to reveal it along with all the others, and even to begin with this one. Why blush to show our temptations and trials, since all the world, more or less, is subject to similar difficulties? It is not a sin to be tempted, but it would be a serious one to risk falling into temptation by postponing its revelation. Often, having many temptations is a good sign. The Holy Spirit teaches us that those who would serve God well must always be prepared to undergo trials. The devil does not need to surround with traps those who already belong to him, since he is their master. He attacks those who resist him strongly, namely, the friends of virtue. Usually, those who are called to higher perfection are, for the same reason, more strongly tempted in various ways. The more faithful they are in rejecting effectively the assaults of the enemies, the more advantages they obtain, especially as regards humility and patience. Thus, at each step and for every individual, we need to praise and recommend this practice.

The novices are too perceptive to be deterred by a false fear that the Father Master will not value them or love them as much after he has been made aware of their temptations. Indeed, he is not only the master able to correct them, but he is especially the father who loves them tenderly in Jesus Christ, and who sympathizes more than ever with their state when he recognizes in them profound confidence and filial submission, in spite of their greater trials. A loving mother is moved all the more when she sees her children suffer greatly and discovers in them more frankness and promptness in turning to her. Now what natural love produces in mothers with regard to their children, the charity of Jesus accomplishes in a manner less sensible, perhaps, but more elevated in the Father Master toward his novices. Following the example of St. Paul, the latter sees them as his spiritual sons, whom he begets in the Lord each day by His holy Gospel and for whom he suffers willingly until Christ is formed in them.

The simple novices should receive spiritual direction every two weeks, either in the cell of the Father Master or the oratory of the novitiate, according to custom. Before going, they will pray on their knees in their cell to ask Our Lord for the blessing: 1° of knowing

themselves well; 2° of making themselves well-known to the director by revealing to him with utmost clarity, simplicity, and confidence all that is happening interiorly; 3° of enlightening the director concerning their state and their needs; 4° of making them receptive to the advice the director will give them. Having arrived next to The Father Master, they should make the prostration, uncover their head, kneel down to recite with him a short prayer, then begin to give him an account of their conduct.

For their spiritual disclosure, the student novices will pick a more convenient time for themselves, for instance, on feast days or during vacations, or during class days, when they are less absorbed in the duties of study. It is mainly their responsibility to remain faithful in respecting the order set up for the schedule for direction. Just as they have to make arrangements so as not to lose their turn, so too they need to be careful not to interfere with that of their brothers. If they wish to advance in perfection, they must practice this holy exercise at least once a month, and even more often, whenever they experience spiritual troubles, strong temptations, or particular attractions of grace. They should examine themselves on the same points mentioned below for simple novices, except that, as regards their vocation, they must consider whether they have corresponded to the grace of their profession; whether they strove to advance in perfection, as they are obliged to do; whether they wasted time intended for study; whether they faithfully observed the Constitutions, as much as it depended on them, as they have promised.

The principal points of disclosure for novices are:

1° *Concerning their vocation*: whether they are happy in the state of life they have embraced, or suffer temptations to the contrary; whether they have difficulty in fulfilling certain items of the Rule or the Constitutions; whether, in their cell, they stay busy with what was expected of them; whether they remain in their cell with pleasure, or become bored there; whether they are suffering some pains in the soul, or some bodily weariness which make religious observances burdensome.

2° *Concerning confessions and communions*: whether they prepare fittingly; whether they obtain the fruits they ought to produce; whether they are becoming more attentive and more meditative in prayer, more disciplined in the senses and the passions on the days they go to confession and to communion; whether they were very attentive in fulfilling their thanksgiving after communion and also after confession, though in another way.

3° *Concerning temptations*: whether they are tempted against faith, purity, charity; if they are inclined to gluttony, anger, laziness, etc.; whether they are tempted against God, the saints, and the most

sacred matters, and what fruits they know how to derive from these trials.

4° *Concerning mental prayer and the presence of God*, which are so necessary for the interior life: how they conduct themselves during meditation; whether they have difficulty in doing so; whether, on the contrary, they find themselves attracted to it; whether they reject distractions as soon as they are aware of them or are negligent in rejecting them; what topics touch them the most; whether, during the day, they are faithful in fulfilling the good resolutions made in the morning; whether they have dry spells, temptations, or consolations; how they deal with them, and whether they give up mental prayer because of annoyances; whether, when they can not meditate in common, they are careful to apply themselves to it in private, at a more favorable time; whether they remember to place themselves often in the presence of God, especially when they enter or leave their cell, when the clock strikes, when they begin study, reading, or any other action.

5° *Concerning mortification*, without which no growth in mental prayer is possible: Whether they feel an attraction or a repugnance for the cross and suffering; whether they have difficulty fasting and abstaining from meat, maintaining solitude and silence, wearing wool, rising during the night, and practicing all the other usual disciplines; whether they are careful to control their sight by always keeping their eyes modestly lowered, and by avoiding fleeting and inquisitive glances, whether out of the window of the cell, in choir, during other activities of the community, in the city, while following in processions or in fulfilling some duty; whether they curb their tongue, never engage in conversations with the professed, and being satisfied, when possible, with writing on a slip of paper the supplies they need to ask for; whether they control their other senses; whether they perform bodily penances without permission from the Father Master and following their own will; whether they curb their opinions and their desires, following the feelings of others more than their own; whether they refrain from being obstinate by controlling their desires and their emotions in line with reason and faith, avoiding undue haste, worry, disputes, and impatience.

6° *Concerning their spiritual exercises*: Whether they complete them with fervor or with indifference; whether they were attentive or distracted in completing them; whether they open themselves to distractions; whether, at the beginning of Office, Mass, etc., they are careful to offer these very holy acts to God, for His glory, for their salvation, and for the sanctification of their neighbor; whether, during those acts, they take the time to place themselves in His presence, to sharpen their attention and kindle their piety; what method they follow during Mass, and what benefits they gain from it; whether they



are faithful in doing spiritual reading every day; whether they do this attentively and without haste; whether they are moved by it and obtain some benefit; whether they correct the faults they recognize in the examination of conscience.

7° *Concerning the practice of religious virtues:* Whether they love these virtues and are horrified by the contrary vices; whether they have difficulty in carrying out obedience; whether they strive to complete all their actions out of obedience; whether, for the same motive, they follow the Rule, the Constitutions, and the rubrics; whether they have a spirit of poverty; whether they are too eager in seeking to obtain their minor comforts; whether they are attached to those items which are left for their use, such as books, habits, the cell, etc.; whether they are doing all they can to acquire great chastity of body, of heart, and of mind, and whether, to this end, they have a tender devotion to the most pure Virgin Mary.

8° *Concerning the Christian virtues, especially humility, which is their foundation, and charity, which is their crown:* Whether they love and desire humiliations; whether they, at least, bear patiently those imposed on them; what they feel inwardly when subject to them; whether they have a secret bent to be esteemed, applauded, praised, and honored; how they reject thoughts of vanity; whether they love God above all things and for Himself; whether they are fervent and exact in singing His praises in choir; whether they love their brothers as themselves and for God; whether they refrain from being attached to them for human and natural reasons; whether they love all their brothers equally, and avoid any closeness or particular friendship with some rather than with others; whether they pray for their neighbor, for the conversion of sinners, for the perfection of the just, for the relief of the souls in Purgatory; whether during recreation or elsewhere they lacked kindness and forbearance toward their brothers; whether they used obliging manners and kind words towards them; whether, on the contrary, they used harsh and offensive words; whether they spread or listened to grumbling or slander against their neighbor, especially against superiors.

After the novices have communicated their inner thoughts to the Father Master, they should listen with great respect, gratitude, submission, and interior remorse to the advice which the latter will give them, so they can grow in the practice of the virtues under the direction of the visible messenger that the Lord has given them on the road of the spiritual life.

When the Father Master has finished encouraging them and responding up their doubts, they will prostrate to receive his blessing, recite a prayer with him, then retire to their cell. After arriving there, they should kneel at their prie-dieu and thank God for the help He just

gave them to work toward their perfection. It is a worthy practice to write down the important counsels received, so as to become more faithful in following them on all the occasions which present themselves.

## ARTICLE VIII

### Study

#### § I - *The need to study*

Study is one of the occupations most recommended by our Constitutions. In some religious orders it is optional, only a suggestion or a pleasant respite from the exercises of the contemplative life. But among us, it is a strict obligation. In fact, the goal and functions of our Order are to work for the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor by teaching everyone, whether in pulpits by preaching, in schools by teaching, in the tribunal of penance by hearing confessions, or by the direction of consciences. In a word, zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls has to be the proper characteristic of the religious of our Order. Now it is impossible to fulfill this vocation properly without applying ourselves unremittingly to study, which provides the knowledge absolutely necessary for preaching, teaching, hearing confessions, and deciding the difficult cases of evangelical morality.

This search for knowledge, which is a duty of our calling, must not in any way impede the work of our sanctification. Indeed, just as virtue without knowledge is useless for one's neighbor, in like manner knowledge without virtue is dangerous for the one who possesses it. Knowledge and virtue allied together are something perfect, according to St. Bernard. Accordingly, novices must not be so consumed by study as to fall into pride, arrogance, or disdain for others. Otherwise, their knowledge would be the kind which puffs up rather than the one which elevates. The devil knows much more than all men, and yet he is unhappy for eternity. Moreover, besides the fact that knowledge by itself is insufficient to sanctify us, it is also insufficient for the sanctification of others. Experience teaches us that preachers and confessors who have great knowledge but little virtue do not produce great results. They do not touch their listeners very deeply, and rarely convert them. The principal outcome of their activity is to attract to themselves praise and approbation. But that is unvarnished pride; one must have been smitten with a kind of folly to indulge in this pursuit.

But if to avoid this danger our religious abandon study under the pretext of becoming more virtuous by devoting themselves to

prayers of their choice, they would risk committing grave faults: whether in the pulpit, by preaching inexact or insubstantial doctrines; in classrooms, by not teaching their disciples adequately; in consultations of conscience, by spreading false principles and by arriving at decisions that are too severe or too lax. As we have already noted, the ignorant are often more bold in making judgments than the wise. They are blind men leading other blind men and, by falling into the pit, they cause the fall of those whom they are directing. God will indeed ask them for an accounting, soul by soul, of all the harm they will have inflicted on others.

To avoid such great evils, one must at a young age accustom himself to serious study, all the while remaining faithful to his practices of piety, and especially to a very faithful observance of the Constitutions. If one has established this holy habit of perseverance in study at a young age, he will retain it all his life. Even though, at first, he may have some difficulty in applying himself, this trouble will quickly change into pleasure. Indeed, it is the nature of the habits we contract to make us repeat those actions promptly, easily, and with delight. However, if one in his youth accustoms himself to idleness, he will continue in this deplorable habit the rest of his days. It is for this reason that our Constitutions command novices and other religious to read or meditate on some topic, whether in the convent or in travel, day and night, and strive to commit to memory all that they can: "They are to be so intent on study that, whether by day or by night, in the house or on a journey, they should read or meditate on something; they should strive to retain in their hearts whatever they can." *In studio taliter sint intenti, ut de die, de nocte, in domo, in itinere legant aliquid vel meditentur; et quidquid poterunt retinere corde tenus nitantur* (N. 1038).

Not only does the lack of study make a religious of our Order incapable of working for the salvation of souls, it becomes for him a source of self-indulgence. "Apply yourselves to the study of knowledge," said St. Jerome, "and you will avoid sins of the flesh." In fact, experience teaches that those who work more, provided they do not set aside their exercises of piety and discipline in favor of study, are more recollected and a better example for others, whereas those who do not study in their youth gradually become self-indulgent, restless, scandalous. Not knowing how to occupy themselves in their cell, they become bored; they often leave the cell unnecessarily; they distract others from their occupations and they scandalize the entire convent. The time of their novitiate completed, they know only to haul their laziness around through the corridors and the cloisters or through the streets of the city, very often scandalizing seculars by their frivolity, their hedonism, and their complaints. In short, they live

and die in a continual transgression of the Constitutions, and maybe even of their vows.

Furthermore, even though the glory of God and the salvation of our soul are not directly tied to our zeal for knowledge, a bit of honor would suffice to animate that zeal in us. It is a feature of a bestial soul, without nobility and without holy ambition, not to enjoy study, especially the study of divine matters and of the relationships between man and his Creator and his Redeemer. In other Orders, when time is not taken up with prayer, manual labor trains the activity of the religious. As for us, we have only intellectual work and prayer to which we alternatively apply our faculties. We need, then, to dedicate ourselves to them wholeheartedly. St. Jerome and St. Bernard often suggested this useful alternation from prayer to study, and from study to prayer, because of their own experience of its benefits.

Application to study, which is the honor and the great duty of the Friar Preacher, also brings him happiness. He could never pray full-time, nor study full-time; the human mind cannot tolerate such an exclusive application to one object. To rest himself, he needs to move from one thing to another. Thus, apportioning the time which the Constitutions allow for prayer and work — both of which are very lofty occupations — he experiences inexpressible well-being. He avoids oppressive activity and stinging tedium; he enjoys a peaceful possession of the truth and the awareness that he loves it; nature and grace join together to offer him a happiness that resembles from afar that of the saints when they see God in Heaven. By contrast, the religious who does not study lives the saddest life in the world, since he receives consolation neither from God nor from man. God wishes him to study since this activity belongs to the vocation which He entrusted to him. Accordingly, He withdraws from this unfaithful one the graces and consolations originally destined for him. As a consequence, the unfortunate individual spends his days without any pleasure of the spirit, without any unction of the heart. Nor can he find as compensation reliable consolations from the flighty friends among whom he lives — his heart, as man and as religious, having been made for the Infinite. Besides, even the most corrupt secular persons respect the religious only to the extent that they know him to be faithful and exact in observing his obligations, one of the principal among them being study. Otherwise, they will receive him well out of politeness, out of self-interest, or because he shares and validates their empty pleasures. Never will they have for him that respect, that affection, that recognition which one has for a man of God, a slave to duty, absorbed by his work for the good of souls.

The great religious of our Order always joined knowledge to piety: for instance, St. Dominic, St. Antoninus, St. Peter Martyr, St.

Thomas, St. Albert the Great, St. Raymond, and all the others, not to mention the renowned teachers, preachers, confessors, and zealous missionaries, who achieved in the Church wonderful results for the glory of God and the salvation of their neighbor. In order to imitate their example it is not sufficient for us to study during the program of philosophy and of theology, but even more so after it has ended. If the young need to study so as to learn what they do not know, likewise must the elders, so that they do not lose the benefits of what they have learned. During the program of classes, we are barely learning how to study. It is only later, after the program has ended, that we are prepared to make progress by reviewing attentively what we saw in a rapid survey, but better assimilating the various points of doctrine by imprinting them more strongly in our mind. Besides, there are so many lofty things to learn that the entire life of a man is insufficient to gain a full understanding of them. This would greatly torment souls that crave for knowledge, if faith had not taught them to be peacefully content with knowledge relative to the duties of their state, or capable of making it their pride and joy.

## § II – *What should be studied*

Our Constitutions demand that we study three topics, namely, scholastic theology, Holy Scripture, and Church history. *In tribus libris theologiae ... videlicet in sentiis, in bibliis, et in historiis, tam in textu quam in glossis praecipue studeant diligenter et intendant* (N. 1041). So that we might have more time to devote to these, they forbid us to learn purely secular sciences [for their own sake]; moreover, if they require us to apply ourselves to philosophy, it is because it is necessary for theology.

1. First of all, we must apply ourselves to scholastic theology, in the manner that St. Thomas developed it. Without scholasticism, the theologian would have little depth in understanding dogmatic truths, and little precision in formulating them. Indeed, it is scholasticism which explains the truths of our faith in a way that is fair, methodical, and concordant with the rigor of the terms. It is also necessary to defend religion against the cunning assertions of heretics, because it grasps with precision what is false and weak in their reasoning; that is why they unleash so much animosity against it. Moreover, scholasticism has, if not as declared enemies, at least as disparagers, the supporters of novelties and of misunderstood progress in the sacred sciences, because it displeases them by belittling their false brilliance, or shows clearly that, behind these novelties, are hidden dangerous and suspect ideas relating to religious teaching. Finally, what recommends scholasticism to us is that St. Thomas, that remarkable

genius who had such a sure inclination toward the sacred sciences and a great moderation in his appreciation of things, believed that he could not have chosen a better method to treat matters of faith in the works he dedicated to the friends of sound doctrine.

The objection will perhaps be raised that scholastic theology contains much quibbling that wastes our time. But even the best things, in the hands of men, are subject to abuse. If such useless things are found in certain books, this is not a consequence of scholasticism, but the deficiency of some authors who, on forgetting that theology has God as its object, *Sermo de Deo*, lose themselves in fanciful questions or give to points of secondary utility as much importance as if it were a question of establishing against heretics the principal articles of our faith. As for genuine scholastic theology, after having used authority to establish each religious dogma against its adversaries, it then explains them by well-linked arguments drawn from the principles of the faith which are suited to convince our reason. Finally, it clarifies the metaphysical subtleties by which the heretics try to obfuscate dogmas, so that no shadow of a doubt remains in the mind. It is on this account that, in the School, there are many questions which at first glance seem useless, but which are, in fact, necessary to rebut the quarrels of the enemies of the Church or to establish our sacred beliefs by means of reason.

Here you have what St. Thomas did in an incomparable manner in his *Summa Theologiae*. There, each article, in spite of brevity, cites the authority of Scripture, or Church Fathers, Councils, popes, or philosophers. Following that come arguments which explain the point in question according to its fundamental principles. Furthermore, the response to each argument of the adversaries concludes by placing truth in a very simple and marvelous light. All these articles are treated with an accuracy, precision, and clarity which obtain the approval and the admiration of the mind. Moreover, there is such beautiful order between them, a linkage of doctrine so admirable, that all of them serve to illuminate some important point of the faith or of morality even when they seem to deal only with questions of philosophy.

Without overlooking in prejudice the services which positive theology offers, we especially, as Friars Preachers, should therefore apply ourselves to scholastic theology more than to anything else. Should we hear some persons praise the former and denigrate the latter, we must remember that positive theology — besides the fact that it lacks the advantages of scholastic theology enumerated above — can fall into the drawbacks about which it reproached its rival. Indeed, many of its proponents also propose useless problems, concerning, for example, facts of history which have no connection with dogma, morality, or ecclesiastical discipline. They treat these historical questions

too extensively; in the midst of many citations and incidents, they lose sight of the center of the question. Instead of clarifying, they can even inject uncertainty by including a number of contradictory inferences which baffle the mind. In short, discernment is needed to study theology, whether scholastic or positive, and to profit from either of them. This is the reason why we are also called upon to study Holy Scripture and Church history.

2. The study of Sacred Scripture should occupy all our life, whether for personal benefit or for that of our neighbor. The holy Books are our consolation, as they were for the Hebrews during the times of their afflictions. It is in the Scriptures that we learn the will of God and are animated to accomplish it, by meditating on the maxims they contain, and by considering, in the facts whose links they relate, how Providence arranges everything for the good of the elect. The Scriptures contain the two Testaments of our God and Father, sealed by the death of His Son. They are a divine letter which the Holy Spirit Himself dictated to the sacred writers in order to speak to us about a country from which we are, for a time, exiled. If one is ill, he can find in Scripture a remedy for all the afflictions of the soul. If one feels weak on the road to perfection, it is the spiritual milk which nourishes us. If one is valiant, it is the bread which increases our strength. If one is troubled by the fire of passions, it is the fountain of Heavenly water. If one is in darkness concerning the means to advance in virtue, it is a Heavenly torch which lights up our path. If one is tried by all kinds of temptations, it is a double-edged sword, a spiritual shield, to overthrow the most formidable enemies. Consequently, it is with sound discernment that the holy Fathers, especially St. Jerome and St. John Chrysostom, strongly advised the reading of the Scriptures, even to pious individuals who live in the world.

St. Dominic, that friend of the truth, encouraged his religious to read the Old and the New Testaments unceasingly, saying that without the knowledge of the sacred Books, one could not be an effective preacher. This is what Thierry of Appolda relates: *Et quia sine sanctorum notitia Scripturarum perfectus prædicator nemo esse potest*, (S. Dominicus) *hortabatur fratres, ut semper in Novi et Veteris Testamenti lectione essent* (*De S. Dominico Confessore Fundatore Ordinis FF. Prædicatorum. Acta Ampliora*, 195). This is why St. Dominic always carried with him a copy of the Bible; he read it so faithfully that he memorized almost all of it. According to certain historians, this notable saint, a perfect model for preachers, following the chapter of Bologna, addressed a letter to the religious of the Order in which he pronounced these words — which, in any case, truly praise his farsightedness and his fervor:



“So that you may abundantly possess a fiery eloquence of preaching and a salutary counsel in the confessional, you must continually follow the divinely inspired Holy Scripture and the immaculate Law of the Lord, converting souls by hearing, meditating, and thoroughly exploring it; always pursuing with zeal what is useful, and avoiding loss because of curiosity.”

*Ut ignito prædicationis eloquio et salutari in confessionibus consilio abundare possitis, Scripturas divinitus inspiratae et Legem Domini, immaculatam convertentem animas, audiendo, meditando, scrutando sectemini; studio semper utilium insistentes, et curiositatis dispendium devitantes.*

Our early fathers, receptive to those counsels, applied themselves earnestly to the study of the Scriptures. They had memorized the text in large part and wrote excellent works to make it easier to understand them. One would need to engage in a holy rivalry to follow their example.

Very wisely, then, did many of our General Chapters, in conformity with the recommendations of the Council of Trent, prescribe the appointment of a professor of the Holy Bible in our convents. While they forbade simple novices from studying philosophy and theology, they imposed on them the duty to study Sacred Scripture, especially the New Testament, and to memorize certain passages so as to converse with each other during recreation.

With greater reason the student novices must apply themselves to this reading. Simple and student novices should read the Holy Book with profound reverence, cherishing all the words, even those they do not understand, since all of them were inspired by the Spirit of God. The more they are inscrutable, the more they bear the imprint of His Majesty. In reading three chapters of the Bible every day, by the end of the year, one will have traversed all of Scripture without too much difficulty, and will quickly understand it, since the best commentary on Scripture is Scripture itself.

3. The novices must also apply themselves to the study of Church history, which they will find pleasant and very useful. Very pleasant, because if there is satisfaction in knowing the history of one's family, of his birthplace, of his country, it is infinitely more satisfying to know the remarkable deeds of the Church, which is our true family, our fatherland, our kingdom. Indeed, Church history teaches us all that concerns this family: what occurred at the Councils; what was the faith of the Fathers of the Church who composed them; what heresies the Councils condemned; what dogmas they established; what canons they promulgated; what rules of morality they prescribed; during

which periods, in what places, under what kingdoms, and under whose pontificates the Councils were held. It is through this history that we learn about the uninterrupted succession of Sovereign Pontiffs; the rules they set for faith and morals; the heretics they condemned; the decretals they published; the decisions they made, and all the other important activities they undertook for the good of religion.

This study is very useful: indeed, it is from church history that we learn what the discipline of the Church was from age to age; how it changed from time to time in minor aspects, and how it differs today from what it was formerly — not because She changed her goal, which is the sanctification of souls, but to succeed in attaining it more easily. In studying this history, we learn about the lives of the holy Fathers and the other saints of each age; we see the periods in which they lived; the influence they had on their times; the moral life they upheld; the spiritual schools they founded; the virtues they practiced; and how, as each group grew in some perfection, when taken together, they expressed in themselves and in their works the perfection and the overall resemblance of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many other advantages of studying the history of the Church; unfortunately, for having neglected this study, many scholastic theologians fell into significant errors, making no distinction between events, times, places, and persons, and neglecting to clarify sufficiently the dogmas themselves — this due to a poor understanding of the links between the facts related to the attacks and the defense involved therein.

This abundance of material which our Constitutions order us to study ought not to discourage us. On the contrary, it should spur us on to get to work early and not to lose a moment so that we may learn, little by little, and in sequence, details so very necessary, lofty, instructive, and appealing. Each friar, it is true, is not required to have comprehensive knowledge of all these topics, but all friars are bound to learn something about them, according to the capacity of their mind. Both the man who used to his advantage his two talents, as well as the one who had received five, earned the reward of entering into the joy of the Lord. It is not extraordinary knowledge that brings glory to the saints, but rather eminent virtue, such as charity, humility, and regular observance.

While one is young and still attending classes, he should not read many books, either of philosophy or of theology. This multiplicity of works would only overload his mind and confuse his ideas. Students should be satisfied with studying their lessons and with striving to understand them well. In order to be successful in this endeavor, it is not sufficient for them to study the lesson every day before class, but to review it from time to time. Thus, they are likely to understand thereafter what at first they could not. Their mind will slowly open

up, their ideas will link together and be enlightened. Besides their notebooks, theologians have the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas; they read and study it diligently, in parallel with the sequence in their classes. Nonetheless, when one is obliged to debate, he may consult another author, looking there for help with objections. Moreover, it is good from time to time to consult dissertations on Holy Scripture, the Councils, the Sovereign Pontiffs, and the holy Fathers. This diversity of sources, when not excessive but linked to the principal goal, refreshes the mind while at the same time enriching it.

It is only after completing their program that the novices will be allowed to study theology, Sacred Scripture, and Church history in authors who treat these topics more extensively — the better to learn them and to become, by this increase in knowledge, more capable of serving Holy Mother Church.

### § III – *How study should be enlivened*

It is not enough to acquire knowledge while studying; one must also become holy. If we hope that study will sanctify us, we need first of all to sanctify study. To this end:

1° Before beginning, study must be offered to God in union with Our Lord Jesus Christ, to contribute to His glory and to accomplish His will; to bring about our sanctification and that of our neighbor; to practice obedience; to acquire the spirit of penance by bearing with the difficulty which one sometimes has in studying and in keeping silence in the cell. A simple lifting up of heart and mind to God gathers together all these motives.

He would be very unhappy and senseless who studied for inferior and earthly motives. If we studied simply to know, this would indicate curiosity; if for esteem, vanity; if only out of pleasure, self-love; if for some temporal advantage, base self-interest; if by habit and custom, we would lose before God the merit and the reward for our work. Consequently, we need to purify our intention at the beginning of our studies and look for nothing else but the Divine Master, following the example of St. Thomas who used to say to the Lord: “Non nisi Te, Domine!” *I ask for no other reward than You, O my God!* As we continue our studies, we should renew often this sincerity of intention with heart and voice.

2° One should also become accustomed, while working, to placing himself every so often in the presence of God, to elevating heart and mind to Him; to arousing in the soul some short aspirations to the Lord and tender affections for Him; to looking at pious images, such as the crucifix or the Blessed Virgin. One could engage in these actions especially when the clock chimes, when turning a page, or

when one has an internal inclination. Far from diverting study, these elevations to Heaven contribute to making it more valuable, because they keep the mind more recollected. A recollected mind is indeed more likely to grasp difficult topics, especially divine ones.

3° One must also end a study period by principle of virtue and especially by obedience. This is why, when the Office bell sounds, or when the bell calls us to another community exercise, or when we hear the bedtime signal, we should immediately cease working so as to obey the superiors and God. At the end of our study period, we should place ourselves in the presence of God, thanking Him for the time He allotted for us to be instructed and asking His pardon for our faults. By leaving the books and effectively setting study aside, we will be far from bringing along our preoccupations into prayer, Office, and the Mass. If we are careful to sanctify study in this way, it will become a great help to piety. If, however, we were not careful to offer it to God, and if, to save time, we omitted part of our duty, this would wither the heart and weary the spirit, and lead to a thousand distractions and faults.

Our illustrious teacher in study, by the depth of his knowledge and the eminence of his sanctity, is St. Thomas Aquinas. His teaching was adopted by the Church, authorized by Councils, and canonized, as it were, by the Supreme Pontiffs. *It is inspired. . . It contains as many miracles as articles* (John XXIII). *It is truly and eminently Catholic* (Urban V). *It has bewildered and overcome all heresies. . . It is the very sure measuring rod of Christian truth* (St. Pius V). *It reaches an admirable status and clarity, and entirely without error* (Clement VIII). *It allows the Church to triumph over all the attacks of heretics* (Paul V). *Its principles are unshakable, very reliable, and beyond any level of praise* (Alexander VII). *It has been approved by Jesus Christ, Who said: "You have written well of me, Thomas"* (Clement VIII). Lastly, *this teaching is so comprehensive that it contains all the knowledge of the ancients, just as the sea embraces the various rivers it receives* (Leo XIII).

By fidelity to following the Angel of the Schools, in spite of the natural weakness and rashness of the human spirit, on the whole we have been able to remain greatly attached to truth and to avoid letting ourselves be carried away by all winds of novel opinions. It is this very predilection which attracted to our Order the esteem and confidence of learned and respectable people, the friends of sound doctrine.

What a great source of consolation for the Friars Preachers to have as their teacher such a great saint and eminent Doctor! In particular, what happiness for those religious whose proximity allows them to pray often before his relics! Along with the Church, they must ask for themselves and for their brothers "the grace of understanding

what he taught, so as to become scholars, and that of imitating the virtues he practiced, so as to become saints." *Ea quae docuit intellectu conspiciere, et quae egit imitatione complere* (Office of St. Thomas).

§ IV – *Important advice from St. Thomas  
to study usefully and piously* (Opus 68)

These counsels were sent as a letter to a student named John, who had asked St. Thomas for advice.

1° *First of all, do not study the great problems*, the holy Doctor begins telling his young disciple, *but the lesser ones, because one reaches an understanding of more difficult topics through easier ones.* — It is, in fact, a very common fault among young students to want to learn and understand everything, even what is most arduous, because of the curiosity, self-conceit, and haste which are natural to them. As a result, when they find themselves unable to fathom those thorny questions, they become discouraged little by little and give up trying to study even easy matters. To avoid this trial, St. Thomas advises young persons to imitate the example of beginners in navigation. Just as navigators do not at first aim for the high seas, but practice a while near shore, so too the student must not jump into great difficulties but come to them little by little and by degrees, by striving to overcome the minor ones, the understanding of which will make the harder ones easier.

2° *Be slow to speak, and do not be in a hurry to go to the parlor.* — Silence is a great help for study and for piety, because it keeps the mind recollected. Recollection is an excellent preparation to understand clearly what we are studying. One should eschew inane conversations which make us lose the time intended for work as well as the spirit of devotion. Not only should one avoid speaking unnecessarily but also hastily, or answering rashly when in a group. On the contrary, one should weigh his words before uttering them. Even as a student, St. Thomas was always very reserved to the point that some of his classmates, in mockery of him, called him derisively the *Dumb Ox*. But when he finally broke his silence, he had become so brilliant and so saintly that his powerful voice did not cease to be heard throughout the world and today continues to gain more importance.

3° *Maintain a great purity of conscience.* — Purity of conscience also contributes to acquiring virtue and knowledge; moreover, it is said: "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God" (*Mt. 5:8*). A conscience well purified, in fact, is not impeded in its contemplation of truth by the disturbances and gloom of the passions. Nothing should be done that would soil it, so that eternal wisdom can communicate its lights to it. If one is careful to consecrate his study properly by offer-

ing it to God by means of a pure intention, study will not tarnish his conscience. But, if one engages in study for base motives, this mixture of earthly motives in a spiritual soul, elevated by grace, will indeed tarnish his conscience. As one progresses in knowledge, he will regress in piety, which is one of the greatest losses for a religious.

4° *Do not forego mental prayer.* — It is a frequent abuse to abandon prayer under the pretext of working for a longer period. Study that steals time destined for prayer is an accursed study. If on occasion, because of pressing duties, one is unable to make this prayer at the appointed time, he should very shortly make up for it. Diligence in this spiritual exercise favors the growth in study, for prayer is a sacred conversation of the soul with God. Now, when one is rigorous in conversing with Him — since He is the source of enlightenment and the Lord of knowledge — He will bless our efforts. He illumines the mind, and in a time that is materially briefer but solidly based on prayer, one gains more than he would have with longer study. This is especially true in the science of theology, which, like prayer, has God as its immediate object. It is true, however, that we do not consider Him in the two approaches under the same aspect. Nonetheless, it is the same God, and holy contemplation gives to the soul some thoughts, powers, and attractions that render the sacred science all the more advantageous. This is why the Church promotes the works of the saints, who were such great men of prayer!

5° *Love to remain in your cell.* — When one remains in his cell, he must necessarily be occupied in study or in prayer. Thus, every day, he grows both in knowledge and in virtue. There, one pauses to listen to the voice of God; there, one is even freer than in choir to give himself to a pious outpouring of the soul, to kneel, to prostrate, to kiss the crucifix, and to hear the counsels of Divine Wisdom. It is important, while young, to accustom oneself to staying in his cell in order to give himself over to these sweet occupations. By this dedication, the will become dear to us and will be our Paradise. However, if we accustom ourselves to leaving it, by reason of restlessness, instability, or laziness, it will become unbearable.

6° *Make yourself amiable to everyone.* — By its nature, virtue is quite amiable and everyone cherishes it in others, at least. Sometimes, though, knowledge alters the charm of virtue, whether because of the pomposity of the heart, which produces self-conceit and haughty words, or because it renders the mind abstruse and inattentive to certain external duties of goodwill and politeness, or because the fear of being disturbed in one's studies leads him to refuse services demanded by charity, or because he avoids occasions which would require him to devote himself to others. Humility, the spirit of faith, the love for Jesus Christ, and the practice of the holy presence of God fortify us against

these defects which are rather common among the learned. By isolating the latter excessively and relieving them of all moral authority over their followers, the defects prevent them from doing all the good of which they are capable.

7° *Do not seek to know what others are doing.* — Everyone should mind his own business. This is the way to be perfectly content and to avoid countless trifling concerns. Do we not have enough to do in examining our own faults and in working to correct them? The care of others should be left to those responsible. If something serious is seen, we need to inform the superior, in good conscience, for the good of everyone, in case he was not aware. On our death-bed, we will not give an accounting of the conduct of our brothers, but of what we ourselves have done. We will not be punished for the offenses of others, but for our own.

8° *Do not be too familiar with anyone and do not worry about what seculars do or say.* — Given that all we hear in the world is but a longing for honors, pleasures, riches, conceits, all of these we have left behind and disdained upon our entrance into the cloister, to become preoccupied with what is going on in the world would be to take back again little by little what we had abandoned so generously and to appear to favor what we had so openly despised. Whence the spirit of piety and of religious devotion weakens and, in particular, the spirit of humility, repentance, poverty, and recollection so favorable for concentration during study.

9° *More than anything else, avoid going into the city.* — A religious must remain in his cloister in order to pursue freely and continuously the sacrifice of self there that he promised to the Lord. From then on, in his solitude he is like a dead person in his tomb. There, he must hide his life in God with Jesus Christ. He must do this out of prudence, since he left the world because of its corruption and entered the cloister as a holy ark to avoid the flood of the age. It is appropriate, then, for him not to leave to go to the city, unless, like the dove from the ark, he goes out of obedience, of necessity, and only for fleeting moments. Wicked religious find ways to remain long, because they love corruption, like the raven of the deluge. But genuine religious find in the city nothing to refresh them; their outings have no other end than to recognize sorrowfully to what degree the times are flooded by passions, or to determine how they could bring the help of grace to them.

10° *Follow the examples of the saints.* — The religious works at becoming perfect. If he wishes to succeed, he must take the actions of the saints as a model. Their examples have a major influence for the training of our mind and heart. In order for those examples to become familiar, we need to read diligently the lives of the saints. This read-

ing, done with attentiveness and reverence, is suitable for us to correct our faults, to make us practice Christian and religious virtues, and to enkindle in our hearts the flames of God's love. The more we are absorbed in study, the more we should endeavor every day, as a wholesome diversion, to engage in spiritual reading. St. Dominic and St. Thomas read with delight the *Conferences* of Cassian to model their behavior on the words and the examples of the Fathers of the desert mentioned therein. However, we should especially read the lives of the saints of our Order. Since they are our fathers in the spirit of the religious family they began, it is fitting that, by faithfully imitating their piety and their virtues, we show ourselves to be their worthy offspring. Furthermore, St. Vincent Ferrer advises us to read often the lives of our early religious, so that by this reading we may provoke ourselves to love God, to consecrate ourselves entirely to Him, to practice great regularity of life, and to devote ourselves without reserve to the salvation of our neighbor.

11° *Imitate also the example of honorable people.* — The examples we encounter in the people we meet frequently have an even stronger appeal than the deeds recounted in books, because, without realizing it, we mold ourselves on those with whom we live. Accordingly, we must be on guard to avoid following the bad examples we might encounter. The dissipation of certain religious and the laxity into which entire monasteries fall often arise from some disorders begun therein. Indeed, the corruption of man's heart is so great that he tends to imitate the bad rather than the good. If some lax subjects are found in a community who nonetheless have authority by reason of their knowledge, their position, their talents for preaching or teaching, and who pass for having some other human merit, then their example is all the more dangerous when they break their Constitutions and complain about some minor points of the regular life. Whatever intellect, whatever knowledge, and whatever talent a religious might have, he should not be imitated unless his life is in conformity with the laws of perfection. Any example contrary to that of St. Dominic, from whatever high personage it may come, must be an object of abomination, not of imitation.

12° *Remember everything good that has been said, whoever the person who told you might be.* — By themselves, virtue and knowledge have so much authority and attractiveness that everyone praises them and has a hand in giving directions to acquire them, even those who do not at all cultivate them. One should be careful to derive gain from all the good advice proffered, from whatever side it came. Even though we should not imitate the evil others do, nonetheless we should not scorn the good things bad persons might say. If a false prophet preached the



adoration of the true God, we should take his advice to heart. In contrast, Moses said to the Israelites:

If there rise in the midst of thee a prophet or one that saith he hath dreamed a dream, and he foretell a sign and a wonder, and that come to pass which he spoke, and he say to thee: "Let us go and follow strange gods, which thou knowest not, and let us serve them," Thou shalt not hear the words of that prophet or dreamer: for the Lord your God trieth you, that it may appear whether you love him with all your heart, and with all your soul, or not. (*Deut.* 13:1-5)

13° *See to it that you understand thoroughly what you are reading and what you are being told, and resolve your doubts.* — For sound and useful study, it is important not to read too many books nor to listen to many discussions, but to penetrate their meaning. Otherwise, one acquires only superficial knowledge composed of a mass of incoherent ideas which fade away in a few days. By trying to understand what we study, we are adopting the genuine means to succeed in the branches of knowledge and to impress that learning deeply on our mind. To that end, serious reflection is required; to check whether we fully comprehend the matter, we should question ourselves as if we were before another person. When we realize that the light has not yet dawned on us, we need to seek it from a more knowledgeable person. There is no shame in having someone explain to us the difficulties we cannot penetrate. The mind of man is so limited that not only students but the learned themselves come upon questions that perplex them for a long time. Pride and bashfulness keep us from revealing our difficulties to anyone, but by reason and humility, we will be able to rise above this unfounded fear. Oftentimes, the doubt that we have expressed to another is the occasion for us to acquire, in a very short time, some new and very beautiful insights concerning topics that at first had confused us greatly.

14° *Try hard to imprint in your memory all that you can.* — Memorization is a great help to learning. It would be distressing to read much material and to retain so very little. In our youth, we ought to strive to develop this powerful but capricious faculty. In order to form it, it is good to learn something by heart each day. If at first this obligation is painful, later it will bring satisfaction. Little by little, one will acquire greater ease in retaining the thoughts and the expressions they take. Before anything else, the student should memorize every day at least part of his lessons. Besides perfecting memory, there is the advantage that, having difficulty in understanding the author at first, he will at least remember the terms. Later, when his mind opens up more completely to the topics treated, the memory will call up the

words already learned — words more exact and better chosen. There is great joy when the mind and memory work in tandem for learning, so that, on the one hand, memory provides the appropriate terms, while on the other, the mind penetrates their meaning and explains them. It is to prepare oneself to enjoy this advantage that one needs to exercise memory as much as possible and to fill it with the important matters which he reads and hears during the program of studies.

15° *Do not look for what is beyond your reach.* — According to His will, God gives men differing aptitudes for learning. He did not give all of them the same degree of ability and insight. Each one must be satisfied with the talents Providence has allotted him and work to cultivate them well. One will have to give a strict accounting for the abilities received from God for study which may have been lost due to laziness. But it would also be a fruitless exercise to pretend to raise oneself to something beyond his level. When we notice eminent talents in others, we should keep ourselves from envy and rather rejoice because of them. One should abase himself for the feelings of envy aroused in this regard and thank God for the share, always too large, that we have received from his bounty. If we had been favored with more striking talents, perhaps we would have abused them through pride, ambition, or self-conceit. We must therefore declare regarding the qualities of mind what we have already said about those of grace: “Let every spirit praise the Lord!” *Omnis spiritus laudet Dominum* (Ps. 150:5).

## ARTICLE IX

### On preaching

It is the custom among us to have the novices preach in the refectory in the presence of the community. The Father Master assigns the topics; after the novices have written sermons, they present them to him for review, either by him personally or by others, so as to make corrections. Subsequently, they can practice several times before a few religious who are able to instruct them on how to speak well, in the proper regulation of their voice, their gestures, and their external demeanor. It is very appropriate to train the novices in preaching early, since this is the purpose of our Order.

Here we will not go into much detail about the principles, the rules, and the tropes of eloquence because we presuppose that, before entering religious life, the novices have had one year of rhetoric. Those who have not followed such a program can learn its principles in specialized works. It will be sufficient to give them, in abbreviated form, some of the counsels which the most experienced masters of Christian and evangelical eloquence present to young preachers, especially with regard to the composition of the discourse, the delivery, and the moral qualities required in a minister of the word of God.

#### § I – *Composition*

1° The *text* of the sermon must be drawn from the Scriptures and taken ordinarily in the literal sense. If it were interpreted in an allegorical sense, it would be obscure and to explain it would take too long. It must have a natural connection with the subject to be treated so that the clear divisions of the sermon can be seen. It has to be translated exactly, avoiding all rewording. The Book of Ecclesiasticus [Sirach], which praises the saints of the Old Testament, provides many themes which can profitably be applied to panegyrics of the saints of the New Covenant. Certain preachers adapt their sermon to a text of Scripture chosen beforehand; others find it more useful to search for a passage only after the sermon has been written. Everyone is free to pursue his own way.

2° The *exordium* is intended to render the listeners attentive, docile, and favorable. To that end, it needs to be clear, concise, simple, and polished. So as to be *clear*, it must with precision explain or apply

the theme of the sermon, distinctly present the subject to be conveyed to the hearers, and have them grasp the meaning from its most interesting aspect. It must be *concise*, so as not to wear out the attention of the hearers from the very beginning. This would be an irreparable mistake, given the influence of first impressions on the human mind. That is why one must get directly to the subject intended and avoid straying from it, even to add some very good words. To be *simple*, the introduction must be presented in a natural style without figures of speech, and develop a single thought, without proofs or amplification. It must be *polished*, without, however, being either too showy or too affected. In such a case, the speaker would not be able to sustain his excessively striking opening for long. It is better to begin with much restraint, which is why the opening does not call for gestures.

3° The *division* of the sermon, to which the opening leads, presents the subject strictly in several parts or propositions which together completely encompass it. These parts should not contain each other, although they must be tied together so that the last one should naturally follow from the preceding one, and their sequence should cover the entire subject, without loss of time, repetition, or confusion. The ancients divided sermons up to even four parts, preceded by two exordia: one to prepare an invocation to the Holy Spirit, the other to announce the division. Today, though, the sermon is usually confined to one introduction and two or three points. The exordium is ended by asking for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. However, this invocation is not used in more familiar sermons of piety. In the exordium or in the peroration, the praise we sometimes address to some clerical dignitary in attendance should be rare, moderate, and short. Ordinarily, a few phrases will suffice. The compliment should embody some tactful and pious reference, without being explicit or exaggerated.

4° The *proofs* for each point must be founded on certain and evident principles, which are established by Sacred Scripture, the decisions of the Church, the works of the Holy Fathers, by solid reasons, or by the facts of indisputable experience. From these principles one must draw out the proofs through natural consequences, so as to highlight what one seeks to demonstrate, and to convince, persuade, touch, and move the hearer. One starts with the more solid reasons and ends with the better ones. Indeed, the better ones are not always those which embody intrinsically a greater amount of truth, but those which are the most striking, the most interesting, and the most touching, in view of the circumstances of time and location, the character of the audience, and the manner in which the rest of the sermon is arranged.

5° If the sermon is one on *morality*, practical consequences of the principle in question need to be drawn and precisely detailed,

showing the advantages of the virtue to be promoted. This includes an indication of the means to practice the virtue effectively, an arousal of horror at the opposed vice, the destruction of false pretexts which had seemed to favor it, and a listing of the most simple and most effective remedies.

6° If the sermon concerns a certain *mystery*, the meaning of the latter needs to be explained, so as to instruct the faithful about the teachings of their religion. For sometimes even educated persons know little. Subsequently, one draws out the consequences, so as to honor this mystery by practices of piety and of virtue.

7° If the discourse is a *homily*, one must explain each part of the day's Gospel reading and draw out simple reflections. Sometimes the topic is changed according to the selection. At other times the homily is reduced to a single subject, as if it were a moral discourse. When the foundation of the homily is a parable, one attempts to highlight the spirit more than the letter; the teachings drawn from the text should be practicable to everyone.

8° If it is a *panegyric*, one must praise the actions and the virtues of the saint and intersperse short but well chosen moral reflections in order to move the hearers to imitate the hero being celebrated. Panegyrics demand an elevated style; their introduction is simply a summary of the sermon. In praising a saint, one must avoid measuring him against others and placing them below him; this would be offensive praise. God alone knows the measure of charity in the elect, as well as that of their worth and their virtue. We should avoid making any kind of sermon too long, whether in the principles or the proofs, in the lesson to be learned, the citations, or the symbols and the images, so as not to overwork the memory nor tire the hearer.

9° The *peroration*, which is the conclusion of the sermon, consists of a recapitulation and an arousal in the audience of feelings appropriate to the subject that was developed. One should present the principal points in broad strokes to increase the attention of the hearers. Then, one should strive to move them and help them develop holy sentiments and strong resolutions. It is praiseworthy, when the topic allows, to finish with a short prayer addressed to God, to Mary, or to the saint about whom we spoke.

## § II – Action

By action, we mean the tone and the inflections of the voice, the gestures or movements of the body, and the external demeanor of the preacher. From one point of view, this part of public speaking is most necessary because it strikes our senses, produces lively impressions in our mind, touches the heart, excites and changes emotions,

with the result that a mediocre sermon, but one raised by pleasing and powerful actions, will be more efficacious than an excellent sermon without them. It is the duty of the orator to enter into the soul of his hearers and to shake them up in favor of the good, for which we are, by nature, too indifferent. Now, to produce this shake-up requires the work of everything: the tone of voice, the gestures of the body, and the facial countenance.

1° The *voice* must be natural. To achieve that quality, the voice we use in public must be the same as that we use in conversation, with the only difference being that in private conversations the voice is not as loud as when we preach, because in the pulpit, the size of the location and the number of hearers demand a higher volume so as to be heard by all. Moreover, we must make the voice more resonant and more melodious. For the voice to be natural, it must reflect differences in all the tones of pronunciation according to different subjects, feelings, and images.

The voice will be natural if it is clear and distinct. Poor articulation, especially of final syllables — for we tend to neglect them — is a serious defect, for thereby the total meaning of the phrase is lost. Finally, the voice must be controlled. Too slow a delivery would also be a defect, because it is likely to tire the audience instead of moving it. In contrast, an overly strong exertion of the voice and too great a haste are serious defects, in which the desire even to make good haste succeed often falls. One should strive for the happy medium, in proportion to what one says, pronouncing with seriousness, kindness, and moderation the matters which require them, and with passion those which are intended to persuade the hearer.

2° For a *gesture* to be natural, without affectation or excessive repetition, it must accompany the words and the sentiments of the soul, whose interpreter it is: sometimes assertive, sometimes commanding attention, sometimes supplicating, sometimes menacing, etc. It is appropriate that the right hand begin and end the speech. The left hand rarely gestures by itself, except to register indignation, contempt, or repulsion. But it does, indeed, accompany the right hand advantageously for a larger and more expressive movement. One ought to avoid exaggerated gestures, such as lifting up the hands and shaking them to excess. Such affected gestures might work the first few times, but they are ostentatious, spoil the simplicity of taste, and, before long, tire the listener. It is an elementary precept that one should never clap his hands nor strike the pulpit with them. It is appropriate to remark, nonetheless, as regards all these rules, that an ardent zeal which sets them aside sometimes makes a strong impression on souls.

The expression of the gesture must never mimic the actions of others, like those of actors; this would be to demean the nobility of the Christian pulpit.

3° The *external appearance* of the preacher includes the posture along with all the movements of the body, especially of the head, the face, the eyes, and the hands. It must be natural, accompanied by decorum, seriousness, simplicity, gentleness, and piety — but with nothing unmanly or sentimental.

The movement of the body must be moderate. If the body were either immobile or too agitated, the action would become disagreeable. One may sit down to present a simple account, develop a narrative, or give an explanation. But one must be standing in order to move and excite feelings. One should avoid moving from one side of the pulpit to the other, slouching, or resting one's elbows while ungraciously bending toward the audience. One's head should remain upright, without an affected rigidity, and without being held too high, or too low, or too bent to one side. One must keep the shoulders in their natural position and not shrug or shake them. The lips should not be too widely open, but stay in the position given by nature. The face is what strikes the most in an action. All the movements of piety, joy, sadness, humility, recollection, gentleness, supplication, indignation, menace, etc., can imprint themselves there, according to the different subjects being treated and the corresponding emotions of the soul.

The eyes will be restrained, without being too open, too raised, or too lowered. Given the great variety of feelings that could occur during the sermon, so will there be a variety of expressions in glances, if the soul sees things appropriately. When the eyes rest exclusively on a portion of the audience, the others are hurt by this. If they stare at the walls, no one is moved. This is why, without exceeding the bounds of restraint, they must embrace the entire audience and hold it captive. When one has learned to coordinate the expression of the eyes and the movement of gestures, these two powers reinforce each other. By eliminating the need for calculated effects, he gives truth a great influence over hearts.

### § III — *The moral qualities of the preacher*

The pagan philosophers themselves considered the moral qualities of the orator as the most important condition for success. But it is above all in the preaching of the Gospel that they are of great help and of absolute necessity. Accordingly, those who wish for the word of Jesus Christ to be fruitful for themselves and for their neighbor, must, first of all, cultivate a great regard for Christ, and then prepare them-

selves by purity of intention, docility, repentance, prayer, and a spirit of zeal fired by perfect charity.

1° First of all, preachers must convince themselves of the excellence of this ministry. It is excellent from the point of view of its author — who is, in fact, Jesus Christ, the Son, the Word, the Wisdom of God, its first and principal minister. He wanted to choose the holy Apostles for Himself, to send them to the ends of the world to establish His Church by their preaching. This ministry is excellent by reason of its end, which is to glorify God, to keep souls from Hell, to assure them of Heaven, and thereby to complete the great work accomplished at the price of the blood and the death of Our Lord. Finally, it is excellent because of the reward it obtains for those who practice it faithfully, for, as St. James says, “He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). St. Gregory assures us that there is no sacrifice more agreeable to the Lord than work for the salvation of souls. Moreover, for the works of preachers and teachers, He reserves in Heaven a special reward, namely, a crown and a distinct glory, just as there is a special crown for virgins and a choice palm for martyrs.

2° Those who are called to the ministry of preaching ought to have a very great purity of intention. That is why they must be especially attentive to avoid smugness and seeking vain glory; not to desire honors, praise, and respect from hearers; not to bask in the praises offered, nor the congratulations which usually contain little sincerity or truth. It is not even sufficient for them to refrain from deliberately performing actions of vainglory. Since the source of such actions is buried deep within us, we need to look for it, to understand it, to fear it, to fight it, and often to do penance for the faults which we unknowingly commit, saying with David: “From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord.” *Ab occultis meis munda me, Domine* (Ps. 19:13).

3° Ministers of the divine Word must have great humility. This abasement will help them realize their unworthiness, and will inspire in them a great distrust in their individual strength. Indeed, it must be said again, whatever natural talents they may have, they will achieve no good results by themselves without divine help, which alone can strengthen the just and recall sinners. This is why, before writing their sermons and before ascending to the pulpit, they must ask God, with ardor and trembling, for the graces they and their hearers need, so that the sermon will not be ineffectual. Should there be any good results, the preachers will be quick to attribute all honor to God. They must also avoid seeking temporal self-interest, foreswearing ambition and higher ministries with their larger salaries. Rather, they should consider themselves fortunate in preaching at locations



assigned by the superiors, and doing this more willingly when the honoraria might be smaller. Their great gain is what the Scriptures call *winning souls*. The work of converting souls is so difficult, according to St. Gregory, that it is a greater miracle to convert a sinner by means of preaching and prayer than to raise someone from death. *Majus est miraculum, prædicationis et orationis solatio peccatorem convertere, quam mortuum suscitare* (*Dialogi* 3, 17).

4° We have just mentioned prayer; indeed, it is by prayer that the preacher obtains from God the graces to achieve in this sacred ministry the results of conversion, which infinitely surpass his ability. Consequently, it follows that the more difficult the apostolic labors of the great saints were, the longer and more fervent became their prayers.

5° Through penance and mortification, preachers atone for their own sins, complete in themselves what is lacking in the Passion of Jesus Christ, and acquire a kind of right to the application of the merits of His blood, not only for the conversion of sinners, but also for the sanctification of the just, which is one of the most worthy objects of concern for the preacher, and for his daily consolation.

6° Finally, preachers must have vehement zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, springing from an ardent charity. This spirit of charity is the best master in the art of preaching, since it allows preachers to imprint hatred for sin and the practice of virtue on the minds and hearts of the faithful. This imprinting comes from the forcefulness of their manner of speech, which make their thoughts and actions lively and colorful according to the nature of the subject being treated and the persons addressed. All the while, they inspire the faithful by turns to fear Hell, to desire Heaven, to repent for sins committed, to have confidence in God, and to resolve to serve Him better.

Happy are those who are called to the Order of St. Dominic, since it is consecrated exclusively to supernatural works of the apostolate! This is its calling, and thus far it has remained faithfully observed. In all parts of the world, the Order has furnished countless preachers and missionaries who spread everywhere the name of Jesus Christ. Every religious of this Order needs to say with St. Paul: "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel . . . for a necessity lieth upon me." *Vae mihi si non evangelizavero . . . necessitas enim mihi incumbit* (*I Cor.* 9:16).



These considerations are sufficient to beget in the novices great esteem for their vocation; much gratitude to God, who condescended to call them; deep love for Our Father St. Dominic, who is their first model and their principal support; finally, a firm resolution to remain faithful to their Constitutions. Indeed, this fidelity will lead infallibly to the imitation of their beloved Father, and to the realization of their beautiful mission, which is to arrive in Heaven in the company of a great number of souls that have been saved.



**INSTRUCTIONS FOR NOVICES**

**PART THREE**

**Concerning the vows and the obligations  
of the religious state**

## PREFACE

It is very useful to devote a special and attentive study to certain important virtues. In this way, it will be easier to understand their nature, to discern their genuine character, to learn by what means they increase or decrease, to study their mutual relationships, and to join them together in the art of living, so that one does not impede another or the less noble move ahead of the one to be preferred. This is the goal of this third part.

It has been divided into nine chapters, treating:

- 1° the vow of poverty;
- 2° the vow of chastity;
- 3° the vow of obedience;
- 4° the observation of the Rule;
- 5° the obligation to work for perfection;
- 6° silence;
- 7° fervor;
- 8° devotion;
- 9° the duties of a docile subject,  
and those of a competent superior.

# CHAPTER I

## The vow of poverty

### ARTICLE I

#### **Advantages of evangelical poverty**

In and of itself, poverty is not a virtue because, if it is forced and involuntary, it would only offer an occasion for impatience, grumbling, complaints, theft, and many other sins. “Through poverty many have sinned.” *Propter inopiam multi delinquerunt* (*Sir.* 27:1). It is poverty of spirit that is a virtue.

Now there are two kinds of poverty of spirit: one is common to all Christians and is obligatory; this we call “Christian poverty.” The other is proper to religious persons; this is poverty of counsel and of perfection, which we generally call “evangelical poverty.”

Christian poverty consists in the detachment of the mind and of the heart concerning the goods and riches which one possesses. Or, if one has none of these, it is a complete submission to the divine will, so that, not desiring anything here below, we are entirely satisfied with the insecure state in which God has placed us. This Christian poverty is an obligation and a precept for everyone, for, as Jesus Christ has said: “Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple.” *Qui non renuntiat omnibus quæ possidet non potest meus esse discipulus* (*Lk.* 14:33).

Evangelical and religious poverty consists not only in the detachment of the mind and the heart regarding the goods of this world, but also in the effective abandonment and complete renunciation of the riches we own or we could own. The renunciation truly comes by reason of a solemn vow, taken to follow the counsel which Jesus Christ offered to the young man mentioned in the Gospel, to whom He said: “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor ... and come, follow me.” *Si vis perfectus esse, vade, vende universa quæ habes*

*et da pauperibus. . . et sequere me* (Mt. 19:21). This poverty has very great advantages. It is, in fact, the foundation of perfection, the source of all the virtues, the cause of true happiness in this world, the sign of our resemblance to Christ and to the first Christians. Finally, it gives us the right to eternal happiness in the kingdom of Heaven.

1° Religious poverty is the foundation of evangelical perfection, which itself is the goal of religious life. Indeed, it was this poverty which Our Lord, as we have just heard, counseled to the young man of the Gospel who aspired to become perfect. Quite the opposite, avarice, or the desire to own goods, and attachment to the riches of this world are the root of all evil. *Radix omnium malorum cupiditas*, as St. Paul said (*I Tim.* 6:10). Indeed, those who wish to become rich fall into the net of the devil and into innumerable useless and dangerous desires, which will imperceptibly lead them to perdition. This unregulated love for worldly goods is one of the greatest obstacles to salvation. It sustains all the passions, troubles cities and kingdoms, divides even the closest families, provokes children against their parents, incites lawsuits between brothers, breaks even the oldest and most tender friendships; it blinds the spirit and hardens the heart; it leads to disloyalty, to injustice, to usury, to robbery, to blows. In sum, it is a mark of reprobation. Our Lord has indeed cried: *Vae vobis divitibus!* "Woe to you that are rich," (*Lk.* 6:24) whose heart is tied to riches. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven." *Facilius est camelum per foramen acus transire quam divitem intrare in regnum caelorum* (Mt. 19:24).

Voluntary and religious poverty of spirit protects us from all these evils which greed produces. Because of that, it is the foundation of evangelical perfection. We see in the Gospel that Jesus Christ established it as the first means to arrive at the happiness of Heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." *Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum* (Mt. 5:3). In what, indeed, does Christian perfection consist if not in perfect charity? According to St. Thomas, voluntary poverty, by which one deprives himself of all property, is the principal foundation on which to establish the edifice of perfect charity. *Ad perfectionem charitatis acquirendam primum fundamentum est voluntaria paupertas ut aliquis absque proprio vivat* (ST II-II, q. 86). Since charity is opposed to greed and destroys it, the more that greed is diminished by voluntary poverty, all the more does charity protect and perfect itself by the interior detachment from riches and the genuine abandonment we make of them. "The diminishment of greed is the nourishment of charity; perfection is entirely without greed." *Nutriminum charitatis est imminutio cupiditatis; perfectio, nulla cupiditas* (St. Aug., *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 83, 36).

2° The spirit of poverty is also the foundation and the source of Christian and religious virtue. By detaching ourselves from temporal goods, it makes us more receptive to the truths of faith. It is a proof of our lively faith when we recognize the poor in spirit as happy, despite the natural inclination which strongly moves us to surround ourselves with the goods of earth. The spirit of poverty also produces a firm hope of possessing as reward, one day, the kingdom of Heaven. Once it has separated us from the goods we own on earth, it works to make us love God with an unalloyed and disinterested love. In effect, charity, like a fire, easily flashes up in a heart which has left everything, scorned everything on earth, so as to serve its Creator. Finally, poverty makes us humble by not leaving anything around us that could lead to pride. This is why we sometimes mistake poverty of spirit for humility, because these two virtues are friends and like sisters.

Poverty of spirit preserves chastity by removing from the body an abundance of food and expensive clothes. It sustains obedience because the spirit detached from everything willingly asks for the necessary permissions, and easily submits itself to the authority of superiors. It is a help in acquiring patience by continually calling for the practice of mortification. It is, in a word, the source and preservation of all the virtues, as St. Ambrose told us: "Just as the opportunities provided by things are the instruments of all the vices, so the denial of them is the begetter and nurse of all the virtues." *Ut rerum facultates sunt instrumenta omnium vitiorum, sic harum abnegatio generatrix est nutritrixque omnium virtutum.* Now religious poverty has this advantage over Christian poverty, that it is much easier to have the mind and the heart unfettered by goods and riches if we have abandoned them, than if we still possess them and if we actually administer them. This is why the young man whom Jesus Christ counseled to sell his numerous possessions, if he would be perfect, and distribute them to the poor, went away very sad. He had the wish for perfection but lacked the courage for it: *Abiit tristis, erat enim habens multas possessiones (Mt. 19:22).*

3° Voluntary poverty and especially religious poverty is the cause and the source of the true happiness we can enjoy in this life. In contrast, riches are the origin of all our misfortunes. The whole world wants to be happy, but this felicity for which we strive unceasingly consists especially in peace of the soul. Whoever does not have a restful spirit is not happy. One might have goods in abundance and inexhaustible treasures, but, far from satisfying us, all of this serves only to torment us and to arouse a multitude of passions. Ambition, avarice, envy, with their entourage of insatiable desires, unceasingly torture the heart. What activity, what trouble we give ourselves in order to acquire possessions! What cares to preserve them! What fear of losing

them! When they do slip from us, what sorrow, what regret, what blame, what a vain return to the past! The happiness that riches are supposed to provide in this life are therefore only illusory. In reality, they stand as the greatest obstacle to our genuine happiness: "Blessed is he who has whatever he wills and wills nothing evil." *Beatus est qui habet quidquid vult et nihil mali vult* (Aug., *De Trinitate*, I, 13).

Since all the goods of this world are incapable of filling our heart, only voluntary poverty will confer happiness. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." *Beati pauperes spiritu*. It achieves this result by preventing us from desiring what we do not have, while detaching our heart and affections from what we do possess. In this way, it obtains for us that peace and tranquility which arise from humble submission to the will of God. In addition, it delivers us from all the difficulties, sorrows, unrest, and impediments which accompany the ownership of earthly goods, and which torment whoever is tied to them. Through poverty, we enjoy an intimate satisfaction, superior to all the pleasures of the senses and of the world, because we think only of serving God, of keeping His commandments, of fulfilling the duties of our state. The practice of all the virtues thus becomes easy for us when voluntary poverty serves as their foundation.

4° Another great advantage that poverty of spirit brings, to the religious who steadfastly embraces it and strictly practices it, is to make him like Jesus Christ. Since He was rich and the master of all things, the Savior wished to make Himself poor for love of us so as to serve as model and to enrich us from His poverty. *Propter nos egenus factus est cum esset dives, ut illius inopia vos divites essetis* (II Cor. 8:9). Jesus practiced poverty from his very birth, during all His life, and at His death. He wanted to be born to poor parents, to come into the world in a stable, to be laid in a manger on a bit of straw. Later, during His hidden life, he earned His daily bread by the sweat of His brow like a simple worker. During His public life, he ate common foods, owned nothing, and could say of Himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not [any] where to lay his head" (*Mt.* 8:20). In His Passion, which contains the most lofty lessons and the greatest evidence of His love, He was even stripped of His garments, and he was naked when He died on the Cross.

Given all this, why should we be surprised at the very special affection that Jesus Christ has for the poor? It was poor shepherds He first called to Himself; to them, He gave the honor of adoring Him in his crib. Poor sinners became His disciples, and He entrusted them with the mission of preaching His doctrine. Besides, in the infant Church, poverty was the object of general imitation. Accordingly, goods were placed in common and the rich sold their inheritance, bringing the proceeds to the feet of the Apostles for distribution ac-



ording to the needs of each. Several Fathers of the Church, among them St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. John Chrysostom, even thought that the Apostles and a certain number of the early Christians made a vow of poverty. It is for that reason, they said, that St. Peter punished with death Ananias and his wife Saphira, who had kept part of the proceeds from the sale of their goods. In fact, if they had not made such a vow, they could have retained everything without lying to God and without sinning against the Holy Spirit, as St. Peter reproached them: "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." *Non es mentitus hominibus sed Deo (Acts 5:4)*.

5° The rewards that Jesus Christ promises to those who embrace poverty are admirable. He gave them a firm right to the kingdom of Heaven and the possession of God: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" (*Mt. 5:3*). He does not say that the kingdom of Heaven *will* some day belong to the poor, as He did for the other beatitudes, rather, He assures them that even in this life it belongs to them by right — even though they do not yet enjoy it — because they bought it by detachment and abandonment of everything. In addition, Jesus Christ promises to give them a more eminent place than others in Heaven and to raise them to the honor of judging other men with Him. When St. Peter replied to Him: "Behold we have left all things, and have followed thee: what therefore shall we have?" Jesus said to them: "Amen I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel." *Sedebitis et vos super sedes duodecim, judicantes duodecim tribus Israel (Mt. 19:27-28)*.

It is the common opinion of the Church Fathers that these words of the divine Savior must be understood as applying not only to the Apostles personally, but also to everyone following after them who will have embraced voluntary poverty and been consecrated to it by vow, as do the religious. If they die in the state of grace, they will sit at the tribunal of the Son of Man, more to judge others than to be judged themselves. Finally, Jesus Christ promised the poor of spirit a hundredfold in this life. "Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting." *Centuplum accipiet et vitam æternam possidebit (Mt. 19:29)*. "He shall receive an hundred times as much, now in this time ... and in the world to come life everlasting." *Accipiet centice tantum, nunc in tempore hoc, et in sæculo futuro vitam æternam (Mk. 10:30)*.

Those who have left everything for God are, by that very fact, rewarded a hundredfold here on earth, either because they receive from Heaven spiritual goods and graces which are a hundred times

more valuable than temporal goods, or because, for the father and the mother they have left, God will give them several other fathers, brothers, and protectors who love them in a more advantageous supernatural manner and form Jesus Christ in them for life eternal. In place of the house they left, God will give many others in which His goodness will provide everything necessary. But if Divine Providence, which shines on them, allows them to be deprived of something, He knows how to make them find in this privation some benefit, peace, and happiness. With this peace of soul, they have no desires, worries, or distress concerning the goods of this world. Worthy imitators of the early Christians, they live as if owning nothing yet possessing everything: *Tamquam nihil habentes et omnia possidentes* (II Cor. 6:10).

These are the advantages of voluntary poverty, united to the authority of the examples of Jesus Christ, of the Apostles, and of the first Christians, which made all the founders of Orders resolve, supported in this by the Church, to establish the vow of poverty as a foundation of their institute. St. Dominic, in particular, was so enthusiastic about this virtue that, at the General Chapter which he held in Bologna in 1220, he gave up all possessions and all current or future income, even though his Order had been confirmed by Honorius III in 1216 with the power to own income and real property. This disposition was later modified, but the spirit must not change. We are always obliged to cultivate poverty as forming an essential duty of our vocation. The mitigation brought about concerning the outward application of the vow is even an obligation to work more to increase its spirit in ourselves, so that the strength of our virtue may not lose anything from the modifications brought by the times, the needs of apostolic ministry, or the lessening of the Christian direction in human societies.

## ARTICLE II

### Obligations of the vow of poverty

The vow of poverty consists in the renouncement of ownership of temporal goods. *Est abdicatio dominii rerum temporalium*. By this vow, religious renounce also the use of goods. But there is this difference between usage and ownership, that superiors may give to their subjects the use of temporal things which they need, while in no way can they grant them dominion or ownership of anything. The reason is simple: superiors are not masters of the meaning of the vows nor of the goods of the community; they are simply the dispensers, and in this dispensing they must follow the will of the God who chose them as His agents.

By the vow of poverty, the religious divests himself not only externally but also internally, detaching his spirit and heart from all worldly possessions, so as to be able to tie himself more freely to God alone and to enrich himself with spiritual goods. The greatest danger to fear in religion is the transgression of this fundamental obligation. Many are condemned because they do not observe it as they should, either because by their negligence they do not pay attention to all of its necessity and obligations, or because property coddles corrupt nature by procuring a soft and sensual life, or because man has a natural and violent passion for acquiring and disposing so as to satisfy his other passions — with the result that he easily deceives and blinds himself in this matter. It is important, then, that every individual be instructed in his duties and be attentive to fulfill them. This is why it will not be amiss to explain here, in detail, the obligations of the vow of poverty, not only as to what pertains to each religious in particular and the permissions he can obtain, but also as regards superiors or officials who assist them regarding the temporalities of the house, and, finally, the gravity of the sin of property, which everyone is liable to commit or to allow others to commit.

When our religious are only in simple vows, these principles undergo modifications which are explained during the novitiate. But as for the disposition of the heart, they must apply to themselves unreservedly all that we will be saying.

§ I - *The particulars*

The religious may not own any temporal item, because, by the vow of poverty, they have renounced the administration of worldly goods and have become incapable of possessing anything. This is why the Council of Trent formally declared that no religious, not even a superior, is allowed to possess or retain as his own, even in the name of the convent, any good movable or immovable, however he acquired it, and ordered that every good held against this prescription be forthwith turned over to the superiors so as to be incorporated into the mass of goods of the community. *Regularium tam virorum quam mulierum nemini liceat bona immobilia et mobilia, aut etiam nomine conventus, possidere vel tenere; sed statim ea superiori tradantur, conventuique incorporentur* (*De Reform. Sess. XXV, c. II*).

Religious are not allowed to dispose of anything at their own whim and without permission from the superior. Indeed, the owner of an item is the only one who can dispose of it as he wills. Now the religious, by making the vow of poverty, has renounced all administration and all rights on temporal goods. Moreover, even if he acquired any good by his own work, if he disposes of it without permission, he is acting as an owner and sins against his vow, and breaking the Rule: "Everything that a religious acquires, he acquires for the convent." *Quidquid acquirit monachus, acquirit monasterio*. Nor can the religious give away anything without permission: not money, furniture, books, nor even food, since one cannot give anything over which he lacks administrative power; and religious have administrative power over nothing. Accordingly, if they give something away without authorization, whoever received it is obliged to return it to the convent, which alone was and remains its owner.

In the two bulls by which he explained the Council of Trent, Pope Clement VII said that it is forbidden for all religious to give anything on their own, in whatever manner the object given away had come into their hands: whether it be, for example, a gift from parents, or a token of gratitude for services rendered, or the wages of a work, or honoraria from preaching. It stands to reason: by his vow, the religious has consecrated to God his goods, his work, his skills, his very person, by which he lost all rights to dispose of anything at his will. All that he has earned is joined to the common property, to help obtain for his brothers food, clothing, in a word, all that is necessary. *Id autem ita absolute et generatim vetitum intelligatur, ut neque omnino fas sit quiddam dare, tum ex fructibus, redditibus, proventibus, etc* (*Constitutione XXVIII, De Largitione Munerum, 3*).

Religious are not allowed to receive anything from the outside for themselves or for the monastery, such as money, clothes, or anything else, if they do not have permission. To act otherwise would be to acquire without authorization the administration or use of a particular object, in other words, to engage in an act of ownership. This is why he to whom we offer something must, before accepting it, request permission from the superior, if the latter is in the convent. If he is absent and there is some urgency, one may accept. But one is held to transmit what has been received into the hands of the superior as soon as possible. The superior, after having incorporated the item among the goods of the community, will allow its use by the brother to whom the object had been given or to any other brother, as he deems expedient. According to the regulations of our Order, one cannot hold for very long what one has received without the knowledge of the superior; within twenty-four hours the gift must be in his hands, under pain of severe penalties.

Religious cannot claim for themselves anything at all that belongs to the convent and serves it, without violating their vow of poverty. They are forbidden from taking clothing out of the clothes closet, bread or wine from the refectory, other foods from the larder, fruits from the garden; the same holds for other items destined for the individual use of brothers. If, without the knowledge of the superior, they retain what has been brought to them from the outside or which they took in the convent, they are guilty of an act of obvious stealing, and consequently of a serious sin when the matter is important. According to the words of St. Bernard, they are on the road to Hell: "If one has something private, or hidden, this is theft, this is manifest fraud, this is a great sin, this is the road to Hell." *Si habet aliquid peculiare, vel absconditum, hoc furtum est, hoc fraus est manifesta, hoc grande peccatum est, hoc est iter inferni* (Serm. 48 *ad Sec.*).

In the furnishing of their cells or in their clothing, religious are not allowed to have anything which manifests vanity, rarity, refinement, laxity, or superabundance; this would be contrary to the vow of poverty. The Council of Trent forbade superiors to tolerate these abuses: "Superiors may, however, permit them the use of movable goods to the degree that befits the lowly state of poverty that they have professed, though there should be nothing superfluous in this." *Mobilium vero usum ita superiores permittant ut eorum supellex statui paupertatis, quam professi sunt, conveniat, nihilque superfluum in ea sit* (Sess. XXV, c. 2). Nor is anyone allowed to introduce anything into his cell without first showing it to the superior, asking him for permission to use it. Even after he has been given the permission, he must remain disposed to return the object as soon as it is requested of him for transmission to another. Indeed, as to everything that serves the

brothers belonging to the convent and sharing in the common property, it is the superior, the dispenser of the conventual goods, who has the sole right to arrange for their distribution.

Buying, selling, and trading are absolutely forbidden to religious. Indeed, trading endangers the goods we have in order to obtain goods we do not have. Religious have no temporal goods which they can risk, improve, or acquire. Nor can they buy or borrow anything, because purchasing transfers to us also the administration of what we acquire and borrowing the possession of what has been loaned. As for the interdiction on borrowing, this refers not only to money, but to everything that has a certain value, such as fabric or other similar items.

They can neither loan nor exchange without authorization, whether it is a question of secular persons or religious. To exchange is really to yield the possession of an item to receive another, more or less different; the compensation which might exist between the two items does not affect the reality of the change. To loan is to transfer the use of an object. Now, by his vow, the religious has renounced the use of goods at the same time as their administration. Nonetheless, in virtue of the tacit permission that superiors are wont to grant, religious are allowed to loan each other objects of little value: books, clothing, etc. But they should not make an exchange with secular persons on the grounds of the benefit to be obtained by the convent. One cannot seek an advantage by using goods which do not belong to him. For the same reasons, religious may not leave in the hands of either a secular person or of another religious a deposit of money or some object of value that a relative or a friend offered to give them, or which they would have received in recognition of their work and their preaching. All of this, under various forms, entails an act of ownership more or less skillfully disguised.

Those who are transferred from one convent to another are not allowed, without permission from the superior, to carry from the house they are leaving anything that belongs to the community or is for the use of a particular individual. If they do, they make themselves owners, because it is an action of ownership to assume for oneself any item against the will of the superior, or simply without his knowledge. Indeed, he is the sole representative of the Church in the distribution and administration of the goods of the religious order. Travelers who deprive themselves of some legitimate benefit and thereby save part of the money they were authorized to spend on route, nonetheless are not allowed to give these reserves to relatives or friends, nor to use them to buy unnecessary items for their journey, for example, some books or clothing. They can use their money only for the intended use, namely, the expenses of the trip. Nonetheless, they are allowed along

the way to take from their savings so as to give a few small alms. As soon as they arrive at the convent of their destination, they must place in the hands of the superior whatever they have left of the money they had received before taking the trip.

Religious who live in a monastery cannot give any alms, even what they might have freely deprived themselves of in food or clothing. All the more are they not allowed to hold money belonging to others. If there is need to offer this service to someone, the sums are to be kept in the deposit of the community, and a proper note made of the amount in question, so as to return it to the owner at his request, so that no dispute may be possible on one side or the other.

Religious, whether superiors or subjects, are not allowed to will or dispose of anything at all, such as books or habits. Having renounced all goods by the vow of poverty, they cannot dispose of anything, whether big or small. The holy canons expressly forbid superiors from granting such permissions to their subjects.

The obligations of the vow of poverty, of which we have spoken up to now, do not apply only to individual religious but also to all officials of the monastery; the latter cannot sell, buy, borrow, provide bail, give alms, except to the extent that they have been given authority by their superior or that the Constitutions allow. If they exceed these limits without permission, they engage in an act of property and sin mortally or venially, depending on whether the matter is grave or light (see ST II-II, q. 187, a. 2).

Religious are not allowed to receive nor to keep money destined to be distributed to the poor, or to be spent at will on good works. In so doing, they would be acting as true owners, determining by their own choice the persons to receive the alms, as well as the time and the amount — all of which pertain to the owner of a good. Besides, it is to be feared that religious who fall into this habit, even though with permission, will end by following their natural sympathies, by plunging into many awkward situations, confusions, perhaps some imprudent financial activities, or by tying themselves to things of earth, as they turn away from God, who still ought to be their sole concern. There would be yet another problem: in their ministry, they would be exposed to hearing false stories intended to rouse their compassion. If they are clear-sighted, they will quickly recognize that they have allowed themselves to be misguided, and that in our vocation we have a gift for the formation of souls more than for the distribution of alms. Moreover, they would do better by imitating St. Hilarion, who refused a considerable sum of money when asked to distribute it to the poor. He answered the person who had made this offer: “You live in a large city where there are so many unfortunates! You would know much more than I how to make this distribution yourself.”

Nonetheless, religious may receive alms and restitutions when the amount, the time, and the persons are specified. In that case, they are only executors of the will of another. In reality, they do but carry out a simple service, fulfilling an assignment. It is prudent, when completing a restitution to a person who wishes to remain anonymous to ask for a receipt which will be transmitted to the donor. The latter will be uplifted by this gesture and will rest more easily in his mind. Religious may also suggest some person or another, even a relative or a friend, to the largess of those who spontaneously request counsel. In this case, the religious intervene only by a charitable recommendation, not with the authority of an owner. But we must always maintain discretion because of the bent of our nature to become entangled, under pretext of charity, in the handling of temporal goods and the distribution of money.

Even though the use of pensions and of deposits is not an activity of religious, since the religious Order has ownership and the superior controls the usage, nonetheless this becomes for many religious the occasion to break the vow of poverty and to condemn themselves. Indeed, it is all too easy for those who have such pensions to regard themselves as their masters, or at least to believe that they have more right to them than others, and to be angered if the revenue had been used for others rather than for themselves alone, and in this case, to complain bitterly — thereby betraying the very evident attachment they have to money and to the advantages it can bring them. Besides, it is to be feared that they will become used to spending these sums themselves to acquire frivolous and superfluous objects, so as to satisfy their curiosity or their sensuality. In any case, this money causes them untold worries and distractions. They are busier considering what they could buy to support their often illusory needs, than fulfilling the duties of their state, pleasing God, and working for their salvation, which is, after all, the only reason He placed them in the world and called them to the religious life.

The use of pensions and deposits is dangerous, not only for individuals but also for communities. Often, they diminish the regular life by introducing selfishness, indulgence, and disorder. This matter calls for great supervision on the part of superiors and visitators.

Happy are the religious who live in monasteries where the common life is faithfully observed! Freed from all material cares, they devote themselves more fully to God, Whom they came to serve in religion. In such communities, there reigns a pronounced union of hearts and minds. Night and day the Divine Office is recited with reverence, decorum, and fervor; there, silence is kept perfectly, a circumstance so favorable to interior contemplation. It is in such a place that religious work profitably at their perfection, advance from virtue to



virtue, and in some fashion enjoy, even in this world — because of their great poverty of spirit — a foretaste of eternal happiness. Indeed, are not the grace of God and the interior consolations with which He envelops the religious a thousand times more preferable than all the pleasures of the senses to be had in this world with all its riches?

## § II - *Permissions*

After having presented what religious are not allowed to do without permission, we must now explain what the word *permission* means. First of all, we distinguish *formal* permission, *implied* permission, and *presumed* permission. Formal permission is when the superior expresses clearly by word or by letter, or by sign, when someone asks for authorization to give or receive a certain object. Implied permission arises from the approbation given by his silence for certain actions which do not require asking for his formal consent, and for which he even prefers not to be asked, so as not to complicate uselessly the sequence of events. Presumed permission is invoked when, for strong reasons and pressing needs, we presume that the superior would consent that we give or receive something, if we had indeed asked for permission. When the superior is present, we cannot use presumed permissions; we must always have recourse to him to request express permission to give, to receive, etc. If it were otherwise, subordinates would no longer be dependent on the authority for necessary items, being able and obliged to presume the charity of the superior, who is inclined not to refuse that which they need. Consequently, they would believe themselves never obliged to approach him but would, on their own, do whatever seemed appropriate to them. They would thereby expose themselves to grave illusions, considering as necessary whatever pleased them. Even if it were a question of some reasonable things, they would always lack the supernatural principle of the will of God substituting for self-will. We would see these religious go to the city, write letters, and make purchases without authorization, under the pretext that the superior would certainly have given permission for these things if they had approached him. It is only when the superior is away and immediate action is required that one may use presumed permission. But even then it is required: 1° that we have valid reasons to suppose that the superior would have given permission if he had been aware of the situation, and that on his return, he will approve of what we have done in his absence; 2° that we have the intention of rendering an account of our conduct, and this, at the earliest opportunity, firmly resolved to follow his orders should he find something to correct in our action.

The consequence of these observations is that it is dangerous to act from a presumed permission. This is how some individuals deceive themselves, believing in such cases that they do not need express permission. They tell themselves: 1° that this is the practice in other religious groups; 2° that certain of their brothers, wise and pious men, have acted in this way; 3° that the superior, being easygoing and indulgent, readily grants all that is asked of him; 4° that, besides, he is obliged to respect the worthiness and the services of the individual who has assumed permission in this way; or, finally, 5° that what one wishes to do is advantageous for the convent.

This kind of reasoning easily misleads us, since all decisions can be changed depending on time, place, and persons. In fact, what is allowed in one religious Order is not always allowed in another whose laws are more restricted as regards poverty. The practice of one virtuous religious serves no better as an excuse for another. Perhaps the first has his particular reasons to act as he did. If he has none, he has acted badly, and, whatever his past record, in this matter he is neither virtuous nor worthy of imitation. If a superior is patronizing by nature or wishes to express gratitude for services rendered in religious life, he cannot go so far as to allow everything. Nor have we the insight to judge whether he would really be granting permission in the present case. Finally, even though the superior seeks the welfare of the convent and respects men of worth, nonetheless, he should not allow everything, nor dispense anyone from presenting himself as a faithful religious when the latter asks for permissions forbidden by the rules of the Order.

One would also be guilty in presuming authorization to receive an object from someone who was perhaps allowed to cede it, but to an undetermined person. This vague permission is not sufficient to legitimize an acceptance. Indeed, it could happen that the superior, knowing the recipient for whom the gift was intended, would not consent to the action, either by foresight that the gift would harm him, because of the attachment which would develop; or in the conviction that it would be superfluous; or out of fear of the resulting bad example to the community. Accordingly, we must always ask the superior, if he is available, for the express permission to receive what has been offered to us.

General and vague permissions are forbidden and do not at all excuse from the sin of ownership. For example, a superior cannot allow a subject to receive or give away anything on his own, nor to use at whim the money for his support. The superior, to be sure, holds authority from religion; but neither in our Order, nor in any other, was there ever any intention to give to this person, or to officials of the convent, such unrestricted authority. Besides, such patronizing

could bring about unfortunate consequences, and result in the damnation of certain religious. Indeed, they would soon make use of this ploy to obtain trivialities or precious objects in opposition to their state. In addition, there would also be unfortunate results for the community, because of the bad example and the disorders thereby introduced. Accordingly, it has been very wisely established that subjects cannot use such vague and general permissions, even if these may have been wrongly granted.

Even less do permissions that have been coerced excuse from sin. Here, for example, is a superior who refuses to allow a religious the use of certain things, judging them to be neither useful nor appropriate for his state of poverty. The latter, by repeated demands, by grumbling, or even by threats, pushes a superior to the limit of his patience, until, weary of the struggle, the superior finally gives up and grants his desires. This permission has been coerced. There is nothing voluntary in it and, therefore, it does not excuse from sin. In reality, it was given so as to avoid greater disorders. Far from diminishing sin, this authorization increases it by adding to the fault against poverty those of insubordination, irreverence, and obstinacy.

Moreover, unjust permissions cannot excuse a veritable lie. A permission is unjust if it has been granted without reasonable cause or without legitimate authority. A superior, for example, who allowed a brother to receive or buy an object not appropriate for his state, would be remiss in his duty in giving such a permission which the Rule and the Council of Trent forbid him to grant. For his part, the religious who dared to profit from it would also be sinning.

Questionable permissions themselves cannot serve as excuses. When a religious is not sure of a permission, he must be wary of using it as if it had been given, because it is a sin to act under a doubt. In that case, the wisest course is to give or receive nothing before having obtained a clear decision from the one who has the right.

Finally, deceitful permissions are never without sin. The religious who, in order to have access to a sum of money, pretends to be afflicted with a costly disease and obtains from the superior everything he desires, is in no way excused by reason of this permission, misled by fraud. The causes alleged to obtain consent from the superior being untrue, the latter's permission is neither genuine nor legitimate. Anyone who uses it is as guilty as one who acts without permission, except that, in this case, there is a lie in addition. The same needs to be said of all permissions obtained from superiors who have been deceived in one way or another.

### § III - *Superiors and officials of the convent*

Superiors are obliged to provide religious, healthy or sick, with all that they need, as ordered by the Council of Trent, which was simply applying a natural principle of distributive justice. If they fail in this obligation, they sin gravely: "Nothing necessary should be refused to them." *Nihilque, quod sit necessarium, eis denegetur* (Conc. Trid., Sess. XXV, c. 2). By using the word *necessary*, the Council intends not only what is absolutely indispensable to prevent death, such as food and clothing, but also everything called for by the fitness of the religious state and all that is anticipated in the particular statutes of the Institute which one has embraced. Accordingly, superiors must offer their subjects a modest diet, according to custom, following the observances and the works of their order, and to provide them with decent and clean vesture.

Superiors who neglect to furnish what is necessary for religious, first of all, as we have said, sin against justice, by their poor administration, since they have been commissioned as dispensers of the goods of the convent for them to be distributed to the brothers in a timely manner, according to the needs of each one. But their fault would be increased if they should give their subjects the temptation of committing sins of ownership. In fact, when a religious finds himself refused what is necessary, he tells himself that, on principle, all is held in common, and easily imagines that he has a right to care for himself on his own, either by taking items of the convent, or by receiving from outside, without permission, objects he intends to keep for his use, now or in the future. Nevertheless, by acting in this way, he commits the sin of ownership, because it is only in the case of extreme and absolute necessity that everything becomes common. In fact, it is not an extreme necessity to be deprived of material unsuitable for our state in the usual course of events.

Nor can superiors authorize their religious to have superfluous things. If they do, they sin against the vow of poverty, because they have no right to dispose of goods of the community except as specified in the statutes of their order. Now all religious institutes, along with the Council of Trent, forbid them from allowing anything excessive: "Nothing may be superfluous." *Nihil sit superfluum* (Trid., *ibid*). Thus, they cannot authorize anything superfluous in food, clothing, or furniture in the cells, such as very expensive pictures, masterpiece paintings, exotic furnishings, sumptuous foods, and pleasing beverages. In his Rule, St. Jerome forbade superiors to give to their subjects anything other than what was necessary in food and clothing, lest the bread of children become the prey of dogs, that is to say, lest

the religious become hedonists; and for fear that they be accused of having been uselessly wasteful of material belonging to Jesus Christ, namely, the goods of the monastery. "Besides food and clothing and things manifestly necessary give no man anything, for dogs must not eat the bread of the children. . . . be careful, therefore, lest you imprudently squander the substance of Christ's." *Praeter victum et vestitum et manifestas necessitates, nihil cuiquam tribuas, ne filiorum panem canes comedant . . . Tu ergo considera ne Christi substantiam imprudenter effundas* (Ep. LVIII, 6, 7. *Ad Paulinum*).

Superiors must give to their subjects an example of poverty, so as to be truly *the model for their flock*, as St. Peter said (*I Pet. 5:3*). They should, in fact, be poorer than the others, the better to instill in them the spirit of poverty. This is why Pope Clement VIII, when explaining the Council of Trent, ordered that all religious, superiors as well as subjects, partake of the same bread, the same wine, the same food as the brothers, and that they eat at a common table.

Everyone, whoever they may be, even superiors, should eat the same bread, the same wine, the same victuals, first or second table, even if the common meal is smeared with pitch as they say, unless they are impeded by reason of infirmity, nor should anyone in any way be able to bring something singular which he could privately enjoy at a meal. If one should sin in this, he should get nothing that day except for bread and water.

*Omnes, etiam superiores, quicumque illi sint, eodem pane, eodem vino eodemque obsonio, sive eadem, ut aiunt, pictantia in communi mensa, prima vel secunda, nisi infirmitatis causa impediti fuerint, vescantur, neque singulare aliquid, quo privatim quisque in cibum utatur, ullo modo affèrri possit. Si quis in ea re peccaverit, nihil ea die alimenti percipiat, nisi panem et aquam* (*De Reformandi Religiosis*, July 25 1599, 4).

How greatly despicable would those superiors be who would look for singularities and who would scandalize their communities by enjoying a more refined life than that of those whose servants they are!

Superiors may not make excessive purchases to give a major dinner or to offer significant gifts to their relatives and acquaintances. They are allowed occasionally to invite common friends of the community, in order to acknowledge considerable services received from them. But such a dinner should happen rarely; moreover, it should be marked by charity, propriety, and decorum, and not by exorbitant expenses. They are also forbidden to spend funds unnecessarily for worthless repairs, or for overly sumptuous constructions, contrary to

the state of poverty. Secular persons are outraged and scandalized by such abuses. Moreover, they mock the religious, who, after having taken the vow of poverty, make a show of their pride or their fortune by luxurious banquets and by magnificent buildings.

Within their purview, the officials of the convent should apply to themselves all that has just been said about superiors. They should not forget that acts of ownership forbidden to individual religious, such as selling, buying, borrowing, posting bond, almsgiving, and storing deposits, are also forbidden to them, except in the rare case when they act in the name of the superior and for the community. Unless they examine themselves frequently and are very watchful as regards the vaguely defined limits of their duties, there could arise a number of acts of personal will and of ownership by which they would satisfy their inclinations and their preferences, to their own loss and that of others, of the spirit of obedience, of poverty, and of mortification.

#### § IV - *Gravity and penalty for the sin of ownership*

In itself and by its nature, the vow of poverty obliges under penalty of mortal sin. It is only the lightness and the insufficiency of matter which restrict it to the limits of venial sin. The transgression of this vow entails: 1° a petty thief, because the religious who give or receive something without permission from the superior dispose of property of the institute which does not belong to them. 2° a sacrilege, because one violates the vow made to God and accepted by the Church. To commit a mortal sin of ownership there is need for more or less matter, according to the religious institute, because some profess a more rigid poverty than others. In general, sufficient matter for petty thievery to be serious in the world is equally sufficient for the sin of ownership to be mortal in religion. Indeed, according to certain authors, less is needed to sin mortally for a religious who gives away, without permission, something belonging to the community, than for a secular person who appropriates the property of another, because the property of a monastery is more valuable and more inviolable, having been consecrated to God.

Religious who take and amass many small objects expose themselves to a hidden danger. Even though each item which they have taken constitutes in itself the matter for a venial sin, if all of them taken together result from the same intention in their thought, they can constitute a single matter which could become seriously sinful.

The sin of ownership has such dire consequences for individuals as well as for communities that the Canons, the Councils, and the Popes condemn religious who die as property owners, and who after

their death are found to have held money, to be deprived of ecclesiastical burial and to be buried in mire with their money, while the following is recited in a loud voice: "May your money perish with you." *Pecunia tua tecum sit in perditionem* (*Acts* 8:20). If they have already been buried in consecrated ground when their crime is discovered, the Church requires that their body be disinterred to suffer this ignominious treatment: "The beneficiary is entirely to be deprived of an ecclesiastical grave and buried in dung hill." *Beneficio ecclesiasticæ sepulturæ omnino privetur atque in sterquilinio sepeliatur* (*Gloss. Const.*). St. Macarius, Pope St. Gregory, and many others have acted in this manner during the nobler days of monastic life. The thought of such a penalty makes one shudder; and yet it is but a glimpse of the punishment reserved by God for those who shame holy poverty.

### ARTICLE III

#### **The genuine spirit and the perfection of evangelical and religious poverty**

According to the Church Fathers and the masters of the spiritual life, there are three degrees of poverty: 1° to rid oneself completely of all the temporal goods which one held in the world, and to detach both heart and mind from them; 2° to deprive oneself also of comforts and of superfluous things; 3° to abandon even necessary items, so that, by this exterior relinquishing of temporal goods and by interior and absolute detachment, one may be much stronger in striving for Heavenly and eternal matters.

First of all, evangelical perfection, which is the goal of religious life, consists in attaching oneself to God alone, so that charity will come to replace avarice in the heart. The more we abandon the goods of this world by detaching our heart and our mind from them, the more will we become capable of approaching God, to give ourselves to Him, and to possess Him in a unique manner.

This interior detachment and this generous contempt for earthly goods embrace what is most important in poverty of spirit, because, while freeing our heart from its love and respect for the world, they prepare us to give ourselves to God unreservedly. Accordingly, the first counsel St. Vincent Ferrer gave to the sons of St. Dominic, in striving effectively for perfection, was to disdain all the things of earth, and to regard them as mire: *Oportet primitus ut omnia terrena contemnat et velut stercorea reputet* (*De Vita Spirituali*, c. 1, 1). Religious are not really poor in spirit if they leave behind goods and riches of the world, but do not at the same time renounce affection for those things and, on the contrary, continue to value and desire them as much as and even more so than secular persons, and are delighted to find themselves in abundance or distressed in having to suffer want. Such religious have not reached even the first degree of the virtue of poverty. They are poor only in appearance, and do not deserve to be called religious.

The second degree of evangelical poverty consists in detachment from one's comforts and all abundance. It requires us to be content with necessary items by distancing ourselves from everything beyond them. For genuine poverty, this degree demands that we have clothing, nourishment, a cell, and humble furniture, so as to practice



penance, to atone for sins committed in the world, to avoid committing others in religious life, and instead, to strive more effectively for salvation. This is what St. Vincent Ferrer recommended to his disciple: "I have determined what is necessary for you," said he, "in ordinary food, in shabby clothing and shoes, which you cannot actually do without." *Necessitatem tuam intelligo in parca victu et vili vestitu et calceamento de quibus præsentialiter indiges* (ibid., c. 1, 3).

Religious who show an attachment to abundance lack the spirit of poverty. They would like to want for nothing and to be more comfortable than secular persons. Not content with the food served in community, they seek to obtain special dishes or desserts. Not satisfied with clothing of the common cloth like that provided to the others, they yearn for clothing made of better material, and they find their happiness in well-furnished and decorated cells. These types of religious do not gain the merit of poverty, and even risk their salvation. The essential element of this virtue, so little understood, is detachment from goods of the world, which they lack altogether. They retain the same kind of desire they had in the world, except that, by change of view, they have transferred it to the small items of religious life. Now, the specific flaw of avarice consists in that attachment and those desires of the heart which bring about disorder and unrest, and not in the paltry value of the material objects which are the occasion for this troubling of the soul.

The magnitude of the attachment, about which they would like to deceive themselves, is apparent: 1° by their eagerness to obtain superfluous, useless, unusual, dainty things, likely to satisfy their sensuality; 2° by their fear of suffering some inconvenience or of losing some advantage in the future; 3° by their extreme care to retain objects that please them, and by the fear of seeing them confiscated. What increases the seriousness of this transgression of the Rule is that often the religious who would have been deprived of almost everything while in the world are precisely the ones who do not want to be deprived in the cloister, and who would claim to enjoy there more than what lay-persons have in their own homes. This is what St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Bernard noticed and complained about. As an example, here is the reproach made to them by St. Bernard: "O deplorable illusion! In religion, which is the center of poverty, and where those who were rich in the middle of the world must now suffer all privations, one sees men who, in the world, would barely have had enough to live on, seeking, once they have entered, all that is convenient, unnecessary, and refined!" *Magna abusio! Ut in loco paupertatis, ubi divites penuriam incurrunt, pauperes superfluitatem quærant: in loco afflictionis, ubi delicati mortificantur, homines rusticani res delicatas affectent.*

The third degree of perfection in evangelical poverty consists in a detachment even from what is necessary. Religious who have no attachment to superfluous items can nonetheless retain strong ties to what is necessary. They take extreme care to lack nothing of what they need. They do not know how to put up with any inconvenience in food, lodging, clothing, etc. When they lack something which they believe to be indispensable, they lament, they complain, they grumble, and thereby they reveal their over-attachment to the necessary. They are like those of whom St. Bernard spoke: religious who wanted to be seen as poor, on the condition of not lacking anything, and who cherish poverty as long as they suffer no privation. *Sunt qui pauperes esse volunt, eo tamen pacto ut nihil eis desit, et sic diligunt paupertatem ut nullam inopiam patiantur* (Sermo. IV, 4. *De duplici adventu*).

A religious who is genuinely poor in spirit suffers with patience all the troubles inevitably resulting from his profession, such as hunger, thirst, cold, heat, exhaustion, disdain, without complaining or seeking mitigation. He observes the abstinence and fasts exactly as prescribed, without using means of any kind to soften their severity. He diligently attends the Divine Office, both day and night, in spite of the cold of winter and the heat of summer. He travels with little fear about the weariness of the road. When necessary, he asks for alms with modesty and humility. He endures rejections and harshness, both of which must always accompany poverty, with patience and resignation. He avoids idleness and sloth, faults inseparable from softness, and he applies himself to work, according to his state: whether to work of the mind, which consists in contemplation, reading, study and apostolic duties; or work of his hands, if he is a lay brother (*convers*). He rejoices in being served simple meals rather than fancy dishes. He is satisfied, as was St. Paul, in having the clothing necessary to cover himself only, and not to bedeck himself. "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." *Habentes alimenta et quibus tegamur, his contenti simus* (I Tim. 6:8).

A religious who truly has the virtue and the love of poverty asks of superiors only what is necessary, as counseled by St. Vincent Ferrer: "Request nothing except what is necessary." *Nihil petas, nisi sit necessitas* (*De Vit.*, sp. c. 1, 3). And those necessities he asks for in humility, like alms, and not with haughtiness and insistence, as something owed for his talents and his services. He is equally satisfied, whether what he asks for is given or is denied. He remains at peace in his illnesses, even though whoever takes care of him may sometimes be negligent in soothing him or in bad humor in serving him. Indeed, the person of true evangelical poverty always considers himself as unworthy of everything, as St. Bernard recommended in his rule: "A complaint about some defect in food or drink or cheap clothing should

never be heard from you; always consider yourself unworthy of the things you have." *Nunquam audiatur aliqua querimonia de te pro aliquo defectu in cibo vel in potu aut in vili vestitu; semper reputa te indignum de iis quæ habes* (Auctor incertus. *Opusculum in verba: "Ad quid venisti?"*, 9).

The religious who is truly poor in heart and spirit avoids seeking dispensations from his superiors except for grave necessity, knowing that unnecessary expenses are contrary to what is most agreeable about poverty in the eyes of God, namely, patience in the pains and in the weariness inherent in a state of universal renunciation.

The religious is happy even in the privation of something necessary, in health or in illness. He is pleased to wear used or patched habits, to miss part of his meal, or to receive one not to his taste, to have a cell that is inconvenient, a wretched bed, a poor table and a poor chair. For he knows that the more he deprives himself of temporal things, the more he will lift himself up to spiritual things, find them desirable, and become more like Christ Jesus.

This is how St. Dominic and his early companions understood poverty. This exalted saint practiced it so perfectly that he himself went out to seek alms, and knelt down to receive the bread being given him. His clothing was the coarsest and the most used of the convent. Usually he had only one tunic for his use, and was obliged to borrow another to have his laundered. *Vilibus indumentis utens* (Humberto, *Vita S. Dominici*, c. 52). The cell which he used was sometimes the smallest and the least convenient of the convent. Almost never did he sleep there, instead, passing all his nights in church, groaning and weeping for sinners in front of the Blessed Sacrament. His food was also very poor, and he ate only one dish, even though two were usually served in the refectory. *In cibo et potu temperatissimus*. During his journeys (which he took on foot), he did not wish to carry any money. Instead, he lived from alms, often sleeping on straw or on a board, sometimes on the ground, very rarely in a bed, and, in that case, he would lay down fully dressed. Finally, he preferred to lodge where he knew he would be most badly received. *Ad ospitia divertebat, eo latior quo durius excipiebatur* (*In Actis canon.*).

We ought to beseech this august saint, our Father and our model, to obtain for us great fidelity to our vow of poverty and an ever-growing desire to acquire its spirit more perfectly.

## CHAPTER II

### The vow of chastity

#### ARTICLE I

#### **Excellence of religious chastity**

By the vow of chastity, religious persons consecrate their body to God and forever renounce pleasures of the flesh, even those which might be permitted in other states of life, so as to strive more effectively for the things of God.

The excellence of chastity consists in that this virtue frees the religious from many troubles, provides them with many goods, draws them to God, makes them agreeable to Him, unites them to Jesus Christ in an intimate manner, makes them resemble angels, and obtains for them special glory in Heaven.

Chastity protects against an infinite number of troubles which concupiscence of the flesh inflicts on persons who do not practice it at all. The sin of impurity poisons the soul, corrupts its strength, and darkens the lights of reason and of faith. It hardens the heart and makes it insensitive to divine graces and to the deplorable misery of its own state. In life, it causes all sorts of other troubles and anxieties, for the pleasures of the senses, at root, are but lowly and base pleasures, incapable of satisfying a soul created for God. The more one searches for such satisfactions, all the more does he distance himself from those of the soul — the only ones which can satisfy the hunger of a spiritual being. The sin of impurity also poisons the body, disorders its moods, introduces an encroaching fire, outrages the passions, turns the spirit into a captive of the flesh, sows disorder in all the senses, corrupts all activity, and makes of man an object of shame and disgrace. In sum, it is the source of all kinds of offenses against God. That is why St. Paul, in his energetic language, defined concupiscence in one word, *the sin*, that is to say, the source of all sins (see *Rom. 7*)

Chastity, on the contrary, enlarges the soul and regulates all its powers. It raises the mind to God, and makes it more receptive to celestial enlightenment. It purifies the heart, gives it a taste of supernatural delights, makes it responsive to the anointing of grace, calms the conscience, and makes the gentleness of an altogether divine conversation echo on earth. It anoints the body with fragrance, calms its tendencies, subdues its passions, makes the flesh submissive to the spirit, transforms men into vessels of honor and of glory, and radiates a divine splendor on all their activities. Accordingly, religious must have a great aversion and a great contempt for all [disordered] sensual pleasures, which they have renounced by the vow of chastity, and consider them as animal behavior, unworthy of a Christian, and more so of a religious. Instead, religious must have a great love for chastity, and avoid all sins, even the slightest, that are opposed to it, seeing it as an ornament of the faithful religious, "Chastity, in this time and place of mortality, uniquely represents the state of the glory of immortality." *Sola est castitas, quae in hoc mortalitatis et loco et tempore, statum quemdam immortalitatis gloriae repraesentat* ([Pseudo] Bonaventure, *Meditationes Vita Christi*, c. 16).

Chastity also frees religious persons from three troubles almost inseparable from the state of marriage, even though it has been sanctified by a sacrament. These problems, noted by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:26, 32-34, are: servitude of the mind, *alligatus*; troubles of the flesh, *tribulationem carnis habebunt hujusmodi*; and a divided heart, *divisus est*. By their vow of chastity, religious persons are spared this confinement of the spirit and live in a holy liberty regarding every creature. They are freed from the division of the heart, having chosen Jesus Christ as their spouse: "The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy both in body and in spirit." *Virgo cogitat quae Domini sunt ut sit sancta corpore et spiritu*. They are freed from troubles of the flesh, that is, from dangerous occasions and temptations. This is why St. Gregory of Nazianzen said that a married person belongs to Christ only half-way, but that a virgin belongs to Him totally: *Mulier nupta est Christi ex parte; at virgo tota Christi fit*.

Chastity, as taught by the Wise Man, places man close to God, because it makes him imitate the purity of the Holy Trinity, which certain Fathers called the "first Virgin." In fact, the creations of God are but productions of knowledge, love, light, and of ardor. In the same way, chaste souls are eminently prepared to seek God, to know Him, to love him ardently, to busy themselves with His perfections, to communicate with Him, and to serve Him with fidelity, constancy, and ease — all of which will attract to them divine kindness. "Incorruption bringeth [one] near God." *Incorruptio facit esse proximum Deo* (*Wis.* 6:20).

According to St. Basil, chastity also makes man like God, insofar as God is incorruptible and immortal. "Great is virginity, which makes man like the incorruptible God." *Magnum est virginitas quæ hominem incorruptibili Deo simillimum facit* (St. Basil., *Lib. de Virginit.*). Even though man by his nature is but mire and corruption, purity raises him above himself, sanctifies his body by consecrating it to the Lord, distances him from gross pleasures, spiritualizes his senses, and more effectively prepares his mind to contemplate Heavenly matters. When chastity is affirmed by a solemn vow, as by religious persons, it shares not only in purity, in incorruptibility, and in holiness but also in divine permanence, by imposing on religious the blessed necessity of persevering in the happiness of their state.

Chastity makes men resemble Jesus Christ, who, born of a Virgin, was the quintessence of purity. Virginal souls are His spouses; their hearts know no other love than his. Moreover, He loves them with particular tenderness and makes Himself known to them in stunning ways. This is why we see those who have excelled the most in the virtue of chastity gain an ineffable union with Our Lord, such as St. John the Baptist, chosen as His precursor, and St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple, whom He made recline on his heart, and whom He then chose to act as son to Mary. The Church Fathers were able to affirm that, if God consented to make Himself man, it was on the condition that He be born of a virgin. Likewise, if it is appropriate by divine virtue that a Virgin give birth to a child, His child could be no less than a Man-God. "How great must be the beauty and the excellence of virginity," said St. Ambrose, "since it was worthy of being chosen to become the temple wherein the Divinity bodily dwelt!" *Quanta est virginitatis gratia, quæ merit a Christo eligi, ut esset corporale Dei templum, in quo corporaliter habitaret plenitudo Divinitatis* (*Lib. de Off.*).

In addition, chastity makes us like the angels and the blessed in Heaven. Indeed, after the resurrection, earthly bonds will no longer exist; men will become like the angels of God. And yet, they will have the same body as here below, but one raised above corruption and the animal functions which it accomplishes in this world. In like manner, the virgins and chaste souls are freed from the corruption attached to our birth and from tendencies which render man similar to the beast. Since the angels are always in God's presence, continually praising Him without ever losing sight of Him, just so chaste persons, who are the angels of the earth, are more likely to talk with Him and to bless Him without weariness or end. St. Augustine expressed this thought very well when he said: "Virginity is part of the angelic life, since in an incorruptible body it is a perpetual imitation of the celestial spirits."

*Virginitatis integritas angelica portio est, et in carne corruptibili incorruptionis perpetua imitatio (Lib. De Virginit., 13).*

If the angels belong to a nature more elevated than that of chaste souls, insofar as they do not have a mortal body, these souls are superior to them in virtue and merit, because they remain in the midst of the flames of lust which do not set fire to the covering of skin which envelops them. Because of the victories which they gain over their passions, their bodies share in the nobility of their soul and change their nature, so to speak, by taking on the incorruptibility of angels. "The victory of virgins is greater than that of angels, for angels live without the flesh, but virgins triumph in the flesh." *Major est victoria Virginum quam Angelorum: Angeli enim sine carne vivunt, Virgines vero in carne triumphant (Aug., Lib. De Vid.).*

Chastity brings to souls a special glory in Heaven. In the Apocalypse, St. John reported seeing on Mount Zion, a figure for Heaven, those who had remained virgins receiving diverse privileges: 1° They followed the Lamb, that is to say, Jesus Christ, everywhere He went, because, as St. Gregory said, the reward for chastity raised them to a higher degree of glory. 2° They sang a new hymn that no one else could sing, because, by triumphing in their flesh, they had preserved its integrity, something which gave them a special joy and furnished them with inimitable strains of song. 3° They bore on their forehead the name of the Lamb, which indicated that they belonged to Him in a more special way by their virginal chastity.

Those who have the happiness of never having stained their virtue by a mortal sin must thank God for it and acknowledge their eminent gratitude. They received this great happiness more by a special protection of God than by their own proper work and natural virtue. They will remember to ask Him for continual perseverance and strive to obtain it by fervent prayers, deep humility, and all the austerities of their state. As for those who have had the misfortune of lacking in this virtue before becoming religious, they must mourn the loss and work continually to repair this evil as much as they can, by doing penance, by avoiding even the lightest faults against modesty, and by renewing often the consecration of their mind and their heart to God. In this way, they can become as pleasing as those who kept perfectly their innocence, and even receive certain greater rewards. It is in this sense that, according to St. John Chrysostom, the Holy Spirit made the woman sinner equal to virgins: *meretricem virginibus coaequavit (Serm. de Pent.).*

## ARTICLE II

### Means to preserve chastity

The Church Fathers recommended a large number of methods to acquire and preserve chastity; we will present only the principal ones.

The first is recourse to God. To be sure, we need His help to acquire and preserve all the virtues; and yet chastity is so delicate and precious a virtue that special graces are needed to obtain it. It is prayer that draws from Heaven that abundance of help. For Jesus Christ promised that, by perfect prayer, we would obtain all the graces requested; He also said that we need to pray so as not to enter into temptation. This is why the Wise Man acknowledged that he could not be chaste unless God gave him the gift. "I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it." *Scivi quoniam aliter non possem esse continens, nisi Deus det (Wis. 8:21)*. Thus St. Paul had recourse to prayer during the frequent and humiliating blows with which the sting of the flesh, a minister of Satan, afflicted him; therein, he found prodigious strength to resist, especially after God had assured him that he would not lack grace. "There was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me. For which thing, thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee." *Datus est mihi stimulus carnis meae, angelus Satana, qui me colaphizet propter quod ter Dominum rogavi ut discederet a me, et dixit mihi: sufficit tibi gratia mea (II Cor. 12:7-9)*. St. Jerome used the same method during temptations, and counseled Salvina to have recourse to it, as the most appropriate means to repel the evil thoughts which usually pursue and weary young people. In fact, in order to conquer in the combats of chastity, one must subdue his own nature, but he cannot resolve to destroy [unchastity] and complete [one's victory] without a particular grace from God, a grace promised for and linked to prayer. "May prayers be frequent to you, so that all attacks of thought, which ordinarily attack youths, may be repelled by this shield." *Crebrae tibi sint orationes, ut omnes cogitationum sagittae, quibus adolescentia percuti solet, hujusmodi clypeo repellantur (Hieron.: Ep. 79, 9 ad Salvina)*

The second means to maintain chastity is humility, which constitutes, it is true, the foundation and guardian of all virtues, *fundamentum et custos virtutum* (S. Bern.: Serm.1, *de Nativ.*), but which pertains



more directly to chastity, according to St. Gregory: "Purity is to be maintained under the watch of humility." *Per humilitatem custodiam servanda munditia castitatis* (*Lib. III Mor.*, c. 17). In fact, to humble oneself is to recognize that in himself one is but nothingness, weakness, sin, and that God alone can sustain him. Now our Lord bestows His grace abundantly on those who mistrust themselves in order to entrust themselves completely to Him, as He promised in the Scriptures: "God giveth grace to the humble." *Deus humilibus dat gratiam* (*James 4:6*). Given this principle, on what occasion does our awareness of our lack of strength appear more clearly than in temptations against chastity? It is, then, as easy as it is necessary to humble oneself deeply. By this humiliation, one attracts graces proportionate to the perils which surround the most delicate of virtues. If perverse suggestions come from the devil, humility is thus a great means to chase them away, because Satan is a spirit of pride. He cannot abide humility. When he becomes aware that, while tempting us against purity, we humble ourselves deeply, he withdraws, lest if he should continue his temptation, it would only serve to make us more virtuous, more mistrustful of self, and more confident in God.

Quite the contrary, pride, presumption of one's own strength, confidence in one's age, character, common sense, and virtue, cause purity to be lost. God resists the proud. Presuming on their own strength and confident in themselves, they expose themselves to occasions of evil, and, given their weakness, they are capable sooner or later of having a dreadful fall: *Deus superbis resistit* (*James 4:6*). Should the proud man trust in his advanced age? There is no elder so decrepit that he cannot be exposed to the blows of concupiscence. St. Basil recounts having known several solitaries who fell into the crime of impurity after having courageously passed twenty-three years in the rigors of penitence and the trials of continual maladies. One must also guard himself from trusting his nature and his temperament, however dispassionate they might seem. For there is no disposition so icy that it is not able to be attacked and troubled by the fire of concupiscence, as soon as it is fed some bad object. Already and in itself, concupiscence is an ardent fire. But the dangerous objects that one presents to it are like embers which inflame it, redoubling its intensity and capable of reducing to ashes souls as solid as rocks. That is why St. Ambrose said: "Lust is a fire; therefore we must not grant it the food of dissipation." *Libido ignis est, ideo non debemus illi alimenta praeberere luxuriae* (*Lib. de Poenit.*).

It would be unreasonable to count on one's good sense. For, however well it is able, in some encounters, to moderate the disorder of the passions and halt them at the beginning, it is not able, without grace, to avoid sense impressions and the revolts of nature. These

clouds which concupiscence unfurls and these cunning tricks of which it avails itself daze the reason little by little, then shake it, and finally make it succumb. That is why one does not need to reason with these temptations, but to humble himself, to distrust himself, and to pray much. In sum, all men are exposed to peril, young men or old, poor or rich, in the world or even in the cloister, as St. Bernard eloquently said: "It is difficult to extinguish the flames of lust. It stimulates young boys, inflames youth, weakens grown men, wearies the old and decrepit; it does not shun cottages nor turn from the palace. Would that it would only flee from monasteries!" *Difficile est libidinis incendia extinguere; impuberes stimulat, juvenes inflammat, viros enervat, senes et decrepitos fatigat, non aspernatur tuguria, non reveretur palatia utinam sola coenobia fugiat* (*Tract. de Interd.*).

It is an even greater presumption to trust one's own virtue in the assaults against chastity. Even if we have eliminated external enemies, we must always fear the internal ones, especially concupiscence of the flesh, no matter how many times before we have chased them away. Lust is a domestic enemy which arises from ourselves, a part of our being. To vanquish it completely, we would have to battle it continuously and arrive at self-destruction. What virtue could ever attain so thorough a result and not become weary of such continual battles? In addition, the difficulty increases because the characteristics of lust are not only intense but also very subtle, almost imperceptible. Consequently, it is very difficult to remain sufficiently attentive over oneself so as not to allow the self to be surprised and undermined.

St. Basil, St. John Climacus, and St. Athanasius have asserted that they saw numerous hermits who attained eminent virtue, were favored with the gift of miracles, chased devils away, commanded savage beasts, and vowed themselves to such austerities that their limbs trembled with weakness, who nonetheless fell into temptation and stained purity, because, with so many virtues, they still lacked humility. If a few saints occasionally exposed themselves to danger and won anyway, it was by an inspiration and extraordinary help from Heaven that made them invulnerable to the attacks of lust. But these extraordinary inspirations and helps are very rare miracles. As for us, we must always fear and mistrust ourselves. "Those who are genuine virgins are accustomed to be always fearful and never careless." *Solent, quæ verae virgines sunt, semper pavidæ et nunquam esse securæ* (St. Bern.: Hom III, *super Missus Est*, 9).

A third necessary means to preserve chastity is mortification of the senses. St. Paul, who was so strongly aware of the thorn in the flesh, employed this method: he severely punished his body, treating it as a slave. Thus, he was stronger against the attacks of that brutal enemy: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection." *Castigo corpus*

*meum et in servitutem redigo* (I Cor. 9:27). The flesh will never cease to revolt against the spirit; accordingly, for the spirit to retain its superiority, it must weaken the flesh. Now this revolt does not arise solely from the corruption of nature perverted by original sin, but also from the devil who tempts us, and from the laxity with which we treat our body, all the while having it avoid obvious excesses. To be perfectly chaste, it is not sufficient to refrain from all excesses in drink and food, or to remove all useless things. It is also necessary, insofar as we can, given our health and state in life, to reduce some part of what is necessary. St. Bernard used to weep when he had to eat, because he always feared that instead of nourishing a friend capable of helping him to acquire perfection, he was sustaining an enemy who would make him lose the beautiful virtue, exposed to injury as long as it remained in the midst of delights. "Chastity is endangered with delights, humility with riches, piety with business, truth with verbosity, charity with worldliness." *Periclitetur castitas in deliciis, humilitas in divitiis, pietas in negotiis, veritas in multiloquio, charitas in hoc saeculo* (*De Conversione*, c. 21).

Some great saints not only deprived themselves of something necessary, but they were also inclined to practice severe mortifications when they were attacked by impure temptations. St. Benedict rolled around in thorns; St. Francis of Assisi buried himself in the snow; St. Bernard immersed himself up to his neck in an icy pond, whence he had to be retrieved, half dead. Even though these examples are more to be admired than imitated, nonetheless they provide a practical lesson for all of us: the temptations against purity are most greatly to be feared, and, for lack of significant austerities, we should at least earnestly practice some penances befitting our state. "The flaming arrows of the devil are extinguished with the vigors of fasting and vigils." *Ardentes diaboli sagittæ ieiuniorum et vigiliarum vigore exstinguendæ sunt* (S. Hier., Ep. 54, *ad Furiam*). But we must only be engaged with these according to the rules of Christian prudence, and with the permission of one's director. A frugal and plain meal, taken only by necessity and never for pleasure, and surrounded by the usual mortifications of our state, reduces much more the wicked inclinations of the flesh and of the imagination than excessive penances.

It is also very necessary to mortify the senses, especially sight, so as to preserve chastity. Ordinarily, it is through the eyes, as through windows, that the sin of impurity enters into the soul and robs it of its treasure. "Death is come up through our windows." *Ascendit mors per fenestras* (Jer. 9:21). "My eye hath wasted my soul." *Oculus meus deprædatus est animam meam* (Lam. 3:51). Job himself, who had arrived at a high level of holiness and whose body, eaten up by boils, seemed inaccessible to feelings of sensual pleasure, believed that he

had to take strong measures against them. Wishing to insulate himself from evil thoughts, he acknowledged that he could not succeed without restraining his eyes. "I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." *Pepigi fœdus cum oculis meis ut ne cogitarem quidem de virgine* (*Job* 31:1). For not having maintained this vigilance and determination, the holy King David fell as unexpectedly as dreadfully. "The most holy David saw a nude woman at a thousand paces, and immediately committed adultery and homicide." *David ille sanctissimus in mille passibus mulierem nudatam vidit, et statim adulterium fecit et homicidium* (St. Aug., *Serm 25 de Temp.*).

One must also control the other senses so as to avoid the occasions of losing purity: never listening to suggestive conversations; never speaking vulgar words; avoiding looking at immodest paintings, prints, images; remaining watchful over the self at all times; refraining from giving long or overly friendly embraces to children; not reading dangerous books and trashy novels or stories.

A fourth method of preserving chastity is to avoid visits and frequent conversations with females, as well as the exchange of letters with them. These contacts are a usual source of danger and of falls, which are no less numerous or regrettable because so many of them remain undetected. While allowing themselves this familiarity, those who have not yet fallen are on the edge of an abyss, as St. Cyprian noted, and they run the risk of tumbling into it at any moment. "No one who is so near danger is safe for long." *Nemo diu tutus periculo proximus* (Ep. 4).

No doubt, they will repeat what so many others have said before becoming victims of their intemperance: that they do not find anything disordered, that everything is taking place honestly, that they engage in conversation with these people only to pass the time and to relax, given that they find them very witty. But, in such dangerous contacts, what man can pride himself in not having opened himself to feeling some disturbance in the heart, the mind, and the body, when it is obvious that we are all made of the same dust and of the same corrupt blood since the fall of Adam? "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence." *Unusquisque tentatur a concupiscentia sua* (*James* 1:14). From this point of view, temptations are unending, while victory is rare: "A daily battle, a rare victory." *Quotidiana pugna, rara victoria* (St. Aug.). At the same time that it is rare, victory is bought only at the cost of strong efforts, since it is a question of an internal enemy who seduces and entices us. This is why St. Augustine saw all other battles of the Christian as nothing in comparison to those: "Among other contests of Christians, the difficult battles of chastity are unique." *Inter caetera certamina christianorum, sola sunt dura praelia castitatis*.

Those imprudent religious also deceive themselves by saying, in self justification, that everything happens honestly in their visits, conversations, etc. Indeed, for visits by religious to women to be honorable, they must take place under the following conditions: they must be required by charity and need, be very rare, deal only with very uplifting subjects, and be ended as soon as the obligation has been satisfied. During the conversation, one never looks at the person's face, and takes care to avoid a secret delight and a certain fondness in that vicious nature which furtively insinuates itself under the guise of charity and duty. Now, is this the way in which these religious act? Quite the contrary, their visits are frequent, non-essential, very long. In them, the conversation is usually about topics that are not uplifting; they look squarely at their conversationalist with smiles, worldly civilities, and expressions of natural friendship. For them to dare to find this behavior inoffensive and honorable is but a proof of passion; the devil has already blinded their mind and partly spoiled their heart!

Another delusion is to believe or to say that one has made these visits as a way of recreating a little with those persons, because of their excellence and their humor, not because they are women. Even if we do not have evil intentions, the devil has some for us. Should there be no dangerous satisfaction, he will shortly introduce some. One equally finds around himself men of wittiness and of knowledge, but he does not seek frequent and extended conversations with them, nor with as much satisfaction. The true and only reason for this difference, no matter what is said, is that dreadful inclination of one sex for the other. Each individual nature taken separately is already very inclined to evil. How much is to be feared in them and certainly to be expected if, far from avoiding such meetings, one encourages them! Two sources of sin combined will only mutually double their strength to enkindle a terrible fire. And who will extinguish it?

It is also a delusion of the religious who goes to see these persons in their home and receives frequent visits from them should he pretend that he has no fondness for them. On the contrary, this propensity is so strong that neither the fear of danger, to which they expose their salvation, the injury they pose to the religious Order, the harm they do to their reputation, the scandal which they give to secular people, the sorrow they cause their brothers, the complaints they receive from inside the convent and outside, nor the prohibitions from their superiors are sufficient to bring the religious to renounce the contacts. When they are no longer able to make those visits openly, they manage clandestine conversations, send secret notes, and experience great sadness if their residence is changed, as a way to force them to pull themselves together by separating from the persons and moving away from the danger.

The dissolute and flighty religious are not the only ones who must avoid frequent conversations with devout and saintly persons, but even the most uplifting religious, especially spiritual directors with their penitents. Only the saints in Paradise enjoy an invulnerable chastity; the saints on earth are always subject to attacks from the enemy. Those who have not yet experienced such attacks run the danger of experiencing them at any moment during those frequent conversations in which they are so close to peril, and the closer to it, the less they realize it. St. Augustine remarked that the more pious individuals are, the more they place in danger the virtue of those who visit them and maneuver their way into their affection. The devil can more easily hide himself under the veil of holiness; as a result, we defy him less, and he is able to tempt more easily. These conversations, highly spiritual at the beginning, degenerate into subjects more and more unrestrained and tender. What began with the spirit ends up with the flesh, as St. Paul said: *Cum spiritu cœperitis, carne consummemini* (*Gal.* 3:3). In the early interviews, one spoke only of God and of the desire for perfection. Sheltered by these thoughts and desires, it is here that hearts filled with themselves and that sought only an opportunity, found each other. The desire to be of help, on the one hand, and gratitude on the other served as pretext; and already the creature appears next to God. Finally come the words of affection, the letters, the gifts; in this affair, love of God is only a word. "Frequent little gifts and sweet letters and handkerchiefs and dishes first tasted by the giver — a holy love does not have these, for all of these taste of the flesh and are far from a chaste love." *Crebra munuscula et dulces litteras et sudariola et prægustatos cibos sanctus amor non habet, hæc enim omnia carnem sapiunt et procul sunt ab amore casto* (St. Jerome Ep. 52, 5 *ad Nepotian*). Accordingly, the Church Fathers recommended great care in avoiding the company of pious persons. The best thing that the director can do for them is to redouble his zeal to sanctify himself in solitude, so as to be more capable of doing them good. This involves praying a lot in secret for their advancement and acquainting them with self-denial, with the love of silence and domestic duties, so that their virtue will be solidly based on faith.

The fifth method of maintaining chastity is to avoid idleness. This is one of the principal causes which caused Sodom to fall into the most horrible of all evils, according to the prophet Ezechiel (*Ezek.* 16:49). As long as David was busy with war, he remained pure; but as soon as he lived an idle life in his palace, vice entered his heart and led him to crime. This is why the Wise Man says that idleness has always taught much evil. *Multam malitiam docuit otiositas* (*Sir.* 33:29). But it especially contributes to the loss of chastity, because if one is idle, sensual desires make themselves felt with greater persistence, and the

absence of application to work will render him less able to resist them. Thus, he will become a slave to love and to his comfort; this habitual state of laxity will destroy purity. This is why St. Benedict used to tell his religious that idleness and sensual pleasure go hand in hand and serve as weapons for the ancient enemy to wound souls. "Idleness and pleasure are classic enemies for deceiving the soul." *Otiositas et voluptas arma sunt hostis antiqui ad decipiendas animas* (See *Reg.*, c. 48). Accordingly, the ancient Fathers of the desert taught that a religious, very busy with the matters of his state, has only one devil to combat, while if he lives in idleness, he has a great number of them who enter into his heart by the door of idleness and work together to increase the fire of impurity. Indeed, it is apparent that they have a particular horror of chastity because it makes men like the blessed spirits, from among whom the devils were expelled because of their pride.

The manner of responding to thoughts contrary to the beautiful virtue can vary according to the different causes which produce them, namely, nature, the devil, or exterior occasions. In general, here is how one should act during these temptations. 1° When we have not initiated the opportunity, we have only to humble ourselves before God by acknowledging the lowliness of our nature, subject to these disorders since the sin of Adam. Humility attracts the grace which readies us to reject these sinful suggestions, and puts the devil to flight. God sometimes allows these temptations so as to make us more humble in the full knowledge of our miseries; with the goal achieved, temptation will cease. 2° We need to pray to Him so that He will not allow us to offend Him, but, on the contrary, that He vouchsafe to strengthen our weakness and make us resist effectively. 3° It is good to think of some subject which, while touching the heart and busying the mind, diverts the dangerous thought. For example, one could think of God, of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the last end, of the Virgin Mary, Queen of purity, or of any other subject. Everyone is to follow his penchant and meditate on whatever will more easily engage him. 4° One should never be afraid or troubled because of bad thoughts, nor consider them to be a mark of damnation. St. Paul, St. Jerome, and the greatest saints all had strong temptations which tormented them and made them wish to be freed from this body of death. We should also be careful not to joust with them by examining too closely whether we consented to them or not, or by striving excessively to understand the ugliness of the sin which we dread. Indeed, the more we try to fight these temptations head on, the stronger their impression on our imagination and senses. The most effective tactic is to reject them calmly and peacefully, while humbling oneself and addressing a short prayer to Our Lord. After that, one will do no more than despise them as unworthy of engaging a Christian and a reli-

gious. We will then also despise the devil, telling him from the bottom of our heart what Jesus said during His temptation in the desert: "Begone, Satan!" *Vade retro, Satana*. God will bless this trust, and the very pure angels will approach our soul to minister to it.



## CHAPTER III

### The vow of obedience

#### ARTICLE I

#### **Advantages of religious obedience**

By the vow of obedience, religious relinquish their own will and promise God to comply with that of the superior whom He puts in His place. Religious obedience is the most excellent of the moral virtues and one the closest to the theological virtues. Even though its immediate object is the order of the superior, it subsequently elevates itself in its motivation to contemplate God, His will, His authority, and His sovereign wisdom, all of which are revealed by the mouth of His visible representative. This perfect submission is therefore a kind of worship very agreeable to the Lord.

The advantages of obedience are incalculable. It is the essential virtue of the religious state, encompassing all the other virtues. It is the soul, the form, and the rule of religious activity. Finally, it provides those who practice it perfect peace in this world and a great glory in Heaven.

1° Obedience is the most essential virtue of the religious state. Indeed, it is what allows us, properly speaking, to be called religious. St. Thomas proves this by three reasons: (1) First, by this vow man offers to God something more excellent than what he gives by the other vows. In fact, by the vow of chastity, he offers God only his own body; by poverty, he sacrifices to Him only material things, his goods and his wealth; while by the vow of obedience, he sacrifices to God his will, his judgment, and with them, his entire being — which is something more considerable than giving one's body and wealth. (2) The vow of obedience contains the other vows, while it is itself not contained in any other. Neither the vow of poverty nor that of chastity entails the practice of obedience, so much so that sometimes faithful in the world pronounce the first two and not the last one. On the contrary, when a religious promises obedience, obliging himself generally to

practice all that will be commanded him, he commits himself implicitly to maintain poverty and chastity, which are among the principal directives of his Rule. That is why in our Order, in that of St. Benedict, and in that of the Carthusians, when making profession, no other vow is expressly named except obedience by these words: "I promise obedience." *Promitto obedientiam*. By one word, all is said. (3) A thing is all the more perfect in that it leads us more directly to the end for which it was instituted. Now obedience, more perfectly than the other vows, brings the religious to the end of his vocation. The end of our Order, for example, being to work for our salvation and that of our neighbor, neither poverty nor chastity lead us specifically and personally to that end. They are limited to providing directions appropriate to the religious of all Orders in order to become perfect. It is obedience which brings us to the realization of the apostolic end of our vocation as Friars Preachers. It is obedience, which, in leading us to that, requires prayer, mortification, and study as means to prepare us to preach, to hear confessions, and to teach. It is obedience which then determines for each religious the degree and the nature of the ministry which he is to exercise, according to his abilities, in union with his brothers, jointly with the other works of zeal practiced by the convent and by the province. In like manner, obedience determines for the religious of other Orders what they must do to arrive at the particular end of their institute, whether it be to nurse the sick, to instruct children, or to comfort the dying. Accordingly, St. Thomas concludes that, of all the vows, obedience is the one most essential to religious life — so much so, that the individual who had vowed poverty and chastity would not on that account be in the religious state without the vow of obedience. *Votum obedientiae est Religioni essentialius* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 8).

2° Obedience includes all the other virtues, imprints them in our soul, and preserves them there, if they are already present, as St. Gregory taught: "Obedience is the only virtue that ingrafts virtues in the soul and protects them when ingrafted" *Obedientia sola virtus est quae ceteras mentis inserit et insertas custodit* (*Moral. Lib. 35, c. 14, n. 28*). It presupposes faith; indeed, it takes a lively faith to be convinced that a superior, imperfect like other men, represents for us the majesty and the will of God. It is allied with hope, because it is sometimes difficult to fulfill what the superior has ordered, unless we have confidence in the all-powerful God, who knows how to demonstrate His power in the greatest weakness. It is united with charity, and even inseparable from it, says St. Thomas: "Charity cannot exist without obedience" *Caritas sine obedientia esse non potest* (ST II-II, q. 104, a. 3), since it seeks to please God for Himself, and to do His will in filial submission to the superior; in this lies the proper character of true charity. It also contains the other virtues because all of them are acquired by the exercise

of their acts. Indeed, it is obedience which trains the religious in different virtues: now in mortification and penitence, now in patience, humility, and mildness, now in poverty, modesty, and temperance, etc. Thus, by allowing ourselves to be directed by obedience and by embracing whole-heartedly all the opportunities which arise to practice it, religious continually practice all the virtues; they grow in each one to the degree that they make progress in obedience. This led St. Augustine to say: "Obedience is a great virtue, and is, as I have said, the source and the mother of all the others." *Obedientia maxima virtus est, et, ut sic dixerim, omnium origo materque virtutum* (*Contra Adversarium Legis et Prophetarum* lib. 1, 14). It is in this sense that St. Gregory and St. Bernard explain this passage of Scripture: "The obedient man will speak only of victories": he will indeed win, not only one victory, but a great number of them by practicing, in spite of obstacles, every kind of virtue. *Vir obediens loquetur victorias* (*Prov.* 21:28).

3° Thus, obedience brings to the religious a kind of impeccability, like a pledge of their salvation. Since the fall of Adam, even after baptism has erased original sin, there remains in the will of man a kind of corruption which tends to evil, and in his mind an ignorance filled with darkness. This perversion of the will and blinding of the mind form the two major sources of all man's sins. The vow of obedience shelters religious from the lies which come from this corruption and this ignorance; in this way, it provides them with a kind of security for their salvation. This is why St. Jerome cried out: "O highest liberty, by which man's ability to sin is overcome!" *O summa libertas! qua obtenta, vix homo potest peccare!* (*In Reg. monacharum*, 6)

In effect, religious consecrate to God their own will to follow that of His representative, in everything which is not contrary to divine law and the Constitutions of their Order. Therefore, if they remain continually obedient, they no longer follow in anything the corruption of their leanings. These religious know no other spirit than that of the superior and, in their doubts and troubles, always accept his insights, his advice, and his counsels, convinced that, even if superiors can be mistaken in ordering one thing rather than another, the subjects would not stray by being obedient. God will not demand an accounting for the unsuitableness of what they have done, or better, what they have omitted. Indeed, this does not regard them but remains on the account of those who were responsible for their conduct. As for the subjects, the Sovereign Judge will ask only whether they obeyed. He will find appropriate all that they will have done in following the orders of their legitimate leader, more so than other activities of their choice, even if, in themselves, they were better. This is why St. Paul was moved to say: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls." *Obedite*

*præpositio vestris et subiaceat eis; ipsi enim pervigilant quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri* (Heb. 13:17).

4° Obedience gives the religious much interior peace. All men desire peace; now, genuine peace consists in the tranquility of order, *tranquillitas ordinis* (cf. St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei* Lib. 19, c. 13, 1). This tranquility occurs when one knows how to direct his inferior part, which is to say, the senses, and let himself be led by his superior, namely, God: “to rule inferiors, to be ruled by superiors,” *regere inferiorem, regi a superiore* (St. Aug., *De Musica* Lib. VI, c. 5, 13). The truly obedient religious, who has embraced this submission, enjoys therefore much tranquility of conscience, whereas the disobedient religious continually experiences disturbances of the soul, by reason of the worries and the remorse which increase when he follows more extensively his own will. In fact, the will becomes an even more exacting tyrant whenever we allow it to extend its reach. That is why the religious is never able to find rest in satisfying the claims of the will. He will have peace only if he disciplines his will and prostrates it by perfect obedience. Moreover, having reached this point, the religious remains always happy; however difficult the nature of what has been commanded, seeing in everything the divine will manifested by the superior, he finds in this a great peace, at the same time that Our Lord loves to repose in his soul.

5° Finally, God gives to obedient religious great glory in Heaven. St. John Climacus expressed this truth when he said that obedience will sit at the right of Jesus crucified: *Obedientia adest a dextris crucifixi* (Grad. 4). Just as Jesus Christ was raised to higher honors because of His perfect obedience, having begun, continued, and accomplished His entire life on earth with it, and since He breathed His last with loving favor for obedient souls, as was revealed to a saint, those who have been perfectly obedient will, in Him and with Him, receive special glory in Heaven. “Christ excelled in external obedience: therefore he has received supreme honor.” *Extremam Christus præstitit obedientiam: propterea accepit supremum honorem* (St. John Chrys.: Epist. ad Philipp.).

Under all these claims, then, how precious is the virtue of obedience! How right is St. Gregory to say: “By the other virtues, we fight against devils, but it is obedience that brings us victory.” *Cæteris quidem virtutibus dæmones impugnamus, per obedientiam vincimus* (In Reg. lib. IV, c. 10). Happy is the religious who understands the advantages of this virtue and who practices it faithfully, since it offers him such perfection in this world and eternal glory after death.

## ARTICLE II

### Conditions of obedience

Several conditions are required to render religious obedience genuine and perfect; the principal ones, to which all the others are reduced, are that it be prompt, complete, and total.

1° Obedience must be prompt. As soon as he hears the voice of his superior calling, the truly obedient subject tells himself that God Himself has spoken and has commanded. Just as he would obey with the speed of lightning if he heard the voice of the Almighty, so too he should obey without delay that of His spokesman. Indeed, it is the same for us whether God speaks to us Himself, or through the mouth of a man. If there is a difference, it is that the reward is greater when we obey the representative of God, instead of God Himself.

St. Bernard explained perfectly the qualities of prompt obedience. "He who is truly obedient," he said, "does not know what it is to put off until the morrow. He is the enemy of delay; he is always ready to see, to listen, to speak, to do everything required, to go anywhere he is sent. In sum, his mind and his body are always disposed to receive the will of the superior in order to fulfill it." *Nescit moras, fugit crastinum, ignorat tarditatem, praeripit praecipientem, parat oculos visui, aures auditui, linguam voci, manus operi, itineri pedes; totum se colligit ut imperantis colligat voluntatem* (Serm. XLI, 7 *de virtute Obedientiae, et septem ejus gradibus*).

This reveals how lacking in obedience those religious are who, after having received an order not to their liking, but which they dare not refuse for fear of correction or out of respect for the person who commands, begin to follow it so slowly, so incompletely, with such indifference or disdain, that they oblige the superior to modify his orders and even to discharge them from their task. To act in this way is not to obey one's superior but rather to force him to obey our faults. Others, having received an order, postpone its execution until they have completed what they are engaged in, something more attuned to their inclination; they allege that the command is not pressing, and that they will comply before long. Such obedience is not at all agreeable to Heaven, since one chooses his personal inclinations over the commands transmitted from God by the holder of His authority.

According to the report of Cassian, the ancient religious were so faithful to this promptitude that they obeyed immediately at the

first sound of the bell. Even though they were always absorbed by prayer, meditation, copying books, or manual labor, they stopped these activities without hesitating, as soon as a signal was given, as if they had heard the voice of God. They even left unfinished the drawing of a single letter that had been begun. This kind of obedience was so pleasing in Heaven that it was sometimes rewarded by miracles. Our Constitutions prescribe a promptitude as perfect as that which we admire in the Fathers of the desert. "Upon hearing the first signal, the friars arise." *Audito primo signo, surgant fratres* (Dist. 1, c. 1). "It is a light fault if anyone, not putting aside everything with timely haste as soon as the signal is given, delays to prepare himself, so that he might go to the church when he ought in a well-ordered and proper way." *Levis culpa est si quis, mox ut signum factum fuerit, non relictis omnibus, cum matura festinatione, differat se praeprare, ut ad Ecclesiam ordinate et composita quando debuerit veniat* (c. 1). Those who, on hearing the signal to wake up, remain for a while in bed, as well as all those who, having heard the agreed-on signal to go sing the praises of God in the church, do not immediately drop their writing, their study, their other occupations — those, I say, break their Constitutions and lose a large part of the reward of obedience. For the fervent and punctual religious, as soon as he hears the sound of the bell, he mimics the Magi when they saw the Star and said: "Let us go; here is the sign of a great King." *Hoc signum magni Regis, eamus* (Mt. 2:2).

The truly obedient religious is docile not only to the sound of the bell, but even to the slightest signal or gesture of the superior. "For the superior's will, however it become known," says St. Thomas, "is a tacit precept, and a man's obedience seems to be all the more prompt, forasmuch as by obeying he forestalls the express command as soon as he understands his superior's will." *Voluntas enim superioris, quocumque modo innotescat, est quoddam tacitum praeceptum et tanto videtur obedientia promptior, quanto praeceptum obediendo praevenit, voluntate superioris intellecta* (ST II-II, q. 104, a. 2). Thus, when a superior, by caution, hesitates to command a religious to do something, and the latter understands the superior's intention, he should offer himself spontaneously. When the prophet Isaiah, understanding that God wished to send him to speak to the people of Israel, immediately presented himself and cried out: "Lo, here am I; send me." *Ecce ego, mitte me* (Is. 6:8). In a similar meaning, St. Bernard said: "Genuine obedience surmises the intentions of the superior, extracts them from the latter before he formulates them, and seizes them for execution." *Praeripit praecipientem* (op. cit.).

Prompt obedience is accompanied by joy. In fact, genuine virtue operates with joy; it springs from love which dilates the heart and makes it operate with delight. Joy inspires much promptitude, while

sadness is always followed by langor. When obedience is fulfilled joyously, it becomes more favorable to God, because He loves what we offer Him with joy and rejects what we offer Him with violence and with sadness. "God loveth a cheerful giver, not from necessity or from sadness." *Hilarem datorem diligit Deus, non ex necessitate aut ex tristitia* (II Cor. 9:7). As St. Bernard tells us, serenity in countenance and kindness in words give a very pleasing brightness to obedience. *Serenitas in vultu, dulcedo in sermonibus, multum colorant obedientiam obsequentis* (Serm. XLI *de Obed.*, 6).

If, on the contrary, one obeys with sadness, he indicates that his heart is unhappy at the command received, and that he obeys only out of necessity or fear. This response spoils the perfection of obedience and could eventually end by destroying it in its substance. One of the thousands of ways by which a religious can help himself escape it is to let his sadness show. "For what place is there for obedience where the affliction of sorrow is seen?" *Quis enim locus obedientiae ubi tristitia cernitur ægritudo?* (St. Bern. *Ibid.*). Because of this, the superior is somewhat obliged to take pity and not assign him this or that duty, lest this give rise to greater disorders.

2° Religious obedience must be entire, that is to say, its domain must extend over the great powers of the soul, the will, the understanding, all of which the religious have consecrated to God by profession.

First of all, religious have to conform their will to that of the superior in such a way that they have no other than his. This accomplishes what St. John Climacus said: "true obedience is a voluntary death and the tomb of one's own will." *Obedientia est spontanea mors. . . sepulchrum propriae voluntatis* (Grad. IV, a. 3). When by obedience our will is thus buried in the will of God, it becomes indifferent to everything and able to devote itself to everything. The religious always has in his mouth, according to St. Bernard, the words of David: "My heart is ready, Lord; my heart is ready" (*Ps.* 57:7). Do you want me to work near you? This is what I will. Do you want me in isolation? Do you want me in exterior activities? I am ready. In a word, I want only what you want. "The good obedient person gives his willingness and unwillingness to that he can say, 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.'" *Bonus obediens dat suum velle et suum nolle ut possit dicere: paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum* (Bernard, *Meditationes de humana conditione*, c. IV.13). Out of consideration for his superior, he always remains in the disposition of the converted St. Paul when he said: "Lord, what do you wish me to do?" *Domine, quid me vis facere?* (*Acts* 9:6) "What a brief phrase!" cried St. Bernard, "But a full one, a lively and efficacious phrase! How few religious utter it in truth!" *O verbum*

*breve! sed plenum, sed vivum, sed efficax . . . Quam pauci inveniuntur in hac perfecta obedientiae forma!* (Serm. I, 6 *In Conversione S. Pauli*)

Today, as in the time of St. Bernard, we find too few religious so detached from themselves and so ready to undertake anything on orders from God. How many times, before issuing a command, must a superior ask himself what each one would do more willingly, and tell them, as Jesus Christ said to the blind man in the Gospel: "What would you like me to do for you?" *Quid tibi vis faciam?* "Would you like this task or that one?" Should he judge it appropriate to place them in a ministry little suited to their personality, he meets with complaints, objections, and resistance. Others, to be sure, do not assert their will so openly. They act more diplomatically and skillfully in getting their opinions to prevail, or they use an intermediary who discloses them to the superior. But more than the others, they are not truly obedient; if they believe themselves to be obedient, said St. Bernard, they are only deceiving themselves: "Whoever secretly or openly schemes in order to impose his will on his spiritual father, he fools him if perhaps he behaves ingratiatingly towards him as if from obedience." *Quisquis vel aperte vel occulte satagit ut, quod habet in voluntate, hoc ei spiritualis pater iniungat, ipse se seducit si forte sibi quasi de obedientia blandiatur* (Serm. 35, n. 4 *de Deversis*).

The genuinely obedient one yields to superiors not only his will but also his own judgment. He has only one attitude towards them, namely, that he believes that the command is advantageous for his salvation, precisely because it is their command. Without that, his obedience would be neither complete nor perfect. In fact, obedience, according to St. John Climacus, is a complete dispossession of one's own judgment: *Discretionis depositio* (*Grad. IV*). Moreover, according to all the saints, it is a perfect holocaust by which one consecrates to God his entire being. Now, in the ancient sacrifice of holocaust, the victim was entirely consumed for God. If then, while being obedient, one sets aside for himself his understanding, that is, the uppermost region of the soul, the most independent, that which directs everything else, obedience is no longer a dispossession of the individual's spirit nor a true holocaust. From then on, it is not as pleasing to God as it ought to be.

Genuine obedience is called *blind* by the Church Fathers because, in all that is not contrary to divine law, it simply makes one obey, without looking for reasons to submit and to convince oneself that this has to be so. The true reason, the universal reason, is the duty and the excellence of obedience itself. This blind obedience is very wise and prudent, because in submitting oneself in simplicity to the superior, the religious follows the insights of the infinite wisdom of God, as St. Bernard stated: "If you want to be wise, be obedient." *Si vis*



*esse sapiens, esto obediens* (*Serm. de Epiph.*). Blind obedience is the soul of religious life, because its whole spirit consists in the dependence of subjects on superiors. He who would undertake to judge and examine their commands destroys this principle and is inclined to reverse in an underhanded way an order of things well arranged.

This is why the first lesson St. Jerome gave his friend Rusticus to form him in religious life was this: "Believe that everything your superior will command is advantageous for your salvation; never entangle yourself in judging his orders; your duty is to fulfill completely what he has commanded, following the words of Moses: 'Listen, Israel, and remain silent.'" *Crede tibi salutare quidquid monasterii praepositus jusserit, nec de maiorum sententia iudices, cuius officii est obedire et implere quae iussa sunt, dicente Moyse: Audi, Israel, et tace* (Ep. 125, n. 15 *ad Rusticus*).

St. Bernard used to complain that he rarely found such a submission of the spirit. "We see many religious," he would say, "who, as soon as they receive an order, bring up a number of questions: 'Why? How? How come this has been assigned to me? For what benefit? Who made up this advice? Give it to someone else.' From this, there arise grumbling, complaints, indignation of the heart, anger in words, excuses, the pretext of impossibility, and finally, the formal refusal to execute the command." *Multos videmus, post praecipientis imperium, multas facere quaestiones: Cur, quare, quamobrem, saepius interrogare, etc.?* (*Serm. XLI, De Virtute Obedientiae*, n.5) Such religious are far from having the docility which St. Gregory described in this way: "Genuine obedience does not at all examine the commands of superiors nor their intentions. Its greatest joy is to complete the order given, knowing no other merit than to obey the order received." *Vera obedientia nec praepositorum intentionem discutit, nec praepcepta discernit; in hoc solo gaudet si quod sibi praecipitur, operatur; nescit enim iudicare quisquis perfecte didicerit obedire, quia hoc tantum bonum putat si praepceptis obediat* (*Reg.*, lib. II, c. IV).

What reveals the lack of justice to which religious expose themselves when they examine and condemn the behavior of their superior is that the prudence of the latter is general and far-seeing, while that of subjects is individual and limited. The superior judges and leads by laws for the common good, about which he will have to answer to God. As for the subject, he is only occupied with himself and judges matters only as they relate to himself; consequently, he cannot appreciate in prudence the behavior of the superior, who often acts for undisclosed reasons and who, besides that, can have motives full of wisdom as regards the universal good, even though controversial as regards individual good. Religious who condemn their superiors based on appearances are therefore rash and badly informed.

Nonetheless, one is allowed to present to the superior, with respect, modesty, and humility, what may concern health, the soul, or public good. But this must be done for God, and not to satisfy one's pride and inclinations; after having explained what one considers relevant, there is nothing left but to be perfectly detached from everything that will be commanded, granted, or refused.

3<sup>o</sup> Obedience must be universal, because as St. Thomas said, the vow of obedience extends to the administration of the religious life and embraces all its activities. This is what gives it a certain universality: *Votum obedientiæ ad religionem pertinens se extendit ad dispositionem totius vitæ; et secundum hoc, habet quamdam universalitatem* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 5, ad 4). It is strange to see, on this point, how many delusions have crept into the practice of the vow of obedience. We should not be averse to delve into details, the better to learn how to avoid these faults.

Obedience must be general for all times, all places, all ages, and all actions. There are some religious who believe that this virtue is appropriate only for novices and is less obligatory for the elders, for qualified men, for professors, preachers, confessors. Others are unwilling to submit unless they are in good spirits; others obey when the superior is present, but not during his absence. These are all delusions. St. Bernard remarked that perfect obedience knows no limits, unless we posit the end of life as a limit. *Perfecta obedientia terminis non arctatur; terminus est obedientiæ qui et vitæ* (*De præcept. et disp.*, c. VI, n. 12).

Obedience must be general regarding all superiors, since all without exception take the place of God. Certain religious would seek to obey only those who have knowledge, virtue, experience, kind manners, and whose character is akin to theirs. But they harbor delusions, as we said earlier. Genuine obedience submits equally to all superiors because it respects in each one the true principle of submission, namely, divine authority. St. Bernard would like one to obey them as he would God, with the same respect and the same precision. "Whatever commands have been handed on, whether from God or from man as vicar of God, it is surely to be yielded to with equal care, equal reverence to be paid, so long as God has not commanded man to the contrary." *Sive Deus, sive homo vicarius Dei mandatum quodcumque tradiderit, pari profecto obsequendum est cura, pari reverentia deferendum, ubi tamen Deo contraria non præcipit homo* (Ibid.).

Obedience must be general as regards all the commandments. We find religious who observe faithfully certain details of their Constitutions, but who brazenly transgress the others. They are not genuinely obedient, since the vow of obedience extends to all the observances and all the Constitutions, rubrics, inclinations, and prostrations in choir, as St. Vincent Ferrer explained (*De Vit. Sp.*, c. 15).

Finally, obedience must be general regarding the circumstances of the command. Certain subjects obey by adding circumstances of their choice, or by suppressing at whim those that were prescribed. They also fall into error. For, by the vow of obedience, the religious has given himself entirely to God, body and soul, with dependence on the superior in all the cases he has foreseen, so that obedience may be universal, as St. Thomas explains: "Those who live in religious life give themselves and their goods entirely to God; whence their obedience is universal." *Illi qui vivunt in religione totaliter se et sua tribuunt Deo; unde obedientia eorum est universalis* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 5, ad 1).

## ARTICLE III

### Means of acquiring religious obedience

The principal means to acquire perfect obedience is to consider that the person of the Divine Master is found within that of the superior, with the result that, as we obey our superior, we do the will of God, recognize His authority, and submit to His Sovereign Majesty. If we acted for another reason, obedience would no longer be an act of religion; it would no longer have the essence, the perfection, and the reward which it deserves as the principal of the vows.

St. Bernard and St. Benedict strove, with reason, to posit this principle as an axiom and frequently called it to mind: obedience paid to superiors is paid to God Himself. *Obedientia quæ exhibetur maioribus, Deo exhibetur* (*De Præceptis et Dispensatione*, c. 9, n. 21). Indeed they prove it by these words of Jesus Christ to his disciples: "He that heareth you heareth me." *Qui vos audit, me audit* (*Lk.* 10:16). These should not be understood as pertaining to the Apostles alone, but also to all spiritual superiors recognized by the Church.

Were Our Lord to appear among us and to give us a command, we would obey Him with a plain and wholly submissive will, for the obvious reason that the will of God is what is best and most sacred for us. We would even rejoice when He asked something difficult and painful of us; we would consider it a favor that He chose us to fulfill it. This is the way, added the two saints, that every order from a superior should be received and followed as if it came from the Sovereign Lord. In fact, what does it matter whether His will has been made known to us by Himself or by the ministry of angels, or by the ministry of men? *Quid enim, interest utrum ipse, aut per suos ministros, sive homines, sive angelos, hominibus innotescat suum beneplacitum?* (*Ibid.*)

In exhorting to virtue those who are subordinate to others, St. Paul tells them: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh ... as to Christ." The same apostle and St. Peter wish that Christians be receptive not only to spiritual superiors but also to earthly authorities; not only to pleasant and considerate masters, but also to those who are harsh. *Servi, obedite dominis carnalibus. . . sicut Christo* (*Eph.* 6:5) ... *Non tantum bonis et modestis, sed etiam dyscolis* (*I Pet.* 2:18). This led St. Basil to observe quite rightly: "If the Apostle wanted us to obey the powerful of the earth as the Son of God Himself, even if they are unfaithful, all the more should we obey our religious superiors, even when they are strict and harsh, because they

“speak directly in the name of God, are sacred persons, and wish only that we follow the divine will for our salvation: exactly the goal we came into religious life to achieve, at the cost of so many sacrifices!”

## ARTICLE IV

### Gravity of the sin of disobedience; its punishment

Once the principle is recognized that superiors take the place of God, it follows that, if subjects lack respect and obedience, God sees this failure as an injury made against His person. Indeed, after Jesus Christ spoke about apostles and superiors, "He that heareth you heareth me," He added, as a consequence, "He that despiseth you despiseth me." *Qui vos spernit me spernit (Lk. 10:16)*. After having reminded us that we should be submissive to authorities and superiors, because all authority comes from God, St. Paul continues immediately: "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." *Qui resistit potestati, Dei ordinationi resistit (Rom. 13:2)*.

The sin of disobedience is so great that the Holy Spirit compares it to idolatry and to witchcraft — crimes detestable above all, since they directly attack the divinity: "It is like the sin of witchcraft, to rebel: and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey." *Quasi peccatum ariolandi est repugnare, et quasi scelus idolatriæ nolle acquiescere (I Reg. [I Sam.] 15:23)*. St. Gregory and St. Bernard justify this comparison by saying that, just as witchcraft and idolatry constitute an act of contempt for God and deprive Him of the worship that is His due, so too disobedience against superiors is an act of contempt that redounds on the authority of the Lord and deprives Him of the worship due to His majesty.

The extraordinary chastisements with which God often punished those who lacked respect and obedience toward superiors show clearly that He recognized such transgressions as being against Himself.

For having grumbled against the behavior of Moses, Miriam, his sister, was struck with a horrible leprosy and had to remain seven days outside the camp, separated from the children of God (*Num. 12*). The people of Israel having grumbled against Moses, on the return of the spies who had gone to examine the promised land, the first grumblers were struck dead in the presence of the Lord, and the rest of the people were condemned to sojourn forty years in the desert (*Num. 14*). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, after complaining against Moses and Aaron for having assumed too much authority in the government, saw the earth open up at their feet and swallow them alive, with their tents and their possessions (*Num. 16*). On another occasion, when the children of Israel grumbled against Moses because of their sufferings in the desert, God sent serpents which killed a large number of them

(*Num.* 21). The extent of these punishments shows that God considered as aimed at His supreme majesty this insubordination of the Israelites, as Moses and Aaron declared to them by these words: "Your murmuring is not against us, but against the Lord." *Nec contra nos est murmur vestrum, sed contra Dominum* (*Ex.* 16:8).

It follows, then, that we must always speak of superiors with respect, and turn away from any who engage in contempt, blame, and grumbling. We must not argue with superiors, even on neutral subjects, but receive their corrections with humility, without anger or complaint. We ought not measure our obedience by the qualities they possess, but think rather, if those qualities are not very praiseworthy, that God can make His will known as much through an ignorant or even unworthy superior, as through a scholar and a saint. Indeed, He has appointed all superiors, and without exception called them visible *divinities*, charged with directing us in His place, as formerly He had established Moses to be the visible divinity of Pharaoh (see *Ex.* 7:1). This is also the reason He has forbidden us to speak badly of the *divinities*, namely, those who have been placed in authority.

Religious who speak badly of their superiors do great harm to the community. They reduce the esteem, the respect, and the confidence placed in those who direct it. These religious inspire an estrangement from the superiors, prevent the acceptance of a large part of their decisions, and weaken in their brothers the strength of obedience. Such complaints against superiors are often serious sins, by reason of the bad impressions and the disastrous consequences which they bring about in their hearers.

Let us pray to God that He lead us to the perfection of obedience, in such a way that it be supernatural, prompt, punctual, anticipatory, and complete. Let us ask Him for the grace to obey in heart and mind, exteriorly and interiorly, by conforming our will, our tendencies, and our judgments to everything which the Lord desires of us. Let us ask pardon of Him for having so often attempted to bend those who commanded us to the unreasonable demands of our pride and to the caprices of our will; pardon for having so many times examined, judged, criticized the administration of our superiors, and scandalized our neighbor because of our complaints against them. From now on, let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the model for our obedience; like Him, let us remain faithful to this virtue until death. In this way, we will reign with Him forever, since "to serve God is to reign." *Servire Deo regnare est.*

## CHAPTER IV

### Observance of the Rule

- 1° Reasons to observe faithfully the religious Rule.
- 2° Advantages of this fidelity even in the least matters.
- 3° The danger in neglecting it; persistent fidelity even in minor matters.

#### ARTICLE I

#### **Reasons to observe the Rule exactly**

The principal reasons which ought to convince religious to observe their Rule faithfully (by these words we mean not only the Rule of St. Augustine but also the Constitutions of each Institute) are that God wills it, that they have promised it to Him, that in so doing they receive abundant graces from Him, and that they provide a good example to others.

1° God wishes that religious keep their Rule exactly. He is, in fact, the first Author of all the states established in the Church. His providence, therefore, has regulated all the duties of everyone and extends to those matters that are most trivial in appearance. He inspired founders of religious Orders and legitimate superiors to choose regulations suitable to lead to perfection with certainty. By giving their individual vocation to diverse religious, He wishes that religious observe faithfully their respective Rule, because, by this, He intends to accomplish in them His eternal designs and to lead them to the degree of sanctity destined for them in this world, and the degree of glory prepared for them in Heaven.

One single reason ought to be sufficient for the person who loves God and who is concerned about his salvation. Indeed, when we love another, we try to please him in all things and to do his will. Moreover, we apply ourselves all the more when we are entirely dependent on him. Thus, if a religious has the audacity to break his Rule



deliberately, habitually, with full awareness, and almost continually, he is very close to losing completely the friendship of his Divine Master, and places himself on the road to damnation. In contrast, there is the genuine religious who observes the rules faithfully. If, perchance, he occasionally transgresses them out of weakness, inadvertence, negligence, or an unexpected situation, he humbles himself before God, asks pardon of Him, corrects himself, and, by a renewed attentiveness, atones for the evil committed.

2° Religious are obliged to observe their Rule because this is what they promised at their profession. If we promise something to a person to whom we owe strong obligations, then fidelity, honor, and sincerity align together to render this promise sacred. Now religious by their profession bind themselves before God to observe all their Constitutions; to break them would constitute infidelity, disloyalty, dishonor.

There is even this singularity among us, as was noted earlier, that before receiving the profession of novices, the superior asks, in the presence of witnesses, whether those novices have the will to observe faithfully the Constitutions, not as practiced in this convent or that, but to the letter, as they have been written. If the novices are not strongly determined to do so, instead of admitting them to vows, they should be sent back to the world. After such a formal commitment, are not the disciples of St. Dominic held rigorously to observe faithfully all their Constitutions?

3° By following their Rules exactly, religious receive many graces. Every time they observe a feature, however insignificant it may be, their fidelity assures a new degree of merit in this world and of glory in Heaven. Even on this earth, to keep their vows joyfully, and to advance every day toward perfection, provides happiness by the interior consolations they receive from God, by the peace of conscience which they enjoy, by the power they acquire to conquer their enemies. Accordingly, St. Bernard with these words encouraged his brothers to persevere with fervor in the observance of their Rule: “I ask you, my very dear brothers, and I strongly implore you earnestly to live in such a way as to keep carefully always the practices of your Order, so that, in turn, they will guard you.” *Rogo vos, fratres et multum obsecro, sic agite et sic state in Domino, dilectissimi, solliciti semper circa custodiam ordinis, ut Ordo custodiat vos* (Ep. 345, n.1).

4° Another strong reason to bind religious to obey carefully their Rule is the good example they owe to the world and especially to their brothers. St. Paul used to tell the early Christians: “Providing good things, not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of all men.” *Providentes bona non solum coram Deo sed etiam coram omnibus hominibus* (Rom. 12:17). Jesus Christ wishes that our light shine so

brightly before men that they will see our good works and glorify our Heavenly Father. *Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in cælis est* (Mt. 5:16). Now, this edification that we should provide to our brothers, and from which no authority can dispense us, results especially in the exact observance of our Constitutions, statutes, and spiritual practices and exercises. The more we perform them faithfully, all the more do we move others to the regular life. If such faithful religious are elderly and important in their Order, the authority of their example is all the more decisive, and their merit, on that score, is that much greater. They become true preservers of the religious life and contribute to the flowering in their community of piety and regular discipline. With faithful religious around us, it is almost impossible for us not to become, at length, virtuous, fervent, and zealous for all that is good.

## ARTICLE II

### **The great advantage of fidelity in observing the Rule in little things**

The most common trap which the devil uses to make religious fall into serious faults is to influence them to neglect the observance of their Constitutions in small matters. They would tremble in horror if, at the outset, he proposed that they break their vows and their essential obligations. But, at first, the insidious one suggests that they not pay attention to small practices, under the pretext that they are of little importance, that they are good only for the young religious; that perfection is not found in those matters; that a broad-minded individual does not stoop to such details; that, in fact, there is no fault in failing here, since it is sufficient to be faithful in observing the large matters. Should the devil, helped by their lukewarmness and their inexperience, win them over to accept these insinuations, he then suggests that they ignore essential regulations — and he succeeds only too often. This led St. John Chrysostom to say: “In general, the devil starts his attacks in the smallest matters.” *Diabolus a minimis plerumque incipit* (Hom. 51 in Matt.).

In order to forewarn novices about this temptation, we will detail the great advantages of fidelity in small observances, and the great punishments prepared for those who neglect or reject them.

First of all, let us assume that we are dealing with religious who are faithful in large matters. They are unlike the Jews who remained scrupulous in observing the law in minor details only to violate it with impunity in more important matters; a common disorder among scrupulous persons. Religious need to have a holy fidelity in observing the least matters prescribed by obedience, and to carry from them a greater generosity for the observance of large matters. Indeed, in view of their importance, the obligation of keeping them is the most essential of all, as St. Bernard remarked: “The truly obedient and humble one knows not to condemn small things, and to attend to great things with great care.” *Novit verus humilisque obediens et minima non contemnere, et maxime curare quæ maxima sunt* (*De Precept.*, c 7).

Once this reservation has been made, there is no doubt that the advantages of fidelity in small matters is considerable. It is the means to keep major matters exactly, to receive from God a large reward, to give Him a great sign of the love, deference, esteem, and

gratitude we have for Him. Moreover, it is a proof of the greatness of our soul, of courage, of wisdom, and of the degree of perfection which we have achieved.

1° Fidelity in observing the Rule in small matters is a way of fulfilling exactly the major ones. Jesus Christ Himself has assured us: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater." *Qui fidelis est in minimo et in maiori fidelis est* (Lk. 16:10). Fidelity is appreciated all the more in the former than in the latter, like the child who displays better his respect and obedience to his father by avoiding the slightest actions which might displease him, than in fulfilling more serious and indispensable duties. In fact, a common virtue suffices to avoid major sins, while it is the mark of a well-developed virtue to watch carefully to avoid the slightest faults.

At the same time that this fidelity is a sign of solid virtue, it contributes to making it easier for us to persevere in the most serious duties. God loves to reward this exactness by more elevated graces. In this, then, is found a sure means for observant religious to make new progress in perfection every day, according to what St. Anselm said: "Do you wish to grow from virtue to virtue, and from progress to progress? Fear to offend God in the minor details." *Si de virtute in virtutem et de profectu ad profectum vultis ascendere, timete in singulis minimis Deum offendere* (Ep. 231).

2° Fidelity in small matters is a means of receiving from God a precious reward in this world and in Heaven. Jesus Christ Himself assured us with these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." *Euge, serve bone et fidelis, quia super pauca fuisti fidelis, supra multa te constituam; intra in gaudium Domini tui* (Mt. 25:21). So as to help us understand the importance of that reward, the Savior does not say that the joy of the Lord will enter into us, because our heart is too small to contain it. Instead, He says that we will enter into the joy of the Lord, there to be entirely immersed and absorbed, as we have explained in speaking of the happiness of Heaven.

The more religious are careful to please God in observances that are only recommended, all the more is God generous in their favor, as toward His well-beloved ones. As St. John Chrysostom said, the practice of the Lord is to spread generous gifts on those who make modest offerings to Him. *Mos est Dei magna dare pro parvis*. He is like those in high places on the earth with regard to their servants. The latter win the affection of their masters more for the little gestures and attentions with which they surround them than for the obligatory services. In these minor considerations, there is a mark of affection that necessarily touches us.

3° This fidelity is also a sign of the rightful idea which religious have of the love of God. For there is nothing to despise in what regards the worship and the glory of an infinitely great Being, said St. Basil: "Nothing is small that is done for the sake of God." *Nihil est minutum quod Dei causa fiat*. If, in the court of a high prince, one is careful to observe all the fine points of the ceremonial, because they concern a royal majesty, and because the honor of the sovereign is involved, how much more exact should we be in all the practices relating to the honor and worship of God, whose majesty is infinite! He is no less honored by small matters than by great ones. He is even often honored better because, in fidelity to the former (beside the merits already indicated), there is less occasion for vanity, pride, and egoism, than in the latter. Only devotion to the glory of God, the desire to please Him, and the need constantly to offer Him new proofs of gratitude can move the religious to be faithful in their observance.

4° There is greatness of soul in observing the least regulations. St. Augustine attests to this: "What is small is small; but it is a great work to remain faithful in the smallest of matters." *Quod minimum est, minimum est; sed in minimo esse fidelem magnum est* (*De Doctrina Christiana* IV, c. 35). Nothing is more extraordinary than a man unable to lack fidelity in anything, and unable to violate the least duties of his state. A mediocre virtue would not be sufficient for anyone to discipline himself continuously, to constrain himself, and to force himself without interruption. It is easier to take on some difficult but momentary efforts to realize, at rare intervals, some generous actions, than it is to condemn oneself to perpetual battles against one's natural inclinations and individual liberty in order to fulfill daily obligations. Only a solid virtue can accomplish this last choice and execute it without faltering.

Let us add that virtue is all the more perfect when it is joined to a more complete and honest intention of pleasing God. Now fidelity in small matters is one sign of this honest and perfect intention. In the practice of remarkable actions one is often excited by the very greatness of what one is doing and by the hope for benefits to be gained. The efforts and the difficulties encountered along the way are thereby diminished, while, on the contrary, the practice of small matters offers little to enrapture the soul, or to lift it up above itself, to overcome boredom and disgust, inseparable in a common and uniform life, continually subject to a thousand bothersome details — and that, without any glory before men. Accordingly, it takes great strength of soul and a particular grace from God to persevere in this meticulous precision.

To be sure, there is still some greatness in this continual exercise, because we occasionally find there the opportunity to practice higher virtues: charity, humility, patience, obedience, evenness of tem-

per, mortification of self-love, of the senses, of the passions, and of the spirit of independence. A multitude of these practices are contained in the lowliest observances. Thus, we end by attaining and even surpassing, without extraordinary efforts, the merit due to the most noble undertakings.

Finally, greatness of soul is to be found in conquering unceasingly the temptations of an enemy as powerful and as clever as the devil. He suggests constantly that we should neglect the minor practices of the religious life. What weakness and what rashness on our part not to strive valiantly to repel these attacks! Everything is important when it could hinder or contribute to the major undertaking of our salvation. Everything is important in what relates to eternal glory, since it could make us lose it or merit it and increase it endlessly. The devil knows this; that is why he neglects nothing in preparing our ruin, little by little, by minor infidelities. And he would succeed unless we decided to resist strongly in faith, by constant exactness in all our duties.

5° Fidelity in minor matters is a sign of great wisdom, because genuine wisdom consists in appreciating and regulating everything appropriately, even matters considered less important. God has also regulated the minute things of the universe, down to the gnat and the ant. St. Augustine himself declared that he found the structure of diminutive insects as admirable as that of huge elephants; the sprouting of a grain of wheat as that of the government of the world. If the small things, in the world of souls, are already great in themselves, they are all the more so when considered as preparations for genuine progress in virtue. The wise man thus makes of them an important matter and applies himself to them with tenacity, realizing not only their intrinsic worth, but also the lofty goal to which, little by little, they inexorably lead.

6° This fidelity is the sign of a perfect soul, because the characteristic of perfection is to avoid easily the least failings, to have a lively fear of them, and to weep bitterly for those who commit them. The imperfect ones, on the contrary, are insensitive to light faults, and do not even think about correcting them because they are already so weighed down with great sins and bad habits. On this score, St. Bernard says that the pure soul, consecrated to God, must have as much horror of minor imperfections as of the more serious ones, so exquisite is the refinement of his conscience. *Mens Deo dicata sic caveat minora vitia ut maiora* (*De Ordine Vitae*, c. 11, n. 37).

The advantages tied to fidelity in small matters become clearer by the consideration of the great evils which their transgression entails. The Holy Spirit said: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little." *Qui spernit modica, paulatim decidet* (*Sir.* 19:1).

God punishes these transgressions by removing His lights from the mind and His consolation from the heart. Following upon the privation of these graces, those who break the Rule fall into indifference, sloth, apathy, and a distaste for spiritual matters. This is how finally they arrive at violating their vows and even the commandments of God.

As to what is particular to our Order, it is true that the Constitutions oblige no one under pain of mortal or venial sin. But all our teachers remark that it is rare, however, that deliberate violations do not incur some culpability. The circumstances which accompany this transgression, the goal towards which it tends, the motives which direct it, and the effects which follow are almost always debased and communicate their malice to it. Even though the Constitutions by themselves do not bind under penalty of sin, nonetheless, one can sin venially or mortally when he transgresses them by contempt, negligence, or a disordered passion (as by sensuality, greed, sloth, pride, lack of self-control, vanity, human respect, curiosity, anger, vengeance). As for the transgression inspired by contempt, it is always a mortal sin. Moreover, the frequency of all transgressions is a preparation for contempt. This led St. Thomas to express categorically: "There is also a religious order, that of the Friars Preachers, where such like transgressions or omissions do not, by their very nature, involve sin, either mortal or venial; but they bind one to suffer the punishment affixed thereto, because it is in this way that they are obliged to observe such things. Nevertheless they may sin venially or mortally through neglect, concupiscence, or contempt." *Qui tamen possent venialiter vel mortaliter peccare ex negligentia vel libidine, seu contemptu* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 9, ad 1).

The young religious who have a fearful conscience need not trouble themselves if sometimes they commit some faults, since they are men. Now, it is a characteristic of mortal man to be weak, and, "There is no just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. ...; For in many things we all offend." *Non est homo qui non peccet...; in multis offendimus omnes* (Eccl. 7:20; James 3:2). They need to humble themselves for their transgressions, ask pardon of God for them, correct themselves promptly, accept with piety and lowliness the penance imposed by the superior, and take the best means so as no longer to fall deliberately.

This firm determination to correct daily faults makes the difference between lax religious institutes and those which are ardent. In the former, religious often break their Rule consciously, with no intention of reforming themselves. Their superior, aware of the transgressions, is hardly troubled by them, and does not impose a suitable penance. Thus, all of them together, by their laxness, allow the introduc-

tion of a lack of observance and slackening, for which they become responsible in the sight of God.

Let us pray to the Lord to keep us from this misfortune and to make us worthy of forming fervent communities by means of this great exactness and this inviolable fidelity to observe, in their least points, our Constitutions, statutes, regular exercises, ordinary practices, and solemn ceremonies. Let us ask Him to pardon our very frequent failings, which scandalize our brothers. Let us make a firm resolution to correct ourselves quickly of our lack of observance, and to be more faithful in future.

May St. Dominic, our Father, who chose our Constitutions through inspiration from Heaven, and gave them to us as a sure way to salvation, obtain for us the grace to follow them as he himself did, in their least prescriptions, day and night, in the convent and outside, during the novitiate and after profession, so that we may remain steadfast in obedience until death.

AMEN.



## CHAPTER V

### The obligation to strive for perfection

- 1° In what does the perfection of man consist?
- 2° The obligation to strive for perfection.
- 3° The means to strive for perfection.
- 4° Obstacles to perfection and their remedies

#### ARTICLE I

##### **In what does the perfection of man consist?**

The perfection of man consists in a total union with God, a union, St. Thomas tells us, that is obtained by charity (see ST II-II, q. 25, a. 4). A thing reaches its total perfection when it has achieved the final end for which it was created. The final end of man is that in which he finds, as in a center, all that his understanding can know and all that his will can love; in other words, God, the sovereign and universal Good. *In hoc consistit perfectio hominis quod totaliter Deo inhæret* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 1). Now, it is love which unites man perfectly to God, as his sovereign good, and makes him become one with God. As St. John taught: “God is charity: and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him.” (*I John* 4:16). Thus it was in all truth that St. Paul could say: “Charity is the bond of perfection.” *Vinculum perfectionis* (*Coloss.* 3:14).

In fact, this complete union with God is achieved by applying to the Supreme Good all the powers of soul and body. As a consequence of this, perfection includes a certain universality, as St. Thomas said, since it chooses God as the sole object of all interior and exterior undertaking. *Importat autem perfectio quandam universalitatem* (ST II-II, q. 184, a. 2). When it is a question of charity, the human mind thinks only of God, and does not judge the value of anything save according to the rules of His divine word. Furthermore, both man’s

heart and mind love only Him, adhere to all that He wills, and ascribe to His glory all affection and desire which do not have Him directly as goal. In their train march all the other powers, words, actions, with the result that, under the banner of charity, everything enters the supernatural order and relates to the honor of the Supreme Being.

Moreover, so that this union of the powers and abilities of the soul with God will be perfect, man must apply himself with all the ardor and constancy of which he is capable, so that nothing can deflect him or slow him down. Again, it is charity which forms in us that irresistible tendency toward God and in some way transforms us into Him. The perfection of charity, to be sure, is completed only in Heaven, since it is there that the blessed see God clearly, love Him perfectly, continually, unable ever to stop. In this world, man cannot always give himself over to this thinking and this love; he is distracted by the weakness of nature and the exigencies of life. Here on earth, at least, the perfection of charity presses us to make all our efforts to unite to God all our interior powers, which are the principles of our actions, so that they keep Him ever as the object and the goal of their activities. Thereby, love brings us to the highest degree of union with God, and to the highest level of perfection possible in this present life.

To cooperate in this endeavor, man has to banish all obstacles to charity, and consequently, to perfection. For this purpose, he has to take three steps: 1° Use all his strength to avoid sin, not only mortal sin which destroys divine love, but also venial sin which diminishes it; to correct all his faults, and to subdue the unruly affections of greed, which poisons charity, as St. Augustine so rightly says: *Venenum caritatis est cupiditas* (83 *Quaest.*, 36; see ST I-II, a. 99, a. 6, obj. 1). 2° Apply himself constantly to practicing all the virtues: humility, patience, obedience, chastity, poverty, penitence, mortification, and the others which facilitate our union with God, so that, finding its work prepared, charity has only to bring them together in the soul and carry them all to the loving Supreme Good. 3° Strive to acquire these virtues to a very high degree, so that they can contribute to excellent and perfect actions, as much as human frailty allows. Indeed, excellent actions, practiced constantly, are what make the life of man similar to that of God and allow the work of perfection to advance in great strides. This insures that, in a short time, generous souls climb very high. Though not numerous, their actions are heroic. By a series of victories, they soon win over the heart of God.

## ARTICLE II

### The obligation to strive for perfection

All Christians are obliged to strive for perfection to a degree proportionate to their condition; indeed, they are obliged to love God with all their heart, with all their strength, above all other things. As St. Paul wrote to his friends: it is the will of God that you become saints. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." *Hæc est voluntas Dei sanctificatio vestra* (*I Thess.* 4:3). Jesus Christ said to everyone: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." *Estote perfecti sicut Pater vester cælestis perfectus est* (*Mt.* 5:48). The means by which secular persons must strive for this decreed perfection is to keep the commandments of God perfectly, especially that of His love, and to imitate His perfections in the acts which deal with the duties of their state.

Religious, however, are obliged to strive to a higher perfection than secular persons, because of the state of sanctity which they embraced at profession — a state by which they obliged themselves to keep not only the commandments, but also the counsels contained in the three usual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. These three vows are added to the other Christian obligations and bring them, along with new duties, the source of a new perfection. This is why the religious state was called by the revered Fathers "the perfection of Christianity," because, by the practice of the vows, it brings about works more excellent than those of simple Christians. God grants more abundant graces in order to enact a more personal and more continual union with Him, as much as is possible in this mortal flesh.

Nonetheless, religious are not obliged to be perfect, but they must strive to become perfect as soon as they have accepted this task by profession, as St. Thomas said. *Non oportet quod quicumque est in religione, iam sit perfectus, sed quod ad perfectionem tendat* (ST II-II, q. 186, a. 1). Should they ever directly or indirectly renounce their original intention to strive for perfection, and not maintain a sincere willingness to do so, they fall into a criminal state, because they offend God by their infidelity to the sacred promises which they made at profession.

## ARTICLE III

### The means to arrive at perfection

By the counsels, we obtain more easily, more surely, and more completely the goal of perfection, which is charity; so said St. Thomas: *Per consilia facilius, securius, perfectiusque charitas obtinetur* (see ST II-II, q. 189, a. 1, ad 5).

Indeed, on the one hand, the vows drive off obstacles to charity; on the other, they gather together what makes it perfect. For by the three vows, renouncing for supernatural motives all the goods of the earth, all the pleasures of the senses, and his freedom, that is to say, his whole being, the religious makes an act of love to God, who is the highest perfection. The reason is that the vows, which consecrate one's entire being to God, constitute a holocaust, that is to say, a complete sacrifice. They are equivalent, then, to a continual martyrdom, by a voluntary death to all the things of this world and by the practice of austere observances. Where, then, can we find an act of love more perfect than in this complete gift and this continual martyrdom for an entire life?

The vows of religion are also effective means of observing more easily and more perfectly the commandments of God, in which Christian perfection is essentially contained. *Per se quidem et essentialiter consistit perfectio christianæ vitæ in caritate* (ST II-II, q. 184, a. 3). For example, all Christians, by the law of the Lord, are obliged to practice poverty of spirit, for Jesus has said that they who do not renounce everything cannot be His disciples. This poverty consists in an interior detachment regarding the goods of this world. Now, it is easier for religious than for secular persons to renounce all they possess, since this renouncement, as we remarked elsewhere, is easier for someone who has effectively separated himself from these goods than for another who retains their possession. Moreover, every good Christian is obliged, by the law of God, to maintain chastity, according to his state. Now, it is easier to renounce entirely the pleasures of the senses than to enjoy them in moderation, without falling into sin. The disciple of Jesus Christ is held also to renounce pride and self-will; that is the precept of the Master. Now, it is much easier for religious than for secular persons to renounce themselves and their pride, because their state obliges them constantly to obey their superiors, while prac-

tically all men of the world are masters of their actions and do whatever pleases them.

All Christians must fulfill the will of God. Even if they know in general what God demands of them, they do not know the details of each action, while religious, even in their slightest actions, can accomplish this sovereign will, which is made known by all the regulations which they have to follow. Each servant of Jesus Christ is obliged to avoid useless speech, for which he will have to account to the Sovereign Judge, along with words contrary to charity, to humility, and to the other Christian virtues. To be sure, it is easier for religious than for lay people to avoid such blameworthy words, thanks to the silence prescribed by the Rule, which shelters them from idle or vicious chatter. Every man is equally held, by the law of God, to avoid the occasions of sin. But on that score, what situation can equal that of the religious? His Rule, his occupations, and his solitude shield him from pernicious objects to which secular people are always exposed.

Every Christian, we would add, is obliged to use his time well and to lead a life full of good works. But is it not easier for religious to succeed at this, since their Rule prescribes a series of spiritual exercises and meritorious works, while in the world one has difficulty using even a single day in a holy manner? Finally, if everyone is obliged by divine precept to do penance, how much easier is that for religious than for secular persons! The Rule of the former determines, in fact, the works of penance they must complete to atone properly for their past sins and to guard against those which they could commit in the future. As for worldly persons, could they be sufficiently aware to condemn themselves to a penance proportionate to their sins and strong enough to avoid relapses? Generally, no.

Furthermore, let us admit that a religious who resolved solely to keep his vows but was uninterested in applying himself to observing the Rule, would be in a perilous condition, as all the Doctors teach. Indeed, being obliged under pain of mortal sin to strive for perfection, he cannot renounce constantly and generally those practices which are the means to it. Otherwise, he would be renouncing perfection itself. Now those means are almost identical with the practice of diverse points of the Rule, in which they have been wisely assembled and condensed. Moreover, the intention of not observing one's Constitutions would, at the very least, be tantamount to contempt of them. Such behavior leads to formal contempt, which is always a serious sin. So many topics for consideration! So many reasons for fear!

St. Augustine and St. Bernard used two comparisons to help us understand better the great advantages religious gain from the Rule so as to become more perfect. As the wings of a bird, they say, serve to make it lighter and to be able to fly higher, and, as the wheels

of a chariot are a great help to the animals who pull it, so too the Rules for religious. Far from being a burden for them, the Rules are formed according to the evangelical counsels and supply them with wings so as to rise more easily to a higher perfection. They are like the wheels which help them to carry more easily the yoke of the commandments of the Lord. All the while, men of the world lag and groan under the weight of their simple Christian obligations. Blest are they who do not falter!

Nonetheless, in order to achieve this marvelous result with the help of observing the Constitutions and the exercise of the daily activities of religious life, one must be very careful to animate them interiorly. Religious often lose sight of this maxim. Their body acts independently. While they sing the praises of God during the night and attend the Holy Sacrifice during the day, their minds and hearts are not occupied with celestial matters, even their bodies lack reverence, their eyes lack restraint, and instead of honoring the Lord by the worship which they offer Him, they offend Him anew.

When they perform such acts of penance as fasts, vigils, studies, etc., it is often under constraint and accompanied by complaints. They soften the harsh edges and ignore them completely if they can do so without being noticed. When they do obey, it is not because of God. In addition, even though they have spent several years in sanctifying exercises, they remain nonetheless without piety and become more imperfect than they were at the beginning of their religious life. To avoid this great misfortune, let them, from their very first year in religion, accustom themselves to refer all their actions directly to God, not only in a general way in morning prayer, but also in a particular way, by enlivening every action with the intention of making it contribute to their spiritual progress.

The Church Fathers recommended many useful means to strive for perfection.

1° An ardent desire is needed. "Driven by desire, the height of the perfection of virtue is reached." *Ad perfectionis fastigium virtutum desiderio impellente pervenitur* (St. Lawrence Justinian). In fact, experience shows that he who ardently desires something uses all his skill to obtain it, and surmounts all the difficulties preventing its acquisition. In contrast, if the will desires something weakly, one makes only half-hearted efforts to obtain it, and soon abandons completely all intentions to pursue it. If, then, one has only a feeble desire for perfection, and if this desire arouses only a mediocre effort to attain it, this is a sign that the individual is not serious in the matter, in spite of the obligation he has assumed.

This ardent desire to become perfect must be based on powerful reasons, especially on the most noble of all, namely, that we obtain

great glory for God while tending unceasingly to a sublime ideal and making every effort to arrive at a perfected holiness. Indeed, even one perfect soul by itself can offer more honor to the divine Majesty, on earth and in Heaven, than a large number of souls in the state of grace, yet deprived of the same degree of holiness. This is why God, Who holds His honor above all, treats that soul as His dearest friend and prepares for it a lovely crown.

2° To grow in perfection, it is not sufficient to have high aspirations – one must work constantly to approach the goal. There are some who work for a while at their progress, then relent, and stop. These persons must tremble for their salvation, for Our Lord said: “No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.” *Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum et respiciens retro aptus est regno Dei* (Lk. 9:62). And again, “The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away.” *Regnum cælorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud* (Mt. 11:12). By these words, the Savior helps us to understand how the desire for perfection must have as a consequence vigorous effort and unshakable courage, so that nothing may be able to surprise or deter [one’s efforts].

St. Gregory and other Church Fathers used apt comparisons to convince us of the need to work without any interruption at perfection if we truly wish to grow. They used to say that, as a man who navigates on a swift-flowing river would soon see himself carried away by the current should he give up rowing, and find himself opposite the shore he wished to reach, so too our corrupt nature experiences a current so violently inclined to evil that, if we do not work without wavering and with strong efforts to advance along the ways of solid virtue, we will find ourselves dragged by the raging pull of passion, and soon be further away from the goal desired than we were at the outset. These examples gave rise to the celebrated axiom of the saints that “in the spiritual life, not to advance is to fall back.” *In via Dei, non progredi, regredi est* (see Aug., *Serm.* 306/B, n. 1; Bernard *Serm.* 35 *de Diversis*, n.2).

Saint Augustine used a similar comparison. “We cannot,” he said, “keep ourselves on the road to perfection and prevent ourselves from failing except by efforts to climb higher. As soon as we begin to stop, we regress, with the result that, if we do not wish to fall back, we have to run ahead always, without slowing down” (Ep. 117). Accordingly, religious, who are obliged by virtue of their state to tend to a higher perfection, must work every day to climb a bit higher on this road, so as not to break the fundamental pact of their profession.

Indeed, it is proof that we are not working to progress when we always remain the same. Work in the pathways of grace is not useless but is always followed by some success.

Nonetheless, this saying should not frighten those timid souls, who, having a very high idea of virtue and a sharp awareness of their troubles, believe themselves every day to be falling back rather than to be advancing. The progress we make is not always noticeable. On the contrary, it increases the awareness of our unworthiness at the same time as that of the most perfect feeling, with the result that we realize more and more what we are lacking — and that is a sign of advancement. Accordingly, these souls must reassure themselves, and even rejoice, in experiencing such a sanctifying fear. Deep down, they have a sincere will and a true desire to please God; they strive with all their efforts to practice virtue and to fulfill the duties of their state. These interior manifestations are the clearest and most reassuring signs of their genuine tendency toward perfection.

To encourage ourselves to acquire it, we must forget the good we did in the past, lest we grow complacent in it, but rather think continually about the good left to be done. Such was the maxim of St. Paul: “Forgetting the things that are behind.” *Quæ quidem retro sunt obliviscens* (*Phil.* 3:13). In order to follow it, we must imitate the travelers who, wishing to arrive in a city before night, are not content with the stretch of road achieved but think only of the remainder ahead of them. Likewise, we voyagers on this earth who hope, during the brief years of our life, to travel the long road to perfection, leading to our celestial homeland, should not measure how much progress in virtue we have already made, but how much is left to be made before we arrive at our goal. Far from allowing ourselves to become exhausted along the way, we should strive, as life becomes shorter, to keep walking ever faster and more energetically, to gain the strongly desired prize: “So run that you may obtain.” *Sic currite ut comprehendatis* (*I Cor.* 9:24).

To animate ourselves to work well for perfection, it is always useful to observe more advanced religious, with the goal of following their example. As St. Anthony said, “Seek to imitate the modesty of one, the humility of another, the silence of this one, the gentleness and patience of that one: what is the best in each one.” It was in doing this himself that the illustrious hermit became very perfect. St. Bernard reported also that, on his entrance into the religious life, he was moved to great feelings of fervor on seeing himself surrounded by religious full of charity, fervor, and regularity of observance. On seeing this, he roused himself to work like them to acquire perfection. He often repeated to himself this exhortation: “Bernard, Bernard; what have you come here for?” *Hoc semper in corde, frequenter etiam in ore habebat: Bernarde, Bernarde, ad quid venisti?* (William of St. Thierry, *Vita Prima S. Bern.*, 4, n.19).



The remembrance of the goal that we voluntarily chose at our entrance into religious life will serve equally to reanimate our courage in the difficulties which we are likely to meet. Like St. Bernard, we will tell ourselves: Why have you come to religious life? Was it to follow your will, or to constrain yourself to following that of your superior? Was it to satisfy your comfort, or was it rather to be deprived of everything, like a poor man of Jesus Christ? Was it to be praised and respected by men, or to be forgotten and despised? Was it to lead a cowardly, soft, sensual, lazy life or was it rather to observe faithfully the regular practices? So, why do you reject now what earlier you came to find, when you used to hear very clearly the voice of grace and were so well disposed to follow it? Why fall back, when you ought to move forward?

Even though God destines all religious for sanctity, for all that, the degree of perfection to which He calls them is unequal. There are some ordinary vocations to which Providence has not allocated choice graces. Those who follow this path have only to work for their growth and the edification of their brothers by practicing the common virtues – modesty, piety, fidelity to spiritual reading, silence, exactness day and night in the community activities – by exciting interiorly these daily practices through motives of charity, mortification, and obedience.

Others are called to a higher perfection. God has given them special graces to perform extraordinary acts of patience, charity, prayer, mortification, humility, poverty, and all the other virtues. With greater attentiveness, these latter must show themselves faithful to the will of the Divine Master for them, and follow their inclinations, as did the major saints of all Orders. But they should never allow themselves extraordinary practices without the approbation of their superiors; it is difficult to think that grace inspires such practices. In that case, rather than an inspiration coming from God and being accompanied by humility and obedience, it comes, more often than not, from pride, illusion, and the temptation of the devil. In general, then, after we have admired the heroic actions we read of in the lives of the saints, we should in humility conclude that we are not worthy of imitating them. Nonetheless, such actions serve to excite our fervor in fulfilling our ordinary duties, so that we may do this with a similar zeal and love which the saints brought to their heroic works and to all the other circumstances of their lives.

## ARTICLE IV

### **Obstacles to perfection; their remedies**

1° The first obstacle impeding perfection is the degeneration of human nature. All men are born with a nature corrupted by original sin. Even though baptism erases that sin in us, nevertheless there remains a foundation of corruption and the disorder of concupiscence. Consequently, those passions arise which lead us to pride, sensuality, curiosity, love for the goods of the world, and also a depraved nature, a temperament leaning to evil, which no human remedy can cure. In leaving the world, religious do not change their nature nor do they find themselves rid of their perverse passions, as if by magic. And yet the vows of which they make profession and the Constitutions which they embrace are means to correct that depravity of nature, the source of all their vices, and to arrive at perfection. Accordingly, they must combat their natural evil until death by these means and every day conquer their violent inclinations. Otherwise, they will never reach the high goal of their vocation.

2° Bad example and the lack of regularity of one's neighbor are obstacles to perfection. Good example is very powerful to make us saints, for virtue by itself is so attractive that we appreciate it in others even if we do not practice it ourselves, and this respect predisposes us to imitation. But bad example is even more influential in making us corrupt. Indeed, its natural power is increased by the corruption of our heart. A religious had remained faithful and pious during his novitiate while living with exemplary religious, but, when living with other lukewarm and negligent ones, he imitated their dissipation and, little by little, lost his original piety. Accordingly, if we wish to form the novices well during their year of probation, they must be kept apart from the rest of the community lest bad example, should they unfortunately come across some, spoil them and impede the results of the good instructions of their Father Master.

To preserve oneself from such misfortune, it is important that one avoid, as much as charity and common life allow, conversations with self-indulgent religious. If one is obliged to mingle with them, far from imitating them, he should seek to bring them back to their former fervor. While acting charitably, one should refrain from any particular friendship with them. As for those who are likely to harm others by their self-indulgence, they should reflect on how severely God

will punish the thoughtless religious who would dare to give bad example to his brothers, who scandalizes them by his transgression of the Rule, and who introduces laxity in the monastery. It would be better that he be cast into the sea, with a millstone around his neck; indeed, this temporal punishment cannot be compared with that which he would suffer in Hell. "It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones." *Utilius est illi, si lapis molaris imponatur circa collum ejus, et projiciatur in mare, quam ut scandalizet unum de pusillis istis* (Lk. 17:2).

3° Seniority in religion is often an obstacle to perfection. Senior religious ought to show themselves as more pious, more faithful to all their exercises, and to be perfect models for the entire community. To be sure, if they have worked toward their sanctification during all those years of profession, regular observance should have become familiar and easy, out of long habit. Nonetheless, there are some religious who consider their seniority a reason to dispense themselves from minor matters, to be less submissive to their superiors, and to become restless, disturbers of charity, joy, and common piety. This is proof that, during their long religious life, they did not work at their perfection, nor did they keep the Rule out of supernatural motives, but only out of human respect and fear of punishment.

To avoid this misfortune, they should reflect often on the fact that, the more years they have spent in religious life, the closer they are to rendering an account of their conduct to God; that they will be all the more seriously judged for having abused a greater number of graces and having given young religious more occasions of scandal. What sorrow for them if they brought upon themselves a reproach similar to that which Jesus made to his disciples: "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Let these young religious, faithful to their duties, come to Me, for I love them tenderly as my dear children; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs, more than yours. "For of such is the kingdom of God." *Sinite parvulos venire ad me ... talium enim est regnum Dei* (Mk. 10:14).

4° Natural talents, distinguished rank, and honorable responsibilities are equally pitfalls to perfection. When God gives to certain religious some natural talents to administer, teach, preach, and direct, He does not give these for them alone, but for His glory, the sanctification of neighbor, and especially that of their brothers. In conforming to these exceptional graces, they will receive in Heaven a greater reward than that of religious who lack significant talents and simply fulfill the ordinary acts of the community.

But there are those who, abusing their talents, use them in a simply natural way or even serve themselves in order to procure their

comfort, to attract the respect of others, to assure continued honorable employment, and to live in greater freedom. Those religious can expect to be punished more severely than if they had omitted only ordinary obligations. God will demand an account of the buried talents or those transformed in the religious life as means and support for laxity. Decadence of regular life in a convent and in a Province does not first come from lowly subjects. It comes, first of all, from superiors who lack firmness in demanding that the Rule be followed and in correcting those who ignore it. Indeed, it also comes from subjects who have merit in the sight of men, and who, on those grounds, more effectively lead others to the transgression of the Constitutions and of the vows.

5<sup>o</sup> Infirmities also provide other opportunities for lax behavior. We see some religious who, after having passed many years in greater observance, when they become infirm or unsteady in health, think only of alleviating their body, neglect their duties, and fall into indifference. No doubt, the religious Order, like a good mother, is careful to help her children and even to anticipate their needs: they served her in health, she must hasten to serve them in illness and weakness. These attentive ministrations are in conformity with the will of God, who, while sending us these trials for us to merit Heaven by our submission to His Providence, wishes that we take measures appropriate to the misfortune and to our state of poverty, so that, once recovered, we may begin again to work for His glory. Nonetheless, we should not, under the pretext of caring for ourselves, caress ourselves too much because of the infirmities. If one has to set aside abstinence [of food] and other observances which his current state of weakness does not allow him to bear, he must show himself all the more attached to those which are not incompatible with the indispositions sent by God. In the absence of external practices, one should at least preserve a great desire to grow in the religious spirit. In fact, during the most extended and most crippling illnesses, it is still possible to work actively toward one's progress, as much and perhaps more than in health, by welcoming trials with submission to the divine will, by uniting them to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, and by practicing perfect simplicity in the use of dispensations. To achieve this, one must make his infirmities known to those who can bring remedy, diminishing or exaggerating nothing, requesting humbly and frankly the medicine he needs; waiting for it patiently, receiving it thankfully, using it without too much self-importance, and quickly foregoing all dispensations, as soon as they are no longer needed.

Let us pray to God to make us strive for perfection and to give us fullness of charity. In order to obtain that, we should follow exactly, even in the most minute matters, all our obligations and pay constant attention to our practice of the vows, which remove the obstacles

to divine love, are a continual exercise of the virtues, and make us rise, step by step, towards the state of perfection. "For the counsels are ordered toward the removal of impediments to the act of charity . . . we endeavor to ascend by these steps to the perfection of charity." *Consilia autem ordinantur ad removendum impedimenta actus caritatis . . . ad perfectionem caritatis istis gradibus conscendere nitimur* (ST II-II, q. 184, a. 3).

We should ask pardon of God for having greatly neglected to strive for that lofty goal, for fulfilling our vows and our Constitutions half-heartedly, or for transgressing them entirely. We should adopt a firm resolution to begin, starting today, to walk along the path of progress with renewed ardor, presenting to the Sovereign Master all the powers and affections of our soul, in our actions, our sufferings, forever.

Let us recommend ourselves to our beloved Father St. Dominic, who so quickly reached the fulfillment of charity, that he may lead us in his footsteps to the sublime perfection of our state. Thus, just as every Christian, in general, seeks to become perfect like his Heavenly Father, so too will we strive to acquire that special perfection of which our glorious Father is our visible and very benevolent model. Such is, for us, the short and infallible road to arrive at possessing the infinite perfection of God.

## CHAPTER VI

### Silence

- 1° Importance of silence for Christian holiness in general. 2° Its special importance for every male religious and, in particular, for the Friar Preacher. 3° Its importance, more specifically, for novices. 4° Rules on how to speak appropriately while maintaining the spirit of silence.

#### ARTICLE I

##### **Importance of silence for Christian holiness in general**

Silence protects Christians who keep it from the daily evils caused by man through intemperance of language, and accumulates for them all kinds of spiritual goods; it helps them grow in virtue, encourages the spirit of prayer, brings about perfection, and obtains peace for the soul.

1° To begin with, silence protects Christians from the great evils caused by intemperance of language. Man has an inner propensity for making himself known in his surroundings by means of language. His passions and his imagination strongly impel him to this. While he speaks, he commits such frequent errors that “if any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain,” said St. James in his Catholic epistle, wherein he describes very eloquently the great evils which an individual brings on himself and on others by his words. *Si quis putat se religiosum esse non refrænans linguam suam, sed seducens cor suum, huius vana est religio* (James 1:26).

The sacred writer adds: “Behold, we put bits into the mouths of horses, that they may obey us: and we turn about their whole body. Behold also ships, whereas they are great and are driven by strong winds, yet are they turned about with a small helm, whithersoever the force of the governor willeth. Even so the tongue is indeed a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire kindleth a

great wood" (*James 3:3-5*). — Again, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: they that love it, shall eat the fruits thereof," said the Holy Spirit (*Prov. 18:21*). *Mors et vita in manu linguae*. It follows, then, that if we were to curb our tongue and if we carefully regulated our words by silence, we would become masters of our actions and overcome our faults.

Just as a spark is sufficient to start a large fire and consume a vast forest, so too "the tongue is a consuming fire," the same St. James said, using another comparison. Indeed, by indiscreet words, it starts wars between kingdoms; by imprudent relationships, it divides even the most flourishing communities; by lies, it blackens the most innocent of lives and causes a thousand different injuries to charity, justice, innocence, truth, and to all the other virtues. Moreover, it is like a world of iniquity and a flood of misfortunes: *Lingua ignis est, universitas iniquitatis* (*James 3:5-6*).

In spite of its small size, the tongue is able to infect the entire body, this Apostle adds, because, from the moment we acquire the use of reason, it opens us regularly to launch or receive in conversation a thousand poisoned darts. This poison spreads with a speed that cannot be stopped and produces devastation that nothing can repair. This is like a fire from Hell, because it arises from the malice of the devil, who uses it to make us and others stray by the abuse of speech. "The tongue defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of Hell." *Lingua maculat totum corpus, et inflammata rotam nativitatis nostræ, inflammata a gehenna* (*James 3:6*).

We may then conclude with St. James that, even if man succeeded in taming all kinds of animals, "by himself, he is incapable of subduing the tongue." It is such a disquieting evil, unyielding, *inquietum malum*. Indeed, no one can boast that he never committed any fault by his words, that he will never do so in future, and that he will never provide others with the occasion of committing a great number of them.

2° Silence is also a powerful means to grow in virtue. To demonstrate this, we could speak of its relation to each virtue in particular. But it will be enough to say that the joining and the balance of all the virtues together — such as innocence, purity of heart, fidelity to grace, etc. — constitute justice. Now silence serves as the cultivation and the maturation of justice. *Cultus justitiæ silentium* (*Is. 32:17*). If virtue in general is an exercise of power, *virtus*, which consists in the repression of passions and in advancing toward salvation, then silence contains in itself the principle and the application of that spiritual force: "In silence and in hope shall be your strength." *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra* (*Is. 30:15*).

3° Silence promotes the spirit of prayer and contemplation, the source of all progress. Indeed, it is in the secret of the heart that we find holy thoughts, that we receive divine inspirations, and that we talk to God when He deigns to visit our heart and to make it savor spiritual consolations. "Therefore, behold I will allure her, and will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart." *Ecce ego lactabo eam, et ducam eam in solitudinem; et loquar ad cor ejus* (Hos. 2:14). But if we engage in unnecessary conversations, we quickly lose the spirit of prayer and the piety acquired with such difficulty. Holy thoughts fly away; the heart becomes dissipated in the midst of a thousand objects which attract the senses; and the soul, filled with trifles, vain curiosities, a crowd of worldly matters, becomes like a public place open to all noises and to all passions.

We ourselves may have sometimes had such experiences. The days when we remain faithful to silence, we are more successful in our prayers, we feel more reverence, we more easily engage in conversation with God during our occupations. This delightful conversation and this intimate recollection — fruits of silence — carry us, in their turn, to observe silence with greater perfection and joy. In the evening, at our examination of conscience, we will hardly find any fault committed during the day; thus, we take our rest in great interior peace. On the contrary, when, in the evening examination, we have to reproach ourselves for infractions of silence, we experience a certain sadness which is their result and their fitting punishment. May this sadness become their remedy, if it allows us to examine ourselves in order to correct ourselves.

4° In addition, silence is a major means to acquire perfection. The apostle St. James was able to say: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." *Si quis in verbo non offendit, hic perfectus est vir* (James 3:2). The perfection of man, to be sure, consists in the love of God, but silence is a great means to acquire genuine love. Indeed, if someone faithfully keeps silence, having freed himself from useless conversations, he thinks only of his advancement in the practice of virtue and, keeping watch over his lips, he protects his soul from all imperfection. "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul." *Qui custodit os suum, custodit animam suam* (Prov. 13:3).

But he who speaks much will fill his soul with imperfections and sins, "In the multitude of words there shall not want sin." *In multiloquio non deerit peccatum* (Prov. 10:19). At first, one will perhaps utter a few useless words which nonetheless are sins. Soon, however, he moves on to mockeries, gossip, rash judgment, and others. As Sacred Scripture says, by speaking too much, one falls infallibly into many oversights and a goodly number of troubles and also wounds his soul. "Where there are many words, there is oftentimes want." *Ubi verba*



*sunt plurima, ibi frequenter egestas (Prov. 14:23). "He that useth many words shall hurt his own soul." Qui multis utitur verbis, laedit animam suam (Sir. 20:8).*

5° In the end, silence provides the soul with peace and joy which surpass all the pleasures of the senses, all the charm of fruitless conversations with the world. The silent and thoughtful man busies himself interiorly with the majesty of God and of Jesus Christ; in this, he finds reliable joy and consolation. In fact, the Lord is the God of peace; He moves away from loquacious persons; He leaves them in continuous worry and dissipation. Accustomed to never being without some satisfaction, and not receiving any from Heaven, these individuals look for it in interaction with creatures. Thus, their discomfort is increased by the very remedies to which they resort, and the depth of their sadness grows along with their debasement.

In contrast, even though on the outside they appear to be serious and mortified, silent men are nonetheless filled with supernatural joy and kindness. God is pleased to speak to them. In this, they are like the spiritual persons of whom St. Paul spoke, sad in appearance, but in fact always joyous. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." *Quasi tristes, semper autem gaudentes (II Cor. 6:10)*. It is in this sense that St. Bernard affirmed never being less alone or exposed to problems than when he was most alone. The company of God gave him genuine contentment in peace of heart. "Never less alone than when most alone." *Nunquam minus solus quam quum magis solus.*

## ARTICLE II

### **The importance of silence for all religious and in particular for the Friar Preacher**

The founders of all Orders have prescribed silence as the soul and the guardian of regular observance. *Silentium est custos religionis* (St. Bernard Serm. II *De mutatione aquae in vinum*, n. 7). It is capable of reforming a single religious and a whole convent. If the religious carefully observes silence, he remains in his cell, leaving it only to attend the Offices and other activities of the community. Busy with prayer, study, and spiritual reading, he becomes a man of prayer and receives from God all kinds of graces, piety, insights, and spiritual consolations.

The observance of silence is enough also to rightly order a convent. If it is kept perfectly there, the members think only of the reasons why they left the world, namely, their salvation and their spiritual growth by the practice of the duties of the cenobitic life, whose principal duty is silence. In order to foster a spirit of a retreat, superiors of those convents keep all doors carefully closed, lest secular persons enter without permission and turn religious away from their cherished solitude. On entering such houses, one breathes in the air of recollection and devotion which even edifies secular people. Blessed are the inhabitants of such temples, filled with the majesty of God. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord." *Beati qui habitant in domo tua, Domine* (Ps. 84:4).

If, however, a religious speaks constantly to everyone he meets, he is a religious in name only. Just as one pitfall leads to another, he will then fall into serious faults. There are some religious whose damnation began with infractions of silence. In useless and frivolous conversations, little by little they lost the savor of God, the consolation, and the interior power. There follows a laxity in regular observance, an unconscious abandonment of study, meditation, and frequent confession. They end by speaking without restraint while others are singing the divine praises, reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin, the rosary, the *De profundis*, and the prayers before and after meals. These frequent and habitual transgressions open them to contempt, and in that contempt can be found, even without their having sought it, the mortal sin for which they are condemned.

Infractions of silence lead religious still more to damnation in that their conversations degenerate into considerable gossip, into serious grumbling about the conduct of the brothers and superiors, or into indiscreet relationships, sometimes lies, which sow division in the convent. These transgressors of silence easily succumb to temptations of the devil, their deadly adversary, as [St.] Albert the Great noted: "Where there is no silence, there man is easily overcome by the adversary." *Ubi non est taciturnitas, ibi homo de facili ab adversario superatur* (*Lib. de virt.* 31). Moreover, he proves this by words of Holy Scripture: "As a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls, so is a man that cannot refrain his own spirit in speaking." *Sicut urbs patens et absque murorum ambitu, ita vir qui non potest cohibere spiritum suum* (*Prov.* 25:28). This is the way in which convents where silence is not observed become like ordinary houses rather than religious dwellings. Their inner and outer doors remain open; secular persons circulate freely everywhere; on all sides, noise never abates; religious enter into each other's cell and meet there with secular persons; the confusion of Babylon reigns in the midst of Jerusalem, the city of peace. In order to excuse themselves, these religious may perhaps contend that they do this without malice and only to pass the time. "Whoever speaks in this way," said St. Bernard, "is demented, and not paying attention to the loss which he brings about." *Non advertit insipiens quid omittat* (*Serm.* 17 *de triplici custodia.*, n.3). "You amuse yourselves in conversation," adds the saint, "so that the hour passes and time flows. That hour is the hour allowed by divine mercy to do penance, to obtain pardon for your sins, to acquire perfection and to earn glory! But that time is the time given you to win the kindness of the Lord and to make yourself worthy of the society of angels, to tremble at the loss of your celestial heritage, to long for the eternal happiness promised to you, to excite your cowardly will to bewail your sins. What folly to waste time in this way!"

The excellence of the Friars Preachers, of the children of St. Dominic, is for us a very pressing reason to observe silence faithfully. This blessed Father, our perfect model, was such a faithful guardian of his speech, as reported by historians, that he spoke only with God or of God. *Linguae observantissimus custos, non nisi cum Deo aut de Deo loquebatur* (See *Primitive Constitutions*, n. 31). The Constitutions which he gave us make no allowance for recreation. Our early Fathers, after meals, would retire to their cell or to church. If they assembled, it was to relax piously with spiritual conferences, to stir up their fervor, to learn how they were to work for their perfection and the salvation of souls. It was by concession from the Supreme Pontiffs, so say several authors, that we now have daily recreations.

The same Constitutions, which do not speak of recreation, frequently enjoin us to maintain continual silence in the cloister, the dormitory, the cells, the refectory, the church, and the oratory of the brothers: *Silentium teneant Fratres nostri in clauastro, in dormitorio, in cellis, in refectorio et in oratorio Fratrum* (n. 16). Should it happen that there be a genuine need, in those five places one may then speak only in a whisper, or better still, by signs. *Nisi forte silenter aliquid loquantur, non tamen oratione perfecta*. Outside these same five solemn locations, we can speak only with special permission of the superior. Blessed Henry Suso, who lived in a convent where silence was not very strictly enforced, when he had to speak for a while, or when called to the parlor, would kneel down at his prie-dieu before leaving his cell and ask God Himself for permission to speak, by saying: *Jube, Domine, benedicere*. Thus, did he make up, as best he could, for the permissions that were impossible for him to request.

The strictness of our silence appears more clearly when we meditate on certain details of our legislation. 1° From the signal which follows Compline until Prime, in summer, and from the one given after dinner until the end of None silence is more sacred, and, so to speak, inviolable. 2° At table we must remain silent, not only when we are eating in the refectory, but everywhere else “on land or at sea:” *sive in terra sive in mari* (ibid). 3° If someone deliberately breaks this silence or gives another permission to speak at table, he is punished to have only water for the meal and to perform other strict penances. 4° The absolution of faults, which frees the religious from faults contrary to silence, does not extend to faults against silence at table, unless given by the provincial. There is, however, this disparity among the diverse applications of silence at table, that no superior — not even the General of the Order — can speak nor give permission to speak while eating in the refectory; but outside of there, such as in hospices or infirmaries, the eldest is allowed to speak or to give this permission to another. But if he cedes this right or this privilege to another priest, he himself loses it. Accordingly, he must remain silent and unable to engage in any conversation: *et tunc ipse taceat*, as is explained more extensively in our Constitutions.

The manner in which the latter speaks of ordinary silence itself contributes to a better understanding of the major importance of silence in the Order. Indeed, if someone breaks silence out of habit, he is made to undergo the penalty of the grievous fault, whose severity is well-known: “It is a grave fault ... if one does not keep silence as tradition demands.” *Gravis culpa est... si quis silentium non tenere in consuetudinem duxerit* (ibid., 21, n.5). In showing us the seriousness of faults against ordinary silence, this indicates also how easily we fall into them. In fact, our legislators could have cited many other light faults

whose habitual practice constitutes a grave fault. But, with the experience they had with what was happening every day, they chose as the sole example the habit of breaking silence as something that occurs most often, something to which religious need to pay more attention, and which superiors need to enforce with the greatest firmness.

## ARTICLE III

### Particular importance of silence for novices

St. Basil and the other ascetical writers especially recommended the observance of silence to novices in religious life. Indeed, novices are disciples in perfection and, in particular, in the art of conversing in a holy manner. Now the method to learn this difficult art is to observe silence well. Young religious come from the world with the habit of talking about all they see, hear, or imagine in their extremely active minds; in sum, speaking all the time, everywhere, and in the tone of voice they favor. It is by practicing a long silence during their novitiate that they arrive at forgetting the bad ways of speaking acquired in the world, and that they will have the opportunity of learning how to speak in the manner of God. “Clearly while taciturnity should beget forgetfulness along with discontinuance [of talking], silence also should supply those proper things which ought to be said.” *Quippe quum taciturnitas simul et oblivionem et desuetudinem pariat, et ad ea quæ recta sunt discenda otium suppeditet* (St. Basil, in *Reg.*).

On this score, the seniors need to contribute to the education of novices by presenting themselves as models of fidelity to the law of silence, in order to give good example to the beginners — a far cry from giving them occasion for scandal. Nonetheless, since we have to take into account human weakness and not expose it to danger unnecessarily, wisely do our rules forbid novices, under grave penalties, to speak with the Fathers without permission. Non-professed novices are even forbidden to speak to their brothers in the professed novitiate; their doing so is ample reason to delay their profession or to dismiss them. Such behavior is a sign that they love to be dissipated, and that, in their turn, they will cause others to become dissipated after their profession.

Silence is a most excellent environment for student brothers; the latter, already settled on their vocation, occupy themselves in becoming capable of exercising the actions of their vocation and especially of eventually fulfilling the apostolic works of the Order. To achieve this end requires exercise in three areas: prayer, study, and patience. Prayer begins to prepare the graces necessary for our sanctification and that of our neighbors. Study helps us to understand God better, it prepares us to love Him, and it helps us feel more sharply the misfortune of souls who lost have Him; finally, it scatters the obstacles

to grace by making us atone for our sins and for those of the people, to appease the just anger of God. Thus, silence is an efficacious tool to satisfy those three needs, while without it, success is almost unattainable.

1° Without fidelity to silence, the spirit of prayer is impossible. Hardly have we begun to recite the Divine Office in choir or in the cell that a thousand trifles, jests, and malicious words come to mind by way of imagination, which is filled with them, and by the shrewdness of the devil, who uses advantageously all his wiles to increase our interior rambling. These distractions, already voluntary in their cause, become even more so by our actual negligence in rejecting them. By such prayers, acts of virtue are transformed into sins. Prayer is never without result: well done, it attracts the graces of God, according to the promise of Christ; done without respect, these graces fall back on us as curses. Thus, there follow the diminution of grace and the growth of impiety, making sin a habit, and man, who was called to save others, no longer knows how to save himself.

2° The omission of silence impedes progress in holy knowledge because it makes us lose time intended for study. If, after a long conversation, one would nonetheless decide to study awhile, he no longer understands anything, his imagination is filled with trivialities, with foolish reflections, with stories, with gossip, with proud thoughts. The faculties of the mind, scattered among such trivialities, have a hard time concentrating on the often very abstract topic of study; one understands little and retains even less. Besides, God, the Lord of knowledge, cannot bless such study. He removes His insights from those who break silence and abandons them to their darkness. This is a well-merited punishment. But if one holds his tongue, no strange object can distract his mind from study; the imagination remains calm, memory preserves all its vitality to retain what is studied; this is a fact established by daily experience. Besides, God enlightens those who approach Him by prayer, petition, and interior silence. "Come ye to Him and be enlightened." *Accedite ad eum, et illuminamini* (Ps. 34:5). He fills them with the knowledge of the saints. Moreover, as we noted at length elsewhere (Part II, Ch. IV), St. Thomas strongly counsels his disciple to maintain silence and stay in his cell. *Tardiloquum te esse iubeo . . . cellam frequenter diligas* (*De modo Studendi*).

3° He who does not keep silence is not likely to practice the penances of his state. Everything fits together, in vice as in virtue. Experience teaches that chattering religious are the same ones who continually look for pretexts to upset or to weaken the young, to exempt themselves from the night Offices, to avoid attendance at meditation, or to leave early, to escape the severity of the cloister and often to leave the cell or even the convent. By contrast, those who keep the

silence develop the habit of continually conquering themselves. Their moral power increases so that they practice mortification more easily. At the same time, spiritual visits of grace increase in them and pour the balm of interior consolation over their fasts, their vigils, their study, and their solitude. The austerity of the life becomes a source of joy.

Young religious ought to be wary of human respect in maintaining silence. Bad examples can be found everywhere; there were deceivers even in Heaven. To avoid being influenced by such disastrous examples, one must avoid all familiarity and all intimate conversations with the dissipated. In recreation, one should join large groups or those brothers who are more faithful. Once recreation is over, he should head straight for his cell, and not leave it except when absolutely necessary. If one of the lax religious comes to speak at the door of our cell, or seeks to have us leave it to engage in a conversation with him, especially during the profound silence, we should, by a serious tone, by a few whispered words, or by signs, make him understand that we are resolved not to speak at any cost, given that it is time for silence. If we are firm in receiving him in this way, perhaps in seeing himself rebuffed and treated coldly, he will be disgusted at his suggestion, and, greatly ashamed at the lesson received, he will leave us in peace. Perhaps he will get angry, or seem to get angry, while telling us that we are scrupulous and unsociable: no answer is needed; the simplest action is to move away or close the door. In the depths of their heart, and after some reflection, the dissolute praise the one who acted in this way and tell themselves that they ought to follow his example. Besides, supposing that they are too blind to make this change in their conscience, we will rise above their criticism and repeat with St. Paul: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." *Si adhuc hominibus placerem, Christi servus non essem* (Gal. 1:10).



## ARTICLE IV

### Rules for keeping the spirit of silence while speaking

The virtue of silence does not consist in never speaking, for there is a time to remain speechless and a time to speak: *Tempus tacendi et tempus loquendi* (Eccl. 3:7). To be sure, it is an act of prudence to avoid human conversations altogether, as did the hermits in ancient times. But not everyone has the strength and the means to embrace the anchoritic life; and, if it became generalized, how would the Gospel be spread? Besides, on this score, perfection consists rather in knowing how to control ourselves so well while remaining in the middle of occasions, that we practice a temperance full of wisdom in conversations, and that we observe, in speaking, the rules of a conversation directed by the Spirit of God. Thus, in an analogous context, perfect temperance in taste does not consist in not eating anything at all, but in nourishing ourselves to the degree and in the manner needed for the glory of God.

The Church Fathers called attention to certain rules and circumstances to be followed in order to speak wisely. Here are the principal ones.

1° Before opening our mouth to ask a question or to provide an answer, it is good to raise our heart to God and to consult Him about what we wish to say. Only God can control our speech. “It is the part of man to prepare the soul: and of the Lord to govern the tongue.” *Domini est gubernare linguam* (Prov.16:1). Because the tongue has such a prodigious ability to move itself untiringly, at the whim of the heart or of the imagination, it participates inevitably in their becoming disordered. We could therefore never ask God too insistently, before we speak, for a spirit of humility, prudence, and insight to do so suitably, and to avoid saying by surprise something that could offend Him.

This is the counsel that St. Augustine gave when he recommended that all our words pass under the file of reflection before leaving our mouth [i.e., to soften the sharp edges - Trans.]: *Omne verbum prius veniat at limam, quam ad linguam*. St. Bernard further enriched this saying and wished that every one of our words before leaving our lips be filed patiently not once, but twice: *Antequam verba proferat, bis ad limam veniant quam semel ad linguam* [see Arnulfus Monachi de Boeriis, *In spec. monach.* n.1]. With greater authority, Holy Scripture

recommends such wisdom when it says: "The heart of fools is in their mouth," because their heart is under the dependance of the tongue, which they allow to say everything with no caution. But "the mouth of wise men is in their heart" because their tongue is under the control of reason. They allow it to say only what is in conformity with the principles of virtue. *In ore fatuorum cor illorum, et in corde sapientium os illorum* (*Sir.* 21:29).

2° One ought not to speak without genuine need or usefulness, for himself or for his neighbor. If one is asked about an indispensable situation, he should answer to the degree that the question demands. If it concerns useless matter, a sign of the head can serve as response, to indicate that one cannot speak. "Silence ought to resolve a useless question," *Questionem inutilem silentium debet solvere*, as St. Vincent Ferrer said in his *Treatise on the Spiritual Life* (c. 2). To this, the saint added: "If what is said to us is for our amusement, we can testify to the goodness by a look on our face, so as not to be drawn in by our brothers, but without speaking, even though some of them could grumble and take offense because of it." *Sed nullo modo loqui, etiamsi illi, quicumque sint, de hoc videantur murmurare vel contristari*. If someone addresses us with sharp words or insults, we should not reply, except out of necessity, but rather act as a man who did not hear or who had nothing to say. Interiorly, we should remain at peace, asking God for patience and praying for the individual who hurt us. This is what David did: "And I became as a man that heareth not: and that hath no reproofs in his mouth." *Factus sum sicut homo non audiens et non habens in ore suo redargutiones* (*Ps.* 38:15). Likewise Jesus, slandered by false witnesses and by the high priests, replied not a single word, to the astonishment of Pilate: "And he answered him not a word, so that the governor wondered exceedingly." *Non respondit ei ad ullum verbum, ita ut miraretur præsces vehementer* (*Mt.* 27:14).

3° While speaking, one must maintain charity, humility, and moderation. One maintains charity by expressing all the good that is known about the neighbor, by remaining silent about the evil that might be known about him, and by bearing patiently his weaknesses and his coarseness. Humility is maintained when words of conjecture, of pride, of vanity, of self-esteem are avoided. Moderation moves us to speak kindly, seriously, simply, honestly, and affably. It alerts us against excessive laughter, hasty gestures, and comical postures. It accustoms us to speak in moderate tones, in a serious voice, blended with kindness, with nothing rude or effeminate, abrupt, or feigned. Moderation, supported by humility, leads to honest conversation, and prevents lying, ambiguous, exaggerated, and deceitful words, which have as their goal to excuse our faults or to uphold our personal deci-

sions. "In all thy works let the true word go before thee." *Ante omnia opera tua, verbum verax præcedat te* (Sir. 37:20).

4° One should speak opportunely according to the times, the places, and the persons to be addressed. As concerns time, the wise man does not speak until the time has come, but the sensual and imprudent man does not recognize either time or limit: *Homo sapiens tacebit usque ad tempus, lascivus autem et imprudens non servabunt tempus* (Sir. 20:7).

Words spoken at the opportune time are generally well received; at any other time, even the best ones lose their value and result in the reverse of what was desired. It is a poor use of time to interrupt a person who is speaking, to answer before having well understood what he wants to tell us, to push ahead when another is being questioned, or when it is the group as a whole to whom the talk is addressed. "Before thou hear, answer not a word: and interrupt not others in the midst of their discourse." *In medio sermonum ne adjicias loqui, priusquam audias ne respondeas verbum* (Sir. 11:8). "He that answereth before he heareth, sheweth himself to be a fool, and worthy of confusion." *Qui prius respondet quam audiat, stultum se esse demonstrat et confusione dignum* (Prov.18:13). As for the place, there are locations where one can usually speak; others where we should never speak, as, for instance, in church. One must also take into account the persons before whom we speak. Indeed, ignorant persons should remain silent before the wise, and young people before the elders. Silence is an ornament of the young man, a sign of his good judgment, his modesty, and his respect for the elderly. "You who are still young, do not attempt to speak, unless it is a question of matters that affect you. Were you to be questioned twice, do not answer except by a sign of the head; in many matters, act as if you knew nothing, but listen in silence; especially do not speak much where there are elders." *Adolescens loquere in causa tua via. Si bis interrogatus fueris, habeat caput responsum tuum; in multis esto quasi inscius, et audi tacens simul et quærens. . . ubi sunt senes, non multum loquaris* (Sir. 32:10-13).

Since the spirit of silence brings us so many advantages and protects us from so many evils, let us address God to ask this of Him. Let us tell him with David: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: and a door round about my lips" so as to restrain them when I need to be silent, and to open them when it is appropriate to speak. You alone, Lord, can accomplish this work, so far beyond human abilities. *Pone Domine, custodiam ori meo, et ostium circumstantiæ labiis meis* (Ps. 141:3).

Let us ask God pardon for all our failings against silence, and with His help let us make the following resolutions: 1° not to speak or answer without genuine need; 2° to raise our hearts to Him in order to consult Him before speaking; 3° to avoid speaking words in conversa-

tions that are useless, trifling, or evil; 4<sup>o</sup> to observe in language all the rules of charity, humility, modesty, and prudence; 5<sup>o</sup> never to speak in forbidden areas and during the profound silence; 6<sup>o</sup> see to it that our silence becomes a Christian silence: spiritual, interior, religious, apostolic, having the presence of God as its principle, and, as its goal, our own perfection as well as the salvation of souls.

## CHAPTER VII

### Concerning fervor

- 1° Nature of and reasons for fervor. 2° Quality of fervor.
- 3° The evil of lukewarmness, which is the opposite of fervor.
- 4° Remedies to lukewarmness.

#### ARTICLE I

##### **Nature of and reason for fervor**

Fervor is an ardent desire and a generous inclination to please God by fulfilling His holy commands in everything. This desire, says St. Thomas, has its origin in a deep love; for love always involves the hope of pleasing the beloved by conforming to his disposition.

There are different kinds of fervor. One is called receptive fervor; it is more often experienced when one begins to serve God in the religious state. It consists of consolations and pleasant satisfactions which help us withstand happily the difficulties attached to the practice of our duties, and help us to act with as much or more eagerness than perfect individuals. But this fervor does not last long. It cools little by little, either because it is like spiritual milk, destined to make us forget the world, and which must then be replaced by a more solid food; or because it arises from the novelty of objects which strike beginners, and which, by gradual familiarity, cease creating the same impression; or because God, Who has provided these consolations to encourage individuals, withdraws them as soon as they threaten to become useless food for proud complacency or an obstacle to self-denial.

There is another kind of fervor which is found among persons more advanced in perfection. It arises from solid and courageous virtue, and especially from a charity more ardent than that generally

found in men. This charity moves those persons to undertake, in order to please God, all that they know will contribute to His glory and to their perfection, even when they do not receive noticeable consolations and live in a profound interior dryness. Indeed, “the truly fervent man,” said St. Basil, “never fails to follow the will of God with ardent affection, with an insatiable desire to please Him, and with painstaking diligence.” *Spiritu fervens est, qui ardenti studio, inexplebili cupiditate, et assidua diligentia, voluntatem Dei facit (In Reg. brev.)*.

We wish to speak principally of this second kind of fervor, and to explain the motives that are most likely to bring it about or to maintain it, which are: the greatness of the God we serve; the many obligations of our state; the dignity of the reward we await for our services; the good examples we have been given of that fervor by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the first Christians, and the saints of our Order.

First of all, in order to possess deep fervor in the service of God, we should begin by preoccupying ourselves with the most lively and profound feelings of reverence, respect, and love for the infinite perfections of God. He who reflects with serious attention on these divine perfections will immediately be convinced that it is impossible to seek to please God or to embrace His interests with sufficient devotion and ardor. St. Paul found no more compelling reason to exhort the first Christians to live in ever-new fervor of the spirit. “Be fervent,” he used to say, “for it is the Lord that you serve.” *Spiritu ferventes, Domino servientes (Rom. 12:11)*.

In fact, if, according to the thought of the Apostle, the excellence of worship is to be measured by the excellence of the person to whom it is addressed, what master can be compared to the master par excellence, the “Lord”: *Dominus*? And if this exalted master is at the same time our daily benefactor, our notable benefactor, our persevering benefactor, who will succeed in giving Him worship equal to His benevolence? At the very least, we should put all our efforts into serving Him in a manner that is not too unworthy of Him, as the Apostle implores us: “That you may walk worthy of God, in all things pleasing.” *Ut ambularetis digne Deo ..., per omnia placentes (I Thess. 2:12; Coloss. 1:10)*. Let us not place any limits to our fervor; after that, we should proclaim again, with conviction and amazement, that “we are unprofitable servants” (*Lk. 17:10*). And since God, out of pure goodness, deigns to accept efforts so disproportionate to His majesty, let us be filled with lively gratitude because of it.

This motive concerning the greatness of God becomes all the more important when we consider His holy presence. Those who serve kings, offer them, when in their presence, intense solicitude to follow their wishes. With how much more eagerness should we not serve our Master, He Who is present everywhere by His immensity,

He Who is all around us and penetrates us completely, He Who lives in us as if in His house and in His temple, He who deigns to cast a watchful eye on everything we do or suffer in order to serve Him and to earn His love!

The sublimity of the obligations of our state provide another motive for fervor. As Christians, we are held by baptism to work toward becoming holy and perfect. We cannot achieve this without great fervor. To work sincerely and efficaciously at sanctification, every genuine disciple of Jesus Christ has to walk the straight and narrow way, rise above himself by vigorous efforts, and practice all the virtues of his state, especially charity. One cannot be faithful to all his duties without a deep fervor which overcomes the obstacles that regularly rise up against spiritual progress. But religious need even greater fervor than ordinary faithful because they have obliged themselves by profession to a higher perfection, and to actualize this they receive more grace than simple Christians. Accordingly, they need a more generous fervor to maintain themselves at this supernatural height, in the midst of the great difficulties of the religious life. Thus, the religious man and the fervent man should mean the same thing, while religious and lukewarm men are as incompatible as light and darkness, as the ice of winter and the heat of the summer sun.

The reward promised for our labors is a third motive for fervor. If we consider quite seriously that, to those who serve Him faithfully, God has promised His Heavenly kingdom, which is boundless, filled with eternal glory – that each action completed with eager love will be rewarded with a certain degree of grace in this world, and with a degree of happiness after this life, we would enkindle ourselves to grow every day and every moment in the most fervent love of God. Do not the children of darkness act in all haste to obtain the most fragile of goods? With what ardor, then, should the children of light not seek to obtain dependable and eternal goods! This ardor, these efforts, ought to be infinite. At least let us expend on them all the activity and intensity of which we are capable.

The fourth motive for fervor arises from the good example given to us by Jesus Christ, the Apostles, the Christians of the early centuries, all the saints, and in particular those of our Order. Jesus Christ brought so much fervor to the service of His Father that He spared nothing to show Him the ardor of His love, going so far as to spill all His blood, when one single drop of that precious blood, one single tear from His eyes, would have been sufficient to redeem us. It was from this fervor that came the cries of which the Psalmist speaks: “He hath rejoiced as a giant,” *Exultavit ut gigas* (Ps 19:5), and that consuming ardor: “Zeal for your house consumes me,” *Zelus domus tuæ comedit me* (Ps 68:10), and those swoons on seeing evildoing: “A faint-

ing hath taken hold of me" *Defectio tenuit me* (Ps 118:53). The Apostles themselves were enlivened with such fervor on leaving the Cenacle where they had received the Holy Spirit, that they could think of nothing else but converting the world and enkindling it with the fire of charity. Those Apostles, who formerly had not dared to defend the innocence of the Savior, who trembling, hid themselves, those same Apostles began to preach boldly His divinity and showed themselves unshakable before tyrants and death. Instructed by the Apostles, the Christians of the early centuries, in turn, bore witness to a fervor which makes us blush. They had an unbreakable attachment to the worship of God, a high reverence for His law, an unflagging eagerness in prayer, a strong sense of duty, and a profound horror of all sin. At their head marched the martyrs; filled with the power and the zeal of their desire to suffer the most cruel torments for the Holy Name of God, they spontaneously presented themselves before the tyrant, astounded by such a thirst for martyrdom. All the saints, especially those of our Order, exhibited such generosity in their religious duties and service to neighbor that they breathed, they worked only to please God and to bring Him glory. Nothing could stop them; they never tired of work, they overcame all difficulties with inexhaustible courage. The greater the difficulties were, the more they excited the zeal of the saints, who made valiant efforts to accomplish heroic acts in honor of their Master. We should often think of all these marvelous examples so as to spur us on to follow them. If we cannot arrive at such sublime perfection, we should at least work every day to practice the virtues of our vocation with ever increasing fervor. For God, nothing is enough.



## ARTICLE II

### Qualities of genuine fervor

The qualities of fervor are as numerous as they are varied; suffice it to say that fervor sets itself into action with ardor, maintains itself by fidelity, and it blossoms in joy.

The first two of these qualities are indicated to us by St. Basil: "I consider," said this holy Father, "that fervor is a desire to please God in everything, a desire that is intense, stable, and constant." *Fervorem esse existimo cupiditatem vehementem stabilem, constantem placendi Deo in omnibus* (*In Reg. brev.*). The third quality is recommended by the teaching of all saints.

1° Fervor must be intense. In fact, it needs liveliness so as to lift us above our nature and to convince us that all the obstacles we encounter fall under God's plan. These obstacles, as we have noted, are numerous and humanly insurmountable. But fervor, a supernatural fire ignited on earth by a divine hand, is always moving to draw us closer to God despite obstacles, and to make us follow His will in everything. By fervor, charity is always in action: it does many things while believing it has done few; it achieves great things, convincing itself that they are small. *Caritas operatur multa et reputat pauca; operatur magna et reputat parva* (St. Thomas) [see Helveticus Theutonicus, *De dilectione Dei et proximi*, II, c. 3].

2° Fervor must be stable and, for that, it must be regulated by prudence, otherwise it would not be a virtue. "Fervor of the will is not virtuous unless it is ordered by reason." *Fervor voluntatis non est virtuosus nisi sit ratione ordinatus* (ST II-II, q. 106, a. 4, ad 2). Indeed, fervor is false and indiscreet when it arises simply from an impetuous nature, drives body and mind to excessive efforts, and spoils everything under the pretext of doing better. Moreover fervor is indiscreet and false when it arises from a base of pride, resorts to outlandish behavior to distinguish itself in the eyes of others, and drives us to superfluous exercises that are very visible. Genuine fervor in a well-ordered convent consists, in its exterior aspects, in living a common but edifying life, in following exactly the established order in everything that conforms to the laws and spirit of the religious life. As to its interior, fervor consists in living a crucified life, suffering all pains in order to please God, and doing nothing to satisfy one's own will. Fervor has to be very steadfast in order to accomplish the common obligations for a

long time and in the same manner, without losing heart, without any diminution of generosity. Such constancy evidently comes from the Holy Spirit, not from nature. He who possesses this fidelity can hope that God is with him and that his fervor is genuine.

We meet some persons who, for a certain time, show themselves to be fervent in all their obligations but their fervor soon diminishes. They become discouraged, fall into negligence and sometimes even into disorderliness. After a few months, they return to work with enthusiasm; and behold, they fall once more into their early sloth for works of piety. These shameful alternations reveal that such fervor was not genuine but superficial and fed more by their eccentric mood or pride than by a constant love of God and of duty.

3° Genuine fervor is accompanied by joy. Because, as the saints teach us, fervor expands [one's heart], and that expansion fosters joy. From that arose David's words in the name of the Christian soul: "I have run the way of thy commandments, when thou didst enlarge my heart." *Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri cum dilatasti cor meum* (*Ps.* 118:32). Fervor, in fact, repels us from the pleasures of the senses by dispelling their illusions; it helps us taste celestial things by showing them to us as the only ones which can make us eternally and perfectly happy. Fervor succeeds in making the greatest difficulties pleasant by the consolations with which it floods our hearts — consolations that the world does not imagine but that the servants of God savor in the secret of their souls. This joy is the source of a great courage to correct our faults, to combat passions, to mortify the senses, and to practice virtue untiringly. Thus, fervor makes us advance in perfection joyfully and speedily, more than we had achieved during the many years we spent in a lax lifestyle. The yoke of Jesus Christ really becomes easy and light. In such an expansion of the soul, one possesses the most reliable sign he could have in this world of being in the state of grace and of living in charity.

## ARTICLE III

### **The evil of lukewarmness which is the opposite of fervor**

Lukewarmness is apathy of the will regarding the good and an indifference in the worship of the Sovereign Master, with no genuine resolution to work at correcting ourselves of it. Thus, it is related to sloth, one of the most disastrous of the capital sins.

The state of lukewarmness offends God greatly, Who punishes it severely, and it is very harmful to the soul which succumbs to it.

1° Lukewarmness offends God because the indifferent attitude with which we worship Him dishonors Him, being proof that *in practice* we do not reverence Him sufficiently to obey promptly, or that we find that the benefits received from His generosity and the rewards expected from His mercy are too little to make us serve Him with ardor; or again, that the penalties with which He threatens those who neglect His law are too mediocre to fear. Accordingly, those who serve God indifferently outrage His greatness, His goodness, His generosity, and His justice.

It should come as no surprise, then, that He rejects the worship of lukewarm souls, as the Old Testament reveals. God rejected the sacrifice of Cain, which consisted of the worst from his fields, while He found acceptable the sacrifice of Abel, which consisted of the best of his sheep. God declared through His prophets that He did not want sickly victims. That is to say, according to the Church Fathers, that under the New Law, prefigured spiritually by the actions of the Old, He expects to be worshiped only with fervor of spirit, and that nothing offends Him like the worship of a careless soul. This is why He protests through another prophet that: "Cursed be he that does the work of God deceitfully or negligently." *Maledictus qui facit opus Dei fraudulenter*, or, in another formulation, *negligenter* (see *Jer.* 48:10) — words which ought to cause tepid and lax religious to tremble. Indeed, *the work of God* par excellence consisted for the Fathers in the exercises of the religious life. If, then, such religious fulfill those exercises in laxity and lukewarmness, they deceive Our Lord and abuse the holy religious Order, which had hoped, in receiving them, to find men faithful to their obligations, worthy of attracting Heavenly blessings to itself, at the same time as to themselves.

Fervor is that fire of the Old Law which was to burn night and day on the altars and was revived every morning with new wood. What is the sanctuary where that fire must be preserved if not the cloister? It is, therefore, the will of God that every religious maintain and build up this fire on the altar of his heart, by his fervor in everyday exercises. "The fire on the altar shall always burn." *Ignis in altari semper ardebit* (*Lev. 6:12*). Since the lukewarm religious allows that fire to go out, God prepares to abandon him like a sanctuary desecrated or fallen into ruin.

2<sup>o</sup> Lukewarmness is harmful to the one who makes himself guilty of it. A few words from Scripture will suffice to demonstrate that to us. In the Apocalypse, St. John reported that, even though the Bishop of Ephesus had accomplished many good works, the Lord reproved him severely for having strayed from his former charity and threatened that, unless he did penance and took up again the former works, He would take away his crown. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen: and do penance and do the first works. Or else I come to thee and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance." *Habeo adversum te quod caritatem tuam primam reliquisti. . . venio tibi et movebo candelabrum tuum de loco suo, nisi pœnitentiam operis* (*Rev. 2:4-5*). After such a threat, how could religious who have diminished their early fervor remain without fear? The Lord also told the Bishop of Laodicea: "Because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." *Quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere de ore meo* (*Rev. 3:16*). Lukewarmness must truly be disagreeable to Him, since the man who falls asleep in it becomes the burden of His very patient heart. What will become of this unfortunate man, driven out of the divine heart? Where will he find refuge after having lost the last asylum of mercy?

The reason for the perils of lukewarmness is easy to understand. To escape from this dangerous state, one must first recognize its evil and then decide to take the steps needed to correct it. Now lukewarm souls have neither of these two dispositions. They do not acknowledge their state and do not believe themselves to be lukewarm, accustomed as they are to their faults, or, with nothing very alarming manifesting itself outwardly, they distrust themselves in nothing, and nothing moves them. Moreover, we often see great sinners become sincere penitents and abandon their disorders, but rarely do lukewarm souls shake off their apathy. This led St. Bernard to say: "It is easier to find secular persons being converted all at once, moving from a disordered life to a holy one, than to see even a single religious, lax in his duties, become more pious." *Multo facilius reperias multos saec-*

*ulares converti ad bonum, quam unum quempiam de religiosis transire ad melius* (Ep. 96, *ad Richardum Fontanensem*).

Indeed, a great sinner, guilty of scandalous faults, is better disposed than we imagine to be touched concerning his disorders and to be in horror of them. A good book read by chance, a talk overheard in passing, an unexpected disgrace, a mission which one attends and hears about the severity of God's judgments, of the need for penance, of the severity of the pains of Hell, and of the other final ends: all of these are liable to make him aware of the evil of his state, to show him its danger, and to lead him, with the help of grace, to a sincere conversion. But a lukewarm religious, who commits no gross or striking faults, easily deceives himself about his personal afflictions which certain good exterior works mask. Accustomed to supernatural considerations, nothing strikes him: prayers, readings, meditations, sermons, the sacraments, the deep truths of religion, no longer have an effect on him. He will twist things to the point of thinking himself virtuous because he compares himself advantageously to certain religious more lax than he. He will consider himself regular because, by habit, he observes several points of his Constitutions. He cannot imagine that he continually transgresses the others and, in fact, he ignores them as if they mattered little. Who knows whether he will go so far as to believe himself exemplary and spiritual because he receives the sacraments and recites his prayers, makes the meditations and other ordinary practices of religion? And yet, the truth is that he completes his exercises inattentively, his meditations fruitlessly, his confessions without contrition or amendment, his communions without love or fruits of sacrifice, all his actions empty of interior spirit. Alas, he has fallen into blindness of spirit and indifference of heart — usual penalties of negligence. Who will be able to enlighten him, to re-enliven him?

Even if lukewarm souls were to acknowledge their state, it would not be easy for them to change. That could be done only at the price of extreme efforts to resist the continual temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Indeed, those souls are in no way disposed to inflict such violence on themselves, so ingrained are their weakness and laxity. To leave this evil state requires, in addition to one's personal efforts, particular help from God, who, we know, removes His graces from lukewarm souls. At the same time as the lukewarm little by little move away from Him, God — by a just but terrible exchange — moves away from them. All He has left for them is coldness. He is satisfied to offer them very feeble help, which, being accepted nonchalantly, will probably not be adequate to awaken the soul and to heal its evil radically.

Further, not only does this state of spiritual apathy offer few means to return to a fervent life, but it also contains the seeds of greater evil since it predisposes one to mortal sin and, in particular, one of the most dreadful: the sin of moral hardness of heart. On this score, it is worse, in a way, than the state of coldness toward God. Without exaggeration, Scripture can say to the lukewarm soul, as we have just seen: "Would to God that you were cold or hot!" (See *Rev.* 3:15). In fact, however icy sinners might be, they find feelings of tenderness and a means for pardon in the heart of Jesus; lukewarm souls are shunned because of their ingratitude. Nonetheless, God has called them to perfection. He had them savor the celestial gifts, had often showered them with his choicest benefits, but the lukewarm souls abused His remedies and produced only brambles and thorns. Abandonment by Heaven is a consequence of their infidelity, and may be their final end. What a sad life! What a dreadful eternity!

## ARTICLE IV

### Remedies for lukewarmness

When the religious soul becomes fearful on considering the perils of lukewarmness, far from allowing himself to fall into discouragement, he ought to hurry to find effective remedies to arm itself against such a great evil. These remedies are prayer, meditation on the great truths of religion, fidelity to exercises of piety, and imitation of good examples.

1° Above all else, we should confidently ask God every day for fervor in His service and firmly believe we will receive it. Indeed, He promised to grant everything we ask of Him regarding salvation — and He is infallible in His promises. In particular, we ought to pray to the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of fervor, that He renew our soul, which, on its own, is fainthearted and inconstant. These desires for interior renewal, these fears of tepidity, these pressing supplications addressed to God, are proof that we are beginning to possess His love and that He will not abandon us.

2° We should often meditate on the following truths, or other similar ones, into which everyone can go deeper: the Master whom we serve is infinitely exalted; He is always present to us, and is worthy of being worshiped with perfection. — The rewards which He has promised us demand that we obey Him in every activity and with as much ardor as possible. — To save our soul is the loftiest and unique concern in this world; we can do this only by performing our exercises of fervor with fervor. — We have many sins to atone for; we will never succeed without embracing mortification, without practicing good works with ardent love. — Finally, we have to combat enemies who expend all their efforts that we might be lost; we cannot overcome them except by greater and more constant efforts than theirs.

Besides, our end is approaching. After that, there will be no more time to acquire merit, whereas right now we can prepare ourselves for a death that is precious before God by our good works accomplished with fervor. The impending judgment, the Hell into which we can fall, the Heaven opened before us: what reasons to impel us to work diligently for our perfection! — Yet, in the final hours of life, what regrets the negligent religious will have, when the thick clouds long accumulated in the soul by reason of lukewarmness begin to dissipate and he will see his sins just as they are! The reproaches he will

address to himself and those which God will call to his attention will be for him a foretaste of Hell. The Lord will especially reproach him for the abuse of the special and invaluable grace by which He called him to the religious state, while He left an untold number of Christians in the dangers of the world. He will reproach that religious for the abuse of superabundant graces prepared for him in his state of perfection, so that he might live more purely than in the world, and that he might be intimately united, fully loyal, irrevocably consecrated to God! What will that unfortunate religious reply? Of what use will be his tears?

3° Fidelity to the exercises of the common life is another remedy against lukewarmness, for it helps us to accomplish activities very pleasing to God, since they are in agreement with His will. Fidelity moves us to that will in an active and constant way. This deliberate and permanent practice of activities pleasing to God is the epitome of fervor and the opposite of lukewarmness. Moreover, after death, the negligent religious will reproach himself more bitterly for not having profited from so many community exercises, acts of obedience, spiritual readings, prayers, chapters, sessions of direction, instructions, and other graces capable of converting a great number of unbelievers. He will reproach himself for having made them useless by his lukewarmness, for having made them frequent occasions of sin and of bad example. He will reproach himself for having lived in continual laxity, by infractions of silence, by acts of immodesty and useless visits, in sum, for having lost all reward for his required duties as well as the eminent place that had been prepared for him in Heaven. We saw, in the article on death, that some religious were so terrified by reproaches of conscience that they ended up in a kind of despair.

As for the pious and faithful souls, but those fearful of conscience, we will tell them not to be alarmed when they do not experience deep fervor in the service of God. Whatever the reflections and personal applications suggested to them by their reading of all the above, they should especially entrust themselves to divine goodness, follow the decisions of their director, which, for them, are expressions of the will of God, beyond all considerations to be found in the most celebrated books, and to maintain their firm decision never to overlook their obligations knowingly. This attitude is sufficient for them rightfully to enjoy confidence and peace.

4° One final remedy for lukewarmness is to consider the example of the fervent religious who surround us. For that purpose, one must know how to distinguish between the religious who is pious and the one who is lukewarm. Indeed, the qualities which show the contrast between the two will become obvious in the following comparison.



*Comparison of a pious religious with a lukewarm religious*

1° A fervent religious is determined to follow his Rule even in most minute matters. The slightest fear of displeasing the Divine Master is enough to make him undertake everything. — The lukewarm religious, on the contrary, often breaks the Rule, dispenses himself as much as he can from community exercises, likes neither prayer nor the study of Sacred Scripture, is very sensitive to human opinions, and wastes time in useless activities.

2° The fervent religious ordinarily finds satisfaction in the duties of religious life. Should he occasionally meet some obstacles, he will not be discouraged because of them, since his fervor changes them into happiness by the balm which it spreads in his soul. Indeed, fervor even makes him add to his obligations other prayers, austerities, and practices of devotion which he imposes on himself, with permission of his confessor or his superior. Accordingly, he is always happy and has kind and graceful manners even towards those who could grieve him. — The lukewarm religious considers regular observance to be an insupportable yoke. He suffers all the bitterness from the difficulties of his state, never experiencing peacefulness and never gaining their merit. He is, therefore, always master of himself and cannot avoid letting this show.

3° The fervent religious keeps himself in great purity of conscience and never commits a voluntary fault deliberately, be it only venial. For that, he avoids the slightest occasions capable of bringing him to evil and of turning him away from perfection — The lukewarm religious cannot make up his mind to avoid those occasions, not wanting to hurt himself in any way. He continually commits voluntary faults; sometimes, they are so serious that one could wonder if he is not in mortal sin.

4° The fervent religious, however much progress he may have made, works unceasingly to advance in holiness, as St. Augustine prescribed. “Always increase, always walk, always advance, do not linger on the road.” *Semper adde, semper ambula, semper profice, noli in via remanere* (Serm. 169, n. 15). — The lukewarm religious does not go out of his way to become better; he does not draw any advantage from occasions to advance and pretends not to notice them. His state is on the brink of death, and he grasps nothing, so blind is he. “The numbness of souls is a fault neighboring death.” *Vicina morti labes, torpor animarum* (Paulinus, Ep. 36 *ad Macarius*).

5° The fervent religious is the support of the regular life. By his example, he upholds the holy traditions, the exactness of all the exercises of the convent, and his presence helps others to follow their

duty. — The lukewarm religious is the destroyer of the regular life. The points of the Rule formerly in force are observed only imperfectly; the holy customs are abolished little by little; abuses creep in; discipline and good order diminish. He pulls behind him all those who are disposed to negligence. In the long run, he is able to infect an entire community, especially if he is reputable because of age, or if he is a man of influence, talent, and human respect. This unfortunate person scandalizes not only children, simple faithful, *unum ex pusillis*, but even religious souls, privileged souls, souls who ought to be the salvation of the world! Is that not a frightening responsibility?

Let us ask God for the grace never to be numbered among the lukewarm religious, but rather among the fervent. If we do not yet have all the fervor which we ought to have, nor even that which we had in the early years of our entrance into religious life, having become lax as a result of our weakness and our inconstancy, we should pray to the Lord to strengthen our weakness and anchor our inconstancy, and not allow us to fall once again into spiritual lukewarmness.

Let us entreat St. Dominic, our Father, to obtain for us from God a fervor similar to his own. It must have been beautiful to hear him sing the divine praises in choir, with lively feelings of devotion, love, adoration, and recollection! His nights were passed in church in the presence of Jesus Christ, in wonderful rapture, now prostrate on the floor, now kneeling, now raising his arms to Heaven. But above all, what fervor when he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, uniting himself to the Redeemer and shedding many tears! In spite of their austerity, the observance of the regular practices was insufficient to consume his ardor. Accordingly, he added many voluntary practices, all of them animated and embellished by his love for God. In the work of the salvation of souls, he was so eager and fervent that he spent his every moment at it. After having preached with admirable success for many long years, in many areas of Europe, far from having exhausted his courage, he dreamed of greater works, and ardently sought to cross the seas to announce the Gospel to unbelievers in the most remote places, hoping to win the crown of martyrdom (*Act. canoniz.*).

Let us strive from afar to imitate these examples of fervor by accomplishing with great zeal the ordinary duties of religious life. Let us sing the praises of God with a lively faith, with much modesty, and with a sweet recollection which arise from our profound respect for the sovereign majesty of God. We should not seek useless pretexts to avoid the austerities of the Order, nor trivial reasons to soften the sanctified hardships. Let us work with fervor for the salvation of our neighbor, and, in order to prepare ourselves to do this effectively, let us use our time productively. We should apply ourselves wholeheart-

edly to study, especially of the Sacred Scriptures, so that we will be able to preach, to hear confessions, to convert sinners, and to strengthen fervent souls in perseverance.

We should have great confidence in the prayers of our glorious Patriarch, so powerful with God. Even when he was still on earth, he acknowledged that he never asked for anything in vain. Now in Heaven, he will obtain even more easily whatever we ask of him, especially if we implore him to obtain for us that disposition which was most pleasing to him: a constant fervor. In fact, before his death, having had all the religious of the community assemble, the first thing that he recommended to them was: "Be constant in fervor for the worship of God." *In fervore spiritus consistite, et in ipso Domino deservite* (*Act. canoniz.*).

## CHAPTER VIII

### Devotion

1° Nature of true devotion. 2° False devotion; its differences with the true.

#### ARTICLE I

##### **Nature of true devotion**

Devotion, said St. Thomas is “a disposition of the will to practice promptly those activities relating to the worship and service of God.” *Devotio nihil aliud esse videtur quam voluntas quaedam prompte tradendi se ad ea quae pertinent ad Dei famulatum* (ST II-II, q. 82, a. 1). Given its object, it belongs to the virtue of religion, the most excellent of moral virtues: “Devotion is an act of religion.” *Devotio est actus religionis* (Ibid., a. 2). By its principle, it is tied to charity, which produces in the soul the urgency to render to God a worship worthy of His goodness. After having been the effect of charity, it becomes in turn its cause, insofar as it nourishes and increases the love for God by the repetition of the actions which it produces in His honor: “Charity causes devotion . . . and through devotion charity is nourished.” *Caritas devotionem causat . . . et per devotionem caritas nutritur* (Ibid., a. 2, ad 2). Devotion bears a great resemblance to fervor, to the point that many theologians confuse one for the other. Indeed, both contain an ardent intention of pleasing God, an ardor which comes from holy charity. Devotion, however, is distinguished from fervor in that it does not deal generally with things that please God, but more particularly with those which, by their nature, pertain to His worship. Devotion is similar to the spiritual joy which we experience in exercises of piety, and to the attraction we have for acts of religion, or that tenderness which the heart touched by eternal things profoundly feels. In reality, however, the two differ as an effect differs from its cause. Devotion does not consist in that joy and that affection of heart, but it is often

accompanied and followed by them, through the mercy of God: "Devotion per se and principally causes spiritual joy of the mind." *Devotio, per se et principaliter, spiritualem lætitiã mentis causat* (Ibid., a. 4).

All Christians are obliged to have a certain measure of devotion. For the word devotion means dedication and consecration to God. Now, by his baptism, every Christian is vowed and consecrated to the service of his Divine Master. But all are not called under the same title; there are different levels of grace, and not all just persons are equally saints, even though all receive sanctifying grace. This difference in grace brings different degrees of devotion.

Religious, however, are obliged to a higher more sublime state of devotion than secular persons, because they have to accustom themselves to accomplish promptly not only the commandments of God but also the evangelical counsels, the practices of their Rule, and the acts of divine worship, for which they are especially delegated. Moreover, their ordinary days are called *férias*, as being vacant and free from temporal preoccupations, so that they may be employed in a permanent manner in the exercises of divine worship.

In the world, libertines mock devotion and condemn devout persons as superstitious, bizarre, scrupulous, disruptive, and troubled. The smallness of mind and the failings of certain Pharisees sometimes offer them pretexts to speak in this way and to extend to devotion in general, by an unjust conclusion, the defects of those who distort it. Nonetheless the foundation for this antipathy lies in a more hidden and more evil principle. The carnal man has an invincible repugnance for everything that calls attention to the domination of the Almighty on souls and the obligation to submit to His yoke. Such a reminder is a permanent reproach for him which troubles and tires him. When he finds the submission of man to the divine will enveloped by this promptitude, this zeal in even the slightest of matters, by sincere fervor, by interior joy, and by the willingness which characterizes devotion, the contrast between what he is and what he sees, between his laxity and the other's generosity, between his disdain and that humble dependence, between his distaste and that abundance of joy, offend him and make him all the more spiteful. From this, there arise his criticisms, nasty remarks, indignation, and impatience at seeing certain acts of devotion, which, in truth, do not hinder him in any way. The truly devout person does not allow himself to be swayed by these mockeries. He remembers that the Christian religion, for many centuries, was persecuted by tyrants. Why is it surprising, then, that devotion — which is nothing other than religion arrived at its most striking bloom — finds itself similarly persecuted by the tongue of evil or indifferent persons?

Sometimes, there could be similar libertines hidden under the monastic habit in cloisters. They mock the devotion of the brothers who stand as a continual censure to their own lack of regularity and devotion. Should a religious, inclined to devotion, practice certain acts of piety with a little too much application and constraint; should he apparently push a little too far his awareness of [others] not executing well the actions of divine worship; should he, in demeanor and modesty of eyes, show very little affectation; should he by weakness fall into certain visible faults; — all this is enough for the libertines to condemn the character of his piety and to censure his entire life, while, regarding themselves, they joyfully break almost all their Constitutions with premeditated malice and accomplish without the least devotion the most serious acts of divine worship. The good religious will know how to bear these attacks without showing indignation, but also without altering his conduct. He will hold to the principles, advice, and corrections given by his superiors; he will be sorry in his heart for those who act with such wantonness, and will reply to them by his silence and his mildness. Above all, he will thank God “Who grants understanding and savor to little ones concerning matters which He hides from false wise men” (see *Lk.* 10:21).

## ARTICLE II

### **False devotion; how it differs from the true**

If it is necessary to justify devotion against the proud who undervalue it, it is even more necessary to defend it against those who pretend to practice it, and who, nonetheless, invalidate its true meaning, apply it falsely, deceive themselves, and harm the interests of our holy religion. We will study the signs which distinguish false devotion from the genuine; we distinguish seven of them:

1° Genuine devotion is founded on a spirit of faith. This spirit enlightens the soul regarding the excellence, the beauty, and the other perfections of God, and helps us to understand the honor which we gain by serving Him out of devotion. This devotion activates charity and, with it, inflames our heart with an ardent desire to offer to the Author of our being an exalted worship, by the interior and exterior sacrifice of our entire being. — Quite the contrary, false devotion only walks in weak and misleading lights: it substitutes hypocrisy for the sincerity of faith. It is a concealment of devotion, like that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. In addition, it allows darkness and blindness to subsist in the mind, and indifference and corruption in the heart.

2° True devotion begins interiorly then extends to everything exterior. In the soul, it produces a complete detachment and a profound disregard of one's opinions and personal interests, in favor of considering only the honor of God. These dispositions soon appear exteriorly when devotion directs wisely the various works of piety, such as vocal prayers, adorations, genuflections, inclinations, fasts, and other mortifications of the body, and finally, all the acts of virtue. — False devotion deals only with what can be seen, with activities of little consequence, with idiosyncracies bordering on superstition, hardly conforming to simple good sense, and denoting a kind of weakness of the spirit. To use the language of the Gospel, it make us resemble whitened sepulchers. Or else, by an opposite disorder, under the pretext of working only on what is solid and essential, it despises what is external and mocks all the common practices of religious life. By doing this, it gives evidence of its self-importance, dishonors God, and scandalizes one's neighbor.

3° True devotion is well-founded. It starts by attaching us to the commandments of God; then it moves us to practice the virtues,

especially charity, then the other exercises proper to our vocation. It prefers the essential to the accidental, the precept to the counsel, the vows to simple regulations, what enters into the duties of state to what is extra. In accomplishing duty, it surmounts difficulties with courage, places its confidence in Him who is the *Good Master*, and is able to sweeten all the works undertaken in His service. — Sanctimonious persons neglect the principal in order to busy themselves with the accessory. They easily dispense themselves from community exercises to give themselves over to personal activities infected with pride. Some appear bizarre, constantly changing their works of piety, unfaithful to their exercises at the slightest obstacle they meet. Still others become so attached to their individual devotions, retreats, novenas, ways of the Cross, that they almost resist the superior when he entrusts them with a certain task for the common good. All of these give witness to a devotion both false and filled with illusion. They lack a firm foundation, namely, the desire to please God by fulfilling, before anything else, all that He deigns to ask of us.

4<sup>o</sup> True devotion is detached. It shines and grows in aridity, dryness, darkness, and the aversions of nature. Its satisfaction consists in being pleasing to Heaven. Natural and egotistical satisfaction matters little to true devotion. — On the contrary, there are pious persons who never enjoy peace. When they are not aware of noticeable consolations, they fear that their service is not pleasing to God. This fear, to be sure, sometimes arises from a certain timidity; but more often, it derives from pride, which relishes tranquility and sees no reward in aridity. Such persons, even though called devout, are far from genuine devotion, which forgets itself to serve only the interests of the God Whom it loves.

5<sup>o</sup> Genuine devotion is humble and kind, since it flows from charity, which, according to St. Paul, contains all the virtues, especially kindness and others of the same nature. The devout religious does not trust himself and is wary of falling, unknowingly, into some illusions. He is charitable, gracious, and of good humor because the joy of a blameless conscience which reigns in his heart flows into his actions. He is free from false contentment and human respect. Indeed, he is always faithful to fulfill exactly all his duties. Should he have to make a fraternal correction to prevent the domination of evil or to maintain the regular life, he will proceed with much prudence, moderation, and humility. — Sanctimonious persons are very different. They pretend to despise themselves as the lowest of men, but become upset and incensed at the slightest humiliation. They show themselves as exclusive and personal in their devotion, valuing in others only that devotion which is in conformity with their own. Others are impatient, saddened, and worried to the point that they make themselves unbearable



to everyone. Their bitter zeal betrays itself even in their fraternal corrections, if, indeed, we can call them that. It is especially to them that the Scriptures addressed the reproach: *they make piety blasphemed* (see *Rom. 2:24*). God preserve us from such a misunderstanding of devotion!

6° True devotion, even though gentle toward others, ceaselessly wages war against wicked nature. It is never satisfied until it sees us resemble Jesus Christ, who always lived a difficult and crucified life. Nonetheless, it makes us enjoy the work it requires of us, because the idea of pleasing the Lord sweetens everything. — To be sure, sanctimonious persons do not seek disorder and vice, and remain exact in certain practices. But they admit only an egoistic and convenient devotion. Now such a devotion can only be misleading or very imperfect, especially in religious, who are obliged to greater holiness than ordinary Christians, and who must apply to the letter the word of St. Paul: “Christ did not please himself.” *Christus non sibi placuit* (*Rom. 15:3*).

7° True devotion serves God with liberty of spirit and interior peace, since it seeks only that which pleases the Sovereign Master. Now God is pleased when He is served as a father and willingly. — There are some men who obey with an anxious mind, a troubled heart, an embarrassed conscience. These fears and this embarrassment rob them of interior peace and are obstacles to their spiritual progress in devotion. A similar evil ordinarily arises from their embittered imagination, their natural timidity poorly resisted, a defect of judgment, exaggerated reflection on their behavior, stubbornness, and a self-love which prevent them from knowing themselves. Simplicity, filial trust, and humility will be their remedy, their salvation, the source of their joy.

We should concentrate all our efforts on acquiring genuine devotion. To achieve that: 1° we should be careful to guard against the illusions of false devotion; 2° we should remove all obstacles to true devotion by avoiding looking for pleasures of the senses, desiring human consolation, or satisfying curiosity; 3° to obtain devotion, let us take the two means suggested by St. Thomas (ST II-II, q. 82, a. 3), namely, asking for it from the Holy Spirit, and considering by turns the divine perfections, the humanity of Jesus Christ, and the troubles of man.

Even though our devotion deals principally with the worship of God, it should also extend to the veneration of the saints, insofar as this is done in relation to God, of Whom they are the ministers and the friends. Accordingly, we ought to have a special devotion to the Holy Trinity, to Jesus Christ, and to the mysteries of religion celebrated by the Church; then, to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, St. Joseph,

our guardian angel, our baptismal patron, the patron of our religious life, St. Dominic and the other saints, especially the saints and blessed of our Order. To form our hearts into the likeness of their hearts is to resemble very closely our Divine Master Himself.

## CHAPTER IX

### The duties of a docile subject and those of a competent superior

#### ARTICLE I

#### **The docile subject**

Let us try to paint the docile subject in a few lines, so that in that picture, as in a mirror, every religious may consider his duties, examine his dispositions, and reform his behavior.

1° A subject must honor his superiors and have great respect for them, because they represent for him the majesty of God, who set them in place to give subjects their care and their instructions. The subject should show this respect and this honor in his words and in his behavior toward them. Thus, he should use only respectful terms in speaking to them; he should act towards them with gentle and submissive manners; in conversation, he should avoid arguing with them, even about insignificant matters on which they do not share a similar viewpoint. He should not answer them in a haughty manner, but should express his opinion with modesty and simplicity, without any anger; he should avoid grumbling about their conduct; quite the contrary: he should deflect those who speak ill of them, scorn them, or complain about them; he should not pay attention to their defects, since they are nonetheless legitimate representatives of divine authority. If, unfortunately, it should happen that certain religious underestimate them and work to undermine their authority, he should not join them, but rather should attempt to calm the disaffected spirits by his prayers, his counsels, and his silence. This is how to attract the respect of men and especially blessings from Heaven.

2° A subject is held to an exceptional obedience toward his superiors because at one and the same time they represent for him the majesty of God, which deserves respect, as well as His will, which has

a right to our submission. This submission ought to be prompt, complete, and all-embracing. Elsewhere we detail the conditions for genuine obedience; it is unnecessary to repeat here those explanations (See Part III, Ch. III).

3° A subject ought to receive good-naturedly the warnings and corrections of his superiors, because God has established these superiors precisely to compensate for the weaknesses and the ignorance of subjects, by correcting their faults and punishing their transgressions. There are some very touchy and bizarre religious who puzzle a superior as to how he should go about it when he is obliged to offer them advice or present rebukes. Indeed, far from receiving these comments wholeheartedly — like the traveler who is grateful to the one who sets him back on the appropriate road — they take everything in a wrong spirit, misinterpret his intentions, and see in the remarks only prejudice, the effect of unjust accusation, or personal spite. Even if we should come across an erroneous correction, lacking in prudence and charity, this should not prevent us from receiving it willingly from someone who, in fact, has the authority to offer to anyone what he believes to be in the latter's best interests. Besides, it would be reckless to judge so easily the defects that we believe to have noticed in the conduct of the superior. These defects are often only the imaginary result of our sensitivity, our pride, and our self-love, always ready to attribute to the reprimand a meaning that it does not have. The devil, for his part, is very cajoling in making us notice the supposed faults in the behavior of superiors and in their corrections so as to distance us from them, if not by open rebellion, at least by secret disdain and by a certain repugnance toward accepting their viewpoint — matters which considerably weaken their authority and the joy of obedience. Consequently, we need always to be wary of our own opinion in these circumstances. Nonetheless, should there be obvious defects in their corrections, we should always receive them with humility, simplicity, submission, and patience, strongly convinced that they will work to our benefit. God, who indeed permits superiors to act in this way regarding their subjects, has His designs for the latter, and will more willingly turn things to their benefit as they show greater confidence in Him. He will use this to raise them up to greater virtue in this world and to be more detached from human affairs. A great glory will be reserved for them in Heaven. But if they do not know how to profit from these graces, their shame at the last judgment will be great but their regrets useless.

4° A docile subject should show love and gratitude for his superiors because God has established the latter as fathers of His religious family and as pastors of his chosen flock. Now this office of father and pastor embraces the greatest benefits, and makes the holders

of these positions worthy of the most unalloyed affection, of the liveliest gratitude. The subject, therefore, should express his love for his superiors by avoiding doing anything that would displease them, and, on the contrary, finding everything that could please them, “so that they exercise their office with joy, and not with groans” (*Heb.* 13:17). This is how he should act, not for base, human, and self-interested reasons — as, for example, to ensnare them and obtain from them favors, dispensations, agreeable assignments — but rather, in view of the principles of the faith, which require that the superior be loved in the Lord: *In Domino*, as St. Paul often said. The subject also owes his superiors much gratitude, insofar as they are entrusted with the significant charge of his salvation. They answer for him before God; their daily concern is intended to direct subjects securely, in the midst of many troubles and perils, toward the blessed goal of their vocation.

5° A subject must pray for his superiors, because they need abundant graces to be enlightened, directed, and strengthened in their duties. Indeed, God has attached all His graces to prayer and fulfills it all the more infallibly when we ask for what is necessary for our salvation, namely, what conforms best with His holy will. Therefore, religious must entreat God to grant to their superiors the graces appropriate for them to act prudently in the difficulties of administration, and supernaturally discharge the multiple duties which absorb them every day. Besides, other than the difficulties which concern their public office, they have, as individuals, their own passions and human weaknesses. They need much help so as not to fall into many faults, even should they be saints. In particular, superiors have a specific need of powerful graces to suffer patiently contradictions, dislikes, and sorrows, whether interior or exterior; to administer the monastery wisely, maintaining there good order, piety, regular life, fervor, and devotion, so as not to waste or lose the goods under their care; to be attentive to all individuals at the same time as to the community; to help the brothers advance in virtue, to assuage their infirmities, and to console them in bodily or mental difficulties. To achieve success in the fulfillment of all these obligations is the art of arts, but it is also the cross of crosses and the merit of merits.

## ARTICLE II

### The good superior

1° A superior must have inexhaustible charity for his subjects, since he is for them the vicar of Our Lord. Now, when He willed to appoint St. Peter as visible head of the Church, Jesus Christ first asked him a full three times if he had charity, in order to teach him, and through him all of us, that this is the essential quality involved in the position of leadership. This love must be gentle, beneficent, all-encompassing. The superior needs to show to every one of his brothers a generous heart and a strong desire to please them, to speak to them with kindness, and to receive them graciously when they approach him. He must help them in their difficulties, grant them graciously all that is not detrimental to their salvation, and even anticipate their needs, especially when they are too timid to have recourse to him. These signs of benevolence, given appropriately by the superior to his subjects, imperceptibly gain him their hearts, and move them to fulfill their duties with joy and generosity. He should avoid, however, granting them something which would weaken the intensity of regular observance.

2° A superior must have much zeal for holy observance, because God, in placing him as leader of others, has charged him with maintaining in their integrity all the Constitutions, the statutes, the rubrics, and the ceremonies of his Order. His mission is to watch over these matters, not as a master who is free to dispose of them at will, but as a guardian who will have to render an account. Besides, since, after the glory of God, he is obliged to promote the spiritual advancement of his brothers, he can work no better for this than by encouraging them to practice their vows, their observances, and the virtues of their state. If superiors should neglect these duties, they would be punished severely at the supreme tribunal for all the evil committed in their community, and for all the good not accomplished by their deficiency. This laxity, this transgression of rules, which they might allow to happen, not by evil intention, but by leniency, indifference, lack of zeal for virtue and of courage to make corrections, will cause them to be reproached by the Supreme Judge, since they will be obliged to answer for their subjects, soul by soul.

3° A superior must give a good example to his subjects. Indeed, he has to be the visible model on which they can regulate their

lives. He should be intent, then, to lead them to virtue, by being the first to do what he commands. By his example he will acquire greater influence than by command. Indeed, the words of the person invested with power make little impression if they are not supported and strengthened by the authority of his actions. When he is seen as looking for his comforts in everything, demanding or at least accepting willingly singularity in his clothing, in food and in everything else, his subjects will do likewise and excuse themselves by the example of the superior who will no longer dare to censure them. In contrast, when we see the superior faithful in choir, in the refectory, and in all the exercises, taking care that everything be done in good order and with regularity, things will happen with edification and promptness. The subjects will attend the community activities good-naturedly and, in so doing, will fulfill their duties with fervor; the praises of God will be sung with dignity and reverence; meditations will take place with care and restraint; meals in the refectory will be serious, uplifting, instructive, accompanied by spiritual reading, silence, and discipline. This is the point expressed by the Scriptures when they say: "The king, that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his look." *Rex qui sedet in solio iudicii dissipat omne malum intuitu suo* (Prov. 20:8). The principal excuse for the superior's lack of commitment in attendance at community activities is the belief that he is forced by his office to make visits outside the monastery, or within the monastery, to be occupied with temporal matters. But superiors who are mortified, regular, and vigilant can find enough time to make these social calls and to deal with temporal matters without neglecting attendance at conventual activities. They are rarely absent, except for pressing and unforeseen cases, convinced as they are that the first and most essential duty of their administration is to look after the souls of the religious, which are of infinite worth and were entrusted to them by God. Their greatest desire — far above all the worries related to certain temporal matters — is to be able to lead their brothers to God by the influence of example, just as the Good Shepherd who always walks at the head of his flock. For them, this is not only a duty but also a necessity, a consolation; they will never feel more at peace than in the midst of their community, under their invisible leader, the Master of the Heavens.

4° A superior is obliged to correct the faults of his subjects because, if he did not oppose the invasion of faults by corrections, they would keep growing daily, given human weakness. But he must make those corrections armed with much wisdom and gentleness. However indispensable the reprimand, so much more the difficulty of doing it well. Indeed, just as correction is a kind of medicine, the more it is proportionate to the nature of the evil, the more it is repugnant to the

natural taste of the sick person. He who faces the task will ordinarily begin with counsels and admonitions; if these have no effect, he will remind the guilty one of all the faults he committed, in order to move him to understand their horror and to correct himself spontaneously out of motives of reason, honor, piety, and devotion. For those who are docile, naturally good, and have some religious instinct, nothing further will be needed. But if the counsels and the gentleness are not sufficient to enlighten the guilty one, to bring about repentance and amendment, the superior will use threats. And if these in turn have no effect, he will then have recourse to the penalties foreseen by the Constitutions of his Order. It is sometimes necessary to use authority and force, especially against those who commit faults brazenly, with awareness, out of malice, habit, and stubbornness. Yet prudence is necessary to direct this conduct. In certain cases, it directs us to pretend not to notice the fault, to tolerate it for a while, either because the guilty one will probably come to open his eyes and humble himself on his own, or to wait until his emotions are calm and he finds himself in a state of mind to receive the correction more usefully. Nonetheless, prudence will keep tolerance from going too far, lest, for the sake of future and doubtful hopes, the evil be allowed to increase to the point of becoming irreparable. Moreover, against those who are obstinate and act out of malice, prudence also seeks to avoid anger and offensive words even as it proceeds firmly, lest, instead of correcting the faults, it would rather embitter persons and lead to even worse consequences. Finally, prudence recommends a particular kindness towards those who are timid and who sin by frailty, so that a too severe correction not make them fall into discouragement. A correction that is sharp, bitter, and overdone often comes from disordered emotions; the overly mild correction arises from misplaced civility, and a certain weakness. The appropriate and charitable correction arises from a well-ordered love which, while no doubt inflicting wounds and penalties painful in themselves, nonetheless knows how to make them acceptable by the affection which led to their being made. "Love has its wounds, which are the more delicious when inflicted by one more loving." *Habet amor plagas suas, quæ dulciores sunt quam amorosius infliguntur* (St. Ambr.). In the same vein, Scripture notes that the Lord corrects the one He loves: "Whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth." *Quem diligit Dominus corripit* (*Prov.* 3:12).

5° A superior must have the wisdom to regulate and direct his community well. For that, (1) He should take as a final end the glory of God; in everything he does or allows, he should consider the spiritual good of his brothers and refuse them everything that could be an obstacle to their sanctification. (2) In the choice of means and in all important decisions he should have to make for the prosperity of the



community, he should seek counsel from wise and disinterested persons; then, without further delay, he should decide on just measures to insure success. (3) Among the obstacles which he will have to prevent or avert, the first to be noted is whatever could compromise the peace and union of hearts in the community. He should be solicitous for everyone, without seeking advantages or glory for himself, in order that his subjects willingly submit to him. To insure peace, he should himself be peaceable, calm, moderate, and maintain significant even-handedness in his conduct with everyone, since he is pastor and father of all, unless, for exceptional reasons, he is sometimes forced to act otherwise. (4) In carrying out his duties, he ought to have a mixture of firmness and mildness, in order to imitate the action of divine wisdom. In administration, lax and cowardly souls can only compromise their salvation as well as that of others; but tranquility must perfect and correct firmness, lest otherwise we embitter minds, make the fulfillment of duties onerous, and give an insufferable bent to correction.

6° A superior must have great humility, because every man is unworthy and incapable of assuming the role of administrator, for, on his own, he lacks the insights, qualities, and virtues necessary to carry out the duties appropriately. Humility should inspire in him a sincere reluctance to abuse his powers because of their gravity and their dangers. Rather, he should maintain a permanent desire to be the last of all and at the feet of all and not at their head; he should be disposed to return as a simple religious, as soon as possible, without opposing the Heavenly will. When he is placed in charge, he ought to accept solely to follow the orders of God, which he can recognize by the signs taken from faith, such as the orders of major superiors, canonical election, and the counsel of wise and enlightened persons. In the exercise of his functions, he should take care to practice humility by avoiding haughty and ostentatious mannerisms. On the contrary, he should know how to lower himself in his very elevation, to issue orders only regretfully, to agree voluntarily with the ideas of others, and sometimes to cede to their wishes in unimportant matters. Nonetheless, this humility should be without loss of dignity, lest a condescension poorly applied or poorly understood lessen among subjects the respect due to authority, which is necessary to lead all of them to goodness.

7° A superior needs much patience to bear in peace the sorrows and the troubles inseparable with his position. He has to expect to suffer both inwardly and outwardly. Although called to be perfect, religious still have their weaknesses and their emotions which noticeably distress their spiritual guide. He finds himself exposed to criticisms, complaints, contradictions, false accusations, to the contempt and the loathing of those who cannot abide an administration that is firm, zealous, and strict, which upset their pride, sensuality, and laxi-

ty. Moreover, the superior has to put up with all that while saying nothing, so as not to trouble the community any further or to expose those unjust and ungrateful religious to even greater faults. At the same time, he has to bear with the ill humor of those who are not as badly disposed but who are nonetheless very imperfect. He has to adapt himself to their different inclinations so as to use the latter in such a way as to make the religious practice virtue more effectively, and thus work more efficaciously for their own salvation. As a result, what sorrows, revulsions, perplexities, worries, wearinesses, and groans will be in a soul which understands clearly the things of God and feels sharply those of the earth!

8° A superior is obliged to pray much for himself and for his subjects. Regarding what concerns himself, he should pray especially for divine wisdom so that it may reside with him, work with him, and teach him what is pleasing to the Lord. He should have recourse to God in all his activities, in all the difficult situations in which he may find himself, so as not to engage in anything save with the mind of Jesus Christ. He should plead for the grace, the power, the courage, the patience which he needs to bear with all his difficulties, and to accomplish faithfully all the duties of his position; to increase the regular observance of his community; to have his brothers grow in fervor, devotion, and perfection; to oppose firmly those who would paralyze his efforts in favor of the good, and who would seek to introduce laxity or dissipation; in sum, he should suffer these contradictions, these complaints, these grumbles, if he finds it impossible to prevent them or to open the eyes of their authors.

Blessed are the communities wherein the subjects, not satisfied with fulfilling their vows and their Rule with fervor and strictness in order to gain salvation, also offer to their superiors respect, submission, love, and other appropriate duties! Blessed are those communities wherein, for their part, superiors hold strictly to the Constitutions to give an example to their religious subjects, and know, with a love that is kind, gracious, well-meaning, and generous towards everyone, how to help them carry the yoke of the religious life with joy and love! Since in such communities, subjects and superiors mutually encourage each other in acquiring the perfection of their state, there we find a kind of Paradise on earth and a foretaste of the ineffable delights of Heaven. Indeed, docile subjects and competent superiors together will enjoy eternally the glory of Paradise on high — subjects on account of their humble and filial docility, superiors on account of their just and paternal direction. God grant us the grace to arrive there before long!

AMEN.

**THE INSTRUCTION OF NOVICES**

**PART FOUR**

**PRAYERS TO JESUS CHRIST,  
THE MODEL OF VIRTUE**



## PREFACE

Novices need to be well instructed about God, His perfections, and His mysteries, for the Christian religion consists in that knowledge. In the colleges from which they come to enter into religious life, they applied themselves very little to acquiring this knowledge; more often than not, they heard speak of the qualities and the character of false divinities rather than of the perfections of God and of the qualities of his Son, Jesus Christ; or else, if they had gained some knowledge, it was often very confused and abstract.

Novices need also to learn to understand the Christian virtues they are called to practice, and the impossibility of acquiring them in which they find themselves, given the great misery that is the fundament of our nature and which they bring with them into the cloister. Moreover, it is important to appreciate greatly the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the evangelical beatitudes, since religious are called to a particular perfection that consists in the most complete practice of these virtues and in the acquisition of those gifts and of those beatitudes.

This fourth part is intended to teach them these different subjects, to serve as a supplement to the three others, and to provide a final helping hand for their perfection. Here they will learn not only how to form a clear and distinct conscience, but also how to arouse in their hearts the feelings appropriate to that light. This is why we have made all these considerations in the form of prayers and colloquies, so as to obviate the need to change their format in order to use them for direct conversation with God, and with Our Lord, whether in or out of prayer. The novices should meditate carefully on these prayers. During the day, they should frequently recall them and use them as an unction to spread over all their actions. Some truths and aspirations appear frequently in different prayers. These repetitions were deliberately made to impress more strongly on the souls of novices the feelings that are most necessary, most advantageous, and also most comforting to them.

For meditation, one can choose among the perfections of God and the qualities of Jesus Christ, whichever he finds himself most attracted to, and therefore those that touched him most intimately. To

better consider them, it would be useful to select one or two each day of the week or of the month, and to peruse them slowly and thoughtfully. In this manner, one will arrive at living in a kind of continual and loving presence with Our Lord, to the degree that the weakness of our human condition allows.

## ARTICLE I

### **Jesus Christ is our model**

You have not come among us, O Jesus, solely to save us by offering yourself as victim to the justice of your Father, but also to be a model for us, and to teach us to offer to God the true worship that is due Him, to practice good works, and to merit heaven.

Men were so corrupted by their attachment to the world, to its greediness, to its false maxims, and by their estrangement from God that they needed a visible and infallible guide in order to follow him with no fear of straying. O my Savior, you are that glorious model by your example and by your sayings which are entirely opposed to the covetousness of the world.

You were disengaged from all greediness and attached to God alone, to whom you referred all your actions, all your suffering. In order to teach men how to cure themselves of pride, of ambition, and of vanity, you gave them the example of humility. In order to encourage them to detach themselves from sensual pleasures, you gave them a perfect model of mortification, of chastity, of patience, and of gentleness. To teach how to spurn riches, you lived a most rigorous and most voluntary poverty. To teach them to attach themselves to God and to seek His glory in all things, you gave them the example of charity, of obedience, of prayer, and of the other virtues carried to the most perfect degree. If they follow in your footsteps and conform themselves to your image here on earth, they will deserve to partake in your glory. In this lies the goal of your works, your power, your wisdom, your goodness.

O my Jesus, I ask you for the grace to reflect upon you and to follow you as my model. I wish especially to imitate your detachment from all greediness, your dedication to your Father. Allow this devotion to God alone to be realized in my heart in spirit and in truth. Let it produce in my life an aversion for vanity, for ambition, and for honors, a victory over sensuality, and a disdain for the goods of this world.

O incomparable model, I ask you for the grace to learn how to study your example, to discover its hidden meaning, to relish its virtue, to experience the authority behind it, and to judge how to apply it in the various circumstances I may find myself. I pray that by this

tender study, I may have the same feelings you had on earth, to behave as you did, to judge things in the same way as you, to speak, to act, to suffer, and to pray as you did, through you, in you, with you, and to please you.

O holy exemplar of all virtues, this is my one desire; increase it, satisfy it. Amen.



## ARTICLE II

### **Jesus Christ, model of humility**

My Jesus, you gave us the example of a most profound humility during all the stages of your life: in your Incarnation, in taking on human nature with its humiliations, its miseries, its faults, its sufferings, its sorrow — but without ignorance, sin, and concupiscence; in your birth, by coming into the world in a stable; in your circumcision, by submitting to what was a remedy to erase original sin, as if you had been the sinner; in your presentation in the Temple, wishing to be redeemed like other first-borns, even though you were the Redeemer of the world; in your isolation and your flight to Egypt, by allowing yourself to be taken away as if you needed that to avoid death, to flee from the persecution of Herod; in the temple at age twelve, by replying to the Doctors of the law, or by interrogating them with modesty and simplicity, as if to instruct yourself, even though you were the knowledge and wisdom of God; in your hidden life up to age thirty, by remaining subject and obedient to Joseph and to Mary, attending to the lowest duties of the household, to the point of working at the humble craft of carpentry; at the beginning of your active and public life, indistinguishable among the sinners by requesting the baptism of repentance from St. John the Baptist on the shore of the Jordan; in the desert, by allowing the devil to tempt you and to transport you from one place to another, as if he were your master; during the three years of your apostolic life, by allowing yourself to endure scorn, injuries, insults, and lies, to be treated as one possessed, a magician, a rebel, a madman, a sinner, a seducer, a Samaritan, and even a blasphemer — you who are the holy one of God!

You were a model of humility in your Transfiguration, forbidding your three disciples who had seen your glory from speaking about it to anyone before your Resurrection; in your miracles, prohibiting the devil and those whom you had healed from making them known; in your refusal to become king, when the crowd wanted to seize you to acclaim you; in your teachings, when you recommended to your apostles and your disciples to learn especially from you to be gentle and humble of heart.

You were a model of humility in your passion, starting by washing the feet of your apostles, enduring all kinds of humiliations; by the scourging, the crowning with thorns, carrying the cross, the crucifixion, which was a most humiliating punishment for the Jews. In a word, you always sought to be despised by men. Moreover, you

humbled yourself even more in the depth of your soul, you the true God, to whom alone belongs all honor and all glory.

I ask you, O my Savior, for the gift of humility which is the source of all graces, the foundation of all virtues, and a necessary condition for salvation. For you have said — and I wish never to forget it — “Unless one becomes lowly and like little children, he will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (*Mt.* 18:3). I desire to go heaven; therefore, I will humble myself in the present world so as to be raised up in the future life. Amen.

### § I – *First levels of humility*

Your saints, O my Jesus, teach us different levels of humility by explaining your teaching and your example. I wish to meditate on their teaching, which contains truth and life. Help me. I trust in you.

The first level, which is indeed the foundation and the standard of humility, is to understand what one is in God’s eyes; to see clearly one’s lowliness and misery which consist in realizing that, by ourselves we are nothing, sinners filled with faults. By this clear knowledge we will arrive at an unshakeable conviction and a kind of evidence that we are miserable beyond words, and that we merit all kinds of scorn.

From this speculative conviction, the second level highlights an effective inclination to scorn oneself. Whoever is at this level, does not glorify himself for the advantages of body or soul, natural or supernatural, knowing that whatever he has, he received from God. He does not imagine raising himself above others nor does he ever disdain them because of the defects of their birth, their talents, their personal qualities. Quite the contrary: he regards all men superior to himself, while he considers his own sins, his faults, and the graces that these others have received or will perhaps receive from God some day.

Arriving at the third level, one promptly renounces all thoughts of vanity and of self-satisfaction, of presumption, and of enjoyment in the esteem of others. One regrets being praised, applauded, honored; one shudders as soon as he discovers deep in his heart the secret desire of being commended; one also regrets any thought of disdain against one’s neighbor, every suspicion and every rash judgment concerning his behavior. But far from being discouraged, we should make these imperfect emotions give rise to more lively and more frequent acts of humility.

The fourth level requires us to refrain from speaking, for personal advantage, any word of pride or of praise, whose goal is to make us be esteemed by others. Not content with refusing to take satisfaction in flattering words and in applause, the individual humiliates him-

self interiorly. One does not allow himself any sign of mockery or disdain of anyone at all; one looks with displeasure at others who give in to these weaknesses, and never does one speak to his neighbor with haughtiness, bitterness, or rudeness.

Grant me the grace, O my Jesus, to feel within me all the effects of the virtue of humility, so as to imitate in my thoughts, my words, and my actions, the example that you have given me. I am aware that I do not have this virtue, not even at its first level, and that, throughout my life, I have been filled with presumption, pride, vanity, inordinate self-esteem, and contempt for my brothers. I ask pardon of you. Grant me the grace to engage every day in some exterior and interior acts of humility, and to spend a long time in examining myself on this virtue until at length I find myself rooted in self-contempt and confirmed in the unity of your love. Amen.

### § II – *Next levels of humility*

O Lord, just as “the pride of those who hate you ever increases” (*Ps.* 74:23), so the humility of those who love you lowers them more and more in the awareness of their lowliness. There remains for me to consider the most perfect levels of this virtue. Allow me to look into the depths of the abyss without faltering, and never to fall back from the practice of what you show me as the best.

The fifth level of humility consists in avoiding, in one’s conversations and behavior, disputes, obstinacy, attachment to one’s personal opinion, animosity, fondness for novelty, peculiarity in matters of religion. It always inspires us with great submission to God, to the Church, and to our superiors, with a certain facility of conforming oneself to the feelings of equals with regard to indifferent matters. It brings great peace to the soul.

The sixth level leads us to act with Christian simplicity, without ostentation or inordinate reliance on ourselves, our lights, and our talents. One no longer seeks to perform the least of his actions to be seen and esteemed by men, but rather only to please God. One does not puff himself up about anything when he fulfills exactly the duties of his state in life and does some good work. If one is esteemed, praised, and honored by others, he refers it all to God, the genuine author of the good, and remains as low in feelings about himself as if he had done nothing. Finally, one always regards himself as a useless servant, and more, as a servant worthy of condemnation, who, by his self-love and negligence, wastes the good that grace sought to operate in him or with him.

Having arrived at the seventh level, we bear with tranquility the humiliations that come our way every day, whether from God, the

devils, from men or other creatures, in the sharp and bitter words addressed to us, the haughty manners perhaps displayed toward us, the preferences given to others, the ill-humor and the painful character of certain persons, embarrassing ailments, along with the various afflictions of body and spirit that we encounter.

The eighth level leads us to the desire of being despised by everyone, and to be known for what we are, vile and contemptible, without wishing to disguise or excuse our faults. Indeed, man naturally loves to find others who agree with him; the truly humble person, applying this inclination properly, and sincerely despising himself, wishes to be despised by others and prefers to obey them more than to command them.

Finally, the ninth level leads us even lower, if down it is; it helps us to find a source of joy in the disdain and outrages of men. This level is the most perfect; all the greatest saints reached it in an admirable way. Thus, the Apostles, on leaving an unjust court, left filled with joy for having been judged worthy of suffering insults for the name of Jesus Christ (*Acts 5:41*).

How powerful your grace has to be, O my God, in order for it to fill with heroic feelings the heart of man, naturally seduced and tyrannized by pride! And these very perfect levels of conduct are proposed by your teachers to all Christians! How much more ought they attract the attention of religious souls and inflame their zeal. O Jesus, grant me the grace to tend toward this goal with perseverance, that neither struggles nor reluctance may frighten me; that my defeats may redouble my vigilance and my courage. The more I advance, the less will I believe myself close to the goal. Every morning, on thinking of the acquisition of humility, I will repeat the word of the king-prophet: "I have said, it is now that I begin" (*Ps. 77:11*). Amen.

### ARTICLE III

#### **Jesus Christ, model of patience and gentleness**

You offer me, O my Jesus, a consummate model of patience and gentleness in all the circumstances of your life: in your Incarnation, by remaining for nine months enclosed in the womb of the Virgin Mary with full use of your mind and a perfect understanding of your condition; at your birth, by enduring the cold and other rigors on a bed of straw; during your hidden life, by engaging in arduous and painful work; in the desert, by watching and fasting for forty days, with no other bed but the ground, exposed to the insults of the devil.

You were patient and gentle during your active life, when suffering hunger and thirst, cold and heat, the weariness of travel and of preaching, slander, insults, and opposition; in your conversations with the apostles and disciples, who remained for so long unpolished and fleshly; in accommodating yourself to their weaknesses, and in instructing them with kindness, by silently suffering their faults, or by correcting them with a touching charity.

During your Passion, you were reduced to agony in the garden of olives, and you experienced grievous sadness, to the point of pouring a bloody sweat on the ground. You were betrayed and kissed by Judas, whom you had formerly called your friend. You were seized and bound by the soldiers, shamefully treated by Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod; accused, judged worthy of death, insulted by spittle and blows, placed below Barabbas the notorious robber, scourged cruelly, crowned with thorns, and treated like a king on the stage, with the final contempt.

Finally, you were condemned to death, delivered to the rage of your enemies, weighed down with the heavy burden of the cross, given gall and vinegar to drink, exposed naked to the eyes of everyone, nailed to the cross for three long hours; plunged interiorly into an abyss of pain and sadness; and, to complete it, abandoned by your Father! And yet you suffered all this treatment with heroic patience, without complaining, without even defending yourself, but on the contrary, pardoning your enemies and praying for them.

I ask you, O good master, for the virtue of patience, which I find so indispensable, because I cannot enter into the joy of heaven except by many tribulations of body and spirit, suffered calmly, in view of that final goal. If to enter your glory it was necessary even for you to submit to that requirement, how could I exempt myself from

it? I submit to it, I accept it with love, and I will always bless the gracious hand that deigns to test me in order to heal me. Amen.

§ I – *Different levels of patience*

In considering what patience is, O my God, I discover different acts, levels, and effects worthy of my attention. Help me to appreciate them just as you do. The principal ones are:

1° To suffer in silence whatever troubles that beset us; to cast out all movements of anger, of agitation, of resentment, and of vengeance that arise in our heart; to avoid all anxieties, sharp words against those whom we believe to be the perpetrators or the occasions for our troubles; in all that happens, to submit ourselves to the will of God, without showing our repugnance, and to be disposed not to escape by unjust means the evil that we endure.

2° To accept the crosses imposed on us, not only in silence, but also with tranquility of soul, without emotion, without exonerating ourselves in the occasions, nor blaming another for the fault, and not wishing to be delivered from our trials, except insofar as it will please the Lord who sends them to us. Such a resignation does not prevent us from asking that the chalice be taken away from us; but we make our request with full submission to the divine will so that the request itself is a new act of virtue.

3° To bear the cross not only with peace but also with joy, so that we place our delight and our glory in suffering, in order to show God how much we desire to love Him and how much we bless Him because of our afflictions. We see these as a blessing from which we expect to reap the greatest advantages.

4° To endure adversities with the magnanimous desire of suffering trials even more disagreeable to human nature, so that far from desiring the termination of our troubles, we offer ourselves to God to bear even greater ones, just as the saints did, so long as the trials increase in us strength and resignation.

5° Not content with restraining ourselves from complaining about those who afflict us, we cherish them as our best friends, we do good to them, and we pray for them. Indeed, they are the ones who provide us with the means to obtain remission of our sins and to merit an increase in grace, the source of greater glory in heaven.

6° In our infirmities, we must not seek to be pitied by others, and not be too hasty in obtaining a remedy; we should be content to make our needs known to those who can relieve us and wait in peace for the medicine they will deem appropriate, in abandonment to the providence of God, and trusting in his goodness, since He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our strength, but will provide help pro-

portionate to our trials.

I beg your pardon, O very patient Jesus, for your saddeness at my words and displeasure because of my demeanor and my natural disposition. I beg your pardon for all the interior and exterior sins I have committed since birth, for my impatience, my anger, and my sharpness. Grant me the grace of practicing patience in the future in all the sufferings that may come to me, and through patience, to possess my soul so as to keep it for you alone. Amen.

## § II – *Reasons for patience*

All of us, good as well as bad, have to suffer in this world, on every side and in everything. I wish to consider, O Lord, the various causes of suffering so that when trials appear, I will greet them in the way expected of one of your disciples.

1° We must suffer from God who permits other creatures to afflict us, so that we have the occasion to expiate our sins and to merit heaven. Sometimes, directly He sends to His followers spiritual dryness and interior neglect so that they serve Him for Himself alone and not only for his consolations.

2° From demons, who use their skill and their tenacity to arouse within us all kinds of temptations in body and spirit.

3° From men, by contradictions, whisperings, and persecutions. On the part of non-rational creatures, by the disruption of seasons, by the cold and the heat, and by all the tribulations that material matters can cause.

4° From the state that we have embraced, by the difficulties that are inseparable from every human position and which become all more inevitable when one seeks to fulfill faithfully even the eminent duties found in the religious state.

5° From ourselves, because of our temperament and our passions which render us subject to weaknesses of the body and afflictions of the spirit.

Nevertheless, O my Savior, you are so merciful that you do not abandon those who wish to belong to you. Upon them, you spread your power and your consolation for them to bear the trial with patience; you release them when you find it timely, either by helping them during their lifetime, or by reserving for them a precious death. The more you love them, all the more do you give them a share in your suffering, as you have done with your apostles and your martyrs, who received the first crowns in heaven for their having been most generous in trials. Thus were the words of St. Paul verified in them: “we glory also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience; and patience, character; and character, hope. And hope con-foundeth not: because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts,

by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (*Rom. 5:3-5*).

Grant me the grace, O most patient Jesus, rightly to sanctify my sufferings in the future so that they themselves may sanctify me. To that end, I will bear them because of these four lofty reasons:

1° For love of God, by whose will these sufferings happen to us, and who makes all that He ordains or permits serve for our salvation, provided we suffer because it is His will — this amounts to a becoming act of love even as it is one of patience.

2° In a spirit of repentance, to expiate our sins, for they were what attracted all those troubles and in fact deserve even more of them.

3° In conformity with Jesus Christ, who suffered the most grievous afflictions for us during his life, even though he was innocence itself. Absent this conformity with Jesus Christ, which brings about the union of our sufferings with his, we could neither be saved nor glorified, however great our afflictions.

4° To merit in heaven the possession of God, because the tribulations we endure in this world, although light and fleeting, bring us glory if we accept them out of love. "Blessed are they who suffer persecutions and ill-treatment in this world for the sake of righteousness, for a great reward is reserved for them in the bosom of God" (*Mt. 5:10*).

How good is the word you address to me, divine Jesus! Blessed, then, are they who practice patience in sufferings and persecutions. I long for that happiness, my God; deign to grant me the virtue needed to earn it, and you yourself be *my great reward* (see *Gen. 15:1*), according to what you promised to the Father of the faithful. Amen.



## ARTICLE IV

### Jesus, model of poverty

O poor Jesus! Poor in your infancy, poor in the course of your life, poor in your death, poor in your grave! I adore you and wish to resemble you. Enlighten me on the characteristics of poverty of spirit.

These characteristics can be summarized thus:

1° To own nothing individually, to give nothing, to receive nothing, and to dispose of absolutely nothing without permission from superiors.

2° To have nothing superfluous, nothing that suggests vanity or luxury in clothing, dwelling, food, or anything else.

3° To establish no attachment, even hidden, to things which we are able to use.

4° To suffer voluntarily and peacefully the results of poverty, namely, hunger, thirst, cold, and miserable food; because as St. Thomas said, the religious who seeks to avoid any privation of necessary things is poor only in name or in imagination.

5° To rejoice when one is deprived even of something indispensable, as did the great patriarch of the poor, St. Francis of Assisi, who would break into joyful song.

I ask you, O my Jesus, the grace to observe in this way the evangelical poverty to which you have called me. I realize the favor you granted me when you chose me to make this vow. Indeed, it delivers me from danger and from the encumbrance arising from the tendency of the goods of this world; it gives interior repose to my soul; and it offers me an effective means to practice more easily the precept that you enjoined on Christians, to renounce everything he owns to become your disciple. May I profit from this blessing. Your Psalmist has said: "Blessed is he who understands the mystery of the poor and the indigent" (*Ps.* 41:1); grant me that understanding. Your Apostle, for his part, teaches that "it is for our sake that you made yourself poor, so that your poverty may be the cause of our riches" (*II Cor.* 8:9). Grant me, then, I pray you, to become genuinely poor out of love for you, more than out of a desire of the reward you promised to holy poverty.

I ask pardon of you, O my Savior, for the numerous faults I have committed against the spirit of this vow by seeking too eagerly whatever pleased me. Give me the grace of being completely detached from everything in the future, and to suffer privations first of all with patience and then with joy. Amen.

## ARTICLE V

### Jesus Christ, model of obedience

You have given us the example of the most perfect obedience, O my Jesus! You practiced it from the beginning of your life in Mary's womb, up to your last breath on the cross. Indeed, from the first instant of your incarnation, you said to your heavenly Father: *Here I am; I come to do your will* (see *Heb.* 10:7). You also repeated that to Him often during your mortal life: *My Father, may your will be done, not mine*. To do the will of your Father in all things was your nourishment (see *Jn.* 4:34). Not only did you obey Him, but also your Mother and Joseph for thirty years; the Gospel encapsulates that long period of your life in one phrase "He was obedient to them" (*Lk.* 2:51). The reason is because you regarded them as the representatives of your Father, Who wanted you in this state of dependence so that you would be glorified by it.

Even though you came into the world uniquely to perform the great work of our redemption through the preaching of the Gospel and to reveal yourself to the world by a new order from your Father, you did not wish to leave your state of obscurity. On leaving this hidden life, which had been a continual act of obedience, you never tired of exercising obedience during your entire public life. During all that time, whatever you practiced in humility, in patience, in gentleness, in poverty and other virtues, you also did by reason of obedience, seeking above all to fulfill the intentions of your Father. Finally, you died as you lived, obedient on the cross to your last breath, resolved to leave life rather than to give up obedience, and giving your soul to God in that cry of perfect submission: *My Father, I place my spirit into your hands* (see *Lk.* 23:46).

I ask you for the virtue of obedience, O Jesus; make me be subject, in a spirit of faith, to all superiors temporal and spiritual, since "to resist them is to resist the ordinance given by God Himself" (see *Rom.* 13:2). Make me obey not only those who are kind and gentle, but even those who are rude and disagreeable, because the less I take myself into account, all the more will I discover in obedience your sovereign authority, which is my strength and my salvation. Amen.

*Characteristics of religious obedience*

The characteristics of religious obedience, O my Savior, deserve that I study them carefully to see if I have them, and to correct in my behavior whatever moves away from them, however slightly. Enlighten me, God of goodness.

1° Its first distinctive trait is to obey superiors in view of pleasing God, because obedience has as its ultimate goal His holy will, and is a kind of worship we pay to His sovereign majesty. Therefore, the thought of the Lord must dominate every action related to this virtue, which is the soul of religion.

2° To obey in all things, in the little as in the great, because there are precious advantages, singular merits, and a sweet blessing, attached to faithful obedience in little things.

3° To obey not only in easy matters, in accordance to our natural inclinations, but in difficult matters especially those we experience with repugnance. For we are assured that in performing repugnant duties and embracing them with ardor, we do not seek personal satisfaction but only the accomplishment of the divine will for us.

4° To obey promptly and as soon as we learn of the intention of superiors concerning us. This promptness is the most certain mark of perfect obedience, constitutes its life, so to speak, and makes it delightful in the eyes of God.

5° To obey simply, without considering the qualities or the defects of those who command, regarding them only in one point, namely, that they have authority and that therefore it is God who has given them the position in order to direct us.

6° To obey with a good heart, not with regret or to gain the good will of the superior, or for other similar human motives. The goal of obedience is to please God; when it is accomplished unwillingly, it could in no way be pleasing to Him.

7° To obey not only on order from superiors who command, but also all obligations, Constitutions, rubrics, ceremonies of one's Order, because it is the will of God that every one of us fulfill the duties of his state wherein His wisdom has given us a special place, to contribute to His glorification, in union with all other creatures.

I ask you, O my Jesus, for the grace to fulfill exactly all the duties of religious obedience which I accepted because of your goodness. With your help, I am able to lead a very perfect life without doing anything else than what is prescribed, as long as it is for this reason, that it is God who desires it, and that I accomplish by my obedience an action very agreeable in His eyes, even if the superior might have been mistaken.

I ask pardon of you, O my Jesus, for all the faults I have committed against obedience. I acknowledge that very often I obeyed for human reasons and not to submit myself to you who are Master, and thereby become perfect. From now on, grant me the grace to work every day at acquiring an obedience without fault, which arises from charity and increases that charity unceasingly in me. Amen.

## ARTICLE VI

### **Jesus Christ, model of chastity**

You have given us, O my Savior, the example of perfect chastity. You have often testified how much you love this very beautiful virtue: in your Incarnation, by choosing as mother a Virgin more chaste than the angels, and being conceived in her womb by the operation of the divine Spirit; in your birth, by embellishing the purity of Mary instead of diminishing it, and in being born from her like a ray of light passes through a crystal without shattering it; in the course of your life, not having allowed the malice of man — despite the calumnies spread about you, such as being possessed by the devil, enjoying good food and wine — dare to interject the slightest suspicion against your purity.

In developing your teaching, you have declared blessed those who have a pure heart, because they will see God. You praised those who maintained perfect purity of soul and of body to insure for themselves the kingdom of heaven, and you expressed a choice friendship for those who were the most chaste, such St. John the Baptist, your forerunner, and St. John the Evangelist, your beloved disciple.

I beg you, O my Master, for the virtue of chastity! Let me renounce forever all pleasures of the senses, even those permitted to me, so that by this purity without reservation, I may become more agreeable to you, engage with more freedom in spiritual works, and become more attached to you in a very intimate way. Indeed, it is the Virgins and the chaste souls who, in heaven, accompany you, O sweet Lamb, everywhere you go; they are the ones who have the name of the Lord written on their foreheads; they live with you on the mountain, as you revealed to St. John (see *Rev.* 14:1 et seq.). By all these metaphors, you wished to teach chaste souls the excellence of their state and the favors you will grant them in the homeland.

I thank you, O my Jesus, for my calling to practice chastity. You alone could call me: you alone can make me faithful. I ask for it through your infinite purity, O my Jesus, and that of your holy Mother. Amen.

### *Means of guarding chastity*

You offer us, O my Savior, several means to preserve chastity. I come to your feet, under your divine gaze, to meditate on its importance.

1° Above all, you recommend prayer. Chastity is a gift from God, that is to say, something beyond all human power; it must therefore be obtained from heaven by our groans and our supplications. This prayer must be accompanied especially by a profound humility. Indeed, God often allows the proud to fall very low, to punish their arrogance by the vice that is so humiliating and so tyrannical, that is very difficult to overcome, for it leads to a blinding of the spirit or a hardening of the heart. From then on, the means necessary to lift oneself up are almost entirely useless.

2° Mortification of the body, which impedes revolts of the flesh against the spirit, or at least diminishes them. This mortification is practiced by abstinence, fasting, vigils, a hard bed, frugal nourishment, temperance in the use of wine, and by other austerities with permission of the director of conscience or the regular superior, according to the condition of persons.

3° Vigilance over oneself, which consists in watching carefully over one's thoughts, actions, and words, so as not to utter anything improper and even slightly loose. It leads us also to respect our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to revere even more the divine Guest who inhabits that temple, to sanctify all our activities.

4° The war against idleness, which applies us without respite to the occupations of our state, because, even if they do not constitute a duty in themselves, they help to dispel thoughts against chastity. Indeed, when the faculties of the soul and of the body are busy in a useful way, the impure devil barely finds an entry to insinuate himself into the heart, to disturb it, and to make virtue waver.

5° Avoidance of useless conversations with persons of the opposite sex. If charity or necessity requires us to speak to them, this must take place in few words and only on subjects of piety. Even then, one must always be on guard, lest some secret satisfaction or some inclination of corrupt nature hides itself under the appearance of virtue. Familiarities and particular friendships between persons of the same sex are themselves often injurious to purity.

6° A great modesty, especially of the eyes, when we are in places where there are persons of a different sex, such as in churches or along the road. It is wise never to look at someone directly, whether deliberately or in curiosity. A single look, even on a simple painting, is able to strike the imagination and to rouse some evil thoughts

that could have regrettable consequences. One could never fear his own personal fragility too much, nor be too cautious, nor avoid too carefully all occasions of sin, even regarding children, who, nevertheless, are a symbol of innocence.

O Jesus, Word of God, sincerity of eternal light, let one of your rays descend upon me. Just as worldly people are not satisfied to take the ordinary precautions of prudence in order to preserve their precious objects, but surround themselves with all possible guarantees, grant me to take the most advantageous and the most certain steps to preserve religious chastity, my treasure and my joy. Deign to pardon me for the faults that I have committed against this lofty virtue since I have been alive. I detest them, and I am strongly resolved to use the time remaining to my life to expiate them by penance.

I ask you, O Jesus, with purity of the body and of the soul which extends to thoughts of the mind and affections of the heart: "Let my heart be immaculate in thy justifications, that I may not be confounded." *Fiat cor meum immaculatum in justificationibus tuis ut non confundar* (Ps. 119:80). Thus will my heart and my senses have no other feelings than those of your love: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." *Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum* (Ps. 84:3). I ask you for this gift through the intercession of the most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary. Amen.

## ARTICLE VII

### Jesus Christ, model of universal mortification

You were not satisfied, O my Savior, to have given us some principles of mortification; you also gave us an example at all the stages of your life, in all your encounters, regarding all matters. The curtailment of pleasure was constant and universal in you. Indeed, we read in the Scriptures, that you *never did anything to please yourself* (see *Rom. 15:3*). And yet, never do we read that you had any amusements, nor even that you allowed yourself the most innocent recreation to relax your spirit and your body.

Unlike us, you had no need for mortification to regulate your passions, for they were disposed only to legitimate and saintly matters. They never hindered nor troubled your reason, but always followed and served it, never wavering except by your order; thence arises that we sometimes call them *propassions*, that is, taking the place of passions. And yet, you wished to practice a universal mortification, that you might honor your Father better, redeem men more gloriously, and more clearly be their model.

You suffered in all your members and in all the senses of your body, from your head to the soles of your feet, to be perfectly *the man of sorrows* (see *Is. 53:3*).

Your head was torn by the crown of thorns; your feet and hands were pierced with nails, so much so that the weight of your body rested on wounds; your mouth was tormented by gall and vinegar; your face, by spittle and blows; finally, all your flesh by the cruel flagellation that covered you with wounds and blood. Moreover, since the character of your body was very delicate, very unblemished, very perfect — being the work of the Holy Spirit — its sufferings also were more keen and more manifest than those that other men could experience.

You tolerated all kinds of persons, Jews and Gentiles, princes and valets, kings and populace, worldly persons and priests, Herod and his court, disciples and friends, Judas and Peter. But you were alone in carrying the burden of all these troubles, without consolation, and with no solace from God or from men.

In your soul, you endured unspeakable internal sorrows: troubles, repugnance, sadness, worries, and a commotion so violent, so inconceivable as could cause your death, and that made you fall in agony to the point of sweating blood, soaking your vesture. Finally, all the powers of your soul, judgment, will, memory, were swarmed by a



thousand various sorrows, as were all your internal and external senses.

O Jesus, when I consider the enormity of your sufferings, I remain astonished. But what really fills me with admiration and gratitude is to see with what full liberty, with what eagerness you accepted them and sought them out. Indeed, those troubles, those feelings, those movements of compassion were voluntary in you; you deliberately roused them because you judged them more appropriate for the salvation of men, and also so that your resignation might serve them more advantageously as an example and as help. I thank you, O my Savior; from now on, I wish that the remembrance of your suffering be always present to me to give me confidence and courage. When you walk ahead of me, how could I refuse to carry my cross? To refuse would be to declare myself your enemy and the enemy of my soul. Preserve me, Lord, from this two-fold wickedness that would make my misfortune eternal. Amen.

#### § I – *Causes of the interior sorrows of Jesus*

O my Jesus, what were the principal causes of the internal sorrow, the sadness, the fear, the worry, and the universal desolation that you suffered within yourself? Would I even be able to understand?

1° First of all, there was your clear recognition of all the sins that had been committed against God since the beginning of the world, and would be committed up to its end; especially the sin of certain Jews and of the others who were to bring about your death, and the defection of your disciples who were to be scandalized by your sufferings. Charged as you were to provide satisfaction to God for the crimes of men, the sight of that number of sins caused you a very deep sorrow, as if you had committed them yourself. Moreover, this picture was proportionate to the seriousness of the offenses as to the benefit of our deliverance.

2° The lively, clear, distinct and present thought of all the great torments that you would endure in your passion; of the very sorrowful and humiliating death you were to suffer on the cross. This picture of many sufferings came to you very clearly as if death and the trials were facing you. By this, you had a foretaste of grief and eventually all its bitterness.

3° The little benefit that, according to your estimates, men would draw from your works (see *Mt.* 7:13-14). This thought brought on a sorrow proportionate to your zeal, and since your love was boundless, your affliction had to be the greatest that ever could be.

4° Finally, your love for us was so great that, in order to be able to suffer more, you held in abeyance, by a miracle, the consola-

tions that, following your incarnation, habitually radiated to the sensitive part of your soul, and which otherwise would have made your body impassible and immortal.

Grant me, Jesus, a spirit of mortification. Continually do I notice in myself the desires of wicked nature and the swelling of passions that rebel against my spirit and lead me to sin. Only your grace can support me and help me conquer these unruly affections of a corrupt nature, by submitting them to the law of the good by mortification. Already you give that grace in abundance, so that I am enveloped by your mortification, like a garment of salvation, to obey the counsel of your Apostle: “always bearing about in our body the death of Jesus.” *Mortificationem Jesus in corpore nostro circumferentes* (II Cor. 4:10). Amen.

### § II – *The practice of mortification*

Deign to enlighten me, O my Jesus, about the different ways of practicing mortification, so that I do not spend any part of the day without offering you some victory over my sensuality and my evil inclinations.

1° One must be disciplined in matters of obligation by faithfully obeying the commandments of God, those of the Church, and the duties of one’s state, such as: prayers, fasts, study, decorum, and fidelity to the exercises of the community. Accordingly, if one foresees that there would be pleasure in neglecting the duty or trouble in remaining faithful to it, he would not hesitate to deprive himself of that pleasure and choose to bear this trouble.

2° To mortify oneself in all matters, be they necessary, indifferent, or superfluous: in necessary matters, by not being attached to them, by not being eager to obtain them but bearing their lack peacefully; in indifferent matters, by depriving oneself of them every so often, out of penance, and by avoiding temptations; in superfluous matters, by perseverance in pushing them away when they are presented to us.

3° To mortify oneself in the bodily senses: in sight, by not looking at anything out of pleasure; in taste, by eating nothing out of sensuality, but being content with ordinary meals prepared like those of everyone else; in hearing, by avoiding useless conversations and strange news which does not concern the honor of God nor the progress of the Church, nor the duties of one’s state; in smell, by not seeking those things that have an agreeable odor, even by avoiding them as much as possible; in touch, which is spread throughout the body, by removing from the flesh its pleasures and its comforts, even by imposing on it corporal penances, such as vigils, tasteless food, a hard bed, and other similar austerities, each according to one’s state. In a

word, one must strive never to grant the senses any pleasure, however innocent, just for the pleasure itself, but only insofar as it is useful to preserve life and to serve God better.

4° To mortify oneself in one's passions; for this, one must necessarily strive to know them better; and above all, to bind oneself to mortify one's dominant passion, then to mortify the defects related to the corrupt natural condition, which makes man troublesome to himself and to others.

5° To discipline oneself in speech, by keeping strict silence, following the example that Jesus Christ made for thirty years, and by speaking only because of some pious need, and in doing so with the fewest words filled with discretion, charity, and humility.

I recognize, my Jesus, when considering these different ways of doing violence to oneself that I have never engaged in genuine mortification. Grant me the gift of starting to practice it today. On each page, Sacred Scripture reminds me of this obligation when it tells me: "One has to die to himself, carry his cross day by day, and hate himself; blessed are they who mourn; it is necessary to pass through the narrow door to arrive at life; one must circumcise his heart, be crucified to the world and discipline the works of the body or of lust by the strength of the Spirit."

All these different expressions and many other similar ones that constantly recur in the Holy Books have the same meaning: that my sluggish spirit and my hard heart often need to hear, to realize, the need for continual mortification. Grant me the grace, O my God, to consecrate my entire life to this. Amen.

§ III – *Continuation of the practice of mortification*

It is the principle of all your saints, O my God, even the most indulgent ones, that for mortification to be complete, it must be universal and extend to all our faculties. This teaching does not smile on my nature; but it is true and beneficial. I will force myself to root it in the deepest part of my soul.

1° One must be disciplined in judgment by avoiding voluntary idle thoughts which waste a lot of time; by always occupying one's mind with useful matters and especially with one's own personal miseries; by renouncing vain curiosity and human knowledge that does not contribute to the fulfillment of duty; by fleeing from frivolous novelties and from everything that does not pertain to us.

2° In the will, by subjecting everything to the will of God, and sometimes even by following the will of our equals rather than our own, in those matters that are not contrary to the perfection of our state.

3° In the memory and the imagination, by habituating our mind to remember only good things; also by training our imagination always to remain calm as it supports the operations of reason or the affections of the heart, and in reminding it gently, when it is over-excited, at least to renounce its impressions, humiliating itself because of them, and then holding its sudden projections in contempt rather than being troubled by them.

4° To mortify oneself in the afflictions of body and of spirit, in exterior and interior pains, in illness, in temptations and in scorn, by adoring the providence of God over us and by depriving oneself of the pleasure we could expect from the consolations of creatures.

5° In a word, the major rule of mortification is never to think or to do anything for the sake of pleasure or to follow a natural inclination; but rather, to greatly desire in everything: the happiness of pleasing God, of accomplishing his will, and of working out our salvation by following in the footsteps of Our Savior.

Grant me the gift O my Savior, of regulating wisely the faculties of my soul, which are ordinarily the sources of my sins on account of original sin by the tendency they give me toward evil, when they ought instead to help me produce a great number of acts of virtue. For that, I beg of you a Christian vigilance, inspired by fear and by love.

I entreat you also, O my lovable Jesus, to make me realize the advantages to be gained from victory over one's passions, the peace of the heart that only you can give, that freedom of the children of God, which frees us from servitude to the devil. Finally, give me the assurance and the foretaste of the eternal reward that you promise to those who do violence to themselves here below. Amen.

## ARTICLE VIII

### **Jesus Christ, model of penance**

O my Jesus! Even though you were not able to possess the virtue of penance insofar as it helps man to expiate his own sins — since you were sinless — nonetheless you had the spirit of penance in all its fullness, and you exercised all its actions in an inexpressible manner.

The principal duties that penance imposes on us are: 1° to think often about our sins, to be ashamed of them; 2° to recognize the grief they cause; 3° to work at making amends to the justice of God; 4° to interiorly animate exterior penances; 5° to offer ourselves to God in order to endure all the troubles His justice will be pleased to send us.

Your encompassing love, O Divine penitent, which moved you to take our sins upon yourself to repair the infinite injury they inflicted on God, also impelled you to fulfill all these conditions of genuine penance. Our sins were continually present in your mind, and you regarded them as your own because you had accepted responsibility for them. From the first instant of your Incarnation, you offered yourself to the Father in expiation for them. During your entire life, you were ceaselessly occupied with them and you sought to complete the expiation you had undertaken by dying on the cross.

This ever-present thought of all the sins of men, in a way written on your forehead as if they were your own deeds, filled you with confusion in the eyes of God, in the eyes of creatures, and in your own eyes. You saw yourself as the shame of men, scorned as much as a worm of the earth, which is trampled underfoot inattentively.

During your entire life, having your heart pierced with sorrow because of our iniquities, your sole consolation was to work at effacing them. You expiated for our sins of pride by your humiliations, our sins of sensuality by your difficult life and your sufferings, our sins of greed by your extreme poverty. You animated your external satisfactions with dispositions so excellent that we can in no way comprehend them. Even though those satisfactions were superabundant, since they were not proportionate to the strong desire you had to repair the infinite injury made to God by sin, you spread your spirit of penance throughout the Church, which is your mystical body, so to continue exercising until the end of time it among those who are your members.

Arouse in me, O my Savior, your spirit of penance, and grant that I may unite my satisfactions to yours so that they may become

pleasing to the Father. I resolve, therefore, with the help of your grace: 1° to keep the memory of my sins always alive, in order to merit that you turn your face from them; 2° ceaselessly to be ashamed of them in your presence, never to appear in your presence except covered with shame, and to be ashamed of them even before men, remaining prostrate in spirit at their feet; 3° to be penetrated with such great sorrow for my sins that it moves me to reject all useless joys and it maintains me in compunction of heart; 4° to work continually in order to make satisfaction to God your Father, by works of penance proportionate to my sins; 5° to offer myself to Him so that in the future may He punish me as much as he pleases, recognizing that all my past penances were insufficient for satisfying His justice. Grant me the grace, O my Jesus, to think frequently of these beneficial resolutions and to remain faithful to them. Amen.

## ARTICLE IX

### **Jesus Christ, model of prayer**

You were not content, O Jesus my Savior, to command us to pray, and to teach us, in the Lord's prayer, the most perfect prayer, which contains the substance of every desirable good; you also preached to us by example. You began to pray to your Father from the first moment of your life, by offering yourself to Him as a victim for our salvation. Moreover, you continued your prayers throughout your life, asking that you would complete the mystery of Redemption and for your complete glorification, imploring for us all the graces desirable for our perfection. Even now, in heaven, you seem to live only to intercede for us.

You engaged in prayer, now in public in the Temple, now apart on the mountains, often throughout entire nights, and even up to forty days during your retreat in the desert. Sometimes you prayed with eyes and hands raised to heaven, at other times, with your brow prostrate on the ground; and in the deadly sorrow that you experienced in the Garden of Olives, far from cutting short your prayers, you prolonged them with a doubling of fervor and courage.

*Lord, teach me how to pray* (see *Lk.* 11:1), I would tell you along with the Apostles. Let me recite carefully my prayers as such, but especially send me the genuine spirit of prayer. I acknowledge that, by myself, I can do nothing for my salvation, not even form a useful thought without you, my one and only mediator. Indeed, it is by prayer that your graces are communicated to us. The sacraments themselves, which, after all, were instituted to confer grace on us, are always accompanied by prayer, and it is by that prayer that we are to receive their benefits — so true is it that prayer is the source of all grace. Give me, if you please, your divine Spirit so that He may teach me how to pray, or rather, that He Himself pray within me, that His unutterable sighs may compensate for my weakness, and that the hopes that He forms in my heart always be fulfilled. Amen.

### *Conditions for effective prayer*

O my God, you have often taught me through your teachers the conditions for effective prayer. Let me to meditate on those conditions and grasp that it is because I have not brought them together in my prayer that it has so often been sterile.

1° To pray well, this must be done in the name of Jesus Christ, namely, to ask for things necessary for salvation through his infinite merits, in union with him, with the virtues of respect and of fervor that animated his prayers; indeed, He is the sole mediator between God and man. This union with Christ is easiest for us in the choral Office; our Savior appears in it everywhere, foretold and represented in the psalms that we recite endlessly; and it is in his presence that we pray, since he is on the altar, surrounded by his angels. Again, the Divine Office is our principal prayer, the most obligatory from the point of view of conscience, the most fruitful in good results, and the most appreciated by a soul touched by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

2° To pray with humility and compunction, that is to say, to pray with groans and the prostration of a heart crushed under the weight of sin, penetrated with the perception of one's miseries, and struck by fear at one's unworthiness before the majesty of God, something frightful even for the most pure angels.

3° To pray with an attentive spirit, that is to say, to think of Him to whom we are speaking, by pushing aside the least voluntary distraction, and to apply oneself to the remote or immediate preparation necessary for all prayer, above all mental prayer.

4° To pray with devotion, that is to say, from the bottom of one's heart, with a strong desire to be answered and with great fervor to praise God, to bless Him, to honor Him, to adore Him. It is in this fervor and devotion that the pious soul draws the power to raise itself up to the divine throne in order to bring back from it the graces one desires.

5° To pray with a respect and decorum that are the visible expression of an internal respect that one has for the infinite holiness of God. It is especially regarding sight that one needs to have this sublime decorum: to look at nothing voluntarily without a genuine need.

6° To pray with confidence, that is to say, with lively hope and a firm assurance that God will grant us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, the graces we ask of Him.

7° To pray with perseverance, or, in other words, to continue to pray until we have been answered, never tiring, despite the pain and distaste we sometimes encounter. It is Our Lord himself who com-



mands us that we pray unceasingly, without becoming discouraged. And if heaven appears not to listen to us, it is to punish our lukewarm fervor, or thereby to make us more humble, more ardent in prayer, more capable of receiving greater favors.

Deign, O my Jesus, to form in me yourself the dispositions appropriate to genuine prayer. Grant me especially that sincere and strong love which brings about continual prayer and which is itself a prayer. Indeed, when we love someone, we never tire of communicating to him our troubles, joys, sorrows, plans, and hopes.

I recognize, O my God, that, in the past, I have committed many faults while praying, especially by my distractions and indifference. Deign to grant me your forgiveness for them. Send me your Spirit, that He may be my master in the science of prayer, that I may pray according to His impulses, and no longer provoke your justice during a time intended to call down your mercy. Amen.

## ARTICLE X

### Jesus Christ, model of charity

You are, O my Jesus, the model of most perfect love. As God, you not only have charity, *you are charity* (see *I Jn.4:8*); and, as Man-God, you have given us examples of the most perfect charity. This charity impelled you to seek the glory of your Father by giving Him endless acts of adoration: it animated each of your actions, even those that appeared trivial, such as a simple prayer, a tear, a sigh of your heart. Moreover, by divine choice these gave God more glory than all men and all angels had given Him and would ever give Him.

It is by reason of charity toward your Father, whose glory you cherished, that throughout your life you practiced a most profound humility, a most perfect patience, a most severe repentance, a most extreme poverty, a most extensive obedience, a most pure chastity, a most rigorous discipline. Indeed, you referred to that goal of charity all your actions and all your sufferings. You manifested your charity towards your disciples, the people, the Pharisees and the Scribes, the sick, the poor, and the afflicted, toward your enemies and your executioners when, attached to the cross, covered with wounds and weighed down with unbelievable pain, you entreated your Father to pardon them, as you tried to excuse their crimes.

O my Jesus, O my benefactor, even though I have many graces to ask of you, I beg you to grant me this virtue, above all, so that I might love you, and that in you I love myself as well as my neighbor, with a holy and well-ordered love. I ask you this very strongly because charity is the most excellent of virtues since its object is your sovereign goodness; of all the virtues, it is the most necessary, since without it we sleep in the eternal death of sin, in the disgrace of God, and in the impossibility of acquiring any merit for salvation.

Charity is the form and the perfection of the supernatural virtues, since, without it, the other virtues have no value before the divine Master. It is their life, in that without it, these same virtues are dead; only charity is strong enough to animate them by referring them to his holy will, the only source of all life. But while having those virtues practiced for the sake of God, charity constitutes the root of all our merit; it is sufficiently efficacious so that even actions that are most indifferent in themselves become priceless.

O divine charity, how I long for you! Without you, what I have is nothing! In you, I will have the plenitude of all goods. Come to me, then! Amen.

§ I – *The measure of charity towards God*

You are one, O my God! And since you are the goal of charity, it too is one, as you are one. But the faculties of our soul that offer you tribute for it are many; thereby, charity, even though one, contains different duties. In your light, O my God, I will meditate on them.

1° Charity makes us love God with our whole heart by referring all our affections to Him, all our desires, all our will, as their only purpose, such that our heart loves nothing else but God or for the love of God. 2° Charity makes us love God with our entire mind, by submitting to Him all our thoughts, all our judgments, with the result that our intellect judges all things according to their conformity to His divine word. 3° Charity makes us love God with our whole soul, by regulating our passions and the inclinations of our sensory appetites according to His holy will, so as to sanctify them. 4° Charity makes us love God with all our strength, by inclining us to fulfill our external actions to please Him by an offering, whether actual or virtual, direct or at least indirect. Indeed, it will only be in heaven that we will always be fully occupied with our sovereign Good. 5° Charity makes us love God for Himself, because He is infinitely good and perfect, without requiring any other reward for our love than having Him alone, in such a way that we would love Him just as much, had He not promised us an eternal reward. 6° Finally, charity makes us love God with a sovereign love, that is to say, one above pleasures, goods, and honors; above parents and even above our own life, so much that would we prefer to lose it a thousand times rather than to lose the friendship of the Lord.

I ask you, O my God, for the grace of an ardent charity. By this charity, may I love you for yourself and above all things, with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul and all my strength! May I renounce everything that is contrary to your love! May I produce unceasingly acts of that same love! In a word, may I find all my joy in thinking only about you, in conversing with you, in longing for you, and in acting only for you. Amen.

§ II – *Different exercises of charity toward God*

O charity, O charity, how should I practice you toward my God to love Him in all truth? Holy Spirit, come teach me, for your words are above all lessons in love.

1° Charity makes us love God with a love of gratitude, for He is good and generous toward His creatures. Indeed, it would be ingratitude not to recognize all the benefits which one has received and one hopes to receive from His generosity. Love cannot support even the thought of being an ingrate.

2° Charity makes us love God with a love of contentment [*complaisance*], namely, that we sincerely rejoice in the boundless majesty that He possesses and of the sovereign happiness He finds in Himself. Moreover, charity makes us love God with a love of benevolence, which consists in hoping that He become known, glorified, cherished by every creature having reason. This desire is so great that, without considering the impossibility, one would like to increase His divine perfections and have the heart of the seraphim to love Him as they do; and one is so saddened by seeing millions of sins committed against Him that one would gladly give one's life to prevent them.

3° Charity makes us love God with a love of conformity which consists in complete abandonment to the orders of His providence and in remaining completely indifferent to things of this world. We hold on to these things only insofar as, in the divine plan, they can contribute to make us perfect. Such an assent provides the quickest way to obtain great peace of heart and of spirit, and to acquire sanctity. This is because this assent contains an eminent degree of perfection that Our Lord has so often recommended to us and that he often said of himself: "I did not come to do my will but yours, O my Father!" And yet the will of Christ was holy!

4° Charity makes us love God with measureless love, since the precept it imposes on us, however strongly and continuously we apply ourselves to it, cannot be accomplished perfectly in this world. Our external powers, our mind, our soul, our heart cannot always remain perfectly united to God; and even when they do unite themselves to Him, they do so in a very feeble manner compared to His supreme excellence. Only in heaven will we possess the fullness of charity, and on seeing God face to face, will we love Him without interruption and perfectly. O great day of eternity! You will also be the great day of charity!

My Jesus, I thank you for having given me so many lessons in charity. I give you thanks for all the benefits with which you have

overwhelmed me. You have sanctified me by your sacraments, nourished me with your flesh, consecrated me to the service of your altars, and destined me for eternal glory, which consists in seeing you and loving you. May you be blessed for it, O my Master, O my Savior! May gratitude be as bottomless a source of love for me as it was the source of your blessings for me! Amen.

§ III – *Charity toward ourselves and our neighbor*

O God of goodness, the more I plumb the depths of your riches, the more I find them unequaled. In the unity and simplicity of your charity, you envelop all the faculties of my soul, as I have already meditated; and behold this inexhaustible charity, without leaving you, extends to me and even to my neighbor. What a marvel on your part! But how many duties incumbent on me!

1° For the love of self to be an extension of divine charity, we must love ourselves out of love for God, seeking no happiness other than in Him. In fact, to love oneself is to work at becoming happy; indeed, we can only be happy by possessing the Author of all goodness, and we possess Him only by bending to Him out of love. Whoever does not love God is therefore an unhappy person! It is to acquire this love that we must hate ourselves to the point of dying to ourselves, so as to find in that hatred and by that death the spiritual life of the soul. To hate oneself, to battle with the self, to die completely to the self: these are obviously quite difficult, but they hide an abundant source of consolation!

2° Charity also obliges us to love our neighbor in God; that is to say, all men, Christians, infidels, heretics, and even our greatest enemies, insofar as they are the reflections of the perfect Being, called, like ourselves, to beatitude. By the effect of this charity, we seek to procure for the neighbor the same benefits that we would like to obtain for ourselves: first of all, eternal happiness, and then everything that leads to it, even temporal helps themselves, but only as they relate to salvation and to heaven.

Charity moves us to love our neighbor with a tender love that makes us compassionate to his troubles and keeps us from adding to his sufferings — with a genuine and effective love that engages us to soothe him by spiritual and corporal works, even to the detriment of our rest, and even to the peril of our life when his eternal salvation is in question, — with an enduring love whereby we suffer patiently his faults and his weaknesses, without paying attention to the aversions that sometimes make themselves terribly felt. In the different duties that it prescribes, charity establishes a wise order to be maintained according to the degree that persons touch us more intimately in God, and, consequently, are indeed our neighbors based on more noble ties. Thus, charity makes us prefer relatives to strangers, Christians to unbelievers, godly persons to sinners, pastors of souls to simple faithful, our own salvation to that of others, the salvation of one's neighbor to our goods and even to our life in case of absolute necessity.

I beg of you, O Savior, a charity that regulates and sanctifies my love of myself, so that it may be free from all egoism and all greediness. By the effect of this same charity, make me love my neighbor for your sake; that I love him as I love myself — better yet, just as you love me and just as you love your Father. O my Savior, forgive all the sins that I have committed against charity. Very late have I loved you! Even now, I am too weak in my love for you! From that arises the excessive love I have for myself, and the insufficient love I have for my neighbor; the little eagerness I have of pleasing him and the little fear I have of scandalizing him.

All of this has left me confused and repentant. Accept the resolution I have taken to correct myself with the help of your powerful grace. Amen.





## APPENDIX

### Biography of Bl. Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier\*

As novices we heard of Fr. Cormier for the first time. The novice master, Fr. Louis McGuaran introduced us to his "Instructions for Novices". It was a large volume, running to 660 pages and it had two editions. But I think Fr. McGuaran held the man in higher esteem than the book. A sensitive lady in Cork while making a typescript of an English translation was moved to tears by some of the severe injunctions. Our novice master was a young priest in Rome when Fr. Cormier came to live at San Clemente in September, 1916 at the end of his term as Master of the Order. [Cormier] had the privilege of choosing where he wished to be assigned to. He chose to remain in Rome so that he might be able to continue the work he was engaged in for the Little Sisters of the Poor and other congregations of religious. There was also a circle of Tertiaries and other laypeople. A few weeks before ceasing to be Master, he wrote to Madame Merry del Val, mother of the Cardinal Secretary of State: "So imagining myself to be rejuvenated, I shall try to employ fruitfully the time and the strength which remains to me. Part of my programme, you may be sure, will be to use this leisure time advising and encouraging devout people who may turn to me still. So this tiny source will be open for you as long as the Good God wishes to keep it supplied."

#### **Beginning at the End**

The manner of his life in the months before his death on Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> December made a lifelong impression on the community. His only complaint was that by their charity and kindness they delayed his going to the Lord. The Prior at the time was Louis Nolan. He was among the witnesses during the first inquiry into his life, convened at

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\* Taken from Jerome Toner, "Hyacinth M. Cormier, 1832-1916," *Dominican Asbram* vol. 4, no. 1 (March 1985): 20-32.

Rome from 1935-8 by the sacred congregation. True to the principle that for souls ever faithful to the inspiration of divine grace, growth is more rapid at life's close, these few months were a precious memory for all who lived with him. Among the "Topics of the Month" in the "Irish Rosary" (January 1917), the notice of his death had a sentence from a letter from San Clemente: "The last few months of his life were simply wonderful. The accumulated sanctity of a long life-time seemed to shine out in all its luster, when he laid down the cares of office and gave himself entirely to contemplation. . . The last fortnight seemed to belong to the miraculous rather than the natural order." Fr. Nolan went to hear his confession one Friday evening. Opening the door, I saw him standing in the centre of the room, holding a wooden crucifix in his hands. He was so completely recollected and withdrawn from himself that he did not notice my presence. . . he was in a state of deep union with God, far higher than the remarkable recollection usual for him when he prayed."

He received the sacraments of the dying in a solemn rite on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December in the presence of Cardinal Boggiani, Father Theisling, his successor, and representatives of the Dominican communities at Rome. After the anointing, Fr. Nolan handed him the Processional with the formula in which the dying friar asks for the forgiveness of his brethren for his failures. He confessed that he could not remember having ever deliberately disobeyed the prescriptions of the Rule or of his superiors or of the Holy Church. But just the same he asked pardon from all present and after a short address he said good-bye to each one present. Then together they sang the *Salve Regina*.

[. . .]

The following day Cardinal Boggiani celebrated the solemn Mass of thanksgiving at the Minerva of the 7<sup>th</sup> centenary of the foundation of the Order by the approval of Honorius III on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1216. Fr. Nolan and Br. Thomas Fleming were alone in San Clemente and were witnesses of his passing. It was marked by an extraordinary incident which the Prior remembered in the same testimony. "It was a few minutes past ten when suddenly he asked me: 'Why hasn't the Mass begun?' (referring to the High Mass at the Minerva). I assured him: 'It's already after ten, Father, Mass must have begun.' But he insisted: 'No, no; the Mass has not begun.' So I took it that he was wandering. But that was far from being the case. I phoned the Minerva at noon to say that the servant of God was at the point of death. I mentioned some details concerning his agony to the Master and others. But when I mentioned this matter and suggested that he was wandering, the Master said: 'No, Father, he was perfectly right. For while the Cardinal was on his way, one of the horses drawing the carriage fell and the Cardinal could not arrive on time.'" It is an example of how far reach-

ing the attention of a soul can be where participation in the Eucharist is concerned.

In her testimony given at Rome in 1948, Mother Tincani, foundress of the Union of Saint Catherine of Siena, the Missionaries of the School remembered how she went to meet Father Cormier at San Clemente to discuss her foundation. But when she arrived he was seriously ill. On the day of his death, she was sitting at home and engaged in needle work when she had a sense of the presence of Father Cormier. She heard his voice saying: "The Lord wants the Union." Describing the experience to her own sisters much later in her life, she added: "a deep peace remained in my soul, and the certainty that God really wanted the Union. Later I came to know that it was the moment of his death." [. . .]

In the way one dies one may see the dominant thrust of a life.

### **Early Life**

He was born in the city of Orleans on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1832 and at Baptism receive the name Henry Marie. [. . .] He and his older brother, Eugene, joined the Minor Seminary. Eugene also died of the disease which affected so many in his father's family. At the time, Henry was passing through a critical stage, a kind of cultural crisis not uncommon in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Always a lover of music and expert in the use of instruments, an enthusiasm for all things beautiful filled his soul and made him restless. His attention to studies suffered. A passion for Italy seized him and he confided to a friend who like himself joined the Dominican Order later on: "I will set out for Italy." The humdrum things of life were becoming unbearable. But the death of Eugene and the steadying advice of his friend brought him to his senses. The change to the discipline of the Minor Seminary helped, too. In a scribbled note he addressed Our Lady: "My good Mother, I wear your holy scapular. I put myself under your banner in the Minor Seminary. Do not forget me now." A few months before his death, he told some sisters: "I loved music so much that I was in danger of losing my vocation." But he gained much by this experience of his soul's volatility. In a negative way it prepared him for the demand in a Dominican's life for total consecration to the Truth, the revelation of God in Christ. At the same time, he retained a love for the beauty of God's house, of liturgical prayer, a spiritually refined good taste. In old age and as Master of the Order, he was delighted to play the organ at evening prayer. Fr. Nolan in his testimony remembered how eager he was to carry out the desire of Jandel that a new edition of our Liturgical Books should be brought out, as part of the reform. He gave particular

attention to the type, paper, diversity of character, and the binding. [ . . . ]

[T]here was growing in his soul a yearning for religious life. The Seminary was fortunate in having an excellent spiritual director, a Sulpician, Fr. Benech. As Henry Cormier was to spend some time during the summer of 1854 at Les Eaux Bonnes for his health's sake, his director advised him to meet Père Lacordaire at Sorèze and to ask his advice about becoming a Dominican. But his [Lacordaire's] opinion was negative. There was no vocation, or if there were, it was certainly not mature. Cormier wondered what he should do. But in the meantime he took a positive step, one he would later in his life advise many diocesan priests to take. In 1855 he was received into the Third Order of Saint Dominic. Feeling the lack of devotion to Dominic might be a weakness, he wrote in the notes of a retreat at the Seminary: "I begged the Blessed Virgin to increase my devotion to him. 'O Mary,' I prayed while reciting the Memorare, 'you have every reason to listen to my prayer. My request is a good one, and it concerns one of the saints who has contributed most to causing you to be venerated.'"

Under the direction of Fr. Benech he continued to seek after Christian perfection and, following St. Dominic, he wanted especially to become a man of prayer. Towards the end of the school year of 1855, his Director told him to consult another Dominican, Père Amanton. He had no hesitation in approving Cormier's desire. Monsignor Dupanloup [Cormier's bishop] was greatly disappointed but as soon as Fr. Benech put it to him as a decision of a conscience well-informed, that great champion of liberty yielded and was willing to ordain the young man before he entered the novitiate. On the evening of his first Mass he told his mother about his intention. Her joy turned suddenly into tears. In time she accepted this separation. [ . . . ]

During the process of inquiry held at Orleans in 1937, Sr. Magdalen Sevin, a sister in a convent of Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament in that city and a cousin of Père Cormier, remembered his visits home when his mother was in her eighties. "I was impressed by the thoughtfulness, tenderness and simplicity he showed his mother. I noticed his patient attention as he listened to her talking again and again of the same events." She also remembered his visits to her own home, and a solemn blessing he gave her brother George. "Everybody connected it with his [George's] vocation to the priesthood."

## Professed to Die

Six weeks after his ordination to the priesthood Cormier received the habit on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1856 at Flavigny dear Dijon and was given the name Hyacinthe. The winter was severe and Hyacinthe-Marie suffered several bouts of coughing blood, lasting sometimes a day or two. The thought of losing one of the best of the five novices saddened their Master. [. . .]

On account of his physical condition, the decision concerning his profession was left to the Master of the Order, Fr. Jandel. The novice himself wrote to him in November, mentioning his anxiety about dispensations from the fasts imposed on him, whereas his whole desire was to be a Dominican totally. He gives a frank account of his health and, in view of the suggestion that he should finish the novitiate in Italy, he says he would prefer to complete it under the direction of the novice master at Flavigny. Jandel agreed that it would be better to remain there. But the early months of 1857 were worse and again he wrote to the Master of the Order. It seems that everybody would like him to leave for Italy as soon as the novitiate ended. He adds a post-script with a personal reason: "to escape from the ceaseless pursuits of my mother." The provincial, Fr. Danzas, felt that hospitality in Italy was tempered somewhat by a fear of contagion where chest trouble was concerned. So he suggested that he join the community at Mosul in the middle-east where the climate was good for tuberculosis. But Jandel dismissed the suggestion. In his notebook Cormier wrote: "My mother has come. Some hassle, at Mass on Friday I asked Our Lord that in return for offering myself to Him He would give himself to be my mother's consolation. On Saturday at meditation, I made a new gift of myself to Our Lady that she might heal my body so that it may be used in the apostolate and that she would sanctify my soul. On Sunday, the conversion of Saint Paul — Lord, give me strength. Jesus change the heart of my mother."

The prior and council voted in favor of his making simple vows for two years, an unusual procedure, since normally novices were admitted to solemn profession at the end of the year. The prior's problem was how to occupy this simply professed priest. Jandel having spent the summer in France took him back with him to Rome as his assistant secretary. Cormier joined him at Lyons, in the small wooden house which Jandel had opened, the beginning of the restoration of the Order there. They sailed from Marseilles to Civita Vecchia and there began on that journey an enduring relationship between Jandel in his sixties and Cormier in his middle twenties, intensified by sharing their common purpose of St. Dominic. He accompanied the Master on his canonical visitations in Italy, Austria, Dalmatia, and Poland, an ap-

prenticeship in the virtues of good government, an experience of the universality of the Order.

After a visit to La Quercia, a common novitiate house of great importance in the reform, Jandel left his secretary behind to act as sub-[novice] master. In the circumstances, it called for great prudence, since Cormier was quite unknown to the community and had little or no official standing. Among the novices there were future provincials Fr. Hickey of Ireland, Antoninus Williams of England. During his time there, Pius IX visited La Quercia. In spite of hemorrhages, on his return to Rome, the Pope himself allowed him to take solemn vows on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 1859, saying, "If he cannot live long as a religious, let him have the consolation of dying a professed member of the Order." He was affiliated to the convent in Corsica. Dressed in the regional costume of La Beauce, his mother came to Rome, hoping, at this decisive point in his vocation, to bring him back to be a priest in the home diocese. But the prayers of her son, the charity and courtesy of his brothers at Santa Sabina, her participation at the Mass of the Pope, all won for her the light to understand and accept his vocation.

Jandel sent him for a cure to Les Eaux Bonnes. From there he wrote to the Master: "Père Tournel, while sending me a copy of the first issue of *L'Annee Dominicaine* asked me to do an article on St. Hyacinthe. I gave him a vague answer, so that I might consult you first. I don't want to try anything that's beyond my strength." But as years passed, writing became easier, almost a hobby, some unfavorable critics said a mania. It was something he could turn his mind to at any spare moment of the day or night. Father Sadoc Szabo, in his biography of Cormier, gives a list of 171 titles, reproduced in the history of the [beatification] process. His best was the life of Raymond of Capua, prepared for the beatification in 1899. His life of Jandel, published three years earlier, disappointed some people because, for the sake of objectivity, he said so little of his own relationship with him. [. . .]

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, on whom the humility of Cormier made an indelible impression, remembered how as an old man and as Master of the Order, he would come with writings for censorship when he was himself just thirty-two and beginning his career at the Angelicum. With regard to the quality of his writings, Garrigou-Lagrange said at the Roman Inquiry (1937): "Speaking or writing, he did not repeat things already said by others. They were his own intimate reflections. For this reason, although he had no special studies in Theology, he never failed to captivate and interest his audience, even when they included men older and more learned than himself. The depth of his meditation counted most for them." At the Inquiry held at Marseilles, Marie-Joseph Lagrange, the founder of the Institute for Biblical Studies at Jerusalem, said that "once while preaching a retreat,

I got an attack of migraine and I couldn't prepare a sermon. But I just read a sermon of Père Cormier's, and afterwards one person remarked, 'this time you really spoke well.' [. . .]

### **The Man of God**

The fourth part of Tristan Mirbel's book on the interior life of Père Cormier consists largely of information he got from an unnamed Dominican who, being in a high office at the Angelicum, lived close to Cormier during his generalate. [. . .] The secret of this discipline in the elusive area of self-consciousness was his fidelity to the unchangeable means to sanctity embodied in the way of life handed down by St Dominic. In directing souls, he asked for that same effort, like Our Lord's insistence on "trying to enter by the narrow way"! A lady, with much to unburden herself of, sought for a good confessor. Noticing Père Cormier, she said to the sacristan, "I'd like that one."

The brother doubted the wisdom of her choice "But isn't he a little austere for you?"

"Yes, perhaps he hasn't the human touch, but it's a man of God I'm looking for."

Dealing with a person in need of reform, his conviction was that "it is enough to carry on conscientiously with the means available; then, God looks after the rest and lets our very weakness play its part." [. . .] The same priest, quoted so amply by Tristan Mirbel, noticed that "this awareness of God gave him an almost natural humility which was seen in him as a superior. His personal views never dominated his decisions. He acted on his authority to implement the rule which he believed to be an expression of the will of God." That, too, was the root of his conviction that penalties should be medicinal, part of the healing ministry of Christ, which Christians should not be deprived of.

Besides the press, he had a very personal means of communicating truth. He always had at hand little cards or pictures on which he would write a word of advice or direction. On one addressed to Princess Clotilde of Savoy, he wrote concerning the Holy Spirit's role in one's prayer: "let the mill be propelled by the wind, the essential is that inside good flour is produced." Concerning quiet of soul at one's work, he wrote: "Do it with worshipful silence as the builders of Solomon's temple, where the sound of the hammer was not heard." Sadoc Szabo, a Hungarian Dominican and a surprise choice as first rector of the Angelicum, an office he filled for eighteen years including the tense years of the Great War, kept a little card he received from Père Cormier when he intervened to restore peace in the community after an indiscrete cheering in battle that all the staff could not rejoice at.

On the card was written: "Be a rose to your brethren, even if they may be thorns for you."

Apart from the seven years after his novitiate during which he was in various ways occupied with novices, Père Cormier for the remaining fifty-one years of his life, filled offices of authority: three times Provincial of Toulouse, a province he restored; Prior of Marseilles and of Toulouse; founder of the house at Biarritz; then Prior of St Maximin. In 1899 he was called to Rome as socius for the French provinces during Fr. Fruhwurth's generalate, becoming Procurator General of the Order in 1896, an office he retained until in his 73<sup>rd</sup> year he was elected Master of the Order at the Chapter of La Quercia during the Pentecost of 1904.

During this period of restoration of the Order in France, the new construction of conventual buildings and the acquisition of new property, Cormier, a man who cherished poverty, was most successful in paying off old debts. He wrote to Jandel in Teresian style: "after virtue what we need most now is money." The Master replied: "Obviously you have a vocation to be a questing friar." Father Janvier at the Inquiry held at Orleans spoke of his poverty: "I never saw him in a new outfit. He wore old habits, stained here and there and that irritated his lay-brother socius, Damien." Cormier had a precept from Pope Pius X to obey Damien in all that pertained to health and rest and he gave him a personal injunction to take a second-class couchette when he had to travel by night.

In bringing reform to its completion, Cormier saw the restoration of studies as paramount. Thomas Garde said of him at the Inquiry in Rome in 1947: "His great achievement was the raising of the standard of studies in our Order. He was greatly attached to the School of Biblical Studies at Jerusalem. With zeal and sacrifice he established the Angelicum in Rome, to foster and develop the genuine teaching of St Thomas. . . . This great work contributed immensely to the revival of our Order, not from the point of view of studies alone, but of the spirit of St. Dominic with which they are intimately connected." [. . .]

### **Support of Père Lagrange**

If his problems were just financial, he would have had less time for scribbling in his jotter in the sleepless hours of the night. But his generalate was overshadowed by Modernism. It was almost inevitable that some professors of our institutions would be suspected. It was unfortunate that a shadow of suspicion should fall on M.-J. Lagrange, whose contribution to biblical studies is so greatly esteemed today. Among the documents in the account of the "Process" published in 1972 by the Congregation for the Promotion of Causes, there are



three that deal with the relations between Fr. Cormier and Fr. Lagrange: the votum of Fr. Voste (270-9), an extended study by Fr. Piccari (113-176), which includes some of the 169 letters of Cormier to Lagrange, beginning in 1880 when the great scholar was still a student. As far as the cause of Fr. Cormier is concerned, the criticisms made by a few of his conduct during the critical years of Lagrange, [while at] the Institute in Jerusalem and the *Revue Biblique*, are marginal. The correspondence shows that the relationship between the two was not just of superior and subject. Père Cormier, who gave him the habit in October 1879, had a deep personal understanding of the soul of this great scholar.

Aware of his special grace and never doubting his orthodoxy, Cormier advised him to be faithful, not just to grace itself but to his own special grace in the Order and the Church. There is a great awareness in Dominican spirituality of the fidelity one owes to the "special grace" (*1 Pt. 4:9*). So Cormier warns him against an excess of courtesy in his relations with scholars out of sympathy with the Church. He tells him to guard against a reticence in discussion that passing the limits of urbanity might be taken for weakness. He told him not to pay too much attention to gossip coming from a friendly or a hostile side. "Seal up your ears." He asked him to turn down an invitation to lecture in North America during a critical period and stay at the work the Order and the Holy See had confided to him: "better remain in the quiet of Jerusalem." As the tension mounted, Cormier wrote as a spiritual father, urging Lagrange to accept the trial as "a profound interior purification" and to pray "for a knowledge of self" in which we can see where reform may be necessary if we are to be God's men and his voice. When Lagrange was removed from his post, there were letters full of wisdom and compassion: "to give into discouragement would make things worse, to be disillusioned would be worse again. . . . time passes quickly. You have not received this Grace from God in vain. You have not my eighty years, but you know that life goes on and we must steep ourselves more and more in God, bringing our nature into subjection under the yoke of Grace, while every thought is captured 'to be brought into obedience to Christ' (*2 Cor. 10:5*)." There is a hint at what anguish enthusiastic supporters were causing him by comments on the Master's handling of the affair: "You know me well enough to realize how I suffer because I am no longer considered as *persona grata* by religious I love."

In Fr. Lagrange's testimony at the Inquiry held at Marseilles in 1936, when the clouds had scattered and he was in his eightieth year, he said, "I desire his beatification with all my heart because I am convinced of his holiness." Finally, he sums up his regard for him as a superior: "I never got the impression that this man acted for any other

motive than the love of God. He was never swayed by emotion or political bias. Of that I am thoroughly convinced.”

The calm assurance with which Cormier did all things points to the fulfillment of the desire of the young seminarian, which made him think of joining the Order: “all that I must tend towards can be reduced to one thing, to become a man of prayer.” Tristan Mirbel remarks on this very point: “In him, prayer was not distinct from action. His prayer was nourished by the reading of Scriptures. He would let nothing dispense him from that.” In a life full of diverse responsibilities, this was his desire. Yet in his old age, there were sighs concerning being “always in the dark” and a lovely tribute to its serviceability: “all that’s left is the Rosary.” The picture of an old man holding onto the beads sums up the history of his soul. As a boy of eight in the primary school of St. Paul parish in Orleans, the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine there used to say the Rosary each day at 11:00am, one boy announcing the mysteries and Henry Cormier distributing and collecting the beads, which were kept hanging from a stick near the picture of Our Lady. In his old age, he said that the Rosary became for him “sweet refreshment, a token of childlike devotion to Mary, a unifying bond, drawing together the scattered actions of each day.”

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Father Hyacinthe-Marie Cormier was a witness to the truth of Christ according to the school of St. Dominic. Blessed be God who allows us to bring together this morning in a single celebration of members of three branches of the great Dominican family, so closely linked to the preaching of the truth!

The truth is not an abstract notion, it is for us a Person, the Person of Christ the King. In his life, Father Cormier has lived constantly for truth and transmitted it to all his Dominican brothers with humility and perseverance. Had he not joined the truth in charity with his motto: "Caritas veritatis"? He said that in fact to give the truth is "the most beautiful charity."

In Father Cormier the Church wants to recognize and honor the action of the human intellect, enlightened by faith. In fact, the founder of the Angelicum University reminds us that God asks us to use the faculties of our mind, a reflection of His, in order to glorify him. A man thirsting for truth, he was able also to give himself to his brothers as Prior, as provincial and as Master General of the Dominican Order, in respect for its ancient traditions. He led the children of Saint Dominic to God with his wisdom and competence, making them true sons and witnesses of the Kingdom.\*

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\* John Paul II, Homily, *Celebrazione Eucaristica per Cinque Nuovi Beati nella Solennità di Cristo Re* (20 November, 1994).



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