

ATTILIO BERIA, SdC

SPIRITUAL PAGES AND PRAYERS

from the writings of

FATHER LOUIS GUANELLA

From the Italian

Luigi Guanella

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INTRODUCTION

1

Regarding the public life of Father Guanella, there is nothing that makes him different from many other saints especially among the recent founders of religious congregations. He was a simple, humble Catholic priest who felt a call to perform charitable works. He was opposed without scruples by civil authorities; oddly opposed by religious authorities; endlessly opposed by circumstances. In spite of that, he reached his goal.

Those who opposed him had to change their mind after a while. Those who opposed him without good faith had to bow in front of him. His foundations showed clearly that his work was the manifestation of God's Will, and was carried out by a saint. His ministry became a source of blessing for numberless needy who drew from it without limit.

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If everything is reduced to that exterior activity, his life would be like pebbles warmed up by the sun, a reality without much sense.

For that reason, I would like to add something more to that reality. The following pages will help us to better know Father Guanella as a man and a man of God.

Guanella comes from the mountains¹. He is a man of mountains, a special environment. The Splugen Valley begins from Splugen Pass in the North and ends in the South at Chiavenna. A few kilometers South from Splugen Pass, another small valley opens. From Campodolcino we climb up to Fraciscio, a small village situated at the foot of a mountain.²

Here, Father Guanella was born in 1842, and here he spent his childhood. The boy was “cultivated” and formed by his austere father³, typical figure of those mountain places, and by a sweet and kind mother⁴, a lady that lived on earth without having left once her home. She was like the majority of mothers who, most of the time, go through their life unnoticed, but who will astonish us when we will read, one day, the history of our world written by God. She was sweet, humble, and strong in God and of God. She greeted into the world, formed and sent back into the world thirteen children. More than one of them could be worthy of being venerated a saint⁵.

The human and spiritual formation of Father Guanella was influenced by his parents. His tenacity, so strong that it became proverbial, comes from the father; while, the kindness of his heart and his piety that we will admire in his future life, carries the mark of his mother.

From their influence he breaks away when as an adolescent - after exceptional demonstrations of will-power - he attended school⁶ and seminary⁷ in Como City where, in 1866, he received, at 24, his priestly ordination⁸.

The public life of Father Guanella takes place between this date (1866) and the date of his death (1915)⁹. What happened in the history and in the Church of Italy during those years is not necessary to our study.

I have to mention, however, that the Catholic Church had the grace to be led, at that time, by great Popes¹⁰. Secondly, Italy was under the assault of the ruling anti-clericalism and of the corruption of charity represented by “philanthropy” whose works of charity were too often carried out for other purposes, for other hidden motives.

Father Guanella got convinced very soon that only a profound and broad intervention of true charity could have had an effective influence on society into which he was sent as a priest. For that reason, after nine years of direct ministry of souls in a parish environment, he left parish life in 1875 and went to Turin to join Father Bosco¹¹. His main purpose was to convince him to open an institution in his native valley. With no avail!

¹ From Fraciscio, in the Italian Alps that divide Italy from Switzerland.

² Mount Groppera

³ Lawrence Guanella

⁴ Maria Bianchi

⁵ Besides being Fr. Louis Guanella a Saint of the Catholic Church, his sister Catherine is a Servant of God.

⁶ Gallio Academy run by the Somascan Fathers.

⁷ St. Abbondio Diocesan Seminary

⁸ He was ordained (26 May 1866) in the Bishop residence’s chapel by Bishop Bernard Frascolla, an exiled Bishop from Foggia, Southern Italy. The Diocese of Como was still vacant because the ruling freemason government was denying permission to the new Bishop, nominated by the Pope, to take possession of his Diocese.

⁹ Fr. Guanella died in Como at the House of Divine Providence on 24 October 1915.

¹⁰ Blessed Pius IX (1792-18780; Leo XIII (1810-1903); St. Pius X (1835-1914); Benedict XV (1854-1922).

¹¹ St. John Bosco (1815-1888) founder of the Salesian Congregations.

Yet, besides acquiring a rich interior life, Father Guanella in those three years¹² developed a very impressive and useful experience in many areas. Most importantly, he had the opportunity to clarify in his mind and heart the resolution to be a Founder himself. Little by little he convinced himself that the idea was coming from God, and so a mere possibility became a project, a reality.

Once the news of what he had in mind went public, people called him eccentric and much worse. The failure of some first attempts to open a charitable institution made people shake their head. His firm protests, fruit of his strong temper, made things worse in the eyes of his ecclesiastical superiors. The civil authority took the occasion of that conflict to send him confined on the top of a mountain¹³. They could not stand that priest indomitable in his uncompromised Catholic faith and fiery in his words that without fear were unmasking and denouncing the plots and wrongdoings of the ruling anticlericals.

When he obeyed and left society to go to his confinement, Father Guanella possessed so little that everything was amassed in a small cart that he himself pulled up, up the steep valley. When night caught him in his way, he just slept on the curb like a homeless man.

Later on, when he could finally leave his confinement, he once again amassed his little possessions into the same cart and pulled it down now, down toward Lake Como, to his new assignment, to Pianello¹⁴. He arrived to the rectory late at night. The house was locked. No one was expecting him. He had to wake up some neighbor to open it. The house was totally empty, no furniture at all, not even a chair.

The years spent in Pianello lengthened the coming of the “Hour of Mercy”. The Hour came one evening in April 1866 when a little boat descended Lake Como directed to Como. Prayers and invocations from a group of scared travelers beat time with the slow and rhythmic movement of oars. The travelers were two Sisters, a sample of human miseries, and a few pieces of furniture that knew better days. They were the insignificant vanguard of Father Guanella to Como, the little seed that was the beginning of the institution that God was asking from him. Praying, Sisters invoked: “Most Holy Providence of God”; praying, the scared orphans girls replied: “Provide for us! – Sacred Heart of Jesus! – Have mercy on us! – Heart of Mary! – Pray for us!” That was the prayer Father Guanella taught them to pray.

During that night, nothing happened that human history could have found worthy to be recorded in its chronicles. Yet, those scared voices call to the Lord. Their invocations reached the Heart of God more quickly than the boat could have reached Como. Como¹⁵ was the County see, the city where the Bishop resided. It was right that the new Founder would go there to put himself and the Motherhouse of his foundations under the Bishop’s protection. God confirmed the foundation by sending a few years later a new Bishop, Andrew Ferrari¹⁶, the first Bishop who welcomed and treated the humble priest as a son.

While in Como the foundation went through endless hard times and prospered at the same time, the Founder began his traveling to find new places for expansion. There was no time to waste now! From Como he reached Milan. There he bought some land for fifty-thousand dollars. As a down payment he gave everything he had in his possession, twenty dollars!

His dream was to go south, to reach Rome, the capital of Italy. Unfavorable circumstances, however, prevented the realization of his dream at that moment. Guanella, then, began opening Houses for orphans and handicapped, one after another, in Northern Italy and

¹² 1875-1878

¹³ Olmo, at 6000 feet above the sea level.

¹⁴ A little town on Lake Como that became the cradle of Fr. Guanella’s foundations.

¹⁵ Como hosts the Motherhouses of both the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

¹⁶ Card. Carlo Andrea Ferrari was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1987.

Switzerland. He opened them right where years before he suffered so much, where he was mocked and slandered so much.

The all process was very simple. He went to the chosen place, bought the land – God only knows how – and built, first, a small wooden chapel. Assured of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, he was confident that, in spite of any obstacle, the foundation was going to take shape soon. Something like that happened at *Pian di Spagna*¹⁷ and in the Protestant Switzerland at *Andeer, Splugen, Promontogno and Vicosoprano*¹⁸.

In 1903, finally, the day to reach Rome¹⁹ arrived. I think that Father Guanella wept at the news! Rome meant being under the protection of the Pope, being one with the Universal Church, and being at the heart of the world, like having reached the heart of a man.

In Rome, God prepared for him Pope Pius X who loved the new Founder, encouraged him, helped and protected him in many ways. The Holy Father advised Guanella and asked to be advised. It was the crowning point that Father Guanella, the poor, humble priest from the arid land of Splugen Valley, had reached here on earth. It was the same poor, humble priest who, before going to Rome to give comfort and advice to the Vicar of Christ, had slept at the curbs of some mountain paths of his Valley.

It is our belief that the opening of the Houses²⁰ in Rome reached the top of the hill of his foundations. Afterwards he felt walking down the hill of his life. That does not mean that the fire of charity and the activity of the Founder had decreased. He was 61 now, and in the following twelve years he went up and down Italy many times to open more Houses²¹, he went again and again to Switzerland²². When 70, he even reached the land of the United States of America²³ to bring the Lord to the many Italian immigrants who left Italy for a job and, because of that job, had left their Catholic faith.

That frenetic activity gives the impression that Father Guanella was convinced that he did carry out what the Lord expected from him here on earth. We have the impression that afterwards he remained here among us just to suffer, restraining with great efforts and patient endurance his desire to go to his Lord.

He left this earth at 73. Finally for him, but not for those in sorrow who loved him; not for the people of Como who flocked around his lifeless body calling him a saint.

If we try to collect some data from his life - like the small cart holding the poor possessions of the confined priest, the boat that slides on the water toward Como filled only with hope, the road Fraciscio-Como-Milan-Rome, the occurrence that a saint joined him in Como and another saint was waiting him in Rome, that another saint – Father Orione²⁴ – was at his bedside when he died. If we would like to vindicate in all those events the work, the invisible but

¹⁷ Pian di Spagna was a malarial area and marsh on the far edge of Lake Como that Fr. Guanella, in 1900, drained, improved and redeveloped into the town of Nuova Olonio San Salvatore. A major foundation of his for developmental disabled people is located there.

¹⁸ Four villages in the Swiss Canton Grisons: 1898 Splugen and Andeer; 1900 Promontogno; 1901 Vicosoprano. The Servants of Charity are still running the parishes of Promontogno and Vicosoprano, Diocese of Chur.

¹⁹ Rome and the Papal State were invaded by the newly born Kingdom of Italy and annexed to it in 1872.

²⁰ 1903 Monte Mario House; 1903 Pius X House; 1908 St. Joseph Trionfale parish; 1913 Pious Union of St. Joseph for the dying.

²¹ Fr. Guanella opened 25 new Houses.

²² 1898 Roveredo; 1899 Capolago, Castel San Pietro, and Maggia.

²³ December 1912- February 1913

²⁴ St. Luigi Orione (1872-1940), intimate friend of Father Guanella, canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2004.

real presence of God, perhaps, dear reader, you would be tempted and reply that they are just allegories or fortuitous chances.

Let us discontinue then this kind of reasoning and let us open another one, more out of the ordinary than the previous one. We can write a biography of some men and women and list the various ways they were “called” or identified in their different periods of life and activity. We strongly believe that their biography would be more sober and truer than the one filled with many words of explanation.

“The well-known priest Guanella” the civil authorities wrote in their official reports when dealing with Father Guanella.

“Failure” or “crazy” was the common way his own brother priests used to nickname him.

“Vagabond priest” was the title that the most benevolent people were giving him.

“Father Louis”, St. Pius X addressed him fraternally.

“A saint”, the same Pope qualified him when talking to others.

“Saint” was the common belief of those who had already admired Father Guanella and were kneeling in front of his body at his death.

2

Before giving some introductory notes, useful to a better knowledge of Father Guanella’s intimate life, we would like to make two premises.

First premise: However similar souls may be, there are no two of them who are living the same characteristics, the same virtues, the same feelings that present the same style, the same brightness, and the same intensity. That affinity could be compared to the life of the human body that is always the most adequate example to understand the soul. In anatomy, bodies are classified into “groups”, yet each one has only similarities to others. In reality, each body is different.

Second premise: Sanctity should be understood as God in a soul. A saint is a person that possesses God in his soul.

The first premise shows how inadequate could be the expression “Saints of Charity” used to name men like Father Guanella. How meaningless could be it if it means – as usually happens – people who had committed their life to a ministry of charity, and had call as many disciples as they were able to group around them to do something for the material relief of the poor, those suffering in their body, and for satisfying their hunger, thirst, nudity, abandonment and many other poverties in kind and species! If this is understood as charity, we have already made a mistake, a big, dangerous mistake. “Social” is a category that deals with the passing fashion: the obsession of social organizations, social talks, and social words. They are a cult to an idol that, at that moment, prevails in the new tribe of idols. That obsession has sometimes corrupted the expression “Saints of Charity” that came to mean saints that had organized relief for society, for this or that “social class”, for this or that kind of poverty; and many, many other words; only words.

Charity is love. We do not love organizations. We do not even love society. We love people, individual people. Love comes only from men and goes toward men. That is true regarding all sentiments, the primordial and intimate sentiments of man, dealing with love as well as with suffering.

A clarification: if love and suffering are self-giving, giving away something that comes from the deepest recesses of our heart, they could be compared to some solemn events of our physical life.

For instance, when a newborn comes to life a mother loves and suffers, a father loves and suffers, and the baby loves and suffers as well. Yet, how different, how distinct, how private

and personal are that love and suffering experienced by the newborn, by the mother, and by the father.

Another example: a person dies. The dying loves and suffers as well as those present who love and suffer with him. But they love and suffer in a different way according to the situation they are enduring at the moment. Once again, how different and distinct, private and personal is that love and suffering among them. And so we have coined another expression to describe that particular situation: we say that a family rejoices, and a family suffers.

However, - if we want to be honest – those words are not expressing the whole truth either. It is true that a special communion, a special bond unites those who are rejoicing or suffering together. However, how bigger is the joy or suffering that is strictly private, personal and unshared with others! And this example deals only within the limits of a family!

Instead, how great is the expression “Saints of Charity” when it is properly understood!

That name denotes Christians who had taken seriously the word of Jesus (Jn 13:35): either we love or Christians we are not! Love is a commandment that we must practice towards every single human being. We must love them because of their soul. The soul becomes both way and consequence for our loving the body, and to show compassion toward its tangle mass of miseries.

Now let us take care of the second premise. The second premise takes into consideration everything that is outside and behind the definition that God in the soul is not essential to sanctity.

It will be useful to understand the distinctive characteristics of a saint, and to know in which particular virtues each saint has been most eminent though those same virtues are not what make a saint a saint. Perhaps, there are no special characteristics or, perhaps, they were there but no one was able to detect them. As a matter of fact, we are venerating many saints of whom we do not know anything about, and it could become an inconvenience when we would like to quickly catch the essential aspect of a saint, to see him – as much as possible – alone in front of God and how He sees him.

It is because of the first of these considerations that – in describing the exterior life of Father Guanella – we had not considered his public life and the organizational aspect of his achievements, the “social questions” that his ministry of charity had arisen in society.

It is because of the second consideration that in the following pages – whose purpose should be to know better his intimate aspect – we will not talk at length about his accomplishments. Rather, we will talk at length about what he had been, about his gifts of nature and grace, about the characteristics of his ascetical doctrine, about his prayer, his piety, and his relationship with God seen as a Father. We will talk about God’s love toward us, about the fact that we all are children of God the Father, and therefore capable of spiritual and intellectual self improvement.

Unfortunately, very little we know about what happened in the soul of Father Guanella. Because of modesty – a virtue common to all saints – he had hidden his intimate spiritual life behind the veil of a strict, resolute reserve. To have a glimpse of his soul, we have to rely on his writings and on the testimony of those who had known him personally.

He received from the Lord the gift of a strong physique, inherited from the mountains, that allowed him to lead a very active and tiresome life; the gift of good inner inclinations that helped him to build a very resolute character; and the gift of a kind and meek heart.

He received also exceptional gifts of grace: a fervent faith from his parents; a natural disposition and inclination toward God's things; extraordinary spiritual qualities that the Lord bestowed on him; and the friendship with holy people he had the fortune to meet.

That too would not explain anything of him because spiritual and natural gifts are mere tools at our disposal. The faith he had received from his family is nothing in comparison of the faith that he matured and made stronger day after day by his own choice. Good leaders show the way, but they do not give usually the necessary fire that makes people zealous and ardent.

Some characteristics of his soul are therefore the fruit of an inner working of intelligence and will under the guidance of divine grace.

1) Father Guanella possessed a firm, sound ascetical doctrine accompanied by the ability to express it through simple words and clear style. It could be found in his books that, though unassuming in style, are, however, easy to read and understandable to all. Two little books that Father Guanella published in 1889 are an example of the soundness of his doctrine. They are a collection of maxims taken from the writings of St. Theresa of Avila and St. Francis de Sales²⁵. In the middle of those pitiful books that infested for too long the prayer of our ordinary people, they were indeed fresh air!

A sample of the quality of his asceticism could be his exhortation on how to structure properly the Christian day. Prayer has to be the light of the day, from morning to evening. If Catholics want to be good Catholics every day and everywhere, they have to lead a personal prayer and pray for the whole world as well. Their prayer should be abundant when they spend time alone with God. They will cultivate, instead, the spirit of prayer when offering and sanctifying their daily work.

When waking up at the morning, after rising the first thought to God, Father Guanella writes that you should "*think of your work like as if on that same day God would call you to himself*"²⁶, and then you should "*get involved with your work which is like the noble chain of your punishment*"²⁷. However, in order not to be crushed by that slavery, "*a voice burst forth from your heart saying: Bread and Paradise, O Lord!*"²⁸ And "*many times within the same hour and in the same day you should smile to the Lord like a little child looking at his beloved father.*"²⁹

Regarding daily life, he points out positive and negative aspects: opportunities to reach the highest points of communicating with God, and possibilities to gravely fall into sin. This is called 'practical sense', 'down-to-earth person' that knows the souls entrusted to him. As a matter of fact, there is no soul on earth that is not open daily to one or the other occasion.

All day should be governed by good doctrine: the first thoughts of morning before leaving our bedroom we should raise - in front of the Crucifix, "the image of Christian" – thoughts and sentiments of faith, hope, charity, and contrition. At the door of the house, before plunging into the world, our thoughts should go to the Blessed Mother. Led by Mary we can go to church, to Mass.

Father Guanella summarizes also the doctrine regarding the behavior of a Christian in the hour of temptation and in his relationship with his brethren with whom he shares good and evil.

²⁵ "Remembrances of St. Theresa of Avila for the Holy Year 1886" (1886); "A Salute to the New Year 1889 – Maxims taken from the Writings of St. Francis de Sales" (1889).

²⁶ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/2

²⁷ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/5

²⁸ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/5

²⁹ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 286/17

The day of a Christian should be built not only on actions led by the sole suggestion of doctrine and intelligence. Everything should be enlightened and reinvigorated by the lively participation of the heart. Our conversation with the Lord would be void and void would be our effort to keep everything in the right place if the heart does not call to the Lord. Father Guanella worries that people may misunderstand that, and so he helps them to carry it out properly. He dedicates ample space to do that.

In the morning: "*You should sigh with deepest affection, 'I am all yours, Lord!'*"³⁰

The first act toward the Lord should be to "*adore your God; pour forth your affection.*"³¹

To Mass, "*hasten like an anxious dove...Hasten to it to sympathize, to sigh, or to rejoice.*"³²

If you are dealing with sin "...*cry out before the Lord and plead with the Lord...*"³³

If one of your brethren had sinned, "*be horrified within your heart*"³⁴, but love him still.

In the evening, "*recollect yourself at the Heart of Jesus...and rejoice saying the same words you have raised to God in the morning: 'I am all yours, O Lord!'*"³⁵

You should live all day "*like a little child looking at his beloved father*".³⁶

The passages from Father Guanella just quoted could help to know other ascetical aspects of his: his prayer, his particular way to understand and live the spirit of prayer by which – whatever we do along the day – the day becomes man and God's work alike. The fruit of this prayer is his piety.

2) Father Guanella prayed so frequently that, perhaps, for God it is not yet died the echo of his constant whispering with which he accompanied his tireless walking. Roads and trains of Italy and world alike for long time brought with them in front of God the fragrance of his prayers. Regarding the content of his prayer, we should take into consideration this beautiful thing: when exposing Christian doctrine in his writings, Father Guanella does not dedicate a special chapter to prayer, but he unites always the explanation of prayer with the virtue of Hope. Check "Let us go to the Father", "The Foundation", and "Vieni Meco". In the latter, the chapter dedicated to Hope titles, "*Christian Hope, that is, prayer*". Christian Hope is contained in prayer.

3) Finally, we should pay attention on the form – anti-rational form – of Father Guanella's piety.

a) Those who would like to give a deeper view of this aspect they should read the pages on the Eucharist, because, among his devotion, the cult of the Eucharist was eminent. They should also give a rapid reading of many other pages and books in which the main topic for meditation are the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Love and Sorrow, and the Blessed Mother.

b) They should pay attention, moreover, to which Saints he preferred, toward which of them he more studied and imitated. They will encounter St. Joseph, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Francis de Sales, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Alphonsus de Liguori ("*Christian Hope, that is, prayer*" echoes St. Alphonsus). The names of these Saints, the examples from their life, and the maxims from their writings are very frequent in his homilies and writings.

c) A third element that should interest those who want to deepen this topic should be found in the exegesis of Father Guanella's texts. The following are some titles: "In the Month of Flowers (1884)", "Flowers of Virtues (1884)", "Home Missions (published posthumously, 1934)",

³⁰ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/1

³¹ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/1

³² The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 284/4

³³ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 285/10

³⁴ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 285/13

³⁵ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 285/15

³⁶ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 286/17

“The Bread of the Soul (1884)”, “Come with Me (1883)”, “Let us Go to Paradise (1883)”, “Let us God the Mountain of Happiness (1881)”, “A Salute to the Immaculate (1887)”, “In the Month of Fervor (1884)”, “O Father ! O Mother! (1884)”.

Flowers, people, home, bread, come, let us go, a salute, happiness, fervor, Father, Mother, Paradise are topics that touch the heart. They show how to live and a style to express it into words.

Frequent are the words moaning, sorrow, love, light, and darkness. Very frequent is the “!”, the exclamation mark, and the “Oh!” at the beginning or at the end of a sentence, as he needed to take a breath because, from the abundance urging inside, his words were pressing and had hard time to come out. Witnesses reported that when Father Guanella was preaching meditation to his religious, he frequently stopped in his tracks and made deep sighs.

No one should dare to portray Father Guanella as a man of constant whining and longing. It is a false and untrue image of the Founder who was a man positive, full of energy, and very efficient. His meekness found relief in prayer and meditation, when conversing with the Lord. It was less so when he conversed with people. His words and attitude were the external expression of his fundamental conviction that *God is a Father and we are his children*. That conviction is – to my opinion – the depths of Father Guanella as man of God and master of spiritual life. If we should summarize in a short statement the most characteristic trait of Father Guanella, we cannot find any other statement except the one just quoted.

The theme “Father-children” was certainly the most frequent he used in his talks and writings. You will bump into it in every page of his books, letters, Regulations, in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. The theme to him expressed the most vivid image of men in front of God. It was the way that helped more people to draw near the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to penetrate into the essential aspects of the Gospel. The Gospel is concentrated in that theme: a father and many children, and the history of the Love of the Father for them all.

4) The secret of Father Guanella’s life, of his never defeated trust in Providence originated from his strong belief that God is a Father. Father Guanella kept an undying serenity among indescribable trials. Among his characteristics, it is the one that is the most outstanding, the one around which many stories and extraordinary events were collected. Too often, however, people neglected to recognize the source from where his virtues were taking their nourishment. Too often, those events left the reader in the same situation in which his contemporaries perceived him. By not perceiving the supernatural source, they mistook his infinite trust as irresponsibility, and his serenity as showing boldness, over-confidence, the taking of something for granted.

In the characteristic piety of Father Guanella – that essentially resolves man as child of God – rests also the foundation of his pedagogy and Catholic charity.

5) Those who would like to discourse on the doctrine and educational style of Father Guanella should begin from the Paternity of God, because only in that Paternity the question of origin and purpose of man find solution. God’s Paternity is the essential foundation of all the work whose purpose is to form man, and whose goal is to give him back, ready to eternal happiness, to the Father. In other words, pedagogy and asceticism!

To make clearer what the affirmation of God’s Paternity contains, we would like to formulate the ultimate principles.

a) God created man and woman and takes care of them as a father takes care of his children.

b) A consequence is that it is not possible to form integrally a man according to his nature when we deny that - before each human educational action – there is the work of the divine educational action through grace; or if we put aside the major purpose of God's action that is to conquer man back after his rebellion.

c) The ultimate reason of God's educational action is Charity. By imitation, human education too must originate from the ultimate reason that is Charity.

The first principle (a) involves two truths: God is a person and man is a person. They are in communication with each other. Their relationship is not one between teacher and student, but between a Father and a son. This principle founds the first corollary: the right and the duty between two persons, the exchange of love whose expression from God is Providence and from man is prayer.

The second principle (b) involves also two truths: original sin and Redemption with its fraternity acquired in Christ. There are two corollaries: man is a weak, corrupted and suffering creature; the means to free ourselves from this condition are the Sacraments.

The third principle (c) highlights the diffusive aspect of Love that is Charity, and founds two corollaries: all men and women are the object of education and, in each one, the whole man, soul and body.

Do not expect from Father Guanella an intellectual elaboration of all the above. Once he affirmed that God is a Father, he moves right away to the practical aspect of that Paternity, to the ascetical and educational action, to the application of the corollaries. They are as follows: total abandonment to Providence; exhortation to be generous in prayer; sadness for the sinful man that is inside us; the Sacraments as a gift of life. They regard each man, each human being, even the most physically handicapped.

His suggestions on how to treat and deal with the elderly of his Houses, so abundantly disseminated in his writings, if collected, will form a valuable treatise on this topic so difficult and delicate to carry out properly.

His "*Norms for a Good Direction of Elementary Education*" (1883), written when Father Guanella was an Elementary teacher and pastor of Savogno, and "*To the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence working in Kindergartens*" (1913) are no more useful after the tremendous development of modern pedagogy. Their content was improved and made available to teachers in numberless modern manuals. They are, however, a testimony of a priest and teacher, Father Guanella, who spent time and energy to inform himself on the great pedagogical schools present in Italy in 1800. They are a valuable proof of his readiness to be ahead of his time where innovation was good and at the service of charity.

It is above all through catechesis and recommendations to families that Father Guanella is forming his people. He solicits attention and collaboration. "*Let us go to Paradise*" is a commentary on the Catholic Catechism. In its introduction, he writes: "*Let us go to Paradise! In order to urge you to walk toward the blessed homeland, I put in front of mine and your mind the light of a truth through examples. I offer to mine and your heart the comfort of an exhortation through a maxim. Let us walk, then, as brothers*

*and sisters toward our fatherly house!*³⁷ He wrote “Let us go the Father” as a commentary of the Lord’s Prayer, the Our Father. We read: “*Come, you will enjoy the fidelity of a friend and the affection of a brother. We will speak to each other with the trust of confidants, making use of the clarity of examples and the power of parables. Thus, not only will we follow the recommendation of philosophers but we will also follow the example of Jesus Christ, our Divine Master, who always spoke to the crowds in parables and followed up what he preached with his example.*”³⁸

The way he talked about God-Providence and helped people to recognize Him; the way he communicated the fire and power of prayer; the way he spoke about the Sacraments; the way he used to direct people to the Eucharist as a means to fall in love with God, is clearly expressed in pages of great pedagogical value through vivid images that attract the imagination, the mind and the heart of readers and listeners.

For instance, “*The baby of the swallow cries and that of the dove does it even more, because they know that their wailing and crying are the only means to get the attention of their mother. The little child does the same.*”³⁹

The words are very simple and reminiscent to violence at the same time: son, suffering, love, and the heart of man are disposed to seek the Father. It is only an image, an intuition, but inside there is a wisdom that reveals a good knowledge of men. In the Gospel too there are pages whose simple words are asking for commitment and violent pages that describes the tragic condition of man: “*A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers*”⁴⁰; or the other passage: “*There was man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.*”⁴¹

6) The virtue and passion of educator in Father Guanella finds its soul in charity whose existence and life refer to the same source, the Paternity of God.

It is a law in the spiritual order of Love that when a soul is far away from divine Love, God looks for that soul, He runs after it, He longs for it. On the contrary, when a soul is possessed by God, it is the soul that looks for God, insatiably longs for Him, and runs after Him wherever He may be. This is the ultimate “*suffering*” of a soul when still here on earth! A soul is restless; it instinctively aspires to expand wherever its Good is still unknown or neglected, where there are people who do not love God or could love Him more, so that divine Love may be revealed and loved.

In Father Guanella the most adequate descriptions of charity are fire and light, because of their qualities of rapidity, impetuosity and restlessness, because of the many benefits they bring. Father Guanella loved and aided the needy out of an inner supernatural impulse, without showing any fear toward obstacle, without looking for a personal profit or caring for success. He loved and aided those in need only for the joy that he received by following his inner inspirations, by following his need to share with others the Lord he had inside, for the sole joy of rejoicing afterwards.

³⁷ “Andiamo al Paradiso” (1883), Italian Edition only.

³⁸ “Let us go to the Father”, 1880, vol. 3, p. 7.

³⁹ “Let us go to the Father”, 1880, vol. 3, p. 8.

⁴⁰ Luke 10: 30

⁴¹ Luke 15: 11

Love brings light and is Catholic, because charity is essentially Catholic. We still remember having read biographies that surprised us because of their ease to talk about greatness and heroism. Alas, it was not history they were narrating, but a mere geography of history! Their limitations, chosen or imposed, showed the smallness, the poverty, and the egotism of the alleged hero. Test and evaluate the biography of some generals or famous politicians or well-known poets according to the remarks just read!

Nothing anti-Catholic, instead, we will find in the geography of the traveling, the constant “pilgrimage” around the world of Father Guanella. He did it with no pre-arranged plans, with no personal goals, but only with his hand in the hand of God, certain that, wherever he was, he was in the field of his Lord. He wrote: “*Christians on this earth are children who are laboring in the field of the heavenly Father. The field is the vast expanse of earth.*”⁴²

“*Your homeland is where God is, and God is everywhere!*”⁴³ he wrote to his Sisters working in the United States.

It is a Love that enlightens; it is Catholic; it is optimistic because the consequence that comes from Love is that all human beings are educable and, in each one, the whole human being is educable. For that reason, Father Guanella, as a member of a worldwide scientists’ convention (*Worldwide Convention of Telegraph Operators, Como, 1899*), invites and brings them to his Divine Providence House in Como. There he talks to them about light and about God who gives light. He looks at his residents, scarce or lacking in intelligence; he looks at their happy or deformed or tragic faces and calls them “good children”. Truly, we should meditate how revealing is that name of Father Guanella’s heart.

It is true that not every man is educable in the same measure. As many objects are not allowing the light to pass through them, so man can put obstacles to grace and love. Light stops in front of an object that is opaque and impenetrable, but by natural instinct turns to one that is better equipped to welcome it. There are objects that are friendly to light. They attract light; they soak themselves in it, refract it, and enrich it with more colors and brightness.

Likewise, there are souls who are very sensitive and open to God’s grace and presence. If a spark of God passes by, they shine at once. “*Virtue carries a divine attraction. You look at the face of a person that you never saw before, and feel strongly attracted by it.*”⁴⁴

“*What a joy to be able to mirror oneself in souls who love God! I wish I had the opportunity to live my life at the side of saints here on earth!*”⁴⁵

Father Guanella had the human ability of recognizing souls open to divine grace and to direct them. A thorough biography of his should take into account also this consolation of his: friendship with many saints, the presence of many humble souls whom he discovered, led out from an ordinary spiritual life, and made them to fall in love with the Lord.

“*You know that the most lively consolation for our hearts here on earth is to have holy souls with whom we can converse. What a comfort, however, when at last your*

⁴² “Vieni Meo”, 1883, Italian Edition only.

⁴³ “Come with Me” for the American Missionary Sisters (1913), Abor, Ghana, 2008, page 70.

⁴⁴ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 190

⁴⁵ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 264

*sisters greet you with, 'Good-bye! Pray for us!' And you, looking at them with your last smile, will impress the example of your virtues into their eyes and fly away to heaven!"*⁴⁶

4

What we have just mentioned regarding the center of his Christian life is confirmed by his activity as a parish priest, as a writer of ascetical books, and as the Founder of two Religious Congregations⁴⁷.

We are not going to talk about his major endeavor – the two Congregations - through which he is still living in the Militant Church⁴⁸. It is a task, a necessary work that has to be done extensively and distributed into different topics.

It should be done as soon as possible because, at the moment, the Congregations resemble a family whose father had died when many of its members were too little to remember him and to treasure his example. Nevertheless, they hear every day about him from their older brothers and sisters. Their home is still filled with nostalgia of him. Everything speaks of him.

It happens that even by touching something, someone says: "Father touched this! His gaze rested on that! His hands used that!"

They, the older siblings, had known him well. They possess his spirit. They pass on what he did and said. They have the opportunity now to recount of him what later on will be impossible to hear any more.

They know that for the little siblings, that avidly are asking about their father, every word of him that could be passed on is still alive, meaningful, and precious.

But for those who will come in the future and will not have anymore the opportunity to meet the direct witnesses of the Founder, what they will collect will be only a story, a talk without nostalgia, pages of mere account, and no more they will be words of life.

Occasionally⁴⁹ we talk about Father Guanella as a Founder, while almost no one knows of his exemplary activity that marked deeply his priestly ministry. Very few, even among his Religious, have a sufficient knowledge of his ascetical writings.

I would like to remind my reader that Father Guanella had composed all his books, very modest in appearance, during his years of waiting the "Hour of Mercy". He paid for their publication from his indigence, such that he did not have even the necessary to eat.

⁴⁶ The Foundation, vol. 3, p. 260

⁴⁷ The Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

⁴⁸ Affirmed by the Second Council of Nicaea, the Councils of Florence and Trent, the ninth article of the Apostles' Creed states that a spiritual union exists among the saints in heaven (Triumphant Church), the souls in purgatory (Suffering Church) and the faithful living on earth (Militant Church). See also Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 51.

⁴⁹ The author – who writes in 1957 - laments the scarce familiarity with the writings of Father Guanella. Only in the 1990s there will be an explosion of studies and interest on the Founder that brought forth numberless seminars and publications. But Fr. Beria – their precursor - was already dead (1983).

Here I will take into consideration two short documents that are useful to know Guanella as a priest and as a writer, because several of his forty and more books represent his preaching and were written for an abundant distribution among the Catholic families entrusted to his care.

The first document I would like to take into consideration regards an Introduction he wrote to a series of publications (1883) called “The well-equipped Catholic”.⁵⁰

*“Under the title of “The Well-equipped Catholic” I introduce a series of booklets suitable for common people so that they may be instructed in Catholic teaching, and suitable also for the clergy so that they may instruct on the occasion of the many Church celebrations or in sacred times during one year. These are, mainly, brief homilies and exhortations which I have tried to arrange for the benefit of simple people. I have taken the material mostly from Father Segneri’s writings. In my writing, I frequently make use of examples and images in order to be better understood. At the end of each exhortation I sum up in a few reflections the points of the truth explained.”*⁵¹

After listing the books, he concludes: *“My dear reader, for what little good that these poor efforts of mine may bring to a soul, join me in thanking God. For whatever defect you may find in them, be kind enough to forgive me and give any assistance to improve them.”*⁵²

The second document regards another brief introduction to another of his books, “In the Sacred Time – Thoughts for Lent”. It gives us an idea of the literary style of his books and his style as a priest among his parishioners. *“Welcome me, dear brother. I enter both the intimacy of your home and that of the sacred assembly of the Church with your brethren. I intend to reflect on the divine maxims that kindle the affections of one’s soul, and cause the family’s material interests to prosper. To pursue such goal, we will follow those holy weeks which are referred to as weeks of penance, meant to prepare us for the Lord’s Paschal Mystery. Oh! When will we be called to enjoy the Paschal Mystery of the Most High, above in heaven? Pray for me, dear reader!”*⁵³

Finally, a note regarding the collection of prayers here published.

While in the process of choosing them, a thought was bothering us: to collect “Prayers” of Father Guanella is arbitrary. He was not the man that was prattling with words. He was not that kind of man and never had the time and will to be so. He prayed a lot, which is true. However, to imagine him sitting at a desk writing down his most intimate thoughts into a diary is ridiculous. To those who knew him it would be an occurrence that was totally out of tune with his whole being.

Because he used to end his homilies with a prayer, beforehand, he wrote down on a piece of paper – which he slipped into his pockets – what he was going to pray.

⁵⁰ “Il Cattolico Provveduto” (The Well-equipped Catholic) is made up of 13 publications: “The Bread of the Soul”, “O Father! O Mother!”, “Come with me”, “The reminder”, “The member of the Third Order of St. Francis”, “In the Sacred Time”, “In the Month of Flowers”, “In the Month of Fervor”, “Let us Go to Paradise”, “On the Tomb of the Dead”, “The Angel of the Sanctuary”, “Flowers of Virtue”, “In School”.

⁵¹ “The Bread of the Soul”, vol. 1, p. 3.

⁵² “The Bread of the Soul”, vol. 1, p. 4.

⁵³ “In the Sacred Time”, vol. 3, p. 298.

When praying, with his characteristic half-closed eyes, he then developed on the chosen topic. He prayed for a long time and his good parishioners with him. The Prayers here collected are those very notes.

From them, dear friend, you can point out the sober and sure doctrine covered under the veil of a modest and at time unassuming style. They were not written to be literary poems. That was not my intention in presenting them to you. They were written day by day as *prayers* by a heart in prayer.

A golden rule: use them one a day, when your heart longs for prayer.

Father Attilio Beria, SdC

GOD

THE EUCHARIST

THE HEART OF JESUS IN HIS HIDDEN LIFE

*“Within my dwelling, I should take my repose beside her;
for association with her involves no bitterness,
and living with her no grief,
but rather joy and gladness.”
(Wisdom 8: 16)*

The Heart of Jesus is the heart of a father. Jesus dwelled in Nazareth for thirty years, and from there with unspeakable joy he intimately conversed with his Eternal Father.

The very same Savior dwells in the Most Holy Sacrament for unending centuries, there waiting for you to come see him. How do you greet him? A friend of yours comes to see you, chats with you for a while, and then he leaves. A child of yours comes, chats with you and then he stays and works with you, has meals with you, sleeps at your house. The fact that your child lives with you certainly pleases you more than just conversing with a friend! Likewise it may happen that you pay a visit to Jesus in church in the morning like a friend, when the Sacred Host is offered on the altar in propitiation for all.

You may return to visit him again in the evening when the Lord blesses his devotees with the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Doing so, you imitate the one who converses with his friend.

However, if during the day you open yourself up with your loving expressions with Jesus, sharing with him the affections of your soul as a child does with his father, then you imitate that most loved child who enjoys so much living with his father. Thus you become twice as dear to Jesus.

Strive to speak to Jesus, try to stay with him, and you will see. It is not like doing it with men. Virtuous as these may be, they are never without defects. Thus, conversing with them is never free from sadness; living with them is never without some kind of boredom. It's completely different with God. The spirit of the Lord is sweeter than honey. Blessed are you if you deserve to taste even for a little bit the dearest sweetness of the Heart of Jesus. You will dwell there as the honey bee dwells on the flower to suck its most sweet nectar. You will find out that those faithful people, who began to relish it, would never have departed from it even if it would cost them to lose priceless earthly

riches.

Meanwhile, if as a friend you converse with Jesus here and there, you will rejoice greatly in your heart. What a joy one experiences in shaking the hand of a friend! However, if you stay with Jesus and establish your dwelling with Him as a son does with his father, then you will experience not just a joy but a deep contentment. Then you will really experience within the rejoicing of a son who pours out into the heart of his father all the affections of his soul.

Jesus will begin by filling your heart with a great peace. He will fill you with the peace that is proper to a son who abandons himself completely and with all trust to the directives of his father. This peace is such a great good that in itself is above all pleasures our senses can enjoy.

In such a state a son works in the field of his father with diligence, and does not get tired. He sweats, yet he does not notice how tired he gets. Thus, spending his life joyfully, he makes great gains for his father. The Christian who lives together with Jesus, gains much more without feeling tiredness. Work causes no regret when done with true love. You are lucky, then, if by just wanting it, you can gather heavenly treasures with not much suffering.

The only condition for enjoying such great good is that you do not hang around in the public squares or market places; you do not stroll about at the clubs. You need to enter into solitude. If you cannot do so in the material sense, since you have to care after your family or business, enter into the spiritual solitude of your heart. Stay there with God and converse with Him, for you will receive all that I have mentioned before. You need solitude, because the loving conversations with Jesus can be heard only in solitude. In the open squares one can only hear Jesus' admonitions.

NOTE

"In the Month of Fervor, Thirty Scriptural Maxims Developed on the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Christian Souls"

English Edition, vol. 5, page 46-47.

ADORATION

When the Magi could no longer see the star, they did not lose courage, but had recourse to legitimate authority to have sure direction as to where they would find Him, Whom they sought. And God, Who is good to the pure of heart, thwarted the plans of Herod and lit up again in heaven the guiding star which accompanied the Magi to Bethlehem.

I, instead, hundreds of times through my own fault, have lost sight of my end, and if God had not grasped me with His grace I would have lost the way. From now on I will turn immediately to Him who represents Our Lord, and if I have good will and a firm purpose to do the Will of God, I will retrace my steps, and arrive at my end, the glory of God and my sanctification. Dearest Mother, Angels and Saints, support my unsure steps in the difficult journey.

So long as the light of divine love floods my soul, and I am convinced of the little I can do, I support with joyful heart all the sorrows that afflict me. But alas! As soon as I no longer see the star—God -- a terrible discouragement overcomes me, and desolation attempts to impede my activity, paralyzes my capacities, darkens my mind, and disturbs my heart.

I listen in sorrow, and a gentle voice tells me: *“Arise, poor one; do not seek the consolation of God, but the God or Consolations.”*

I hear your just reproof, oh my crucified Love, and I accept from your hand the cross, refusing every human comfort. I deliberately renounce all sensible consolations, ready to suffer with God, oh, Jesus, agonizing in the Garden, the weariness and the hatred of men, persecutions, and death. I renounce, oh my Jesus, all the consolations of religious life, and I attach myself to all in it that is difficult and heavy because I wish to be saved, journeying on the Way of the Cross with you.

And when around the cross flowers will grow, and they will be flowers of suffering, I will be anxious to adorn my head and my heart to be more than ever like to You, O my Bridegroom, crowned with thorns.

NOTE

*“The Voice of the Father. Guide for the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence”
Chicago, Revised Translation 1986, page 439-440.*

In the Appendix of the 1911 Rule, Father Guanella published some prayers suggested for solemn spiritual occasions. This passage is an example of his “passionate” adoration of the Eucharist.

ACTS OF LOVE AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

I live, O Lord, but it is no longer I who live; you live in me. O Holy Soul of Jesus, my Savior, purify my soul! O Heart of Jesus, wash my heart! O Holy Body of my Redeemer rule over my body!

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Angels of heaven, what do you say? I pray you, come! Venerate the mystery of love!

Saints of Paradise, come to me because the Lord who had created and sanctified you has come in the poor house of my heart.

Astounded, I look at the earth where I live and say: "What is this place where I live? The Lord is with me. True, true: this is a holy place, the antechamber of the Most High."

O Lord, call everyone to come over! Call the great Popes, the ardent priests, the faithful Catholics.

Call even the poor sinners.

Let even schismatics and heretics come over!

Cry out with a stronger voice. Let the more remote nations of pagans come over to praise you.

May you be the father of all creatures! May all be saved in your Son Jesus whom you have sent! O Good Lord!

Watch over on the souls of Purgatory. It is hard to lead a life away from your fatherly face. Distressed they are for having offended you and made no suitable reparation. Join to their suffering my prayer and suffering. Free those souls that you still love.

Let us all go to Paradise, O Lord! When do you call us to your presence? I have already spent too much time here on earth!

To Paradise, O my soul! To Paradise for eternity!

NOTE

At the end of his books, Father Guanella published several prayers, especially prayers suitable to follow the celebration of Mass and to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. At times he wrote them; other times he collected the prayers already used by his parishioners. They lead us to a noteworthy conclusion: to Father Guanella, prayer is the normal close of every meditation or dialogue with the Lord.

The passage just quoted above, has been taken from “Thanksgiving to Holy Communion” that was added to “The Angel of the Sanctuary”⁵⁴. The angel he is talking about is the altar-server who accompanies and serves the priest at the altar.

I had chosen it among many others because it gives relevance to two themes: Communion of Saints and transformation in Christ. We will recall the latter later on in another note.

PRAYERS

1. O Most Holy Heart of Jesus, show yourself also to me, longing so much for you. Open up a way, for I, also, want to enter into your blessed Side. I will stay kneeling in perpetual adoration. With gratitude to that Divine Heart who has saved me, I too, will groan with loving affection until the multitude of my brethren, who still walk the path of perdition, may listen to me and so hasten to receive their own salvation from your Divine Heart, O Jesus.⁵⁵

2. May friends praise the care of their loved ones: I admire the love of the Eternal Father, for I know that his love is very deep. What more could you have done, my Lord, than giving me your only Son, and making him undergo immense sufferings? Let me lay absorbed in wondering ecstasy, and let me repeat over and over again: “God so loved the world that he gave to it his only Son.”⁵⁶

3. O Most Holy Heart of Jesus, I cannot love you as the Blessed Mother loved you. I feel bad about it. I would like to love you, as the chaste St. Joseph did. At least, O Lord, make me love you with simplicity and affection equal to that of the devout shepherds. How happy will I be when I will really begin to love you! How fortunate I will be when, rousing high my voice, I will be able to rejoice around you with the choirs of angels, saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will!”⁵⁷

4. Jesus, call me, too, to you! I long for it. I long for it. It is better to come and stay with you than to live on earth in danger of losing you. Call me, call me to you. May my heart pine for you! May I die longing for possessing you, O my Jesus!⁵⁸

5. O Jesus, to pray better in supplication, I want to enclose myself into your blessed Heart. I pray for me so that I may not lose patience in waiting for you. I implore you also for all my brothers. I know that the pains of one’s soul are very sharp. I am aware also that with infinite love you apply the afflictions of my spirit for my own eternal salvation. May you be ever praised, O Heart of my Jesus! From you I gratefully take the

⁵⁴ There is no English translation of this book, yet.

⁵⁵ “In the Month of Fervor”, vol. 5, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 16

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 20

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 30

days of joy, with resignation my days of sorrow. Grant me your assistance that I may remain firm in this resolution.⁵⁹

6. Jesus, my Father and Master! May the effect of your word and example remain for all eternity in my heart! I want to be patient. I want to be meek. This is the best that can happen to me here on earth. This is the great virtue that makes me ready for the joy of paradise. Eternal Father: I beg you, through the Incarnate Heart of Jesus, see to it that I am always meek of heart, humble in love till the end.⁶⁰

7. O Jesus, lead me into solitude. I do want to separate myself from the things of earth, and I am only waiting for you to call me. Speak to me about myself and my eternal salvation. Speak to me about You and of your most holy love. Like the fish which darts in the waters, and like the bird that flies in the air, so I want to live with you, conversing with you who are the very source of my life, the pure air for me to breathe.⁶¹

8. Heart of my Jesus, show yourself to me, also. Appear to me with the power of your grace. Show yourself by the good influence of your holy inspirations. Dear Jesus, out of love you transfigured yourself in the manger, out of love you did it again on Mt. Tabor, then in the suffering on Calvary, and finally in the tomb by your resurrection. Out of love for me, you transfigured yourself in the Most Holy Sacrament on the altar, yet, out of love for you, will I struggle to transfigure myself in you by imitating your holy virtues? Give me your help, O most loving Heart of Jesus, my Savior.⁶²

9. Jesus, I know, I know. The worst misfortune that could happen to me is to offend your majesty. How ungrateful I have been so far! No more. I, too, want to consume myself for the zeal and honor of your glory, since a son who does not work for the honor of his father is an ungrateful creature and a useless burden on earth.⁶³

10. Jesus, I also want to be a willing victim. How fortunate would I be if I were found worthy to be immolated for your glory! However, I am too great a sinner. Forgive me, my Jesus, and give me your assistance so that I may be able at least to offer you the oblation of my pious works, the sacrifice of my holy sufferings.⁶⁴

11. My Jesus: draw me completely to you. Draw me with all the affections of my heart. If I knew that one single fiber of my heart were not palpitating for you, I would tear it away at all cost. However, I know that I could not do so without your help. Draw me to you, my Jesus, draw me entirely to you. I am well aware how my heart has no rest until it rests entirely in your heart.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 34

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 55

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 60

⁶² Ibid. p. 77

⁶³ Ibid. p. 100

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 104

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 122

12. O adorable Heart of my Jesus! What am I doing here on earth if I do not completely burn with your holy love? My Jesus! I look piously at your sepulcher and then I want to moan: "The love of Jesus Christ impels me." Now I want to live for you until you grant me the favor to die for you.⁶⁶

13. O most Holy Heart of my Redeemer, you palpitate with such affection for my sake, while I think of you with such infrequent love. Yet I want to be a good soldier of yours. Arm me, O Lord. Give light to my mind, courage to my heart. I want to be one of those soldiers who claim to be generous and belong to the so-called 'death battalion'. They call themselves so since they stay where they have to defend their king as lost soldiers, happy whether they live or they die, as long as they find themselves useful for the majesty to whom they have consecrated themselves. My Jesus, if the heart of a man can give of itself for the sake of an earthly king, I want to consecrate myself to you, heavenly king, who, triumphantly risen, live and reign and rule forever and ever.⁶⁷

14. O Heart of my Jesus! I now understand how advantageous it is to listen to the loving invitations of your Heart. How foolish I was in making you wait until now. Now you are with me. Stay with me forever. How joyful it is for me to stay with you! What jubilation to sit at the table that you prepare for me. When, Lord will I sit at your table in paradise, when?⁶⁸

15. My Jesus, I also wait for and I am certain that my resurrection will come. In the meantime I will wait for it with desire. My Jesus, send to me the battle of Jerusalem, send to me the battle of Calvary, while you assist me with your holy grace. However, console me soon with the triumph of my change, since I know that my joy will be full only when I will be able to resemble you, Jesus, rising triumphant and immortal from the sepulcher.⁶⁹

16. Oh, when will my soul see you face to face, my God and my Lord? I am comforted in thinking of your mercy, O my Jesus. I am comforted in reflecting upon the tenderness of your Heart. I beg you to save me, O Lord. I will take my poor steps while you will support my weakness, O my Jesus. That I may be saved, my Savior! That I may be safe in heaven because of your merits!⁷⁰

17. Jesus, bless me, also. I long for you, I do long for you. Heart of my Jesus, I want to enter your heart and I do not want to separate myself from you anymore. Cover my soul with the blood of your heart and purify it so that it may be ready to come before you in paradise. My paradise, my God, I long for nothing else but you. O Sweet Heart of my Jesus, may I love you more and more!⁷¹

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 126

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 132

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 138

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 143

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 148

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 157

18. My dear Jesus, I do not like to sit at the table of sinners anymore. May I sit at your divine table where you prepare for me your Flesh and where I can taste the sweet fruits of life and eternal joy!

19. O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, by the power of your mercy you are still calling me. If I delay in replying, threaten me with your punishment. Push me through the whip of your chastisement. It is a punishment the suffering that leads to salvation. It is grace and mercy. O Jesus, have mercy on me, that I may eternally sing your mercy.

20. O Jesus, you always shows mercy to your children. May you are forever blessed, O Lord and loving Father! Send us any time the chalice of bitterness, but, together with it, gives us the comfort of resignation. It is a chalice any suffering we endure in life. Your will be done, O Father. Always, your will be done.

21. O Jesus, material food changes into flesh and blood of my body. By the Most Holy Heart of yours, the food of your divine will changes into precious nourishment for my soul. O Jesus, help me to grow in your divine life! I wish to grow until I reach you and live forever with you.

22. O adorable Heart of my Savior! How I regret for having offended you by my many sins! I am sorry for having offended you by my many foolish words! I deserved to be left aside. But you did not abandon me and for this I give you glory. Oh, the praise of your Holy Name always resounds on my lips, because you, by the price of your Most Precious Blood, had saved me! O Jesus, on the altar of the Cross you showed me in agony for love of me. I confess that you are my Savior, true God and true Man, and my true Father.

NOTE

Part of the above prayers could be found in the book "In the Month of Fervor, Thirty Scriptural Maxims developed on the Sacred Heart of Jesus for Christian Souls", 1884. As we have mentioned in the previous Note, these prayers are part of meditation and not mere appendices of it or even separated bodies. On the contrary, his prayers are "moans" encapsulated into the practice of meditation, a deep desire to penetrate into the mysteries of the life of Jesus. If detached from meditation, they lose their brightness and immediacy for they are like words of affection between two friends who are exchanging their good-bye with each other.

GOD'S WILL

THE THIRD PETITION OF THE OUR FATHER

"Your will be done"

Philotea⁷², here is a heavenly guide for you: follow the holy will of the Lord, so that the holy will of God may give peace to your heart and accompany you to heaven.

Doing the will of God, you enter a close relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Of two individuals who love each other, it is said that they have one mind and one heart. Likewise, following the divine will, you will become intimately united to the love of the Heart of Jesus Christ.

How fortunate! By doing God's will you gain time after time. Even the misfortunes of hunger, illness, and persecution turn into consolations for your heart and treasures for acquiring paradise. You can even take advantage of a sinful inclination by profiting more for your humility and for a more lively confidence in God.

NOTE

"The Foundation" – Catechism for souls who aspire to perfection, 1885, vol. 3, p. 203.

MERCY OF GOD

THE LORD IS A FRIEND THAT BRINGS SALVATION

⁷² Philotea comes from the Greek, and means "A soul in love with the Lord".

How do you give thanks to God for the many times he raised your soul from the death of sin? To raise from death the son of a poor widow⁷³, the Prophet⁷⁴ prayed continually for three days by the remains of that child. To raise you from the death of sin, God had to sigh as a friend despised for I do not know how long, for three days or three years or thirty years. In the meantime he sent his angels from heaven to support you so that you would not perish. He also had to send you angels from earth, that is his sacred ministers, to support you. He kept the fury of the demons away from you, because they attempted to cause you the painful death of hell. He also commanded lightening and storms and seas: "Be quiet, because I do not want the sinner to die but that he repent and live." What more do you expect? Justice, that is the infinite attribute of God, said: "The iniquitous should be punished!" However, mercy replied with more lively affection: "I want to sustain him so that he may repent!" The latter triumphed at the end.

Admire even more the sensitivity of this divine mercy. You praise the compassion of St. Charles Borromeo who in one day gave away forty thousand crowns during the famine in Milan. Though he believed that alms were meritorious in the eyes of God, he had to stop because he ran out of money. God, instead, the more he gives the more treasures he possesses, for the treasures of his mercy are infinite.

You admire the charity of St. Vincent De Paul or that of St. Augustine who, not having anything to pay to ransom slaves or prisoners, offered themselves to bear their chains and their slave work. However, they did an act of mercy which in a certain way they were expected to perform according to the precept of love. God, instead, is not expected to do anything for others; still, he has showered so much grace unto you!

More than anyone else, you never cease from praising the love of St. Francis Xavier, who traveled in search of souls for ten years a distance which is five times a trip around the world. He did so with such a love that wherever he went he caused many thousands of souls to prostrate themselves at the feet of the cross of Jesus. Thus, St. Francis had the most cherished satisfaction to assure the salvation of his own soul by saving others. God, instead, is all right and blessed in himself. From your salvation he gets no increase of glory. Still, he looked at you, a poor one, and showed to you a sign of his divine mercy!

A benefactor who shows mercy gives his heart to the person who is benefited. By showing mercy to you, the Lord gave his Only Son with such miraculous love that the saints in heaven and the just on earth still remain ecstatic in contemplating such a miracle of benevolence. St. Francis of Assisi, seeing a lamb taken to be slaughtered, shed floods of tears, saying: "This reminds me of Jesus, the innocent lamb, who was taken to Calvary to be crucified for my sins." How can you look at Jesus crucified without being moved to tears?

⁷³ 1 Kings 17: 17-24, Elijah revives the son of the widow of Zarephath.

⁷⁴ Elijah, the Prophet, that appeared with Moses at the side of Jesus transfigured on Mount Tabor (Mt 17: 1-8).

NOTE

“In the Sacred Time – Short sermons for each day of Lent”, 1884, vol. 3, p. 375-377.

This book is very precious because (1) the Scriptural passages are well chosen; (2) the sternness of the Lenten topics is typical of Father Guanella. His view of the ‘old man’ that we have to reform within us is decisively pessimistic; (3) the plan of the meditations is well detailed. To me this book is the best among the many that Father Guanella dedicated to meditation.

GOD’S PROVIDENCE

THE FOURTH PETITION OF THE OUR FATHER
“Give us this day our daily bread”

Philothea, two things are performed by everyone here on earth: living and dying. We die every day, because every hour we get closer and closer to our home, the tomb. Let us pray: "Grant us, O Lord, food for soul and body, as long as we stay here on earth and then raise us from earth to heaven."

The food for soul is prayer, either vocal or mental. Also food for soul is the Holy Mass and the Holy Sacraments. Lord, give us holy inspirations, the manna of our souls, which you shower as dew so abundantly over holy souls!

And then give us a piece of bread to satisfy our hunger, and a rag to cover our poor and lowly body. Although he is a miserable and recalcitrant servant, have mercy on him, and give him something to eat so that he may improve himself.

Above all, feed your spirit. Regarding everything else, it is very true that it is all vanity that does not help one to achieve holiness.

Philothea, Jesus Christ in person has fed the five thousand people in the desert. Through; St. Francis, he feeds five thousand religious who entrusted themselves to him first

by following him. He feeds them still today, after seven hundred years, now that they are five times as many. If you open the eyes of faith and give at least part of your possessions to the poor and entrust yourself to God, you will see him right away.

Earthly goods are thorns to a heart. Soon you have to leave them anyway. Is it possible that you, Philothea, still give some of your attention to them?

You live day after day. Is it not beautiful to labor, day after day, and then expect that God will bless you from heaven?

A soul who is faithful and at the same time worries about her future, is like an individual who claims to be your friend, but in reality is so in words not in facts. You work, adore God, and then let Divine Providence come to your assistance.

NOTE

"The Foundation - Catechism for souls who aspire to perfection, 1885, vol. 3, p. 204.

TO THE BLESSED MOTHER

PRAYERS

1. Immaculate Virgin, if this is God's will that one of us achieve perfection of his soul by following an extraordinary way of heavenly inspirations, let us know our pathway, and we will eagerly follow it. O Virgin, O Virgin! If this brief apparition of yours is the cause of such happiness, what will happen when we will see you face to face in heaven! Just thinking of it, our hearts seem to fail enjoying a most pure joy. Help us, O Immaculate Virgin!⁷⁵

2. Immaculate Virgin, this is God's will, that all of us become saints. Make us holy, Blessed Virgin! Lead us on the royal pathways of simplicity, since they are the

⁷⁵ A Salute to the Immaculate Mary of Lourdes every day of the month of May, 1887, vol. 5, p. 331

dearest to you, the most available to all of us poor mortals. Oh, make us learn how beautiful it is to be virtuous. Make us understand what a great happiness we can find in setting out on the ways of the perfect good!⁷⁶

3. O Immaculate Mary, why do you hesitate in inspiring our minds with the true spirit of faith, the wise interpretation of our holy religion? If you grant us our request, as we ask you, it will not be because of any merit of ours, but only because of your full and great bounty. You, then, will have glory and your divine Son, Jesus as well. The souls will, then, obtain salvation from it.⁷⁷

4. Immaculate Virgin, work on us one more of your miracles of motherly compassion! Make us open up our eyes so we can well understand the wonder of divine mercies. See to it that our hearts are touched that we may love the ineffable mysteries of divine love.⁷⁸

5. Immaculate Virgin, I would not know how to ask you today for a grace more beautiful than the holy humility, for which you yourself pleased the Most High superabundantly. Make me humble by lowly thinking of myself, humbler by prudently thinking of others. Make of me the humblest creature by submitting myself to any wish or command or advice my superior may express.⁷⁹

6. Immaculate Virgin, how many times you yourself, Blessed Virgin and Mother, have opened my very eyes on what to do in events of tormenting darkness! Be always welcomed! You still speak with motherly tenderness. Make us understand that who listens to your voice listens to Jesus, your divine Son, and in following you we find salvation from the Lord!⁸⁰

7. Immaculate Virgin, do not delay from turning your loving gaze on us. Heal us, above all, in our soul, eaten up by so many evils of error and vice, coldness, human respect, most vain and dangerous attachments. Please, heal us from any illness of ours, heal us! We will bless you forever.⁸¹

8. Immaculate Virgin, you point out to us the program of Christian battle for these days of ours. It is included in the history of our pilgrims. Protest firmly, then wait that God will change the plan of the adversaries: this is the program of the Catholics. Immaculate Virgin, make us attentive to this way of battling and at the same time make ourselves active and fervent, so that the day of the triumph of Christians may soon smile on us.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 323

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 334

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 345

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 355

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 373

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 380

⁸² Ibid. p. 392

9. O Virgin, what a joy for the Christian world to be able to recognize that you are the Immaculate, our common mother, who has come to visit your children! Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and our Mother, take us by the hand, deliver us to Jesus, and ask Him to save us.⁸³

10. Immaculate Virgin, when a spark of that flame of charity that is in you shines on the face of a simple creature, it calls the attention of all on earth. What a joy to stay with an innocent!... What a pleasure to be able to see the face of a holy one of the Lord!... Immaculate Virgin, make us holy so that all of us may become your worthy children!⁸⁴

11. Immaculate Virgin, what a consolation to be able to say: I am with Mary and I find myself with the one who exterminates heresies, I am with the universal mother of the faithful, I am with the one who first crushed the head of the serpent from hell! O Mary, make us your true devout children, for to belong to you is our ineffable joy and to possess you is an unfailling security.⁸⁵

12. O Immaculate Virgin, make us understand who you are, the Virgin of Virgins, all holy and immaculate forever, the fortunate redeemer of humankind, the true Mother of Jesus Christ our Savior, and our mother. Show us your heart, O Immaculate Virgin, and make us love you at least as much as our heart can do. O Virgin, O Mother, he who does not love you, has no heart!⁸⁶

13. Holy Virgin, you are blessed because you knew how to love so well. Blessed may I be if I will learn how to really love! My Mother, help me to be of one heart, of one mind with the beloved souls of Christian charity. O Mary, why can't I love Jesus as much as you loved Him?⁸⁷

14. O Holy Virgin, I will pray to God through your intercession and then I will be tranquil. Had I to worry, I will worry about my heavenly glory, never about worldly vanities. Blessed Virgin, protect me, so that in any undertaking for God's glory I may not exceed for excessive ardor, nor may I back up because of excessive fear.⁸⁸

15. O Blessed Virgin, I do not know what to say when I gaze intently at you hastening to the temple of the Lord. How much my heart melts with love when I see you praying at the sanctuary of the Most High. How blind are the proud of the world! How blind are those who think they know better, yet they do not know what concerns paradise and God! They are blind because they are proud. Blessed Virgin, obtain that I may be enlightened. Obtain that all of us are enlightened.⁸⁹

⁸³ Ibid. p. 396

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 408

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 425

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 326

⁸⁷ In the Month of Flowers – A Scriptural Maxim suggested for each day in the life of the Blessed Mother, vol. 5, p. 199.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 185

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 175

16. O Blessed Virgin! I wish I knew how to pray well as you always did! Unfortunately, I do not know very well the needs of my soul, nor am I able to present myself to God, my Lord, better than you did. Teach me, O Virgin. That I could at least have the fervent heart of an innocent child, the pitiful heart of the poor beggar. My Blessed Mary, I have much trust in you: help me!⁹⁰

17. Holy Virgin, you are the mother of holy love! I say that I love, yet how cold a Christian I am still! I feel the need to love, because the Lord inspires my heart. Yet I am not able to respond to it. I regret sacrifices! I do not like to fill my heart with the anxieties of the wretched. Mother! Mother! You, who are the mother of all, see to it that we all become your worthy children.⁹¹

18. O Virgin, how sweetly surprised the Angels turned their gaze on you when they saw you joyful in the midst of the greatest afflictions! What would those heavenly spirits say about me? In words I confess that there is joy in suffering for God, but, then, in fact I Withdraw from it right away. Mother, Mother! Sustain me and comfort me in trials!⁹²

19. Immaculate Virgin, you have spoken very well to us many times and we have understood you well, yet why do we feel lost every time we stumble in a contradiction? We do acknowledge that we are feeble and stubborn Christians! Yet, turning away from you, where will we go? Mother, Mother, regard us with indulgence always and come to our assistance immediately!⁹³

20. O Mary, I want to be saved, I want to, I want to! The sufferings of this life are the pledge of my eternal salvation. I know that, but then I am so lazy in bearing with them. My Mother, Mary, give me your assistance. Tell Jesus to give me suffering and the strength to bear with it as well. Then I will be saved and your glory will be full, O my heavenly Protectress.⁹⁴

21. My

Virgin, be a beloved mother to me also. I have such a great need of it in all the battles of suffering, conversing, and Christian mortification. My Virgin, be a beloved mother to me in all acts of my life.⁹⁵

22. O Virgin, I, too, say that I want to love Jesus Christ with all the energies of my soul, but then I am so miserable. I resolve to overcome all trials and persecutions for you, but then in fact I prove myself to be so timid and disheartened. O Holy Virgin, lead me by the hand. Sustain me in all the paths of privations and hunger, to which the Lord

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 189

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 203

⁹² Ibid. p. 211

⁹³ A Salute to the Immaculate Mary of Lourdes, vol. 5, p. 341.

⁹⁴ In the Month of Flowers, vol. 5, p. 238

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 257

may call me. Through your intercession I am sure that I will certainly triumph in all trials, as difficult as they might be.⁹⁶

23. Immaculate Virgin, at least you make us understand that our duty is to constantly oppose following our own will and to follow the will of the Divine Savior, your son. In suffering we can find our glory and our triumph over our enemies, the passions of our senses, ministers of iniquities.

Immaculate Virgin! We know very well how much you suffered yourself. Thereby God raised you to the glory of such a high sanctity. O Virgin, have mercy on us who are so weak, indeed!⁹⁷

24. Virgin, Mother of Sorrows, let the world get mad as much as it wants, but I want to embrace the cross of my Savior! I know that the world abhors that wood of salvation, and will hate me, too. Yet I do not pay attention to it, the foolish one. Desolate Mother, inspire me at least with part of that lively affection that you had for your Jesus. Then I will be steadfast in saying myself: "God forbid that I may boast of anything else but the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ."⁹⁸

25. Immaculate Virgin, what a joy being with God and with you! Make us understand that this is heaven on earth, and that receiving the most august Sacrament here on earth is like heaven opening itself over us here on earth. Blessed be God! Blessed may you be, also, the Mother of our Divine Savior!⁹⁹

26. May all hearts here on earth praise you, O Virgin, for you never cease to bless your children every day! These sensible favors for which we show our affection are but a small token of the greater graces which you shower upon us on every occasion, which we do not even notice. How wretched we are! Yet, when you will open the gate of the blessed paradise for us, then we will understand. Meanwhile, keep blessing us, O most loving Mother.¹⁰⁰

27. Blessed Virgin, how much do I fear the threats of my Lord? I know that the Lord will come to judge me. I myself confess that my past sins are many, that, due to my frailty, I have even more reason to fear for my future. Still, I do regret it much. Still I squander my spirit in so many vanities. Mother, Mother, you come to my assistance! Mother, Mother, when you see me leaving, call me back immediately to the sacred retreat of the house, to the beloved solitude of my heart!¹⁰¹

28. Holy Virgin, if I knew who I am, misery and sin, I would certainly be a less evil Christian. Instead I detest the evil I see in others and do not abhor my own evils. Most ungrateful Christian! Whatever good God grants me I do not acknowledge as a gift from

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 249

⁹⁷ A Salute to the Immaculate, vol. 5, p. 429

⁹⁸ In the Month of Flowers, vol. 5, p. 282

⁹⁹ A Salute to the Immaculate, vol. 5, p. 377

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 315

¹⁰¹ In the Month of Flowers, vol. 5, p. 262

heaven, the many defects I find in me I excuse and hide. For how long will I be blind and foolish to so high a degree?¹⁰²

29. Blessed Virgin, behold my homeland at last! My Paradise is there, and I understand well that you are preparing a place of enjoyment for me. Let the world say otherwise. But I am certain that being in God's hand I will be safe. What peace I will enjoy in heaven! What purest pleasure! Blessed Virgin, hasten to give me that dear blessedness. Oh heaven, Oh beautiful paradise! Oh glorious Mother, when will I see you? Make me be with you soon.¹⁰³

30. O Blessed Virgin, I want paradise for myself, too. I want it at all cost. The beautiful heaven is there waiting for everyone who wants it. I certainly want it. O Holy Virgin, I mercifully cry out to God through you. I make use of all my energies and abilities. In working for it I will despise all human respect.

O Virgin, the Lord calls me to himself through so many loving invitations. May I, at least, attain paradise by bearing the tribulations that are proper to the everyday life!¹⁰⁴

31. O Holy Virgin, I too want to listen to Jesus! I need so much to be enlightened. Oh, that I could find the safe way to paradise! I will walk on it with vigor. I will follow it with delight until I will have paradise in sight. When will I see the beautiful paradise, O Mother, when?¹⁰⁵

32. Holy Virgin, I want to learn from Jesus how to save myself. What a holy teacher, what a compassionate teacher Jesus is! While he teaches, he opens the mind to understand, moves the heart to act. Good Jesus, your word even works a miracle to turn the heart of an obstinate Christian into a repentant one. O Virgin, when will I be able to take advantage of Jesus' teaching, as you were able to do so well?¹⁰⁶

33. Immaculate Virgin, when a soul tossed by remorse is taken to the abyss of desperation, to whom can it make recourse other than to you? You are the refuge of sinners; of the desperate you are the safe port; of everyone you are the loving mother? Oh, continue working such wonders over our souls! For in us our affection of gratitude and love will increase even more.¹⁰⁷

NOTE

Two are the Marian books that Father Guanella wrote: "The Month of Flowers" and "A Salute to the Immaculate".

In the first book, his intention is to lead a soul to imitate and to participate to the Mysteries of the life of Mary. Only the thirty-one titles of the meditations could make

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 194

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 306

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 243

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 266

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 230

¹⁰⁷ A Salute to the Immaculate, vol. 5, p. 388

happy a disciple of those ascetical Schools that put perfection in “participating” to the Mysteries. Because the Mysteries deal with the life of the Blessed Mother, the book should be appreciated by the Marian movements that happened to largely develop in recent years.

In the second book, the chapters narrate the events of the Apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France (1858) to St. Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879). The most precious things in them – both doctrinally and pedagogically – are the “Resolutions” that close the reading of the day. They are very short but powerful invitations to practice perfection. Those who would follow the suggestions would be able to check in a month the consistency of their spiritual life.

The prayers I had chosen are taken from both books and are – practically - acts of love into which the meditations find its conclusion.

ASCETICAL PAGES

SIN

BY SINNING A CHRISTIAN BECOMES AN ANIMAL

"In his riches, man lacks wisdom:
he is like the beasts that are destroyed."
(Ps. 49: 13)

Picture king Nebuchadnezzar mirroring himself in the gold plated crystals hanging on the walls of his palace. He boasts on them more than a peacock on his golden feathers, and exclaims: "Who is equal to king Nebuchadnezzar? No one can compare with him neither on earth nor in the high heaven!"

At the very same moment the hand of God is over the proud Nebuchadnezzar who lowers himself down to the floor and cries out: "I am a beast! I am a beast!" In saying this, he moos like a cow and runs to the stable to mingle with the herds, then from the stable he goes to the pastures where he roams like a herd and eats the grass of the field like the calves.

This incident is so striking that the Lord wanted it recounted in detail in his Holy Books. Now, what would happen if one day it were said that you had become a beast? If you commit the extreme of a very serious sin, you automatically make yourself more despicable than a vile beast.

You start off by losing the- gift of intelligence. Because they do not know better, often children give away a golden jewel for a nut in exchange. The beast, who does not understand, looks with interest at a handful of hay, and without losing her composure overlooks all the precious stones that do not stop glittering like bright rays of sun.

How unfortunate you are when, for a handful of odious money, you content yourself by losing paradise and God! What is this, other than a symptom that you have completely lost the gift of your mind?

How deep you have fallen! Not only are you lacking intelligence like a little eagle, and

are lacking heart like a kingfisher: you have become foolish like the stupidest among the animals, the ox. You know that the ox is usually used as typical for excessive stupidity. Yet, can a degree of craziness be found which is worse than that of a sinner who renounces paradise for a second of pleasure and opts for hell.

What do you think about it? It is very true that the Lord, by saying that the worst sinner has made of himself a beast, has uttered the harshest reproach for him. May heaven not want that this is a crude anticipation of a harsher punishment!

NOTE

"In the Sacred Time", Short sermons for each day of Lent", 1884, vol. 3, p. 357.

DO NOT WAIT FOR DYING TO CONFESS YOUR SINS

You say: "One hour during the terminal disease is enough for one to confess his sins." Yes, but who can assure you that you will have a chance to confess your sins at the time of your death? Is it rare that several people who go to sleep at night are found dead in the morning? How many people move from conversing or from eating or traveling into death! Had this happened to you, how could you find the time to go to confession?

Or suppose that you become sick and then your sickness becomes more serious. As long as your sickness is not serious, you will think that you will not die of it and thereby you will not worry about asking for a priest to hear your confession. Yet, once your health conditions become more serious, who can say that you still will be able to go to confession? High fevers could burn your senses and hinder your consciousness. Very often, people move from a torpor of feverish sleep into the sleep of death.

Suppose that nothing disastrous like this happens to you and at the time of your death you have a chance to confess your sins. Confession, however, means conversion: do you think that you will be able to make such a resolution at the time of your death, since you were not able to reflect and examine your conscience accurately while you were in good health?

Will you then even be able to detach your heart from mortal sins? Sinful habits are like strait-jackets that cannot be pulled away. For many long years sinful inclinations have penetrated the very core of an individual. And you expect to be able to change, within a few moments, the black skin of an Ethiopian into a snow white skin? Believe me: at the time of dying, a sinner does not detach his heart from his sin. On the contrary, the sinful pleasure abandons an individual, because this cannot sense it anymore.

Suppose that you have the opportunity to confess your sins and repent. Still you

will be burdened with an extreme fatigue caused by the sinful habit established by so many sins. You will look like a convalescent who is recovering from a very serious illness. In this case, you are so weak and ailing that a simple cold draft is enough to make you relapse and die.

At the moment of your death, your mind will be tormented by the sight of that eternal abyss opened below your feet. At that time the demons make all their deceitful efforts while you are hesitating. To relapse in a mortal sin of thought and thereby to become lost forever is a tragedy caused in a matter of seconds!

NOTE

"In the Sacred Time", vol. 3, p. 405

VIRTUES

THE SIXTH PETITION OF THE OUR FATHER "Lead us not into temptation"

You are a child of God and a soldier of Jesus Christ. Remember this attentively when you pray: *"Lead us not into temptation."* Praying in these words you must also add: "I am a child of the Father and I want to hold a job in the house of my Father... I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, and I want to fight for the glory of his Name... If I will not be able to do anything else, at least I want to consume myself loving God... My Lord, while I am doing this, you save me from all dangers!"

Consider now the field of Satan and the field of Jesus. Satan sits on a fiery throne in the sinful city of Babylon. He gives three weapons to his followers, pride, avarice and lust. Pride is like the flash of lightning, which can only blind a fool who keeps staring at it and sticks to it like a crazy individual looking at the noon time sun. The weapon of avarice is like the abject mud on the street. However, a traveler who is no longer a child can easily avoid the annoyance of the puddle. The weapon of lust is like the putrid air laying on the plain, and is sometimes like the magnet of the asp which can strike dumb. Yet if you live in high sites and remove your gaze from the asp, you are safe.

Also Jesus gives you his weapons. Your divine captain has his kingdom in the holy city of Jerusalem, and has his throne on Calvary for the sake of everyone. From this city and from his throne he gives the weapons of humility, poverty and sufferings.

These weapons have been tempered in the fire of God's love, and are wet with the Blood of Jesus Christ. Each weapon, when handled appropriately, can destroy all the powers of hell, all the assaults of the world.

What did St. Francis of Assisi obtain for himself and for his companions through poverty? And what about St. Philip Neri through humiliations? And what did St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis do with the weapon of sufferings?... With these weapons, wise Christians achieve the salvation of their brothers, as Jesus was able to save his children by means of these same weapons. How do you make use of these weapons, and what victories have you obtained so far?

NOTE

“Let us to the Father”, Familiar Invitations to pray the Our Father well, vol. 3, p. 60 and 62.

POVERTY

SEVENTH AND TENTH COMMANDMENT

“You shall not steal” – “You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods”

1. Worldly riches adhere tighter than their own clothes to those who possess.
Material riches are almost part of your own flesh and bones. Possessing money without attaching one’s heart to it, is so rare that it may be almost considered a wonder. Therefore, faithful soul, see to it with fear that walking on earth you do not stain the treasure of your soul in some way.
2. You said that you trust in God: why then did you get attached to a little piece of land you own? O deceived Philothea! Do you not understand yet what a hindrance an earthly attachment may become to your perfection?
3. Are you aware whether you might have deprived your own family of divine blessings? Poor little soul, when you had an opportunity, did you ever say to your people: "Hope in the Lord?"
4. You will find yourself surrounded by people who prosper, and yet are not more faithful than you. If this is so, look above, within yourself and below yourself. Then humble yourself and trust.
5. You may find these truths rather bitter. So? The most bitter medicines happen to be the most effective.

NOTE

“The Foundation”, Catechism for souls who aspire to perfection, vol. 3, p. 218.

ON THE INVOCATION OF THE OUR FATHER Bread, bread, bread!

A child moans: “Dad, give me some bread!”

First of all, you should ask the heavenly Father the bread for your soul, because, when the soul is rejoicing at the table of prayer and good works, the body too forgets the need of material nourishment.

For the table of your body, the Lord had prepared an infinite variety of animals on earth, in the sea, in the air, and an immense variety of fruits that grow under the sun. To embellish the table, God had hidden underground a variety of metals, silver, gems, and in the sea the precious pearls.

When it is convenient, God sends his Angels to prepare the table as He did to St. Francis¹⁰⁸, St. Cajetan¹⁰⁹ and others. At times, He descends in person as He did to St. Martin¹¹⁰ and St. John Colombini.¹¹¹

Do not expect for you such extraordinary occurrence. It is written that man has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Therefore, go to your work and persevere in working even if you are sweating or tired, because the Father sees you. When you return home

¹⁰⁸ Saint Francis of Assisi (Giovanni Francesco di Bernardone; 1181/1182 – October 3, 1226) was a Catholic deacon and preacher. He also was the founder of the Order of Friars Minor, more commonly known as the Franciscans.

¹⁰⁹ St. Cajetan (1480-1547), priest, was born of a noble family at Thiene in Northern Italy. He was co-founder of the Congregation of the Theatines, a religious institution established to promote the Catholic Reformation. Inspired by a singular confidence in God, he determined that his religious should live exclusively by means of spontaneous alms. He is one of the Patron Saints of the Servants of Charity (7 August).

¹¹⁰ St. Martin, bishop of Tours (316-397). It was on a bitterly cold day, that Martin found a poor man, nearly naked, trembling in the cold winter while begging from passersby at the city gate. Martin had nothing but his weapon and his woolen army cloak to give. Drawing his sword, he cleaved the cloak into two pieces, giving one to the beggar and wrapping himself in what was left. It was that night that Martin had a vision of Christ himself dressed in the half cloak he had given away. The vision told him, "Martin, still a catechumen, has covered me with this garment."

¹¹¹ St. John Colombini, lay; Founder of the Congregation of Jesuati; born at Siena about 1300; died on 31 July, 1367.

carrying the fruits blessed by God, as a merciful brother, call the sick or needy and divide with them your bread.

Believe me: what gives taste to your food and makes rich your house is work and alms. Abraham¹¹², because of his alms, merited the visit of angels that brought him good news. Gregory¹¹³, because of his alms, was visited by an angel who told him that one day he would be a Pope.

When asking for your daily bread, use this rule.

Ask without measure in quantity and quality the spiritual bread for the soul. Regarding the material bread, ask only what is necessary day by day, until the Lord will call you from this earth to heaven.

Wise Christians look with annoyance at the things of this earth. When they are forced to use them for sustenance, they use them with fear, because they know that a lot of food for the body can change into poison for their soul.

There are Christians that crave material possessions like the snake the dust of the earth. These people we have to pity.

Ask a physician, and he will tell you that: "Sobriety prolongs your days." Ask a philosopher and he will reply: "Moderation in human pleasures ennobles the soul." Ask the Church, and this wise Queen will tell you that Christian poverty is the noblest companion because when we embrace it willingly we are embracing a friend that fully satisfy the heart and delights the senses of the soul.

NOTE

Let us go to Paradise – Brief exhortations in maxims and examples for each answer of the Catechism, 1883, no English translation.

¹¹² Genesis 18: 1-15

¹¹³ Pope Gregory I: c. 540 – 12 March 604, better known as Gregory the Great, was pope from 3 September 590 until his death. Gregory is well-known for his writings, which were more prolific than those of any of his predecessors as pope.

THE WICKED RICH MAN IS A FOOL

"I have seen a fool spreading his roots,
but his household suddenly decayed."

(Job 5 3)

Still you can find individuals today who by their actions tell you: "Give me money and you can keep everything else, including paradise, soul, God." At the same time these individuals strive to build a golden dwelling making use of cheating, deceptions and even open violence. Now we know that Esau was a fool for giving his right of primogeniture away to Jacob in exchange for a dish of lentils. A fool also was that stubborn child who, deceived by the desire to savor a bit of honey, afterwards died of it.

Another fool was the rich man in the parable, who from sitting at a luxurious and exquisite dinner table moved suddenly into hell, to become food for the anger of the devils. Still more foolish are all those Christians who at the clear light of the Gospel do not want to understand the promise of the Lord: "Give your surplus to the poor; make the poor your friends sharing your riches with them, because whatever you have done to the poorest of my children, you have done to me."

On the contrary, they want to draw blood from the poor up to last drop. Miserable ones! What is going to happen to the fools when in a few minutes the Lord will ask them to give account of all their sinful attachment to riches? Most miserable ones! With a handful of gold they could have gained paradise! They will then realize how foolish they had been by missing it!

The more you find yourself with rich men who make merry in pleasures, the more heartily you should have compassion toward them.

The holy Job looked briefly at the wicked flourishing in their riches and uttered calamities and curses. If you go to see beautiful pastures where sheep to be slaughtered are fed, would you look with envy at the happily leaping ram? And if entering a stable you would find beautiful fatted calves ready to be butchered, would you envy the abundance of their food? Imitate Job: look at them and reflect on the ruin awaiting them, and pass by with compassion.

NOTE

In the Sacred Time – Little sermons for each day of Lent, 1884, vol. 3, p. 337.

MORTIFICATION

ON MORTIFICATION AND PENANCE

1. Need for Mortification

Mortification is so necessary that we could not reasonably live on earth without it. Mortification is even more necessary to preserve the natural order of the things on earth as well as to remedy its disorders. Reason, aided by faith, suggests mortification as the way to perfect ourselves and to render ourselves effective in helping others.

By means of mortification personages of this world become famous. More often indeed and more efficaciously, it is through mortification that personages who are illustrious in Christian virtues become saints.

2. Interior Mortification

Interior mortification consists in death of the old man and resurrection of the new man in Jesus Christ.

In the old man there is pride of mind and perversion of heart. In the man regenerated by Jesus Christ there is humility of mind and charity of heart. To see things as God sees them, and learn how to conform ourselves to it, as well as to love the truth which is God himself and to seek his resemblance, constitute the great enterprise which requires the effort of the entire life of a Christian. We must never grow weary. In fact, through our assiduous practice of Christian mortification we obey perfectly the teaching of Jesus Christ: "He, who wishes to follow me, must take up his cross and begin to follow in my footsteps." The life of a Christian is condensed in two words: "Abstain and suffer." Priestly lips and saintly hearts cannot utter more efficacious discourses than those on mortification and patience. Patience is necessary so that the promises of our Divine Savior may come true in us.

All this is for Christians in general. However, the strength of the doctrine explained above applies also to the religious who are especially obliged by rule to a life of perfection. These, above all others, must desire to be hidden from the eyes of the world and be considered useless for every good work. The more a religious man rises to acknowledge the most high holiness of God, the more will he humble himself in knowing that he is the lowliest worm and a despicable creature.

To this we are led through the exercise of internal Christian mortification.

3. External Mortification

We must mortify our eyes without appearing affected. We must mortify our ears without being and appearing unsociable. Even through the sense of smell the danger of concupiscence can creep into us. We must, above all, mortify our taste because in these practices lies the principle of Christian perfection. We must restrain our speech, because it is written that, "Blessed is he who never falls because of his speech." We must mortify our sense of touch, because this poor human body of ours is like a miserable patient covered with sores who keeps repeating: "Do not touch me, do not touch me!"

We must restrain our own actions in dealing with our neighbors. It is well not to be too effusive with youth, or too impatient with the old. With friends, we must know how to bear their defects, and to win over our adversaries with repeated acts of charity and kindness. It is very difficult to deal familiarly with saints, and even more difficult to deal with sinners. Work brings pain, but doing little or nothing at all bores the spirit. Miserable is the man who is not guided by the spirit of mortification! More miserable is the religious man who does not know how to progress in his own sanctification through the spirit of mortification!

NOTE

Regulations of the Servants of Charity, 1910, vol. 2, p. 70.

WHAT A SICK PERSON SHOULD DO

The sick person must strive to be a good patient. A good patient, as a good Christian and fervent religious, submits himself to the will of God. To obtain the gift of a more perfect submission and thereby the relief of an even more secure and tranquil conscience, he should receive the sacraments of Penance and Communion, praying and asking others as well to pray. This is an efficacious remedy for a more secure and quicker recovery.

A good patient entrusts himself to the doctor, because it is written that "in sickness one must obey the doctor." Generally speaking, when an individual is sick, he is not able to decide intelligently the appropriate remedies nor is his will strong enough to help himself. He needs a doctor!

Likewise, a good confrere-patient obeys his nurse, because of his needs and also because of his faith and the merit of his virtue. In this sense he is first a doctor for himself. Since a patient many times does not feel the need for food or drink or rest, he must entrust himself to the advice of the wise, and rely on the useful knowledge of those who are experienced in this matter.

The Servant of Charity who has become ill has the right and duty to be informed about the seriousness of his illness and of the possibility or danger of his death. He has the right and duty to know about it, and he cannot be deceived in this serious matter by anyone. Those who may manage to keep the sick confrere unaware of his terminal condition out of imprudence or fickleness or mistaken sense of charity, may incur the penalty of guilt. Such behavior is not even tolerated among the laity, and must be condemned among religious persons, who through their vows have promised to renounce the world and themselves, and should be ready to live every day as if it were the day they would die.

NOTE

Regulations of the Servants of Charity, 1910, vol. 2, p. 78.

CHASTITY

THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY

Chastity is described in the words of the Gospel, "*Blessed are the single-hearted for they shall see God.*"

The Lord is purest spirit, creator of heaven and earth, sanctifier of souls. Men are a composite of soul and body. The soul, spiritual and reasoning, informs the body and gives life to it. The body is expected to obey the soul according to reason and faith.

A chaste and pure Christian must be pure in the faculties of his soul and in the senses of his body. He must be bright pure in mind, like a mirror reflecting the sanctity of God. As the eye does not tolerate even a tiny bit of straw, likewise all thoughts less than holy must be driven out of his mind. The chaste Christian heart is like the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ. It must be a heart of gold, pure, fervent with charity, like the sun which illumines and warms all created things even the unclean, without its splendor being stained. The Christian, who is chaste in his faculties and in his bodily senses, must be like the "touch-me-not" plant which does not want to be touched. He must keep his senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell as pure as the snow. The white clean and soft snow must not be stepped on in order to keep its whiteness. It must not even be touched by hands. Every Christian person holily trained behaves like a fragrant lily, always ready to delight the senses of sight and smell with its beauty and fragrant perfume.

Behold: this is the virtue which is pre-eminently called beautiful and makes man resemble the angels. This is the virtue of St. Aloysius which made him an angel of virtue, a martyr of penance. This is the beautiful virtue presented by Jesus Christ as a gift from heaven to men on earth, given by Jesus Christ who is purity itself.

This is the virtue preached by the Apostles, which is dear to all the faithful and practiced by all those who were able to achieve glorious martyrdom.

NOTE

Regulations of the Servants of Charity, 1910, vol. 2, p. 54.

FEAR OF GOD

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS MORE VALUABLE THAN KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

"He who finds wisdom is great indeed,
but not greater than he who fears the Lord.
Fear of the Lord surpasses all else."
(Sir 25: 10-11)

1. Wisdom is the master governing the world. Consequently you see all peoples bow and obey wise statements of the philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Seneca and Lycurgus, Knowledge, then, is the teacher who leads to achieve paradise. Therefore, you can see how the whole Christian world pay respect to St. John Chrysostom¹¹⁴, St. Gregory the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas¹¹⁵, St. Ambrose¹¹⁶, St. Jerome¹¹⁷, St. Augustine¹¹⁸ and to all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, who are the greatest in sacred knowledge.

However, also St. Francis of Assisi, St. Felix of Cantalice¹¹⁹ and St. Pasqual Baylon¹²⁰ are revered highly in the sight of God as those illustrious Doctors. Simple Christian individuals who fear the Lord are dearer to God than the learned and the wise, because these can be condemned in spite of their knowledge, while the person who fears God is certainly saved.

2. Now you will be able to understand why the wise have such a high regard for piety and the fear of the Lord. Theodosius¹²¹, in order to find a teacher who could teach his son piety along with science and knowledge, traveled from West to East, until he went

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom (c. 349–407, Archbishop of Constantinople, was an important Early Church Father. He is known for his eloquence in preaching and public speaking.

¹¹⁵ Saint Thomas Aquinas, O.P., (Aquino, 1225 – Fossanova, 7 March 1274) was an Italian priest of the Catholic Church in the Dominican Order, and an immensely influential philosopher and theologian in the tradition of scholasticism, known as Doctor Angelicus (the Angelic Doctor).

¹¹⁶ Saint Ambrose (c. between 337 and 340 – 4 April 397), was a bishop of Milan who became one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the 4th century. He is counted as one of the four original doctors of the Church.

¹¹⁷ St. Jerome (c. 347 – 30 September 420) of the city of Stridon, which was on the border of Dalmatia and Pannonia. He is best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), and his list of writings is extensive. He is recognized by the Catholic Church as a saint and Doctor of the Church, and the Vulgate is still an important text in Catholicism.

¹¹⁸ Augustine of Hippo (November 13, 354 – August 28, 430), also known as Augustine, St. Augustine, was Bishop of Hippo. He was a Latin-speaking philosopher and theologian who lived in the Roman Africa Province. His writings were very influential in the development of Western Christianity.

¹¹⁹ St. Felix of Cantalice was born in Cantalice, Italy. As a boy he worked hard as a farm laborer and shepherd, and, in 1543, became a Capuchin lay brother. In 1547 he was sent to Rome and spent his remaining 38 years aiding the sick and the poor. He dies in Rome in 1587.

¹²⁰ Saint Paschal Baylon (1540 – 1592) was a Spanish friar. He spent his youth as a shepherd. He would carry a book with him and beg passerbys to teach him the alphabet and to read, and as he toiled in the fields he would read religious books. In around 1564, he joined the Reformed Franciscan Order as a lay brother. He chose to live in poor monasteries because, he said, "I was born poor and am resolved to die in poverty and penance." He lived a life of poverty and prayer, even praying while working, for the rest of his life. He was a mystic and contemplative, and he had frequent ecstatic visions.

to see the Pope.

Those who are good among the general population prefer their children miss knowledge rather than having them risk lose the fear of the Lord by learning other things. And this is especially done in a very exemplary manner by the wise members of noble patricians.

How do you apply yourself to achieve your knowledge as well as your wisdom? If you study only for mere curiosity, your attitude is very foolish and vain. If you study in order to provide yourself a career for living, you show self interest. However, if you strive for God's glory, then your efforts are very commendable. In reality, by the fact you attempt to discern the way to heaven through knowledge and wisdom, because of the holy fear of the Lord, you are already taking quick steps toward it.

3. Think of the apologists as strenuous defenders of their castle of truth, or think of a ship carrying courageous holy missionaries traveling to spread the light of Jesus' Gospel to the nations. Now, what would happen to that tower if it did not have a sentry on duty? And what would happen to the ship if it did not have a steersman or a navigator? The tower could be assaulted and the ship could easily risk a shipwreck. What profit would knowledge be to those defenders; or wisdom to those missionaries? The fear of God, therefore, is an indispensable guide which both knowledge and wisdom must obey. He who does not possess the holy fear of God cannot ever be secure.

4. The house of the wise is enticed by many adversaries. First of all of them is the evil beast of vainglory and pride who wants to dominate like a lion in the desert. Then arrogance and obstinacy come, followed by self-interest, deceit and ostentatious attitude. They are all together seven horrible enemies, seven monsters besieging your home: how can you stay in it secure and content? Besides, who can come to you under those conditions? You need, then, to possess the strenuous leadership of the fear of God in order to be able to dispel those angry monsters and thereby free the house of your heart from hostile infestations.

People who claim to possess knowledge and wisdom can be found rather easily today. However, are all the learned and wise also God-fearing? On the contrary, the fear of the Lord is left out by many. Consequently, most of the learned today are to be regarded with pity rather than with admiration. What do you think you deserve? Do you wish to be praised or looked upon with pity?

NOTE

In the Sacred Time, vol. 3, p. 410.

PRAYER

A Homily

¹²¹ Flavius Theodosius (347 – 395), commonly known as Theodosius I or Theodosius the Great, was Roman Emperor from 378 to 395. Theodosius was the last emperor to rule over both the eastern and the western halves of the Roman Empire.

A CHRISTIAN TEMPTER

1. The divine Savior comes to us with the attitude of a loving father, who spreads out the treasure of his belongings, lets his children review them, pointing out to them what might be more profitable and necessary for them. Listen to him when he speaks, for he will draw tears of consolation from you.

Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you truly: whatever you ask the Father, in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."¹²²

This is the discourse of Jesus Christ, the true Son of the eternal Father. A wretched little fellow comes by, filled with pretension and maliciousness. He comes to meet the Most High almost as though to make fun of him. He comes with the attitude of a rebel, raising up high two hands stained with crimes, fixes his two ugly eyes accustomed to scorn, and with the sound of mocking irony ends up with saying: "Tell me, tell me who is this?" It is the image of the Christian who in asking from God does not prepare his soul first but comes by as one who wants to tempt the Lord. Let us observe him bit by bit, because the mocker deserves to be known well enough to be abhorred accordingly.

2. Take the example of two sons who go to their father to ask for something. One of them approaches his father and arrogantly says: "Just set quickly before me the best food and clothes you have, for I do not intend to wait too long. What a presumptuous way of asking! Doesn't this individual tempt directly the bounty or severity of his father? Who is he who dares to speak so to his pious and just father? The other son, who really does not care about it, does not speak to his father like his brother, yet goes and presents himself to him unseemly dressed, with his hair ruffled, with a discontented and demanding face. This does say much directly, but in fact he looks like one who wants to make fun of his father.

Christians, if you approach God to plead with him with no better dispositions than these evil ones, please do not take one step, for you do not come to pray but to insult God.

3. We approach God right when we come to him with a pure eye, with a humble and mortified attitude. We have to remove from our mind the darkness of mortal sin. We have to remove as much as possible the darkening caused by deliberate venial sins. How can one look to heaven and distinguish heavenly things from earthly ones if he does not take care to clear up fully the eye of his mind? Besides, we must approach God with all the faculties of our soul. We must approach God with our companions, the senses of our body. Yet, if our will is attached to the things of the earth and our senses crave for their earthly pleasures, how can they be worthy in the presence of the Lord?

When you have prepared your look and set your person properly you have made

¹²² John 16: 23-24

what we refer to as the remote preparation to pray well. Then comes the immediate preparation. This consists in making the request intended. This must be done by presenting in order and truth all those good reasons for mercy and power on God's part, of misery and sicknesses on our part, as clearly as a poor man in rags and tatters does when he implores for help deeply buried in all his misfortunes. Praying with this disposition is a devout one. Otherwise it is the request of the tempter.

4. You might claim that as soon as you see a church you are able to recollect yourself, that as soon as you kneel before the Crucifix you are able to plead. Pay attention that what you say is true and not otherwise. Or isn't your disposition like the one of many who are in prayer as lifeless pillars? There are some people who come to holy Mass, but do not make a move of their lips to pray. Others attend benediction and stand there all the time. These individuals honor the Lord like the dead stones of the columns, which, being placed there, at least obey in sustaining the house of the Lord! If you are devout in this way, do not consider yourselves safe.

You will tell me that you truly pray, but aware that God knows your needs better than you do, you think that it is enough that you make a general request, not a specific one. I answer you that God is more pleased when you ask for specific favors. The blind man on the road to Jericho called on Jesus as follows: "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!" Jesus questioned him: "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said: "That I may see." Then Jesus healed him¹²³. He who wants to be listened to makes use of all means to obtain it. Isn't it, then, opportune for a man to employ all methods possible to him in order to achieve what he wants?

5. In this case we must make an observation. While we set our mind in asking from God a special grace, we must not linger on it so much that we would not then be able to let it go for any reason. It is good that we pray for a beneficial grace from God. Yet who assures us that the Lord is more willing to grant us another grace that may be more beneficial to us? A pilot who needs to supply his ship with provisions steers toward his set port, but if the wind pushes the ship toward another port, which perhaps is closer and certainly more furnished, wouldn't the pilot be a fool to insist on his first destination?

This, too, is a bit of news that is good to keep in mind, because it might help us. Other than this, there is DO more important norm for good prayer. Have we understood the lesson? Well, then, let us remember it all the time: it is an excellent and necessary thing to pray as a devout Christian. To pray with the dispositions of a Christian is the worst and most ruinous thing.

NOTE

'The Bread of the Soul', Third Course of Spiritual Maxims presented in Gospel's Explanations, 1884, English Edition, vol. 3, p. 121.

¹²³ Mark 10: 46-52

Under this title, Father Guanella published three books, each one collecting a complete set of homilies on the Sunday Gospel of one year. Clearly, they refer to his homilies during the celebration of Sunday Mass when he was a pastor.

CHRISTIAN HOPE THAT IS PRAYER

1

We are in this earth like in a jail. Does not the inmate desire to get out? The jail is our mortal body and we should be afraid to live in this jail. Under our feet there are angry devils. Around us the servants of Satan, the men belonging to the world and to sin, are threatening us. Inside us there is a snake that twines around our members and close our heart. How miserable we are! Who will save us?

In history we read that when a city is besieged, people inside try their best to send out someone to look for food. We are here below like those who are besieged. Let us stay with the holy souls of Purgatory. We are surrounded by danger and evil; however, we are still able to cry out with a loud voice and to lift up our heart to heaven. Let us lift up our hearts to heaven always!

You may say: "I have prayed but nothing I had received." I know; but when did you pray and how did you pray? What did you ask for by your prayer? God does not deceive anyone. He promised that those who will ask will be answered. Now, either you did not pray properly or you have asked something not appropriate to your eternal life.

You know that God rejoices when you call him: "Father!" Sigh therefore with more intensity, because each sigh of your heart is counted by the Lord who wants to answer you.

You say: "When I pray many other thoughts come up in my mind." Listen: is your fault if flies and mosquitoes fly round you head? It would be your fault if you allow them to nest in your hair.

Others say: "I have a hard time in praying. I would like to feel in my heart a great joy when I pray." You should know that a child does not move to compassion anyone by crying out, Mother, when she is there and gives him an apple! A child moves to tears when his mother is not there and, in not finding her anywhere, he sighs, Mom, Mom!

You will earn great merits in front of God when you, in spite of spiritual aridity, do not omit meditation, the most excellent prayer. If you would only know what great gift is meditation! By practicing it, devil and sin will never reign in your heart.

Regarding the place where to pray, prefer the church, the house of God and our Paradise on earth. When in need of extraordinary graces, choose those holy temples, the shrines, where God seems to bestow his graces more frequently and abundantly.

Prayer is a voice that burst forth spontaneously from the heart. It is the voice of a child, the moan of a child that sighs. We can pray in church and also at home, in our bedroom, outside, kneeling or standing. We can pray while working or resting; night and day. Oh, how God welcomes with affection the desires of our heart, our words burning

with love! The souls that love God in this way are not much different from the heavenly Seraphims.

NOTE

"Come with Me" – Christian Doctrine presented with examples in 40 familiar discourses, 1883.

No English Translation available.

2

Remember this often, Philothea, that it is the Lord who created you and sustains you and consoles you. Trust in the Lord and be happy.

You have the Lord who, from on high, shows you his Son at your side. Jesus Christ offers his right hand to you and says: "Let us ascend. Come on, why do you hesitate? Ascend, ascend higher."

You are ascending, Philothea. Pray to Mary to intercede for you and to send to you your guardian angel to accompany you, and Jesus, who may lead you by the hand, by giving vigor to your steps and desire to your heart.

Long continuously for such a goal as the dove longs for her nest and the chicks for their mother hen.

The heart is the life of our body; prayer is the life of a Christian soul. An excellent method of prayer among all others is the Our Father.

Listen and allow yourself to be touched, if you can. In the Lord's Prayer a son prays with his heart thus: "I am yours, heavenly Father. Give me a job to keep myself occupied, food to live, and help me to praise you and make everyone love you. Father, when will I see you glorious in paradise?"

In the Our Father you pray: "Make my soul holy, Father. Living or dying, I want to be with you. In this discourse there is the whole Christian person.

NOTE

"The Foundation", vol. 3, p. 160.

3

1. Philothea, with all your heart say: "Abba! Father! Father!" and you will see.

2. In the Our Father you find the way to enter the most holy heart of Jesus Christ, to live in it and aspire to and long only for what pleases God the Most High.

3. The faithful soul exclaims with St. Paul: "I live no longer myself, but it is Jesus Christ who lives in me." Philothea, do you want to make this way of speaking your own? Pray hard and with all your heart!

4. It is not much that I am asking you: pray and trust.
5. You are not alone, O faithful soul, because Jesus Christ is with you, pleading for you and showing his Father the most sacred wounds of his hands, feet and open side.
6. So, look at him at your right side, your Jesus who is accompanying you. Sing hymns of joy and gaining the Savior's confidence, tell him that you want to be all his, and that he may be all for your poor soul.
7. A child leans on the shoulder of his father, a pupil on the right hand of his teacher. Faithful soul, like John, lean your head on the side of Jesus Christ and be strengthened with the life of God.
8. The paradise of God and his blessed is so beautiful that after being seen, though from a distance by Paul and John, they almost died of contentment. Philothea, look there above: our Lord Jesus Christ himself is there waiting to let you enter.
9. However, it is very bad that we are not able to pray to God as expected, and to ask of God the things which suit us best.
10. Ask him to make you holy, because the Christian perfection that makes us love God and benefit our neighbor for God's sake, is the only good.
11. Regarding temporal goods, ask only what you strictly need and what is more fitting the good of your soul.
12. Philothea, when you come to pray, come with the faculties of your soul and the senses of your body captivated like a sinner who regrets all her sins. Then, keep yourself humble and confident, and sigh with love like a poor man who stretches his hands asking for mercy. Who knows? It could be that, by not ceasing from pleading in this way, God in his goodness might grant you what fulfills your spirit most.
13. Above all, be patient in waiting for great things and beware of even any slight offence you have committed against God. How sorry should you feel about it!
14. After prayer, we should not feel proud or presumptuous and complain that God did not satisfy our requests. Had he wanted to grant us other even greater favors, would we not be more grateful to him?
15. As a bird soars in the air and as a fish swims in the water, likewise, Philothea, your soul must continuously live in God, breathe for God. Most of all, in greeting the new day in the morning or in closing it at night, you should detach yourself from the things of this world at least for an hour and, imagining that you are in heaven, you should converse with the Lord your God.
16. Being in the presence of the Most High, keep in mind that you are like another Moses, holding his hands outstretched to keep all enemies away, the Amalekites murderers, or at least pray as he did with true affection: "Lord, forgive my brothers and their sins, deliver me from this land of iniquities and bring me to your Paradise."

NOTE

"The Foundation", vol. 3, p. 199.

A CHRISTIAN DAY

WHAT A FAITHFUL SOUL MUST DO EVERY DAY

1. From the early dawn you should sigh with deepest affection and say: "I am all yours, Lord!"

2. Think of your work as if on that same day God would call you to himself.

3. Before leaving your room, go before the image of Jesus the Savior. On your knee adore your God, O faithful soul; pour forth your affection of faith, hope, love and contrition saying: "I could have died this past night; instead here I am still alive. Come to my assistance, O Lord! Mother of my Savior, I greet you. Pray for me and with me God the Most High."

4. Then, like an anxious dove, go to church, where Jesus, the spouse of the souls, offers himself in the Holy Mass. Hasten to it to sympathize, to sigh or to rejoice with Jesus our Savior.

5. Afterwards, get involved with your work which is like the noble chain of your

punishment. May a sound burst forth to say: "Bread and paradise, O Lord!" And you will live with trust on earth with the sweat of your brow.

6. If you exclaim with lively faith, "Bread and paradise, O my God!" by working you suddenly obtain either one.

7. Before eating, the sons of St. Domenic¹²⁴ waited anxiously so that they could feed at least one soul with the holy food of the divine word. You do likewise. Before taking to your mouth the bread supplied by Providence, exclaim with joy: "Blessed be the Lord, my God!"

8. Before and after meals, the friars of St. Francis of Assisi gather in jubilation imitating their Father, who seated at a spring with a piece of bread in his hands and praised God saying: "How good is the Lord!"

9. If suddenly you are assaulted by a temptation, then cry out immediately as a little child does when assaulted by a furious dog: "O Heavenly Father, O my God, help me!" And bless yourself with the sign of the cross so that the enemy may flee terrified.

10. If you have sinned seriously or slightly, Philothea, cry out before God and plead with the Lord that he may have mercy. Then, go to the sacred minister, and confess your sins saying: "Father I have sinned!"

11. When you hear the sound of the bell alerting you that Jesus is blessing everyone in the solemn moment of the Holy Mass or other sacred function, join with your spirit the most Sacred Heart of the Redeemer and pray to him to have mercy upon you.

12. When - at dawn, during or at the end of the day - the sound of the militant Church, your mother, in the battle of the day, reminds you of the benefits of our Savior, then kneel down, look on high and whisper: "Praised be Jesus, praised be Mary, mother of my Savior."

13. If you see one of your brothers fall into sin, be horrified within your heart, and as much as you can, show your uneasiness to others. Do not delay, however, from pleading with God and try with all your strength to save a soul from that sin or from worse ones.

14. If out of good fortune you meet brothers who like angels with flesh and bones praise and bless God, praise God for it and rejoice. And upon finding a faithful soul who loves the Lord, get close to her with respect and imitate her strengthening examples.

15. Upon reaching the end of your day, recollect yourself with the Heart of Jesus our Savior and rejoice in saying: "How good it is to live on the Providence of the Most High!"

16. Finally, kneel down before the Lord; place your hands across your chest and say: "Lord, that my soul may be all yours. If you want to call me this night and die, let me awaken in your holy paradise."

17. Nor should you do so only one time, but many times within the same hour and in the same day you should smile to the Lord like a little child looking at his beloved father.

18. How much love there is in the little heart of an innocent child! Turn yourself to God and say over and over again: "I love you, O Lord! Jesus, have mercy!"

19. You can do so little, O faithful soul, in working for God. At least make amends with the affections of your heart, because you can achieve immensely by desires.

20. You will be able to achieve more, both with your body and with your heart, the more you mortify both your body and your heart. If you undergo much suffering, you will

¹²⁴ Saint Dominic (1170 –1221) was the founder of the Friars Preachers, popularly called the Dominicans or Order of Preachers (OP).

be found resembling Jesus Savior and therefore more apt to imitate the works for the salvation of all.

21. Now and then it will happen that you hear about a brother of yours who is sick and you may see the Most Sacred Body of the Redeemer brought to him solemnly. Imagine then that the grace of God inundates the soul of that sick brother with its vivifying goodness. Pray to God to comfort, with the abundance of his blessings, those who suffer in illness.

22. And if from the sad sound of the bells you learn that one of your brothers is dying, pray that the dying person may offer all his or her suffering with the pains of Jesus agonizing in the Garden, or dying on Calvary.

23. When you learn that your brother has completed his journey here on earth, you pray saying: "When will I see you in heaven, O my God? When? Give eternal rest to the beloved soul who has met you, and let the light of blessedness shine soon upon her."

NOTE

Three times Father Guanella dedicated in his books a meditation on what a Christian day should be.

In "The Foundation – Catechism for the souls who aspire to perfection", the passage just read opens with the title that appropriately describes the content.

"Let us go to Paradise" gives a more sober and short description: "Be every day an upright son".

Both chapters close the explanation of the Catechism. Therefore, to Father Guanella, studying the Catechism is to be transformed into a leading every day a holy life.

The third time that Father Guanella mentions the topic in question is among the exhortations that he addresses to his parishioners when he invites them to bring to fruition the grace received during a period of extraordinary preaching. The title's book is "Fifty little remembrances of the Holy Missions" (1887). The chapter "A Christian Day" begins: "The day of a Christian faithful is a day of Paradise". He had the nerve to say that! He did not even close the sentence with an exclamation mark (!), a mark that could have implied that he was aware of saying something very disconcerting! Either we have a heroic faith or his statement arouses rebellion. It is indeed interesting the comparison among those three passages!

TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Passages from "The Foundation" will conclude this short study of Father Guanella. The book is not a dogmatic-moral commentary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, even though it follows its content. It is an ascetical treatise as the title itself can show clearly: "Catechism for the souls who aspire to perfection".

The word "Catechism" has the same meaning we found in another author, the French Father Jean-Jacques Olier¹²⁵, who wrote a "Christian Catechism for interior life".

¹²⁵ Jean-Jacques Olier, Founder of the seminary and Society of St. Sulpice, born at Paris in 1608; died there in 1657. He combated the idea that Christian perfection was only for priests and religious, and inspired many to the practices of a devout life, including daily meditation, spiritual reading and other exercises of piety, and to a more exact fulfillment of their duties at work and at home. St. Vincent de Paul

The resemblance to Fr. Olier comes naturally because:

- 1) the two titles look like;*
- 2) what the books aim is similar;*
- 3) the pace is the same though the literary way to express the same truth changes;*
- 4) there is a spiritual affinity between the two when they talk about prayer;*
- 5) and, finally, both end their work with a chapter dedicated “to our participation to the Mysteries of Christ”.*

Their dissimilarity regards:

- 1) the difference in expounding the Catechism (organized in Olier and fragmented in Father Guanella to the extent of irritating experts);*
- 2) the great distance between the doctrinal elaboration of Olier and the spontaneity of Father Guanella.*

The two works are evidently different and on that we will not discuss anymore. We do not have sufficient information to support the idea that Father Guanella was acquainted with the French School. And yet, there is something similar. If we read in Olier the chapter 20 on “Grace of the Mysteries of Jesus Christ to which we have to participate” or “The Holy Mystery of the Incarnation” and if we compare them with the texts we have collected in this book on the Mystery of Jesus in the Eucharist and on the Incarnation, we should admit that the spirit is the same and the same the doctrine.

The essential elements of the teaching of Olier and the French School are:

- 1) “To be a perfect Christian” is necessary “the annihilation of one’s self” in “imitation of Jesus Christ”, until “we are one with him”. Jesus is the “altar” on which the “perfect sacrifice is carried out” and in which “the victim is the human nature of Jesus Christ and of all faithful”. “The sacrifice is offered to the Father”.*
- 2) The pessimistic view of the fallen man is very present. However, man’s ransom is possible through his transformation in Christ.*
- 3) Everything should be done for the glory of God.*

Regarding the view that Fr. Guanella held on the “old man” that is in us, you should check the Note on “In the Sacred Time” and the passages on mortification and sin (“by sinning a Christian becomes an animal”). According to Olier, “Sinners should be deprived as from now of all their corporal and spiritual faculties”.

The possibility of ransom happens only when we unite ourselves to Christ, we participate to his sacrifice, when we transform ourselves in Him (“The wine is changed into the Blood of Christ. It is the same Blood that will run through the veins of your heart. Without losing your individuality, you will be changed into the Body and Blood of the God-Man”).

Through the “Brotherhood” acquired in Christ, man is rehabilitated, almost recreated, because the state of grace makes us “Children of God” in a fuller sense, more profound than the moment of our creation.

You should keep in mind what in the Introduction we have said: that the main

was Father Olier's spiritual director.

characteristic of Father Guanella's asceticism is to embrace God as a Father.

The disconcerting proposition you have read a few pages back, "The day of a Christian is a day of Paradise", here finds its explanation, its translation into the Pauline statement, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2: 20)."

The dogmatic foundations of his ascetical building that we have mentioned in the Introduction and shown in this anthology, allow us to perceive Father Guanella as a great master of doctrine and ascetical practice.

At first sight, that could be debatable, for the writings of Father Guanella were jotted down following the flow, the rush of his heart, and then abandoned there with no care at all.

This is why we have collected passages from "Sin" through the "Transfiguration in Christ": to offer you the main features of the doctrine and asceticism of Father Louis Guanella.

THE REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

1. Jesus, the true Son of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is alive and real in body and human soul in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Philothea, Jesus enters your heart many times. With his grace he habitually sits on the throne of your heart as in a cherished sanctuary. Rejoice, then, Philothea!

2. Imagine that you are with the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph in the cave in Bethlehem and in the house of Nazareth.

3. As the host before consecration is just a piece of material bread, likewise you were only a human creature in the beginning. However, later on you became something better through the grace of the first sacrament.

4. As the host after consecration has become the true Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, so through the grace of the Sacraments you are immediately transformed into a heavenly creature. What a wonder of the power and mercy of our God and Lord!

5. As in the chalice we have grape wine at first, likewise your body contains man's blood first.

6. However, that wine is soon transformed into the most pure and holy Blood of Jesus Christ. Thereafter, this blood is ready to flow through your veins into your heart,

and without losing your own individuality, you are transformed into the body and blood of God become Man at the most solemn moment of Communion when you join Jesus and Jesus joins you in your heart.

7. At the most solemn moment of the Holy Sacrifice, the priest prostrates himself to adore the mystery unfolded through his hands. Likewise it happens in a moment, during your life or in the period of many days, when the grace comes to you and you accept it. Then, a most loving union binds you with God, as the union of two souls who, sharing their meal, open their hearts and share whatever they possess in their lives.

8. What does it mean, Philothea, that God is omnipotent and very good?

9. After consecration, you still seem to see bread and wine, but actually they are the true Body and real Blood of Jesus Christ. Philothea, for how long will you put obstacles in your path in order not to give yourself to God completely? By achieving Christian unity you will belong entirely to God and the Lord will belong to you. You will be holy without being aware of it.

10. In the most holy Host you still see the mere appearances of the whiteness and taste of bread. Likewise, you seem to see the poor features of a wild roughness in the simple heart of a devout soul. I wish, however, that you would notice that the heart beating within that chest is made of most pure solid gold, and it is a pearl shining in the presence of God like a most precious red sapphire!

11. In the sacred chalice there are the species of wine, in its color, its fluidity and in its taste. In the person of a faithful soul there is blood, but, Philothea, what kind of blood do you have? Is it the blood of a martyr or of a virgin for the Lord? If not, what would you be before the Lord?

12. Allow yourself to be entirely managed by God, and you will see one day the wonders of his divine mercy and infinite power.

13. In the sacred Host there is the Body and the Blood of the Man-God. Likewise, when the grace of the charity of the Lord is in your heart, it is also accompanied by hope, faith, patience and humility as it is proper for a soul which is faithful to the Most High.

14. As in the most holy Blood of Jesus Christ there is his Divine Body, likewise, Philothea, God continues showering his heavenly favors upon the soul whom he starts loving first and in whom He finds a welcome reception of his love.

15. Jesus Christ lives, wins and reigns. A faithful soul is strong and powerful in all battles because the Lord of hosts is with her.

16. Meanwhile, Jesus Christ as Man-God is in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. Faithful soul, why are you not perfect and exemplary as one who holds an ineffable treasure, the intimate friendship with God? Be such that your brothers may be totally edified.

17. Jesus Christ is alive and glorious and omnipotent in all consecrated Hosts. Why do you not do your best so that you may be present in many places with your zeal, and in many nations with the desire of your heart?

18. Jesus Christ is indivisible. He is all in every fragment of a holy Host. But you, when will you divide your heart between the creatures and God?

19. Jesus is all in every particle of a Host. You, on your part, try to be all with God in every work of good, with your mind and thoughts, with the affection of your heart and with the strength of your body.

20. Jesus Christ is the same in all Hosts, small as well as large. Philothea, be happy! The Lord is equally fully present in the heart of the great as well as in the heart of the little ones.

21. However, Jesus Christ is adored in the Most Holy Eucharist, and is taken to the sick as a Viaticum of eternal life. Revere the grace which the good God gives you, or you may find it more abundantly granted to other people. Take advantage of the good God gives you for the salvation of all.

22. Everyone should bend his knees before Jesus Christ in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. What a marvel, Philothea! Want it or not, everyone bows their head in the presence of a virtue clearly shown on the face of a Christian.

23. We reverently approach the tabernacle of the Most Holy Sacrament, because God has told us: "There is Jesus, my only begotten Son." And Jesus keeps repeating it to the Holy Church, our Mother.

Consequently, Philotea, we look to heaven and at the same time we lovingly look to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We kneel joyfully before our Mother and smiling to her we hasten to do good with her until we will enter into the blessed Paradise.

NOTE

"The Foundation", vol. 3, p. 234-237.

THE THIRD ARTICLE OF THE CREED THE INCARNATION

1. Philothea, consider what you are going to find out. To embrace you, the Lord took on human flesh and was born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. When will you strip yourself of the vices of your decayed nature in order to become an adventuring angel in human flesh? Cover yourself with a mantle of great virtues and you will join your God more joyfully.

2. The wonder of Divine Incarnation took place by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is good that the grace of God descends also upon you and that it grants you to belong completely to the Lord Most High. Faithful soul, plead until you are heard.

3. The Persons of the most august Trinity concurred equally in fulfilling the greatest mystery of mercy, the wonder of Divine Incarnation. The happiest change for you, Philothea, is to open your heart to God allowing the Lord to take full possession of it. Please, hurry! For such a reception, then, put all the guards of your house, the senses of your body and the faculties of your soul on alert.

4. Then, like an ardent cherubim invoke the grace of God. Pray as Mary and the disciples did in the Cenacle. God, the Holy Spirit, descended to transform the pagan

world into a Christian one.

5. Consider also this: in Jesus Christ there is a human nature and a divine nature. In you, the body is human, while the grace is divine. The divine grace gives spiritual life, and honors and consecrates the very corporal life, which, though inferior and dependent, on its part assists divine grace like a sister.

6. In Jesus Christ there is only one person. Philothea, you are only one person, too, and you are like a little world doing good with the divine help.

7. Jesus Christ is the true Son of God and Mary. You, O faithful soul, take courage! The grace of the Lord dwelling in you makes you a true adopted child of God, a daughter dear to the Blessed Mother, as by nature you are a child of your father and your mother.

8. Mary ever Virgin is the true Mother of Jesus Christ, who is true God. What a mystery! Philothea, what do you say when you receive Jesus in the Holy Communion? What do you answer to the Lord, when as a glorious Infant he speaks to your heart and amuses himself with you to lead you to love him with more affection?

9. Mary remained a virgin always. You are fortunate, Philothea, if upon reflection you realize that God has called you to be a creature of his from the beginning of your life until the day when he will show himself to you face to face.

NOTE

"The Foundation", vol. 3, p. 178-179.