

## INTRODUCTION

Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar has earned high regard in the history of the Polish nation by his many books on religious, cultural and social life. He has rendered the highest of services to his compatriots by his ascetical books which have enriched the spiritual lives of priests, religious men and women, and even the laity during the last ten years of the nineteenth century up to the Second World War.

The most important ascetical work of Bishop Pelczar is “The Spiritual Life”, which, with its seven editions, was widely acclaimed by the Polish people despite their triple subjugation by a foreign power, as well as by migrants. The revised and improved eighth edition was published at Przemysl in 1924. Noteworthy are his meditations for priests “Sacerdotal Asceticism”, and “Jesus Christ, Example and Teacher of the Priest”, as well as his Meditations for religious regarding religious life and on the life of Jesus Christ.

The ascetical books of the Saint did not attain their popularity from novelty of doctrine. In fact, the author retains the Christian ascetical tradition, sprinkling the contents of his works with quotations from the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as well as the writings of the most learned teachers of the spiritual life. Even the form of his writings is not entirely original; the comparison between the interior life and the construction of an edifice may be found in the sermons of St. Augustine, in the Spiritual Castle of St. Teresa of Avila, and many other authors. Bishop Pelczar’s books quickly developed a wide appeal, above all because of the author’s deep spiritual life which permeated all his works, as well as his precise intuition of the internal needs of his nation and his wish to satisfy them.

Forced to endure the tragic loss of their freedom, the Polish people of that time had as their religious ideal the worship of Jesus Christ Crucified, total trust in the Mother of God, Queen of Poland, and fidelity to the Church. The ascetical books of Bishop Pelczar were ideally suited to the mentality of the people because they had a Christocentric, Marian, ecclesial character. The simplicity of language, graceful style, and explanations of the difficult problems of the spiritual life were made understandable to all by parables and stories taken from ordinary daily life.

Bishop Pelczar was concise. He condensed problems concerning ascetical formation in one book, “The Spiritual Life”, and he took for his theme one popular idea—the builder about to construct an edifice. This traditional story was given a modern approach in his book. Here before you, is the plan of “The Spiritual Life”:

The architect and the builder of the spiritual edifice of the soul is the Divine Master, Jesus Christ. The collaborator is man who aspires to Perfection. To bring this masterpiece to a happy fruition, both Christ and man had to be put to work side by side. Christ operates by means of Grace; while the instrument of human action, prayer, is a gift of Christ.

The work begins by clearing the ground (the soul) of sin, of imperfections and undue attachments followed by digging out the virtue of Humility. The foundation is next reinforced, that is, the virtues of Faith and Hope must be deeply established. The walls of the edifice are constructed with the love of God and neighbor and are fortified with the cardinal virtues. A roof is placed over the entire edifice: this is submission to the will of God. The door of the edifice is Obedience and the framed windows are the motives—pure intention and simplicity. All the other virtues represent the outside and inside trim. Thus the edifice is maintained in good condition and is protected from deterioration.

During this arduous undertaking, Christ comforts the collaborator with Eucharistic food. The entire spiritual family, that is, the Mother of God, Mother of the Church, and the Angels and the Saints help out as well. The aim of this mutual assistance between Christ and man is the happiness of living with Him in this newly constructed edifice. It is this kind of union with God that already has begun here on earth and will be made perfect in heaven when we shall see God face to face.

This concept of the ascetical method as described by Pelczar in his “Spiritual Life” is repeated in many ascetical books. It is true that the linguistic form may not fit our modern era. Yes, there may be need of another edition, a modern redaction, substitution for old comparisons, modernization of the language, and simplification of the style. However, in spite of Pelczar’s form, the essential content never ages.

Before one can bring out a new edition of the ascetical books of Bishop Pelczar, especially the one titled “The Spiritual Life”, I should like to offer those interested in the ascetical life the main principles of the spiritual life and the evangelical counsels subdivided for each day of the year. Although in their present state they may be only fragmentary, nevertheless they contain all the essential elements of “The Spiritual Life”, united into one imposing harmonious whole, according to the plan the author drew up for us in the introduction of his book.

I should like to bring to the readers the ascetical science of a master of the spiritual life by selecting the texts, substituting some words now considered obsolete, simplifying and shortening a sentence that is too long and therefore very difficult to understand, and I hope and pray that the seed of his words may fall on fertile soil and bear fruit one hundred fold.

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N.B. In the introduction I refer to the eighth edition of “The Spiritual Life”, in three volumes, using the following abbreviations: SL indicates the title of the book (Three volumes in all). The number preceding the comma indicates the volume: the number following the comma indicates the page. In the text, besides changes indicated in the Introduction, when there is a shift of words or ideas, or a summary of the original text, before the abbreviation “SL”, there is another one, “Cfr”.



## JANUARY

### CHRISTIAN PERFECTION: LIFE WITH AND IN CHRIST

1. Before attempting to plumb the depths of Christian Perfection, kneel before Our Lady, the “Morning Star” and with heartfelt fervor ask for her aid, and through her intercession also the help of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit as your Teacher and the Mother of God as your guide, you will quickly understand the Way of Perfection and with great ease start on your journey. (VS 1, 8)
2. Man, by his nature, joins in himself two worlds. He is a member of the immense human family sharing its privileges and obligations, blessings and deficiencies. Above all, however, he is a creature of God from whom he has received the gift of life and to Whom he should reach out as his ultimate goal. (VS 1, 9)
3. To serve God: This is aim of life, the most important goal, before which everything else appears as dross. Every action which does not reflect man’s ultimate destiny only saps his energy and leaves him unhappy. Mere knowledge without Faith does not answer the fundamental question of Life, and inflates pride. Instead of enlightening, it engulfs man in darker doubts. Every act of love that does not come from and incline to God will fail to satiate the infinite craving for the divine that God placed in the immortal soul. (Cfr. VS 1, 10-12)
4. If we could experience all worldly pleasures, pile up all earthly treasures, if we could own all the medals of all the heroes, enjoy the wisdom of all the intellectual giants, if we could boast of enjoying the contentment of a happy family, even of society, and do not serve God, with Jesus Christ, who is our way, truth and life, we have accomplished nothing, and we are not living Christian lives. Life without God is merely an illusion, a dream which turns into a nightmare. (VS 1, 12)
5. The Christian Life is a reflection of Divine Life, because it has as its source Jesus Christ, its inspiration, teacher, and model; the Holy Spirit as its developer and director; and the Catholic Church as its unerring guide—all this for one purpose: union with God, that is, life through God, with God, and in God. (VS 1, 14-15)
6. Whoever wishes to live a supernatural life here on earth and achieve eternal salvation in heaven must make use of the redeeming graces of the Passion of Jesus Christ. Not only must he accept the truths of Faith, the promises of Hope, but also the necessity of being united to God by Charity. In this way divine love takes root in the heart and God condescends to abide there. (VS 1, 15)
7. The Christian, elevated to the supernatural state, aided by the Holy Spirit, together with human effort, must shape and develop the interior and exterior life in accordance with the will of God, as revealed by Christ and proposed by the Catholic Church. Thus, the soul resembles

Christ in thought, word, deed, sentiment, and even in suffering. This is the foundation of the Christian life. (VS 1, 15-16)

8. The essence of the Christian life is love. It unites the soul to God who is “Perfect Love”. The more intense the love, the more developed is the Christian life. (VS 1, 17)

9. The interior life, the Christian life, is developed day after day; it is the growth of the life of Jesus in the soul and the growth of the soul in Jesus. This requires a life of recollection, prayer, self-denial and mortification. In short, it means a life of sacrifice and total dedication to God. This produces a way of life on the supernatural level, whereby, through the help of the Holy Spirit, Jesus freely acts in the soul. And so the soul is ever on the alert to avoid sin, follow graces, reject evil inclinations, control self indulgence and bear cheerfully one’s daily cross; in short, gradually to die to one’s self, ever mindful of Jesus Christ. (VS 1, 18)

10. Just as in developing one’s physical and mental energies there are three stages—infancy, childhood, and adolescence; so too in the spiritual life there are three stages, titled by the theologians the purgative, illuminative and unitive Ways. (VS 1, 19)

11. To strive for perfection in the purgative way, the soul must learn to reject sin, avoid its subtle occasions, shun unnecessary worldly attachments and overcome spiritual inertia. To do this requires following aids: by energetic interior and exterior mortification, frequent prayer, reception of the Sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin and obedience to one’s spiritual director. (VS 1, 19-20)

12. The illuminative way consists of strengthening and growth in virtues. This floods the soul with divine light, enabling it to see Jesus Christ, its example and treasure, more clearly. The soul thus hurries along the divine paths to be united in a still more perfect way with its Beloved. (VS 1, 20)

13. The third state is the unitive way. By now, already having been cleansed from every sinful inclination, and firmly entrenched in the practice of virtue, the soul now craves unqualified union with God. By thoughts directed frequently to God, by a profound spirit of recollection, the soul immerses itself in meditation, faithfully performs God’s will and totally submits to His desires, wishing only to live, act and suffer for its Beloved. From such an intense union the soul attains a lofty degree of perfection and true happiness. The Lord often blesses such a soul with mystical gifts. Many times too, He asks heroic sacrifices. (VS 1, 21)

14. The soul, even in the unitive way, must be ever alert and accept any proffered grace, because even the person gifted with the highest state of perfection is not thereby incapable of falling. Hence one must constantly practice virtue and strive daily to achieve the most perfect degree of charity. The degree of charity attained on earth will be rewarded with a proportionate degree of glory in heaven. (VS 1, 21)

15. It is more difficult for the laity in the world to become holy than for the religious, even though they remain faithful to their vocation. By no means does this imply that the laity are any less God's dear children. They too can and must serve Him faithfully. The words, "Be ye perfect" have been addressed to them also. (Cfr. VS 1, 25)

16. Some souls, such as a few canonized Saints, have been blessed with unusual privileges, even extraordinary gifts. This does not imply that God has forgotten all others. In the religious life, no one is abandoned except by his deliberate choice. Neither status nor age is an obstacle to growth in holiness. God concerns Himself not with externals, but with the internal disposition of the soul. (VS 1, 27)

17. Since perfection is attainable by everyone, let us compare it to the sun. As the sun enlightens the tallest mountains and deepest valleys, so perfection can be reflected by everyone's soul, religious and laity, rich and poor, learned and unlettered. (VS 1, 31)

18. God wishes unity with all creatures. However, while delighting in the diversity of creation, He cultivates His Church like a beautiful garden filled with a variety of multi-colored flowers. In the same way, God directs different souls to progress along different paths leading to the main road to heaven. Each soul must recognize his specific path, follow it faithfully, and thus sanctify himself according to God's will. This is achieved above all, by performing his daily duties conscientiously. (VS 1, 32)

19. One must have recourse to the graces of his specific state of life and vocation in order to develop spiritually. Failure to do so would result in a tragic mistake, and cause one to fall short of one's goal in life. If a religious, rather than being recollected, were to steep himself in mundane undertakings; if the pastor of souls, rather than caring for their sanctification, were to lose himself in worldly sciences; if a mother, rather than nurturing for her children, were to devote herself to prayer all day long, such an individual would miss the target of religious perfection. None of these persons would be living according to the will of God. (VS 1, 32)

20. The Christian life is not easy. It requires self-denial, mortification and transformation into Christ. Due to the power of Christ's grace, the Christian life is within our grasp. By grace, one sustains and develops his soul; ever assisted by two other forces- the Blessed Virgin Mary and Holy Mother the Church. (Cfr. VS 1, 33-34)

21. Whoever decides to construct a house must first face the tedious job of clearing the land. Next he pours a reinforced, level foundation. The same process takes place in one's spiritual life. We start by eradicating and clearing away the roots of sin. Then we build a solid foundation by acts of humility. Add perseverance in prayer plus the exertion of human effort, and divine grace will move the soul to make rapid progress. (VS 1, 34)

22. The perfect life is not easy because it is a life with the Cross. God sometimes desires great sacrifices from souls striving towards perfection. However, He constantly sustains them with superabundant graces and gives them sweet consolations. Cfr. VS 1, 33-34)

23. The spiritual life may be compared to the life of nature. Nature very often begins to develop during the cooler season. So it is in the spiritual life: raging storms of passion batter it, biting cold of the world freezes it, the smog of ignorance beclouds it. Then suddenly rays of sun pierce the storm clouds. These are rays of divine grace and overwhelming consolations rousing dormant faith. Springtime has arrived. With the heat of the sun, storms have dissipated and ice patches have melted. Under rays of divine grace, passions subside, the world's temptations are brought under control, and the soul soon begins to blossom with pure precious desires, and adorns itself with the multi-colored flowers of virtue. During Spring, an occasional rain cloud darkens the sky. So for the soul there will be days of discouragement, darkness, and weakness. Every now and then, a violent storm will erupt. In the soul there is at times a terrifying struggle against a most insidious temptation, possibly a moment of doubt and weakness. The soul collapses, defeated. Nevertheless, the soul, when truly humble, becomes resilient; regains strength, health, vitality, and forges ahead, once more into a new season—Summer! Then the sun of God warms the soul; the crops and fruits—the good works—now grow, mature, and ripen. (VS 1, 35)

24. Perfection adds to the soul a radiant splendor, a supernatural beauty. It becomes an object of awe to the Angels, and an object of love to God himself. Sometimes the brilliance of the soul radiates throughout the body. (VS 1, 38)

25. If the soul consecrates itself to God, He in turn gives His life to the soul. Since God is all Beauty and all Goodness, He fills the beloved soul with a profound peace and joy, unlike anything on this earth. Although some earthly attractions, such as true family relationships, are wholesome and genuine, they can never totally quench the thirst of the human heart. The heart has a capacity for the infinite – for God! (VS 1, 38-39)

26. The soul, consecrated to God, becomes filled with divine graces and frees itself from the slavery of sin, all inordinate inclinations, worldly allurements and self-love; and in their place the supreme law of Love enters – Love of God and Love of neighbor. The soul thus becomes truly free. (VS 1, 40)

27. Together with freedom, the soul is flooded with peace. Man cannot give himself peace because peace is not an integral part of human nature. Nor is man self-sufficient. Other creatures cannot fill him with peace because even they too are upset, worried and disturbed. Where then can a soul find peace? In God and only in God! (VS 1, 41-42)

28. Jesus Christ taught that peace may be obtained by overcoming and controlling the passions of our fallen nature by the practice of humility, obedience and patience, as well as by cultivating virtues: love of God and love of neighbor. Every once in a while, God will test some chosen

souls. He will ask them to shoulder and embrace their crosses. These souls are thus placed and directed along the road to His Most Sacred Heart, which is the way to Perfection. (VS 1-42-43)

29. You will not find true peace and happiness except in God. Many have discovered this truth the hard way, having sought peace and happiness without God. Notice the magnetic needle. It acts like the soul. The needle hovers back and forth, as if it were seeking impatiently its true destination. Only when it points north does it stop wavering. The needle has come to rest—it is at peace. So it is with the soul, destined for God alone. As long as the soul looks elsewhere it remains in a state of nervous anxiety, useless motion. Only when it points away from creatures and to God does the soul stop its restless search. It has found peace: peace of mind by way of Faith, peace of heart by way of Hope, and peace of will by way of Charity. (VS 1, 43)

30. What must one do to reach the state of Perfection? One can hardly take a step along the road to the perfect life if he uses only human exertion. Effort from both the will and daily prayer will move God to inspire and guide the soul. Thus one many soar like the mighty eagle toward the lofty heights of Christian perfection, which until now seemed beyond reach. (VS 1, 55)

31. Be faithful to God in matters both large and small. Carry your daily cross with courage, consecrating yourself to God's holy will. Do not refuse Him any sacrifice He may ask of you, and remain in His presence. Thank Him for everything. Each day put your trust in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the help of the Most Holy Virgin. (VS 1, 59)



## **FEBRUARY**

### **JESUS CHRIST, SOURCE OF SUPERNATURAL LIFE, SANCTIFIES THE SOUL WITH GRACE**

1. Jesus Christ is our Life, and the author of the supernatural life. In Him, as St. Paul says, “God chose us before the world began so that we might be holy and blameless in His sight.” (Ef. 1, 4) (VS 1, 64)
2. The Lord Jesus, during His earthly life, was obedient to Mary. As her Son, He submitted to her will, and He entrusted to her the Church. Mary never has abandoned those who confidently seek her protection. Devotion to Mary is the hope of our salvation, and the sign of our destiny of eternal glory. Love of Mary is the measure of love of Jesus; whoever fervently loves Jesus, must also love Mary. (Cfr. Meditations on the Religious Life, p. 183)
3. Jesus Christ lives in the soul that remains faithful to His teachings. All the good actions of a Christian are the actions of Christ living in him. It is Christ who acts in him and through him. From Christ comes all light, fervor, higher strength, virtue, self-denial, and sacrifice. (VS 63-64)
4. Humanity did not know the ways of life and salvation. Thus Christ the Lord became for us the way of life, and, through His death, the way of salvation. In order for humanity to recognize the road to heaven, the Lord became like a brilliant lamp, its vessel His humanity, its oil His divinity. This Lamp shines forever in His Church. The Lord Jesus Himself is the guide and support. He is the Door to the Father’s house and His Cross is the Key. Only He, Jesus Christ, is the source of all grace and the only example of holiness. (VS 1, 67)
5. If you want to know Jesus Christ, meditate on His Life. Pray for interior light, which will help you to penetrate the secrets of His Sacred Heart, and give you a deeper insight into divine truth. (VS 1, 69)
6. To imitate Jesus Christ is to follow Him, to walk in His footsteps; that is, to think, desire, speak, act, and suffer like Him. One may put it in another way – conform your life to the life of Christ. All Christians are obligated to this imitation of Christ due to their Christian vocation and name. Through Baptism, we have become one with Christ. (Cfr. VS 1, 69)
7. The faithful imitation of Christ sanctifies our actions. From Christ flows sanctifying grace and the inner spirit that gives supernatural value to each action. Whoever wants to be holy should unite himself with Jesus through His grace, enter into His Heart and submit to His Will. (VS 1, 77)
8. Grace, in general, is any good gift coming from the Father of Light, whether it is of the natural or supernatural order. In particular, grace is a supernatural gift of God, which He bestows, through the merits of Jesus, that we might achieve salvation. (VS 1, 84)

9. Among the graces which directly sanctify the soul, the first place is occupied by sanctifying grace, which is supernaturally infused. In this habitual state of soul, the Holy Spirit Himself internally purifies, justifies, sanctifies, renews and brings us to the supernatural state, to participation in God's nature and union with God.

10. Sanctifying Grace flows from the divine Person of Christ, through His human nature, through His Sacred Heart and bursts through His five wounds, as five flowing fountains, forming a great stream at the foot of the Cross, from which seven rivulets, that are the seven Sacraments, pour out upon the Church the Water of Life, purifying the sinner and sanctifying the just. (VS 1, 91)

11. Sanctifying grace not only transforms the soul into the temple of the Most Holy Trinity and enables it to enjoy a participation in the nature of God, but also enables the soul to become His friend, His spouse. Who can express the glory of the pure and holy soul possessing grace in the high degree? Such a soul, immeasurably blessed by God, is elevated beyond all human comprehension. (VS 1, 37)

12. Our soul is like a small boat heading for the port of eternity where God is waiting. The boat is supplied with food and oars; that is, sanctifying grace and infused virtues. It would be extremely difficult, however, to navigate toward God, if the Holy Spirit did not fill the sails, on which stands the symbol of the Cross, with the Wind from above to push the boat. He does this by the grace of His gifts. (VS 1, 93)

13. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are necessary for salvation because only those who are governed by the Spirit are the true Sons of God and the heirs of heavenly glory. (VS 1, 95)

14. Among the most precious and desirable fruits of the Holy Spirit is love. From love comes joy...and the perfection of joy is peace, dependent on the possession of God. If some outside force threatens this peace, love must practice the virtue of patience; if love meets with obstacles and must wait, it must practice the virtue of long-suffering. Toward the neighbor, love is benevolent, wishes him good, is quiet, bears hurts and irritations, is faithful, open and simple, far from malice. (VS 1, 9)

15. Besides sanctifying grace, we need actual grace. Sanctifying grace is a state of soul, in which the soul is made holy and enabled to do good; actual grace is what impels us to perform a good act. (VS 1, 105)

16. The effects of sanctifying grace differ from those of actual graces. Let me explain with some examples. It's not enough for the eye to be healthy to be able to see; it also needs light. It's not enough to till the soil; heat, humidity and water are needed. It's not enough to prepare a boat for sailing, to raise the sails, etc; wind must fill the sails. Light, heat, water and wind – these exemplify actual graces for the soul. (VS 1, 105)

17. Grace does not destroy nature, but rather purifies, perfects, and exalts it. Grace bestows on nature some powers and energies which the soul otherwise would never possess. Finally, grace does not restrict the will but gently and firmly assists it. (VS 1, 105)

18. The teacher who guides the hand of the student does not force the pupil to write. Yet the student starts to write. The writing is the result of the effort of both the teacher and the student. In the same way grace does not coerce the will to act. The will may still resist. But the will, sensing the divine impulse, cooperates and this results in an action issuing from both divine grace and human effort. It is necessary to remember this: the very cooperation of the will is already a fruit of divine grace. (V 1, 105)

19. God does not deny His grace to anyone...in the merciful Kingdom of God salvation is offered to every person, except the one who deliberately rejects it. However, God does not bestow His grace equally. His divine pleasure is dependent on the disposition of the soul and its cooperation with the proffered graces. Man has no right to grace; grace depends on God's goodness, but man can lessen, even prevent grace entering his soul due to pride or some sinful attachment. Certainly we may ask for help by prayer. We see, then, the necessity of prayer for everyone. (VS1, 108-109)

20. If you are grateful for the graces received, you will make yourself worthy to be given still more graces. Gratitude for a grace obtained is a powerful prayer for more graces. If you do not give thanks, you will not be open to more generosity from God (VS 1, 111)

21. Accept divine graces with a deep sense of gratitude and joy. If you had the privilege of standing on Calvary when drops of Our Redeemer's Blood dripped from His wounds, it would have been with ardent devotion and tender love that you would have caught them in your own hands. With the same devotion and love, you should receive the divine graces that fall from His Most Sacred Wounds, since they are the fruits of the passion and death of Christ. (VS 1, 11-113)

22. Take full advantage of graces offered to you. Just as when a favorable wind blows, sailors quickly hoist their sails and begin their voyage, so too, at the breath of the Holy Spirit, you should open your soul and welcome Him into your heart; thus you will advance along the way to salvation. This is what the saints did. (VS 1, 113)

23. Faithful and constant effort together with divine grace move one in a straight line toward perfection. As in a chain every link is attached to the other, so each grace is linked to the next one. The first grace attracts the next one and so on. God extends this chain of graces to everyone. The soul, utilizing the first, disposes itself for the next grace, which God will quickly bestow. Furthermore, the better the first grace is used, the more fruitful will be the second. The Saints were experts on making the best possible use of their graces. That is why they became Saints. (VS 1, 117)

24. Do not put up obstacles to divine inspirations...let your spirit be trustworthy and your heart eager to accept them. To write on a parchment one must prepare it carefully – clean it, dry it, and polish it. The Holy Spirit often wishes to write sacred thoughts on your soul. Prepare it properly – clean it of sin and self-love, and erase as much as possible even venial sins. (VS 1, 120)

25. Avoid pride. It is based on self-assurance and self-centeredness characteristics that obscure awareness of one's limitations and block out the divine light. Also beware of self-will. It impedes you from submitting to God's will and makes you cling to your own selfish point of view. (VS 1, 120)

26. When the Lord inspires you, place all your trust in Him with humility and faith. However, be certain the inspiration comes from God. If the divine Will is not clearly understood, pray for helpful light and guidance. Listen to the voice of common sense and conscience. Above all, seek the advice of a confessor. When the inspiration is clearly understandable, follow God's Will. Do not hesitate. Rely on His graces and let them move you the way a boat floats with the current. Otherwise, if you hesitate, the Lord may withdraw His help and no longer speak. (VS 1, 122)

27. Hardly had the three Magi seen the heavenly star and they unhesitatingly started their journey. They left country, family and home. They followed the celestial light because divine inspiration assured them that the star would point to the birthplace of the Savior. (VS1, 118)

If the Apostles had not listened to the first divine call, the Lord might have passed them by and offered the gift of a vocation to others. The Lord withdraws His graces from the unworthy and gives them to better disposed souls. See that you do not neglect the opportunity of embracing God when He visits you. (VS 1, 122)

28. Imitate the lives of the Saints; seek the supernatural light, which illumines the road and directs your steps and actions like a flaming torch. Do not pay attention to the worldly wise, nor to the light of mere reason...do not be distracted by external clatter. Rather, always be aware of the Presence of God...keep yourself recollected, united to God and steadfast in His love. (VS 1, 123)

29. Each soul is a unique and unrepeatable creation of God. . To each He has determined a specific degree of perfection, a suitable state of glory and the means to reach this destiny. The ways to God are as many and diverse as these are souls. However, God reveals to each soul its particular way of salvation by His unerring inspirations. These inspirations may be compared to impulses that spur the soul into action. They are many and varied; some inspirations are attached to externals, e.g., the words of a sermon, advice of a confessor, a spiritual book. At other times, the inspirations may come from within, e.g., the desire for total conversion, love of the cross, zeal for the Kingdom of God on earth and a desire to live a sacrificial life. (Cfr. VS 1, 118-120)



## **MARCH**

### **MAN, CALLED TO COLLABORATE WITH CHRIST IN THE WORK OF SALVATION, REMAINS IN TOUCH WITH HIM THROUGH THE GIFT OF PRAYER WHICH HE RECEIVES FROM HIM**

1. Prayer is the lifting of the soul to God the heavenly Father. God is delighted with prayer, as a father is pleased to speak with his child. Every voice which comes out of a pure and penitent heart soars to heaven and reaches the Heart of Jesus. (VS 1, 126)
2. Prayer is an act of faith and worship, the duty of a creature to God, a burning sacrifice offered to Him. By prayer, the soul confesses its nothingness and misery, while, professing God's omnipotence and His goodness. (VS 1, 126-127)
3. Without grace there is no salvation; without prayer we cannot receive grace. As St. Augustine says, many graces, for example, the grace of receiving the faith, are given gratuitously by God. Others, such as the gift of perseverance, God bestows only on those who ask. Prayer is like the key that opens the treasure chest of Divine Mercy. (VS 1, 128-129)
4. If prayer is so important for an ordinary Christian life, it is all the more so for the soul striving for perfection. Without fervent and persevering prayer, God will not bestow the more abundant graces without which we cannot reach perfection. (VS1, 132)
5. If God draws a soul to a greater service, He first grants the gift of prayer. St. Teresa says, "Prayer alone was the door and the way to all the graces given me by God." Truly St Bonaventure has said that whoever knows how to pray well, knows how to live well. (VS 1, 132)
6. The great doctors of the Church, Sts. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Bernard, etc. attest that above all, they received their wisdom through meditation. We read often that they placed their most difficult problems at the feet of the Blessed Virgin and before the Blessed Sacrament, trusting more in God than in their own intellect. Let us do the same. (VS 1, 133)
7. Prayer gives light and wisdom to the soul, sharpening its vision and enabling it to penetrate God's mysteries. More light from God is given by one hour of prayer than an entire day of intellectual effort. Often God gives to a humble soul in prayer, more wisdom than it could acquire by years of study. (VS 1, 133-134)
8. Prayer gives the soul stability and strength. The soul that trusts in God's help is eager to do great things. The prayerful soul is stronger than the whole world. The soul neglectful of prayer is like a paralytic lying motionless. (VS1, 135)

9. Prayer raises the soul to heaven, and unites it with God. Prayer nourishes apostolic works as is witnessed by such great missionaries as St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus Ligouri, etc. (VS 1, 135)

10. The Son of God teaches us how to pray. “If you ask the Father anything in my name, He will give it to you.” Jesus Christ, while on earth, prayed for us and promised that our prayers would be answered. Now He intercedes for us at the altar and throne of Heaven. We must join our prayers with those of Christ to assure that they will be favorably accepted by God. (VS 1, 136)

11. To pray in the Name of Jesus is to ask for whatever is in accord with God’s will, and thus for spiritual gifts needed for our salvation, according to the words of our Savior: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice and all these things will be given to you.” (Matt. 6, 33) (VS 1, 138)

12. The Lord has promised many spiritual gifts to those who ask. Ask persistently and unconditionally; spread the wings of prayer, for God gives His gifts in proportion to the asking. Do not question Him as to when or how He will answer you; He has His time and ways. (VS 1, 138)

13. St. Alphonsus and St. Teresa counsel us to pray for great and precious gifts, because God is very rich and generous. By such confident prayer we acknowledge His attributes of mercy and generosity. (VS 1, 138)

14. We may also pray for temporal blessings such as health, prosperity, etc., but on the condition that they be used to glorify God and save souls. It seems preferable, however, to put everything in God’s hands and submit entirely to His Holy Will. By this means, we will be praying to do only what pleases Him. He knows best, and, being Goodness Itself, He wishes our eternal salvation. Hence He will give us whatever we truly need. (VS 1, 139)

15. Pray with as much faith and charity as possible. Begin your prayer with a pure and penitent heart. Always keep your mind in prayerful recollection. (Cfr. VS 1, 140-141)

16. If you wish to be assured that your prayer will reach the throne and heart of God, remind yourself of your imperfections – that you are weak, miserable and sinful. Humble yourself; admit that before God you are nothing...let your prayer be confident and trusting. God, in His infinite wisdom, already knows what you need. Being omnipotent, He can give you anything you need, provided that it is for your good. So ask for whatever you need. (VS 1, 146)

17. Distractions are inevitable due to our weak nature. Therefore, let us stifle vain thoughts and foolish imaginings. Let us check selfish ambitions and frivolous hopes. They only fill and bloat us with mundane aspirations, pompous ideas, egotistic desires and unreal goals...If we do not prepare adequately when it is time for prayer, if we do not recall the presence of God, is it any

wonder we suffer such wild distractions? It would require more than a miracle to be able to pray fervently while having bothersome distractions at the same time. (VS 1, 155)

18. Remember that a distraction, regardless of its source, does not render the soul fruitless and thereby culpable in the sight of God. Sometimes involuntary distractions are God's way of indicating our weaknesses... effort on our part to ward them off wins graces for the soul. (VS 1, 155)

19. To pray well, both interior and exterior mortification are necessary. Just as incense gives a fragrance if burnt on the glowing coals, so the prayer of a well ordered soul rises to heaven with a holy fragrance. (VS 1, 157)

20. True devotion means that the heart is aflame with love of God and disposed to carry out His Sacred Will. Such holiness does not require physical sensations, tastes or consolations. (VS1, 162)

21. The essence of prayer is not found in external feelings but in submission to God's Will. When we concur with the Divine Will, we have attained a lofty degree of prayer. Keep praying. Despite aridity, continue praying to God, offering even the aridity to Him. Such a form of prayer pleases God and earns merit for the soul because it is born of sacrifice. (VS 1, 166-167)

22. Vocal prayer, though not vitally necessary, is to be encouraged. It is helpful, fruitful and fosters growth in the interior life. Reason tells us that man must worship his Creator, not only in mind and heart but also with his entire body. Our Blessed Savior often prayed in this manner, and taught us to do the same. He who would refuse to pray to the Lord with the words ... "Our Father" would be an errant and ungrateful son. (VS 1, 177)

23. Meditation requires the use of all the faculties. However do not overburden the soul with thoughts or ramblings, for the mind easily loses itself and the heart turns tepid. The primary purpose of meditation is not so much to reason or grasp a sacred truth, as to arouse pious sentiments of the heart, formulate solid resolutions and find inspiration to put everything into practice. Otherwise, you will be like the soldier who surrenders while in the barracks. (Cfr. VS 1, 191-195)

24. Affective prayer means to lift the soul to God by lively sentiments of the heart and firm desires of the will. Whoever has reached this art of prayer should realize and place greater emphasis on acts of the will which arise from love and are offered to the God of love, according to His Most Sacred Will. (VS 1, 212)

25. Contemplative prayer essentially consists in the awareness of the Presence of God to which is attached an indescribable joy. In contemplative prayer, there are no long considerations, no protracted sentiments. Rather, it is made up of one ecstatic thought that affects the soul profoundly and predominates everything else. (VS 1, 218)



26. Pope Benedict XIV says that infused contemplation means to see and love divine things. God enables the intellect and will to attain this exalted state of contemplation through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the spirit of wisdom and understanding,. Thus, the intellect is enlightened and the will moved to an unusually high degree of holiness. . . . In order to progress to such a state of intense union with God, one may aspire for this mystical marriage by prayer. However do not expect any accompanying gifts such as visions and apparitions because they do not pertain to the essence of contemplation and may therefore hinder rather than aid (one) in striving for perfection. (Cfr. VS 1, 220-226)

27. To walk always in the Presence of God means not only to remember that God is present but also to direct the heart to Him and unite the will to Him. (VS 1, 228)

28. Besides being mindful of the presence of God in a general way, one should remember, in a special manner, His presence within the individual soul. Just as good kings prefer to live simply despite external luxuries, so too God, though present everywhere, prefers to abide in the soul of the just man as in His temple. (VS 1, 232-233)

29. Never forget that you are the temple of the living God. Adore Him as if His altar is in your soul, rendering Him homage, offering Him your sacrifices and prayers, and humbling yourself before Him. . . Remember your heart is like an open book – He reads it! (VS 1, 233)

30. Endeavor to see God in all creatures. Indeed, the world is like a large organ whose music rises to the Creator in crescendos; it is like a book that describes the various perfections of God. Each creature is one word taken from the book. (VS 1, 235)

31. Another necessity of the spiritual life is recollection. The first requirement is love; the second is recollection. There have been Saints who, for their entire lives, did nothing extraordinary, but there has never been a Saint whose interior life lacked spiritual recollection. (VS 1, 246)

## APRIL

### **PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL FROM THE RUBBLE OF SIN AND THE CAUSES OF OUR DEFECTS AND IMPERFECTIONS**

1. If one wishes to build a house, he must first cut down and remove all the rubble and ruins. So too, in regard to the spiritual edifice, we must remove all the rubble that is our sins. What is sin? This question, many, unfortunately, do not ponder. There is nothing as common as sin, and nothing so frequently ignored as sin, because Satan has succeeded in convincing man that virtue is boring and sin is fun. (VS 1, 260-261)
2. What is sin? Let us answer with the words of the Catechism. Sin is a transgression of the divine law through evil thought, word, desire or action, or negligence of a good deed to which we are obligated. Mortal sin is breaking the Divine Law in important matters, with full awareness. Venial sin is transgressing the Divine Law in lesser matters, or important matters but without full knowledge. (VS 1, 261-262, 325)
3. St. Thomas Aquinas explains the difference between mortal and venial sin. Mortal sin alienates man from his final end – God – and directs his aim toward creatures. In contrast, with venial sin, one does not tear himself away from God, but he attaches himself too much to creatures, and does not use them according to God’s Will. Thus he is guilty of a disorder which he introduces into his soul, which is the image of God. (VS 1, 325-326)
4. Mortal sin is as a hatred of God; venial sin wounds our friendship with Him. Mortal sin is the death of the soul; venial sin is a sickness. Mortal sin is running away from the Father’s House; venial sin is grieving His Heart. Mortal sin is the loss of our heavenly inheritance; venial sin is diminishing it. We must, however, differentiate between venial sins committed with knowledge and attachment from sins committed out of weakness or temperament. Of these latter, the Holy Scripture says, “The just man falls seven times a day and seven times a day he rises.” (Prov. 24, 16) (Vs 1, 326)
5. Sin is trampling over God’s Will, rebellion against Him, turning from Him, scorning His Love, and offending Him so greatly that for remission of sin, the Incarnate Son of God poured out His Blood. (VS 1, 262-263)
6. Mortal sin is the greatest scorn and ingratitude, sacrilegious to the living temple of God, and trampling on the Most Holy Blood of the Savior. It is a cruel adultery, separating the soul from the love of God, the only Spouse of Souls, turning it away from Him to creatures. (VS 1, 264)
7. To save themselves from earthly death, even for a time, some people will submit to grave inconvenience – they will spend a great deal of money, fast, diet, even undergo amputations of various limbs. How much more should they gladly endure to save their immortal souls from eternal death! (VS 1, 269)

8. If you find yourself in danger of sin, call upon the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In the biography of St. Hyacinth, we read that when the Tartars entered Kiev and began to destroy the convent, he with one hand took the ciborium with the Most Blessed Sacrament, and with the other, the stone statue of the Madonna. He then passed unscathed through the midst of those enemies. You too should hold in one hand the Heart of Jesus, and in the other, the mantle of the heavenly Queen and Mother. Thus you also will go unharmed amidst your enemies. (VS 1, 270-271)

9. To be worthy of the help of the Heart of Jesus the care of Mary, be humble and do not trust yourself. Avoid dangerous occasions. Constantly watch over yourself, as a soldier in enemy territory. Watch for the traps of Satan and the delusions of the world. Mortify your body, keep watch over your natural inclinations, and avoid too much attachment to creatures, so that they may not lead you where you would not want to go. (VS 1, 271)

10. Should you fall unfortunately, do not despair, but with trust and humility run to the Mercy of God, Who does not want the death of the sinner but patiently bears with him, seeks and receives him with love. When Divine Mercy lifts you from your sins, be careful not to return to them. As a fever, once cured, becomes stronger with a relapse, so too does a return to former sin; it becomes worse. (VS 1, 272-273)

11. Where does a soul who wants to return to God find help? In Jesus Christ, Savior of the world and the physician of souls, is refuge found. He died for the sins of the world and now cleanses souls of sins, returns them to spiritual life, heals their wounds, sanctifies them through penance, and strengthens their weaknesses. (VS 1, 274)

12. During the time of Jesus Christ, there was a pool in Jerusalem whose waters were periodically moved by an Angel. The first to bathe after the waters were moved would be cured. Such a pool was made by the Lord Jesus with His Blood, in the true Jerusalem, the Catholic Church. An earthly angel, the priest, constantly moves this pool. Whoever washes himself in this water with faith, hope and contrition is cleansed of his sins. This pool is called confession. (VS 1, 274)

13. The Sacrament of Penance is the most marvelous work of Mercy. How great is the Mercy of God! It is so easy, in one moment, to drown our sins in the Blood of Jesus, to break the bonds of Satan, return to the friendship of God, and restore the life of the soul, and together with this, to restore its former beauty, peace and merits. (VS 1, 275)

14. Confession is the cooperation of the soul with God. On the part of God this means the direct action of the Creator upon the Creature, and on the soul's part, the acts of faith, devotion, humility and repentance, which he offers to his Creator. In this cooperation with God in the Sacrament of Penance, the soul must prepare through examination of conscience. (VS 1, 276-277)

15. During the examination of conscience, ask God that the ray of His grace would enlighten the most hidden recesses of your heart. In order to more easily discover your sins before Confession, make a diligent examination daily. (VS 1, 278-279)

16. When evaluating the state of your soul, do not look for excuses, but act as a doctor who does not heed the cries of the sick person, as he examines his wounds. Do not fool yourself or consider yourself innocent, but examine yourself as though you had to stand at this very moment before the Highest Judge. (VS 1, 278-279)

17. During the examination of conscience, avoid levity and negligence. On the other hand, avoid fear and scrupulosity that robs you of peace and makes true contrition more difficult. be not so upset as to fall into a state of panic. The person who is scrupulous should follow the directives of the confessor. (VS 1, 280)

18. Sorrow for sin is an essential element for a good confession. Nothing can replace it. Where there is no genuine sorrow – there can be no true conversion, nor can there be any forgiveness on the part of God. (VS 1, 280)

19. Another condition, closely allied to sorrow, is a firm purpose of amendment. . . . Indeed, whoever is sincerely sorry, not only detests his sins, but also becomes determined to avoid them in the future. Otherwise, according to the words of St. Ambrose, there would be no genuine repentance and the Sacrament of Penance would be exposed to profanation. (VS 1, 282)

20. One should think of confession as a blessed and treasured Sacrament, as a precious moment to ask for forgiveness of the God of Love, to appease divine justice, and to regain and reinforce the friendship of God. VS 1, 289)

21. God gives a feeling of shame when one commits a sin, and a feeling of confidence when one goes to confession. Satan, however, has inverted this order attaching pleasure to sin, and shame, even fear, to Confession. If ever you should be submitted to this temptation, that is, not to tell all your serious sins in confession or, worse yet, to skip confession, beg God for the grace to overcome all human respect and erase this diabolical temptation. (VS 1, 292)

22. Go with complete confidence to Confession. In it you receive a treasured Sacrament, the merits from the Savior's death, and the presence of Christ in the person of the confessor. ... Go to confession with complete confidence... regardless of how downcast and discouraged you may feel due to sins committed. The mercy of God outweighs your sins. (VS 1, 129)

23. After Confession, thank God for the privilege of such a precious gift which is, as St. Thomas Aquinas observes, more blessed, more wonderful than the creation of the world. (VS 1, 294)

24. God bestowed on the first man some natural and supernatural gifts. The good God gave him not only what pertained to his human nature but also a powerful interior light and a powerful loving force enabling him to be a holy friend of God. Besides this beautiful natural life, man possesses a life of grace whose beginning, center, and end is God, the font of love. The perfect

fusion between the soul and God has at the same time blended an unusual harmony between the soul and body. However original sin upset this harmony, wiped out the life of grace, and weakened and wounded human nature, leaving intact only its essence. (VS 1, 356-357)

25. Original sin leaves us, as it were, with a double life: one rises from our wounded nature, the other from the grace of God. The first is the life of the senses, such as pride and vanity, of which St. Paul says: “I see in my body’s members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me prisoner of the law of sin in my members.” (Rom. 7, 23) The second is the life of grace, a life of faith, mortification, chastity, humility and love. It is a life lived in Christ. As St. Paul the Apostle tells us: “The life I live now is not my own: Christ is living in me.” (Gal. 2, 20) (VS 1, 358)

26. Man must conquer and eliminate whatever makes his nature unclean in order that he may live in Christ. This is achieved by mortification, or as some writers say, “self-denial, death of the old man.” (VS 1, 359)

27. Mortification is a matter not only of counsel, as many say, but also of obligation. It is a duty for each and every person without exception. This law has been imposed on us by Jesus Christ who said: “If a man wishes to come after me he must deny his very self, take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps.” (Matt. 16, 24) (VS 1, 359-360)

28. To be perfect, one must refrain not only from forbidden fruit and what may lead him to sin, but also from what prevents us from practicing virtue and from any obstacle on the road to perfection even if not strictly forbidden. I repeat – the essence of perfection is the love of God and one of the best ways to achieve this goal is “mortification.” This is the general conclusion of the Saints. In short – we progress in goodness to the extent that we conquer and maintain control of our nature. (VS 1, 361-362)

29. Mortification disposes the soul to the love and union of God. The soul is thus emptied of impurities and imperfections, preparing a fitting resting place for the divine. Correctly has it been noted: “if you deny yourself totally, you will find God. Empty your heart of creatures and God will fill you with Divine Love.” (VS 1, 362-363)

30. Without mortification, prayer is of little help. According to St. Francis Borgia, prayer produces love of God, mortification prepares the way by emptying the heart of inordinate desires and relationships. Without mortification, even the Sacraments, though frequently received, bear little fruit. It is mortification chiefly that clears away whatever obstacles that may weaken us. In brief, without mortification the spiritual life, yes even the religious life, and above all the priestly apostolic life, becomes nothing but a farce, an illusion, and sad to say, at times a living contradiction. (VS 1, 363)

## MAY

### **TO CONSTRUCT THE EDIFICE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION ONE MUST PREPARE THE NECESSARY MATERIAL, THAT IS, THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUES, ESPECIALLY, HUMILITY**

1. With major obstacles eliminated, the soul now prepares, by grace of God, the material for the construction of the edifice of perfection. The material, generally speaking, may be identified as “the Christian virtues”. A virtue is a good habit, that is, an inclination to do good. One develops a facility in virtue by repeated practice. When treating of the supernatural and Christian virtues, there is required one more consideration – the grace of God, whose source and model is Jesus Christ. (VS 2,3)
2. There is a vast difference between an acquired material virtue and an infused supernatural virtue. The former is the net result of an infused supernatural virtue. Material virtue is the net result of an action and its repetition, which a man performs well, graciously, and easily, but within the natural order. The latter, a supernatural virtue, is the work of the Holy Spirit that pours into the soul the seeds of virtue by means of the Sacraments and sanctifying grace. Hence, God is the source of supernatural virtue, but its growth requires man’s cooperation. Supernatural virtue leans toward God since its aim is to please Him, and is assisted by the help of grace and the teachings of Christ. (VS 2, 3-4)
3. Virtue, the fruit of grace and human effort, has an immeasurable value. It is more precious than all the treasures of the world. . . its unique character embellishes the soul in the sight of God and the esteem of mankind. It is virtue that makes the soul exceedingly beautiful, fortifies its divine glow, and makes it resemble God Who is all beautiful. Virtue is the authentic Tree of Life, whose trunk is born in time, but whose branches and fruits are from eternity. (VS 2, 5)
4. Virtue, in the broad sense, is the determined and ceaseless craving of the soul to observe the divine law in all its ramifications and to do so with purity of intention. In this sense, virtue is unique and is one with love, in accord with the words of St. Paul the Apostle: “Love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Cfr. Rom. 13, 8) (VS 2, 5-6)
5. Just as God is the one supreme and perfect Good in Whom all perfection resides, so love is the one supreme and perfect virtue which contains all the other virtues, and dispenses them under various aspects and names according to type and action. (VS 2, 6)
6. Theologians divide the divine (theological) virtues into three (faith, hope and charity). They proceed directly from God and have Him as their object. Then there are the moral virtues that guide and regulate behavior with one’s neighbor. There are four principal moral virtues called the Cardinal Virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance). They direct and oversee one’s moral life. (VS 2, 6)
7. One should practice virtue according to his state of life and cultivate the good habits needed to carry out his vocation. Some virtues are necessary for everyone. For example, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity endeavor to acquire and develop them, especially the virtue of

charity because it ranks as the mother, the queen of virtues. Make acts of virtue frequently, but be sure their motive is love. Adorn the soul with all the virtues for example, humility, patience, meekness, affability, alertness, etc. since they are indispensable in day-to-day living. They may appear trivial but they play an important role in our association with others, as St. Francis de Sales observes – good virtues are attractive, made possible by the Blood of the Savior and merited from the shadow of the Cross.

8. Avoid superficial virtues. Externally, they look genuine but within a short time the veneer collapses and they fail to live up to the test. Just as one hears of counterfeit money in the world of business, so in religious life, there are some who pompously parade superficial acts of virtue. They base their service of God on mere externals so as to be seen by others, but they neglect their own interior life forgetting the laws of God. They perform their duties with an exterior flare to receive worldly praise and at the same time overlook the needs of their own interior life. In short, they imitate the Jewish Pharisees and Sadducees by being mainly concerned about self-aggrandizement and public adulation. (VS 2, 9-10)

9. If you hope to acquire real virtue, you must not only pray, but also pray perseveringly for grace. Do not ever become discouraged in the face of difficulties. Whoever wishes to savor the rich taste of the kernel of a nut must first crack the shell. So it is that the one who aspires to the life of virtue must first eliminate the manifold obstacles to virtue, namely, human passion, weakness and inertia. The effort seems and feels exhausting and most discouraging, but it is so only at the beginning. As one progresses, it becomes easier and more pleasant. (VS 11-12)

10. Not all the virtues require the same effort. Some people have been blessed with natural inclinations toward this or that virtue and so its practice is delightful and attractive. One should not rely smugly on natural talents, which in the long run tend to bore and peter out. Make your actions turn into acquired virtues by frequent practice. On the other hand, try your best to overcome any normal repugnance to practice this or that virtue. Once in control, the virtue will become stronger and the merit greater. (VS 2, 12-13)

11. If you want to attain virtue to a perfect degree, look frequently for help in Jesus Christ and exert yourself over and over because there are not holidays or vacation in the spiritual life. Be zealous, but not overanxious, nor easily perturbed. Do not think you can become holy in a day or a year. Do not demand from yourself what only God can give. (VS 2, 13)

12. If anyone should decide to build a house, he must first construct solid and reinforced foundations which will support, without too much stress, the weight of the building. In the spiritual life, the foundation is humility...What this virtue truly entails, may only be grasped by he who, with the help of God, is deeply humble. (VS 2, 15)

13. There is hardly any greater virtue for the mind to understand or the will to practice than humility. In the pagan world, its very name is unknown. Humility became known with the coming of Jesus Christ. He clothed it with a garment in such a way as to make it very attractive and accessible to the people. (VS 2, 15)

14. On what does humility rely? It relies on the knowledge and understanding of self-worth. St. Bernard says, “Humility is a virtue by which a man by introspection, attains a true knowledge of himself and doesn’t think highly of himself.” Therefore, there are two factors to consider for humility: truth and virtue...truth resides in the mind, virtue in the heart and will. Humility in the mind is quite common because most people see and admit their shortcomings; humility in the will, however, is rare since there are few who like humiliations. (VS 2, 15)

15. To understand ourselves, we need light, a divine light, to illuminate the mind, plus the guidance of faith and grace. These will teach us who is God and who is man. By this, we humble ourselves before God and other men since they bear the divine image and likeness. The basis for such humility is the knowledge of God, especially his omnipotence, wisdom, holiness and majesty, as well as His incredible life of humility – His Incarnation, Redemption and Eucharistic Presence. St. Theresa has accurately observed: “We shall never know ourselves if we never get to know God.” If, therefore, you wish to acquire humility, you must understand God, both who He is in Himself and also in relation to us creatures; and who you are in relation to God and to other creatures. (VS 2, 16-17)

16. You are a Christian, that is, a believer and follower of Jesus Christ. It is He who said: “Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart.” (Matt. 11, 29) Therefore, you should esteem and love humiliations because they make you similar to Him who concealed His majesty even unto death, to the death of the cross. (VS 2, 20-21)

17. Humility should permeate the whole person – reason, heart, will, and in a certain sense, the entire body. In other words, one should practice humility toward God, his neighbor, and even toward his very self. (VS 2, 21)

18. St. Ignatius distinguishes three grades in treating of humility. The first consists of the total submission of the soul to the divine law...The second, in the complete indifference to the things of the world; the third, and the highest degree, consists in this – secure in the knowledge of eventual glory and salvation, the soul prefers to be poor, to suffer, to be humiliated rather than be adulated by the people, considered wealthy and surrounded by worldly goods. This state of humility has only one object in mind – to become more and more like Christ. (VS 2, 21)

19. Jesus Christ is the finest teacher of humility. He instructs us by word and example through Bethlehem’s stable, His hidden life, His public life, His passion and death, and how He is present in the Eucharist. He says we should realize our own nothingness, shun honors and acclamations, not rely too much on our puny efforts, give no credit to ourselves, endure courageously the barbs and criticisms of others, and find joy in our humiliations. (VS 2, 22)

20. The humble soul is convinced to rely on nothing, not to attempt anything alone, and that whatever it has, the soul has received it from God and, therefore, God alone should be adored in Himself. Let the soul humble himself before God as a creature before His Creator, attributing nothing to himself, not even seeking his personal glory but rather the glory of God. (VS 2, 22)

21. It is not wrong to accept the esteem of people as well as compliments for one’s works and deeds because esteem is useful and necessary for a fruitful apostolate, especially for priests.



Congratulatory remarks often encourage and inspire (priests/souls?) to still greater works of the apostolate. Encouraging compliments are especially necessary for timid and hesitating souls. Therefore, accept approval and enjoy compliments, but do so with an upright and pure motive. However, you will be better off on this matter to submit them to God's most sacred Will. He who remains indifferent to both praise and scorn will be at greater peace within himself. (VS 2, 40)

22. Do not neglect to praise your neighbor when truth and prudence dictate it. Be happy when others praise your neighbor. Only an envious and proud soul forgets to give praise when praise is due, and his heart fills with envy when another receives a pat on the back. Be careful that your praiseworthy remarks do not hurt others or cause any displeasure. As a rule – avoid worldly praise. (VS 2, 41)

23. Neither condemn nor judge your neighbor. If you do, God will teach you humility at your expense, permitting you to slip into the same sins that you condemned in others. With the eye of faith, see in your neighbor, whoever he may be, the beautiful image of God, a soul redeemed by the Blood of the Savior and destined to inherit heavenly glory. (VS 2, 45)

24. The humble soul does not think too highly of himself because of his sins. He humbles himself before God and before other men out of love of God. He accept humiliations patiently....If it is asked why the Saints call themselves sinners...one must answer that, from mystical prayer and contemplation, they reached that high degree of enlightenment as to behold their real selves – a sight that can never be achieved from meditation only – and so they appreciate all the more the holiness of God, their own imperfections, and the awfulness of sin. Pray that God grant you even a glimmer of such spiritual insight. (VS 2, 44-46)

25. The humble soul willingly accepts humiliations and criticism. However, it may be difficult to comprehend how one joyfully accepts them because they run against the grain of self-love. I respond, the will, reinforced by the grace of God, can overcome self-love and can endure all humiliations freely, despite the opposition of a wounded nature. (VS 2, 53-54)

26. If you sincerely aspire to perfection, God, who is infinitely wise and good, will not spare you from humiliations. Some will become famous by words of praise from men, but you will get the silent treatment. Others will be assigned to this or that responsible office, but you will be considered as incapable and inept. What about it? Will this attitude dishearten or build up the green eyed monster of envy in you? No! You will be content to be ignored, passed by, and considered unfit because you will thereby imitate the hidden life of the Lord Jesus, uniting your humiliations to His. (VS 2, 54-55)

27. The perfectly humble soul not only endures humiliations with patience but also eagerly seeks opportunities to practice humility...their greatest happiness is to be humiliated, scorned, and abused, in order “to become more like Him who, for you, allowed Himself to be filled with opprobrium by the people.” (VS 2, 59)

28. Read the lives of the Saints and you will discover that even proud men did not seek fame and fortune with the same zeal that Saints sought humiliations and rejections. If you inquire,

what made you master your fallen nature, what made you set aside the world's adulation, your answer should be: it was because of my great, intense love for Christ and my burning desire to imitate His humility. (VS 2, 59-60)

29. The Saints have done things that seem unholy more than once. They acted this way to avoid the approval of men and to draw down their derision. However, following the counsel of St. Frances de Sales, I advise you not to act this way without receiving the direct approval from God. Such behavior may stunt the growth of humility as well as your good reputation, (which is) so necessary to edify your neighbor. Instead, accept the humiliations God sends you and thank Him for such precious gifts. A drop of gall that the Lord sends from Calvary is a greater gift than what you could have received had you been with the Apostles on Mt. Tabor. (VS 2, 63-64)

30. Does the virtue of humility perhaps appear too unpleasant? I admit that our inborn pride shudders at the thought. The world hates the word- humility. However, without it there is no salvation. Open the Gospel and read: "Take my yoke upon your shoulder and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart." (Matt. 11, 29) Who is speaking? It is the Son of God, the Teacher of the world. And to whom? He speaks to all His followers; that is, to all Christians. Therefore, whoever refuses to accept this teaching is not a Christian. (VS 2, 64-65)

31. Humility is the foundation, the very root, of the spiritual life. As a flower receives its vital fluid through its roots and thus feeds and grows, but loses its vitality and dies once cut off from the root, so virtue cut off from the root of humility soon dries up and dies. Humility is the main source of energy for all the virtues. Just as the tree laden with fruit has its branches weighted down, while the tree barren of fruit retains its branches elevated, so fruitful virtue is humble and fruitless virtue is proud. (VS 2, 66-67)

## JUNE

### **AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF HUMILITY; LIFE BASED ON FAITH AND HOPE**

1. If God were never humiliated, man would have despised the virtue of humility; instead now he hates the vice of pride. When the Son of God became man, He wished to be considered as nothing so that man might accept his own nothingness, despite the fact it was repugnant to his nature. For this reason, the Lord clothed Himself with the virtue of humility. If you are to love humility, love the Lord Jesus, for humility is the daughter of the love of God. If you wish to develop humility, receive the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion, that is, in the mystery of the greatest act of love and the most profound act of humility. If the Lord Jesus, who comes to you in the Eucharist, does not make you humble, it must be concluded that we possess an obstacle that resists the action of the Sacred Heart. In this condition, there is no hope of becoming humble. (VS 2, 79)
2. If you wish to become truly humble, pray to God. Tell Him you lack this virtue since humility is a divine gift. A ray of God's light will teach more in one moment than a year spent in meditation. Pray especially to the Heart of Jesus, hidden in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of love and humility, saying: "Oh Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like to Thine." Pray also to the most humble mother, Mary, that she intercede on your behalf for the gift of humility. (VS 2, 77)
3. If you wish to become humble, contemplate the infinite perfections of God, as well as the incredible humility of the Son of God in His Incarnation, hidden and public life, on the cross, and in the Eucharist. Consider likewise the humility of the Most Blessed Virgin and the Saints such as St. Joseph, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Elizabeth, etc. (VS 2, 77-79)
4. True humility is always united to the virtue of hope. (VS 2, 47-48)
5. Pondering one's imperfections can make the soul feel sad and discouraged. At such a time, look up to God who, in His mercy, will erase your misery. (VS 2, 80)
6. Practice acts of humility. Like all the virtues, humility develops and strengthens only by repetition. Whoever humbles himself in thought only is like a builder who wishes to construct a house but never does. Acts of humility lead to the virtue of humility, just as patience brings peace, and reading produces knowledge. (VS 2, 80-81)
7. The foundation stone of the edifice of the spiritual life is faith. It is a supernatural virtue, a gift of God, by which, in placing our trust in His divine authority, we accept what He has revealed and what the Catholic Church has officially proposed for man's belief as entirely true. (VS 2, 82)
8. Faith...is like a plant that emerges from an unearthly world, whose seed comes only from God through Baptism. Therefore, this plant only grows under the influence of the light of grace,

through the teaching of the Church. Then, with the soul's cooperation, faith sprouts into a shoot and finally blooms into a healthy full-grown flower. (VS 2, 82)

9. To believe as a Christian, it is necessary to recognize the truth with the intellect and to embrace it with one's free will. The Church teaches these truths and the grace of God inspires the will to accept them...without the teaching of the Church and without the help of the Holy Spirit, the virtue of faith cannot exist. The Church never ceases to teach. God never refuses His grace to those who present no obstacles. Therefore, one can never be justified who, having heard and understood the Christian truths, still refuses to accept the gift of faith. (VS 2, 82-83)

10. (The object of) faith contains all the truths revealed by God and entrusted to the care of the Church whose function it is to preserve them intact and proclaim them infallibly. The basis of faith is the authority of God alone, Who is All Truth and All Wisdom. (V2, 83)

11. Faith is a divine virtue because God Himself is its source, object, and scope. The purpose of faith is to form a close union with God in order to know Him better...Faith leads the soul into the supernatural world, opening the door – something the intellect alone could never do. Faith is the basis of the virtues of hope and charity. That is why faith is called the foundation stone of the spiritual edifice. (VS 2, 83)

12. Faith makes the soul pleasing to God and disposes Him to grant many graces; it is adoration due to God who is All Truth; it is submission of the human mind to divine authority. Faith produces in the soul a light that illuminates the mysteries of God, mysteries containing a wealth of wisdom by far incomprehensible to reason. (VS 2, 85)

13. When Abraham did not hesitate to offer his son in sacrifice, not only did he not lose his son, but he also received many beautiful blessings from God. Likewise, the soul that subjects reason to faith not only does not lose anything but also actually adds to his knowledge, being assured of a heavenly home and family. (VS 2, 93)

14. The spirit of faith gives man an insight into the truths of faith so that he thinks, desires, speaks, acts, and even suffers as a faithful Christian...With the eyes of faith, he studies both the earthly and sacramental life of the Lord Jesus, he reflects on the Lord's cross, enters His Sacred Heart, and welcomes Him into his soul as the center of his life. (VS 2, 107)

15. Do not rest content to look at other creatures and the occurrences of life merely with the eye of reason much less scrutinize them with the eye of self-love; rather, view everything with the eye of faith. Speak and act according to faith – let all your words and actions be made with pure and holy motives. (V 2, 108)

16. If you wish to be a good Christian, let yourself be guided by the spirit of faith; let it permeate every action of your life. Try to do whatever will lead you to God.

Think and breathe invoking God, contemplating Him in His creatures. Empty your heart of earthly things and dedicate it totally to God. (VS 2, 107)

17. Always worship the will of God. Accept all setbacks with humility, patience and gratitude. Consider them as precious gifts of the Lord Jesus, the one Whom you hope to emulate. (VS 2, 108)

18. The spirit of faith begets freedom of soul, joy of heart, holiness of life, interior lights, and true wisdom, which looks at human events with a supernatural vision and measures time with eternity. (VS 2, 108)

19. Faith should be for you what the soul is for the body...it should penetrate your faculties, guide your actions, and make you look, insofar as possible, like Christ. May the words of St. Paul be recognized in you: "All who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God." (Rom. 8, 14) (VS 2, 109)

20. Hope is an infused supernatural virtue by means of which, relying on the promise of God and the merits of Christ, we await the fulfillment of this promise with serenity and joy. Two principles formulate the virtue of hope: the desire to possess God, the supreme God in all His fullness, and the trust that we shall receive the necessary graces merited by the Lord to reach this heavenly goal. (VS 2, 110)

21. The principal object of hope is God alone – the secondary object is everything God has promised us, especially eternal salvation together with the means to reach our final destiny, that is, sanctifying and actual graces, the forgiveness of sins, and hope in the Holy Spirit besides others. Furthermore, worldly goods may be the object of hope, provided we use them as a means to attain our supernatural and eternal goals. (VS 2, 110-111)

22. Like faith, hope develops from the seed God plants in the soul at the time of Baptism. In fact, the seeds of faith and hope were placed in the soul at the same moment. Thus, there is a perfect union between faith and hope. Faith teaches us that supernatural blessings exist and are destined for man. Hope encourages us to seek them and assures us they can be obtained.

23. Hope rests on the divine promise that God Himself, who is infinitely Good, wants to give us these precious gifts; being infinitely loyal, He will give us everything that He has promised with absolute certainty. Therefore, we may aptly compare hope to an anchor. As the anchor has three arms used to grip solid land thus preventing the boat from being tossed about by the waves, so hope has three arms on which the Christian may brace himself during the voyage of life. They are the Omnipotence, Goodness, and the Faithfulness of God. (VS 2,111)

24. God has repeatedly promised us His help and grace, and confirmed and sealed it with an oath. You may retort: "This promise is not for me a sinner! It is for good people." You must never forget that God is full of mercy. Look at the cross – behold Jesus Crucified! - the Mediator between God and sinful man. He cries out: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Perhaps you fear the sufferings of the cross?? If so, look at the foot of the cross. There you will find His Mother, the Mediatrix between Jesus and sinners. (VS 2,112)

25. Trust in the mercy of God whose center is the most merciful Heart of Jesus and whose haven to which the most holy Madonna can guide us. Do not place your confidence in creatures since they will turn out to be a sad letdown. (V 2,113)

26. Hope is necessary so that man may live according to the law of God. For a person not to be swayed by ephemeral, worldly attractions, it is necessary for him to keep his eyes fixed rigidly on spiritual, eternal values; man needs the assurance of divine help and comfort that he not waver in daily struggles, that he not collapse under the weight of the cross. Man must have a firm promise that heaven is within his reach in order that he exert himself in the right direction. Man must feel secure that the goal will be reached so that he can take those difficult steps toward perfection. This certainty is obtained by the virtue of hope. (VS 2,114)

27. Hope, insofar as it is founded on God and is convinced of receiving His help, is called trust. The virtue of trust draws down many divine graces because it is homage rendered to divine mercy and it opens the doors for this mercy, according to the words of the Psalmist: "Mercy surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord." (Ps. 32, 10) ( VS 2, 115)

28. Trust assures us of God's protection. If we consecrate ourselves totally to God, He, being so good and attentive, will take care of us. This divine concern will be in proportion to the depth of our virtue of trust. (VS 2, 116)

29. Trust gives us strength, courage, and peace. Who can possibly upset the soul that trusts in the Lord? Have you ever watched a baby asleep in the arms of its mother? The same tranquility resides in the soul that trusts in the Heart of Jesus. (VS 2, 116-117)

30. Hope comforts us in time of sorrow, assures us of acquiring well deserved merits, and consoles us at the most critical of all moments - death. Hope, like an angel of peace, approaches the death bed, permits a short preview of heaven, the soul's true country; and lastly, to protect one from the temptation to despair, reveals the marvelous Mercy of God. (VS 2, 118-119)

**JULY**  
**THE WALLS OF THE SPIRITUAL EDIFICE ARE  
MADE OF CHARITY AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR**

1. Charity is an infused supernatural virtue by which we love God above all things, since He is all good, and we love our neighbor as ourselves because of our love of God. This love is the fruit of grace. The Holy Spirit has bestowed it through Baptism. At first it is only a seed. Then with the help of God and our cooperation with His grace, the virtue of charity grows and matures. (Cfr. VS 2, 149-150)
2. The foundation of charity is faith and hope. Faith shows us the divine gifts. Hope promises them to us – faith and hope set the stage for the greatest and most important of all virtues, charity. It is charity that draws us close to God. Faith treats of sacred truths we cannot see; hope explains the gifts we have yet to obtain; however, Charity begins that glorious union with God even though the union itself is but imperfect. (VS 2, 150)
3. Charity is called the perfect virtue because it makes the soul God-like according to the words of the Apostle Paul: “God is Love.” Charity is the queen of all the virtues. Charity clothes the soul with the divine image – yes, the soul and God are united. This is the essence of perfection. Hence the importance and perfection of the soul depend on charity. If the soul attains a lofty degree of charity, this is a remarkable gift; if a lesser degree, the soul is just ordinary; if the soul lacks charity, it is nothing. As St. Paul says: “If I do not have charity, I am nothing.” (1 Cor. 13:2)
4. How obvious is the way to perfection! One errs saying that perfection consists in extreme penances, lengthy prayers or other arduous tasks; whereas perfection depends chiefly on perfect charity. “Love”, says St. Augustine, “and then you may do what you wish.” This means that charity is the thread that runs through all our actions until we arrive safely and happily at our ultimate goal – God! Therefore, if charity dominates every beat of the heart, our daily life will be a holy one. (VS 2, 152)
5. Charity is the most perfect way to God, as well as the most direct way - no detours! It is also the shortest way - no delays! The road of charity is level - no ravines! It is safe; no hidden obstacles! Charity is a happy journey because it resembles a stroll with your dearest friend, a most learned guide, Jesus Christ, Master and Savior of the world!! (VS 2, 152)
6. Charity is such a powerful force nothing can stop it. No sword can wound it; no water can drown it; no flame can burn it; no cataclysm can destroy it. Not even death can conquer it. Charity lives on! Great are the achievements of charity. It purifies the soul and transforms it radically so that the timid become courageous, the weak become strong, and the tepid become fervent. Charity exalts the soul in an extraordinary way. Under its influence the soul instinctively withdraws from mundane pursuits and prefers to think of, desire and seek God alone. (VS 2, 153-154)
7. Charity is a most admirable virtue because it allows us to share God’s life, thus becoming the source of all consolation and happiness. Charity also possesses, as it were, a magical

power – a heavy load becomes light, a difficulty is rendered simple, an overwhelming sorrow is made endurable, even light...Oh! The Love of God – you are the sweetest aspiration of the human heart, the greatest consolation of earthly life! With you, poverty turns into richness, suffering into joy. Without you, wealth is boredom, and pleasure is bitterness. With you, life, however difficult it may be, suddenly becomes heavenly; without you, even heaven becomes a hell on earth. (VS 2, 155-157)

8. Charity is like the heart beat of the virtues because it gives them a supernatural value, a divine power and beauty, so much so, that every action prompted by charity attains an unusual worth and merit. Where charity reigns, the entire makeup of the virtues glistens with indescribable brilliance. On the contrary, where charity is lacking, all the virtues become like a mass of ruins. Even chastity without charity has no beauty and, according to the words of St. Matthew (25), “it is like a lamp without oil.” (VS 2, 160)

9. Charity illuminates the soul because it draws near to pure light. The appearance of charity surpasses even the appearance of faith. Charity enlivens, uplifts and prepares the soul to perform many noble actions. It unites itself to God and, in a certain sense, transforms the soul to look like God. A quality of charity is this: that it transforms the one loving into the one loved . . . Therefore; if you wish to resemble God, love. Man becomes God-like, not from knowledge, but from love. The union of the soul with God is the first step in the life of the Saints. (VS 2, 160-161)

10. Jeremiah says: “With age-old love I have loved you.” (31, 33) If you want to ponder the profound depth of this love, simply examine the works of the God-man, particularly the three eternal masterpieces of His love – the crib, the cross, and the Eucharist. Then, stand at the foot of the cross and contemplate the love of Jesus Crucified. Kneel before the tabernacle and meditate on the incredible length that Jesus took to conceal Himself in the Eucharist, such a complete sacrifice of Himself, so total a dedication to mankind, all prompted by divine love. Consider too the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Its love. Indeed, no amount of reasoning, however elevated, can fully grasp the intensity of the love of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. (VS 2, 164-165)

11. What should be the measure of our love of God? The Fathers of the Church reply: “Without measure; because God is infinite He is worthy of an infinite love. Since His love for us had no limits, then our love for Him should have no limits.” (VS 2, 166)

12. Among the many grades of love, St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes three principal degrees. In the first and lowest degree, the soul loves God without adoring any creature and so avoids grave sin. In the next degree, having overcome all obstacles and having prepared a fitting place for God in his heart, the soul expresses an ardent love of God, and so avoids venial sins. There one reaches the state of Christian perfection, which expresses itself particularly in a life dedicated to the practice of the evangelical counsels and religious vows. The third and highest degree of love consists in love’s ecstasy. This state is to be found in the soul of the Most Blessed Virgin; one also may discover a reflection of it in the lives of the Saints. (VS 2, 170-171)



13. Love has a variety of species. For example, natural and supernatural love; habitual love, which is infused, and actual love, which is expressed by one's actions; perfect and imperfect love; sentimental or accidental love and essential love. Oh! If we could only and always consider God as Our Father and we His sons, how much worship we would render to God, and what a sublime degree of happiness we would enjoy. (VS 2, 171-177)

14. The soul that loves God perfectly forgets self and the world. It seeks only God because God means everything to it. God has become its consolation, wealth, glory and life itself. Under the influence of grace, the soul feels that no other person, no other thing exists in the entire world. Only God and the soul exist. Fame and scorn, happiness and suffering, life and death, do not influence the soul. The soul seeks and desires nothing but God. (VS 2, 204)

15. The soul that loves God forgets self – not seeking its own happiness, not its own consolation even though spiritual, not even the divine gifts in themselves. The soul seeks God alone. (VS 2, 205)

16. Blessed is the soul that loves God in a perfect way. It towers above the world, it breathes the fresh air of heaven – Jesus is its friend. Its wisdom springs from heaven, its joy is utterly sacred, its liberty is a divine liberty, and its peace is unchangeable in spite of trials and setbacks. If you are looking for such a love, free yourself from self-love, even when it views sacred matters. Seek God everywhere – seek only God. (VS 2, 206)

17. With every ounce of energy, search out that interior love that penetrates your entire being, that aggressive love which expresses itself not only in words but also in actions. It is a love that is brave and full of sacrifice, ready to face any labor, suffering, or self-denial; a love that is pure and disinterested, a love for the sake of God alone, setting aside any consolation or profit; it is a love that perpetually burns on the altar of your heart. In short – it is the perfect love about which St. Francis exclaims: “My God and my All!” (VS 2, 214)

18. There are two ways to acquire true love. The first is to remove the obstacles; the second is to permit the entrance of love into the soul and foster its growth and maturity. To remove the obstacles, one starts by eradicating self-love. This is obvious because the love of God cannot live together with a disordered self-love. Hence there is a need to free the heart from the snares and passions harmful to the love of God, and to get rid of any obstacle that may impede normal growth. As St. Theresa urges, “Wean your heart from creatures, and seek God, and you will find Him.” (VS 2, 214-215)

19. The soul unduly attached to creatures, will never attain true union with God. Human attachments prove a stumbling block to divine action. Clean the soul of imperfections. These imperfections, especially the deliberate ones, such as excessive curiosity, or talkativeness, impede the growth of love. Above all, be humble. Humility invites God to enter the soul and abide there. As fire retains its glow better under ashes, so love is protected under the mantle of humility. (VS 2, 216)

20. For love to enter and mature in the soul, one must ardently want it because God bestows His love only to those who ask. Ask for this love because it is the greatest of all gifts. Jesus

reminds us that He came on earth to bring fire and He wishes everyone to be consumed by this fire (Lk. 12, 49). He will light this fire in the hearts of those properly disposed. He will inflame the soul more willingly as love is sought more eagerly. (VS 2, 217)

21. To inflame your heart, meditate on the infinite perfections of God and His incomprehensible love. Consider especially the love that Jesus revealed as he hung on His cross, and also His boundless love expressed in the Eucharist. Do everything out of love! As one must study long hours in order to learn a science, as one must practice very much to speak eloquently, so too in order to love, we must work hard and struggle to perfect ourselves in the art of loving God. (VS 2, 218-219)

22. Christian love has as its object not only God but also the neighbor who is wished well out of love for God. Love of neighbor is an extension of the love of God. By wishing well to the father of the family we automatically include our love for his children, so when we wish well to God, we extend our love to the children of God, namely, our neighbor. Love of neighbor is the foundation of love of God. It may be asserted, without any hesitation, that where the love of neighbor does not exist, neither does the love of God. Love of God quickens the heart. Where God resides everyone lives. Where God does not live, neither there room for anyone else. (VS 2, 218-220)

23. Love of neighbor is the virtue of a perfect soul . . . and it is a most important habit, more pleasing to God than a sacrifice offered in His name. It is far more difficult to love a neighbor who has many imperfections than it is to love God who is infinitely perfect. By the parable of the Good Samaritan, Our Savior teaches us how we should also love regardless of the difference in rank, age, race or creed. We must not make exceptions, loving one and hating another . . . Christian love excludes no one because it imitates God, Who is the Father of all. (VS 2, 221-223)

24. If we love our neighbor because he loves us, or because it benefits us, or gives us pleasure or honor, we act more like animals. If we love our neighbor because of the good we see in him, for example, his handsome features, his unusual talents, we act more like the pagans. In neither case is it supernatural love because the motives are material. True love makes it possible for us to love God in Himself and for Himself, and to love our neighbor because God loves him and abides in his soul. (VS 2, 222)

25. True love sees his neighbor in the Heart of the Savior. (VS 2, 226)

26. Jesus teaches us the model and measure of love of neighbor: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” According to God, true love of self becomes the measure of love of neighbor. Christ leaves us another rule of thumb: “I give you a new commandment – love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 13, 34) The Lord has loved us even to the extreme of sacrificing Himself. He loved us to the very end – despite our failings – despite our ingratitude. (VS 2, 227-228)

27. To achieve perfect love, one must remove all impediments, the most important of which is self-love. Pray fervently to succeed in this undertaking of conversion of heart. Pray

especially to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the paragon of love, that God may fill your heart with pure love. Pray to the Mother of love that her children may love each other and she may bestow this love on those who ask. Reflect on the love of Jesus, the love of the Mother of God, and the love of the Saints. Ask for the courage to imitate them. (VS 2, 229)

28. Endeavor to see only Christ in your neighbor; for He assures us that whatever we do to one of these little ones, we do to Him. Perform such acts of love. (VS 229)

29. It is necessary to love one's neighbor with all one's mind, heart, will and deeds. Loving with the mind is not breed evil thoughts against your neighbor, not doubting his sincerity. Everyone has a right to a good reputation; it's a treasure more precious than silver and gold. To love with the mind includes another facet, namely, do not underestimate or scorn anyone but rather hold him in high esteem before God. (VS 2, 230-237)

30. Love of neighbor with one's heart means avoiding hatred, revenge, any form of antipathy which may breed irritation, rudeness, suspicion and revulsion. Do not behave from caprice but from Christian love. Do not judge out of ill feelings but out of the virtue of faith. When kneeling before the Most Blessed Sacrament, the humble Eucharistic species are not deceiving you, for you are really and truly seeing, with the eyes of faith, Jesus Christ. Therefore, be not duped by the weaknesses and defects of your neighbor but rather behold in him the image of God. (VS 2, 238-239)

31. Love your neighbor in word and deed. May your neighbor never be the target of your barbs, that is, verbal attacks against your neighbor. Such masochistic delight, at the expense of love, can be brutal. Your speech should be kind and pleasant, without flattery; sweet without becoming saccharine, as St. Paul puts it, sprinkled with the salt of kindness. (VS 2, 249-251)

Love your neighbor in deed. The Apostle John encourages us when he says: "Little children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it." (1 Jn. 3, 18) Love is born in the heart, develops in words and matures with actions. Fire dies out when not fueled. So also love when not kept alive by good deeds. (Cfr. VS 2, 260)

## **AUGUST**

### **BE SUBJECT TO THE DIVINE WILL IN ALL OF LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES AND BE PATIENT IN SUFFERING**

1. Submission to the will of God is the roof of our spiritual edifice. The soul that has acquired this virtue may in good conscience say, "Lord, I do not wish anything but to do your will." The will of God is discovered in two ways, active or passive. God's will may command, forbid, permit, counsel or execute His eternal plan in time. Our submission to God's will may be either active or passive - active when we carry out the divine will; passive when we accept what God does. (VS 2, 351)

2. According to the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church and theologians, there are certain things that God proposed unconditionally and His Will must be fulfilled; and there are other

matters that are conditioned, that is, dependent on free human will. For example, God wishes everyone's salvation, provided each person cooperates with His grace. (VS 2, 351-352)

3. How does one recognize the will of God? It is recognized in the following manner – the Commandments of God, the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Precepts of the Church, just orders of legitimate superiors, obligations of one's state in life, acts of Divine Providence and the genuine aspirations that come from God. (VS 2, 352)

4. What is meant by "according to the will of God?" In the first place, we should adore God's most wise plans and we should submit to them without hesitation if they are clearly understood. Do not fret or even seek to find out whether they are pleasant or unpleasant – if there is some doubt, do not insist on putting them under a microscope. Rather, in all things, we should submit to God's wisdom, love and holiness. (VS 2, 352-353)

5. Do not oppose God's will when it is obvious. Furthermore, one should seek always and everywhere to carry out God's requests and to consider His will as the only norm of our way of life. (VS 2, 353)

6. God is the creator of all things and therefore, everything, all creation, depends on Him. He directs them according to His will. Everything, except sin, comes from His "fiat." Cassian tells us "It is necessary to believe without hesitation because nothing takes place without Him willing it or permitting it. In short nothing occurs in the world by so called blind chance or by absolute necessity, but rather according to the plan of the all wise and all merciful Providence." (VS 2, 353-355)

7. It may often happen that, due to the natural law, one suffers a set back and it cannot be avoided. For example, one contracts a disease because the atmosphere is infected, or a raging storm destroys a harvest, etc. It is true, God keeps us away from such disasters, but if He doesn't, be patient! He will draw out some good from every evil; He will use these occasions to correct, purify and sanctify us. (VS 2, 356)

8. Perhaps you wonder if those hurts, outrages and calumnies perpetrated by other men really are permitted by God. This much we know. Yes, indeed, they are sins. They are evil. However, God, who is all holy, does not want them to happen and so He condemns and punishes those evil doers. On the other hand, yes, it is also true that God tolerates the sinner, in order to chastise and put someone else to the test. (VS 2, 356-357)

9. If your neighbor sins and by his sin causes you harm and makes you suffer, certainly you have every right to condemn the sin. However, you should view your own hurts as a test from the Lord Who is using your neighbor as an instrument of His justice and mercy. (VS 2, 357)

10. "Shall I not drink the chalice that the Father has given me?" said our Savior. (Jn. 18, 11) This chalice was prepared by the Jews. But one must not conclude that they acted according to a command of God. No! Their wrong came from their evil will and, therefore, they sinned. But God was aware and tolerated this sin, using it as the instrument to carry out His own most sacred plan. (VS 2, 357-358)

11. God never goes along with the sin, but He does accept its penalty, the Cross. So, too, we should be willing to carry our cross. If you shoulder only the crosses you deserve and not some others, you will be missing an excellent opportunity to advance along the way of perfection. (VS 2, 358)

12. The Saints lived with only one desire – to know and carry out God’s Will. Blessed Henry Suso once said: “I would rather be the vilest worm by doing God’s Holy Will than to be a seraph doing my own.”

“Whatever we do,” says another Saint (St. Francis de Sales), “becomes valuable due to the union of our will with the will of God. When, for example, I eat or play according to God’s will, I am giving more honor to the Lord, acquiring more merits for my eternal salvation than if I performed some pious act that did not conform to the will of God.” (VS 2, 360)

13. Submission of the human will to the divine will glorifies and adores God perfectly because it spells the triumph of His grace. The Lord established two kinds of a strong and permanent union: first, the union of the divine nature with the human nature in the One Person of Jesus Christ; and second, the union of the maternity and virginity in the one person of the Most Blessed Virgin. There is nothing on this earth that can give God more honor and make man more like to God than the union of the human will with the divine will. (VS 2, 360)

14. In the mystery of the Incarnation, the human nature of Jesus does not act by itself but through the Person of the Word...likewise our human will united perfectly to the will of God no longer acts by itself but becomes the instrument of the action of God. Just as the humanity of Jesus Christ, by virtue of its union with His divinity, became one Person infinitely wise, holy and brave, so also the human will, when transformed as it were into the will of God, becomes holy and perfect. (VS 2, 360-361)

15. Union with the will of God secures for us every possible good. We are granted, above all, a holy liberty. Therefore whoever becomes subject to the divine will automatically frees himself from the slavery of the world and from self-love and enjoys the freedom of the sons of God. (VS 2, 161)

By her total submission to the will of God, The Blessed Virgin attained the highest of all honors, the dignity of divine maternity. All other titles and gifts, such as her Immaculate Conception, her Virginity, her fullness of Grace and Virtue, her Assumption into Heaven – all are like rays of that brilliant Sun, namely, Divine Maternity. (VS 2, 153)

16. Union with the divine will produces strength and courage. If you act according to the will of God, you will obtain the assurance of the help of God. If you are promised the help of God, why do you suffer from fear? You may (May you?) declare with the Prophet: “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” (Ps. 23, 1) (VS 2, 61)

17. Union with the will of God gives us perfect peace. What can possibly fray your nerves: you quietly accept whatever happens, knowing full well that everything takes place by the most wise and most merciful will of God? The soul united to God’s will repeats over and over, “God wills it.” It is this precious conviction that produces perfect peace. As St. Leo the Great adds that

peace consists in this: Do not separate yourself from the will of God, and be happy only with whatever leads you to God. (VS 2, 362)

18. The union of man's will with God's will produces perfect happiness because this act of submission assuages any displeasure and eases any sorrow. Why are so many people unhappy? Mainly for this reason: They want what God does not want, and they do not want what God wants. A wooden cross is made when one beam falls across the other beam. Likewise, the spiritual cross is formed when man's will falls across God's will. (VS 2, 362)

19. Union with the divine will produces much merit and glory. The greater our sacrifice, the higher will be the reward God gives us. Is there any sacrifice greater than the surrender of one's free will? Man can offer God nothing more than the complete surrender of his free will. (VS 2, 365)

20. The better the clay, the more expensive is the vase of the potter. Likewise, the more obedient the human will, the more beautiful is the vase of grace which God forms because He truly loves souls who are totally dedicated to Him. (VS 2, 365)

21. Our perfection emerges from our submission to the divine will. Submission is the heart of perfection. Whoever follows God's will in every detail may be called "perfect". Because of this union of wills, everything that happens produces dividends for the soul and aids the desire for sanctification. Submission is also the best short cut to union with God. He who submits to God's holy will can expect many blessings because he raises himself above other creatures, approaches the place set aside for Angels, and soars, as it were, with the wings of an eagle, all the way up to heaven, the abode of the most Holy Trinity. He becomes the brother of Christ, who said: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and my mother." (Matt. 12:50) (VS 2, 366-367)

22. Submission to the will of God assures us of a place in heaven. Just as the pilot steers the ship and arrives safely in port despite contrary winds, so God guides the humble soul through life and brings it safely into the port of heaven despite many temptation and trials. (VS 2, 368)

23. The Lord wishes the salvation of everyone. There is only one road that leads to God – the imitation of Jesus Christ. However God has constructed various pathways along the main route to suit the diverse personalities of souls. He, the Creator of harmony, loves diversity in unity. Therefore, if God wishes to guide you along this or that path, for example, by suffering rather than by consolations, or by the active life rather than by the contemplative life, do not object and do not seek other paths. Rather, continue along the way selected by God. Otherwise, you may get lost and never reach your heavenly home. (VS 2, 389-390)

24. Do not be finicky in the choice of your way to perfection. Accept willingly what God sends. You will thus become sanctified. If, therefore, God does not offer you this or that means, for example, a good confessor or the opportunity to pray more often, do not become frustrated or testy, but be assured God wants to sanctify you in His way. And yet, when God does make known this or that method to follow, do not become too attached or too absorbed as to lose your

freedom of spirit. One more piece of advice – never give up or squander what may help toward your sanctification and salvation.

25. The soul, perfectly subject to the will of God, does not decide for itself the way and means to perfection, nor even the steps required to advance spiritually. “There is only one sure way,” says St. Theresa, “To wish what God wishes, because He knows better than we what’s for our greater good and He indeed loves us.” All this means is to consecrate oneself to Him without any reservation as if the soul belongs to God now and forever. He may do with the soul whatever He wishes. (The Way of Perfection, 25) (VS 2, 391)

26. In striving for perfection, do not try to attain more than what God expects of you. On the other hand, do not short change yourself. Keep moving, always forward, ever higher, because you do not know the mind of God. Use all your energies so that God’s plans for you may be fulfilled. (VS 2, 391)

27. Do not think you can rid yourself of imperfections in a moment’s time and thereby rise to a high state of perfection! Such an attitude reveals a streak of self-love and hidden pride. Aim to be perfect, not for the sake of being perfect and smug at the achievement, but with the motive of carrying out the will of God and thus pleasing Him alone. (VS 2, 394)

28. The means by which we crucify our will is suffering. Hence, in the spiritual sense, we call every cross by the term “suffering” whether it is suffering of soul or body. The cross is an integral part of every Christian’s life. The first Adam cut it from the tree from which he picked the forbidden fruit and then he placed that cross on the shoulders of all his children, the human race. So, the cross is a necessary part in the makeup of every Christian. As our teacher and Savior entered His Glory by His Cross, so for the followers of Jesus, there is no other way to eternal life than by the Cross... “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” (Lk. 14:27) (VS 2, 398-340)

29. Not everyone shoulders his cross in the same way. Some suffer like the bad thief; their well deserved suffering leads to their perdition. Some suffer like the good thief: their suffering becomes a source of conversion and repentance. Some suffer like the Sorrowful Madonna; their agonies reinforce their sanctity and increase their merits. There are three ways to carry one’s cross. The first – submit humbly to the will of God; second – a higher degree, not only do God’s will, but carry the cross with courage and patience; third the highest degree, not only do God’s will, not only carry the cross with courage and patience, but to do so willingly and with consummate joy. The soul who has attained this third and highest degree of virtue is happy with the burden of a cross and even wishes to shoulder still more burdens. St. Margaret Mary, during very trying moments, used to prostrate before the Crucified Savior and pray: “Oh, my most loving Savior, what happiness would be mine to wear the imprints of your sufferings on my own body.” (VS 2, 420-421)

30. Accept your crosses with patience. You simply cannot avoid them. The cross follows you and rests on your shoulder wherever you go. If you manage to escape one cross, another will come along, weigh you down and oppress you. If you refuse the cross, others will force it upon your shoulders, just as it happened to Simon of Cyrene. So, rather than dread the cross, humbly

submit to God's Holy Will. Whoever accepts the divine will, does not carry the cross but the cross carries him. Do not be choosy of crosses, because the acceptance of one and the rejection of another does not make for solid virtue. If God places a certain cross on your shoulder, thank Him and consider the cross as a gift of the love of God. (VS 2, 423-24)

31. Remember, you cannot better express your love of God than by suffering for Him. St. John of the Cross correctly describes suffering as the daughter of love. Crosses are for us a privilege because they make us like our suffering King, the Crucified Christ. They are like the symbol of victory, that is, they will be the jewels for the crown which the Lord will soon place on our heads. If, then, the cross gives you discomfort or, if you prefer comfort, pity and consolation, look to Our Sweetest Savior, the Lord of all Consolation and the Comforter of the Afflicted, seek Him in prayer, seek Him in the Eucharist where He is the food for the strong hearted and the manna of all gentle consolation. (VS 2, 524-26)



**SEPTEMBER**  
**THE SPIRITUAL EDIFICE IS COMPLETED BY HANGING THE DOOR  
OF OBEDIENCE AND INSTALLING THE WINDOWS  
OF PURE INTENTION AND OBEDIENCE**

1. Obedience may be described as the door of the spiritual edifice because it lets other virtues into the soul and protects them. From whence arises this duty to obey? I shall give the reason: every sin has its source from the abuse of free will, and every virtue is performed by the proper use of the free will. Who can better put to use his will than he who freely submits to the will of his superiors? (VS 2, 527)
2. The order of the world is maintained by the constant fulfillment of the will of the Creator, and He determined this all wise rule for creatures. Likewise He established the social and moral order on obedience and, through the words of St. Paul, He bade all men to “obey your leaders and submit to them.” (Heb. 13, 17) God not only pointed out that obedience is a duty, but also gave it His blessing. He also condemned those who disobeyed. (VS 2, 527-528)
3. Obedience is pleasing to God. It delights Him more than does prayer because obedience requires mastery of our nature whereas prayer often fills us with consolations. Obedience delights God more than does mortification of the body which controls only self-love. It is more pleasing than giving alms. Obedience consists in giving up what is very dear to us, our free will, our private judgment. Hence all the more does God esteem this sacrifice of obedience and reward it abundantly. (VS 2, 530-531)
4. Obedience brings to the soul goodness – a goodness more sublime than contemplation. It is said that a drop of obedience is worth more than a bucket of contemplation. Obedience is more profitable than work and penance. For example, to gather hay out of obedience has greater value than to preach, fast or be scourged to the extent of drawing blood, but prompted by self-love. (VS 2, 532)
5. Highly esteemed are the fruits of obedience. Obedience defends us against sin, for he who listens to God and hears God speak through the voice of his superiors, will not fall into sin. Obedience draws graces from God and increases merits. It helps to advance toward perfection, to possess peace, joy and holy liberty . . . it assures one of a special place at the most critical moment of existence – death . . . and it procures an abundance of merits for eternal life. (VS 2,532-536)
6. Obedience is the heart of perfection and of life itself. The duty of every Christian and the only way to sanctity is the complete submission of the will to God. “The flowering of sanctity and perfection” says St. Alphonsus Ligouri, “Consists in the denial of oneself and the fulfillment of the Will of God.” (VS 2, 537)
7. According to St. Bernard, the man who wishes to attain perfect obedience must climb the seven steps of the ladder of spirituality; that is, he must obey freely, simply, joyfully, promptly, courageously, humbly and perseveringly. The Saints did this . . . for example, St. Vincent De Paul was always ready, like an angel, to follow what was considered the will of God. The same

for St. Francis of Assisi; he asked for nothing as eagerly as he begged the Lord for light and grace to recognize and carry out His Will. (VS 2, 538)

8. “True obedience,” says St. Ignatius, “is expressed in three ways: in the fulfillment of the command – in the understanding and appreciation of the command – and in the will carrying out the command. In the fulfillment – when the superior’s command is executed freely, joyfully and exactly; in the appreciation – when the mind of the superior is accepted; in the will – when nothing is desired except what the superior wishes. (Cfr. VS 3, 552)

9. He who sees God in the person of the superior and listens to him out of love of God obeys supernaturally. Indeed, it is not wrong to obey the superior because you like him or because he is prudent and kind. But one must admit, it requires greater effort to obey because God wills it and He expresses His will through the superior. (VS 2, 552-553)

10. Obedience carries through all the commands of the superior, not only those that are pleasant but also those that are irksome. Difficult orders that rub against human nature form an excellent test of obedience, whereas pleasant tasks execute not so much the Will of God, as our own. (VS 2, 554)

11. Obedience should be expressed freely and promptly. We must carry out the order not only by our exterior behavior but also by our interior disposition, without rancor and apathy. If, therefore, while performing an act of obedience you become irritated and grouchy, your submission turns into an act, not of obedience, but a fault of character. (VS 2, 556)

12. Perfect obedience, especially from a religious, must be humble. Whoever has reached this state does not look for the reason of the order nor offer snide remarks; rather, he carries out the order even though it seems far-fetched and very strange. He does not try to change the order. He merely wishes to follow as exactly as possible the superiors mind. He doesn’t bother to find out whether or not the order was fair. He obeys and thus avoids the possibility of a sin. (VS 2, 557-558)

13. What part do the superiors play in the exercise of the virtue of obedience? To this question St. Francis de Sales answers: “If the superiors give an order to be carried out as the Will of God, then these orders are strict acts of obedience.” (VS 2, 560)

14. To become obedient one must pray to obtain this virtue as well as that of humility. Ask for help from the Most Sacred Heart and the intercession of the Most Humble Mother Mary. Meditate on the heroic obedience of the Son of God who “though He was in the form of God, did not deem equality with God, something to be grasped at. Rather, He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that He humbled Himself, obediently accepting death, even death on the Cross.” (Phil. 2, 6-8) (VS 2, 560)

15. The windows of the spiritual edifice are pure intention and simplicity. Pure intention is as it were the internal cause of the action, producing and guiding its execution. For example, if I give alms with the idea of obtaining for myself some divine grace or some material popularity, then

the reason why I execute the action becomes the intention of my act. The intention depends entirely on me and it is found only within my soul . . . it is the spring board of my action and gives it vitality and value. (VS 2,564)

16. I have called pure intention the window of the soul. In a house, there enters only as much sunlight as the windows permit. Likewise an action has only as much value as the motive of the intention. If the intention is upright, the action is good provided the object is good or at least neutral. If the intention is evil, then the entire action is evil, regardless of how good the object may be. The Lord Jesus explains the principle when He says; “The eye is the light of the body. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light. If your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness.” (Mt. 6:22) (VS 2, 564-565)

17. There is nothing more natural than sleeping or eating. If these are performed with supernatural motives, being in the state of grace, they become meritorious for life in heaven. On the other hand, there are incredible actions of the apostolate, which at times, lead to the extreme of suffering martyrdom. But if these actions lack a pure intention, they not only fail to produce any value but even bring down God’s disapproval. (VS 2, 565)

18. It is the intention or motive that determines the difference between two similar actions. Externally they appear the same. Internally, by their intention, they carry a different worth. The Lord Jesus explains this truth when he speaks of the parable of the sowers (plural?). The first sower reaped a harvest of 80%; the second 60%; the third 100%. (VS 2, 566)

19. Pure intention is the basis of all the virtues. For instance, just as the columns holding up the house are its foundations, so our spiritual life is supported by the virtue, and the virtues receive their strength from pure intention. (VS 2, 566)

20. There are many kinds of intentions. Some are bad. Of all these evil intentions, the most common is the desire for vain glory. There are others, though not directly opposed to God, which are nevertheless made up of natural, material motives. And lastly, there are some intentions that are truly supernatural; born of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. (VS 2, 567-574)

21. If a man revels in a worldly reputation, caused by his actions, he destroys the order established by God. He is a rebel, thief, ingrate, idolater . . . because he cheats God, robbing Him of His glory; he foolishly pretends to be like god and demands incense to be burned before his mortal person. (VS 2, 568)

22. Actions that are prompted by nature and material in intention, though not sinful, have no worth to merit eternal life because they lack the seal of God’s approval. To make them fruitful, it is necessary to be in the state of grace and raise them heavenward by acts of love of God. (VS 2, 573)

23. Supernatural intentions aim to please God alone. For example, the scope of faith is to live according to the precepts and example of Jesus. The scope of hope is to rely on one’s supernatural destiny. The scope of charity reflects on God Himself, His glory, His Will, and

gratitude for the gifts bestowed on us and others. Charity reminds one of the sacred humanity of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels (the angels don't have a humanity) and Saints. Charity inspires one to an active apostolate, to a devotion to Christ, the Madonna and all the heavenly saints. It urges one to implore divine help for other Christians, for the sanctification of souls, making them very beautiful sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit and worthy receptacles of the grace of God. (VS 2, 574-575)

24. Many are convinced that whatever they do, they are doing for God's sake. However, these actions are not perfect. Why? Because their intentions are by no means pure, being mixed more or less with worldly motives. For example, a person may give alms both out of love of God and also to receive the praise and compliments of the world. Likewise, one may pray to adore God and bask in self-satisfaction, etc. . . . very often our weaknesses are many and a powerful force is required to refrain from seeking the praise of men and giving ourselves credit for our actions. Let us frequently offer God the gift of wine, mixed with water. (VS 2, 580-581)

25. A pure intention is to seek and to gaze at God alone, to behold ourselves as living in Him . . . St. Alphonsus Ligouri says that the saints have only one eye and with it they are always staring at God.

Worldly people, on the contrary have many eyes which they deliberately turn to gaze at earthly vanities. Pure intention is like a calm and cloudless sky. Try to cultivate such a pure intention. (VS 2, 581)

26. If you want to develop pure intention, form the practice of walking in the presence of God, and remember that next to you stands your Guardian Angel who is ever ready to bring your every good action before the divine throne as a sacrifice of love. Especially love the Lord dearly because it is the nature of love to penetrate the mysteries of the Sacred Heart and purify your good intentions. (VS 2, 583)

27. Another window of the spiritual edifice is called "simplicity." According to St. Francis de Sales, simplicity takes the straight road to the truth, to perform its duty, and to God alone. The simple soul, always and everywhere, seeks the Lord and seeks to carry out His will, thus spreading His honor and glory, and receiving His blessings and love. (VS 2, 590)

28. The simple soul believes humbly, hopes strongly and conforms sincerely to the divine will. It finds refuge in God like a child in the arms of his caring father. (V 2, 590)

29. The simple soul is not a pretender, not a hypocrite, and not a liar. He does not suspect, nor judge rashly; he speaks only well of his neighbor. The simple soul does not place limits on love of neighbor, nor does he offer service with the hope of a return of favors, much less does he perform acts of charity out of selfish, egotistical motives. The simple soul dislikes false courtesy, avoids pretenses, exaggerations, superficial attitudes and all forms of vanity, especially the big "I". The simple soul refuses to stand out in outstanding circumstances. The simple soul does not change like the moon nor wear a mask, but always and everywhere stays the same. (VS 2, 590-591)

30. Strive to cultivate the virtue of simplicity. Pray often to the Lord that he create in you a “clean heart” and an “upright spirit”. Ever keep in mind that the eye of God sees and penetrates the deep recesses of your heart. Therefore, in thought, word and action, do nothing false, hypocritical, or egotistical. Do not exaggerate in the practice of this virtue. Therefore, with utter simplicity, and with holy prudence, live your spiritual life. Follow the counsel of the Lord: “Be wise as serpents and as simple as doves.” (Mt. 10:16) (VS 2, 590-591)

**OCTOBER**  
**THE PURPOSE OF THE CARDINAL VIRTUES AND  
THEIR OFFSHOOTS IS TO STRENGTHEN AND  
REINFORCE THE SPIRITUAL EDIFICE**

1. After hanging the doors and installing the windows of the spiritual edifice, one must now proceed with the necessary trim both inside and outside. This is done by the practice of the cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude. Prudence ranks first because it enlightens the reason and helps it decide, in each and every particular action, what to do and what to avoid. In the supernatural order, prudence is love because it selects only what leads to God and warns of what turns us away from God. (VS 2, 595-596)
2. There are offshoots of the virtue of prudence. They are – memory, which recalls the past; the intellect, which views the actual situation; foresight, which helps select the proper means for the end in view; caution, which anticipates possible difficulties; and docility and wise reasoning, which facilitate the search and eventual coalition of everything, that is the action itself, circumstances, and goal, and forms a prudent judgment.
3. Prudence has many facets depending on the object of our actions: it may consider personal matters or those of our neighbor, matters of the family or of society, political or military matters, material or spiritual ones, natural or supernatural cases. However, special attention requires a prudence that is Christian and supernatural in what centers on God and eternity. (Cfr. VS 2, 596)
4. The Fathers of the Church and ascetical writers say that prudence is the lifeline of the other virtues; it is also the eye and rudder of the soul, the salt of the spirit, the master control of the passions, the model of behavior, the instructor of manners, the very guide of life itself. Where there is prudence, order and harmony reign; where it is lacking, there runs rampant disorder and confusion. Where there is no prudence, there is a state where love does not know what must be loved above all things, and hence is not capable of resolving the problem. Here, too, humility becomes exaggerated, obedience turns into absurdity, trust changes into rashness, generosity into extravagance. In a word, virtue loses its identity. (VS 2, 597-598)
5. If you wish to become prudent, seek out true prudence, that is, Christian prudence. There exists also a false prudence, called prudence of the world or of the flesh. It has evil goals and evil means. At times it will use evil means to reach a good end. It is a product of this material world of which Our Lord says that the children of this world are, in a certain way, more prudent than the children of light. False prudence often results in the desire to gratify the senses, or amass temporal possessions; and produces the vices of pride, egotism, hypocrisy, vainglory, superficial behavior, and outright betrayal. The teacher of false prudence is Satan himself. (VS 2, 599)
6. Use every effort to cultivate genuine prudence. It stems as a gift of the Holy Spirit and respects the will of God in every situation. Pray earnestly and perseveringly for this most necessary virtue. Together with prayer, perform ascetical acts, develop a deep understanding of yourself and be the master of your nature. As exemplary models for imitation, turn to Jesus

Christ, the Master of every virtue, and Mary, the Paragon of human perfection. Invoke also the intercession of those Saints who have already acquired the virtue of prudence. (VS 2, 600-602)

7. To beautify the spiritual edifice, one needs not only prudence but the virtue of temperance. In general, temperance consists in the control of the appetites, instincts and desires of the body and soul. As such, temperance normally is not a virtue that stands by itself but is linked to the other virtues, such as mortification, meekness, chastity, humility, modesty, etc. It acts as a guide, pointing out the proper behavior of all the other virtues. Strictly speaking, temperance consists in controlling the faculties of the senses, particularly the inclinations of sensual pleasures and the indulgence of food and drink. In this sense, temperance is one of the four cardinal virtues. (VS 2, 603-606)

8. The great value of temperance is evidenced by the many modern brutal and evil excesses which this virtue attempts to control. “Whoever lacks temperance,” observes the angelic doctor, must be reprovved for two reasons: not only does the intemperate person not strive to look like God whose image he is meant to be, but he becomes like the animals since animals are not capable of human acts except to eat and reproduce. They are not even recognized as human because of their pride and other vices. (Cfr. VS 2, 606)

9. Intemperance renders a man incapable of performing prudent actions because he not only hinders the operation of supernatural grace but also shuts out the natural life of reason. The man who becomes a slave of intemperance is not capable of intellectual work or spiritual work such as prayer or contemplation of divine things. Oftentimes he sinks to the extreme of denying the existence of God and his soul.

10. Temperance is the opposite of intemperance. Temperance controls man’s inclinations, ennoble his passions, enlightens his spirit, calms his heart, and makes a man wise, moderate, sensible, energetic, and eager to work and pray. The pagan philosophers realized this fact and formulated the motto: “to abstain is to maintain.” (VS 2, 607-608)

11. A good builder designs his house externally as not to raise any problems for his neighbors, and also not to endanger his own property and life. The same applies to one’s behavior in the spiritual life, that is, he must be careful not to hurt anyone especially God, the author of the virtue of justice. The purpose of the virtue of fortitude is to resist the external onslaughts against one’s character. (VS 2, 609)

12. Justice, in a broad sense, is a virtue that requires us to render to God what belongs to God, to our neighbor what is rightfully his, and to ourselves what truly belongs to us. This virtue implies the practice of many other virtues, all of which establish a state of holiness. It is nothing more than what Sacred Scripture stresses as the basic principle – avoid evil and do good. Justice, strictly speaking, is a firm, stable habit of the will to give each one what rightfully belongs to him. To the virtue of justice belong many offshoots – reverence, piety, a spirit of obedience, understanding, truth, courtesy and generosity. (VS 2, 609-610)

13. Justice is concerned more with the well-being of one's neighbor than of oneself. It forms the basis of community life. It is the source of peace. All unrest and all bitter resentment rise from the transgression of a law or the loss of a right. Justice safeguards these values. (VS 2, 610)

14. Justice produces peace for our society. Social life is possible only when the rights of others are respected, when superiors carry out the principles of justice and when subjects show regard to the commands of superiors. Without justice, society cannot exist. (VS 2, 611)

15. If you wish to acquire the habit of justice, practice the following: First of all, control self-love which closes one's eyes to a neighbor's misfortune and seeks only what is to one's interest. Second, detach the heart from mundane wealth and possessions because such undue material craving can bring on many heart breaking evils. Lastly, avoid hurting your neighbor in trivial matters because he who errs in small matters will soon err in greater ones. The so-called "additional allowances" stir up, little by little, the desire to amass more and more and this craving leads man to crush under foot every holy law of justice. Therefore, it is not enough merely to give alms and make donations to the Church because the needs of your neighbor cry out for assistance and they will be not silenced until you come to his aid. (VS 2, 612-614)

16. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the virtue of fortitude offers two points of view. First, it offers a strong and determined act of the will by which a man overcomes his problems. In this sense, fortitude embraces the other virtues. Hence, one cannot acquire a virtue without the strength and exertion of fortitude. Second, fortitude may be considered a habitual disposition of courage and firmness in the soul to overcome difficulties and put up with setbacks. Because of this, fortitude is one of the cardinal virtues. (VS 2, 615)

17. The purpose of the virtue of fortitude is to develop, as it were, muscles in the soul to face difficulties, dangers, to fight against vices by employing necessary, unusual, and even heroic measures, and to bring about good deeds for God and neighbor and thus reach a high degree of holiness and perfection. This includes the need to prepare oneself, to toughen one's will so as to endure great sorrows, especially death and suffering. This virtue shines forth brilliantly in the lives of millions of martyrs. (VS 2, 615-616)

18. In order to put the finishing touches both on the outside and inside of the spiritual edifice, it is now necessary to mention a few other virtues. The outside touches that beautify the soul consist in modesty, complimented by a spirit of meekness, a sense of sweetness. The internal counterpart is chastity. In general, the virtue of modesty focuses on the external well-being of man, including body and senses, as well as the affections of the soul. Modesty, in a word, aims to protect man from vainglory and curiosity. Therefore, modesty is two-fold – internal and external. (VS 2, 622-623)

19. Internal modesty is achieved by acts of mortification and humility; from it flows external modesty. Therefore, you cannot cultivate one without, at the same time, developing the other. If a watch does not keep time, it's not enough merely to move the hands on the dial. One must open the watch and repair the internal mechanism. Likewise, one cultivates external modesty by practicing internal modesty. People judge us to be modest by our external actions and rarely are



they mistaken . . . for external modesty is united very intimately with internal modesty. (VS 2, 623-624)

20. Modesty reflects itself in every position of the body, in whatever affects the senses. Be sure, then, that your facial expressions show signs of kindness, moderation, divine joy and peace because they are indications of a noble and beautiful soul...Let modesty glow in your eyes, echo in your speech, escort your steps, movements, yes, your entire body...Be modest in everything, since this is befitting a temple of God, thus you will let everyone know that Almighty God resides in you. (VS 2, 626-631)

21. Chastity is a virtue that bears much fruit. It elevates and enobles man giving energy to the soul, joy to the heart, strength to the will, and health and longevity to the body. It inclines the soul to the spirit of prayer, prepares it to accept the graces of God, and elevates it to enjoy the vision of God, as the Lord Himself assures us; “Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God.” (Matt. 5, 8) VS 2, 635-636)

22. In order to strengthen chastity in the soul and preserve it without strain, one must practice modesty and propriety because they are to chastity what the bark is to the tree, or what the eyelid is to the eye. To attain religious decorum, one must guard the senses, especially custody of the eyes, imagination and heart. Vigilance must be united a holy awareness and a profound humility. One must also avoid the occasions of evil and idleness to preserve chastity. Finally, always remember the Presence of God. (Cfr. VS 2, 639-649)

23. Meekness, also called submissiveness and gentleness, controls the passion of anger. It is a god-like virtue because God is Himself not angry. It makes us like to the Lord, worthy to be called Sons of God, as Our Lord promises; “Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the Sons of God.” (Matt. 5, 9) (Vs 2, 660-664)

24. It is not enough to build and decorate a house. One must also keep it in order, maintain it, and protect it from outside dangers. Hence, fidelity in little things is what maintains the spiritual edifice – the constant effort to advance in holiness makes the edifice become more and more beautiful, and determination to persevere to the very end forms an impregnable defense from outside threats. (VS 2, 682)

25. Although many roads lead to holiness, the shortest is fidelity in small matters, that is, to carry out, to the best of one’s ability, one’s daily duties as manifested by Divine Providence. This is an excellent means to increase God’s glory. The Lord teaches us this virtue of fidelity; both by word and example. From its practice, perfection of the soul may be attained. Our holiness does not consist in what we do so much as how we do it, such that an ordinary act of behavior may possibly sanctify us more than a thousand acts of misbehavior. (Cfr. VS 2, 682-685)

26. If you seek fidelity in your daily duties, ask Our Lord for a delicate conscience, one which will not permit you to overlook anything. Meditate on Christ’s fidelity to His duties. Ponder this virtue in the lives of the Saints especially in the life of Mary, the model of perfection. (VS 2, 702)

27. Be not content merely with fidelity in little things. Strive to become more and more perfect and in this way you will fulfill the precepts of Our Lord “Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5, 48) (VS 2, 705)

28. In the spiritual life, there is no such thing as old age or stagnancy. While climbing the ladder of perfection one cannot decide to remain in one spot, content to take a rest, or a vacation from the pursuit of holiness. Rather always keep moving forward. Follow Our Lord. He alone may limit our strides toward the ultimate goal of a perfect life. (VS 2, 706)

29. If the contractor puts in the foundation, builds the walls, but fails to construct the roof, his work remains undone. Whatever good he did would be lost and he would soon become the object of derision before angels and men. As in the natural order, so too in the supernatural order, perseverance to the end is absolutely necessary. (VS 2, 719)

30. Without perseverance, no one can be saved. Our Savior said: “Whoever perseveres to the end shall be saved.” (Mt. 10:1, 12) Through the mouth of the disciples is the same advice: “Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.” (Ap. 2:10) (VS 2, 719)

31. Perseverance, according to the Council of Trent, is an extraordinary grace, that is, it is not one grace given in a moment’s time. Rather, it is like a chain of graces including external helps to eliminate obstacles as well as internal aids to enlighten, arouse and reinforce the life of the soul. To this chain of graces one must add the chain of prayers. Never give up the chain of prayers, for without it you will never be able to enter heaven. Pray especially to the Blessed Virgin that She may hold you in her maternal embrace. She is the door through which we must pass to enter the temple of perfection and reach the top of Zion. (VS 2, 722)

**NOVEMBER**  
**MAN, CALLED BY CHRIST TO COOPERATE IN  
THE SPIRITUAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUL,  
IS CONSTANTLY NOURISHED WITH THE EUCHARIST  
AND ASSISTED BY THE FAMILY OF GOD**

1. God would prefer to nourish us with His divinity, but since it is the food of the angels, He decided to come to earth and assume our nature. Behold, the Word is not only made flesh, but has been clothed in the species of bread and wine. Thus, the Lord nourishes us with His flesh and blood in order to sustain and increase the supernatural life of the soul, and to purify, sanctify, unite and transform us into Him. (VS 3, 15-16) By receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, one joins the whole pilgrim Church, the Church Triumphant, all the Saints in Heaven, and the angels who, though not seen, always hover about the sanctuary of God. (VS 3, 80)
2. The Eucharist is the renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross. When the Lord delivered His spirit into the hands of the Father, the earth trembled, the tombs opened, the dead rose to life and the souls of the just were delivered out of Limbo. So now, when Jesus renews His Sacrifice on the altar, His Precious Blood flows into Purgatory, washes away the stains of the poor souls, erases their sins and opens to them the gates of heaven. (Cfr. VS 3, 18-28)
3. The Holy Mass is, first and foremost, the Sacrifice of Adoration. During the Holy Rite, the Son of God adores His Father and humbles Himself before the Divine Majesty by annihilating Himself and dying in an unbloody manner. Therefore, be united to Jesus during Mass and offer your life to Him and for Him and thus adore and add to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity.
4. The Holy Mass is the sacrificial act of gratitude. All of us are debtors to God. But what more can we give Him for all the gifts He has bestowed on us? In fact, nothing we possess is worthy of God. But Jesus had mercy on us – giving Himself as a sacrifice during Mass – and this is a most fitting act of gratitude to God. (VS 3, 22-23)
5. The Holy Mass not only stands out as the most sublime of gifts, but also has become known as the school where the word “thanks” is taught. When you assist at Mass, say thanks to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus with all your heart; and through Him, say thanks to the Most Holy Trinity. Thank Him for all the natural and supernatural gifts showered on you, on the angels in heaven, the men on earth, and last but not least, on the Queen of Heaven. (VS 3, 23)
6. The Holy Mass is an act of sacrificial prayer. We, all of us, are in God’s disfavor, and we need the Almighty’s Mercy for every step taken. And so the altar is the throne of Mercy. There we may offer our prayers with confidence, being assured that our petitions are one with the will of God and will be answered in our favor. During Mass, it is the Lord Jesus alone who sacrifices Himself for us, offering to the Eternal Father His merits, His life and His death. (VS 3, 23)
7. The Holy Mass is the act of sacrificial reparation. We have sinned, we deserve a stern punishment because every sin, being a rebellion against God, offends the Divine Holiness and provokes Divine Justice. The sacrifice of the Holy Mass brings us the grace of conversion and repentance. It thus reconciles us to God, and erases the punishment due to sin. Besides, the

mass is the ideal act of reparation for the offense committed by our sins, and it helps us repair the damage we have brought on the pilgrim and suffering Church. (VS 3, 25)

8. When you assist at the sacrifice of the mass, ponder with lively faith, and if possible, contemplate the infinite love of God as expressed in this sacrifice---that your faith be inflamed with charity. Join the virtue of humility to faith and charity. This disposition of humility becomes the wellspring of your external adoration. Let your visible disposition help your inner recollection of spirit and devotion of your heart. (VS 3, 31-32)

9. Jesus is our Teacher, and He speaks to every soul from the center of the altar. Listen to His instructions, contemplate His Sacred Heart, imitate His virtues. (VS 3, 17). Delving into the words of the Holy Gospel, confidently give your assent to all the revealed truths, be prepared for martyrdom, to die for the Faith, thank God for being called to be a member of the Church. (VS 3, 42)

10. The Eucharistic Jesus is the comfort of our souls, and wishes to be received by us. (VS 3, 18). Material food is taken into the body and becomes transformed by it. Holy Communion unites us to Jesus and transforms us into Him, and through Him, unites us to the Father. In Holy Communion a triune love meets and becomes united, that is, the love of the Father for the Son, the love of Jesus for man and the love of man for God. This happens because God desires man and man looks up to God, so much so, that they embrace each other; it is a mutual love, on the part of the Creator and Savior and on the part of man.

11. If you wish to be prepared for Holy Communion, beg for this grace because only God can make you worthy to receive Him. Implore the Sacred Heart for the strong light of faith and the burning ardor of heart, also implore the Madonna that you may possess just a little of the proper disposition with which she received the most sacred Body of her Son. Contribute your effort; namely, unite a living faith, humble adoration and holy fear to the chastity of your heart. (VS 3, 105-106)

12. Jesus remained in the Eucharist because of love. Go then, filled with love and confidence to the Lord and let your love of God be united to your love of neighbor. Remember that Jesus does not let anyone approach the altar, unless he is first reconciled with his brother. Hence, as St. Augustine says, Jesus gave us this Sacrament under the species of bread and wine so that we may become one body, one soul, just as many grains of wheat are united into one bread and many drops of grapes are united into one form of wine. The Eucharist is the union and symbol of union that exists in the Mystical Body, whose head is Christ. (VS 3, 105-106)

13. If Our Lord were only to remain in our sanctuaries during the time of Mass, this would be sufficient to fill us with much joy and happiness. But He did even more; He became a prisoner in our Churches, sharing our earthly exile---if then, Jesus is willing to live in our midst, is it not proper for us to visit Him often? (VS 3, 46)

14. The life of the Eucharistic Jesus is a continuation and complement of His earthly life---as before, so now, Jesus is poor, humble, obedience, meek, totally dedicated to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As before, so now, He instructs and enlightens poor souls, He consoles and confronts those who suffer, He cures and uplifts those who are weak and those who may

have fallen, He revives and restores to life those who died from sin. As in the past many souls went to Him to be taught, consoled and blessed, so today many approach Him to receive these same blessings. This the people do when they visit Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament. (VS 3, 48-49)

15. From visiting the Blessed Sacrament one gains supernatural wisdom, fervent love, comfort in suffering, strength in temptation, and a happiness that fills the soul. This is part of the sum total of our wealth. Why then do people wonder at the Saints who were so anxious to make visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament? Imitating their example, you too should hasten to visit Our Eucharistic Lord with the same intense desire. One of the happiest moments in your life will be found in your prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. (VS 3, 49-51)

16. When you visit the Most Blessed Sacrament, approach Jesus with the love of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph and St. John; with the repentance of Mary Magdalen and the Good Thief; with the desire of the elderly Simeon, with the confidence of the Canaanite and the Centurion. When you kneel before the tabernacle of Christ, make an act of lively faith, or deep realization of the real presence of Jesus. Rejoice in His Presence, and pour out your heart in a most personal and trustful conversation. (VS 3, 52-53)

17. The most efficacious means to foster adoration and love for Jesus hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament is a devotion to His Sacred Heart. This is the Heart of the God-Man, the Heart of the Highest Wisdom, of utter Holiness and infinite Love. It is the Heart of Our Creator, Teacher, and Savior; the Heart of Our King, Friend, Brother and Father. (VS 3, 132-133)

18. The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is the fire and symbol of the love which He, as God, shares with the Father and Holy Spirit and which, as Man, overflows in His own heart. It is a love so profound that it defies all understanding; it issues from all His words and actions; and it is with this divine love that He hopes to fill our hearts. (VS 3, 134)

19. One should offer a worship worthy of God to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus because this Heart is certainly united to divinity; it is the Heart of the Son of God. Love His Heart with all your heart, since He surely seeks your love. Imitate the divine Heart of Jesus, that is, ponder not only His words and actions, but also His feeling and aspiration and desires to be accepted and carried out by you. Have a childlike trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If a task or sacrifice seems too burdensome, place it in the gaping wound of the Heart of Jesus and it will become bearable. In short, always come and rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (VS 3, 139-144)

20. In natural life, man has a family: father, mother, brother and sisters. So also in the spiritual life our Father is God, our Mother is the Madonna with the Church, and our brothers and sisters are the angels and Saints in heaven together with all mankind on earth. (VS 3, 145)

21. St. Bernard, wishing to spread devotion to the Madonna, says of her: “your magnificence surpasses the splendor of the heavens and your glory outshines the beauty of the earth—neither in heaven nor on earth is there a creature adequate enough to describe your dignity.” (Sermon #2 on the Salve Regina). There are five topics for meditation that deal with the spirituality of our Heavenly Mother, namely that the most holy Virgin is a miracle of grace, the example and

teacher of Perfection, the Mother of God, our intercessor before Her Son, and our Mother and Queen. (VS 3, 145-146)

22. Marvelous indeed was the Temple of Solomon, whose interior glittered with gold. But a hundred times more wondrous is the most Holy Mary, chosen by God to be the temple and living tabernacle of the eternal Word, since through her and from her the Son of God took His human body. God adorned this living temple with heavenly graces. Not only did He preserve her from every stain of sin, but he also poured upon her a sea of graces---hence the Archangel Gabriel called her “full of grace”. (VS 3, 145)

23. The most holy Virgin Mary is the shining example and teacher of perfection. She is the consummate image of Jesus Christ, a copy so true that the virtues of Christ reflect in her as an indescribable light. The Sacred Scripture says that in the beginning God created two sources of light (the Sun and the Moon) and He placed them in the firmament of the sky. So also in the spiritual world, namely, the Church, we behold two sources of light: Jesus Christ is the Sun, the Blessed Mother of God is the Moon. Jesus Christ is the Light in and of Himself. Mary received her light, that is her grace, sanctity and glory, from Christ. (VS 3, 150-151)

24. Among the many privileges God bestowed on the Blessed Virgin, the most outstanding was that the Son of God took from her, His human body by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Mary, as the Mother of the Redeemer, forms an integral piece in the extraordinary mosaic of God’s plans. By her words, “be it done to me,” God permitted the redemption of the world to be dependent on her. He arranged to have Mary stand at the foot of the cross when the most solemn of events took place. God planned that she be present in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. Thus our salvation depends on her mediation. Now we know why the Lord made Mary full of grace, power and mercy – it was to make her capable of her astounding title- the Distributor and Mediatrix of Grace. (VS 3, 153-156)

25. The Mother of God is not only Our Mediatrix; she is also our Mother. She became our mother when she brought into the World the Son of God, and through Him the entire Christian family. Jesus is the Head, we are the members. This maternity became a fact on Mt. Calvary, where Mary begot us for the second time, sharing in the agonies of the Redeemer. Jesus, by the words, “Woman, behold thy Son”, officially conferred on her not only the name of mother, but also instincts and sentiments of a mother. Hence the fire of love emanating from His Sacred Heart also issued from the Heart of Mary. (VS 3, 159)

26. The Mother of God is also our Queen. Since she shared in the humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God, she would also participate in His exaltation and glory. Just as Christ is King of the whole world, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, so Mary is the Queen of heaven and earth. (VS 3, 166-167)

27. According to the wise observation of St. Catherine of Siena, Jesus is like a bridge that spans two shores, eternity and time, the infinite and finite, Almighty God and human creatures. This bridge unites God to man and man to God. Jesus then is our mediator and only through Him do we have the road that leads to the Father. Since Mary was the first to accept Jesus and clothe Him with a human body, then we go to Jesus through her, as through Jesus one goes to the

Father. As Jesus came to us first through Mary, so He comes to us now and forever, through the Church. The Church then is like a second Mother of God; it is repeatedly begetting Christ for the World, a miracle which occurs daily. (VS 3, 189-190)

28. How much gratitude do you owe God who has invited you into His Church, which has become the infallible teacher of the World, the great benefactor and source of man's salvation? It is the Church that feeds your mind with her doctrines, that fills your soul with the graces of the Sacraments. It is the Church who, like a good Mother, takes care of you! (VS 3, 193)

29. Besides our neighbors we also enjoy the friendship of our spiritual brothers, the Guardian Angels. According to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, the Angels are ranked by grace and dignity. They form a hierarchy of nine choirs. The lowest choir is called Angels; followed by Archangels, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Dominations, Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim. Their prime function is to praise the One and Triune God with an everlasting song of glory--- They also carry out the wishes of God, being the instruments of His Justice and Mercy. They bring blessings from heaven to earth, and our petitions from earth to heaven. They lead saintly souls into heaven, welcoming them and placing them in their proper places, thus to enjoy the Beatific Vision. Under the protection of the angels, these holy souls have won their great struggle on earth and now are rewarded by being seated on the thrones prepared for them by God. (VS 3, 208-216)

30. Our spiritual brothers in heaven also include the Saints. While on earth they lived as perfectly as possible, ever imitating Christ. They therefore have become the true living images of Christ, members of His Mystical Body, resplendent tabernacles of His grace and glory, sparkling gems in the crown of the King of Heaven, the chosen leaders of the celestial court. The Saints are also our mediators before God, since our one Mediator, Jesus Christ, permits them to intercede for us. As they behold God, they see in Him all our needs, because everything is reflected as in a large mirror. The Saints may look and see as much as God permits. Therefore, ask the help of the Saints. (VS 3, 219-221)

**DECEMBER**  
**THE OUTCOME OF MAN'S COOPERATION WITH GOD  
IS THE CREATION OF A SPIRITUAL TEMPLE WHERE GOD,  
UNITED TO THE SOUL, HAPPILY RESIDES**

1. The Spiritual Edifice, built in the soul by Christ with man's cooperation, becomes the sanctuary of the Lord, who once said, "Remain in Me and I in you." (Jn. 15, 4) Therefore, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things both in the visible earthly world and the invisible spiritual World. (VS 3, 227)
2. Jesus is our everything. He is our God, and Creator and our Savior. He is our Salvation and Redemption, our Redeemer and Mediator before God, our Life, guide and way, teacher and wisdom, priest and sacrifice, our nourishment, our final end, and perfect happiness. (VS 2, 227)
3. In Baptism, Jesus becomes the Lord of the soul and the soul becomes His tabernacle consecrated by His Blood. Our soul has become like an altar on which is continuously burned the sacrifice of faith, hope and love - the sacrifice of adoration and thanksgiving. As long as the altar remains in the soul, Jesus abides there together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. (VS 3, 228)
4. In Baptism Jesus becomes the soul's friend, indeed a sincere friend, because He wishes our best good not for His own profit. He is a noble friend, loving and unwavering, who shares everything, never leaving the soul alone but guiding its every step until, with His help, it arrives at its heavenly homeland. He will see to it that you are near Him, seated on a beautiful throne, clothed with glory and majesty, and filled with the happiness of the Beatific Vision. (VS 3, 229)
5. In Baptism Jesus becomes the Spouse of the soul and the soul in turn becomes His spouse. As a symbol of this union He gives the soul a ring, leads the soul into His home, the Church, and permits it to share both earthly and heavenly treasures, the only condition being that the soul remain faithful to its spouse. (VS 3, 229-230)
6. To be specific, the soul becomes the spouse of Christ when, out of love for Him, it selects a life of perpetual virginity, and repeats, in a way, the words of St. Agnes: "Jesus is my spouse, my love, my life, my all." (VS 3, 231)
7. In Baptism Jesus becomes the life of the soul because, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, He bestows on the soul, together with sanctifying grace, the first fruits of the spiritual life - the seeds of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Jesus continues to live and work in the soul as long as no obstacles are placed in His way. Therefore the life of the Christian soul is no more than the continuation of the life of Jesus. (VS 3, 232-233)
8. Jesus is the fount of our spiritual life, as He explained the parable of the vine and the branches. As the branches quickly wither and die when separated from the vine, so too the same takes place in the spiritual life. We remain spiritually alive only when we are united to Christ. (VS 3, 234)



The Blessed Virgin Mary was preserved from all stain of sin thanks to the merits of Christ, the Savior of the World, and thus she is given the title of the Immaculate Conception. (VS 3, 46)

9. Jesus gives His gifts to the soul but He expects something in return. As He is willing to live in us, we must also be willing to live in Him. To live in Christ means to offer Him all the faculties of our soul and body, thus permitting Him to reign more easily over us according to His Will. To live in Christ is to be transformed into Him both interiorly and exteriorly---so as to be able to repeat the words of St. Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2, 20) (VS 3, 234-235)

10. To reach his sublime goal, one must be clothed in Christ, that is, become like Him in exterior behavior, such as words, actions and sufferings. In the Sacred Scriptures we read that Jacob, following the advice of his mother Rebecca, put on the clothing of Esau and went to his father Isaac to receive the paternal blessing. So too, Holy Mother Church clothes us with the virtues of Christ, namely, humility, meekness, patience and charity. Then she brings us before God Our Father, so that He, smelling the fragrance of the Christian virtues, will bless us. (VS 3, 235)

11. Furthermore, one must also transform his interior life, that is, his thoughts, feelings and motives into those of Christ. It is necessary to convert ones' heart into the Heart of Jesus, not only to speak, act and suffer exteriorly like Him, but also to think and desire as Christ does. In a word, one should live totally like Christ and in Christ. (VS 3, 235-236)

12. To live in Christ is the duty of all the baptized because every Christian must become another Christ in thought, desire, word and suffering. He should conform his entire life to that of Christ. To live (in) Christ is to achieve the epitome of perfection. (VS 3, 236)

13. St. Bonaventure said that the highest state of perfection attainable by the soul is a union with God so perfect that the soul becomes completely absorbed in God as to be one spirit with Him. The soul's memory remembers only God, its mind thinks only of God, its will turns to God alone with an exclusive love. If these three faculties, or even if only one, are not sealed with the divine stamp, it proves that the soul is not yet perfectly united to God. (VS 3, 236)

14. The soul achieves a state of richness and grandeur from its union with Christ. Jesus generously reciprocates with the soul so completely dedicated to God. Jesus often allows the soul to enter divine omnipotence in human hands. (VS 3, 232-237)

15. Life in Christ gives the soul true peace and happiness because Jesus is essential wisdom, utter goodness, eternal consolation and heaven itself. St. Lawrence once said, "In Christ exists love's companion, eternal and unspeakable peace, perpetual happiness, pure joy, and calm serenity". (VS 3, 237)

16. "Whoever has found Christ," asserts St. Henry of Suso, "has discovered the source of joy and happiness." Jesus is the living fount, the inexhaustible treasure that quenches all desires for happiness. Therefore one should not be surprised that the Saints have ardently craved to live with Jesus and in Jesus. (VS 3, 237)

17. Jesus desires you to live in Him. Just as He did many years ago in Bethlehem, so now, Jesus walks with Mary and Joseph, trudging from house to house, from soul to soul, seeking for a place to stay saying, "Open the door so that I may stay with you and enrich you with my divine light and love." I am sure if the Lord were to speak with you in this fashion, you would never refuse his grace.

18. To reach this union with Jesus, it is necessary, above all, to love Him ardently because the lover always seeks to be absorbed by the beloved. If you want to increase your love of Christ, ponder well His beauty, holiness, perfection, His infinite love for you and the profound expressions of His love through the Crib, the Cross, and the Eucharist.

19. If you wish Jesus to reside in you, pray fervently for His grace, especially during your Holy Communion. Tell Him; "O Jesus rid me of the life of nature corrupted by sin and fill me with your divine life." Think often of the life of Jesus, both His exterior and interior life, so as to form your life after pattern of His. Prayer and recollection will take you half-way to your goal. (VS 3, 238-239)

20. Prayer alone is not enough. To purify the soul one must avoid sin, especially those mortal sins which deprive the soul of sanctifying grace and the love of God, but if possible steer clear of those venial sins which weaken the divine life of the soul. To reach this goal pray daily to the Lord, particularly after Holy Communion saying; "O Lord, do not permit me to be separated from You because of grave sin. I prefer rather to die than to sin. Defend me also from venial sins especially those committed willfully and with full knowledge. (VS 3, 239)

21. Another exercise of virtue, such as constant vigilance, the realization of one's own frailty, and daily effort, must be joined to humble and trusting prayer because sly and powerful enemies threaten us from all sides. From the inside, the disordinate instincts rise to the attack; from the outside, Satan and the World pose threats. In such moments of temptation the most powerful forces of the soul are necessary. Be deeply humble, admit your natural weakness as the result of original sin, and then turn to God with a fervent plea for His help---May the Lord fight in you, for you and with you. Knock at the door of His Heart through the intercession of the Madonna, the Angels and the Saints. (VS 3, 239)

22. Purify the soul of the vices and weaknesses which are obstacles to the divine action. When Jesus comes to us and finds our heart filled with disordinate hopes and feelings, with all kinds of vanities, He simply cannot help us. For such a state of soul impedes the growth of the Kingdom of God in us. The Lord hopes to find a pure heart, empty of earthly ambitions. He can thus take possession and fill the soul with His life. (VS 3, 240)

23. If you want divine grace, listen to the author of the "Imitation" who says that you must reject whatever hinders the coming of Jesus. Seek out solitude- seek contacts with no one; be not attached to the world. Above all, consecrate yourselves to God. (VS 3, 240)

24. Seek to discover your shortcomings and weaknesses by means of an enlightened examination of conscience. Humble yourself before God and man and daily beg God for the will

to oppose evil by mortification and for the strength to overcome temptations and acquire virtue. Cooperate with the grace of God, put aside harmful friendships, (e.g. sensual attractions) and mundane matters (e.g. worldly fame, power, goods). Religious ought to avoid undue attachments to work assignments, places, tasks, and public offices. However, there are some wholesome attachments (e.g. natural bonds with ones' family), which ought to be supernaturalized, that is, transformed into a holy love, which loves God with all ones' heart and leaves the rest to God and for God. (VS 3, 241)

25. The Blessed Virgin, after having received from God "the fullness of grace", daily increased this gift by prayer and good works. The maid servant of God lived an obscure life, after repeating the words, "Be it done to me according to your word." At the Incarnation God the Father deigned to allow His only Son also to become the son of Mary. (Cfr. VS 3, 148-153). Whoever wishes Jesus to live and act in his soul must practice self-denial. (VS 3, 241)

26. There are certain signs by which one may ascertain if the soul is under the influence of grace or nature. Divine grace guides the reason to know truth and directs the will to love goodness and to possess it. (VS 3, 243)

27. The Spirit of God influences reason by always teaching the truth and only the truth, by pointing out matters that are important and useful, clarifying doubts, rendering the mind fit, obedient, and prudent as well as creating humble thoughts instead of proud and haughty ideas. The Spirit of God also influences the will. It awakens the desire of self-denial and mortification, and is a bearer of inner peace, holy freedom of spirit, indifference toward one's worth, love of humility, favorable response to divine inspirations and to superiors, patience during set-backs, a love full of meekness and sacrifice, purity of intention united to sincerity, and honesty, but more than anything the spirit of God influences the will to imitate Jesus. (VS 3, 243)

28. The Spirit of God, ordinarily acts calmly and in silence, but in a determined decisive manner. It does not compel the soul but adapts itself to the personality and the needs of the individual. The soul thus remains unhurt and becomes purified and made perfect. In some persons the spirit of God appeals to the mind, in others it influences the will. For example, the spirit enlightens the educated and cultured in order to bring them closer to the truth. But after the intellect has been attracted to the beauty of the truth, then the will is moved to love and appreciate what it has learned. As for the unlettered, who are more dependent on sense than rational perceptions, the Spirit creates in them a strong desire for the good and directs them to their spiritual advisor for counseling. (VS 3, 243-244)

29. There are several benefits from the divine action on the soul. It produces a deeper spirit of recollection, a more accurate estimation of oneself and of the world, a more trusting confidence in God and a more ardent desire to consecrate ones' life to Him. Human nature left to itself acts to the contrary. Human nature habitually seeks its own pleasure, the satisfaction that comes from self-love, and, if it is attracted to some good, will very often choose what is beautiful, wonderful, and pleasant, so much so that the basis of its very action is the hidden but obvious bloated "I". This soul is not concerned about supernatural motives, and therefore rivets its attention on making a "super" appearance, hoping to fill an interior void by an external splash. (VS 3, 245-246)

30. To reach perfect union with God, one must die totally to himself. When a person passes away, he not only loses the earthly passions and consolations but also the use of physical faculties. The soul is separated from the body and no longer can act on it. The same happens when a man dies to himself and the world. He scorns appointments to high offices, he detaches his heart from creatures, mortifies his senses and strong desires. Life on the outside has no attraction, but rather, even in the hustle and bustle of daily activities he finds a way to speak to God in the sanctuary of his own heart. (VS 3, 250-251)

31. In mystical death the “I” of man no longer exists. He no longer thinks of self, seeks self, nor acts by self or for self. Rather, by this sort of death, he rises to life. Jesus is united to the soul so perfectly that man prays, desires, speaks, and operates only with Jesus. If the soul, then, is faithful to the grace of the Lord, it achieves a remarkable union with Him, a union which the Apostle Paul describes in these words; “It is no longer I who live but Christ Who lives within me.” (Gal. 2, 20) Christ can work with complete liberty in the soul that is mortified, humble and amenable. Such a soul cooperates with Him in a way that is joyful and adaptable. To die to oneself is to live in Jesus and for Jesus. This is our goal here on earth. (VS 3, 251-252)

## **“The Principles of the Interior Life and Ascetical Points”**

**Servant of God, J. S. Pelczar**

**Thoughts gathered from the book Zycie Duchowne (Spiritual Life)**

**Compiled by M. Karolina Kasperkiewicz**

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March: Man called to cooperate with Christ in the sanctifying act, contacts Him by the gift received from Him. This gift is prayer.

1. Prayer is an uplifting of the soul to God. It is an intimate talk of the child of God with his Heavenly Father.

God enjoys prayer as a father enjoys talking to his child.

Every sound flowing from a pure or contrite heart pierces heaven and strikes the Heart of Christ.

2. Prayer is an act of homage and acknowledgment rendered to the Creator from creatures; it is a sacrificial holocaust to God. Through it, on one hand, man confesses his nothingness and misery, on the other, the omnipotence and goodness of God.

3. Without grace we cannot be saved and without prayer we cannot receive graces.

As St. Augustine said, God gives some graces, such as faith, without prayer, however the gift of perseverance is given only to those who ask for it. Prayer is like a key opening the treasure chest of God's Mercy.

4. If prayer is so much needed in every Christian's life, it is needed so much more for those who want to live a perfect life. Without persevering in sincere prayer, God will not grant His graces, and without them we cannot become perfect.

5. If God draws a soul to a more perfect life, He imparts first the gift of prayer. As St. Theresa of Avila said, "Prayer was the door and way for all the great gifts granted me from God."

Rightly, St. Bonaventure said, "one who prays well – lives well."

6. Great Doctors of the Church, such as, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard of Clairvoux and others confessed that they find wisdom only in prayer. We read that often they put their complicated problems at the feet of Mary or before the Blessed Sacrament trusting more in God than in their own knowledge.

7. Prayer gives light and wisdom to the soul. It uncovers God's mysteries to her and makes her alert to recognize them. One hour of good prayer gives more light than a whole day of reasoning. Often God gives the humble soul more wisdom in prayer than she could obtain through many years of study.

8. Prayer gives to the soul fortitude and strength, and then she attempts great things full of trust in God's help. A prayerful soul is a powerful soul. On the contrary, a soul negligent in prayer is powerless and helpless like a paralytic.

9. Prayer lifts the soul to heaven and unites it with God. Prayer also makes fruitful apostolic work, which is seen so significantly in the missionary works of St. Francis Xavier and others.

10. The Son of God teaches us how to pray: "Whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He will give you." Here on earth Jesus Christ prayed for us and obtained efficacy for our prayers. Now He intercedes for us at the Altar and at His Throne in Heaven. We must, therefore, unite our prayers to Heaven. We must, therefore, unite our prayers with His prayer, so that they may be pleasing to God.

11. To pray in the Name of Jesus is to ask for that which is in harmony with God's Will. Above all, ask for spiritual goods, those necessary for salvation according to the Savior's words; "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given you besides." (Matt. 6:33).

12. Our Lord promised to grant spiritual goods to all those who ask for them. Ask, therefore, with persistence. Enlarge the wings of prayer since God conforms His gifts to your request. However, do not appoint the time, moment or the way how your prayer should be answered since God has His time and ways.

13. Following the advice of St. Alphonsus Liguori and St. Teresa of Avila, ask for great, valuable gifts, since our God is a rich and merciful Lord. We honor His mercy and generosity by asking for such gifts.

14. We may ask for a temporary good like health, success, prosperity, etc.; however, we ask only under the condition that these gifts will serve for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of souls. It is best to trust entirely in God, conform to His Holy Will, and desire only what pleases Him because the good God, besides eternal life, gives us all we need.

15. Pray with faith and great love as much as you are capable. Always try to bring a clean heart, or at least a contrite heart, to prayer. The prayer of your heart unites with the prayer of your deeds and acts.

16. If you want your prayer to penetrate the Heart of God, never forget your weakness, misery and sinfulness. Humble yourself before God in confessing your nothingness. Pray with perseverance and faith, knowing that God as all-wise is able to give; only as the All-Powerful can give; and as the All-Good wants to give.

17. Distractions are caused mostly by our own faults. Not enough vigilance over our senses causes vain thoughts and memories. We are blinded by the dust of pride and the decay of vain activities. Hence, we are filled with earthly concerns, proud imaginings, egoistical plans and

unnecessary fears. We do not prepare ourselves for prayer, and while at prayer itself, we do not remember that we are in God's presence. No wonder that we are distracted. It would be a miracle if it would be otherwise.

18. Wherever distractions come from, remember that only voluntary ones deprive the soul of the fruits of prayer and bring accusations from God upon us.

19. Practice interior and external mortification in order to pray well. Just as incense gives a fragrance if burnt on the glowing coals, so the prayer of a well ordered soul rises to heaven with a holy fragrance.

20. True devotion depends upon our love for God; and the readiness always to do His Holy Will flows from our love of God. This readiness does not depend upon spiritual consolations or any satisfactions.

21. The essence of devotion is not consolation but surrendering to God's Will. The best prayer is that in which we submit to God's Will. Therefore, when God permits dryness, offer it to Him along with the desire of a fervent prayer. Such a prayer is pleasing to God and very profitable to the soul because it is a sacrifice.

22. Oral prayer, though not absolutely necessary, is however, needed and used whenever it awakens and increases our interior devotion. Common sense tells us that man should not only adore the Creator in spirit, but also with the body. The Savior, Himself, prayed that way and taught us oral prayer. One would be ungrateful and in great error who would not like to talk to the Lord in these words; "Our Father".

23. Meditation embraces our body and soul. However, be alert not to overload your soul with many thoughts and vain inquiry in which the intellect is lost and the heart emptied. The purpose of meditation is not reasoning or studying, but perfecting your soul. Meditation should awaken the heart's affections and lead us to a good resolution, which must be fulfilled. Otherwise, you are like the soldier who is a hero at the camp, but on the battlefield becomes a coward.

24. Affective prayer is the raising of the soul to God with the help of the sentiments of the heart and acts of the will. True, the mind is at work here, but the main part is done by our will. The will, under the influence of love, is captivated by God, to reveal her love to Him and to submit completely to His Will.

25. The prayer of a simple contemplation is simple, but accompanied by a certitude of God's presence within the soul, with an experience of joy. It does not consist in long meditations or a variety of feelings, rather, attention is given to one main thought acting strongly and one (a?) deep affection dominating the other.

26. Pope Benedict XIV said that infused contemplation is a simple prayer, linked with joy and love centered on God. God, in a special way, influences the intellect and will through the gifts of

the Holy Spirit; mainly the gifts of wisdom and knowledge. We can desire a mystical union with God in order to progress in love. However, we should never desire supernatural gifts such as visions or revelations since they do not belong to the essence of a union with God; on the contrary, they could become harmful.

27. Living in God's presence does not mean only reminding oneself that God is everywhere; in thought, occupy yourself with God, but also raise the heart to God, and unite the will with God.

28. Besides remembering God's presence in general, imagine that God in a special way is present in you. As Kings, even though they live in the entire castle, prefer to dwell in one chamber, likewise, God – in spite of His presence in the whole world – lives in the just man's soul, as in His temple.

29. Do not forget, that you are the house and the temple of the living God. Worship God at the altar of your heart, give Him homage and sacrifice; humble yourself before Him. Always remember that He reads your heart as an open book.

30. Try to see God in His creatures. The world is like a large organ – unceasingly playing the melody of the Creator, chanting God's perfections, and is like an open book in which every creature is one letter in that book.

31. A great need in the interior life is recollection. Besides love, there is nothing more needed. There were Saints, who during their lives did not do any extraordinary things...but there were no Saints who were not recollected.