

CATECHISM

OF AN

Interior Life,

BY

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CONTENTS.

FIRST PART.

OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

	Page
LESSON I. Of the Spirit, and of the two lives of our Lord Jesus Christ.	13
LESSON II. Of the loss of grace after baptism, and of the labor of penance necessary to recover it.	16
LESSON III. Of the dignity of the Christian, in whom Jesus Christ dwells, to inspire him with his dispositions and sentiments, in a word, to animate him with his own life.	21
LESSON IV. Of the spirit and inclinations of Adam; that the christian spirit is very different from them.	25
LESSON V. That Christians are obliged to mortify in themselves the inclinations of Adam and of the flesh, and crucify the old man.	28
LESSON VI. Of the source of the malignity of the flesh, which we are obliged to renounce.	36

CONTENTS.

	Page
LESSON VII. Of the love of the cross, that is, of abjection, sufferings, and poverty, which the Holy Ghost gives us in Baptism.	41
LESSON VIII. Of our first generation, in which the devil is the father of our perverse inclinations ; and of the regeneration of baptism, in which Jesus Christ being our Father communicates to us his divine life.	46
LESSON IX. Of the obligation we are under to carry the cross, and cherish the love of it, on account of the Spirit whom we received in Baptism, and who imprinted this love in our hearts.	51
LESSON X. Of another obligation to love the cross, and particularly contempt, abjection, and dereliction, which are the first branch of the cross, proceeding from the fact that man, by himself, is a mere nothing.	55
LESSON XI. Of Pride, and of the desire of honor, which we must resist.	62
LESSON XII. That honor is due to God alone ; how we ought to act, when we are despised.	67
LESSON XIII. That the miserable desire of being honored is a common and universal desire ; of the manner of combating and renouncing it.	73
LESSON XIV. Of the obligation we are under to love pains, sufferings, and per-	

CHRISTIAN CATECHISM
OF AN
INTERIOR LIFE.

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Part First.

OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

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LESSON I.

Of the Spirit, and of the two lives of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. Who deserves to be called
a Christian?

A. He who has in him the
Spirit of Christ.*

Q. What do you mean by the
Spirit of Christ?

* Si quis spiritum non habet, hic non
est ejus. Rom. viii, 9.

A. I do not mean his soul, but the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in him.

Q. How can we know that we have the Spirit of Christ?

A. We know it by the inclinations he gives us, similar to his own, and by which we are led to live as he lived.

Q. What is the life of Christ, of which you speak?

A. It is that holy life, described to us in scripture, especially in the new testament.

Q. How many lives are there in Christ?

A. There are two, the interior life and the exterior life.

Q. In what does the interior life of Christ consist?

A. It consists in his interior dispositions and sentiments with regard to every thing; for example, in his perfect union with his Father, his love for the neighbor, his humility in regard to himself, his horror for sin, and his condemnation of the world and its maxims.

Q. In what does his exterior life consist?

A. It consists in his outward actions, and in the visible practice of all virtues, emanating from his divine interior.

Q. To be true christians, then, we must be animated by the Holy Spirit, who makes us live interiorly and exteriorly as Christ did?

A. Yes.

Q. But is not this very difficult?

A. Yes, for him who has not received holy baptism, in which the spirit of Christ is given us, to make us live as he lived.

LESSON II.

Of the loss of grace after baptism, and of the labor of penance necessary to recover it.

Q. Can he, who has once lost the grace of the Holy Spirit after baptism, ever recover it?

A. He can by penance; but with great labor and toil.

Q. It is for this reason, perhaps. that the sacrament of pen-

CONTENTS.

	Page
secutions, founded upon the fact that by ourselves we are sin.	80
LESSON XV. Explanation of the preceding doctrine.	86
LESSON XVI. Continuation of the same subject; that our flesh is nothing but sin.	91
LESSON XVII. That our flesh is wholly opposed and rebellious to God and his divine Spirit.	96
LESSON XVIII. That the malignity of the flesh deserves every kind of humiliations on the part of God and creatures.	103
LESSON XIX. Of the obligation we are under, in consequence of our sins, to bear poverty, which is the third branch of the cross of Christians.	111
LESSON XX. Of the grace wrought in the soul by the mysteries of our Lord in which we must participate. First, of the mystery of the Incarnation.	119
LESSON XXI. Of the mystery of the Crucifixion, and its grace.	126
LESSON XXII. Of the mystery of the Death of our Lord, and of the state of death which it operates in us.	128
LESSON XXIII. Of the mystery of the Burial of our Lord, and in what the grace of this mystery differs from that of death.	131
LESSON XXIV. Of the mystery of the	

CONTENTS.

	Page
Resurrection, and of the grace that it operates in us.	135
LESSON XXV. Of the mystery of the Ascension of our Lord ; of its grace and state, which is that of the perfect.	138

SECOND PART.

OF THE MEANS TO ACQUIRE AND PRESERVE THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

	Page
LESSON I. That prayer is the principal means , and that it is necessary to pray with humility and confidence.	148
LESSON II. Of the intercession of Saints, who pray for us in Christ and by Christ.	159
LESSON III. That the sacrifice of the altar is the same as that of the cross, and that our Lord carries to it the same dispositions that he had upon the cross.	166
LESSON IV. That we can receive holy communion for the good and advantage of others.	174
LESSON V. That our Lord Jesus Christ dwells in us, and that we can at all times communicate spiritually.	181
LESSON VI. How we may communicate spiritually, and unite ourselves to the Spirit of our Lord in all our actions.	187

CONTENTS.

	Page
LESSON VII. Application of the preceding doctrine to the exercise of meditation.	193
LESSON VIII. Method to be followed in meditation.	198
LESSON IX. That we can pray to God, although we may not know him perfectly, and are even ignorant of our wants.	205
LESSON X. How Christ is our mediator with God for our religious duties, which explains a difficulty raised by heretics on the use of the latin tongue in the public prayer of the church.	213
LESSON XI. That in uniting ourselves to Christ in meditation, we enter into a participation of his prayers and graces.	219
LESSON XII. How we may know that we are united to our Lord in meditation.	225
LESSON XIII. That in uniting ourselves to Jesus Christ, we participate in the operations of the Holy Spirit not only in him, but also in each of the saints of the church.	230
LESSON XIV. How often we should unite ourselves to the Spirit of Jesus Christ in Prayer.	233
LESSON XV. That the happiness of Christians in meditation and holy communion, approaches the happiness of the blessed in heaven.	249

ance is called a laborious baptism?

A. It is, undoubtedly; for in baptism, in which we are regenerated in Christ, God, our Father, infuses into us the life of his beloved Son, without his divine justice exacting any penalty from us; but it is not so with penance.

Q. Why?

A. Because we must now toil and labor, to recover the virtues that God had given us in baptism, and planted in our soul with his own omnipotent hand; and it is only by the sweat of our brow that the Holy Spirit will now fertilise the barren and unfruitful soil of our heart, in

which grace had before caused virtues to germinate without toil or labor on our part.

Q. The loss of the grace of baptism is then a great loss?

A. Yes, inexpressibly great; and how can this master-piece of grace and mercy be restored?

Q. Is not this loss retrieved by penance?

A. Not perfectly; for, by penance, we generally do what an inferior artist does, who tries to restore the original of a great painter, already much defaced; the last work would not approach the first.

Q. Why is so much trouble necessary to recover the grace of Baptism?

A. Because it has been lost by an enormous sin and a monstrous ingratitude, in trampling upon the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and stifling the gifts of the Holy Ghost which we had received in baptism.

Q. What! does he who offends God after baptism by a mortal sin, trample upon the blood of Christ?

A. Yes, he does.

Q. How?

A. First, because he outrages his blood and merits, which purchased for us the Holy Ghost and all his graces. Secondly, because he becomes one spirit with Satan, who tramples upon the blood of Christ in the soul

of the sinner, and triumphs over our Lord on his own throne.

Q. It is, perhaps, for this reason that St. Paul says* that the sinner crucifies to himself the Son of God?

A. Yes.

Q. But how can one crucify Christ?

A. As the Jews, actuated by the rage of devils, bound, and nailed, and fastened our Lord upon the cross, so that he had no use of his limbs; so by sin we bind and fasten him in our hearts, and deprive him of the power of acting in us.

* Crucifigentes sibimetipsis Filium Dei. Hebr. vi. 6.

Q. Explain this more fully, if you please.

A. Our avarice binds his charity, our anger his mildness, our impatience his patience, our pride his humility; and thus, by our vices, we chain, and bind, and tear to pieces, as much as we can, our Lord dwelling in us.

LESSON III.

Of the dignity of the Christian, in whom Jesus Christ dwells, to inspire him with his dispositions and sentiments, in a word, to animate him with his own life.

Q. Christ dwells then in us?*

A. Yes, he dwells in our

* Ego in vobis. Joan. xiv, 20.

hearts by faith, as St. Paul says after our Lord himself.*

Q. Have you not said that the Holy Ghost dwelt also in us?

A. Yes; he is in us with the Father and the Son, and infuses into us, as we have said before, the inclinations, sentiments, dispositions and virtues of Christ.

Q. A Christian is then something very great?

A. There is nothing greater, nothing more august, nothing more magnificent. A Christian is another Christ living upon earth.

Q. How unhappy then is he who loses these precious trea-

* *Christum habitare per fidem in cordibus vestris. Epis. iii, 17.*

tures by mortal sin! But you say that Christ dwells in us, and that we are anointed with the unction with which he is himself anointed, that is, with the Holy Ghost; and that he infuses into us his dispositions, inclinations, and sentiments. How do you know this?

A. St. Paul wishes us to have in us the same dispositions that our Lord had,* who annihilated and humbled himself upon the cross, although he was equal in every thing to his heavenly Father.

Q. What do you mean by

* Hoc sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Jesu. Philip. ii, 5.

having the same dispositions that our Lord had?

A. It is to have in one's heart and soul the same desires that he had; for example, of being humbled and crucified.

Q. Is it necessary to have these desires in the same degree of perfection in which he had them?

A. I do not say this; I only say that we must have similar dispositions, though not equal.

Q. Can we even have similar dispositions?

A. Yes.

Q. By what means?

A. By the virtue of the Holy Ghost, who can give us inclinations, entirely opposed and contrary to those we have in the flesh by our birth from Adam.

LESSON IV.

Of the Spirit and inclinations of Adam;
that the Christian Spirit is very different
from them.

Q. Were Adam's inclinations different from those of Christ? had he another spirit than that of our Lord? did the Holy Ghost produce in him other sentiments than he produced in Christ?

A. Yes; for Adam was created to be similar to God in his riches, his honor, and his beatitude; for this reason he was born in the terrestrial Paradise, king of the whole world.

Q. Are not Christians called to the same?

A. No.

Q. What! are they not created after the image of God?

A. Yes; they are created similar to God in his justice and true sanctity.*

Q. What do you call to be created in justice and true sanctity?

A. It is to be created in Jesus Christ;† it is to be renewed and regenerated, by baptism, in a complete separation from creatures.

Q. The condition of Christians is then very different from that of Adam?

* Secundum deum creatus est in iustitiâ et sanctitate veritatis. Epis. iv, 24.

† Creati in Christo Jesu. Epis. ii. 10

A. Yes; for Adam sought God, served and adored him in his creatures; Christians, on the contrary, are obliged to seek him by faith, to serve and adore him, retired in himself and in his sanctity, separated from all creatures, and elevated above all things.

Q. Christians must then be separated from every thing; they must then be holy?

A. Yes; they ought to be separated from every thing; they ought to apply themselves to God in himself; it is for this that they are called saints by the apostle St. Paul.*

* Vocatis sanctis. Rom. i, 7.

LESSON V.

That Christians are obliged to mortify in themselves the inclinations of Adam and of the flesh, and crucify the old man.

Q. What ought Christians to do, when they feel in themselves an inclination to unite and bind themselves to creatures?

A. They must mortify such inclinations; they must renounce them, since they come from the flesh, and they are no longer debtors to the flesh, to live according to its inclinations.*

Q. After receiving baptism, which is a second generation,

* *Debitores sumus non carni, ut secundum carnem vivamus. Rom. viii 12.*

are Christians obliged to conform themselves to Adam, their father, and live according to his life?

A. No; for God being made our father in baptism, we are obliged to live according to God, and the inclinations which his spirit infuses into us.

Q. If we live according to the flesh, shall we be saved?

A. No; for St. Paul says that we shall die, if we do not mortify our flesh and all its concupiscences.

Q. Christians therefore are obliged to mortify themselves?

A. Yes; for, according to the apostle, those who are Christ's, have crucified their flesh with

its vices and concupiscences;* they have crucified, and stripped themselves of the old man with all his deeds.†

Q. What do you mean by the old man?

A. It is the same thing as the flesh; it is ourselves with the inclinations we have received from Adam, in being born of him by our parents.

Q. What are those inclinations?

A. They are all the inclinations which we have to evil, and

* Qui sunt Christi, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum vitiis et concupiscentiis. Gal. v, 24.

† Expoliantes vos veterem hominem cum actibus suis. Col. iii, 9.

with which we are entirely filled.

Q. To how many heads may these inclinations be referred?

A. To three: inclinations to pleasures, inclinations to riches, and inclinations to honors.

Q. What! must all these be repressed?

A. Yes.

Q. We must then crucify in us the old man?

A. Yes, we must crucify him, as the wicked crucify in themselves Jesus Christ.

Q. But again, what do you mean precisely by crucifying the old man?

A. It is to bind, repress, and destroy interiorly all the impure

and inordinate desires that we feel in our flesh.

Q. What do you mean by our flesh?

A. All the old creature in us, all man, in as much as he is not regenerated by grace, and is opposed to the Holy Spirit that we receive in baptism.

Q. What! are our souls and minds flesh, before we are baptised?

A. Yes.

Q. But why do you call the soul flesh?

A. Because, being sunk and drowned in the flesh, it participates in all its evil inclinations; so that, unless grace separates them, they become the same

thing; and therefore the soul is called flesh.

Q. Is it for this reason, that our Lord says we must hate our soul?*

A. Yes; for in as much as the soul is the same thing with the flesh, and in as much as it animates and vivifies its impurity and corruption, it is the enemy of God, and worthy of all hatred.

Q. Could the flesh alone sin?

A. No, since it can not even live without the soul. The soul, at the same time that it animates the flesh, seeks evil with it, and participates in all its corruption.

* Qui non odit—adhuc—et animam suam, etc. Luc. xiv, 26.

Q. Is the mind also called flesh?

A. Yes, when it has thoughts conformable to the inclinations and movements of the flesh. Hence St. Paul says that the prudence of the flesh is death.*

Q. What do you mean by the prudence of the flesh?

A. All the thoughts and designs formed in the mind, to attain the ends of the flesh, which are carnal pleasures, honors, and riches.

Q. Is the will also called flesh?

A. Yes, when it adheres to the movements of the flesh.

Prudentia carnis mors est. Rom. viii, 6.

Q. What do you call the movements of the flesh?

A. St. Paul calls them the desires and the will of the flesh.*

Q. The flesh is then very injurious to man?

A. Yes; and therefore we must hate it, crucify it, and make it die.

Q. Is it for this reason that our Lord was crucified, put to death, and even buried?

A. Yes, it was to teach us that we must crucify ourselves in our flesh; and that, if he spared not his innocent flesh, which had only the resemblance

* In desideriiis carnis nostræ facientes voluntatem carnis. Eph. ii, 3.

of sin, we are much more bound to crucify ours, which is truly sinful, and filled with corruption and malice.

LESSON VI.

Of the source of the malignity of the flesh,
which we are obliged to renounce.

Q. Whence comes the malignity of our flesh?

A. It comes from the devil, who insinuated his venom into the soul of our first parents: they received it with pleasure, and so infected their nature that all their posterity felt the effects of it.

Q. Will you explain this to me by an example?

A. It is with the children of Adam as with those of a leper, whose corruption is so great, that all his flesh and substance are corrupted; so that all born of him are corrupted; all his children are lepers like himself.

Q. Have you another example?

A. Yes; they may be compared to a source of stagnant and corrupt water; the streams flowing from it, are equally corrupt, and retain its infection.

Q. Our first parents were then infected with the malignity of the devil?

A. Yes; and our flesh, which comes from that of Adam, as

from its source, has been filled with the same malignity.

Q. And thus, the corruption and malignity of our flesh are of the same nature with that of the devil?

A. Yes.

Q. God has then a great hatred for our flesh?

A. Yes, since it is filled with the malignity of the devil himself.

Q. But the malice of the devil is consummated in hell; does our flesh share in this consummated malice?

A. Yes.

Q. What! is our flesh capable of doing as much evil as the devil?

A. Our flesh would be guilty of all the evil that the devil can commit, if it were deserted by God and his Holy Spirit.

Q. In this case, we ought to have a great hatred and horror for our flesh ?

A. Yes, we ought to hate it, as much as we do the devil; we ought to fly from it as from satan.

Q. It is, perhaps, for this reason, that the saints treated their flesh so cruelly; and that, through the hatred they had for it, they tore it to pieces and disciplined and scourged themselves even to blood ?

A. Yes; they discharged their

anger upon their flesh, as upon the sworn enemy of God.

Q O! how much we ought to hate the flesh, and renounce all that it may ask or desire of us!

A. Yes.

Q. Is it for this reason that our Lord said to his disciples, that he who wishes to follow him must renounce himself?*

A. Yes.

Q. What do you mean by renouncing ourselves?

A. To renounce ourselves, is to renounce all the inclinations of the flesh; the desire of honors, pleasures, and riches; the desire of being loved; the desire of vengeance; in a word, all the

* Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum. Matth. xvi, 24.

desires of sin that are in us, and are opposed to the cross of Christ.

LESSON VII.

Of the love of the cross, that is, of abjection, sufferings, and poverty, which the Holy Ghost gives us in Baptism.

Q. What! are we bound to carry the cross of our Lord, and make profession of his maxims?

A. Yes; the second condition which our Lord imposes upon his disciples and all christians, is to carry his cross,* and bear with pleasure sufferings, humiliations, calumnies, poverty etc.

* Tollat crucem suam. Matth. xvi, 24

Q. How can we love humiliations, sufferings, and poverty; in a word, the holy cross of Christ?

A. We can not do it by our own strength, but by the virtue of Christ and of the Holy Spirit who is given us in baptism.

Q. How so?

A. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to repose in us and in the bottom of our hearts, to communicate to us his holy inclinations.

Q. All this seems quite strange and contradictory.

A. True; and it is for this reason that we have such violent struggles to sustain.

Q. What struggles?

A. Those of which St. Paul

speaks when he says that the flesh combats against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*.

Q. How is that?

A. On one side, the Holy Ghost, who is in us, inclines us to contempt, poverty, and sufferings; and on the other, our flesh desires honors, pleasures, and riches. Our soul is at liberty either to adhere to the Holy Spirit, by the grace he gives us; or to oppose him, by adhering to the flesh in its own malice.

Q. You say that the Spirit

* Caro concupiscit adversus spiritum; spiritus autem adversus carnem: hæc enim sibi invicem adversantur Paul. vi, 7.

of God gives us the love of sufferings, humiliations, and poverty; I never felt it.

A. What you say is true; you do not feel this pleasure in your flesh; you do not experience in it this joy, these delights; neither does the Holy Ghost dwell in you to produce these effects in your flesh; nor does he come to work this change in your body, but only in the bottom of your soul.

Q. What! will the flesh never take pleasure in affliction, in sufferings, and in the cross?

A. No, unless sometimes, by an extraordinary favor, the Holy Ghost communicates to it the same inclinations that

he diffuses in the soul, and makes our bodies experience the same sentiments with which he fills our hearts; but this he does rarely, and only for a time.

Q. Baptism then does not make its impression upon the body as upon the soul; it does not regenerate the flesh, but the spirit?

A. That is true; it is our soul that receives the inspirations of the Holy Spirit; it is the soul that receives his impressions and is imbued with his sentiments; in fine, it is the soul alone that is regenerated by baptism.

LESSON VIII.

Of our first generation, in which the devil is the father of our perverse inclinations; and of the regeneration of baptism, in which Jesus Christ being our Father communicates to us his divine life.

Q. What do you mean, when you say that our soul is regenerated in baptism?

A. I mean that it receives in it inclinations and impressions entirely new and different from those of its first generation.

Q. How so?

A. By its first generation, our soul had received perverse inclinations, by which it was entirely bent upon sin and crea-

tures; on the contrary, by the regeneration of baptism, it receives new impressions, and entirely different inclinations, which excite it to the love of God and a perfect union with him, to the separation from creatures and an ardent desire of heavenly things.

Q. After baptism, man is then no longer our father, nor the flesh our mother?

A. No; and we ought no longer to follow their evil inclinations.

Q. By baptism, is God our Father?

A. Yes; we call God our Father, and he is so in truth; because, in baptism, he infuses

into us, by his Holy Spirit, his own nature and divine life.*

Q. Is not the devil the father of man?

A. In our first generation, the devil is properly the father of man, a sinner in Adam; because he communicated to him his life and perverse inclinations, which were transmitted to us in our birth †.

Q. And in the second generation?

A. Here the case is very different, because, in this generation, the eternal Father is our Fa-

* Ut efficiamini divinæ consortes naturæ. II, Petr. i, 4.— Ut filii Dei nominemur, et simus. I. Joan. iii, 1.

† Vos ex patre diabolo estis, et desideria patris vestri vultis facere. Jacob. viii, 44.

ther; he communicates to us his inclinations, sentiments, and sanctity, by virtue of his Holy Spirit whom he gives us, to be in us the principle of his divine life; and the splendor of this life beams forth from our good works, which being then like those of God, cause him to be glorified upon earth.*

Q. But since in our first generation, the devil is our father, and since Adam transmitted to us all the perverse inclinations of the devil, we are then very miserable in ourselves?

* *Luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificent patrem vestrum qui in cœlis est.*
Matth. v, 16.

A. Yes, inexpressibly so; God alone can comprehend it.

Q. Why?

A. Because, as God alone can conceive the malice of the devil and the wretched state to which he has been reduced by divine justice, so God alone can conceive the misery, malignity and destitution of our flesh, which is reduced to so pitiable a state, that, besides being made partaker of the malediction of the devil, it has weaknesses, impurities and miseries, of which the devil himself is not capable by his own nature.

Q. That being so, man ought indeed to cherish abjection; he ought indeed to love contempt.

A. Yes; for they are indeed his due.

LESSON IX.

Of the obligation we are under to carry the cross, and cherish the love of it, on account of the Spirit whom we received in Baptism, and who imprinted this love in our hearts.

Q. Can the flesh deserve any thing but contempt, abjection and contradiction?

A. No.

Q. It is then an effect (of) the justice of God, that, in Baptism, the love of contempt, sufferings and poverty, is imprinted in the heart of man.

A. Yes; for man, of himself, being nothingness and sin, he

ought to have no other desire for himself than to be treated as he deserves, that is to say, to suffer contempt, persecution, poverty, etc.

Q. How admirable are the conduct and ways of God over Christians! no, it is not without reason that the scripture calls the mystery of the cross a hidden mystery.^{*} Truly, few persons would believe that the cross is so just and reasonable a thing, and that there is such an obligation for us to cherish the love of it in our hearts.

A. This is the misfortune and error of the age; many try to persuade themselves that this is

^{*} Absconditum ab eis. Luc. xviii, 34

an excess of piety, a devotion reserved to cloisters, and not an obligation for all Christians.

Q. But, by baptism, have we not received the Holy Ghost, that obliges us to live in the love of the cross?

A. Yes; for according to St. Paul,* as I have already said, we are no longer debtors to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; but we are obliged to live according to the Spirit; and, if we live in the Spirit, we must walk according to the direction of the Spirit,† who imprints in our hearts an inclination for

* Rom. viii, 12.

† Si spiritu vivimus, spiritu et ambulemus. Galat. v, 25.

the cross, and gives us at
the same time strength to
carry it.

Q. Is not this expressed in the ceremonies of baptism?

A. Yes; for there are two crosses made with the holy oil, one upon the heart, the other upon the shoulders of the person baptized, to denote to us the effect of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What does the oil represent?

A. The Holy Spirit.

Q. What does the cross made upon the heart signify?

A. The love of the cross; because the heart is the seat of love.

Q. And that made upon the shoulders?

A. It signifies the strength to carry the cross; because the shoulders are the seat of strength in man.

LESSON X.

Of another obligation to love the cross, and particularly contempt, abjection, and dereliction, which are the first branch of the cross, proceeding from the fact that man, by himself, is a mere nothing.

Q. Besides the Spirit that we received in baptism, does what we are by ourselves oblige us to the love of the cross?

A. Yes.

Q. And what is man by himself?

A. Alas! nothing.

Q. What was man, before God had infused into him his being?

A. He was nothing at all.

Q. What does nothing merit?

A. Nothing merits nothing, or rather it deserves all contempt, abjection, dereliction, and forgetfulness on the part of all creatures; nothing can not be looked at; for there is nothing in it, upon which one may cast his eyes.

Q. We should not then desire to be noticed, seen, or esteemed?

A. No; we should, on the contrary, desire to be treated according to what we are; and as nothing is disregarded, is

despised, does not even deserve to be despised, since it is not even worth that one should trouble himself about it, to pass a judgment on it; so man, who is nothing by himself, merits nothing, not even contempt.

Q. Alas! we are then very miserable creatures, since we do not even deserve that one should take the trouble to despise us. But how can you say that man is nothing, since he has a body and a soul?

A. I say that man is nothing by himself; he has indeed something borrowed; but he is not the less nothing by himself, and consequently he ought not to be

honored; but honor ought to return to him to whom the good which man has received belongs.

Q. Whence do you draw this truth?

A. From St. Paul, who says, first, that he who thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, deceiveth himself; secondly, that man ought not to glorify himself, since the good which may be in him, he has received from another.*

Q. From whom has man received all that he possesses?

* Si quis existimat se aliquid esse, cùm nihil sit, ipse se seducit. Gal. vi, 3. Quid habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris, quasi non acceperis? 1. Cor. iv, 7.

A. From God alone.

Q. God alone then ought to be honored for all the good which is in man?

A. Yes, just as a painter ought to be praised for his painting, and not the piece of canvass upon which he has placed his colors.

Q. Men then ought not to receive for themselves the praises that are given them?

A. No.

Q. What ought they to do, when they are praised?

A. They ought to offer to God all the praises that are given to them, and say to him: My God, I refer to thee all these praises, because thou alone de-

servest them for the blessings thou hast bestowed upon me.

Q. But when we perceive in us gifts and graces from God, what must we do?

A. Three things:

1. Humble ourselves before God, acknowledging that he is the author of all good in us;

2. Thank him that he has been pleased to bestow upon us what we did not merit;

3. Pray to him that he may glorify himself for his gifts, and use them in us for his glory, since by ourselves we cannot do it well.

Q. Were these dispositions in the devils, when they received the gifts of God?

A. No; if they had acted in this way, they would not be damned.

Q. What then did they do, to lose themselves so miserably, in receiving the gifts of God?

A. Being charmed with the sweets of honor, they wished to be honored themselves for the gifts of God; and, drawing upon themselves the praises due to God, they endeavored to rob the Almighty of the glory which belonged to him alone.

Q. We must not then suffer any honor to be paid to us?

A. No.

LESSON XI.

Of Pride, and of the desire of honor, which we must resist.

Q. Must we never desire to be honored?

A. No; for this is to desire the property of another, the property of God; it is to be a thief; it is, according to St. Paul, to commit a robbery;* it is to steal from God that which is most dear to him, his glory, which he assures us he will never give to another.†

Q. It is then a sacrilegious

* Philip ii, 6.

† *Gloriam meam alteri non dabo.* Is. xlii, 8, et xlviii, 2.

theft, since it is robbing God himself?

A. Yes, it is to rob from the altar of God and from his hands that which he declares he will not give up or yield to any one.

Q. Pride is then a great sin?

A. Yes, and it is for this reason that it is so rigorously punished in the demons, and that it is said in scripture that God resists the proud;* as if they wished to wrest from his hands, in spite of him, his most precious treasure.

Q. The punishment of pride then is not only an effect of the

* Deus superbis resistit. Jacob. iv, 6; et 1. Petr. v, 5.

anger of God, but also of his indignation?

A. Yes; it is a consequence of the resistance of God, irritated against the proud, who wish to rob him of his honor, and upon whom he finally discharges his anger, enkindled and changed into fury.

Q. Men are then very much deceived, when they run after honor, since they are not permitted to desire it?

A. That is true; for if we retain for ourselves the honor offered us, without referring it to God, we expose ourselves to the danger of offending him grievously, and of exciting his indignation against us.

Q. What must we do, when we discover in us the desire of being honored, when we feel joy from the praises given to us and the esteem evinced in our favor?

A. When we perceive in ourselves this desire of being noticed and esteemed, we must renounce it, and confound ourselves, at feeling in our hearts sentiments that had their birth in hell and are like those which hurled Satan and his angels into everlasting damnation.

Q. How is this?

A. It is because Satan, as I have already said, desired to be esteemed and honored by his fellow angels; he even enticed them to give him honor and

praise, which he received from them with joy. God grant that we may never have such sentiments, since they damned the angels themselves.

Q. You must not say this; for the desire of honor and esteem will be in us until death; and this desire is not a sin, provided we resist it.

A. That is true; for the good and bad angels were equally attacked by the temptation; but the latter yielded to it, and not the former; these resisted it, and were crowned; the others consented to it, and were damned.

Q. What must we then do?

A. Never adhere to these sentiments, and never take any pleasure in them.

LESSON XII.

That honor is due to God alone; how we ought to act, when we are despised.

Q. Who is he who ought to be honored?

A. God alone; “to God alone,” says St. Paul, “be all honor and glory;* and to us confusion,” says the Prophet Daniel.†

Q. Can you give some reason for this?

A. Yes; it is because God alone is perfect in himself, as our Lord says; none is good but

* Soli Deo honor et gloria. 1, Tim. i, 17.

† Nobis autem confusio faciei. Dan. ix, 8.

God alone *. Every thing else is nothing by itself, and possesses no good but from God; wherefore our Saviour said of himself: my doctrine is not mine nor of me †.

Q. But ought we not to honor the Saints who are in heaven? does not God wish us to honor them?

A. The honor we render to the Saints who are in heaven, is an honor which we render to God himself dwelling in them; and when we honor the just upon earth, it is the Holy Spirit that we honor in those in whom he

* Nemo bonus, nisi solus Deus. Luc. xviii, 19.

† Mea doctrina non est mea. Joan. vii, 16.

dwells, whom he justifies, and to whom he gives grace and virtue to be faithful to God.

Q. Is it for this reason that we read in the holy Scripture, that God is wonderful and admirable in his Saints?*

A. Yes; because by his power he elevates their weakness to the practice of sublime virtues, enlightens their ignorance, and makes his grandeur shine forth in their baseness.

Q. Is it thus God wishes to be honored in his Saints?

A. Yes; our Lord himself, when upon earth, wished that his Father should be honored in him; he did not wish to re-

† *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.* Psal. xvii, 36.

ceive any praise for himself, but referred it all to his Father. He said to those who called him good: do not say so; no one is good but my Father. The goodness which shines in me comes from him, it originates in him, and if he had not given it to me, I would not have it. Before my Father had communicated it to me, I was nothing, had nothing; I was a mere nothing, like the rest of men; my humanity was created out of nothing, as well as that of other creatures. God poured himself upon me, and infused into me the plenitude of his treasures, so that they are all his, and whatever is good, beautiful and perfect in me, is from him; this good is God's,

not mine; he is the author of these perfections and beauties; he ought to be honored for his work, and above all, for this masterpiece of his hands.

Q. It was then in as much as he was nothing of himself, that he called himself the reproach of men and the outcast of the people?*

A. Yes, and it was also because he was charged with the sins of the whole world.

Q. You have told us wonderful things about our divine Saviour, which I beg you to explain a little more fully. But, before leaving this subject, tell us still more particularly how

* *Opprobrium hominum, et abjectio plebis.* Ps. xxii, 7.

we ought to act, when we are despised, and when no kind of notice is taken of us.

A. When we are passed by unnoticed, we should rejoice, and say in ourselves: O my God! how happy I am not to be seen or noticed by men. How glad I am that nobody thinks of me! for, in this manner, O Lord! I do not occupy in the thoughts or minds of thy creatures the place which thou alone shouldst occupy in them. How delighted I am to be left out of their view, that I may also be left out of their hearts! This was the disposition of thy holy martyr St. Ignatius, when he foresaw that he would be entombed in the body of the beasts

which were on the point of devouring him, “at least, said he, I shall be seen there by no one, I shall occupy no one’s mind, nor shall I fill any one with myself.”*

LESSON XIII.

That the miserable desire of being honored is a common and universal desire; of the manner of combating and renouncing it.

Q. Is the desire of being thought of, loved, and esteemed,

* Blanditiis demulcete ferās, ut mihi sepulchrum fiant, et nihil de corpore meo relinquunt; ne cū obdormiens, molestus cuicumque sim. Tunc ero verè christi discipulus, cum mundus nec corpus meum videbit. St. Ign. Epist. ad Rom.

universal, and common to all men?

A. It is a desire so common, that there is scarcely any one, if he does not watch over himself very carefully, that does not act and speak by its secret impulse. We have in us this miserable and idolatrous desire, to fill every one's mind with ourselves, to wish to instil the esteem of ourselves in all hearts, and to be idolized by all.

Q. Alas! what a misfortune, what a wretched state!

A. We are all filled in our flesh with the inclinations of the devil, which he infused into us by the sin of Adam; so that our flesh makes us wish, like him,

to hold the place of God in the world, and whilst formerly man was to be honored as the image of God, and receive from creatures their homage and veneration to offer them to God; since his prevarication, he wishes to receive them for himself, and to be idolized and adored in the place of God.

Q. How do you think that people speak in the world, and act even in the most holy things?

A. It is with the desire of being esteemed, and of impressing the love of themselves in the hearts of all around them.

Q. The means not to fall into this disorder?

A. It is to renounce ourselves

in the beginning of our conversations and actions, which is done in the following manner: My God! I renounce all intention of appearing in this; I renounce all intention of attracting to me the esteem of men; I renounce all the detestable desires of my flesh which always seeks itself in all things; I renounce all the self-love and abominable pride with which I am filled.

Q. Is it enough for us to renounce ourselves and all the desires of self-seeking?

A. We must, besides, endeavor to become stronger, in abandoning ourselves to the Spirit of our Lord, who, since baptism, is in us to perform our

actions with us, in order that we
may do the works of Christ,
and not those of the old man,
the works of the spirit and not
those of the flesh, and that
in all things God may be glori-
fied in us through his Son, Jesus
Christ.

Q. This is a beautiful doctrine; but is it found in the Scriptures?

A. Yes; I could give you many passages to establish it; but I will quote only what St. Peter, our master in Christ, says of it: "If any man speaks. let him speak as the words of God. Let him speak in the Spirit of God. If any man administers, let him do it as of

the power, which God administereth, that in all things the holiness and majesty of God may be honored through Jesus Christ.*

Q. It is then in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord, acting in us, that we ought to do all things?

A. Yes; we must go out of ourselves and enter into the virtue of Christ, to honor God, his Father; for otherwise we are all filled with impurity and bad intentions which infect all our works.

* Si quis loquitur, quasi sermones Dei; si quis ministrat, tanquam ex virtute quam administrat Deus; ut in omnibus honorificetur Deus per Jesum Christum. 1, Pet. iv, xi.

Q. We are then very miserable and wretched, since, as long as we remain in ourselves, we can do nothing that can please God?

A. This proceeds from the corruption of the flesh; wherever it appears, it corrupts every thing.

Q. I am not astonished that we so much deserve to be despised?

A. We not only deserve to be forgotten and despised on account of our nothingness, but we also merit to be persecuted and trampled under foot, in a word, of ourselves we merit nothing but hell.

Q. What do you say? you

destroy entirely the confidence I had in myself.

A. I say nothing to you that I do not show you in the Scriptures.

LESSON XIV.

Of the obligation we are under to love pains, sufferings, and persecutions, founded upon the fact that by ourselves we are sin.

Q. For God's sake, explain to me the truth you have just proposed, and impress it upon my heart so deeply that it may never be effaced, in order that I may love sufferings, persecutions, calumny, in a word, the penance that I am bound to perform in this world which is the sojourn for it.

A. This is the second branch of the cross; for we have already seen the obligation we are under to love abjection and contempt, which forms the first branch of it, and suffer them through justice, as well as through religion. We must now see how we are obliged to love also pains and sufferings, and bear patiently persecutions and calumnies, not only because the Holy Spirit we have received in baptism has given us these inclinations, but also through justice, on account of our demerit.

Q. Explain that to me, if you please.

A. To understand it well, you

have only to know that we are sin by ourselves.

Q. I have indeed heard it said that we were sinners, but not that we were sin.

A. We are not only sinners, but also sin.

Q. If that is so, there is no sort of opprobrium, calumny, vexation, or persecution, that we do not deserve. But I beg you to show me how we are sin.

A. The Christian, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, is composed of two things; one is called flesh, the other spirit. Thus is man divided in the Scriptures.

Q. I understand very well that man is composed of body

and soul; but I do not know whether this is what you mean, when you say that the Christian is composed of flesh and spirit.

A. No; by the spirit, I mean the Holy Spirit and all the gifts which originate with him, such as faith, hope, charity, humility, patience, and other like gifts, graces, and virtues, as St. Paul teaches us, after our Lord, who says in St. John, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the spirit is spirit.*”

Q. And what do you mean by the flesh?

* Quod natum est ex carne caro est, quod natum est ex spiritu spiritus est. Joan. iii, 6.

A. You see it by the word of our Lord; it is that which is not the Holy Spirit, nor born of the Holy Spirit, but is born of the flesh.

Q. The body and soul are then called flesh in the Holy Scripture?

A. Yes; the soul particularly, when it follows the flesh and its inclinations, and even our spirit, when it acts with a view to attain to the designs of the flesh, are called flesh; in fine, all their thoughts are called flesh, because they originate in it, and the Scriptures condemn them, as things of death: the prudence of the flesh is death,

says St. Paul,* and we have had thoughts of flesh, says again the same Apostle.

Q. What is born of the Holy Spirit, and is called spirit, does not then belong to us; it is not born of us; it is not ourselves?

A. No; for it is God himself, and the effects of his holy presence, which are his light, wisdom, love, etc.

Q. We must not glory in it then, nor place it in the number of the things that are ours?

A. You are right; they are gifts of the pure liberality and great mercy of God, moved with compassion for our misery and

* Prudentia carnis mors est. Rom. viii, 5.

actuated by the charity of his Son who died for us upon the cross.

LESSON XV.

Explanation of the preceding doctrine.

Q. What then is our own in us ?

A. Our nothingness and sins; this is all we can boast of.

Q. We are then very wretched creatures, and truly deserve all kinds of sufferings and persecutions ?

A. As for our nothingness, I have already shown you, how, of ourselves, we are really nothing: it is what we were from all eternity; the being which

God gave us, is not ours, but his; and although he gave it to us, it does not cease to be his being, for which he wishes to be honored.

Q. But how are we sin?

A. I will tell you, with the grace of God. The first man, Adam, had been created in innocence; he sinned, and all men sinned in him.

Q. How do you understand this?

A. If a father had made a bargain for himself and all his family, is it not true that all his children would be bound to the conditions under which he contracted?

Q. That is true.

A. Our first parent made a

treaty in the name of all his children and of his whole family: by his sin he violated this treaty; his children have then all participated with him in his crime, and justly borne the punishment of it.

Q. I see plainly enough, and firmly believe, that we have committed sin in our first father, and are punished for it, which is just; but I do not yet see how we are sin.

A. To understand what I am going to say, it was necessary to presuppose what I have already said. The sin of the first man made such a waste in us, and produced in us such corruption, that from that time

we are nothing but flesh and sin. God says, “my spirit shall not remain in man for ever, because he is flesh;* because all his being, both spiritual and corporal, is infected with sin. His soul is become flesh, it is sensual like the flesh, it is blind like the flesh, it seeks only the appetites of the flesh, it is carnal and terrestrial like the flesh; it is all depraved and stripped of its righteousness; it is turned aside from its first ways; it has no longer any but impure, sensual and lewd desires; in a word, it has no longer any of the features or resemblance of God.

* Non permanebit spiritus meus in homine in æternum, quia caro est. Gen. vi, 3.

Q. I would like to have still more light upon this matter.

A. Man is so depraved in his corrupt nature, that he has no inclinations but to evil and sin, and these inclinations are so strong in him, by the misery and venom of original sin, that he is like an abyss and bottomless pit of sin, carrying in himself the principle, not only of one sin or two, but of all the sins that can be committed.

Q. Alas! what misery! and how can we glory in our flesh? If the Scripture forbids pride to man, because he is dust and ashes,* how much more

* Quid superbit terra et cinis? Eccli. x, 9.

should it forbid pride to the flesh, which is all infected by sin?

A. This is what we are.

LESSON XVI.

Continuation of the same subject ; that our flesh is nothing but sin.

Q. Could you add something to what you have already said, to make me understand better how the flesh is nothing but sin?

A. It is so much sin, that it is all inclination and movement to sin, and even to all sin; so that, if the Holy Spirit did not restrain our soul, and assist us with his grace, it would be carried away by the inclinations

of the flesh, which tend wholly to sin, and are diffused and spread in the soul, on account of its strict connexion and intimate union with the flesh.

Q. Great God! what then is the flesh?

A. It is the effect of sin, the principle of sin; we may say of it, as the Jews said of the man born blind, that it is wholly born in sin.*

Q. If that is so, why do we not fall at every moment into sin?

A. It is the mercy of God that prevents us from it, and his divine Spirit that assists us

* In peccatis natus es totus. Joan, ix, 34.

and remains in us to sustain our weakness.

Q. I am then indebted to God, if I do not commit every sin in the world?

A. Yes: St. Augustine said so of himself, and it is the ordinary sentiment of the saints; because the flesh is drawn by such a weight towards sin, that nothing but God can prevent it from falling into it.*

Q. What' could not wisdom and philosophy?

* Gratia tuæ deputo et quæcumque non feci mala. Quid enim non facere potui, qui etiam gratuitum facinus amavi? Et omnia mihi dimissa esse fateor, et quæ meâ sponte feci mala, et quæ te duce non feci. S. Aug. Conf. l. ii, c. 7.

A. No; for the greatest philosophers and wisest men of antiquity, although they knew virtue and had the greatest horror for vice, committed the grossest faults, and even fell into the most horrid and shameful vices against nature.*

Q. We are then under very great obligation to our Lord Jesus Christ, for having given us his Holy Spirit, to raise up again our soul, and draw it out of the mire of sin and the corruption of the flesh in which it was plunged?

A. Our obligation to him is too great to be expressed.

* Rom. i. 21, etc.

Q. But, again, could you tell me something more about it?

A. What I can tell you about it is, that there is no sort of sin that can be conceived, no sort of imperfection or disorder, no error or irregularity, that does not fill our flesh; so that there is no kind of weakness, or folly, or crime, that the flesh is not capable of, at every moment.

Q. What! I might be a fool; I might act as such, through the streets and highways, if I were not assisted by God?

A. This would be but little, as it only regards civil deportment; but you must know that, without the grace of God and

the virtue of his Holy Spirit, there is no kind of impurity, foulness, infamy, drunkenness, blasphemy; no sort of sin, to which man may not abandon himself.

Q. The flesh is then very corrupt?

A. You see it.

LESSON XVII.

That our flesh is wholly opposed and rebellious to God and his divine Spirit.

Q. I see plainly that the flesh is all sin: I can no longer doubt it; but I beg you nevertheless to make me see it more fully, in order to inspire me with a still greater horror of it.

A. The flesh is sin, in as much as it is wholly opposed to God, in as much as it combats against the spirit, and the spirit also combats against it.*

Q. What do you say? is the flesh opposed to God and his divine Spirit?

A. Yes, Saint Paul himself says so.

Q. It acts, then, like Satan, who is always waging war against God, and is consequently of the same nature with him?

A. Yes.

Q. I am no longer astonished, at your telling me that we must

* Caro concupiscit adversùs spiritum, spiritus autem adversùs carnem. Gal. v, 17.

hate our flesh, that we ought to have a horror of ourselves, and that man, in his present state, ought to be cursed, calumniated, persecuted by all: no, I am no longer surprised at it. In truth, there is no sort of evil or misfortune, that ought not to fall upon man on account of his flesh.

A. You are right: all the hatred, maledictions and persecutions that fall upon the devil, should fall upon the flesh and its movements.

Q. But the devil is cursed, because he will not be converted to God, and can never be subjected to him.

A. It is so also with the flesh,

during all the time of this life; it is so corrupted, depraved, sullied, and perverted, that it can never be converted to God; it can not be subjected to him, says St. Paul.*

Q. But, if that is so, how was it possible for the saints who had a flesh like ours, to serve God in this world?

A. Because, in them, the Holy Spirit, to whom their soul adhered, and by whom it was enlightened, carried the flesh with him, and subjected it to God in spite of itself.

Q. Was it in spite of itself?

A. Yes; for, in this life, the

* Legi enim Dei non est subjecta; nec enim potest. Rom, vii, 7.

flesh always remains what it is; and although, sometimes, the grace of God and the effusion of the Holy Spirit into it, make it rejoice in the Lord, as is said in Holy Scripture;* it is however always ready to resist them, and almost always withdraws itself from them by force.

Q. But the devils never sing the praise of God, and can not rejoice.

A. They cannot in the state in which they are; God, however, if he wished it, could make them do so by his power, even in the midst of their depravation.

Q. But why does our flesh

* Cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum. Ps. lxxxiii, 3.

praise God sometimes, whilst the devils never praised him?

A. Because the devils are no longer in a state to hope or merit glory; but the flesh is given as a companion to the soul, which merits glory and hopes for it every day; so that, in man, the soul serves God, and adheres to him in his Spirit, and the flesh remains, in spite of itself, subjected to the Spirit, although it may not be submissive to him.

Q. What do you mean by the flesh being subjected and not submissive.

A. The flesh is like the demon, who, notwithstanding his opposition and rage, is subjected

to the power of the divine Spirit, but nevertheless is not submissive to his laws.

Q. Is the flesh so disposed, whilst the soul serves God in it?

A. Yes; at the same time that I pray to God, and submit myself to him, whilst I raise my heart to God by the virtue of the Holy Spirit, at that very time the flesh separates itself from God, distracts itself with creatures, lowers itself towards the earth, and thus frequently diverts the soul from God.* At the time that the soul keeps itself in purity, the flesh plunges itself into impurity and

* *Deprimit sensum multa cogitantem.*
Sap. ix, 15.

all sort of dishonesty; at the same time that the soul enters in the holiness of God, the flesh mingles, defiles, and pollutes itself with creatures; it no more ceases to be what it is, than does the demon.

LESSON XVIII.

That the malignity of the flesh deserves every kind of humiliations on the part of God and creatures.

Q. When will man and the flesh be no longer sin?

A. In paradise, on the day of the resurrection, when God will reform this vile, abject, and humbled body.

Q. Can we say with propriety: *this humbled body*?

A. Yes; and it is also according to St. Paul that we say it: for man truly deserves every humiliation, and there is no confusion that he ought not to suffer; for example, if a person says of me, of you, or of any one: this man or this woman is avaricious; we must bear it, since we have in us a principle of insatiable avarice, although grace may perhaps have stifled the sentiment of it in our souls. If a person says: this man or this woman is dishonest, we must bear it, because the seed of every vice and impurity is found in our flesh, and would

carry it to sin, if the Holy Spirit did not prevent it. If any one says: there is much pride in you or in me; this is always true, whatever effects the grace of Christ and his Holy Spirit may have wrought in us; and a person does us no injury, by calling us proud, because our flesh remains always the same, that is to say, always full of pride, always ready to act through pride; so that we never cease to be proud, although we may not feel it, and may sometimes exercise ourselves in acts of humility. Thus it is of all other imperfections that can be conceived in man; because the flesh is the source

and sink of all impurity, disorder, and sin.

Q. There is then no kind of humiliations that we ought not to suffer, and believe to be our due?

A. No.

Q. Contempt, injuries, calumnies, should not then trouble us?

A. No; we should imitate, on the contrary, that holy man, who, being punished for a crime which he had not committed, would not justify himself, being convinced that he would have committed it, and many other sins, had not God prevented him by his grace.

Q. So we ought to suffer all kinds of persecutions?

A. If we understood well the malice of our flesh, we would not doubt it; we would, on the contrary, desire to suffer these chastisements, to repress by them the continual rebellion of the flesh against God.

Q. Men, angels, God himself, should then persecute us incessantly?

A. Yes; we should be treated, as sinners will be at the day of judgement, whom God will punish, and upon whom he will exercise his vengeance, through all his creatures, as by so many instruments of the execution of his

justice.* Thus, in all sickness, persecution, contempt, and other like afflictions, we must take part with God against ourselves, and say that we justly merit all this and more; that God has a right to use all creatures to punish us, and that we humbly adore the great mercy which he now exercises towards us, knowing that in the time of his justice, he would treat us more rigorously.

Q. What do you call the time of his justice?

A. The time of the next life, when he will no longer show any mercy to men, when his jus-

* Pugnabit cum illo orbis terrarum contra insensatos. Sap. v, 21.

tice will no longer be blended with compassion for our miseries, and when he will treat us according to all the severity of his judgment.

Q. This will then be very terrible?

A. It is a fearful thing, says the scripture,* to fall into the hands of the living God; for then there will be no kind of pains or torments, with which our soul and body will not be overwhelmed.

Q. It is then much easier to carry now the cross which his justice imposes upon us, in the time of his mercy, when

* *Horrendum est incidere in manus Dei viventis. Heb. x, 31.*

we are sustained by his grace and the virtue that his goodness gives us, than to await the time when we shall be deprived of all help and consolation, and overwhelmed with every sort of torments?

A. You are right; in hell there is no strength to sustain, no grace to fortify, no unction to sweeten the yoke of the rigor of God; which is nevertheless in this world the greatest alleviation of our cross and torments.

LESSON XIX.

Of the obligation we are under, in consequence of our sins, to bear poverty, which is the third branch of the cross of Christians.

Q. You have shown me that we are obliged, in consequence of sin, to carry the two first parts of the cross, namely, contempt and persecution, or those violent pains which we call sufferings; but you have not yet spoken to me of the third part, no less hard to bear than the others, I mean poverty, which is the third branch of the cross of Christians.

A. It is very easy to do so, and to show you that we are

obliged, in consequence of sin, to bear the greatest poverty imaginable. The justice of the kings of the world, who do nothing just but through a participation of the justice of God himself, teaches this to us in the laws enacted against criminals. For as soon as it has convicted a man of high treason, it strips him of all his goods, demolishes his house, and deprives of all right in the kingdom, not only the criminal himself, but all his family and descendants.

Q. Is it thus that God has treated sinners?

A. Yes, in the person of the first man, and, after him, in that of all his children. First, he

drove Adam out of his dwelling place, the beautiful mansion of the terrestrial Paradise, which is, as it were, demolished and destroyed for him and all his children; secondly, he dispossessed him of the empire of the world, deprived him of all rights, and reduced him to the state of a most wretched slavery.

Q. But why does God take away all goods from sinners?

A. Because it is not just that a rebellious creature, a revolted servant, a traitor, an unfaithful man should enjoy the goods of his master. Justice requires, on the contrary, that the master should take them out of his hands, expel him from his house,

and suffer him no longer to eat his bread in his company. Justice requires then that God should take his goods from his enemies, since they ordinarily use them only to offend him.

Q. Why then do sinners enjoy so quietly the gifts of God? Why do they live so much at their ease? Why do they abound in every thing?

A. Because God does not always exercise his justice upon them in this world; he reserves it to himself to punish them in the next. Then the richest of men shall not have a drop of water to cool their parched tongue, as our Lord says.* Then they

* Mitte Lazarum, ut intingat extre-

will be so poor and miserable, that they will be stript of every thing, and even deprived of the use of their natural powers, by the excess of their tortures, and the subtraction of the help of God, who will leave them only so much of the exercise of their faculties as is necessary to make them feel more keenly the rigor of their punishment.

Q. The devils and reprobate are then very miserable ?

A. They are so miserable, that God alone can understand their misery; they themselves can not comprehend it, both

mum digiti sui in aquam, ut refrigeret linguam meam, quia crucior in hac flammâ. Luc. xvi, 24.

because their pain is so great as to exceed their understanding, and because it gives them no intermission to think deliberately about it. They cry incessantly in the excess of their rage and despair, and do nothing else. Sinners, according to the order of the justice of God, should be in a like state.

Q. What! ought sinners to be poor and deprived of every thing, like the evil spirits?

A. Yes; they should even be deprived of all their corporal and spiritual faculties, and be stripped of all the gifts of God.

Q. Why are they not deprived of them?

A. Because our Saviour pur-

chased for them, by the effusion of his blood, the rights which they had lost; it is on his account that they enjoy them; they have no spiritual or temporal gifts but through the pure mercy of God and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, being moved with compassion for the misery of men, came himself to bear it for them, and to compensate by his poverty for that which they should suffer.

Q. Will you explain this more fully in relation to the gifts of the mind?

A. We have no use of our powers, no light of the mind, no movement of the will, that Christ did not acquire for us; be-

cause, having sinned in Adam, we deserved to lose all; but we received in Christ all we had lost, and even many more graces and gifts than sin had taken from us. Thus where sin abounded, grace does more abound* through Jesus Christ; and, we may say, with the Church: Happy fault, that has procured for us such and so great a Redeemer!†

* Ubi abundavit delictum, superabundavit gratia. Rom. v, 20.

† O felix culpa! quæ talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem. Præ. Pasch.

LESSON XX.

Of the grace wrought in the soul by the mysteries of our Lord in which we must participate. First, of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Q. To be a perfect Christian, is it sufficient to have the dispositions which you have so far indicated?

A. No; it is necessary, moreover, that the Christian should participate in all the mysteries of Jesus Christ, this amiable Redeemer having accomplished them in his person, that they might be abundant and special sources of grace in his church.

Q. Has each mystery acquired

for the church some special grace?

A. Yes; each mystery has acquired for the church sanctifying grace, and a variety of particular graces which he grants to faithful souls, when it pleases him, and ordinarily in the time of the solemnity of the mystery.

Q. What are the principal mysteries in which the soul can participate?

A. It ought to participate in all, but principally in six, which are; the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord.

Q. What grace does the mys-

tery of the Incarnation produce in us?

A. The grace of annihilation to all self-interest and self-love.

Q. What do you mean by annihilation to all self-interest and self-love?

A. I mean that, as by the adorable mystery of the Incarnation, the sacred humanity of our Lord was annihilated in his own person, so that it no longer sought itself, no longer had any self-interest, no longer acted for itself, having in itself another person substituted in the place of its own, namely, the person of the Son of God, who sought only the interest of his

Father, whom alone he considered at all times and in all things; so we ought to be annihilated to all self views and interests, and have no others than those of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in us, to live in us for his Father.* As my Father, when he sent me, destroyed in me the very root of self-love, in not giving me the human person, but uniting me to the divine person of his Son, in order to make me live for him; so, when you will receive me, you will live for me and not for yourselves. For, I will

* Sicut misit me vivens Pater, et ego vivo propter Patrem: et qui manducat me, et ipse vivet propter me. Joan. vi, 58.

live in you; I will fill your soul with my desires and my life, which will consume and annihilate in you all that is self, so that it will be I who shall live and will in you, instead of yourselves, and thus being entirely annihilated in yourselves, you will be wholly changed in me.

Q. Is this change a second grace of the mystery of the Incarnation?

A. Yes; for the mystery of the Incarnation, besides effecting in us an entire divesture of ourselves, also effects the putting on of our Lord, by a total consecration of ourselves to God, in the same manner as

on the day of his Incarnation our Lord consecrated himself entirely to his Father, with all his members, sanctifying in advance all the particular occasions that he and his members would ever have to serve and glorify God.

Q. Did our Saviour, on the day of his Incarnation, offer to his Father his life and that of all his members?

A. Yes, he offered them, and continues still to make the same offering; he is still in the same dispositions in which he was during his mortal life; he continues in them without interruption, and offers himself to God with all his mem-

bers, whenever they have to serve, honor and glorify him. Our Lord, in his divine person, is an altar upon which all men are offered to God with all their actions and sufferings; he is that golden altar* upon which is consummated every perfect sacrifice, the human nature of Christ with that of all the faithful being the victim, his Spirit the fire, and God the Father He to whom it is offered, and who is adored by it in Spirit and truth.

* Apoc. viii, 3.

LESSON XXI.

Of the mystery of the Crucifixion, and its
grace.

Q. I am satisfied with what you have said to me about the great and most holy mystery of the Incarnation, but what grace does the mystery of the crucifixion of our Lord operate in us?

A. It gives us grace and strength to crucify all our members, by the virtue of the Spirit of God, who is like the sacrificer and the executioner of the sentence pronounced against the flesh. The nails he uses are the virtues that fasten to the cross our-self love and impure desires.

This state of crucifixion supposes that the soul is still living to itself, that it still struggles, and that the divine Spirit uses violence upon the body to crucify it. Mortify your members that are upon the earth, says St. Paul.* Thus this state supposes resistance to the Spirit on the part of the flesh; and often, in this agony, we are tortured with excessive pains.

Q. What must we do, when we feel any desire rising in our hearts, and giving us pain?

A. We must address ourselves to the Holy Spirit, begging him to use his power against the

* Mortificate ergo membra vestra quæ sunt super terram. Col. iii, 5.

flesh and act in us as a master; protesting that, on our side, we renounce all our desires, and unite with him to act in his virtue against ourselves, annihilating and confounding ourselves, and crushing all the revolts of the flesh in us, as much as we can, like a victim that God takes pleasure in seeing us immolate to his justice.

LESSON XXII.

Of the mystery of the Death of our Lord, and of the state of death which it operates in us.

Q. How can we participate in the mystery of the death of our Lord?

A. By appropriating to our-

selves the state and grace of interior death, which he acquired for us in this mystery.

Q. What do you call state of interior death?

A. It is a state in which a man can no longer be moved, and although the world may show him its beauties, honors and riches, it is the same thing as if they were offered to a dead man, who remains without movement and desire, insensible to all that is presented to him. The christian, in this state of death, whatever his senses may show him, whatever the malignity of the world may excite against him, is interiorly immoveable; he may be agitated,

as long as he is in life, but his soul is always in peace; he remains indifferent to all things, and takes no notice of them, because he is dead to all in our Lord.*

A dead man can be shaken exteriorly, and receive some movement in his body; but this agitation is altogether exterior, and does not proceed from the interior, which is wholly without life, vigor, or strength. Thus a soul that is interiorly dead, may be disturbed without; but within, it remains dead and without movement for any thing that may present itself, because there is no longer in it

* Mortui enim estis. Col. iii, 3.

any life for the world, it is wholly insensible, and completely dead to the vain things of the earth, on account of the divine life which absorbs all that is mortal in it.* *soul*

LESSON XXIII.

Of the mystery of the Burial of our Lord, and in what the grace of this mystery differs from that of death.

Q. What grace did the mystery of the Burial of our Lord acquire for us, and in what does it differ from the grace of interior death?

A. A dead man still retains

* Ut absorbeatur quod mortale est à vitâ II, Cor. v, 4.

the form of the world and of the flesh; he still appears to be a part of Adam, he can yet be occasionally moved, he gives yet some pleasure to the world; but the buried man is no longer spoken of, he is no longer in the rank of men; as he is in a state of corruption, and an object of horror, he has no longer any thing that pleases, he is trampled under foot in a cemetery, without any one being astonished at it; so perfectly is the world convinced that he is nothing, and is no longer in the number of men.

The burial of which St. Paul speaks, when he says that we are buried with our Lord by

baptism,* is the same thing as that corruption, of which our Lord speaks in St. John, when he says that unless the grain of wheat which falls on the ground dies, it remains alone and without fruit.*

This Burial and this corruption are different from death, in as much as the state of death supposes only a state of consistency, stiffness and insensibility; whilst the state of burial and corruption implies the destruc-

* *Consepulti enim sumus cum illo per baptismum in mortem. Rom. vi, 4. Consepulti ei in baptismo. Col. ii, 12.*

* *Nisi granum frumenti cadens in terram, mortuum fuerit, nullum fructum affert. Joan. xii, 24.*

tion of the whole being, and the production of the germ of a new life. The grain, after rotting in the ground, is like the tomb from which the new creature rises; and the body of a christian, already condemned to corruption in Adam, sees from its corruption spring up the germ of a divine life, which the Holy Spirit produces in it with all the effects and movements of sanctity that accompany it. This mystery is founded upon that of the burial of our Lord, since this divine Saviour sprang up alive from his tomb, in which death had buried this grain of wheat of the elect.

LESSON XXIV.

Of the mystery of the Resurrection, and of the grace that it operates in us.

Q. What does the holy mystery of the Resurrection of our Lord give us? What grace does it operate in us?

A. It is a grace of separation from the world, of detachment from the present life, which makes us sigh for the life to come, and aspire continually to heaven, after the example of our Lord, who, since his resurrection, could not even live with his disciples, nor bear their incredulity and hardness of heart, so impatient and de-

sirous was he of being with his Father, as he had already testified during his life, when he said: Glorify me, my Father, etc.*

Q. But one should be out of the world, to be in this state?

A. Yes; for our Lord, after his resurrection, appeared again, it is true, with his disciples; he conversed with them, but more rarely; he eat with them, but with reluctance.

Q. Can there be any attachment to creatures in this state?

A. No; as we may see in what passed between our Lord and St. Magdalen; he no longer

* Pater, venit hora, clarifica Filium tuum. Joan. xii, 1.

permitted her to approach his person, no longer suffered her holy familiarity; he kept her at a distance from him, because the state of holiness in which the soul risen from the dead enters, carries with it the separation from all visible creatures. Be holy, O Magdalen, for I am holy; cease to be attached to the profane things of the world; for, being holy as I am, I cannot have any thing to do with them, nor consequently with you, if you have still any attachment to them.

Although the state of resurrection carries with it separation from creatures, union and application to God; it is not so

perfect, however, as that of Ascension.

LESSON XXV.

Of the mystery of the Ascension of our Lord; of its grace and state, which is that of the perfect.

Q. What is then the grace and state of the mystery of the Ascension?

A. It is a state of perfect transformation into God, a state of triumph and glory, a state in which nothing infirm any longer appears.

Q. Did any infirmity appear in our Lord after his Resurrection?

A. He had still some marks

of it, and seemed occasionally to despoil himself of the perfect glory of his consummation in God, and of his total resemblance with his Father. He still rendered his humanity occasionally palpable and visible to the eyes of his apostles; he still would eat with them.*

But, after the day of his Ascension, his glory no longer suffered any interruption or suspension; the sight of it was no longer supportable to the eyes of men: having entered into the splendor of God his Father, he now lives hidden in his bo-

* *Palpate et videte, quia Spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtis habere. Luc. xxiv, 39.*

som, and no longer falls under our senses; and, although he still preserves the qualities of human nature, he does not subject them any longer to our infirmities. He has become a vivifying Spirit, having perfectly entered into a participation of the nature of his Father, glorious, spiritual, all powerful; so that he even sends with him his Holy Spirit, and participates in the fecundity of the Father, to communicate this Spirit without. For, as the eternal Word, infinitely one with his Father, by an interior and identical principle, produces the Holy Ghost with him and in him, so Jesus Christ our Lord, who is exterior

to God by his human nature, in uniting himself to him, and entering into perfect unity with him, produces the Holy Ghost, whom he sends with him to his apostles; and in this consists the admirable wonder of the mystery of the Ascension. Hence, at the time when a soul enters in this state of the divine Ascension of our Lord, it receives the participation of his divinity, as the church sings,* after the holy apostle, who says that we are made partakers of the divine nature.†

* Est elevatus in cœlum, ut nos divinitatis suæ tribueret esse participes. Præfat. Ascensionis.

† Divinæ consortes naturæ. ii, Petr. 14.

A truly wonderful state of the soul, rendered interiorly conformable and wholly similar to God, and, as the saints say, perfectly deiform, that is, all glowing with love, and luminous with the splendor of God.

The soul in this state does not fall any longer from its union with God, to descend to the wretched condition of human infirmity. It no longer yields to passion or self-love, no longer allows itself to be transformed into the creature, no longer permits in itself the love of perishable things, which makes one see himself in them and them in him, and thus causes him to lose the perfect resem-

blance with God and his adorable Son ascended into heaven, where being now himself transformed and consummated in his Father, he draws us gently to the same transformation and consummation. It is for this reason that he said to Magdalen,* Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: wait until I am in that state, in which I will draw souls to my Father, and to the transformation into him.

This is what he does in the most holy Sacrament of the altar, in which, having entered

* Noli me tangere; nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum. Joan. xx, 17

into his power, he transforms souls into himself: "you will not change me into you, but you will be changed into me." The soul, in the state of resurrection, ought to fear the attachment and even the approach of creatures, for fear of being transformed into them, and becoming partaker of their vile being.

Q. The state of the holy Ascension is then the state of the perfect?

A. Yes; it is the state of souls that are already perfect and interiorly transformed into God, into whose being and life they have passed by virtue

of a perfect and most intimate union.

Q. How truly admirable this union is?

A. Yes; and it is for this reason that the Ascension of our Lord is called *admirable*,* and that it makes souls enter into a state of ineffable sanctity.

Q. Tell me something more of it, to make me still more desirous of attaining to it?

A. The soul, in this state, is impenetrable to the attacks of the world; it is no longer susceptible of the imperfection of creatures; it is entirely separated from the profane being; it

* Per admirabilem Ascensionem tuam,
Litan.

possesses a divine peace and repose, and is immoveable in its interior: to a soul in this state we may safely apply these words: There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.* One would say that such a soul has already entered, by a happy anticipation, the region of eternal bliss. This state is one of admirable purity, one in which the soul has no longer any union with profane things. It sees its old man and its flesh change and alter; but always intimate and interior with

* Non accedet ad te malum, et flagellum non appropinquabit tabernaculo tuo. Ps. xc, 10.

itself, it does not fall from its union with God; it remains firm, and constantly makes new progress; and it is only in its flesh that there is any alteration.*

* *Licet is, qui foris est, noster homo corrumpatur; tamen is qui intus est, renovatur de die in diem. II Cor. iv, 16.*

END OF PART FIRST.

CHRISTIAN CATECHISM
OF AN
INTERIOR LIFE.

~~~~~  
*Part Second.*

OF THE MEANS TO ACQUIRE AND PRESERVE THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

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LESSON I.

That prayer is the principal means ; and that it is necessary to pray with humility and confidence.

Q. After showing me in what the Christian Spirit consists, will you teach me the means to acquire and preserve it?

A. One of the principal and most efficacious means is prayer;

for our Lord assures us in the Gospel, that God, our Father, will give the good spirit to them that ask it of him.*

Q. What method must we observe in prayer?

A. We must bring to it the same dispositions as our Saviour himself, the same which he taught to his disciples; we must address ourselves to the eternal Father, in all humility and confidence, as our Lord did in those beautiful prayers, which we read in the Gospel of St. John, and in the *Our Father*.

Q. What do you mean by the word humility?

* Pater vester de cœlo dabit spiritum bonum petentibus se. Luc. xi, 13.

A. I mean first, a sentiment of confusion for our unworthiness, caused by the sight of our sins, for which God has the utmost abhorrence. “You are not a God that loves iniquity,”* says the Psalmist to him.

Secondly, I mean by humility the same sentiment of shame and confusion, arising from our utter incapacity for praying. For prayer is a supernatural action, which we cannot perform without grace; and being by ourselves entirely void of it, we are therefore by ourselves utterly incapable of praying.

Q. How can we then pray with confidence?

* Non deus volens iniquitatem tu es.
Ps. v, 5.

A. God has provided for it, and I am going to tell you how we can have that confidence, so glorious to God and so useful to us. After keeping ourselves for some time in the sentiment of humility, of which I have just spoken, we must recollect ourselves in the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in the heart of all the children of the church, to raise them to prayer, as St. Paul says;* and it is in this spirit that we pray with confidence. It is what is implied in the name of Father, which we give to God, and by

* *Accepisti Spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus, Abba, Pater. Rom. viii, 15.*

the cry that our heart utters to him in praying, according to the word of the same Apostle. This expresses the great confidence and eagerness with which we ask of God all our wants. I will add here what St. Paul mentions in another place, that the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.*

Q. What does that mean? I never heard before that the Holy Spirit groaned.

A. It is mysteriously that the Scripture says that the Holy Spirit groans; for all the words of the Scripture are mysterious:

* Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus. Rom. viii, 26.

it means that when we pray in union with the Holy Spirit, we obtain more than we would by all our groans and tears. I will also remark, that our Lord, who dwells in us, and does therein the part of the Holy Spirit,* is called by David in the spirit of prophecy, a Host of vociferation.†

Q. What is meant by the expression, *Host of vociferation*?

A. The prophet makes allusion to the cries uttered in the temple by the animals destined for the sacrifices, which were the figure of Christ upon the

* Factus est in Spiritum vivificantem. I Cor. xv, 45.

† Hostiam vociferationis. Ps. xxvi, 6.

cross and in our hearts. Now, it is said of our Lord, that he prayed for us with abundant tears and powerful cries.*

Q. What does this signify in our Lord?

A. It shows the tenderness of his love for us and the strength of his zeal in his prayer.

Q. Does our divine Lord do the same in our hearts?

A. Yes; he does it, wherever he is, both in our hearts, and in the holy Sacrament, and in the bosom of his Father; and here is the reason why: What the Holy Spirit commenced once

* Preces supplicationesque cum clamore valido et lacrymis offerens. Hebr. v, 7.

in the heart of Jesus, he continued during all his life, and will continue during all eternity. The operations of sanctity in the heart of Jesus, are eternal like those of all the saints in heaven. The great secret of Christianity, and the reason of the confidence of the children of God, consists in this, that Jesus is all things to us, as St. Paul says:* “He is our prayer, our patience, our charity, etc.

These are the dispositions with which we must pray, and the order we ought to observe in

* Omnia et in omnibus Christus, Col. iii, ii. Omnia in ipso constant. Ibid. i, 17.

our prayers. We must present ourselves to God, our Father, who is always full of charity, and who tells us by one of his prophets that he loved us with a continual love;* and although our sins render us unworthy to appear before him, yet, if we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, our unworthiness is covered before his Father, when he perceives the perfume exhaled from the vestments of his eldest Son, Christ our Lord, with which we are covered, as Jacob was with the robe of Esau. We must then, after having held ourselves for some time in sen-

* In charitate perpetuâ dilexi te. Jerem. xxxi, 3.

timents of humility, enter into Jesus Christ as our prayer, and unite ourselves to him as our advocate;* and then, animated by this spirit, pay to God all our homages, and ask of him all our wants: and, to say all in one word, the principal point in prayer, after humility and grief for our sins, is to come to it armed with an unbounded confidence and a perfect faith, founded upon these words of our Lord: If you ask my Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you.† In fact,

* *Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis. Hebr. vii, 25. Advocatum habemus apud Patrem Jesum Christum justum. I Joan. ii, 1.*

† *Si quid petieritis Patrem in nomine meo, dabit vobis. Joan. xvi, 23.*

we see in the Apocalypse* that our Lord appears before his Father as a lamb, standing, and apparently dead; which signifies that he is always before the throne of his Father, clad with the arms of his passion, asking for us through his divine mysteries all that we stand in need of, and saying to him in his prayer, like David:† my God, remember the meekness and patience I had in my death: I beseech thee by my penitential life to have pity on my children.

* Et ecce in medio throni Agnum stantem tanquam occisum. Apoc. v, 6.

† Memento, Domine, David, et omnis mansuetudinis ejus. Ps. cxxxi, 1.

LESSON II.

Of the intercession of Saints, who pray for us in Christ and by Christ.

Q. Teach me yet something more upon this subject, to augment my confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ.

A. All that our Lord asks of his Father, the saints also ask with him, as is shown in the Apocalypse by these words: I heard a voice from heaven as a voice of many waters; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps.*

* *Audivi vocem de cœlo tanquam vocem aquarum multarum. . . . ; et vo-*

Q. Tell me, if you please, what this means?

A. You must know that the people, in the holy Scripture, are signified by the waters,* and that the Saints, in their celestial harmonies, are compared to harpers. Now, the Saints and the just are like echoes, which carry to God the voice of Christ living in them, so that whatever Christ asks, the whole church of heaven and earth asks

cem quam audivi sicut citharædorum citharizantium in citharis suis. Apoc. xiv, 2.

* *Cùm Aquæ in Apocalypsi beati Joannis, xvii. 15, populi dicantur, ipsius populi fidelis cum capite Christo unio repræsentatur. Conc.; Trid. sess. xxii; de Sacrif. cap. vii.*

with him. Is not this a great subject of confidence for us, and with what faith should we not pray?

Q. But, since the Saints are only the echoes of the prayer of our Lord, it seems that we need not address ourselves to them, and that it is sufficient to address our Lord himself.

A. The intention of the church is that we should seek Jesus Christ in his Saints, as we are surer of finding him in them, for example, in the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John, St. Peter, than when we seek him immediately and by ourselves.

When we seek our Lord in the blessed Virgin, whom the

church calls our advocate with Jesus Christ, we are sure, according to St. Bernard,* that she begins immediately to pray for us to her Son; and this divine Son is thus reminded of the power which he gave her over himself, in quality of his mother, never to take it from her, because grace and glory perfect nature,

* *Ad patrem verebaris accedere, Jesum tibi dedit mediatorem; sed forsitan et in ipso majestatem vereare divinam. . . . Advocatum habere vis et ad ipsum? ad Mariam recurre. . . . Nec dubius dixerim exaudietur et ipse pro reverentiâ suâ. Exaudiet utique Matrem Filius, et exaudiet Filium Pater; filioli, hæc peccatorum scala, hæc mea maxima fiducia est, hæc tota ratio spei meæ. Serm. in Nativit. B. Mar. N. 7.*

without making it lose any of its rights. The blessed Virgin immediately prevails upon her divine Son to pray for us, and she thus obtains what we are not sure of obtaining by ourselves; for we are most unworthy of approaching our Lord, and he has a right by his justice to reject us, since having entered into all the sentiments of his Father, after his resurrection,* he is in the same disposition towards sinners, as his Father; so that the difficulty consists in making him change his quality of judge into that of advocate and suppliant. Now, this is what the

* Nunc per omnia Deus. S. Ambr. de fide. Resurrect. m. 90.

Saints do, and particularly the Blessed Virgin.

Have you not frequently heard these words of St. Paul: "He who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."* Christ is in the blessed Sacrament, risen and full of glory; and, although he is in a Sacrament of goodness and mercy, he however exercises in it his judgment by very common condemnations.*

We must then go to a sacrament of pure mercy, in which our Lord sets altogether

* Qui manducat et bibit indignè, judicium sibi manducat et bibit. I Cor. xi, 29.

* Mors est malis. Prose of the mass of the blessed Sacrament.

aside his quality of judge. This sacrament we find in the Blessed Virgin, his most beloved Mother. It is by her that we have access to Jesus Christ in all confidence. If heretics had understood in this way the prayer of the Saints, they would never have dared condemn it. Let us go then to our Lord, wherever he is, in the Blessed Virgin, and in the Saints; let us go with faith to them, as we know it to be perfectly agreeable to Christ; let us beg them to obtain for us access to him, and to conjure him to intercede for us with his Father. Thus each Saint will even make the whole church and all the Saints pray

through our Lord, who, being moved by their solicitations, will fill the whole church with his spirit and his prayer.

LESSON III.

That the sacrifice of the altar is the same as that of the cross; and that our Lord carries to it the same dispositions that he had upon the cross.

Q. Give me, if you please, the explanation of what you said above, that is, that the Holy Spirit continues to operate in the soul of Christ, the same sentiments that he once began to work in it; and that our Lord carries every where these same operations, whether in the heart of the faithful, or in the most

holy Sacrament, or in the bosom of his Father?

A. This is a very important question, the explanation of which will be exceedingly useful to resolve three great difficulties, one relating to the holy sacrifice of the altar; the other to the communion of the faithful; and the third to prayer, both mental and vocal. Before commencing to explain it, it is necessary to know this fundamental truth, that our Lord is the masterpiece of his Father, called in Scripture the work by excellency.*

The patriarchs and prophets,

* Domine, opus tuum, in medio an-
norum vivifica illud. Habac. iii, 2.

who sighed continually after him, called him so, and among others the prophet David, who said of him:* the great work of God is Christ, whose interior is all filled with the praise and acknowledgment of the grandeur of his Father, whom he alone praises more fully than all heaven and earth, than all the angels and saints. Our Lord is not only the praise of his Father; he is also the immense reservoir of the goodness and magnificence of God over the church; and, according to the language of St. Paul, it is in him and by him, that God the Father has poured

* Ps. cx, 3.

upon us his holy benedictions.* This fire, which the Holy Spirit once enkindled in our Lord, is never extinguished; and the same interior fervor, which was in him upon the cross, and prompted him to sacrifice himself to the glory of his Father, and operate our salvation, continues to burn in him in the holy sacrifice of the altar, and will continue until the end of the world. By this you may understand something of our Lord, and see how he is the masterpiece of God, and the perfect sanctuary of the Holy

* Benedixit nos in omni benedictione spirituali, in cœlestibus, in Christo Eph. i, 3.

Spirit, filled with sentiments of devotion, by which he renders an infinite honor to the divine majesty.

By this, again, is clearly explained the difficulty of heretics, who say that the sacrifice of the altar, is only the commemoration of that of the cross, on account of these words of our Lord, falsely and maliciously understood: Do this in remembrance of me.* For we know that it is the same host that is offered, that it is the same interior, the same dispositions of heart, the same Jesus Christ who is present in the sacrifice of

* Hoc facite in meam commemorationem. Luc. xxii, 19.

the altar, as well as upon the cross; and thus, that it is the same sacrifice continued, and to be continued until the end of the world, although under a different form. Upon the cross, our Lord appears spilling his blood to the last drop, shedding bitter tears, and praying in a loud voice; upon the altar, he appears in silence, and has no sensible marks of his human nature; so that when he said to his apostles, Do this in remembrance of me, it was only to warn them that, in offering in this true sacrifice of the altar his person hidden under the appearance of bread, they should remember the cha-

rity, which he so visibly showed upon calvary and the cross, and his devotion towards his Father, which he displayed in the eyes of all the world. Now, learn that, in our Lord, as well as in the rest of Christians his members, the principal is not the exterior part of the work, but, the secret and interior operation of the Holy Spirit, the author and principle of all good works; and that it is in this, that God takes most pleasure. As the august interior of Christ is the same upon the cross as upon the altar, whether under the appearance of bread or the veil of the flesh; it is also what we ought to esteem

and honor most in the sacrifice of our Lord, which commenced upon the cross, and is continued upon the holy altar.

Q. I will endeavor, with the aid of our Lord, to study well before God the explanation of this difficulty, to profit by it, especially at mass, remembering the death and passion of our Lord, and the pledge he gives us therein, of his love, at the same time that he is there present, overflowing with charity for us. By this, I will excite myself powerfully to serve this good master, and suffer every thing for his love. But is this all the fruit that you intend me to draw from this lesson ?

A. This is enough for the present; I am very glad that God opens your mind to make you understand christian truths and the profit that you ought to draw from them.

LESSON IV.

That we can receive holy communion for the good and advantage of others.

Q. As, by the advice of my confessor, I frequently approach the holy table, will you explain to me the second difficulty, concerning holy communion?

A. This difficulty, at present very common, disquiets but too much the faithful who have the

devotion to communicate frequently. Many pious souls, whom our Lord admits to the holy communion of his body and blood, are often interiorly attracted to communicate for the deliverance of the souls of purgatory, or for the relief of the infirmities of their brethren, or to ask of God more efficaciously some grace that may be important for their souls, the good of their neighbor, and the sanctification of the church.

But, there are persons who condemn these intentions, saying: are the adoration and faith of one who communicates so great a thing? can his communion relieve the souls of pur-

gatory? can it draw any benediction upon the whole church? This difficulty arises from not knowing sufficiently the value and merit of the communion of the faithful. Remember well these beautiful words of our Lord, which contain so much instruction: He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* These are words of great consolation for the whole church, and in particular for each one who communicates. They explain fully the principal intention of our Lord in his nuptial

* Qui manducat meam carnem, et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet, et ego in illo. Joan. vi, 57.

banquet, in which he makes a soul taste the sweetest delights, and treats it as a spouse, testifying to it that he enters by holy communion into all the intentions of his spouse; it entering, on its part, into all those of Jesus Christ. In this consists the perfect union of our Lord with us, when he becomes perfectly one with us, and we perfectly one with him, as he is one with his father.

This being supposed, when we receive by holy communion the body and blood of our Lord, we enter into all his designs and intentions, and use him as if he belonged to us; so that when we communicate with the intention

of relieving a soul in purgatory, or drawing down the blessings of heaven upon the whole church, we have the right, in virtue of that holy union, to use all the prayers of our Lord, his zeal, fervor, merits, and sufferings, for the fulfilment of this object. We have a right to direct his prayers in whatsoever channel we please, and request him to ask whatever we desire for the good of the church; so that, what we would be ashamed of asking by ourselves, not being worthy of the least favor, we are sure to obtain, when we ask it through our Lord.

Indeed, He who was heard by his Father, for the res-

pect due to his person, whilst living upon earth, is the same who prays in the christian soul; and what he asks upon earth, as well as in the bosom of his Father, he is sure to obtain in consideration of the grandeur of his person and divine nature, and by the infinite merits of his prayers, sufferings, and tears, which he incessantly offers to God, according to the word of St. Paul,* that he appears for us in the presence of his father, with whom he is always interceding in our favor.† Our Lord

* Apparet vultui Dei pro nobis. Heb. ix, 24.

† Semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis. Hebr. vii, 25.

wished to survive himself like Isaac, and live after his death in his holy sacrifice, always to pray to his Father for us and all our wants.

The heart of a Christian who communicates is a temple, it is an altar, it is the image of the bosom of God the Father. In that heart, Christ offers himself to God, as he did on mount Calvary, and continues in the same dispositions and prayers, as at the time of his death.

LESSON V

That our Lord Jesus Christ dwells in us,
and that we can at all times communi-
cate spiritually.

Q. It is impossible for me to express the feelings of esteem and respect, which God gives me for the most holy Sacrament of the altar, after you have shown me how great and precious a treasure we possess in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, filled with the divinity of his Father and all the treasures of his infinite wisdom and knowledge.

A. This is true; and it is for this reason that St. Paul says we carry a most precious trea-

sure in earthen vessels.* It is an effect of that truly unbounded charity, by which, as the same Apostle says,† God vouchsafed to manifest to us the abundance of his infinite mercies, in giving us his only Son, the figure of his substance, the splendor of his glory and beauty,‡ to be our host of praise, the principle of our life, the source of all the

* *Habemus thesaurum istum in vasis fictilibus.* II Cor. iv, 7.

† *Propter nimiam charitatem suam, quâ dilexit nos, et cùm essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo. Ut ostenderet in sæculis supervenientibus abundantes divitias gratiæ suæ, in bonitate super nos, in Christo Jesu.* Eph. ii, 4, 5, 7.

‡ *Splendor gloriæ, et figura substantiæ ejus.* Hebr. i, 3.

merits of the church. But what ought still more to increase our love for God, is that he gave us his Son to dwell in us, not only when we receive by communion his body and blood, but at every moment of our life.

Q. What do you say? Does our Lord dwell in us otherwise than by holy communion?

A. Yes, he does; and it is what St. Paul himself affirms when he says,* that Jesus Christ dwells by faith in our souls, and works therein his divine life. He dwells in us, not only as the Word, by his immensity, to perform in us our natural

* Christum habitare per fidem in corlibus vestris. Eph. iii, 17

actions, but also as Christ, by his grace, to communicate to us his unction and divine life.

Q. Since we always possess Christ dwelling in us, and can so often participate in his grace, is it not useless to approach the Sacrament of the altar?

A. No; for although our Lord is in our hearts, to pour into us at every moment the grace of his divine life, this ought not to prevent us from approaching frequently this adorable Sacrament. For we receive in it more abundant graces than we do in spiritual communion alone. Our Lord communicates his grace to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, accord-

ing to the whole extent of his divine charity, which is unbounded; but the graces which we receive by meditation and the sighs of our heart, are given us in proportion to the mortification of the old man, and the fidelity with which we renounce ourselves and the inclinations of nature. This depends also upon the more or less lively feelings of faith, charity, humility, and other similar dispositions, that our Lord discovers in us. Besides, as the imperfections of poor weak human nature are frequently blended with our very virtues, the communications of our Lord, and the participation in his interior life,

are very rare and very feeble. The creature spoils all, and impedes the greatest design of the divine goodness in our regard.

Would to God, that Christians knew their happiness and the treasures they possess in Jesus, in whom and with whom they can do so much for the glory of God. O! that they may always remember that our Lord is in them, to sanctify them with all their actions, and fill all their faculties with himself. That adorable Saviour wishes to be in us the light of our mind, the fervor of our heart, the strength of all our powers, in order that in him we may know, love, and accomplish the will of his Fa-

ther, act for his honor, and endure all for his glory.

LESSON VI.

How we may communicate spiritually, and unite ourselves to the Spirit of our Lord in all our actions.

Q. Can you teach me how we may communicate frequently in spirit during the course of the day, and perform well so holy an action?

A. I shall do it briefly, after reminding you of the words of our Lord to his apostles, that his food was to do the will of his Father,* and that he did all

* *Meus cibus est ut faciam voluntatem ejus qui misit me, ut perficiam opus ejus.* Joan. iv, 34.

things with him.* We may learn from this, that, as our Lord performed all his actions in and with his Father, we must also perform ours in union with this divine Saviour, because he has come to dwell in us, in order to vivify us by his virtue, and give us the grace of sanctifying all our actions and rendering them agreeable to his Father.

Q. How is this done? I do not understand it.

A. Be not astonished at it; our Lord anticipated your complaint and desire, when he said to his disciples: You will know

* *Pater meus usque modo operatur, et ego operor.* Joan. v, 17.

the last day, that, as my Father is in me and I in him; so I am in you, and you in me; and as my Father, dwelling in me, performs my actions,* so I will perform yours, and you mine, as I do those of my Father.

Q. If this knowledge is deferred until the last day, in what can it help me now, to perform my actions in Jesus Christ?

A. Although you neither know or understand this doctrine perfectly, it is nevertheless very easy to faith, to make you put it practice. It is enough to be-

* In illo die vos cognoscetis quia ego sum in Patre meo, et vos in me, et ego in vobis. Joan. xiv, 10.-

Pater in me manens, ipse facit opera. Joan. xiv, 12.

lieve; it is not necessary to see or understand clearly. Is it not true that you believe, though you do not understand, all the mysteries that faith teaches you. Be satisfied to know that faith commands you to act in Christ and with Christ; this the church repeats every day, at mass, when saying;* all honor and glory be to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ. It is enough to believe it; do not wish to understand it.

Q. Teach me then in what manner I may do my actions in

* Per ipsum, et cum ipso, et in ipso, est tibi Deo Patri omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus sancti, omnis honor et gloria. Cannon Missæ.

union with our Lord, since this is the means given by faith to do them well.

A. I shall explain it to you in a few words, and add to it a short exercise for all the actions of the day, containing the dispositions both of the mind and heart, in which you must be to do them christianly. The perfection of a christian life consists in performing all your actions for the glory of God and in union with our Saviour; it is what St. Paul calls, living for God, in Christ our Lord.*

We already said that, according to St. Paul, our Lord

* *Viventes autem Deo, in Christo Jesu Domino nostro. Rom. vi, 11.*

dwells in us by faith, that we may do every thing in him and with him, since what is not done so, is not done for God. Our intentions and thoughts tend to evil by the corruption of nature; and if we act by ourselves, and follow the bent of our inclinations, we wholly tend to sin. You see from this, how carefully we ought, at the beginning of each action, to renounce our own sentiments, wishes, inclinations, and will, to enter, according to the direction of St. Paul, into the sentiments and intentions of Christ,* and thus be able to live in the exercise

* Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu. Philip. ii, 5.

of devotion towards God, justice to our neighbor, sanctity for ourselves, and moderation in regard to all creatures.* It is what our Lord said in these words: If any one wishes to come after me, let him renounce himself and follow me.†

LESSON VII.

Application of the preceding doctrine to the exercise of meditation.

Q. To make me understand better the explanation given in

* Abnegantes impietatem et sæcularia desideria, ut sobriè, justè, et piè vivamus in hoc sæculo. Tit. ii, 12.

† Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum, et sequatur me. Matth. xvi, 24.

the preceding lesson, can you apply it to some action of the day?

A. I shall apply it to prayer itself, and thus complete the explanation of the third difficulty, which is already partly resolved; for, we cannot speak too much of meditation, since it is the most important action of a christian life.

When you commence your meditation, the first thing to be done, is to renounce yourself and your own intentions.

Q. Why renounce our own intentions when we pray? is not prayer a good action?

A. Yes; but all we do by ourselves is filled with self-love and secret pride. For example,

how many persons make use of prayer, to ask for riches, for the gain of a suit, or the attainment of honors, in all which they have frequently no other object, at least ultimately, than to enjoy the pleasures of the world, satisfy their ambition, or take revenge of their enemies. In all this, there is nothing for God or the good of their souls; all this tends, on the contrary, to sin and the satisfaction of self-love. How necessary is it then to renounce ourselves, and all the vicious intentions which may poison our very best actions.

Q. How is this done?

A. In the beginning of your meditation, prostrate yourself

before God, filled with confusion at the sight of your malice and sins, and say from the bottom of your heart, according to the advice of our Lord; O my God and my all, I renounce myself and all my inclinations to sin; I clearly see that I cannot pray to thee, either in myself or by myself; I detest with all my heart whatever is displeasing to thee in me; and to cover my iniquities and malice, and obtain access to thy divine majesty, I give myself to Christ, thy Son, who lives in me, and is the prayer and praise of thy whole church.

The holy prophet David had the same sentiments, when he

said: According to thy name, O God, so also is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.*

This praise is nothing else than that of our Lord himself perfectly equal to his Father, and paying him a tribute of glory equal to himself. O! how happy is a Christian thus to be able to pay to God, a glory, infinite like himself, and containing all his praises! The same prophet, speaking in another place of the prayer of the faithful compares the church to a chariot carrying thousands of Christians, praising God and rejoicing in his presence. He adds that the spirit of our

* *Secundùm nomen tuum, Deus, sic et laus tua in fines terræ. Ps. xlvii, 11*

Lord is in the midst of them, their voice and joyous canticle.* The same Jesus who offers through them this praise to his Father, is also in the bosom of God and in the Sacrament of the altar, therein to pay to the divine majesty a tribute of respect and honor, and ask of him the wants and necessities of each member of the church.

LESSON VIII.

Method to be followed in meditation.

Q. After renouncing ourselves and purifying our heart in

* *Currus Dei decem millibus multiplex, millia lætantium, Dominus in eis in Sina, in sancto. Ps. lxxvii, 18.*

the beginning of meditation, and uniting ourselves in Spirit with our Lord, what must we do?

A. Two things, as we are taught in the Lord's Prayer: The first, is to adore, praise, and glorify God; the Second, to ask relief in our wants.

Q. Are these the two parts of meditation?

A. Yes; the First is called adoration; the Second, communion.

Q. Why do you begin with adoration?

A. 1st. Because, of the two ends of meditation, the principal is to honor and glorify God; 2dly, because the church does so in the beginning of her public

prayers, saying:* Come, let us adore, and prostrate ourselves before God.

Q. Why do you call the First part, *adoration*?

A. Because the word *adoration* is often taken in the holy scripture, to signify that virtue of Religion which inclines the soul to annihilation, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, love, in a word, to all the duties and homages which we ought to pay to Almighty God in the first part of meditation.

Q. Why do you call the second part, *communion*.

A. Because, in this part, we

* Venite, adoremus, et procidamus ante Deum. Ps. xciv, 6.

give ourselves to God, to enter into a participation of his graces and perfections. Now, this participation is called *communion*, especially by the greek Fathers, because in it God renders his riches *common* to us. The participation to the body of Jesus Christ is called sacramental communion, because this sacrament renders common to us the goods of our Lord, and communicates to us his choicest blessings; by the same reason, the participation that takes place in meditation, is called *spiritual communion*, on account of the gifts which Almighty God communicates to us in it by the in-

terior operation alone of his divine Spirit. When a soul experiences in itself any secret operations, it ought to hold itself in repose and silence, to receive, in their full extent, the gifts and communications of God, without acting by itself, or making any exertion that might disturb the pure and holy operations of the Holy Ghost.

Q. Are these the only parts of meditation?

A. There is a third part, called by some *resolutions*, by most, *cooperation*; this is the fruit of meditation, and extends to the whole day.

Q. Explain what you mean by *cooperaton*?

A. After exciting ourselves, in the second part of meditation, to imitate our Lord in the mystery or virtue we adored in him in the beginning of it, and holding ourselves some time in his holy presence, as poor mendicants, who are never tired to expose their wants, and stretch forth their suppliant hands to those from whom they expect assistance, the third part consists in corresponding and faithfully cooperating with the grace received. Then we take good and fervent resolutions, foresee the occasions we may have to put them into execution in the course of the day, and abandon ourselves entirely to the Spirit of

our Lord Jesus Christ, to obey and serve him, not only on the present day, but also during the remainder of our life.

Q. What difference is there between resolutions and cooperation?

A. They are the same thing; but the word cooperation designates more particularly the virtue of the Holy Spirit, on whom we must much more rely for our good actions, than upon our will, which can do nothing, unless it be moved and fortified by the virtue of that divine Spirit. On the contrary, the word resolutions indicates more expressly the determination of our will, and seems to give less to the

virtue and efficacious power of the Holy Spirit, to whom, however, we must abandon ourselves entirely, so that he may act in us when the occasion presents itself, remind us interiorly of his designs upon us, and give us grace and strength to accomplish them. We must therefore conclude our meditation by a total abandonment of ourselves to the Holy Ghost, who will be our light, our virtue, and our love.

LESSON IX.

That we can pray to God, although we may not know him perfectly, and are even ignorant of our wants.

Q. You taught me in the preceding Lesson, that the two

things to be done in prayer, are to adore and glorify God, and then to ask relief in our wants. But how can we glorify God, since we do not know him, nor what we should ask of him for the good of our soul?

A. This difficulty would have some foundation, if our Saviour had not made himself, in his quality of our high Priest, the prayer of his church, and of each of its members. He says himself that no one knoweth the Father but the Son,* which shows how little we know God. On the other hand, St. Paul says that we do not know what

* Neque Patrem quis novit nisi Filius. Matt. xi, 26.

is good for us, nor what we ought to ask, and besides we have not the strength to ask it. Now the same apostle teaches us that the Spirit of our Lord is the supplement of our ignorance and weakness. 'The Spirit, says he, helpeth our infirmity: for, we know not what we should pray for, as we ought: but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what the Spirit desireth: because he asketh for the saints according to God.*

* Spiritus adjuvat infirmitatem nostram; nam quid oremus, sicut oportet, nescimus, sed ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus: qui

Q. How can we unite ourselves with the Holy Spirit.

A. The Holy Spirit is in us, as the spouse of our soul, ready to listen to all our desires. We have only to give ourselves to him, to pray by him and in him. He will be our prayer, for, in his quality of Mediator, he prays for the whole church, though the church does not pray in him, unless it is united with him. We must then give ourselves to that Holy Spirit, as he gives himself to us.*

Marriage supposes a mutual

autem scrutatur corda, scit quid desideret Spiritus; quia secundum Deum postulat pro sanctis. Rom. viii, 26, 27.

* *Charitas Dei diffusa est in cordibus*

gift of hearts. In a spiritual union, there must then be a mutual exchange and consent of spirits. Jesus in the soul, and the soul in Jesus offer the same prayer, which is the principal fruit of the alliance of the Holy Spirit with the soul; so that our prayers may be considered as the offspring of that spiritual marriage. If you ask who prays, it is the soul in Jesus, and Jesus in the soul. Wishing to know more, is to wish to violate the secret of Jesus in us, and penetrate a mystery which he desires to keep hidden, as he does in regard to the operations of the Father.

nostris per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis. Rom. v, 5.

ther in the Son, and of the Son in the Father. Whose are the works of Jesus? Do they belong to the Father, or to the Son? They belong to both, and the creature should not try to find a distinction in them; it is enough to know that Jesus performs them in his Father, and his Father in him and with him.

Q. I never heard that our Lord was our mediator of prayer.

A. It is true that our Saviour, as is generally said, is our mediator of Redemption, because he offered his blood to God the Father through the Holy Spirit for our salvation, and gave his life for ours. Thus

he was our supplement for our main debt, in satisfying to God for our sins by his death, which alone could satisfy fully the divine justice. But this was not all; we were still indebted to God for many religious duties, which we were by ourselves unable to pay to him, as to adore, to love, and praise him, as he desires and we are obliged. It was then necessary that our Lord should be our supplement and mediator for these duties; and it is for this reason that he was to rise again after his death, and be always living, in order that he might always intercede for us, as the apostle says,*

* Hebr. vii, 25.

that is, that he might always adore, love, and praise his Father in our stead. Our Lord did all this in the old law, he does it in the church, he will do it in heaven; he was yesterday,* says the same apostle, he is today, and he will be forever. By the word yesterday is meant the old law, by today the church, and by forever eternity, during which our Lord will be the supplement of our duties, and our mediator with his father.

* *Jesus Christus heri, et hodie, ipse et in sæcula.* Hebr. xiii, 8.

LESSON X

How Christ is our mediator with God for our religious duties, which explains a difficulty raised by heretics on the use of the Latin tongue in the public prayer of the church.

Q. The instruction which you just gave me, invites me most powerfully to unite myself to our Lord, knowing that he wishes it, that he is in us for it, and that he only waits that we do it. We would be very guilty, indeed, if, feeling in the bottom of our hearts the attraction of his divine charity, we should resist it. It is for this reason, undoubtedly, that some saints had less fear of the judgments of God for their

sins, than for their infidelity to grace, knowing that by it they had saddened the Holy Spirit, and deprived God of the honor so justly due him. It is for the same reason that St. Catherine of Sienna accused herself of the sins of the whole world, feeling that by her infidelities she had deprived souls of many graces, and deeply grieving at her resistance to the Holy Spirit, who so frequently called her to prayer, to produce in her heart holy movements, capable of appeasing the wrath of God, and drawing down upon sinners the showers of divine mercy and an abundant effusion of victorious graces. I am myself

covered with confusion, in telling you these things; for I have reason to humble myself to the dust for my own infidelities, and I beg you to join with me to obtain the forgiveness of my faults.

A. I thank God that he has given you sentiments so holy and so conformable to those of his saints. To explain better the present truth, namely, that Christ is not only our mediator of redemption, but also of our prayers, I shall observe that he was represented in this quality by the high priest of the old law, who entered into the holy of holies,* carrying in his hands

* Levit. xvi.

the blood of the victims, and a censer filled with perfumes. That censer represents the children of the church, figured by the grains of incense, which are consumed by the fire, as our hearts are in prayer by divine love.

This explains the objection of the heretics, who ridicule simple people and virgins consecrated to God, because they sing the praise of God in the Latin tongue, as if they prayed without fruit, because they use then a language which they do not understand. This difficulty is without foundation; for in going to prayer, we have only to unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, the

prayer and praise of the church; and our soul, being united to him, and entering with affection into all the praises he gives to his Father, and all the petitions he addresses to him, will pray far better in this union, than if we prayed in our own spirit, and tried to adore, love and praise God by ourselves. For, by this union, the soul becomes identified with the spirit of our Lord, who prays in the whole church. This is the kind of prayer that is offered up in heaven, where the prayers of the saints wholly consist in saying amen to the prayer of the Lamb, as we see in the Apo-

calypse.* They thus express the union of their hearts with Christ praying for them; and acknowledging their incapacity to pray by themselves, they lose themselves in Christ, to render to God all the praise He gives him, and all the church with him. This is also what the prophet David invites us to do, when he says:* O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol his name together. We must then, like the children in the furnace, glorify God with one spirit, one will, and one

* Hebr. ix. † Apoc. vii, 12.

heart,* and in the dispositions and intentions of Christ.

LESSON XI.

That in uniting ourselves to Christ in meditation, we enter into a participation of his prayers and graces.

Q. I am well convinced of the necessity of having recourse to our Lord Jesus Christ, to render our prayers more agreeable to God, and more advantageous to ourselves; I have yet, however, two difficulties to propose to you; 1st, am I sure that in giving myself to our Lord, I participate in the grace of his

* Magnificate Dominum mecum, et exaltemus nomen ejus in idipsum. Ps. xxxiii, 4.

prayers? 2dly, how can I know whether I am united with him?

A. As for your first question, the holy Scripture tells us that we have only to seek God with simplicity of heart.* Since then our Lord is waiting for us with his arms stretched out to us, let us go to him with all simplicity, and give ourselves to him, to do all our works and prayers in union with him. For, he dwells in us to be our host of praise; he considers us as his temples, to glorify his Father incessantly by us, in us, and with us. He tells us by David: glorify the

* Sentite de Domino in bonitate, et in simplicitate cordis quærite illum. Sap. i, 1.

Lord with me, and let us extol his name together. We have then only to tell him with simplicity: My Lord Jesus Christ, who art my praise, I rejoice in all the praises thou givest to thy Father; I unite and give myself to thee, to adore and praise him by thee and with thee; I wish to be one host of praise with thee, to glorify him during all eternity. This will be sufficient, if we have in our hearts the affections and desires expressed by our words; we shall then be sure to participate in all his prayers.

Q. But is this doctrine quite certain?

A. Yes, it is quite so; and

you may be sure that if you act in this way, you will find the greatest advantages in this practice. Besides, this truth is sufficiently expressed in the Apostle's Creed.

Q. I do not remember having ever read it there.

A. It is nevertheless expressed in it, but perhaps you did not notice it. It is contained in the third part of the Symbol, which regards the person of the Holy Ghost and his operations in the church: I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic church, the communion of Saints: it is here implied.

Q. I beg you to explain it to

me more clearly; for I do not yet understand it. I know that the Holy Ghost formed the Catholic church, that this divine Spirit fills the saints who are already in heaven, and the just still living upon earth; and that when we have charity, we have the same life as the saints.

A. The expression *communion of Saints*, signifies partly what you say; but it also signifies that the faithful participate in all the holy things that are in the church. In the same manner that we receive by communion the sacred body and blood of our Lord, so we can also receive his Spirit, and not only his spirit, but also all the operations of this Holy Spi-

rit; as when we receive the most holy Sacrament of the altar, we not only participate in the body and blood of our Lord, but also in the holy operations of his divine interior, which is for us a treasure without price. Thus it is with the interior of the blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. John, and the other saints of heaven. For, in contemplating, for example, the interior of the most holy Virgin, and the fruit of sanctity which the Spirit of God produced in her, we are frequently attracted to enter into a spiritual communion with the Holy Ghost and the interior grace he bestowed upon that most holy soul. You see from

what I have just said, how we participate in the prayers of Christ and the operations of his Spirit, in uniting with him by a simple act of faith and charity.

LESSON XII.

How we may know that we are united to our Lord in meditation.

Q. Will you now explain to me how we may know whether we are united to Jesus Christ?

A. This difficulty is an occasion of many errors for certain devout persons, who, to be more sure of the operations of the Holy Spirit in them, are generally anxious to feel them. This is an error, but too common in

devotion, and very injurious to the progress of souls. To remove it, I will give you a sure principle, taken from the words of our Saviour, the teacher of true devotion. He says in the gospel, that he will have adorers who will adore his Father in spirit and truth, that is, by faith and charity.* St. Paul says the same thing in other words, in speaking of the manner of adoring of christians, who seek God through faith and charity.† It follows from this, that if you wish to

* *Fides quæ per charitatem operatur.*
Gal. v, 6.

† *Veri adoratores adorabunt Patrem in spiritu et veritate. Spiritus est Deus, et eos qui adorant eum, in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare.* JOAN. xxiii, 24.

unite yourself with our Lord, you need no sensible representation or light in your mind, but you ought to be satisfied with simple faith and charity, without wishing to feel any sensible operation in your heart. Faith and charity may be compared to those two mystical animals, which draw the magnificent chariot of the church, as explained in a preceding lesson.

A further proof that we need no sensible disposition, to be interiorly united with our Lord, is that no such dispositions are required, when we receive the body and blood of our Lord, to participate in the spirit and life which he gives us in this adorable sacrament.

Q. It seems to me, if I understand you well, that it is principally to receive the spirit, life, and virtues of our Lord, that we receive his adorable body and blood in communion?

A. It is true; the precious body and blood of our Saviour are the channels through which his spirit is conveyed to us, to impart to us his life and divine operations, to be our food, to make us improve in the practice of all virtues,* in a word, to communicate to us the plenitude of his interior life.†

Q. But do Christians expe-

* *Crescamus in illo per omnia.* Eph. iv, 15.

* *Ut impleamini in omnem plenitudinem Dei.* Eph. iii, 19.

rience this in themselves, when they receive our Lord? Do they feel the operations of his Holy Spirit? Do they hear the praise which he gives to God in their hearts? Do they experience in a sensible manner all the virtues which flow from him into their souls?

A. No; for our Lord being all Spirit since his resurrection, his operations are also purely spiritual, and therefore they are not sensible; and in the same manner as corporal food preserves life in all the parts of the human body, although the vivifying influence flowing secretly into each of them is not felt, so our spiritual food vivifies our

soul, in an insensible manner. As he is in us a pure spirit,* it is perfectly sufficient to unite ourselves to him by faith and charity, to participate in his divine operations.

LESSON XIII.

That in uniting ourselves to Jesus Christ, we participate in the operations of the Holy Spirit not only in him, but also in each of the saints of the church.

Q. Can you show me how, in uniting ourselves to our Lord, we participate in his Holy Spirit, and all his operations not only in him, but also in the saints, for example, in the blessed Virgin?

* Factus in spiritum vivificantem. 1. Cor xv, 45.

A. Yes, I can show it to you very easily. Is it not true, that he who receives more, receives less, and that he who participates in the cause, participates also in its effects. Since then, in uniting ourselves to our Lord, we also unite ourselves to his Holy Spirit dwelling in him, we consequently participate in the operations of that divine Spirit both in our Saviour himself and in his saints. This riches and abundance of gifts, spread in holy souls, and in which we have a right to share, is like a mystical banquet, in which we can choose, according to the inclination of the interior Spirit, such spiritual food as may be most pleasing to us.

I might exemplify this beautiful doctrine by an admirable figure taken from the Old Testament, I mean, the manna which God gave to his people. This food, though the same for all, had the taste of the various viands which the children of Israel craved. It is so with the gifts which we receive from God by the communion of saints. When we desire to participate in any of the graces of the blessed, we have only to unite ourselves to the Spirit of our Lord, the source of these graces. Hence the practice, so common in the church, to receive communion in honor of the saints, in order to participate in their spirit and

graces, a participation in which we really enter, when we unite ourselves to our Lord in the Sacrament of the altar, with the intention of sharing in the favors he bestows in it upon his saints. I will unfold to you another no less consoling mystery. When we communicate, we can likewise participate in the graces of the just who are still upon earth. For example, when you see in any one a great humility, charity, or patience, instead of being jealous of it, which might happen by a suggestion of self-love, unite yourself to the Spirit of our Lord in the Sacrament of the altar; adore him as the source of these virtues,

ask him the grace of participating in them, and you will soon perceive how useful and advantageous this practice is.

To explain this truth still better, I shall make use of another figure, which we find in the holy scripture. The prophet Isaias, in a mysterious vision, saw the Son of God, full of glory and majesty, sitting upon a magnificent throne, and the scripture observes, that a part of his rich garments,* which was under him, filled the whole temple. Now, by this portion of the garments of the Son of God, we can understand the divine operations

* Isai. vi, 1.

of his Holy Spirit, which fill the whole church, and are spread in all the saints. For, the Holy Spirit dwelt first in Christ our head, and produced in him those graces, which were one day to pass from him into each member of his mystical body; so that all the graces which we see in the saints, who already enjoy the felicity of heaven, or in the just, who are still travelling in the pilgrimage of this world, flow from Jesus Christ, as their only source. They are communicated to them by the Holy Spirit, who, being sent by our Lord to his members, infuses his gifts into them,

and makes them partakers of his divine life.

I advise you then to unite yourself continually to the Holy Spirit, that you may perform all your actions in the dispositions of our Saviour himself, that your weakness may be strengthened, and your charity inflamed. Unite yourself to him by a lively faith and an ardent love; he is that river of fire, mentioned in the Scripture,* flowing from the face of God. This river represents two things, the way and the life; it figures the impetuosity of the love with which we ought

* *Fluvius igneus, rapidusque, egrediebatur à facie ejus.* Dan. vii, 10.

to go to Almighty God, and the strength of the Spirit of Grace, which coming from Jesus Christ enters into us, to be our way, our truth, and our life.

Q. This being so, it is very consoling, indeed, to be a Christian. For nothing is so sweet for a man, as to abandon himself to love, and to be sure of the perfect possession of God.

A. You see now how important it is to give ourselves to the Holy Spirit, when we have to act or pray. We must frequently unite ourselves to him, that we may always act by his divine impulse, instead of acting, as is too often the case, by

a principle of self-love, that carries us to sin.

LESSON XIV.

How often we should unite ourselves to the Spirit of Jesus Christ during prayer.

Q. Can you tell me how often we should unite ourselves, when praying, to our Saviour and his Holy Spirit?

A. We should unite ourselves to the Holy Spirit in the beginning, and at least in each part of our meditation; also, when we feel our soul in a state of dryness, obscurity, and interior desolation. In solemn prayer, we must renew our union to the

divine Spirit, as often as the church commands.

Q. What! does the church command us to do so? I thought this was a new method of praying.

A. No; Far from me ever to advance anything new in matters of religion; this practice was always in use, both in the Latin and Greek churches, as I will show you.

If you ever assisted at the office of Matins, you may have observed that, in the very beginning, the priest addressing our Lord, says in a loud voice: "O Lord, thou wilt open my lips," to which the Choir answers: "and my mouth shall de-

clare thy praise.”* As if he said: Lord, come and open my lips, that we may praise thee, not being able to do it by ourselves. Immediately after, to testify that it is not in his own spirit, but in the Spirit of Christ that he praises God, he addresses himself to the Father, begging him to consider Christ, our help and assistance, our prayer and host of praise, and not ourselves; then he addresses Christ himself in these words, O Lord, make haste to help me.† Thus

* Domine, labia mea aperies; et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam. Ps. i, 17.

† Deus, in adjutorium meum intende; Domine, ad adjuvandum me, festina. Ps. lxxix, 2.

the church in the beginning of her prayers, invokes the Spirit of her Spouse to come to her assistance, and seems to apply to him those amorous words of the Apocalypse: The Spirit and the bride say come. And he that heareth, let him say come . . . come, Lord Jesus.*

Then all together bow profoundly, saying: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the holy Ghost. In the Greek church, the officiating clergyman goes and bows three times before the image of our Lord, and three times before that of the

* Spiritus et sponsa dicunt : Veni; et qui audit, dicat : Veni . . . Veni, Domine Jesu. Apoc. xxii, 17.

blessed Virgin, acknowledging hereby his incapacity to pray by himself, and uniting with our Lord, to glorify by him the divine majesty.

To enter into the spirit of the church upon this point, whenever the *Glory be to the Father* is said, and the clergy bow towards the blessed Sacrament, you will endeavor to do, in your heart, with feeling of the liveliest devotion, what the priests do exteriorly. You will then unite yourself to our Lord, humble yourself profoundly before him, and protest to him that you are unworthy of praising him, and that, as he alone is the living and true praise of the

holy Trinity, he alone can glorify it worthily.

Q. Is it for this reason that the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* are said in the beginning of the Office?

A. Yes; it is to unite ourselves to the interior of our Lord, in his quality of the mediator of the prayer of the Church, and to that of his most holy Mother. The reason of it is, that religion is founded upon two points; the one consists in adoring the Father, the other in glorifying the Son. Religion having these two objects, we must have two mediators. To praise God in himself and in his works, we have then recourse

to Christ, the mediator of our praise. To honor Christ in his person and in his mysteries, we have recourse to the most holy Virgin, our mediatrix with her divine Son, whose prayers will be much more acceptable to him, than ours would.

Admire the wisdom of God in the mystery of the Incarnation. The humanity of Christ, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, was like an august temple, in which the divinity wished to be honored; wherever the sacred humanity of our Lord was, upon earth, there also God found his heaven, his paradise, his glory. But the humanity of Christ deserving likewise

praise, honor, and glory, God prepared for it a temple infinitely more magnificent, than that of Solomon in which it might receive the tribute of homage, to which it was so justly entitled. This temple is the blessed Virgin. She followed her divine Son throughout all the mysteries of his life, to praise and glorify him in herself, as the priests of the old law followed every where the ark of alliance. That most holy Virgin, having received all the graces and virtues necessary to honor perfectly the humanity of the Saviour, seems peculiarly adapted to act as our mediatrix with God, in regard to the duties we owe to the sacred humanity

of her divine Son. If then, after saying the *Our Father*, before commencing the Office, the church adds to it the *Hail Mary*, it is to induce us to unite ourselves also with the holy interior of that most blessed Mother.

Q. Did our Saviour and his apostles command the first christians to unite themselves to the blessed Virgin?

A. They did not do it expressly, our Lord being principally intent upon making his Father known, and the apostles upon making known our Lord Jesus Christ, to establish the christian religion, of which he was the foundation. But after them, the holy Fathers recom-

mended it very strongly. Here is what St. Ambrose, one of the most illustrious doctors of the Latin Church says upon this subject: “Let the Soul of Mary be in each of us, to glorify the Lord; let the Spirit of Mary be in each of us, to rejoice in God”.* I shall only quote this passage of St. Ambrose; but in him you have the whole church, who always held this holy doctor in the highest esteem.

Q. The *Apostle's Creed* is also recited in the beginning

§ Sit in singulis Mariæ anima, ut magnificet Dominum; sit in singulis spiritus Mariæ, ut exultet in Deo. In Luc. lib. ii, n. 26.

of the office; what is the reason of it?

A. It is to recall, in a few words, to the minds of the faithful the principal works of the Father and of the Son, and the true object of our praise. I shall add here that an excellent means to recite the psalms well, is to unite ourselves to the spirit, intentions, and interior, of the holy Prophet who composed them.

LESSON XV.

That the happiness of Christians in meditation and holy communion, approaches the happiness of the blessed in heaven.

Q. If I understood well what you told me, it seems that our happiness on earth approaches that of the blessed in heaven?

A. That is true; and it is for this reason that our Lord said to his disciples; “the kingdom of God is within you.”* For when we possess him in us by meditation or communion, we possess heaven itself.

The happiness of heaven consists in contemplating one God

* Regnum dei intra vos est. Luc. xvii, 21.

in three persons, and the sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, overflowing with the torrents of the Deity. It consists also in seeing the blessed Virgin Mary, filled with Christ, as Christ is filled with his Father; in seeing the brilliant assembly of the saints, and the magnificent body of the Church, animated by Christ, filled by him with love, praise, adoration, and glorifying through him God the Father. Now, he who possesses our Lord in the adorable Sacrament of the altar, possesses him, such as he is in heaven. For our Lord carries every where what he is; he is then in us, the temple of his Father, the host

OF AN INTERIOR LIFE.

of praise that praises God in all his saints. The church of earth possesses then the same treasures as heaven itself, with this difference only, that here below we do not participate in them so perfectly as we shall in heaven, because upon earth our Lord does not pour forth into us the torrents of his divine essence with the same abundance as he will in heaven, as here below we have not sufficient capacity in our hearts to receive them.

THE END.