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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

Christian Truths and Christian Duties.

DIGESTED INTO

MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

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PART I.

FOR THE FIRST SIX MONTHS



Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the LORD; and he shall meditate on his law day and night.

And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.—
Psalms i. 1, 2, 3.

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THE PREFACE.

DEAR READER,

I HERE present thee with a set of meditations, for every day in the year, collected from the word of God, and the writings of the saints, and servants of God. The subjects are digested in such manner as to take in the whole Christian doctrine, with all the mysteries and solemnities celebrated by the church throughout the year, and all the practical lessons of the gospel. The great truths of the Christian religion are here briefly proposed, in their own plain native colours - upon every subject there are three considerations, which may serve to entertain the devout Christian for half an hour, or longer, according to the time he allows himself for the exercise of daily meditation; and every meditation is concluded with pious resolutions, which may determine the soul to decline with all her strength, for the time to come from all evil, and to dedicate herself in good earnest to the love and service of her Maker, by a serious application of all her powers to good.

As to the preparation, that ought always to be premised: to avoid needless repetitions, I have not marked it down, at the beginning of each meditation, but must here put thee in mind, once for all, that thou must ever begin this exercise, by the faith and remembrance of the presence of God, and by humbly imploring his light, grace, and assistance. Thou must also observe, that these considerations are not designed to be a matter of barren study, or speculation of the brain; but to be the seeds of pious affections in the heart; which affections are looked upon by spiritual writers as the principal part of mental prayer, as tending directly to bring the soul to her God, and to unite her to him by divine love. I have not set down, upon each subject, all the various affections, that might be drawn from every consideration; as well because this would have been an endless work, and liable to frequent repetitions, as because these affections are usually taught by a better master, viz. the Spirit of God, to all such as diligently frequent his school, which he holds in the interior of those souls that seriously exercise themselves in mental prayer.

However, as it may be of some help to many, especially to beginners, I shall here point out the different kinds of affections, which may be excited in the soul, according to the different subjects of her meditations, and the degrees of her advancement in a spiritual life. Such are, 1st, Acts of a lively *faith* of the divine truths, set before the soul in the considerations; and a bowing down of all the powers of the soul to adore the sovereign Truth, that is thus pleased to reveal himself to little ones. 2. Acts of *fear* of the judgments of God; of his wrath enkindled against impenitent sinners; and of all the dreadful consequences of sin, and the punishments inflicted upon it, by divine justice, both in this world and in the world to come. 3. Acts of *hope*, and confidence in the power, mercy, and goodness of God, represented in the meditation; in the fidelity of his divine promises, made in favour of penitent sinners; and in the inexhaustible treasures of merit and grace, purchased for us all, by the labours, sweat, and blood of the Son of God. 4. Acts of the *love* of God, from the consideration of the goodness of God in himself, of all his divine attributes, beauty and perfections; of his eternal love for us, and of all his benefits to us; and of the passion and death of his Son, for the love of us. 5. Acts of *shame* and *confusion* for our manifold sins against his infinite goodness, and for our base ingratitude, by which we have returned so much evil for so much good. 6. Acts of *repentance* and *contrition* for our sins, and of an humble accusation of them all at the feet of Christ of a horror and hatred for them, and even a hatred of ourselves, for having been so base, and wicked, with earnest supplications for mercy for what is past, and an offering of ourselves to a penitential life for the time to come. 7. Acts of *adoration* of the divine majesty; of *praise* and *thanksgiving* to him for all his benefits; of *invitation* of all the angels and saints, and of all his works to glorify him; and of an *oblation* of our whole being, and of all that we have, to his glory. 8. Acts of *joy* in him, and of *congratulation* with him, that he is what he is; of *zeal* for the greater glory of his name, for the advancement of his kingdom, and the executing of his will; of *desire* that all the world may be converted to him, and that all may know him, love him, and serve him. 9. Acts of *humility*, and contempt of ourselves; of embracing the cross, and of *resignation* to God's blessed will in all things; and of a total *dedication* and consecration of ourselves to be the servants of his divine love. 10. Acts of *desire* to *imitate* the virtues of our dear Redeemer, of his blessed Mother, and of all the saints, to attend to his heavenly lessons, to imprint them deeply in our hearts, and to sigh continually after him. 11. Acts of *compassion* for our Lord

in his sufferings; with a great sense of what he has endured for us; and of all the outrages, that are daily offered him by wilful sinners. 12. Acts of a general *flight*, and abhorrence of all evil; and resolutions to embrace and follow all Christian virtues. Lastly, fervent petitions and prayers for the divine grace and assistance in all things.

These afflictions may also be exercised, in the way of *colloquies* with our Lord, or with his saints, according to the exigence of the subject; sometimes treating with him as with a parent; other times as with a friend, or a spouse; other times as with our physician, representing to him all the maladies of our soul; at other times casting ourselves at his feet, like Magdalen, making a general confession of all our sins to him, as to our high-priest, and the true pastor of our souls, &c.; ever representing him as near us, or rather as within us, and in the very centre of our being; and treating with him as we would do if we saw him visibly present with us, and ever concluding our addresses to him with an oblation of our whole selves to him, to execute all his wills.

As to the necessity of this holy exercise of meditation, and the great advantages of the daily practice of it, I shall refer thee to what thou shalt find below, under the heads of *consideration* and *mental prayer* and I shall only add here, that a diligence, in this exercise, is the great means to bring all good to the soul, and to conduct her safe to her Sovereign Good. The devil, who very well knows that such souls, as apply themselves seriously to mental prayer, will be none of his, makes all possible efforts to divert Christians from this application, by a thousand impostures; and to frighten them with phantoms of imaginary difficulties: but this very opposition of his ought to convince us of the great importance of this exercise, and to make us more eager to pursue it, in spite of all his lies and deceits. He pretends, the practice of mental prayer is not for all, but only for such as live in convents or colleges; that it requires wit and learning; and that the exercise of it is very difficult, &c. But all this is nothing but a delusion; it is all imposition and lies. Mental prayer, by the way of meditation, is very easy, even to the meanest capacities; it requires nothing but a good will, and a sincere desire of conversing with God, by thinking of him, and loving him. In effect, the great business of mental prayer is *thinking* and *loving*: and who is there that can even live without *thinking* and *loving*? But then in mental prayer, the *thinking* and *loving* is not confined to such narrow limits, or mean objects, as the thoughts and affections of worldlings are, which lie always grovelling upon the earth; but it has an immense field, opened for its entertainment, of

great and everlasting truths, and such as are both highly moving, and of infinite importance to us all, and of great and eternal goods, together with the way to make them all our own.

As to the difficulty, objected to mental prayer, from the importunity of distractions, and the dryness and indevotion, that many find therein, it must be allowed, that, in order to make any progress in this exercise, the Christian must do his part in removing the occasions of these distractions, as well by maintaining a purity of conscience as by retrenching all inordinate affections to creatures, (for where the treasure is, there the heart and thought will be,) and by restraining the mind, at other times, from idle and impertinent amusements, and from that continual dissipation of thought, in which too many Christians pass their days. But then, for our comfort, where we endeavour to follow these rules, the involuntary distractions, or dryness, which we find in prayer, will not be imputed to us, nor hinder our prayer from being acceptable to God, and, though less pleasant, highly advantageous to ourselves.—And what matter is it whether we please ourselves or no, provided we please our God, and do his will? This we may assure ourselves of, that if we continue faithful in attending, as it were, daily upon him, by this exercise of mental prayer, in spite of all this dryness, and opposition of the devil, and of our own weakness and corruption, we shall not fail of coming, sooner or later, to taste of the excellent fruits, that ever grow upon this tree of life.

I shall add no more, by way of preface, but only beg of thee resolutely to undertake, and constantly to persevere, in this heavenly exercise of mental prayer, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. What thou art seeking after is a treasure of infinite value: if it cost thee some pains in digging for it, it will abundantly recompense all thy labour. This exercise is the true Christian *philosophy*, consisting in the search and love of *true wisdom*; even that wisdom, which is so much extolled by the spirit of God, in holy writ, and which comes down from God, and carries us up to God. This is *the science of the saints*.

MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR

JANUARY 1.

On New Year's Day.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day we keep the octave of the birth of Christ, together with the festivity of his circumcision, when, being yet but eight days old, he began to shed his sacred blood, in obedience to his Father's will, subjecting himself to that most painful and most humbling ceremony, and bearing therein the resemblance of a criminal, as if he, like the rest, had stood in need of the circumcising knife for the expiation of sin. Christians, learn here, from your infant Saviour, the lessons he desires to teach you in his circumcision; his unparalleled humility, his perfect obedience and conformity to his Father's will, his patience in suffering, and his ardent love and charity for us. He came to discharge the immense debt we owed by our sins to his Father's justice, by shedding the last drop of his blood in expiation for them; and, behold, he has here given us an earnest of his payment, by submitting himself this day to the knife of circumcision.

Consider, secondly, and set before your eyes this divine Infant, this innocent Lamb of God, this beloved of your souls, beautiful beyond the children of men, all imbrued in his own most sacred blood, and suffering, in that tender age, the cruel smart of a most sensible wound. O how sensible indeed to him! O how sensible to the loving heart of his blessed Virgin Mother! See with what affection she embraces him! See with what anguish of heart she bewails his sufferings! See with what tender compassion she strives to afford him all the comfort she is able! Learn of her the like affections of love and compassion for your suffering Lord. O my soul, embrace with her thy infant Saviour, bleeding for thee! *A bloody spouse art thou to me*, said Sephora to Moses, *Exodus iv. 25*, when, to deliver him from the hand of the

angel that threatened him with death, she touched his feet with the blood of her child, whom she had just then circumcised. O how truly is our dear Redeemer a *sponsus sanguinum*, a *bloody spouse* to our souls, for whom he gives now these first-fruits of his blood, and for whom he will one day give all his blood, to rescue us from the hand of the destroying angel! O blessed be his divine charity for ever.

Consider, thirdly, that it is the duty of all Christians to imitate our Lord's circumcision by a spiritual circumcising of the heart, which God so often calls for in the Scriptures, and always preferred before the carnal circumcision. This spiritual circumcision requires of us a cutting off or retrenching all disorderly affections to the world and its pomps, to the mammon of iniquity, and to the flesh and its lusts, and a serious application of our souls to a daily mortification of our passions and corrupt inclinations. My soul, let us heartily embrace, and daily put in practice, this circumcision of the heart.

Conclude to make a return of thy heart to thy infant Saviour, who began on this day to shed his blood for thee; but see it be a heart purified, by a spiritual circumcision, from all such affections as are disagreeable to him.

JANUARY 2.

On beginning a New Life with the New Year.

CONSIDER, first, how many years of your life are now past and gone; how long it is since you first came to the knowledge of good and evil, and in what manner you have spent all this precious time, given you for no other end but that you might employ it in the love and service of your God, and in securing the salvation of your immortal souls. Alas! have any of these past years been spent in such a manner as to answer this great end? Is not that one and only business for which you came into this world still to be begun? Have not all these years, which, one after another, have flowed away into the gulf of eternity, been utterly lost to your souls? It is well if they have not, considering how soon the greatest part of Christians, after their coming to the use of reason, fall from the grace of their baptism, how quickly they give themselves up to follow the bent of their corrupt inclinations and passions, and in what a forgetfulness of God they generally pass their days. Ah, my soul, what a sad thing would it be, if, during all these years thou hast hitherto lived, instead of storing up provisions for a happy eternity, thou hast been only *treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath!*

Consider, secondly, the present state of your conscience. What is your life at present? How stand accounts between your soul and God? What would you think, if this day you were to be called to the bar of divine justice? Should you not earnestly desire a delay? Alas! how few live in the manner in which they would be glad to be found when death shall overtake them! And yet they are not ignorant that death generally comes when least expected, and that, generally speaking, as men live, so they die. Ah, my soul! deceive not thyself, nor suffer thyself to be imposed upon by the enemy. Thy time, in all appearance, will be much shorter than thou art willing to think: this very day, perhaps, may be thy last: it will certainly be so to many thousands who expect it as little as thyself. Set, then, thy house in order now; begin this very day to rectify the whole state of thy interior, and live henceforward as thou desirest to die. There cannot be too great a security where eternity is at stake.

Consider, thirdly, that the mercy of God has borne with you for so many years past, and, notwithstanding all the provocations of your repeated crimes, and perpetual ingratitude, has brought you now to the beginning of this new year, out of a sincere desire, that now, at least, you might begin a new life, and such a life as might secure to your souls that true life which never ends. You have been, alas! like the barren *fig-tree, planted in his vineyard*, which hitherto has brought forth nothing but leaves: but see, he is willing to try you once more, in hopes of your doing better for the future, and to manure you a little while longer with his word, his graces, and his sacraments. But, O, take care to disappoint him no more, by refusing him the fruits he expects of a thorough amendment of life, lest he pass an irrevocable sentence, for the barren tree to be cut down, and cast into the fire.

Conclude to begin, from this very hour, to turn away from sin, and to dedicate yourselves henceforward in good earnest to the love and service of your God. Alas! how few Christians seem to be truly in earnest in this greatest of all concerns, where their all is at stake for eternity!

JANUARY 3.

On the Rules of a New Life.

CONSIDER, first, that in the epistle which is read on New Year's Day, *Titus* ii. 11—15., the apostle has in a few words declared to us the rules we are to follow in our lives, in consequence of the Son of God's coming among us: namely, what we are to renounce; what we are to practise; what we are to look for; and what we are to tend to "The grace of God, our Saviour.

(saith he) hath appeared to all men, instructing us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world; looking for that blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of that great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works." O how many great lessons are here contained in a few words! Let us reflect on them one after another.

Consider therefore, secondly, the end for which our God and Saviour came down amongst us, by the mystery of his incarnation; enlightened us by his gospel and by his life; and at length offered himself in sacrifice for us, by his death upon the cross *He gave himself for us*, saith the apostle, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, by setting us at liberty from being slaves to Satan, sin, and hell; by breaking in sunder all the chains of our vices and passions; and by purchasing all mercy, grace and salvation for us; to the end that, by the virtue of his precious blood, *he might cleanse us for himself*, and make us *an acceptable people*, (*a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation*, I Peter ii. 9.) a zealous *pursuer of all good works*. See, Christians, what kind of men we ought to be, in consequence of what the Son of God has done for us, in coming down from heaven for us, and laying down his life for us. O, let us never more degenerate by leading lives unworthy of him! Let us never more return to our former slavery.

Consider, thirdly, that, being purchased by the Son of God, with so great a price, we are to consider ourselves henceforward as his property; and therefore we must not pretend to dispose of ourselves any otherwise than according to his will and pleasure. This ought to be our *rule* in all we do; this we ought to consult in all our deliberations; this holy will of him, that has bought us with his own blood, should be in every thing a law to us, so as ever to renounce all that we know to be displeasing to him, and ever to pursue with all our strength, what we know to be agreeable to him. *You are not your own: you are bought with a great price*, says the apostle, I Cor. vi. 19, 20. *Glorify, and bear God in your body*.

Conclude to take in practice, for the rule of your life, this holy will of your Redeemer, according to the whole extent of the apostle's exposition and declaration of the Christian's rule, *Titus* ii. 11, &c., and you will be religious men indeed, of that excellent order which Jesus Christ came from heaven to institute; and you will be with him for ever.

JANUARY 4.

On what we are to renounce by the Christian's Rule.

CONSIDER, first, that, in consequence of our redemption through Jesus Christ, we are bound, by the tenor of our rule above rehearsed, to deny, that is, to renounce, all *ungodliness and worldly desires*, and to be *clean from all iniquity*: we are to turn away from all evil; but more especially from the evils here named; the first of which is *ungodliness*; which is usually the first crime we commit, and the source of all the rest. For by *ungodliness* we understand, either the giving away from God what belongs to him, or the refusing him the service and love which we owe him. Now here the sinner usually begins his revolt. He is indispensably obliged to dedicate himself to God from his first coming to the use of reason; instead of which, like the apostate angels, he turns himself away from him; he refuses him his heart, which he so justly claims, and gives it away to empty toys and lying follies. This is *ungodliness*; this is a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator; this is the source of innumerable evils; this is the very bane of the world. O, let us renounce it and detest it!

Consider, secondly, what those baits are which Satan usually employs to draw us away from God; for no man ever chooses to serve the devil for his own sake, or for any love he has for him: but the tempter sets before us the deceitful appearances of some worldly honour, profit, or pleasure; and with these he allures deluded mortals to his service; these are the gilded pills with which he poisons the soul: these are his treacherous baits which hide the hook with which he draws millions into hell. Therefore the Christian's rule requires that, together with *ungodliness*, he should also *deny all worldly desires*; that is, all affections to those worldly toys and cheating vanities, as the most effectual means of disarming Satan, and hindering him from having any hold at all of us. For when we despise all that he can offer, and even fly and abhor his choicest allurements, he stands confounded, and can do no more.

Consider, thirdly, that these *worldly lusts and desires*, which the Christian must renounce, are, in particular, those of which the beloved disciple writes, 1 John ii. 15, 16. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father (the love of God) is not in him; for all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.* It is on account of this *triple concupiscence*, which reigns in all places, that *the whole world*, as the same apostle tells us, (chap. v. ver. 19) *is seated*

in wickedness; so that, if we desire to belong to Christ in good earnest, and to profess ourselves religious under his rule, we must declare a perpetual war against this triple concupiscence, and its abettors, namely, the world and our corrupt nature; and then we may despise all the devils in hell. Yes, Christians, renounce but these three capital enemies of your souls, the love of sensual pleasures, the love of gratifying the covetous eye with worldly toys, and the love of worldly honour and windy pride, and you shall be *clean from all iniquity*.

Conclude to be ever zealous observers of your rule, by *denying ungodliness and worldly desires*, and turn your hearts to seek your happiness in other kinds of honours, riches, and pleasures, which the world cannot give, and which may stay with you for ever.

JANUARY 5.

On what Lives we are to lead by the Christian's Rule.

CONSIDER, first, that, by our rule above rehearsed, we are not only to decline from all evil, in consequence of our God and Saviour's coming amongst us, but we are also to do good; we are not only to *deny ungodliness and worldly desires*, but also to *live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world*; that we may walk worthy of him who has *given himself for us*, not only that *he might redeem us from all iniquity*, but also that *he might cleanse us for himself*, and make us *an acceptable people, a pursuer of good works*. The Christian's duty, by his rule of life, has three branches: one of them relates to the regulating of himself; another regards his neighbours; but the third, and chiefest of all, relates to his God. All these we comply with, if we *live soberly, and justly, and godly*; because, by living *soberly*, we keep *ourselves* in perfect order; by living *justly*, we behave ourselves to *our neighbours* in all things as we ought; and by living *godly*, we dedicate our whole lives to *God*.

Consider, secondly, the great extent of these three branches of the Christian's duty, and how much this *sobriety*, this *justice*, and this *godliness* requires of us. Christian *sobriety* does not only exclude intemperance in eating and drinking, but also all other excesses and disorders, that may any ways carry us out of the bounds of strict regularity; so that, to be truly sober we must restrain pride by humility, anger by meekness, lust by purity, and all the irregular motions of our passions and disorderly inclinations by such a general temperance and moderation as may maintain the whole man in a due decorum, both as to soul and body. And this Christian *sobriety* keeps us, as to ourselves, in perfect order, harmony, and peace. Christian *justice* reg-

ulates our whole conduct as to our neighbours, by that golden rule of *doing as we would be done by*; and, in consequence of this, excludes every thought, every judgment or censure, every word or discourse, every action or dealing, that may any ways tend to their prejudice or disadvantage, and by this means, as much as lies in us, we maintain due order, harmony, and peace with all our neighbours. And lastly, true *godliness* makes us seek God in all things, and above all things; and consecrates all our powers and faculties to his love and service, by the means of recollection, meditation, and continual prayer; and thus we maintain a perpetual peace with God; so that the complying with these three branches of our duty, makes us truly wise, and truly perfect, and establishes the peace of God in our souls.

Consider, thirdly, that according to the words of the apostle, in the place above noted, whilst we labour to comply with the excellent rule of Christ our Lord, by *living soberly, justly, and godly in this world*, we must not confine our views to the narrow limits of this short life here below; but we must be ever looking forward towards the great object of the Christian's hope, namely, the blessed and glorious coming of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall come to accomplish the great work he has begun in us, and to take us home with him, both in soul and body, to our true country; and there make us his eternal kingdom. O how happy are those souls that are always aspiring after this coming of their Lord, and bewailing, in the mean time, the long continuance of their banishment here, and their great distance from him, in this foreign land!

Conclude to begin, at least now with this new year, to enter upon the true paths of life, by a general *sobriety, justice, and godliness*, and to strive to advance daily, by large steps, in this happy way, which leads to that life which never ends.

JANUARY 6.

ON THE EPIPHANY.

CONSIDER, first, that this day is kept by the church of God, with great solemnity, as one of the principal festivals of the year, and is called the *Epiphany*, that is to say, the *apparition* or *manifestation* of our Lord; because on this day he was first made known to the Gentiles, viz. to the wise men of the east, who were conducted to him by the apparition of an extraordinary star, and inspired to pay their early homage and worship to him. O how just it is that we should all celebrate, with a grateful devotion, this day of our first calling to the knowledge and faith of Christ; this Christmas day of the Gentiles! O my soul, how

great is this benefit of thy *vocation* to the true Christian faith? What would all other favours, or advantages either of nature or of grace, have availed thee, if this had been wanting? How miserable must thou have been, both for time and eternity, if, like millions of others, thou hadst been left to *sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death!* O bless him then both now and for ever, who, without any desert on thy part, has brought thee to his admirable light!

Consider, secondly, the wonderful ways of divine providence, as well in preparing beforehand both the Jews and Gentiles to expect about that time the coming of the great Messiah, as in giving an early notice of his birth both to the Jews and the Gentiles: to the Jews by an Angel sent to the shepherds; to the Gentiles by the star that appeared to the wise men of the east. But alas! how few either of the one or the other duly corresponded with this great call! And is not this the case of millions to this day, who, though many ways called and invited by and to that *light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, John i. choose rather to remain in the darkness of infidelity, error, or vice, than to follow the conduct of that star, that would bring them to the true light? O how clearly shall we see one day, that there was nothing wanting on the part of divine providence to bring us all to himself, but that we have been generally so unhappy, as to be wanting in our correspondence with his lights and calls!

Consider, thirdly, that this star, which gave notice of the birth of our Saviour, was seen by all the nations of the East; but that the generality contented themselves with gazing upon it, without taking any pains to seek him, whom that star preached unto them; whilst the wise men, following this divine call, set out without delay in quest of this new-born king; in consequence of which, these were happily brought to Christ, and to his admirable light, whilst those others remained in darkness, and died in their infidelity. See, my soul, the difference between a ready compliance with the inspirations and graces of God and the neglect of these heavenly calls; a difference, which, as it produces here the distinction of the saint and the sinner, so will terminate hereafter in a happy eternity for such as follow God and his calls, and a miserable eternity for such as neglect them. Ah! sinners, dread the consequences of neglecting the calls of heaven! God will not be mocked.

Conclude to be ever attentive to all those gracious lights and inspirations, by which you are invited to leave the ways of iniquity, and to come and follow Christ. Alas! how many of these stars have you hitherto neglected! Arise now at least, and set out by the guidance of this divine light, that you may make the

best of your way home from those husks of swine to your Father's house. It is not yet too late.

JANUARY 7.

On the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem.

CONSIDER, first, that the wise men were no sooner informed, by the apparition of this extraordinary star, of the birth of the great King that was to rule the world, but they set out to seek him in Judea, where they understood, by an ancient tradition, and by the prophecy of Balaam, *Numbers* xxiv. 17., that he that was denoted by that star should be born. And as it was natural for them to expect to hear news of him in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea, they went thither to inquire after him: "Where is he, (say they,) *Matt.* ii. 2., that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to adore him." But as *his kingdom was not of this world*, but was to be established upon other kind of foundations than any mortal empire, in the immortal souls of his people, and that upon the ruins of worldly pride, and of all the pomps of Satan, he chose for his birth the humble stable of Bethlehem, before any of the stately palaces of Jerusalem, as being more agreeable to his kingdom, the kingdom of humility and truth. O how happy are those souls whose eyes are always open to this heavenly truth, and shut to worldly vanity and lies! how happy they, who, by conforming in practice to these maxims of this great King, become themselves his kingdom; even that kingdom in which he shall reign for ever!

Consider, secondly, how king Herod was troubled at hearing of the birth of this new king; and so was all Jerusalem with him; in which they were a figure of all such souls as are so wedded to this cheating world, and its lusts, as to be more afraid of parting with them than of losing an eternal kingdom; and therefore they are troubled and disturbed when they are summoned by the messengers of heaven to arise, and leave these toys, to go and seek after Christ; and they even strive to stifle the heavenly infant, that would gladly be born in their souls, by smothering those lights and graces that offer to conduct them to him. O how much more happy were the dispositions of the wise men, who were willing at any rate to find Christ, and who gladly sought and embraced the directions of those that by their office were qualified to point him out to them! But alas! how miserable were those priests and scribes, who, whilst they directed the wise men to our Saviour, took no pains to seek him themselves! See, my soul, this never be thy case.

Consider, thirdly, how the wise men, in their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, were again favoured with the sight of the star, which both conducted them to Bethlehem, and pointed out to them the place where our Saviour was. This heavenly light filled their hearts with exceeding great joy; and, going in, they found him whom their souls desired, and they paid their homage to him. O how precious, how lovely, how desirable is that light, that conducts the soul to Christ! O what joy, what delight is it to the soul to see herself draw near to her God, her sovereign good! But then this heavenly manna is not usually given, but to them that fight, and that conquer all the labours, difficulties and oppositions, that they meet with in the way to Christ, and who, like the wise men, are quite in earnest in seeking him. Happy they that follow this great example! Happy they that taste, and see, how sweet the Lord is to them that seek and find him!

Conclude to imitate the wise men, first, in their ready compliance with the divine call; secondly, in their diligence in inquiring after Christ; and, thirdly, in their perseverance; and then you may confidently expect, like them, to find your Lord, and to rejoice in him.

JANUARY 8.

On the Faith and Offerings of the Wise Men.

CONSIDER, first, the strong and lively faith of the wise men: they set out with expectation of finding an infant king, attended with that state and pomp, which was suitable with the dignity of one that was born to be monarch of the universe: and behold, instead of this, they meet with nothing but poverty and humility; a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger; attended only by a poor maid, and an humble tradesman; an ox and an ass. But their faith by this time was more fully instructed in the qualities of him, whom they had been seeking for with so much labour; and therefore they were not shocked with those mean appearances, nor looked upon them with a worldly eye, but, under this poor and humble equipage, believed and adored their King, their God, and their Saviour. O how happy are those souls whose faith takes no scandal either at the crib or the cross of Christ, but rather knits them so much the more closely to him, by how much the more he has debased himself for the love of them!

Consider, secondly, how the wise men, having found our Lord, immediately fell down prostrate before him, and worshipped him, professing, by this humble and submissive posture of the body, the profound reverence and adoration of their souls. Do

we imitate them by the like humility, reverence, and adoration, when we appear before the same Lord in prayer? After this homage, they opened their stores, and made him their offerings, of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; to signify by the quality of these their gifts, their faith in him, to whom they gave them; they presented him with their gold, as a tribute due to him as their king: they offered him their frankincense, (which was used in the divine worship,) as to their God, and they gave him their myrrh, (which was used in the burial of the dead,) as to a mortal man, who came to redeem all mankind by his death. O let us, by their example, daily offer him our best homages, in all these qualities, as our King, as our God, and as our Redeemer!

Consider, thirdly, that the wise men, having found Christ, were admonished from heaven not to return any more to Herod; and so went back another way to their own country; to teach us, that after finding Christ, we must return no more to his and our enemies, Satan and sin, but must make the best of our way to our true country, by a quite different road from that by which we came away from it. Our true country is Paradise: we came away from this our country, by pride, by disobedience, and by the love of these visible things, and by gratifying our sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit. We must take quite another road, if we hope to return thither again: it must be by penitential tears, by humility, by despising these visible things, by restraining our sensual appetite, by wholesome mortifications of the flesh, and other self-denials, and by a constant obedience, that we are to find the way back to our true home.

Conclude to quit the broad road of gratifying thy passions and sensual pleasures, and to pass over to the narrow way of penance and self-denial, and thou shalt be brought safely back to thy true country, and to thy Father's house.

JANUARY 9.

Of the Offerings we are to make, by the Example of the Wise Men.

CONSIDER, first, that the *gold*, *frankincense*, and *myrrh*, offered by the wise men to our new-born Saviour, mystically denoted other offerings, which we also ought daily to make to him. In the first place, we must offer him the tribute of our *gold*, as to our true King: that is, we must daily present him with our souls, stamped with his own image, and burnished with divine love. This is the *gold* this is the tribute our Sovereign expects from us. When the Jews asked him concerning their giving tribute to Cesar, he called for their coin, in which they had the image of Cesar, and inferred from thence, that they were to *render to*

Cesar the things that were Cesar's, (Matt. xxii.) that is, to give him what was stamped with his image. Our souls are stamped with God's own image, to this very end, that we should give them in tribute to him, by perfect love: *render, then, to God the things that are God's*, by daily offering your whole souls up to him, by fervent acts of love, and you shall have given him your gold.

Consider, secondly, that we must also offer our *frankincense* to our Saviour, as to our God. *Incense* in scripture is considered as an emblem of *prayer*, and expresses the worship we pay to our Lord, by sending up to him the odoriferous vapours of our devotions, as from the censer of a heart, burning with the love of God. Prayer, then, is the *frankincense*, which we must, in imitation of the wise men, present to our Saviour, as to our God. This we must daily offer to him at the *hours of incense*, as a morning and evening sacrifice, in the temple of God, which is within our souls: with this we ought also to endeavour to perfume, in some measure, all our other daily actions and employments, in order to make them agreeable to him.

Consider, thirdly, that with these offerings of *the gold of divine love*, and of *the frankincense of fervent prayer*, we must also join that of the *myrrh of self-denial, and mortification*, which our Lord no less expects, and requires at our hands, than the other two; since he has so expressly declared, that except we *deny ourselves and hate ourselves* in this world, we cannot be his disciples. *Myrrh* has a bitter taste, but it is a wholesome bitter; and it has an excellent property to keep bodies from corruption. Thus it is an emblem of the *mortification* of our passions and sensual inclinations; which is somewhat bitter indeed, and disagreeable to the taste of our nature, but is sovereignly wholesome, and necessary to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. So that this offering of *myrrh*, like the other two, should be the daily exercise of a Christian; and should, as it were, season all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to restrain them from evil.

Conclude, O my soul, not to let a day pass without frequently offering to thy Lord the gold of love and charity, the frankincense of prayer, and the myrrh of self-denial; and he will certainly accept of both thy offerings and thyself; and in exchange he will give thee himself.

JANUARY 10.

On the Gospel of the Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany.

Consider, first, how Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, went every year up to Jerusalem, to the temple of God, upon the solemn festivals, notwithstanding their poverty and their living at the distance of

three days' journey from Jerusalem: and there they employed the weeks appointed for the feasts, in assisting at the public worship, praises, and sacrifices, which were offered to God in the temple at those times. Christians, learn from this great example, the diligence with which you ought to assist at the public worship of God upon festivals. Learn not to suffer every trifling difficulty to hinder your attendance in God's temple on those days; when neither the length, nor the charges, either of the journey, or of the stay they were to make in Jerusalem, could keep this holy family from a constant observance of these times dedicated to God. But, O, who can worthily apprehend the dispositions of soul, with which they entered upon these journeys; their recollection on the road, their heavenly conversation in Jerusalem, their profound adoration, their inflamed love, their fervent prayer and devotion in the temple! Let us strive to imitate them.

Consider, secondly, how when Jesus was twelve years old, and they had gone up, according to their custom, to keep the solemn feast of the Pasch in Jerusalem, after the days of the solemnity were fulfilled, when they returned, our Saviour withdrew himself from them, and staid behind them in the city. They, innocently thinking him to be in the company, went one day's journey homewards without him, and then, not finding him, were struck with unspeakable grief and concern for their loss; the more because they apprehended, lest, by some fault of theirs, they might have driven him away from them. Ah! what anguish must it be to a soul, that is sensible of the treasure she possesses, when she has Jesus with her, to find that he has withdrawn himself from her, and that she has lost her treasure! But how much more must this blessed couple have resented the loss of their Jesus, whose love for him was much greater than can be expressed or imagined! for in proportion to their love, their sorrow also must have been beyond expression great. Learn from hence, my soul, what value thou oughtest to set upon the happiness of having Jesus with thee, and how much thou oughtest to regret the loss of him.

Consider, thirdly, that although the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had lost their Jesus, as to his sensible presence, yet they had not lost him as to the presence of his grace and love; they had him still very near to them, because they had him in their hearts—a lesson for Christians of good-will, not to be discouraged, nor to give themselves up to excessive anguish, if sometimes they experience the like abstractions of the sensible presence of our Lord by a dryness in their devotions, and a spiritual desolation: let them but take care to keep their heart and will with him and they may be assured he is not far from them

He has often dealt thus with the greatest saints; and to their advantage too; to keep them more humble, and distrustful of themselves; and to teach them not to seek their own satisfaction in the milk of spiritual consolations, but to be content to feed their souls with the more solid diet of conformity to the will of God, and to the cross of Christ.

Conclude to take care not to drive away Jesus by wilful sin; and be assured that nothing else can ever separate him from thee.

JANUARY 11.

On seeking Jesus when he has been lost by Sin.

CONSIDER, first, how great an evil it is to lose Jesus by wilful sin. Ah! it is a far greater loss than if we should lose the whole world besides; for in losing him we lose our all. This loss is the greatest misery that can befall any soul on this side of eternity: it wants nothing but eternity to make it hell. And yet how common is this loss! How often is Jesus lost in this manner, even in our most solemn festivals, by the abuse of these holy times! And how is it possible that a Christian soul should admit of any manner of comfort, joy, or pleasure, under so great a loss? What then must they do that have reason to apprehend they have thus lost their Jesus, and that he is now no longer theirs, and they no longer his? They must learn from the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, how they are to seek him, and find him again; for though this blessed couple had not lost him in that wretched way, yet the manner in which they sought him may be an instruction to all others, to teach them by what means Jesus may be found again when he is lost.

Consider therefore, secondly, that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were no sooner sensible that they had lost Jesus, but they began to seek him without the least delay; and they gave themselves no rest till they had found him again; to teach us, that there ought to be no manner of delay in seeking him, as soon as ever we perceive we have lost him; and how much we ought to resent so dismal a loss. They made no stay in the place where they were, but hastened back to Jerusalem, to find him there; not enduring to remain for ever so short a time at a distance from him; to teach us to spare no pains, either night or day, in seeking him, and in using all means in our power to come at him. They sought him *sorrowing*, that is, with their souls full of grief and anguish, through the sense they had of the loss of their beloved; to teach us, that the true way to find Jesus, when lost, must be by a *sorrow* influenced with love; that is,

by a contrite and humble heart. They sought him with perseverance, and did not give over their search till they had effectually found him; to teach us not to desist, upon meeting with difficulties and oppositions, in our search after Jesus, but to go on with diligence, till we recover his gracious company.

Consider, thirdly, that Jesus was *not found*, by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, *amongst their kindred and acquaintance*. Alas! he is too often lost in the company and conversation of our worldly friends; but is very seldom to be found there. The common conversation of the world is at best but empty, worldly, and distracting; and it is out of fashion to speak or think of Jesus in the company of worldlings. Therefore the soul that would effectually find him, must withdraw, as much as may be, from worldly company, and must enter into a kind of spiritual retreat; she must make the best of her way by spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer, to the temple of God in Jerusalem; or, rather, she must make a temple for her Jesus within her own self, and seek him there by inward recollection. It is the surest place to find him in. O sinners! return to your own hearts, and you will quickly find your God. When you went astray from him, you went astray also from your own hearts, and from your inward house; you forgot at the same time both God and yourselves. Return home to your interior, and you shall recover them both again.

Conclude, if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have lost Jesus, to withdraw immediately from the crowd, to seek him in his temple in your own interior, and to give yourselves no rest till you have found him there. There he will hear you, and there he will teach you.

JANUARY 12.

On the Lessons our Lord Jesus gives us in his private Life.

CONSIDER, first, those words spoken by our Lord Jesus to his parents, when they found him in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, Luke ii. *Did you not know* (said he) *that I must be about my Father's business? He came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him.* John iv. 38. This was his daily food, during his mortal life. *My meat* (said he) *is to do the will of him that sent me.* John iv. 34. This then was the exercise of his private life; which he spent in obscurity and retirement, under a poor carpenter's roof. He was all the while about the business of his Father. He was ever doing the will of his Father. All his thoughts and words, all his actions and omissions, were directed to his Father's glory. And this is the great lesson we

are to learn from him in his private life. We all of us, like him, came into this world for nothing else but to do the will of God: we all of us ought to be ever about the business of our heavenly Father: all our thoughts, words, actions, and omissions ought to be directed to him. O, let us study well this great lesson, which the Son of God employed so many years in teaching!

Consider, secondly, how *he went down with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, and was subject to them.* Luke ii. 51. O stand astonished, my soul, to see the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth submitting himself to his creatures, and obedient to them. O see how he serves them, even in the meanest offices! how he works, with his reputed father, at his mechanic trade! but with what modesty and silence, with what recollection and application of his soul to his heavenly Father by continual adoration, thanksgiving, oblation, and love, and by continual prayer and intercession for us! Christians, learn from this great example, to be ever humble, meek, and obedient. Learn to sanctify your ordinary employments, and even your common actions, by recollection and mental prayer. Learn that even the highest perfection may be found in the exercise of the lowest and meanest offices, if in these the soul do but take care to keep close to her God, and to embrace him by love.

Consider, thirdly, what is written of our Lord, with relation to this private part of his life; that *Jesus increased in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men.* Luke ii. 52. Our Lord, who, from the first moment of his conception, was full of all heavenly wisdom and divine grace, was pleased, in proportion to his advancing in age, to show forth every day more than other, in his words and actions, the admirable treasures of wisdom and grace that were hidden in his soul; to teach us to make a continual progress in the way of God, and to advance every day, by large steps, from virtue to virtue, till we come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ. Eph. iv. 13. Christians, do we seriously apply ourselves to learn this excellent lesson? What progress have we hitherto made, after so many years pretending to walk after Jesus Christ in the way of virtue? Have we not, for the most part, rather gone backward than forward? O let us now at least begin to be in earnest!

Conclude to learn of our Saviour all those lessons which he desires to teach us in his private life, particularly these three—
 1. To be ever about the business of our Father; 2. To be ever submissive and obedient to his viceregerents; and 3. To be ever making the best of our way to him

JANUARY 13.

In our Saviour's being baptized by St. John the Baptist.

CONSIDER, first, how St. John the Baptist, being sent as a forerunner of our Lord, to prepare the people for him, by preaching to them penance, and a thorough conversion from their sins when a multitude of publicans and other sinners resorted to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins, and receiving from him the rules of a new life, our Lord Jesus also came among them, as if he had been one of their number, and stood in need of that baptism of penance for the remission of sins, and desired to be baptized by him. Admire the humility of this *Lamb of God*, who came to *take away the sins of the world*; and yet here associates himself with sinners, and is willing to pass for one of them. The Baptist was astonished at it, and refused to baptize him, saying, *I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?* But Jesus insisted upon his doing it; *for so it becometh us*, said he, *to fulfil all justice*; (Matt. iii. 14, 15.) that is, to exercise, and to give examples of all virtues; amongst which humility is the foundation, which sustains all the rest. O give us thy grace, dear Lord, that we also *may fulfil all justice*, by the imitation of thy humility!

Consider, secondly, how our Lord Jesus, having thus humbled himself, to *fulfil all justice*, was presently *exalted* by his heavenly Father; when, *being baptized and praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven; Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.* Luke iii. 21, 22. Learn from hence, my soul, what humility opens heaven, and conducts us to God, and to all good. But see, also, how upon this occasion of the baptism of Christ, the chief mysteries of religion are displayed: see how the whole Blessed Trinity manifests itself; the Father, by his voice from heaven; the Son, in his human nature, assumed for us; and the Holy Ghost, by descending in the shape of a dove. See how the mission, and the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, are here solemnly authorized, with a formal declaration of the dignity of his person, and of his unction and consecration by the Spirit of God: see how the Son of God, descending into the waters, sanctifies them, in order to those great effects of *regeneration* and *renovation* of the soul in the laver of baptism: see how he buries, as it were, the *old Adam* here, under the waters, and brings him forth a *new man*, opening heaven in his favour, and imparting to him both his holy Spirit, and the title and dignity of Son of God. O let us venerate these heavenly mysteries!

Let us here embrace our humble Saviour, the source of all our good.

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord began the functions of his mission, and the preaching of his gospel, from this time of his being baptized; and his being here solemnly recommended to the world; not only by the repeated testimonies of St. John Baptist, but by the voice of his heavenly Father, and by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. But first, for our instruction, he was pleased, by way of preparation, to withdraw himself from the conversation of men, into a lonesome wilderness, and there to employ forty days in fasting and prayer; at the end of which time he suffered three different assaults of temptation from Satan; and after overcoming this wicked enemy, he was visited and served by angels. Christians, let us learn from this great example, in all our spiritual undertakings, to seek first the assistance and blessing of heaven, by retirement, fasting, and prayer: let us learn, that these same are also the best arms against all the temptations of the enemy; that we are not to expect, how much soever we are retired from the world, to live without temptations, since Christ himself was tempted, and tempted in the desert; but that we must, by his example, fight and overcome; and that this is the way to heavenly comforts here, and to an immortal crown hereafter.

Conclude to keep as close as thou canst to the Lord Jesus, in every step he takes, and to have thy eye always upon him, that thou mayst copy out his virtues in thy life.

JANUARY 14.

ON THE SACRED NAME OF JESUS.

For the first Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany.

CONSIDER, first, these words of the apostles, *Philip. ii.* spoken of the eternal Son of God, incarnate for us: *He humbled himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and hath given him name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.* Christians, let us then venerate this sacred name, and all the mysteries and heavenly truths it contains; which are so many, and so great, that no tongue can sufficiently express them, nor heart conceive them. The name of Jesus came from heaven: it signifies a *Saviour*;

but such a *Saviour* as should deliver his people from their sins, reconcile lost man to God, purchase for him mercy, grace, and salvation, and of a slave of Satan, and a child of hell, make him a son of God, and heir of heaven. O, what has not our Lord Jesus done, what has he not suffered, that he might be such a *Jesus* to us! none but he could ever fulfil the import of this heavenly name: none but a *God-man*, an *Emmanuel*, that is, a God with us, could be a Jesus to save his people from their sins, and be to them a never-failing source of all true good; even to that degree as to make them in a manner partners in his divinity

Consider, secondly, that the name of Jesus is a name of *virtue* and of *power*: in this name the churches of God were planted throughout the earth. In this name the apostles wrought all kinds of miracles, and even raised the dead to life. By this name millions of martyrs have overcome death in all its shapes. This name has peopled the deserts with holy solitaires, and every nation of the Christian world, in every age, with innumerable saints, who, *looking upon Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith*, have, through his name, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and are now set down with Jesus in his throne, according to the promise he has made to them that conquer in his name. *Rev. iii. 21.* To this sacred name so many mighty monarchs have yielded themselves captives, submitting both themselves and their kingdoms to this great conqueror, and oftentimes leaving even their crown and sceptre for the love of this divine name. O kingdom of Jesus, kingdom of mercy and grace, when wilt thou extend thy conquests over all the universe, and bring all kings and people, all nations and all hearts, to bow down to embrace, and to give all praise and glory to this adorable name?

Consider, thirdly, that the name of *Jesus* carries with it an unspeakable majesty, tempered with humility, meekness, sweetness, and love; inasmuch as it expresses to us a *God made man*, even a poor, meek and humble man, out of a pure love for us. It shows forth to us all the divine attributes, stooping, as I may say, to the work of our redemption, in order to raise us up from the dunghill, and to bring us to a heavenly kingdom. *Jesus* is a name of mercy, a name of comfort, a name of grace and salvation: it promises pardon and forgiveness to all penitent sinners, it preaches to them deliverance from their slavery, and from their bonds, the discharge of all their debts, the healing of all their maladies, and the rescuing them from all their enemies, and from the wrath to come. It supports the Christian pilgrim under all his labours; it comforts him in all his afflictions; it is his refuge in all dangers; it sets before him the source of all his good; it encourages him to pray with an assurance that there is nothing but what he may obtain if he prays in the name of his

Saviour. It puts to flight all the powers of hell; they cannot bear that sacred name. It conquers the world and the flesh: in fine, it opens heaven to all its true lovers and followers. O sacred name, mayst thou be always in our hearts, and in our mouths! It was so with the blessed apostle St. Paul: O may we, like him, find all things in Jesus!

Conclude ever to venerate the divine name of *Jesus*, as presenting to your souls the principal object of the Christian's *faith*, the strongest grounds of his *hope*, and the chiefest motive, and most powerful attractive, to engage his *love*; viz. a God incarnate, and crucified for us. Thus may you exercise, as often as you hear this sacred name, all the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love of God.

JANUARY 15.

On our Lord's changing Water into Wine, at the Marriage-Feast of Cana. St. John ii.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the Gospel, *There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples.* Happy marriage, which our Lord was pleased to honour with his presence, and with his first miracle! he himself was the author and first institutor of marriage, and therefore was pleased to give it a sanction, and a blessing, by assisting at it. He came to marry, as it were, by his incarnation, our human nature with his divine person: he came to marry himself to his church, and by imparting to it a spiritual grace, to raise Christian matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, which should be a sacred and mysterious sign of this perpetual union with his church: he came to espouse our souls to himself, and therefore was pleased to favour this marriage (in which the contracting parties were, to all appearance, allied both in blood and virtue with his blessed mother) with his first miracle. O how happy were they in inviting Jesus and Mary to their wedding! O how unhappy are they who, when they marry, *shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, to give themselves to their lust.* Tob. vi. 17. *Over these the devil hath power*, because they invite him, rather than Jesus, to their wedding. And is not this the true cause why so many marriages are unhappy, for want of the blessing of Jesus?

Consider, secondly, how, in the midst of the marriage-feast, wine was wanting, to teach us how deceitful are all the pleasures of the world, and how often they fail us, when we expect the most from them. O, it is Jesus alone can furnish our immortal souls with the true *wine that cheereth the heart of man.* It is his love

alone can present us with pure delights, which bring with them joy and peace, and a certain foretaste of heaven. He often changes, in favour of his friends, even the waters of *the torrent in the way*, into delicious wine, by the consolations he gives them in their labours and afflictions, and the spiritual blessings of his grace, for the advancing their souls in divine love, and bringing them nearer to himself, the source of all sweetness; whilst the world, the flesh and the devil, do but delude us, by flattering our senses, at first with a false sweetness, which quickly comes to an end, and leaves nothing behind it but bitterness, discontent, and remorse.

Consider, thirdly, that this miraculous change, made by our Lord, of water into wine, (which was his first miracle,) was a prelude to another more miraculous change, which he made at his last supper, and will continue to make, by his ministers, even to the end of the world, of bread and wine into his own body and blood. With this wonderful miracle, he daily honours the wedding feast of his own espousals with our souls, in order to communicate himself to his spouses and to unite them to himself. And by the means of this communication of himself to us, he operates another no less wonderful change in us, by which he changes us in a manner into himself. The corporeal food we take is, by the means of our natural heat, daily changed into our flesh and blood: but this spiritual food, like the fire, which changes all things into itself, is not changed into our substance, but changes and transforms our souls, as it were, into its own nature, to make them one with this bread of life; here by grace, hereafter by glory. O miraculous change! O blessed conversion!

Conclude to be ever thankful for all the wonders which the Son of God has wrought, and continues daily to work for thee. But particularly join with the church at this time of the Epiphany, in celebrating, with love and gratitude, those three miracles, which were the forerunners of, and introductions to all thy good, thy *vocation* to the true faith, thy being regenerated in Christ by *baptism*, and admitted to his heavenly feast in the blessed Eucharist, in which thou art incorporated with him. O who can ever sufficiently love him, and praise him, for these great wonders of his love to us!

JANUARY 16.

On the Necessity of Consideration.

CONSIDER, first, and take a view of the whole Christian world, and see how much Satan and sin every where reign. See how many thousands in every nation, of all degrees and

conditions, pass their lives in mortal sin, with little or no concern, or apprehension, either of death, judgment, or hell: see how they wallow in the mire of carnal pleasures: see how they indulge their passions, and prefer every empty toy, mere bubbles, before their immortal souls; before their God, and a happy eternity: see how numbers of them even live without God, and in a total forgetfulness of him: then see how hell opens wide its jaws, and daily swallows down thousands of them; cut off, alas, in the midst of their sins, when they least expected it, and hurried away in a moment from their short-lived, empty, and deceitful satisfactions, to dreadful and everlasting torments. And whence proceeds all this dismal scene of evils, but from the want of consideration? *with desolation is all the earth made desolate*, saith the prophet, *because there is none that considereth in the heart* Jerem. xii. 11.

Consider, secondly, the great truths which the Christian faith teaches; that there is a God of infinite majesty, whose eye is always upon us; a God infinitely good, and infinitely just; and who hates wilful sin with an infinite hatred; a God, who is our first beginning, and our last end, our Creator and Redeemer, to whom we belong by all kind of titles, who made us for himself, and sent us hither upon no other errand, and for no other business, but to love and serve him in this world, and to be eternally happy with him in the next; that there is another life hereafter, in comparison with which the present is but a moment; that death will quickly separate us from all these visible things, and send us into another region, where all that worldlings here set their hearts on will appear as smoke; that there is a judgment to come; and that there is a heaven, and a hell, &c. All these are articles of the Christian faith, and all most certainly true, and in themselves very moving. And do all Christians believe these truths? They must believe them, or they are no Christians. But how then is it possible they should live as the generality do? how is it possible that such as believe all these things should live on in sin, and walk in the broad road that leads to hell? O! it is for want of consideration; it is because they do not think.

Consider, thirdly, that the great difference between the good and the bad Christian is, that the one thinks well on the truths he believes, and by that means lets them sink deep into his soul, and take root there, so that they bring forth in him the fruits of all virtues; whereas the other does not think, and therefore is little or nothing affected with the truths of the gospel: they make no impression upon him, because his faith is asleep, or rather dead, for want of consideration. O what wonderful effects have we not seen produced in the world by consideration! how many, even of the greatest sinners, have been reclaimed by

it, and drawn back from the very jaws of hell! how many has it sent out of the midst of Babylon to seek their God in solitude, and to consecrate their lives to him! O that men would but think, what a reformation should we see in the world! O it is thinking is the true way to heaven; and not thinking the high road to hell!

Conclude to allow thyself daily some time to meditate upon some or other of the great truths that relate to God and eternity. It is one of the best means thou hast to secure thy soul. They that will not think of these things now, will infallibly think on them hereafter, when their thinking will only serve to increase their eternal misery.

JANUARY 17.

On the Consideration of God.

CONSIDER, first, that we cannot be saved without *the knowledge of God*, and such a knowledge as may effectually influence our lives, and command both our love and obedience. Now we can neither know God, nor love him as we ought, without the help of consideration. It is consideration that discovers to us his infinite beauty and perfection, and the many pressing motives we have to dedicate ourselves wholly to his love and service. It is consideration sets before our eyes his eternal love, and all his benefits to us, and convinces us that he is both infinitely charming and lovely in himself, and infinitely good to us. Without consideration, we know these things as if we knew them not: we have eyes and see not. But when these truths are duly weighed and *considered* by the soul, it is then the light of the knowledge of God begins to dispel our darkness; and in our meditation the fire of his love breaks forth into flames, which sweetly carry up the soul towards their heavenly element, which is with God, and hinder her from ever forgetting him.

Consider, secondly, how large a field we have in God for our meditation, whether we consider him as he is in himself, and in his own divine attributes, or with relation to what he is to us, and the titles he has been pleased to assume in our regard. He is in himself *eternal*, that is, without beginning, without end, without change, self-existent, independent: he is being itself, he alone properly is; *I am who am*, says he, *Exod.* iii.; all other things are just nothing at all; they have no being but from him and in him: he is the being of all beings. He is *immense* and *incomprehensible*, and every way *infinite*: he fills heaven and earth; creating, preserving, moving, ruling, supporting all things. He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely good, infinite-

ly just, infinitely merciful; he is beauty itself, truth itself, and all perfection. See, my soul, what an immense field we have here for our considerations! It has no end. Here is more than enough to employ us for all eternity; in this vast ocean of the infinite perfections of the Deity, the blessed themselves can find no bottom. Here they are happily lost in the contemplation of him, who, though he discovers himself to them face to face, and fills their souls with heavenly pleasure, remains, nevertheless, *incomprehensible*, even to the highest angels, because he is every way *infinite*.

Consider, thirdly, that there still remains an ample field for meditation to help us to acquire the knowledge and love of God, in the manifold considerations of what God is in our regard, and how good he is to us. He is our sovereign good: he alone can satisfy our souls. He has loved us first; he is our ancient lover; he is our eternal lover; his thought and heart are always upon us. He is a disinterested lover, a most faithful, and most constant lover, whose love never forsakes them that do not first forsake his love. He is our Maker and our Redeemer; the best of Fathers; the best of Friends; the Spouse of our souls. He ever desires to come and dwell with us and in us, and to impart all his heavenly treasures to us; in a word, to give himself to us, and to take us to himself. And are not here sufficient motives to oblige us to love this great and good God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us? Is it possible that a generous heart, made through love and for love, should hold out against such pressing considerations as these, so far as to refuse a return of love? O divine love, it is only because thou art thought of so little, that thou art so little known in this wretched world; and it is only because thou art so little known, that thou art so little loved. O, it is consideration then is both the true way to know thee, and the true way to love thee!

Conclude ever to seek by daily considerations, and to cherish in thy soul this saving and savoury knowledge of God, as the source of divine love and of all thy good. And remember that a deluge of all evils will come pouring in upon the soul, where this *knowledge of God* is wanting. *Osee* iv. 1, 2.

JANUARY 18.

On the Consideration of the Law of God.

CONSIDER, first, that in order to our salvation, we must also have a right knowledge of the holy law and commandments of God: we must know all the precepts and maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and we must know them in such a manner as to be practically convinced of the beauty of this divine law, of

the equity of these commandments, of the excellence of these heavenly precepts, of the truth of these gospel maxims, that so we may heartily embrace them, love them, and keep them. Now this infers a necessity of a serious and frequent meditation on God's holy law, without which we shall not even know as we ought the duties and obligations of a Christian life; much less shall we have a due esteem and love for these divine statutes and ordinances, which our great King has made to be for us the way to true life. "O! blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, and who shall meditate on it day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season; and his leaf shall not fall off; and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper." *Psalms* i. O happy meditation, which is the source of so much good! unhappy they who seldom think of this divine law, and therefore neither love it nor keep it!

Consider, secondly, that even under the Old Testament, God required of his people, that they should continually meditate on his divine commandments, *Deut.* vi. 6., &c. "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, lying down to bed, and rising up. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doors of thy house." Now, if under the old law, (when so great perfection was not expected of the faithful as now,) God was pleased to require this close application of the soul to the meditating on his divine precepts, how much more does he now expect it from us, under the new covenant of grace and love, in which he delivers his commandments to us, not graven on tables of stone, but on the tables of the heart; not to be laid up in the ark, or deposited in an earthly sanctuary, but to be laid up within us, in the true sanctuary of God in our souls! Christians, this is our glory and our wisdom, this is our happiness above all other people, to have the divine law written in our hearts, to keep it there by love and affection, and to read it there by attention and meditation, lest otherwise we lose so great a treasure.

Consider, thirdly, what were the sentiments of the royal prophet, with regard to the law and commandments of God, and the duty of meditating continually upon them. He has abundantly declared them in the 118th psalm, (*alias* 119th,) where there is scarce one verse, in which the beauty and excellence of the divine law, the love and observance of it, the great happiness of keeping it, and the many advantages of meditating upon it, are not strongly inculcated. For which reason the church, in her

canonical hours of prayer, appoints this psalm for the daily devotion of her children, in order to inspire into them the like sentiments, with relation to the holy law and commandments of God, and to oblige them daily to meditate upon these divine ordinances. Christians, can any thing else be of so great importance to you, as to study well the true way to a happy eternity? Can any other science deserve your attention in comparison with this? Is not your all here at stake? And what other way is there to secure to your souls a happy eternity, but the knowing and keeping the law and commandments of God? It is this then calls for your study and attention, by daily considerations and meditations.

Conclude to turn henceforwards your thoughts from vain and curious searches into things little or nothing to your purpose, to the daily considering on what God requires of you by his holy law, what you are to do to please him, and to save your souls, what your duty is to him, and what his will is in your regard. The studying this is our great business. O how little will all other sciences avail, if this be neglected!

JANUARY 19.

On the Consideration of Ourselves.

CONSIDER, first, that besides the obligation we lie under of daily consideration, in order to know God, and our duty to him, there is another branch of necessary knowledge, which also calls for our serious attention and meditation; and this is the knowledge of ourselves. "This is the highest and most profitable lesson," says the devout *A Kempis*, "truly to know, and to despise ourselves." The knowledge of ourselves is the foundation of true humility, which is the virtue that teaches us to despise ourselves: and humility is the foundation of all other virtues; they have all a necessary dependence upon it; so that the knowledge of ourselves is, in effect, the foundation of all virtues. Now this knowledge of ourselves is not to be acquired without frequent and serious consideration. For to know ourselves right, we must consider attentively our origin and extraction; what we have hitherto been; what we are now at present; and what we shall be by and by: and such considerations as these will open our eyes, and will convince us what poor wretches we are, and how little reason we have to be proud, and, on the contrary, how many urgent reasons we have to despise ourselves, and to be thoroughly humble.

Consider, therefore, secondly, your extraction, as to your body, out of dirt and corruption, as to your soul, out of nothing; and

that whatsoever you have, either as to body or soul, above mere nothing, is not of your own growth, but the property of your Maker. Reflect that you no sooner came into a being but you were defiled with sin, and were children of wrath; that your whole life has hitherto been one continued course of sin and ingratitude. And ah! how often have you fallen into that worst of evils, that bottomless pit of *mortal sin*! And what a dreadful figure did you then make in the sight of God, and his holy angels! What confusion, what horror, what an eternal damnation was then your due! And is not this still your case at this day? And what title have you then to any regard, either from God or man? what claim to any benefit, or service from any of God's creatures? Or what just complaint can you make, if all the world should abhor you, as a traitor to God, a slave to the devil, and a victim of hell, and all creatures should join together against you, to revenge upon you the cause of their Creator? Reflect also on the many miseries you daily lie under, the small light there is in you, for the discerning true good from that which is only so in appearance; the strength of your passions, and self-love; your perpetual repugnance to the taking true pains for acquiring real goods, and the violent bent of your inclinations to evil, and then consider how soon death will be with you, and send your bodies to the worms, and your souls to the bar of divine justice, under a dreadful uncertainty as to your eternal lot. And see if, in the consideration of these things, you will not find matter enough to cure your pride, and to bring you to a true sense of your manifold misery and corruption; that so you may learn entirely to distrust in yourselves, to be ever humble, and to place your whole confidence in God.

Consider, thirdly, the other great advantages which the soul acquires by often entering into herself, by the means of serious consideration, and taking an impartial view of the whole state of her own interior. Here she discovers her spiritual maladies, (to which before she was a stranger,) and she is enabled, by this discovery, to seek and to apply proper remedies to all her evils. Here she finds out the sacred ambushes of her enemies, especially those more subtle ones of her pride and self-love, which are continually seeking to impose upon her and deceive her. Here she learns to discern between the different motions of nature and grace, to watch over her own heart, to regulate its affections and inclinations, to guard against her passions, and to order her whole interior in such manner as to be agreeable to him who desires to make it his everlasting temple. O how happy it is for the soul thus to know herself! ah, what will it avail a man to know all things else, if he be a stranger to himself?

Conclude to make the knowledge of thyself one of thy principal studies for the future. The saints have always considered the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of themselves, as the most necessary of all sciences. O study well, by the means of daily meditation, this science of the saints in both its parts. Daily pray with St. Augustin, *noverim te, noverim me.* Lord, give me grace to know thee ; Lord, give me grace to know myself.

JANUARY 20.

On our first Beginning.

CONSIDER, first, my soul, that, not very long ago, thou hadst no being at all, nor any share in the transactions of the world : thou wast not even so much as thought of by any creature upon earth. In this low abyss of nothing, thou hadst been engulfed from all eternity, and there of thyself thou must have remained to all eternity, infinitely beneath the condition even of the meanest insect, or the most inconsiderable of all God's creatures ; so that whatsoever thou hast at present above this mere nothing is no acquisition of thy own, nor any property of thine, but the pure gift of thy Maker. Down, then, with all self-conceit and presumption ; down with all vain-glory ; acknowledge thy true origin, thy original nothing ; sit always down in the lowest place, even in the centre of thy nothing ; ascribe nothing to thyself, as of thy own growth, but thy manifold sins : give the whole glory of all the rest to thy Maker.

Consider, secondly, who it was that drew thee out of that deep abyss of nothing, into this being, which thou now enjoyest ; who gave thee this power of thinking, this conscious life, this will, this memory, this understanding ; who made for thee this soul and body : no other but he that made heaven and earth ; even the eternal, immense, infinite Deity. And how came this great God to think of making thee ? What did he see in thee, that could move him to love thee, and to bestow this being upon thee ? O ! it was nothing but his own infinite goodness ; for there could be nothing in thee worthy of his love : he stood in no need of thee : thou couldst do him no service. O ! embrace, then, with all the powers of thy soul, this infinite goodness of thy God. Give thy whole being to him, who has given it all to thee. Dedicate thy whole self to his love and service, for time and eternity.

Consider, thirdly, that God made thee after his own image and likeness, that he might engage thee the more to love him. This image and likeness is in thy soul, which is a spiritual being, and in the spiritual powers of thy soul ; thy free will, which noth-

ing controls, and which can be satisfied with nothing less than God; and thy understanding, which is capable of soaring above all things, visible and invisible, and reaching to the contemplation of God himself. O, let not then this noble spirit lie any longer grovelling in the mire of the earth. Let not this will, that was made to be a queen, be a slave to flesh and blood. Let not this understanding, this mind, this thought, that should contemplate heavenly truths, be bowed down to empty, earthly toys.

Conclude to be ever mindful of thy own nothing, and that thou hast received all thou hast from the pure bounty of God. The sense and remembrance of this truth will teach thee always to despise thyself, and to love thy Maker with all thy strength.

JANUARY 21.

On our last End.

CONSIDER, first, my soul, why thou camest hither · what is thy business in this mortal life? for what end has God made thee? upon what errand has he sent thee hither? This should have been the subject of thy meditation from thy first coming to the use of reason; and hast thou ever yet seriously thought on it? Thou canst not here plead ignorance; for one of the first things thou wast taught was that thou wast made for God; and that the business for which thou camest into the world was to know him, love him, and serve him here, and so to come to enjoy him hereafter, in a happy eternity. O how noble, how glorious, how blessed is this end, for which thou wast made! O how good is thy God, who has made thee for himself and for heaven, and, even from all eternity, has designed this happiness for thee!

Consider, secondly, that, properly speaking, thou hast but one thing to do in this mortal life; and that is no other than to answer this end, for which thou wast made, by dedicating thyself, in good earnest, to the love and service of thy Maker. This is that one thing necessary. *Luke x. 42.* If thou apply thyself seriously to this great business, all is well: if thou neglect this, all will be lost, whatever success thou mayst meet with in any thing else. “O what will it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul, and, with his soul, lose his God, and a happy eternity? O let all other business, then, be subordinate to this: let all that no ways conduces to this be despised as vain and unprofitable: let all that is opposite to this be avoided, rejected and abhorred, as hurtful and pernicious. O how true is it, *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*, besides the loving God, and serving him alone!” *Kempis.*

Consider, thirdly, the great blindness and misery of worldings who live in a continual neglect and forgetfulness of this their only business; whose pursuits are after mere vanities; who weary themselves, like children, in running after butterflies; in catching at bubbles, and empty shadows; such as vain honours, false riches, and deceitful pleasures, that last but one moment; and for these they forfeit God and eternity. And has not this, O my soul, been hitherto thy own case? O be confounded at the thought of thy having been so strangely senseless, and so very wretched. Detest the errors of thy past life; and now, at least, resolve to mind thy true and only business, and to turn to thy God with all thy heart.

Conclude, since God is both thy first beginning, and thy last end; since thou art made by him, and for him; all thy powers, senses and faculties are designed to bring thee to him; to employ them all henceforward in serving and glorifying him: thus only shalt thou find true comfort here and heaven hereafter.

JANUARY 22.

On the Titles God has to our Service.

CONSIDER, first, that we belong to God, by all manner of titles, and therefore cannot, without the most crying injustice, alienate any part of our being from him, or refuse to employ our whole selves in his divine service. We are his by *creation*; because he made us, and made us for himself, and therefore has given us a soul, capable of knowing, loving and enjoying him, and not able to find any true rest or satisfaction but in him. Our whole being is from him: our whole soul and body, with all our powers, senses and faculties, belong to him: all whatsoever we possess, interiorly or exteriorly, is all his. And as the fund is his, so the whole produce ought to be his. As we are absolutely and entirely the fund, and all our time, and all our talents are but lent us by him; so are we indispensably obliged to dedicate all our hours, all our thoughts, words and actions to him. And have we ever rightly considered this obligation? We belong to God, in like manner, by the title of *conservation*, by which he preserves and maintains every moment the being he has given us; otherwise we should presently return again to our ancient nothing; so that, as in every moment we have an obligation to him for our continuance in being what we are, so every moment we are obliged to be his.

Consider, secondly, that we belong also to God, and that in a very particular manner, by our *redemption*; by which the Son of God

has purchased us for himself and for his Father, with his own most precious blood. For we had sold ourselves to Satan; we were become his slaves; we had no longer any share in God, or title to him; we were rebels and traitors to him by sin, and as such we stood condemned to death and to hell. But, behold, the Son of God, out of pure love and compassion, comes down from heaven to redeem us; he pays himself the price of our ransom,—a great price indeed! even the last drop of his own most sacred blood,—to deliver us from Satan, sin and hell, to reconcile us to his Father, and to purchase mercy, grace and salvation for us; so that now, by virtue of this redemption, he claims us as his own property; and it would be a sacrilegious robbery to pretend to alienate again from him these souls of ours, which he has purchased for himself with his own blood. It would be even, in the language of the apostle, *treading under foot the Son of God, and esteeming the blood of the covenant unclean, with which we were sanctified.* Heb. x. 29.

Consider, thirdly, that we belong also to God by solemn vows and covenants, and by the *dedication* by which we were happily and holily dedicated and consecrated to him, in our baptism and confirmation, and sanctified to be his temples for ever. Now all those things, that are once solemnly consecrated to God, and more especially such as are made the temples of the living God, must be always his; and it would be a most grievous sacrilege to pervert them from his service to profane uses; and therefore it would be highly criminal in us to pervert these souls of ours from the love and service of their God, to whom they have been thus solemnly dedicated; and to profane and defile them by wilful sin. We belong to him also in quality of our King, our Father, our Lord and Master, the great Sovereign of the whole universe, the Being of all beings, &c.; and upon all these, and many more titles, his divine Majesty challenges our love and service as his undoubted right. O let us never be so miserable as to refuse him what he so justly claims. Let us look upon it as our greatest happiness that we belong entirely to him.

Conclude to render faithfully to God what upon so many titles belongs to him, by giving your whole selves to him, and employing henceforward both your soul and body in executing all his wills.

JANUARY 23.

On the Happiness of serving God.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the prophet (Isai. iii.) *Say to the just man; It is well.* And reflect on the many advantages

which this short word *well* comprises, and ensures to the just, both for time and eternity. Honour, riches and pleasure are the things on which the world sets the greatest value; but they are not to be found where the world seeks them, but only in the service of God. It is indeed a greater *honour* to be a *servant* of God than to be the emperor of all the earth. What then must it be to be his friend and favourite? to be his spouse, to be his child, and to be his temple? can any worldly honours be compared with these? O how glorious a dignity it is to be heir apparent to a heavenly and eternal kingdom! O how happy, in the mean time, during our mortal pilgrimage, to walk and converse with God! to be as familiar as one pleases with this great King! to have admittance into his closet whenever we will! to have an assurance from him of a favourable audience, and of obtaining all our requests, &c. How truly honourable is it to have one's name enrolled in the book of life! one's character established, not in the mean village of this world, (which nevertheless cannot help admiring and esteeming true virtue,) but in the great city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem! O my soul, let such honours as these be the only objects of thy ambition.

Consider, secondly, how rich the just man is; not always indeed in those worldly possessions which every accident may take away, and which can never satisfy the heart, but in treasures infinitely more valuable, of virtue, grace, and merit, which all the money in the world is not sufficient to purchase, and which make the soul rich for eternity. But the servants of God have a still greater treasure than this, viz. God himself; whom the whole world cannot take from them, as long as they take care not to drive him away by wilful sin. *He is their Protector, and their Reward exceeding great.* Gen. xv. He is always with them; he is a tender Father to them; the eye of his special providence is ever upon them; his angels encamp about them, to defend them, and deliver them from evil. In a word, God is all things to them that fear and love him; so that, even as to the goods of this world, he never forsakes those that do not first forsake him. O my soul, see thou seek no other treasure but him. He will make thee rich indeed: fear no loss but the losing of him. If thou hast him, nothing can make thee miserable; but without him, nothing can make thee happy.

Consider, thirdly, the solid *pleasures* that attend a virtuous life; such as the satisfaction, peace and joy of a good conscience; the sense that holy souls have of God's goodness, and love for them; the experience they have of his sweetness, in their recollection and prayer; the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and the ravishing delights they often find in God, as a certain foretaste of the joys of heaven; the comfortable prospect of a happy eter-

nity, after their short mortal pilgrimage; and, above all, their love of God, and a blessed conformity to his will in all things, which sweetens even their greatest crosses. Such pleasures as these are far beyond all that worldlings can pretend to; pleasures pure and spiritual, which have supported, and even given an inexpressible joy to the martyrs, under the worst of their torments; which have sweetened all the labours and penitential austerities of other saints, and made them think whole nights too short, when spent with God in prayer. O! how great then is that error, how pernicious is that deceit, by which Satan persuades the children of this world, that there are no pleasures in a virtuous life! whereas, indeed, there is no true pleasure any where else.

Conclude, since thy whole happiness, in time as well as eternity, depends entirely upon loving and serving God, to set out from this hour in quest of this happiness, by entering upon the beautiful path of virtue, which alone can bring thee to it.

JANUARY 24.

On the Vanity of all those Things that keep Worldlings from the Service of God.

CONSIDER, first, how truly *vain* all those things are which poor deluded worldlings prefer before their God; empty bubbles, mere toys and trifles, false appearances, deceitful baits, laid by the enemy to catch their souls; gilded pills, that conceal a deadly poison; deluding dreams, and airy phantoms, that will all vanish away in a moment, and leave both their hands and their hearts empty; and then, alas, the scene will change, and their fool's paradise of an imaginary happiness shall turn to real, dreadful, and everlasting evils. *O ye children of men, how long will you be in love with vanity? how long will you run after mere lies and deceit?* Reflect upon those that are gone before you; upon those that have enjoyed the most of what this world could afford of honours, riches and pleasures; and tell me what judgment you think they make of them now. O, they will certainly cry out with Solomon (Eccles. ii. 11.) that in *all these things they found* nothing but *vanity and vexation of spirit*. They will loudly condemn their own past folly and madness, in having set their hearts upon such toys, to the loss of God and their souls.

Consider, secondly, and take a nearer view of these worldly idols, these phantoms of honours, riches, and pleasures; and see with what toil they are acquired, with what cares and fears they are possessed; how easily they are lost; how great evils they are exposed to; what a slavery they bring along with them;

how short and how unconstant they are ; how false and deceitful ; how often embittered with gall ; how mean, and unworthy the affections of a Christian ; how far beneath the dignity of an immortal soul, made for nothing less than God ; and how incapable of giving any solid content or satisfaction to a heart that can never rest but in its Maker. O how truly miserable then are all these children of Babylon, who are enslaved to things so base, so vile, so filthy ! How wretched is that life that is all spent in this manner, in weaving cobwebs, in running after butterflies, in catching at shadows ! in squandering away those precious hours, that were given to secure to the soul a happy eternity, in impertinent amusement, in idle, foolish, and often sinful conversation ! in dressing out, or pampering a carcass that must quickly be the food of worms, in public houses, in hanging over a pack of cards, in reading love tales and romances, and such like empty fooleries ! Surely such a life as this must be most irksome and tedious, void of all true content, joy, peace, or comfort here, and of all prospect of happiness hereafter.

Consider, thirdly, how this folly and misery of worldlings is described by the prophet Isaias, chap. lix., where he tells them that they put their trust in that which is a mere *nothing* ; that *they speak vanities* ; that is, that their whole discourse and conversation is empty, foolish, and nothing to the purpose ; that they *conceive, labour, and bring forth iniquity* ; that they are sitting day and night upon the *eggs of asps*, (most poisonous serpents,) which if they *eat* will bring present death ; and if they *hatch*, will turn out serpents, and destroy them. That all their works are but spending their bowels in *weaving spiders' webs*, which *can never clothe them* ; *unprofitable works*, fit for nothing but to catch flies ; that their thoughts and devices are all vain and unprofitable ; and that their ways lead to destruction ; that their paths are crooked ; and that there is no judgment in their steps ; and that whosoever treadeth in them *knoweth no peace*. O see how pathetically the Holy Spirit has here described the pains and labours poor worldlings take in the pursuit of lying madneses, which bring all kind of evils and death to their souls, without any manner of real profit or pleasure ! and learn thou to be more wise than to walk in their footsteps.

Conclude never to imitate this wretched choice of blind mortals, who turn away from God to follow after cheating vanities ; but to despise from thy heart all those childish toys, and to turn to the charming paths of wisdom, virtue and truth.

JANUARY 25.

On the Conversion of St. Paul.

CONSIDER, first, and admire the wonders of the grace of God, in the conversion of St. Paul, suddenly changed from a fiery zealot for the Jews' religion, and a bloody persecutor of the church of Christ, to be a fervent Christian, a zealous preacher of the Gospel, a vessel of election, to carry the name of Christ to nations and kings, a doctor of the Gentiles, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and a most eminent saint. Learn from hence the greatness of God's mercy, and the power of his grace; learn never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem from the faith or grace of God; who could be more remote than the convert of this day? Assure thyself that the hand of God is not shortened, and that his power, mercy and goodness are as great now as ever; and therefore never cease to pray to God for the conversion of infidels and sinners. It is likely the conversion of St. Paul is in great measure owing to the prayers of St. Stephen. Join with the church on this day, in glorifying God, and returning him thanks, through Jesus Christ, for the wonders of his mercy and grace in St. Paul, and the many thousands he has brought, through his preaching, to the ways of truth and life.

Consider, secondly, that the conversion of St. Paul is, by the church, set before our eyes this day, as a model of a perfect conversion; from which sinners may learn, first, how readily they ought to correspond with the calls and graces of God inviting them home; second, how they ought to yield themselves up entirely to him; and, third, what their lives ought afterwards to be, in consequence of that distinguishing mercy which God has showed them in their conversion. Paul was no sooner called by the voice of Jesus Christ, but he presently obeyed the call, and yielded himself up to be his for ever. His prayer he then made was short in words, but very expressive of the perfect disposition of his soul in this regard, and of the sacrifice he desired to make of himself, without the least reserve, to the holy will of him that called him. *Lord, said he, what wilt thou have me to do? As much as to say, My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!* here I am prostrate at thy feet, desirous only to know and to do thy will: send me where thou pleasest; ordain concerning me what thou pleasest; I desire to be thine in life and death; I desire to have no exceptions at all to thy blessed will. See also how, being sent into the city, where he was to learn of Ananias the will of God, and to receive from him the sacrament of regeneration, for the washing away his sins, he there continues for three whole days, neither eating nor drinking, but

wholly employed in prayer. O! this was showing himself to be a convert indeed; this was being quite in earnest in preparing himself for his baptism; this was laying a solid foundation for a new life. O that all penitents would set this great example before their eyes, when they pretend to make their peace with God, and would, like Paul, prepare themselves, by fervent and un-continued prayer, joined with the exercises of mortification and penance! Thus we should see other sort of conversions than we commonly meet with now-a-days.

Consider, thirdly, the sentiments of St. Paul, with regard to the life he looked upon himself obliged to lead, in consequence of the mercy God had showed to him in his conversion. He had ever before his eyes the greatness of this mercy; he considered himself as having been, to his thinking, the greatest of all sinners, and how God had spared him all the while he went on in his sins, and, without any merit on his part, had, by an evident miracle, wrought in an instant that total change in him; and therefore he was convinced, as he both declared in his words, and showed forth in his practice, that he could do no less than devote his whole life to the love and service of his Saviour, to testify his gratitude for the love he had showed to him. This consideration carried him through all his labours and afflictions; and animated him to meet death in all its shapes; (for he was *dying daily*, as he tells us;) because Christ had loved him, and had died for him; and therefore the love of Christ pressed him, that he might live no longer to himself, but to him who had showed him mercy. O that all converts would have the like sentiments!

Conclude to learn in practice the lessons which St. Paul teaches you in his conversion, and in particular to have a great esteem of the grace of reconciliation, and of that unspeakable mercy and love, which God has showed you, in receiving you again, after you had fallen from him by sin. Learn also from him to testify your gratitude, by dedicating yourselves henceforward, in good earnest, to the love and service of him who has done such great things for you.

JANUARY 26.

On the Evil of mortal Sin.

CONSIDER, first, the enormous malice of mortal sin, inasmuch as it is infinitely opposite to the infinite goodness of God; and thou wilt find it to be a bottomless pit, which no created understanding can fathom. As none but God himself can fully comprehend his own infinite goodness, so none but God himself can

perfectly comprehend the infinite enormity that is found in this opposite evil. And as God essentially loves his own goodness, with an infinite love, and cannot cease to love it, no more than he can cease to be God, so he essentially hates mortal sin with an infinite hatred, and cannot cease to hate it, wherever he sees it. And didst thou think, my soul, that thou wast committing so great, so dreadful, so abominable an evil, when first thou rebelledst against thy God by mortal sin? O how couldst thou dare so often to repeat this enormous treason! or how couldst thou endure to carry about with thee, for so long a time, so odious, so hideous a monster! O, how much art thou indebted to the boundless mercies of thy God, and to the precious blood of his Son, that he has tolerated thee so long, and not cast thee long ago into hell.

Consider, secondly, that there is not upon earth, no, nor in hell itself, a greater evil than mortal sin: it is, without any comparison, the greatest of all evils; it is the parent both of the devil and of hell; for hell was only made for mortal sin, and the devil was an angel till he was transformed into a devil by mortal sin; so that, in truth, mortal sin is a monster more hideous than hell, more filthy and abominable than the devil himself. This dreadful evil, which the damned see and feel, for all eternity, in the midst of their souls, torments them more than all the devils: it is this that oppresses them with its everlasting weight; it is this that feeds the ever-gnawing worm of their guilty conscience; it is this is the fuel of that fire that never is extinguished; it is this that eternally possesses their souls, and both keeps God eternally from them, and them eternally from God. O that sinners had but a just notion of this dreadful evil here! it would effectually keep them from feeling its enormous weight hereafter. If they did but sufficiently apprehend what they are going to do, when they offer to commit a mortal sin, they would choose a thousand deaths before so great an evil.

Consider, thirdly, that what makes sin the greatest of all evils, is, because it strikes at God himself. It is a rebellion; it is a high treason against him. Satan, the first sinner, proudly sought to place himself in the throne of God; and all that unhappily follow the example of this arch-rebel, by consenting to mortal sin, are, in some measure, guilty of the like perversity; inasmuch as they turn away from God, as he did, affecting, in the like manner, an independency on God, and impiously prefer their own will, and the gratifying their own inclinations and passions, before his holy will and his divine ordinances. Thus they renounce their allegiance to him, and disclaim his authority and sovereignty over them; they refuse to be subject to his laws: they condemn his wisdom; they slight his justice; they abuse his mercy and goodness; and, instead of seeking, in the first

place, (as upon all accounts they are bound to do,) the glory of their Maker's name, the propagation of his kingdom, and the fulfilling of his will, they set up that idol *self* in the place of the living God; they seek their own worldly honour, interest, and pleasure, more than his; and to this unhappy idol of their own self-love, they sacrifice their soul and conscience, their God and all. And can there be any other evil comparable to this?

Conclude utterly to renounce, detest, and abhor, for the time to come, all mortal sin, and to fly it more than hell itself. And as to all thy past guilt in this kind, bewail it from thy heart as the greatest of all evils, and do penance for it all thy life time.

JANUARY 27.

On the manifold Aggravations that are found in mortal Sin

CONSIDER, first, that besides the bottomless depth of the malice of mortal sin, from its opposition to the infinite goodness of God, and the high treason it contains against his divine majesty, there are divers other enormities and most heinous aggravations in every mortal sin, that beyond measure extend and multiply its guilt. The first of these is the sinner's black ingratitude to God, which is a circumstance that violently aggravates the guilt of every sin he commits against his Maker and Redeemer, his ancient Lover, his dearest Friend, and perpetual Benefactor; from whom he has received, and daily receives, all that he has, and all that he is; and this out of pure love, without any desert on his part, and such a love as can suffer no comparison, since it has brought the Lover down from heaven, to die for this very wretch that dares thus ungratefully to offend him, and to crucify him again by sin. I know not whether any of the devils in hell, if God had done so much for them, would ever have been so ungrateful as to offend him any more.

Consider, secondly, the manifold injustice that is found in every mortal sin, in the violation of all the rights and titles that God has to us, and to our love and service; as he is our first beginning, and our last end, who made us, and made us for himself; as he is the very Being of our beings, the great Monarch of the whole creation, the Lord of us and of all things; as he has purchased us for himself, and marked us out for his own; and we, on our part, have been solemnly dedicated and consecrated to him, that we might be his both for time and eternity. The wretched sinner breaks through all these considerations; withdraws himself from his Maker, his King, his Lord, and his Redeemer; villanously and sacrilegiously alienates from him what, upon all these titles, is strictly his; and makes all over to

his mortal enemy; and, in exchange for some petty trifle he sells to him both his soul and his God. And does not such an enormous injustice cry to heaven for vengeance? more especially in Christians, in whom it is joined with the aggravating circumstances of a profanation of the temple of God, and of a notorious perfidiousness, by the violation of their solemn vows and engagements made to him.

Consider, thirdly, that, in every mortal sin, there is found, in some measure, the guilt of the breach of all the ten commandments, according to that of St. James ii. 10. *He that offends in one point is guilty of all.* Because, whosoever wilfully breaks through any part of the divine law by mortal sin, violates the first commandment, by turning away from the true and living God, and refusing him the worship that is due to him; he is guilty of idolatry, by *worshipping the creature*, which is the object or occasion of his sin, *rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.* Rom. i. He profanes the sacred name of God, and blasphemes him, if not in words, at least in facts, by treading his authority under foot. He violates the true and everlasting sabbath of God's rest, by the servile work of sin, by which he makes himself a slave to Satan. He dishonours, in a most outrageous manner, the best of fathers. He is guilty of the murder of his own soul, and of the Son of God himself, whom he crucifies by sin. He is guilty of a spiritual adultery, by prostituting to Satan his soul, which has been espoused to Christ. He is guilty of theft, robbery, and sacrilege, as we have seen above, by taking away from God what belongs to him. He bears false witness, in fact, against the law of God, in favour of lies and deceit; for all sin is a lie. And, that nothing may be wanting to complete his wickedness, he is guilty of coveting what is not his, and what he has no right to, and what the law of God restrains him from. So manifold is the guilt that is found in any one wilful sin.

Conclude to detest the ingratitude, injustice, perfidiousness, and all the other aggravations that are found in mortal sin, and to make it thy continual prayer, that thou mayst rather die ten thousand deaths, than once incur this dreadful complication of all evils.

JANUARY 28.

On the Presumption, Folly, and Madness of the wilful Sinner

CONSIDER, first, the desperate presumption of a worm of the earth, that dares to attack, by wilful sin, the Almighty Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who holds the thread of his life in his hand, and can in that moment let him drop into hell. And

what can the wretch expect from making war with God? with a God who is eternal, immense, and every way infinite;—a God whose eye is ever upon all his ways, and who has an infinite hatred for mortal sin;—a God without whom he can neither live nor move, nor be? What then can he expect from making this God his enemy, but the loss of all manner of good, and the incurring of all misery, both temporal and eternal? Alas! from the moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of God is drawn against him, and continually hangs over his guilty head, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell, encompass him on all sides. The captain himself, whom he follows in this warfare, is already damned; his fellow-soldiers are daily falling down the precipice, and crowding into hell; and what has he to hope for?

Consider, secondly, the folly and madness that are found in every wilful sin; forasmuch as the wilful sinner, by his own act and deed, freely and deliberately parts with his God, an infinite good, and the source of all his good; gives up his title to heaven, together with all his treasures of virtue, grace, and merit, and sells his soul into the bargain, to be a slave to Satan here, and a victim of hell hereafter; and, in exchange for all this, he purchases nothing but hubbles and shadows, that are unable to afford him one moment of solid content, that leave nothing behind them but uneasiness and remorse, and continually expose him to all kinds of misery, both for time and eternity! And is it possible to conceive a greater madness than this? Alas! it is exchanging heaven for hell, God for the devil, the supreme and infinite good for the very abyss of endless and infinite evils!

Consider, thirdly, the folly and madness of sinners in looking for any success in their ways, or blessing on their undertakings, whilst they oppose, by wilful sin, the holy will of God, and violate his divine law and commandments. All men have an inbred desire of their own well-being: this the sinner pretends to seek in the unhappy choice he makes, whenever he indulges himself in sin; but, alas! in vain does he seek it where it is not to be found. He seeks for happiness in the way that leads to all kinds of misery; he seeks for honour in that which is in itself most disgraceful, and which strips him of all true honour; he seeks an imaginary gain in that which brings with it the greatest of all losses, he seeks for pleasure, and meets with pain, discontent, and uneasiness; he seeks for peace and joy, and finds nothing but disturbance and sorrow; he seeks for a false liberty, and falls into true slavery; he seeks for life, but all in vain; because he seeks it in the region of death. And can any thing be more extravagant and mad than to seek for any good, whilst one wilfully turns one's back upon the source of all good? Alas! the soul here experi-

ences to her cost, in the opposition and disappointments she meets with, in all her projects and all her pursuits, the truth of those menaces of God by the prophet Osee. *Osee ii. 6, &c. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will stop it up with a wall; and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, and shall not find them, &c.* For it is even thus the poor sinner, in all he turns to, when he turns away from God, meets with a hedge of thorns in his way, which he cannot pass over, and runs after a shadow that flies away from him.

Conclude to be more wise, and to seek thy happiness where it is to be found, that is, in the love and service of God: if thou seek it any where else, thou shalt lose thy labour, and be in danger of losing thyself too, and of condemning thy folly and madness for a long eternity.

JANUARY 29.

On the dismal Havoc Sin has made in the World.

CONSIDER the havoc this monstrous evil of wilful sin made, in its first conception, in heaven itself; when one sin, consented to but in thought, changed in an instant millions of most beautiful angels into ugly devils; cast them out of heaven, and condemned them eternally to hell. O dreadful poison, that canst thus blast in a moment so many legions of heavenly spirits! O dreadful guilt, that canst draw such a dismal and irrevocable judgment from a God, whose very nature is goodness, and who loves all his works, upon his favourite creatures! And thou, my soul, that knewest this, how didst thou ever dare to sin? And how hath thy God been able to endure thee under the guilt of so many treasons?

Consider, secondly, the havoc sin has made upon earth, when this monster, banished from heaven, was entertained by our first parents, in the earthly paradise. Alas! in one moment it stripped them and all their race of that original justice, innocence and sanctity in which they were created, and of all the gifts of divine grace; it wounded them in all the powers of the soul it gave them up to the tyranny of Satan; it cast them out of paradise, and condemned them both to a temporal and eternal death. In the mean time, it let loose upon them a whole army of all manner of evils, both of soul and body; which are all of them the dismal consequences of sin; and has entailed upon all mankind an unexpressible weakness with regard to the doing of good, and a violent inclination to evil, which has filled the world with innumerable sins, and with innumerable most dreadful

judgments, both upon particulars, and upon whole nations, in punishment of sin.

Consider, thirdly, that sin, by infecting and corrupting so many of the principal creatures of God, has in some measure blasted the whole creation, and subjected the whole to many evils, which the apostle (*Rom. viii. 20, 21.*) calls the *servitude of corruption*, inasmuch as God's creatures are abused by men and devils, and made subservient to sin and corruption; as also *vanity*, inasmuch as, by occasion of sin, they are also liable to a perpetual instability, and a variety of defects. Hence the whole creation, by a figure of speech, is said by the apostle *to groan, and to be in labour*; longing, as it were, for its deliverance from its unhappy subjection to sin, *into the liberty of the glory of the children of God*; which shall then be accomplished, when the reign of sin shall be utterly abolished; and, the world being purged by the last fire, God shall make for his children *new heavens and a new earth, in which justice shall dwell.* 2 Peter iii. 13. O when shall that happy hour come! when shall this hellish monster, sin, be for ever excluded from all other parts of the creation, and shut up in its proper place, never to come out to blast the world any more!

Conclude to abhor the evil that has made such dreadful havoc both in heaven and earth, and to spare no pains for the abolishing of it both in thyself and in all others.

JANUARY 30.

On the dismal Havoc Sin makes in the Soul of a Christian.

CONSIDER, first, how strangely the soul is changed, that falls from the state of grace into mortal sin. The metamorphose is not unlike to that of an angel into a devil. A soul in grace is a child of God, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit; but in the moment she consents to mortal sin, she forfeits all her honour and dignity; she becomes a slave of hell, a prostitute to Satan, a den of unclean spirits. A soul in grace is beautiful, like an angel, and agreeable to the eyes of God and his saints; but a soul in mortal sin is ugly, like the devil, and most odious, filthy and loathsome to her Maker, and all his heavenly court. A soul in grace is very rich; she is worth an eternal kingdom; she always carries her God about with her, and is entitled to the eternal possession of him; but when she falls into mortal sin, she loses at once all her store of virtue and merit, she becomes wretchedly poor and miserable, and, instead of possessing God, she is possessed by the devil.

Consider, secondly, that sin gives a mortal wound to the soul; it is the death of the soul. For as it is the soul of man that gives life to the body, and when the soul is departed, the body is dead, and becomes a lump of clay, without either sense or motion, so it is the grace of God that gives life to the soul; and that soul is dead, which by mortal sin has lost her God, and drove away his grace from her. O dismal separation! O dreadful death indeed, which wanteth nothing but eternity to make it hell! Sinners, how can you endure yourselves under this wretched condition? If a dead carcass, from which the soul is gone, be so very loathsome and frightful, that few would endure to pass one night in the same bed with such a bedfellow, how can you bear to carry continually about with you, night and day, a filthy carcass of a soul dead in mortal sin, and quite putrefied and corrupted by her sinful habits? Ah! open your eyes now, at least, to see your deplorable case, and to detest the monster sin, the cause of all your misery. O run to him, without any further delay, by humble prayer and repentance, who alone can raise the dead to life.

Consider, thirdly, how true that is of the scripture, that *they that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul.* Tob. xii. 10; and that *he that doeth iniquity hateth his own soul.* Ps. x. 6. Since of all the evils that we can possibly incur, either here or hereafter, there is none comparable to the evil we bring upon ourselves by mortal sin; so that if all men upon earth, and all the devils in hell, should all conspire together, with a general license from God, to do us all the mischief, and to inflict upon us all the torments they could invent, they could never do us half so much hurt as we do ourselves by one mortal sin. Because all that they can do, as long as we do not consent to sin, cannot hurt the soul; whereas we ourselves, by consenting to any one mortal sin, bring upon our own souls a dreadful death, both for time and eternity. Good God! never suffer us to be so wretchedly blind, as to become thus the wilful murderers of our own souls.

Conclude never more to join thyself with thy mortal enemies, the world, the flesh, or the devil, in waging war against thy own soul by wilful sin. But make it thy continual prayer to God, that he would never suffer thee at any rate to consent to so great an evil, though thou wert even to endure a thousand deaths for thy refusal.

JANUARY 31.

On the Judgments of God upon mortal Sin.

CONSIDER, first, that besides all the sad effects of mortal sin, already mentioned, which are more than sufficient to demonstrate how heinous this worst of evils is in the sight of God, there still remain divers other convincing arguments of the hatred God bears to it, from the manifold judgments he has of old, and daily does, execute upon them that are guilty of it; and shall continue to execute, to the end of the world, and even to all eternity. Witness of old the judgment of the deluge, which, in punishment of the general corruption of all flesh, swept off at once all the sinners of the earth, and hurried them down to hell. Witness the judgment of fire from heaven on Sodom and the neighbouring cities: witness the many judgments on the rebel Israelites in the wilderness; particularly that remarkable one of the earth opening and swallowing up alive Core and his companions; and the fire from the Lord, destroying in an instant fourteen thousand seven hundred of their abettors. *Numb. xvi.* Witness, in every age of the world, millions that have been hurried away when they least expected it, by violent or untimely death, in punishment of their crying sins; besides many instances of flourishing cities, yea, and of whole nations too, destroyed by wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, &c., all brought upon them by their sins. O great God! who shall not fear thy almighty wrath, which always looks towards wilful sinners? who shall not fear the dreadful evil of mortal sin, which thus provokes thy avenging justice?

Consider, secondly, that though these visible judgments of God upon impenitent sinners, by which they are snatched away before their time by unprovided death in the midst of their sins, be both very common and very terrible, yet there is another kind of more secret judgments, which he daily executes upon thousands, which is far more terrible; inasmuch as it brings upon them a far more dreadful damnation. And that is, when, in punishment of their abuse of grace, and obstinacy in sin, he gives them up at length to a reprobate sense, and to a blindness and hardness of heart; so that they have now no more any fear, or thought of God, or his judgments, or any concern at all for their souls, or for eternity. Now this is indeed the broad road to final impenitence, and is in its consequences the very worst of all God's judgments. It was thus he did by the Jews, according to the prediction of the royal prophet, Ps. lxxviii, *Letting their eyes be darkened that they should not see; and bowing down their back always—adding iniquity upon their iniquity, &c.* Namely

by withdrawing his lights and his graces from them; and so giving them up to their own wicked inclinations: and thus he daily does with thousands of habitual sinners, in punishment of their slighting and resisting his repeated calls, *Prov. i. 24. &c.*; suffering them to go on in their wretched ways, and to add daily sin upon sin, (without ever thinking of repentance,) and consequently hell upon hell; which proves, at long run, a far more dreadful judgment upon them, than if, upon their first sin, the earth had opened, and swallowed them down alive into hell.

Consider, thirdly, the judgments of God upon mortal sin, in the eternal duration of the torments of hell. O sinners, go down now, whilst you are alive, into that bottomless pit, and take a serious view of the rigour of God's justice there, of that worm that never dies, of that fire that never is extinguished, of that everlasting rage and despair, and of all that complication of the worst of evils, that is to be found in that woful dungeon: and then tell me what you think of the hatred God must bear to every mortal sin, when he, who is infinitely good and infinitely just, and cannot punish any one beyond what he richly deserves, condemns every soul that dies under any such guilt to all this extremity of misery, for all eternity. Surely the dismal prospect of this scene of wo must suffice to convince you of the enormity of mortal sin. But if any thing be here wanting to a full conviction, turn your eyes upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and see how he was treated by the justice of his Father, for our sins, which he had taken upon himself to expiate: see him agonizing in the garden, and sweating blood, under their enormous weight: see the multitude and variety of torments he endures for them, till his expiring upon a cruel and disgraceful cross; and how, notwithstanding the infinite dignity of his person, the divine justice would admit of nothing less than of all these sufferings of his own Son for the expiation of any one mortal sin: and I am persuaded that the sight of a God, crucified for sin, must more effectually demonstrate to you the hatred God bears to this monstrous evil than the sight of hell itself, with all its dreadful and everlasting torments.

Conclude by giving thanks to God for having spared thee so long in thy sins, and resolving now to labour in earnest to avert, by a serious and speedy conversion, those judgments, which thou mayest have reason to apprehend are actually hanging over thy head for thy sins

FEBRUARY 1.

On not making light of venial Sins.

CONSIDER, first, that although there be no manner of comparison between the guilt of a mortal sin, and that of a venial sin, as there is no manner of comparison between a mote and a beam, *Matt. vii. 3.*, yet the guilt even of the least venial sin, considering that it is an offence of a God infinitely great and infinitely good, is so displeasing in his sight, that no soul that is stained with it can ever be admitted into his presence till this guilt be purged away; and no man living can be allowed, by any power in heaven or in earth, to commit any one venial sin; no, not to save a kingdom, or even to save the whole world; because the offence of God is a greater evil than the loss of the whole world; and we are not to do any thing that is evil to save the whole world. Christians, do you think of this when, upon every trifling apprehension of incurring the displeasure of man, you take refuge in a lie, which is sure to displease your God? Do you think of this, when you go on with so little concern, indulging yourselves in vanity, curiosity, sensuality, loss of your precious time, anger, impatience, and other sinful habits, upon the notion that these are but venial sins, and therefore need not be regarded? Oh! you will find one day to your cost, how much you have been deceived, if you do not correct in time this dangerous and pernicious error.

Consider, secondly, the danger to which the soul exposes herself, when she makes light of venial sins; even the danger of the very worst of evils, that is, of mortal sin, and of all its dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity; according to that of the wise man, *Eccles. xix. He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.* It is true, venial sin does not of itself immediately destroy, or drive away from the soul, the grace and love of God, and therefore does not of itself bring present death to the soul, as mortal sin does; but then it weakens and cools the fervour of divine love, it lessens devotion, it hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working effectually in the soul, it leaves the soul feeble and drowsy, sick and languishing; so that, upon the coming of a greater temptation, she easily yields, and quickly falls into mortal sin. And how can we expect it should be otherwise, when we have so little regard to God, or his friendship and love, as not to care how much we displease him, provided we can but escape his avenging justice? Or how can the fire of the love of God be kept alive for any long time in the soul, when, instead of being nourished with its proper fuel, it is

continually losing ground, by a diminution of its heat and strength?

Consider, thirdly, that this danger of falling quickly into mortal sin, by making little or no account of venial sins, is the greater, because of the difficulty there often is of distinguishing betwixt what is mortal sin and what is only venial, since even the best divines are often at a loss to find the limits between the one and the other; so that all such as are in the unhappy disposition of venturing without scruple as far as the utmost limits of venial sin can be extended, are daily exposed to an evident danger of slipping beyond the bounds, and of falling into the pit of mortal sin—the more because of the manifold subtleties and deceits of self-love, which is ever ready to favour and to excuse the inclinations of corrupt nature, and, in all such cases, to make that appear slight which is really grievous; and the more still, when persons give themselves up to a tepid, negligent life, as they generally do, who make light of venial sins; for this negligence takes the soul off from her guard, disarms her, and lays her interior open to the spiritual sins of pride, envy, and such like disorders, which are mortal sins, and which easily prevail over careless souls, and are seldom thoroughly cured.

Conclude with a sincere resolution of never wilfully, and with full deliberation, consenting to any one known sin, how venial soever it may seem to be; and much more of never indulging any habit or custom of any such sins. It is hard to reconcile the indulging such habits as these with the great commandment of the love of God above all things; at least it cannot be expected that divine love should abide to dwell for any long time in a heart where God is so often slighted.

FEBRUARY 2.

ON CANDLEMAS DAY.

CONSIDER, first, that, on this day, the blessed Virgin Mary, according to the rites prescribed by the ancient law, came to the temple of God, to be purified after her childbearing, and to make her offering, according to what her poverty allowed, of a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons, the one for a whole burnt-offering, the other as a sacrifice for sin. *Levitic. xii.* Admire her ready *obedience* to a law, in which in reality she was not concerned, being exempted by that singular privilege of hers of bringing forth a son, without any detriment to her virginal purity. Admire her *humility*, in being willing to pass for a person unclean, she that was more pure than the angels; and to be excluded for forty days from touching any thing that was holy, or

coming near the house of God; and to be cleansed by a sin offering, as if she needed any such expiation. Admire her love of *purity*, which brought her on this day to the temple of God, to be there *purified* with these legal sacrifices; because she was desirous of omitting nothing that could any ways contribute to increase or maintain *purity*. And learn to imitate these three great virtues, namely, her ready obedience, her profound humility, and her great zeal and love for purity.

Consider, secondly, that, on this day, the blessed Virgin made a rich present to God, in his temple, infinitely surpassing all the offerings that had ever been made there before; when, according to the law of the *first-born*, Exod. xiii., she presented her Son, the first-born of the whole creation, by whom all things were made, both visible and invisible, to his eternal Father. Parents, learn to imitate this presentation, by making an offering of your children to God, by the hands of Mary, to be dedicated for ever to his love and service. Christians, learn to present him with your hearts, together with all their offspring, your thoughts, words, and deeds: learn to make an offering to him of your whole being, every day and every hour of your life. But then you must not stop here: you must also present to him his son Jesus Christ, and yourselves with him, and through him; daily in the sacred mysteries, and hourly in the spiritual temple of your souls. The temple of God in Jerusalem was highly honoured, on this day, by the presence of the Son of God, according to that prophecy of Aggeus, c. ii. *The Desired of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory; saith the Lord of hosts.—Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* My soul, art not thou ambitious of a share in this glory, peace, and happiness? Invite then this same Son of God, *the Desired of all nations*, into thy inward house; and he will come and make thee the temple of his glory, and bring thee his true peace, which will make thee happy indeed.

Consider, thirdly, that on this day the venerable Simeon, who had received a promise from the Holy Ghost, that he should see the Saviour of the world before he died, coming by divine instinct into the temple, whilst our Lord was presented there, took him into his arms, and declared him to be the promised Messias, the Glory of Israel, and the Light of all nations. At the same time, that holy widow, Anna, the prophetess, who for a great number of years had attended on the Lord in his temple by continual prayer and fasting, was also favoured with the like grace, and made the like public profession of her faith in our infant Saviour. This sacred meeting of so many persons of such eminent sanctity, in the temple of God, in company with the Son of God and

his blessed Mother, the church celebrates in the procession of this day, which we make, with lighted candles in our hands, that are solemnly blessed in the name of Christ, and received from the hand of God's priest, as emblems of the light of Christ. See then, Christian souls, with what affection of devotion you ought to receive, and to bear in your hands, these hallowed candles, as figures of Christ. O, learn, on this occasion, of holy Simeon, to seek Christ alone, to sigh after him alone, to aspire with your whole souls after his embraces, despising all things else, that you may find him. O, remember that he is the true light of the world, in his life and doctrine; and determine from this time forward ever to follow him.

Conclude to study well all the lessons, which are to be learnt from the presentation of the Son of God, and the purification of his blessed Mother; and to conform yourselves to them in the practice of your lives; that so, being purified from all your sins, you may also be worthy to be one day presented to God, in the eternal temple of his glory.

FEBRUARY 3.

On the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. St. Matt. xx
FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day we enter upon a time of devotion and penance, in the way of a preparation for the solemn fast of Lent: and therefore we are called upon by the church, both in the epistle, and in the gospel of this Sunday, to begin now at least to be quite in earnest, in the great concern of our souls. In the epistle, we are put in mind by St. Paul (1 Cor. ix. and x.) that we are all here running in a race, in which we must push forward with all our power, or we shall lose the prize; that we are engaged in a conflict for an incorruptible crown, which is not to be obtained without much labour and self-denial; that if we are not in earnest, notwithstanding all the distinguishing favours we have received, and daily do receive from God, we shall be in great danger to be excluded, like the Israelites, from the true land of promise. In the parable of the gospel, we are put in mind, that we have but one business in this world, which is here represented under the figure of labouring in the vineyard of our Lord; that in this labour we are to spend the short day of our mortal life; and, by persevering till night in this labour, we are to secure to our souls the wages of a happy eternity: O let us attend well, that we may learn these great lessons!

Consider, secondly, in the parable of this day's gospel, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us, in that perpetual attention of his, in every age, since the beginning of the world, and in every part of the life of man, to go out by his divine graces and calls, and to invite, to hire and to send labourers into his vineyard. And after all, what need has he of our labours? or of what service can we be to him? or what can we give him, which he does not first give to us? Why then does he press us to labour in his vineyard? O, it is his pure goodness and love, that he may make us for ever happy by our serving him here, and enjoying him hereafter. But what then is the meaning of this *vineyard* of our Lord? and what is this labour that he calls for at our hands? *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts*, saith the prophet Isaias, chap. v. ver. 7., *is the house of Israel*, that is, the people of God. Yes: our own souls are the vineyard we are commanded to cultivate: no one can be excused from his share in this labour: every one must at least take care of one. To labour here to the purpose, we must in the first place root out the poisonous weeds of sinful habits, and cut up all the thorns and briers of our vices and passions; and then we must plant in their stead the good plants of Christian virtues, and bring them on, by proper care and manure, till they are capable of bringing forth fruit, that may answer the expectation of the great Lord and Master of the vineyard, and be agreeable to him. O how happy shall we be, if, by our labours and his blessing, we so cultivate this little part of the Lord's vineyard, that falls to our share, as to engage him to come to us, and recreate himself there with us!

Consider, thirdly, Christian souls, how early in the morning your good God invited you to work in his vineyard, by the early knowledge he gave you of himself, and of the end for which he brought you into the world; and how frequently he has pressed you, ever since, by his repeated graces and calls, in every part of your life, to oblige you to set about this work in good earnest. But can you say you have yet begun? May he not justly reproach you, as he did those whom he found standing in the market-place at the eleventh hour; *why stand you here all the day idle?* Alas! are you not *idle*, when you are doing nothing to the purpose? And has not your whole life hitherto been spent in doing nothing to your purpose? nothing to answer the great end, the only business for which you were made? Have you not then been truly idle all the day, that is, all the time of your life? O begin now at least to labour: perhaps this is your last hour your day is far spent: the night is coming on, *when no man can work*. John ix. 4. Work therefore now, whilst you have time, lest, being surprised by the night, you may have no more time to work in, and so starve for eternity.

Conclude to make good use of this fresh summons, by which you are called upon this day, by God and his church, to go, and to labour in the vineyard of your souls, lest otherwise, by not corresponding to the call, and by receiving this grace of God in vain, you verify in yourselves that sentence with which our Lord concludes the parable of this Sunday: *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

FEBRUARY 4.

On the Multitude of our Sins.

CONSIDER, first, O my soul, how long it is since thou wast first so miserable as to fall from thy God by sin; and how much thy sins have been multiplied since that unhappy hour. Alas! didst thou not, at thy first coming to the use of reason, forfeit thy baptismal innocence, and fall a prey to that hellish monster? It was thy indispensable duty, in consequence of thy creation, of thy redemption, and of thy baptismal engagements, to turn to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing him, as to thy first beginning and last end, and to dedicate thyself eternally to his love and service. And didst thou comply with this strict obligation? Lucifer and his companions were cast down headlong into hell, because, immediately after they were created, instead of turning to God, as they were bound to do, and dedicating themselves wholly to him, they turned away from him, to take pride in themselves: and hast thou not imitated these rebels, at the first dawning of thy reason, by turning also thy back upon God, and by preferring thy own irregular inclinations, and every senseless toy, before him?

Consider, secondly, how, after so wretched a beginning, thou hast gone on for so many years, daily adding sin to sin; against God, against thy neighbour, against thyself, by work, by word, or by desire; so that not one day, perhaps not even one hour, has yet passed, without frequently offending God, either by commission or omission, by ignorance, frailty or malice. Alas! my poor soul, is it not true, that, even from thy childhood, thou wast given to lies, passion and impurity? Is it not true, that, even then, thy thoughts went continually astray from God, after lying fooleries and vanities? that thy prayers were without attention; thy confessions without sincerity, repentance, or amendment, and thy whole life and conversation without any true sense of God, or any solid good? And hast thou grown any better by growing older? Or hast thou not rather daily multiplied thy sins, and still more and more corrupted and defiled all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses and members,

with repeated offences and treasons, and continually perverted and abused all the gifts of God against the giver? O, *pass over in thy mind (but let it be in the bitterness of thy soul) all thy years*, and lament to find, that thy sins have been indeed far more numerous than the hairs of thy head, besides an infinite multitude of hidden sins, or sins which thou hast occasioned in others, which keep out of sight at present, but will all one day appear against thee.

Consider, thirdly, to the end thou mayest make a better judgment of the immense number of thy offences and transgressions, how little thou hast complied, in any part of thy life, with the great duty of *loving God with thy whole heart*; of dedicating thy whole self to his service, and of directing, by a pure intention, all thy thoughts, words, and actions to him; how little restraint thou hast put upon thy natural inclinations, too strongly bent on evil, from thy very childhood; how little guard thou hast kept upon thy roving thoughts and imaginations; how little attention thou hast had not to offend in words, nor to give occasion of offence to others, &c. Reflect also how much of thy precious time thou hast squandered away; how many graces thou hast received in vain; how little thou hast corresponded with the divine calls and inspirations; how little use thou hast made of the talents, with which thou hast been intrusted; and how very ill thou hast discharged thyself of thy stewardship, in every part of thy life. And then see what armies of sins will presently rise up before thy eyes, and stand staring thee in the face. And how wilt thou dare, after so much guilt, and so much ingratitude, which is a perpetual aggravation of every one of thy sins, to lift up thy eyes any more to heaven, or so much as to name the holy name of God, which thou hast so often profaned?

Conclude to be always humble, by a true sense and daily remembrance of thy innumerable sins; to offer up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and to embrace henceforward a penitential life, as the best security after so much guilt.

FEBRUARY 5.

On the Goodness of God in waiting for Sinners.

CONSIDER, first, the wonders of God's goodness in his dealings with sinners. See with what patience he bears with them, and that, very often, for a long time; notwithstanding their repeated provocations, their continually abusing all his bounty and mercy, and that infinite hatred he always bears to mortal sin, wherever

he sees it. O my soul, how much art thou indebted to this patience of thy God, in bearing with thee, all these years past, ever since thy first fall into sin! Alas! hast thou not all this time been playing upon the very brink of that dreadful precipice which conducts to the bottomless pit? Hast thou not been at this while within a hair's breadth of a miserable eternity? Is it not true, that, every night thou hast gone to bed, thou didst not know but before the morning thou mightest find thyself in hell! Millions have fallen into that dismal dungeon of endless woe whilst thy God hath spared thee: millions are now burning in those unquenchable flames, for fewer sins than thou hast committed. O, blessed to all eternity be the infinite goodness of my God, and may all his angels and saints praise and glorify him for ever, for having endured me so long; for having preserved me all this time, and continually watched over me; or else my soul had long since dwelt in hell!

Consider, secondly, the many ways by which God seeks to reclaim sinners, and to call them home to him. Reflect on the remorse, and inward reproaches of conscience, with which he visits them; the terrors of his judgments, and the allurements of his mercies, which he sets before them. See how he is continually calling upon them, by his word, by his preachers, by good books, by good examples, and wholesome admonitions, and by a number of interior invitations and graces. Has he not dealt thus with thee, my soul, all this time thou hast been going astray from him? And what is the meaning of all this goodness of thy God to such an underserving, ungrateful, and obstinate rebel? Why, it is nothing else but his own pure mercy and love, in consideration of the precious blood of his Son. And shall not all this love of his for thee soften thy heart, and oblige thee, now at least, to resolve in good earnest to return to him; lest otherwise mercy, being long abused, should give place to justice; and the land which has been so often watered with rain from heaven, and still continues to bring forth nothing but thorns and briars, should fall at length under a dreadful curse, and be condemned to the fire? *Heb. vi.*

Consider, thirdly, what encouragement God gives to all sinners to return to him. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner; but that he may be converted from his ways, and may live. O why will you die, O house of Israel? Ezech. xxxiii. Return to me and live, chap. xviii. Thou hast gone astray after many lovers, but return to me, and I will receive thee, Jeremias iii.* See with what love the good shepherd in the gospel goes after the lost sheep; and with what joy he lays it upon his shoulders, and brings it home to the fold. See how the father runs out to meet the prodigal child, when he returns home

from the husks of the swine ; see how he embraces him, clothes him with the best robe, and makes a feast for him, *Luke xv.* Reflect how the Son of God, when here upon earth, treated the penitent Magdalene, the thief upon the cross, and all other sinners that had recourse to his mercy ; and how he has declared, that there is more joy in heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety and nine just, &c. And let all these instances and testimonies of his goodness to poor sinners encourage and determine us to stay no longer away from him by sin, but to arise without delay, and return to so good, to so loving a Father, by a thorough conversion.

Conclude to abuse no longer the mercies of God, by continuing in sin, but to turn to him, now at least, with thy whole heart, and never to depart from him any more.

FEBRUARY 6.

On turning from Sin to God.

CONSIDER, first, that every wilful sinner is guilty of two enormous evils : according to that of *Jerem. ii. 12, 13.* *Be astonished, O ye heavens—For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the Fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns, (pits,) broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* Yes, Christians, in every mortal sin, there are always these two exceeding great evils : namely, the turning away from a God infinitely good, and the very Fountain of all goodness and life ; and the embracing in his stead that hellish monstrous sin ; by the allurements of some deceitful appearance of an imaginary happiness, justly compared by the prophet to a broken cistern, that can hold no water, but only filth and mud. Wherefore, in the conversion of a sinner, there must also be always two principal ingredients, opposite to those two great evils : namely, the turning away from sin, with horror, detestation and sorrow, for having offended a God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us ; and the returning back to God, to embrace his holy law, and to dedicate the years that remain of life to his obedience, service, and love. Happy conversion, that thus brings the poor sinner back from the very worst of evils to his sovereign good !

Consider, secondly, that this turning away of the soul from sin, which is a necessary ingredient of the sinner's conversion, must be *effectual* ; that is, the soul must turn away from her sins in *effect*. She must not content herself with a slight sorrow for her sins, nor with faint purposes of amendment, nor with a half will, nor yet with making some weak efforts towards beginning a new life. But she must renounce her sins with her whole heart : she must

detest them above all evils: she must even hate them worse than hell: she must fly and abhor like a pestilence all such company, or other occasions, as may expose her to the danger of relapsing into them: she must be absolutely and resolutely determined never more to return to them, upon any consideration whatsoever. This is being *penitent indeed*. But to pretend to be true converts, without leaving our sins, is all a mockery.

Consider, thirdly, that the principal ingredient of the conversion of a sinner, is the turning to God with his whole heart; as the principal ingredient of sin is the turning away from God. Wherefore the true convert must not only leave the husks of the swine, which he hath hitherto set his heart upon; but he must arise, and return to the embraces of his Father, with a contrite and humble, but loving heart, resolved henceforward to be the eternal servant of his divine love. He must remember that *many sins are forgiven to him that loveth much*, Luke vii.; and that he that has been the greatest debtor, is the most obliged to love with his whole heart that merciful creditor, who shows so much love to him, in being so ready to discharge him of his great debts. In a word, a constant adhesion to God, by love and obedience, must be the perpetual business of a true convert. His whole life, for the time he has yet to come, must be dedicated and consecrated to divine love. This is his best security for the remission of all his past sins: this is the best preservative from all sin for the future.

Conclude to show thyself to be a true convert from sin to God, by renouncing all thy criminal affections, and sacrificing them all to the love of God; by hating what thou hast hitherto loved, and embracing with thy whole soul thy Lord and Saviour, crucified for the love of thee.

FEBRUARY 7.

On the Sentiments of a penitent Sinner.

CONSIDER, first, that according to the different steps that are usually taken in the sinner's conversion, different sentiments and affections gradually take possession of his soul. And first his faith, which was asleep before, awakened by serious consideration, or by hearing the word of God, or by reading good books, opens his eyes to discover, in part at least, how odious, how filthy a monster, has hitherto had possession of his soul, and what dreadful dangers have surrounded him, all this time he has been in sin; and still threaten him with the worst of judgments from God, both for time and eternity. This, by the help of the Holy Ghost, produces in his soul a wholesome fear of the justice of

God, and of that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are daily overtaking unrepenting sinners. Now this fear is usually the beginning of the greatest conversions. O how hard must that sinner be, whom neither the sight of the sword of God, hanging over his head, nor of a miserable death, following close at his heels, nor of hell, opened under his feet and just ready to swallow him down, can move to repentance!

Consider, secondly, that the sinner, being alarmed with the terrors of divine justice, seeks to find how he may escape these dreadful evils, that continually threaten him on every side; and how he may rid himself of his sins, the true source of all these evils. And here the mercy and goodness of God, and the precious blood of the Son of God, shed for poor sinners, present themselves before the eyes of his soul, and encourage him to hope, that the same God, whose mercy has endured him so long in his sins; whose goodness has watched over him all this while, preserving him from innumerable evils, and loading him with innumerable benefits; who has purchased this soul of his for himself, at so dear a rate; and who has shed his own blood to wash him from these very sins; will certainly receive him, now he desires to return to him, (according to his repeated promises made to repenting sinners) as he has received millions of others, that have returned to him after sin. And in this hope, he firmly purposes to neglect no one thing, required on his part, towards obtaining the absolution and full remission of all his sins, and a perfect reconciliation with his God.

Consider, thirdly, that the sinner, being thus encouraged, and resolved to go, and present himself before the throne of divine grace, and there to sue for the pardon of all his sins, through the precious blood of the Son of God, betakes himself to fervent prayer, in order to obtain the necessary disposition of *a contrite and humble heart*, without which there is no admittance to mercy and grace. This *contrite and humble heart* is an excellent composition of three great virtues; viz. penance, humility and divine love; *penance* fills the soul with a horror, and deep sense of sorrow for sin committed, together with an ardent desire to abolish it at any rate: *humility* obliges the soul to condemn herself, by reason of her manifold crimes, as worthy of all manner of evils, and unworthy of the least good; and to sit down in the very lowest place, as the most wretched, the most ungrateful, and the most abominable of all creatures; and divine love teaches her to consider and detest in her sins, not so much the evil they bring upon her as their infinite malice; from the infinite opposition they have to a God infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to her; and their enormous outrages against the Son of God, incarnate for the love of her. With these sentiments the true penitent

endeavours to prepare and dispose himself for the confession of his sins, and absolution from them. And this is that *contrite and humble heart which God never despises*. Psalm 1.

Conclude, if thou wouldst effectually turn from sin to God, to endeavour to walk in these steps; especially to meditate seriously upon the great truths that relate to eternity; and to labour with all thy power for the acquiring of a contrite and humble heart.

FEBRUARY 8.

On doing Penance for our Sins.

CONSIDER, first, that sentence of our Lord, Luke xiii. 5, *Except you do penance, you shall all perish*. The virtue of *penance* always was, is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary for every soul, that has at any time in life, fallen from God by wilful sin. It is the only plank that can save them after the shipwreck they have made of their innocence. *Aut pœnitendum aut ardentum*, says an ancient father, *either penance or hell fire*; there is no medium for wilful sinners: they must choose one of the two. Sin must be punished either here or hereafter; either by the penitent sinner, or by divine justice. Hence the preaching of *penance* to such as had fallen from God by sin, was the great subject of the commission of the prophets in the old Testament, and of the apostles and all apostolic preachers in the new. Hence it was by preaching of *penance*, and of the necessity of *bringing forth worthy fruits of penance*, that St. John Baptist was to prepare the people for Christ, *Matt.* iii.; and our Lord himself opened his mission with the same theme, *Matt.* iv. Because there can be no other way to come to God and a happy eternity, but either the way of innocence, or, when we have strayed from this, the way of *penance*.

Consider, secondly, that this virtue of *penance* does not only require of us that we should turn from sin to God, by a change of heart, and by a change of life, but also that we should labour to make satisfaction to the divine justice, by voluntary mortifications of the flesh, and other penitential exercises, for all the injuries and affronts we have offered him by our sins; and that by this means we should endeavour to discharge, according to our weak ability, the debt we owe to God for them. This is properly *doing penance* for our sins: this is what divine justice always expects: this is what the church of God has always called for from penitent sinners. We cannot be true penitents, without hating and detesting our sins above all evils, because they offend a God infinitely good: now this of necessity infers a hatred for this traitorous self-love of ours, and for all its irregular inclina-

tions and passions, as enemies of God and the soul, and especially a hatred for this sinful flesh, that is so apt to betray us into this dreadful evil of sin. And hence again naturally flows, in all true penitents, a sincere and effectual desire of punishing themselves for their sins, a desire of chastising this flesh by penitential exercises, and thereby doing their best to make satisfaction for their sins. This is, and ever was, one necessary ingredient of that virtue of *penance*, without which the sinner could never be reconciled to an offended God.

Consider, thirdly, how much this way of *doing penance* for our sins is inculcated in holy writ; where we are so often put in mind of *turning to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning; of doing penance in sackcloth and ashes*, and the like, and where we meet with divers instances of the mercy and favour God is pleased to show to all such as exercise themselves in these voluntary mortifications and humiliations of the flesh when they are accompanied, as they ought to be, with a penitential spirit. Here also we learn, that no assurance we can possibly have of the remission of our sins, is to exempt us from doing penance for them, when we see that king David, notwithstanding the prophet had assured him that *the Lord had taken away his sin*, (2 Sam. xii. 13,) yet still continued to do penance for it, as we find by his penitential psalms, which inform us, that his sin was always before him; that he washed every night his couch with his tears; that he laboured in his groans; that he mingled ashes with his bread, and tears with his drink, &c. O let us imitate this glorious penitent!

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true friend to thy own soul, not to be afraid of hurting this sinful flesh, which is thy greatest enemy; but to keep it in subjection, by voluntary mortifications, and to chastise it for its past misdemeanors by penitential austerities.

FEBRUARY 9.

On the Manner of doing Penance for our Sins.

CONSIDER, first, that the true manner of doing penance for our sins, is not to be learned from the maxims, or from the common practice of the children of this world, who fear nothing more than the hurting of themselves, or the contradicting of their own humours, appetites, and inclinations; and therefore this *bringing forth fruits worthy of penance* is to them a hard saying, which they cannot endure to hear. But the true manner of doing penance for sin is to be learned of the children of light, that is, from the doctrine and practice of the saints,

who, as they had quite other ideas of the evil of sin, than worldlings have, so also they had a very different way of thinking, and of acting, in regard to penance; as they have demonstrated by the penitential austerities to which they have condemned themselves, all their life time, for expiation of the punishment due to their sins. And what are so many religious orders, in the church of God, in which so many thousands of both sexes, retiring from the world, dedicate themselves to daily mortifications and penances, but as many standing memorials, and living instances, of that true manner of doing penance, which the spirit of God usually inspires to those whom he *convincés of sin*, that is to say, whom he makes sensible of the heinousness of the evil of sin, and how much ought to be done for the expiation of it.

Consider, secondly, how this same spirit of God dictated to the ancient church those rules and ordinances, commonly called the *penitential canons*, which were in force for many hundred years, by which penitent sinners were subjected to divers fasts and other humiliations, for three, seven, ten and sometimes for fifteen years, or more, for one mortal sin, and yet did not think they did too much. O how ought this to convince sinners, that there is something more to be done for the remission of their sins, than they have hitherto been aware of! For though, according to the modern discipline of the church, these *penitential canons* are not now enforced, yet as God is still the same, and sin is still as heinous in his eyes, as it was in former ages, so the sinner stands no less indebted at present to the divine justice than formerly, and therefore ought to think upon discharging this debt, in the best manner he is able, by frequent fasting and other corporeal mortifications, as well as by alms-deeds, and long continued prayer.

Consider, thirdly, that there are three particular practices of penance, which ought never to be forgotten, by any such as have, at any time in life, been guilty of mortal sin. The first and principal is, that they should go daily in spirit to the feet of Christ, to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from a loving heart; and there earnestly beg pardon for all their past offences, through his precious blood. The second, which will naturally flow from the first, is, that, having their sins thus always before their eyes, they should daily offer up to God, in penance for them, some voluntary mortifications of their own will, humour, or appetite; at least, in lesser things, if they have not the courage or strength to undertake greater. For instance, that they should, in this spirit, rise early in the morning; retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, sleeping, and diversions; and mortify upon every occasion, their vanity, curiosity and sensuality. The third is, that they should also offer up daily for

their sins, in a penitential spirit, all the labours, to which their state of life is exposed, with all their pains and sufferings of every kind, which they may have to endure in life or death, to be united to, and sanctified by, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God; considering themselves all the while as under a course of penance laid on them by the Almighty for their sins, and going through it with humility, patience, and courage. Whosoever shall diligently persevere in the practice of these three things, will be allowed of one day as true penitents, and receive the crown of true penitents, though their circumstances of life, strength, or health, may not have admitted of any other penitential austerities. But no condition of life, or other circumstances whatsoever, ought to dispense with any sinner, from these three most easy, and most wholesome exercises of penance.

Conclude upon doing penance for thy sins, in the best manner thou art able, now, whilst thou hast time before thee; lest otherwise thou be surprised and overtaken with the night, and mayest then wish in vain to have done penance, when time shall be no more.

FEBRUARY 10.

On the Parable of the Sower. Luke viii. Being the Gospel of Sexagesima Sunday.

CONSIDER, first, in this parable, the infinite riches of the goodness and bounty of the Son of God, who, without distinction, or respect of persons, sows so plentifully the seed of his word, and of his graces, on all kind of soils. This seed is heavenly: it is capable of producing fruit a hundred fold: he himself is the sower; and he himself waters with rain from heaven the seed he has sown: and yet three parts in four of this divine seed are lost, for want of a correspondence in the soil. Christians, see in what manner you receive the seed of God's word: see how you correspond with the divine graces and calls: your eternal salvation is here at stake. If you bring forth good fruit, agreeable to this divine seed, you shall live on it for endless ages, in the kingdom of heaven; but if you suffer the soil of your soul to be like a beaten highway, or like a rock, covered but with a thin surface of earth, or like a ground overrun with thorns and briars, the seed of God will be lost upon you, and you will be answerable for the loss of it, and miserable for all eternity.

Consider, secondly, what is here meant by the *highway*; where the seed is trodden under foot, or picked up by the birds;

and see how justly all such souls are compared to a *highway*, or a beaten path, as live in the forgetfulness of God, and in a continual dissipation of thought, so as to become a mere thoroughfare for every passenger that pleases; that is, for every idle amusement that offers itself; for every impertinent or sinful imagination; without any fence at all of the fear of God, or any care to keep off those wicked spirits, signified by the birds, which are ever upon the watch to catch away this divine seed of God's word, that lies thus unregarded on the surface of the soul. But what is the remedy for this evil? No other, to be sure, than to plough up this ground, that has hitherto been made a highway, to fence it in in such a manner as that the passengers may have no longer liberty to be continually trampling it under foot, and to harrow it so that the seed may be covered by the earth, and lie no longer exposed to be a prey to the birds. For a highway, or beaten path, as long as it remains such, can never bring forth fruit. Now, in the spiritual sense, we plough up the soil of the soul, by daily meditations upon eternal truths; we fence it in by a spirit of recollection; and we preserve the divine seed, which is to make it fruitful, from our spiritual enemies, by letting it sink deep into our souls, and there guarding it by watching and prayer.

Consider, thirdly, who they are that are meant by the *rock*, or *stony ground*, where there is no depth of earth, nor proper moisture to nourish the seed, so as to bring the fruit to maturity; viz. such souls as receive indeed the word of God; and are moved by it to make some good resolutions, and some slender efforts towards bringing forth the fruits of a new life; but the *rock* of their old bad habits (which they have never heartily renounced) hinders the seed from taking root: their resolutions are but superficial; they do not sink in deep enough to reach, or change the heart, but, upon the first opposition or temptation, they wither away and die. The remedy here must be to procure that this rock may be softened, by the means of a long continued application to mental prayer, and other spiritual exercises; till those old habits are brought to give way to the fear and love of God, which are capable even of breaking the rock in pieces, and of changing it into springs of water.

Conclude to be ever attentive to the gracious calls of the word of God, and of his heavenly inspirations, and to let this divine seed sink deep into thy soul by daily meditation.

FEBRUARY 11.

On the remaining Part of the Parable of the Sower.

CONSIDER, first, that there remains a third kind of soil, which brings no fruit to maturity; viz. the *thorny ground*, which receives indeed the seed of the divine word, but suffers it not to grow up, and to ripen, but overpowers it, and chokes it up with the thorns, which are its natural produce, and which have taken a much stronger root therein. By which thorny ground are meant all they who hear the word of God, or are otherwise favoured with the visits of his graces and calls, but are so unhappy as to suffer all this heavenly seed to be overpowered, and choked up with their carnal affections and lusts; or, as our Saviour says, *with the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life; and so yield no fruit.* Luke viii. 14. O see, my soul, if this be not thy misfortune. Reflect how often thou hast been visited with graces from heaven! how often thou hast heard or read the word of God! And what fruit has this divine seed hitherto produced in thee? It is well if, instead of the increase of a hundred fold, it has not been rendered absolutely fruitless, if not pernicious to thee, by the thorns of thy disorderly affections to the things of this world, which thou hast loved more than God.

Consider, secondly, that *thorny ground* can never bring any fruit to perfection, except the thorns be first rooted up: for since they are much stronger than the corn, and have taken a deeper root in this unhappy soil, (in consequence of the curse laid upon our earth by occasion of sin, *Gen.* iii. 17, 18. ;) as long as they are suffered to occupy the ground, they will of course overpower, and choke up the good grain. Wherefore, if we desire to bring forth fruit, and that the seed of the word, and of the grace of God, should not be lost upon us, we must seriously apply our souls to the rooting out these thorns of our irregular affections to worldly toys and sensual pleasures; for as long as these are predominant in our souls, the seed of heaven will bring forth no fruit there. Now this rooting out of these thorns is the proper business of the virtue of self-denial, that is, of the daily mortification of our passions and natural inclinations, which are ever prone to evil, and, if not kept under, hurry the soul into all kinds of vice, and stifle all the graces and inspirations of heaven. This then must be the care of every Christian, this our daily labour, to keep these thorns under, that they may not overpower the seed of the word, and of the grace of God in our souls. And whatsoever we affect or love, to the prejudice of the love of God, or of our duty to him, we must look upon as thorns, and

discharge from our souls, as mortal enemies to the seed of heaven, and to our true welfare, either for time or eternity.

Consider, thirdly, that the Christian must endeavour to be the good ground, in which the seed of God's word yieldeth fruit an hundred-fold: that is, he must labour to be of the number of those, *who, with a good and perfect heart, hear the word, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.* He must hear it with a *good heart*; not out of idle curiosity, but for his own instruction and edification; not to carp at it, or criticise upon it; but to let it sink into his soul, for the reformation of his life. He must hear it with a *perfect heart*, embracing it as the word and truth of God, brought to him from heaven by the Son of God, and designed to carry him to heaven. He must *keep it*, by laying it up carefully in his mind, and often meditating upon it: he must ever follow its light, and regulate all his steps by it. He must *bring forth fruit* with it, by exercising himself daily in those virtues which it recommends, and advancing continually, by its direction, in the love of God, and in the way of Christian perfection. And this fruit he must bring forth *in patience*; that is, with constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding all the difficulties and oppositions he will be sure to meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Conclude to rid thy soul of all the thorns that may hinder it from bringing forth fruit to God; that thou mayest be the good ground that may yield a hundred fold.

FEBRUARY 12.

Against Delay of Repentance.

CONSIDER, first, that of all the tricks of Satan, by which he deludes unhappy souls to their eternal ruin, there is none more common, or more dangerous, than this by which he persuades them to put off their repentance and their conversion to God, from time to time, till there is no more time for them. Alas! thousands and millions of poor souls have been thus betrayed into that bottomless pit of never ending wo, *where the worm never dies and the fire is never extinguished*; who thought as little of damning themselves, or of dying in their sins, as any one now living: but by putting off their conversion, they have gone on provoking the divine justice, till by a just judgment of God, they have been cut off when they least expected it, and, dying as they lived, have been justly sentenced to that second and everlasting death. Unhappy wretches, who would not believe the just judge, who has so often warned them *to watch*, and assured them that otherwise he should surprise them, like a thief in the night,

when they least expected him. Ah! how dreadful and how common are these judgments!

Consider, secondly, the insupportable affront, that sinners offer to the divine majesty, when, being invited and pressed by his heavenly graces to a reconciliation with their offended God, they put him off till another time, shutting their ears to his sweet calls, and refusing him the entrance of their hearts, where he stands and knocks. Alas! if he withdraws himself, they are undone for ever: and how dare they treat him with so much contempt? Is it not an infinite goodness in him to have already suffered them so long in their sins; to have restrained the sword of his justice from falling upon their guilty heads; to have kept them so long out of hell, hanging as they were all the while over this bottomless pit, and supported only by a slender thread of a brittle life, which he held in his hand? Is it not an inexpressible condescension in his divine majesty, after their repeated treasons, to allow them any conditions of peace and reconciliation at all? How much more to call after them, when they are running away from him, and to press them so earnestly to return to him; whereas he has no need at all of them, but only seeks their welfare? But what then ought they not to apprehend from his justice, if they still refuse his offers of mercy, and slight his graces and calls? Can any punishment be too great for so much insolence, for so much obstinacy, and for so much ingratitude? O! let them give ear to his threats by the mouth of the wise man, Prov. i. *Because I have called, and you have refused to hear. I have stretched out my hand, and you would not regard me. You have despised all my counsels, and neglected my reprehensions. Therefore will I also laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that which you feared shall come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear, &c.*

Consider, thirdly, the monstrous presumption the sinner is guilty of, in wilfully persisting in sin, upon the confidence of a future conversion. Wretch that he is, how dares he pretend to dispose of the time to come, when he is not master of one moment of it? Or how has he the assurance to promise himself greater graces hereafter, than those he abuses at present. Does he not know that God alone is the master both of time and grace? and that he has neither promised the time nor grace of a true conversion hereafter, to any one of those who put off their repentance at the present? so far from it, that he has often signified to such presumptuous sinners, that they shall neither have the time, nor the effectual grace, which they promise themselves, but that they shall be surprised, and die in their sins. According to that of the wise man, Eccles. v. 8, 9. *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day: for his wrath shall*

come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he shall destroy thee.

Conclude never to expose thy dear soul, by any delays, to the dreadful danger of dying in thy sins: but if at any time thou hast reason to apprehend thou hast lost the grace of God by sin, use thy best endeavours to be reconciled out of hand. It is a dreadful thing to be an enemy of God, though it were to be only for one night. That night may be thy last: therefore never venture to lie down to sleep under the guilt of mortal sin.

FEBRUARY 13.

On the Folly of deferring our Conversion to God.

CONSIDER, first, how foolish it is for the sinner, when called, when invited, and pressed, by the best of Fathers, to return to him, to choose rather to continue a slave to Satan, for to feed his swine, and to prefer the husks of swine, which can never satisfy him, before his Father's table, and the happy liberty of the children of God. Ah! poor wretch, open thy eyes, and see how strangely thou art deluded! Thy God proffers thee his mercy, his grace, his favour, the honour of being his child, his spouse, his temple, a share in his heavenly treasures, his peace, his comforts, his table, his kingdom, his Holy Spirit, in a word, himself, and all that is good. And thou art so blind, and so mad, as to desire him to keep all his favours for another time, and to make choice for thyself at present of the extremity of all misery, by choosing to go on yet awhile under the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, a wretched slave to Satan, sin and hell. Can any madness be comparable to this?

Consider, secondly, how vain and foolish are those pretexts, by which sinners suffer themselves to be imposed upon, when they defer their conversion to God: especially with regard to pretended difficulties in the undertaking, which would all presently be put to flight, and vanish away, if they would but once heartily set their hand to the work. But what is the most common delusion, is that they vainly imagine, they shall do it more easily another time—a dreadful delusion indeed! since both reason and daily experience must make it evident, that the longer this work is deferred, the harder it is to bring it about. And how should it be otherwise; since by these delays, and by continuing to add sin to sin, their sinful habits grow daily stronger upon them, and consequently harder to be rooted out; the devil's power over them daily increases; and God Almighty, provoked by their repeated abuses of his graces, and their obstinate impenitence, withdraws himself further and further from them, and suffers

them by degrees to fall into that blindness and hardness of heart which of all evils is the most difficult to be cured.

Consider, thirdly, the folly of all such as put off their conversion to God, through the apprehension of the confession of their sins; and choose to suffer for a long time the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience, with all the other evils that always attend on mortal sin; and to be continually exposed to the danger of death and hell, and to all the judgments of an offended God, rather than to undergo a small confusion, that would last but one moment, and would immediately be followed with unspeakable comfort, and with a speedy pardon, reconciliation, peace, and grace. Would not all the world condemn that person of the greatest folly and madness, who, labouring under a most painful and mortal distemper, should refuse an easy, safe and sovereign remedy, only because it was disagreeable to the palate, just for the moment of the taking of it? But O, how much more unaccountable is the folly and madness of the sinner, who, for fear of so small a humiliation as the confession of his sins to a minister of God, tied by the laws, both of God and man, to an eternal secrecy, refuses all the medicines of heaven, under a mortal disease, which is hurrying him on towards an eternal death; and chooses rather to risk his all, for eternity, than to discover his illness to his physician?

Conclude not to suffer the enemy to impose upon thee, with any of his deceitful wiles, so as to induce thee to continue playing upon the brink of a precipice, with the sword of God hanging over thy head. No prudent person would refuse to be immediately reconciled to a man whom he had offended, who had the power and authority to condemn him to a cruel death for his offence: how much less should the sinner put off his reconciliation with an offended God, who can in an instant cast both his body and soul into hell; and who is highly provoked by his impenitence.

FEBRUARY 14.

On Death-bed Performances.

CONSIDER, first, that, if it be so great an evil to defer, for any considerable time, one's conversion to God, and one's reconciliation with him; it must be an evil incomparably greater to form a premeditated design of putting it off, to the end of our life, upon the confidence of a death-bed repentance; because the risk, the presumption, the madness, the outrage offered to God in this case is incomparably greater: so that it is well, if one in a thousand of them, that are guilty of such a formal design of putting

a cheat upon the divine justice, (by indulging themselves in sin all their lifetime, and then only thinking to make their peace with God, when they can sin no longer) ever meet with even the poor chance of a death-bed confession; much less with the grace of an effectual conversion. Oh! no: such sinners will find to their loss that *God is not to be mocked*: Gal. vi. 7. The general rule is that *what a man soweth, the same shall he reap*; and that as a man lives, so shall he die. A rule so general, that in the whole scripture we have but one instance of a happy death after a wicked life, viz. that of the good thief: an example so singular in all its circumstances, as to afford no kind of encouragement to such sinners as design, beforehand, to give the slip to God's justice, by a death-bed conversion.

Consider, secondly, how very little it is, that the sinner is capable of doing, on his death-bed, towards his conversion; when either the dulness and stupidity, caused by his sickness, or by the quality of the medicines; or the pains and agonies, which he endures in body or in mind, render him quite unfit for prayer, and incapable of attention to reading; or of any serious application of his thoughts to the great business of his soul. Alas! if a little headache, or any other slight indisposition, be enough to hinder us at any time from making any serious meditation, or praying with devotion, how much less shall we be able to attend to prayer, or to do any thing else to the purpose, when we shall be surprised with a mortal illness, and with the pangs of death? O Christians, let not yourselves then be imposed upon with vain imaginations of the fine acts of contrition, and of the love of God, that you will make upon your death-bed: they will all fly away from you then: it is well if you shall then be capable even of one good thought. Thousands, that have flattered themselves with the thoughts of doing fine things upon their death-bed, have been prevented by sudden death; thousands have been taken out of their senses, before they apprehended their danger; thousands have been flattered by those about them into a conceit that they were not dying, when they really were; and which is the most common of all, thousands, in punishment of their forgetting God in their lifetime, have been suffered to forget themselves in death: and thus, generally speaking, these fine projects of death-bed performances turn to smoke, and end in hell.

Consider, thirdly, that the conversion of an habitual sinner is at any time a very difficult task, and requires a strong grace such as may reach and change the heart, and effectually turn it from the affection of sin to the love of God, so as to make it hate above all evils, what has been for a long time turned into a second nature, by the force of an evil habit, and to love and embrace with the whole soul what has hitherto been loathed or despised. But

if this task be very difficult at all times, and seldom brought to effect, without long and serious meditations, and much prayer, what a poor chance must there be for such sinners as have on set purpose put off this work to the time, in which they are neither capable of meditation nor prayer; and which is worst of all, when in punishment of their obstinate impenitence, and insupportable presumption, God has withdrawn himself from them? Alas! poor sinner, thou flatteredst thyself in thy sins, that it would be easy for thee at any time (how late soever) to make thy peace with God, and to escape hell; because thou hadst heard, that in whatsoever hour the sinner shall turn to God, he will show him mercy: but then the devil hid from thy eyes, that this effectual turning to God, especially upon a death-bed, must be the fruit of an extraordinary grace of God, which he has promised to no man; yea a very great miracle of grace, which he is seldom disposed to work in favour of such presumptuous wretches, as have made a practice all their lifetime of mocking him.

Conclude to have no dependence upon the death-bed performances of habitual sinners: no, not even though, like Antiochus, they should shed tears plentifully: these are often influenced by the fear of death, more than the love of God. Take thou care of one at least, by living always, for thy own part, as thou desirest to die; and exhort all that belong to thee to secure their souls by this same method; it is the only safe way.

FEBRUARY 15.

On the Dispositions with which we are to enter upon the Service of God. From Eccles. ii.

CONSIDER, first, and diligently attend to those words of the wise man, Eccles. ii. 1. *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation:* and learn from these prescriptions of the Holy Ghost to enter upon the service of God with a strong resolution of not being discouraged with the opposition thou shalt meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil. and with a determination to stand thy ground, in this spiritual warfare, like a valiant soldier, putting on the armour of Christian justice, and of the fear of God according to that of the apostle, Eph. vi. 13, &c. *Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth* (that is, with sincerity in your intention towards God) *and having on the breast-plate of justice* (that is, of Christian virtue, with a full determination at all events, to be true to your God) *in all things taking th-*

shield of faith wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; (by a lively sense of God and eternity) and take unto you the helmet of salvation, (that is, an humble confidence in God,) and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God: viz. by frequent hearing, reading, or meditating on divine truths. And being thus prepared for the fight, you will not fail of gaining the victory.

Consider, secondly, what the wise man further prescribes to all that desire to succeed in this glorious enterprise, which is to bring us to God, and to eternal life. *Humble thy heart, says he, and endure; (that is, suppress, and keep under, all the irregular risings of thy pride and passion, that shall offer to oppose thy undertaking;) wait on God with patience, join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.* Excellent lessons, not only for beginners, but for all that are on their journey towards heaven! for crosses, sufferings, and humiliations, are the portion of all the servants of God; and patience and courage in adversities, humbling ourselves under the hand of God, and a perfect resignation to his holy will, serve to qualify all our afflictions, and to make them light and easy, as well as infinitely advantageous to our souls. O how happy are they who have learnt what it is to *join themselves to God*, in all they have to suffer! O what happiness is to be found in enduring in his company, and with an entire conformity to his blessed will! what an *increase* will this give to *our life in the latter end*, by adding to it a happy eternity!

Consider, thirdly, that one of the most excellent dispositions for attaining to all good, and the most effectual means to begin well, to advance daily, and to continue to the end in the happy service of God, is to conceive, and to nourish in the soul, a great esteem for a virtuous and devout life, an earnest desire of being good, a hunger and thirst after Christian justice; in a word, an ardent love for true wisdom, which indeed is no other than the knowledge, love, and service of God. *I wished, says the wise man, Wisdom vii. 7, and understanding was given me, and I called, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me; and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison with her.—I loved her above health and beauty, and all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.—For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God.* O how glorious are the things that are said, both here and in many other passages of the divine oracles of this heavenly wisdom! O how lovely, how de-

sirable, is this treasure, this precious pearl of virtue and devotion, which is the truest wisdom! Who would not give all things else to purchase such an inestimable jewel? But, behold, the wisest of men, yea, the Spirit of God by him, assures us, that we need but desire it, seek it, and love it, with all our hearts, and it shall be our own.

Conclude to observe all these heavenly lessons; and they will not fail to bring thee to God. He earnestly desires to make thee happy, by making thee his true servant; if thou desirest the same, how canst thou miscarry, provided thy desire be fervent and perseverant?

FEBRUARY 16.

On true Devotion.

CONSIDER, first, that a *devout life* is indeed the most happy of lives, and the most secure way to an eternal life. For *true devotion* is the very perfection of charity and love; she is the queen of virtues. But beware, O my soul, of the error of such *false devotees*, as make all devotion consist in certain external exercises, destitute of the internal spirit; or in huddling over a number of prayers; or in frequent fastings, disciplines, or hair shirts; or in giving alms; or in frequenting the sacraments; or in following some other religious practices, which happen to be agreeable to their inclinations, though they remain all the while unmortified in their passions, full of self-love, and void of all true charity, either to God or to their neighbours; whereas true devotion cannot be without keeping of all the commandments, but more especially those two of loving God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves.

Consider, secondly, that to be *truly devout*, is to give one's self truly to God, according to the original meaning of the word *devotion*, which signifies a dedication and consecration of one's self to God; so that true devotion consists in always seeking God, and tending to him, in embracing in all things his holy will, and ever loving and obeying his holy law. He that does this, is truly devout; but he that does not love the will of God better than his own humour, is not devout, although he prays all day long, and sheds floods of tears. Consequently, he that is a slave to any of his passions, he that entertains a rancour to any one of his neighbours, he that sets his heart upon the world, and its toys, more than God, can never be truly devout, because he wants the very foundation of true devotion, which is loving God above all things. As to those other things mentioned above they are often the attendants of true devotion, or its effects: but

then devotion does not consist in any of them, and they may often be found in such as have no true devotion, no true charity, nor even true faith; *without which no one can please God*, Heb. xi.

Consider, thirdly, that true devotion is not always sensible, nor does it consist in certain sensible tendernesses, which some people experience in prayer: whilst others, who, perhaps, in the sight of God, are much better Christians, meet with nothing, for a long time, but dryness and desolation. Some persons are of a more soft and tender nature, and are easily affected even unto tears; and yet withal are very superficial in the love of God; quickly forget their good resolutions of serving him; easily yield in the time of temptation; shrink under every cross; and never arrive at solid virtue: and where is their *devotion* all this while, since it dries up, like their tears, in a moment, and brings forth no fruit? How much more devout is that Christian, who continues constant in prayer, though he finds no sensible comfort therein; who goes not to prayer to seek his own pleasure, but to please his God, and to glorify him; who is willing to take up the cross, and to help his Saviour in the carriage of his cross, by bearing, for the love of him, the dryness and desolation that he endures, without leaving his accustomed exercises; in a word, whose prayer is a conformity of his own will to the will of God! O this is devotion indeed: but sensible consolations, without this conformity, deserve not the name of devotion.

Conclude to make no account of any feeling of devotion, that is not accompanied with charity, humility, and conformity to the will of God; and thou wilt be sure not to be imposed upon, as great numbers have been, by false appearances, and phantoms of devotion, to the danger of the loss of their precious souls.

FEBRUARY 17.

*On the Opposition there is between the World and the Gospel.
For Shrove-tide.*

CONSIDER, first, that it is not for nothing that the Son of God, in the *gospel*, so often declares against the *world* as a capital enemy of him and his; because light and darkness are not more opposite than the *world* and the *gospel*. The maxims and practices of the one are quite contradictory to the other. The world perpetually recommends what the gospel condemns, and condemns what the gospel recommends. The world is made up of pride, ambition, and vain-glory; the gospel breathes nothing but humility, self-contempt, choosing the lowest place, and becoming as little children; assuring us that otherwise

there is no heaven for us. The world inspires a covetous spirit, the love of mammon, and a fondness for worldly toys; the gospel inculcates the necessity of despising all these things, and of quitting all things, at least in affection, to follow Christ. The world is a slave to sensual pleasures, and places its whole happiness in gratifying and indulging its own humours and inclinations; the gospel requires, as the very first and most necessary condition to be a disciple of Christ, that we should deny ourselves, hate our own humours and inclinations, and take up our cross, and follow him. The world imagines them blessed, that abound the most with worldly honours, riches, delicacies, pastimes, and other worldly enjoyments, and have no one to thwart or contradict them. The gospel, on the contrary, pronounces them blessed that are poor in this world, that suffer injuries and affronts with meekness, that weep and mourn, and that are reviled and persecuted by men. In a word, the life of worldlings is a perpetual contradiction to the gospel of Christ. And the life of Christ, and of all the true children of the gospel, is a perpetual censure of the world and its maxims. See, my soul, which thou hadst rather follow, the world or the gospel; the broad way, or the narrow; the way of perdition, or the way of life.

Consider, secondly, that Christianity never had a more dangerous enemy than the world; and never yet suffered half so much from all the persecutions of infidels, that have been from the beginning, as it continually suffers from these false brethren, who, under the Christian name, are perpetually undermining the gospel of Christ, and promoting the kingdom of Satan. The persecutions of infidels made innumerable saints, and served very much to purify, and to propagate, the church and kingdom of Christ; whereas, this war that is continually carried on by wicked Christians, against the morals and maxims of the gospel, draws away innumerable souls from Christ, corrupts the innocence even of the best inclined, enslaves them to Satan and sin, and condemns them to hell. O let us beware of this mortal enemy of our salvation, this torrent of worldly custom, these pernicious maxims of a deluded and deluding world.

Consider, thirdly, with relation to this very time of *Shrovetide*, how wide a distance there is between the true spirit of Christianity, and the practice of the children of this world. The church sets aside this time for a time of devotion and penance, that it may be a suitable preparation for the solemn fast of Lent; therefore she puts on at this time her penitential attire; she calls upon her children to enter into a penitential disposition; to renounce now their evil ways, and to confess their sins; that, by removing these rubs out of the way, they may be properly prepared for meeting with mercy and grace at this approaching

time of mercy and grace. The very name of *Shrove-tide*, in the ancient English, signifies *the time of confession of sins*, because our Catholic ancestors were taught to turn to God, at this time, with their whole hearts, by humble confession and penance. But O how sadly has the spirit of the world perverted this pious institution, and turned this time of devotion and penance into a time of riot and sin; even of such excesses and extravagances as would much better suit with the heathenish festivals of Bacchus, than with any Christian solemnity; much less with a preparation for a penitential fast. Beware thou, my soul, of conforming thyself to the world in any of its extravagances at this time, lest, by joining now with this enemy of God, and of thy salvation, thou come to lose both thyself, and thy God, for all eternity.

Conclude to give ear to the divine oracles. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15. The friendship of this world is the enemy of God: Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God, James iv. 4.* And since the word of God thus expressly declares, that there can be no such thing as being a friend both to God and the world, keep off from the love of the world, and from its maxims and customs, lest thou make God thy enemy.

FEBRUARY 18.

On fighting under the Standard of Jesus Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that there are upon earth, and have been all along, two opposite kingdoms, two opposite interests, two opposite cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, the city of God and the city of the devil; two opposite standards, that of Jesus Christ, and that of Satan. From the time that man unhappily fell from God by sin, Satan set up his tyrannical usurpation; which he has, by all kind of tricks and lies, endeavoured to maintain ever since; by alluring poor deluded mortals with the glittering show of worldly pomps, riches, and pleasures, to become his slaves, and to fight under his standard; and by establishing amongst them his laws and maxims, calculated for nothing else but to make them miserable both for time and eternity. And ah! how unhappily has he prevailed over millions! what multitudes every where join with him against their God! how is this wretched Babylon spread over all the earth!

Consider, secondly, that Jesus Christ came into this world to set up his standard, in opposition to the standard of Satan, and to invite all men to follow him; promising to deliver his follow-

ers from all their evils, and to impart to them all his good. They that duly correspond with his call, and join his royal standard make up the city of God, the blessed Jerusalem, the church of the saints. But see now the immense difference between these two opposite cities and their inhabitants; how happy the one, and how miserable the other. The children of Babylon are miserable indeed; they are slaves to passions that can never be satisfied; to a world that can never be contented: to infernal tyrants, that are continually dragging them along with them towards hell: they are slaves to empty vanities, childish toys, and lying follies; labouring under a variety of fears, cares, sorrows, uneasinesses, and innumerable other evils, without enjoying so much as any one solid or lasting satisfaction. But O how happy are the children of Jerusalem! what content, what peace, what pure pleasure in the soul, are commonly their portion, even in this life, and immortal joys in the next! and shalt thou, my soul, stand one moment to deliberate, which of the two thou wilt choose; the standard of Christ, or that of Satan; Jerusalem or Babylon; all good, or all evil; verity or vanity; happiness or misery; heaven or hell?

Consider, thirdly, that all manner of motives, from time and eternity, from our origin and last end, from duty and interest, honour and pleasure, fear and love, all here concur to determine the soul in her choice, and to fix her in the happy resolution of following the standard of Jesus Christ. Turn then, my soul, turn away from this *Babel* of confusion, noise, and disorder: break her chains from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. Renounce, for good and all, the king of pride, the tyrant that has usurped to himself the dominion over this world, and its deluded admirers: renounce his works and pomps, together with all his associates, the princes of darkness and all their slaves, and turn thyself to the blessed Jerusalem, the city of peace: embrace the king of peace, and his glorious standard, with all thy heart; choose him for thy king for ever; pay him irrevocable homage; and promise him inviolable fidelity and obedience.

Conclude, since thou hast now chosen Jesus Christ to be thy king, to fight manfully unto death, under his royal standard of the cross, against his and thy enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In order to this, learn well thy exercise of prayer, and the rules of the gospel, which are the military discipline which he has fixed for his soldiers.

FEBRUARY 19.

On the Rules prescribed by Jesus Christ to his Followers.

CONSIDER, first, the laws of the military discipline, which Jesus Christ prescribes to all that desire to be his soldiers, Mat. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.* The observance of these three articles makes a complete soldier of Christ. We must renounce ourselves; we must bear our crosses; and we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The corruption of man by sin; the wounds that sin has left in all the faculties of the soul; the violence of our disorderly passions; and the bent of our natural inclinations to evil, infer a necessity of renouncing ourselves, of fighting against ourselves, and of hating our natural inclinations, if we hope to be happy either here or hereafter. We have not a more dangerous enemy than ourselves; the devil himself cannot hurt us half so much as we hurt ourselves, when we follow our own will, and indulge our own inclinations. *The denying, therefore, of ourselves,* is the first article of the discipline of Jesus Christ, in opposition to our unhappy self-love, the root of all our evils, and its three principal branches, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The Son of God came down from heaven to engage us in this holy warfare. The humility, the poverty, the voluntary sufferings of his birth, of his life, and of his death, were all levelled against these enemies.

Consider, secondly, that the soldier of Jesus Christ must stand to his colours; he must not run from the cross. He must bear and forbear; he must endure many conflicts; he must patiently submit to, and courageously go through, the labours and hardships of this short campaign of his mortal life. He must not pretend to fare better than his captain and his king. All sufferings and hardships appear as nothing to a brave soldier, when he is following his prince, and is happy in his company. The Christian soldier then must be willing to carry his cross after Jesus Christ, who opened heaven to us by the cross, and conducts his soldiers thither by the way of the cross. Embrace then, O my soul, this happy instrument of thy salvation, in which, if thou bearest it in a proper manner, thou wilt find an inexhaustible source of grace and comfort. Embrace the holy will of God, which lays the cross upon thee, to bring thee to himself. He knows what is best for thee, because he is infinitely wise, and he sends thee what he knows is for the best, because he is infinitely good, and good to thee. Thou canst not be in a safer or better way than in the way of the cross, by

which Jesus Christ and all his saints have gone to heaven. Even in this life, the true soldiers of Christ find often a greater sweetness in the cross than in all the pleasures of this world.

Consider, thirdly, that the soldiers of Christ are all called, even as his first disciples were, to *follow him*; that is, to walk in his footsteps by an imitation of his life. He came down from heaven to be our teacher and our model; and it is the great duty of all that desire to belong to him, to copy after his blessed original, and to show forth in themselves the life of Jesus Christ; *to learn of him to be meek and humble of heart*; to learn of him poverty of spirit, a contempt of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, and a disengagement of the heart from all earthly things; to learn of him a horror for sin, and an obedience even unto death; in fine, to learn of him a perpetual conformity to the will of God, and an unbounded charity to every neighbour. Such was the life of Jesus Christ, and such ought to be the life of all his soldiers.

Conclude to embrace, henceforward, this discipline of Jesus Christ, in all its parts. It is a *heavenly* discipline indeed, since he came down from *heaven* to teach it, and the observance of it is to bring us to *heaven*.

N. B. That as Lent sometimes begins before the twentieth of February, sometimes after; when it begins before, the meditations that are not read at this time, are to be read in June, after the octave of *Corpus Christi*; as on the other hand, when Lent begins later than the twentieth of February, the meditations that shall be wanting here, are to be taken out of the number of those that are placed in the month of June, after the aforesaid octave.

Here follow meditations for the feasts of St. Matthias, St. Joseph, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, which commonly fall in Lent.

FEBRUARY 24.

On the Gospel for the Feast of St. Matthias.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, *rejoicing in the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xi. 25. &c., addressed himself to his heavenly Father in these words: *I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things* (the great truths of the gospel) *from the wise and prudent* (of this world) *and hast revealed them to little ones.* And learn thou, my soul, to admire and adore in this the wonderful ways of the wisdom of God, who ever resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble; and

therefore withdraws and hides himself, and his truths, from such as are puffed up with the conceit of their own wit or learning, or any other talents, whether natural or acquired; whilst he discovers his secrets to the little and humble, fills their souls with his heavenly light, and works his greatest wonders in them and by them. Thus he did with regard to his apostles; and thus we shall generally find, that the humble and simple have been the instruments, in the hand of God, of all the great works he has wrought in the conversion and sanctification of souls. O blessed be his name for ever, who thus delights in showing his power in weak vessels, and chooses the contemptible things of this world to confound our pride! O teach me, dear Lord, to be ever little and humble!

Consider, secondly, how sweetly our Lord, on the same occasion, invites us to himself, saying, *Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Alas! we all labour in this vale of tears: 'The days of this world are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries, where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, assaulted with many fears, disquieted with many cares, dissipated with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, surrounded with many errors, broken with many hardships and fatigues, troubled with many temptations.' *Kempis.* And is not all this *labouring* and being *heavy laden*? Yes, there is a *heavy yoke, indeed, upon the children of Adam, from their coming out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial into the mother of all,* Ecclus. xl But what remedy then for all these evils? We must run to Christ, and *he will refresh us*; he will comfort and relieve us. *We must take up his yoke upon us,* and he will rescue us from the slavery of sin and Satan; he will qualify all our other labours and miseries; he will give us the victory over all our passions and temptations; *and we shall find rest to our souls. For his yoke is sweet, and his burthen light.*

Consider, thirdly, that our Lord here invites us also to *learn of him*, to take him for our master, and to become his scholars. A great honour indeed, to have the Son of God come down from heaven to be our teacher! But what then are we to learn of so great a master? Are we to learn of him to make heaven and earth, or to rule and govern the whole universe? Or are we to learn of him to work all kind of miracles, and to raise the dead to life? O no: but we are to learn of him to be *meek and humble of heart.* This is the great lesson the king of heaven came down to teach us. In learning this, we shall find a remedy for all our evils. No one but he could effectually teach us this lesson. Could we even raise the dead to life, it would be all noth-

ing, without *learning to be meek and humble of heart*, and overcoming passion and pride.

Conclude, O my soul, to comply henceforward with this sweet summons and invitation of thy dear Lord, and to run to him, and put thyself in his service, that, with his gracious assistance, thou mayest cast off from thy shoulders the heavy yoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and take up his light yoke, and rest in him for ever.

MARCH 19.

On St. Joseph.

CONSIDER, first, the testimony that the Holy Ghost has given to the virtue and sanctity of St. Joseph, in telling us in the gospel, that he was *a just man*. And doubtless the Almighty would never have made choice of any man to be the chaste bridegroom of the purest of virgins, and the foster-father and guardian of his own divine Son, that was not consummate in purity and sanctity. Learn from hence, Christian souls, what kind of qualifications will make you also agreeable to Jesus and Mary: you will certainly drive them far away from you by criminal impurity. Admire the command St. Joseph had of his passions, in his joining perfect continence with the state of marriage; and in the evenness of soul, which he preserved under all events, how adverse soever; and learn of him to keep thy passions under subjection, and cheerfully to submit thy will in all occasions to the appointments of heaven.

Consider, secondly, the great examples St. Joseph has given us of all other virtues: his lively faith, in a ready submission of his soul to the belief of the most difficult mysteries, relating to the incarnation of the Son of God: his ardent love of his dearest Jesus: his concern and tender care for him in his infancy and childhood; and his wonderful diligence in all that belonged to his charge: his meekness and charity to the blessed Virgin, when, to his unspeakable surprise, he found her with child: his ready obedience, without demur or reply, to every intimation of the will of heaven: whatsoever hardships or labours it might put him to; as in the case of his flight into Egypt: his patience under afflictions and persecutions: his humble submission, notwithstanding his royal extraction, to the toil and labour of a handicraft, to gain a poor livelihood for himself, and for Jesus and Mary, with the sweat of his brow: together with an amiable simplicity in his whole comportment, and a perpetual attention to God, by divine contemplation. Christians, let us imitate his

virtues, whatsoever our station of life may be: we see by his example, that perfect sanctity may be found even in the midst of the distractions of a worldly calling: and that if we are not saints, it is not the fault of our calling, but of our not corresponding with divine grace. St. Joseph found a great advantage to his soul from his having Jesus always in his company, and working with him: O let us also take care to have Jesus always with us, (wherever we are, or whatever we are doing,) by a spirit of recollection, and a constant attention to him; and never to drive him away by any sinful conversation, or by entertaining his enemies in our interior; and we shall quickly be sensible of the fruits his presence will bring to our souls.

Consider, thirdly, and learn from the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, how great an error the world lies under, when it flies with so much eagerness from poverty and labour, as conceiving them to be great evils, which the wisdom of God made choice of for himself, for his blessed mother, and his reputed father, and which they have consecrated by their life and practice. As for thy part, my soul, have another way of thinking; and if thy condition be that of the rich, be not puffed up with it, but rather humble thyself to see thou art so unlike to that blessed family, and fear the many dangers that riches are exposed to: despise not the poor, but ever honour and succour them, as the relations of Christ, or as Christ himself: thou hast his authority for doing so. If thou art poor, remember thou wearest the livery of Christ, and of his family: comfort thyself in the resemblance thou bearest with them; and take care lest, by thy murmuring or impatience, thou lose any of the advantages which thy state entitles thee to. If thou followest any trade or handicraft, take St. Joseph for thy patron, and for thy pattern. Thou seest, by his example, that sanctity is not inconsistent with thy business. But then take heed, lest by any fraud, or injustice, or by an excessive solicitude for the things of this world, to the neglect of thy soul, thou banish Jesus from thy shop or house. Be sure to make him the companion of all thy labour; offer up all thou doest to him; and often entertain thyself with him. If God has blessed thee with children, take care, by an early diligence, to form Christ in them, by constantly instilling into their tender minds the fear and love of God, and the horror of sin: thus thou mayest, like St. Joseph, bring up Jesus in these little ones.

Conclude to honour St. Joseph by an imitation of his virtues, and, in order to this, implore the assistance of his prayers. His interest is great with our Lord, as St. Teresa declares she frequently experienced. Beg, in particular, his intercession for the obtaining of a happy death. St. Joseph was happy in death, by having our Lord and the blessed Virgin to attend and assist him

Let us, like him, keep ever close to them in life, and they will be with us in death.

MARCH 25.

On the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, how *the angel Gabriel* (Luke i. 26. &c.) *was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a Virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel, being come in, said to her, Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.* Christians, give attention to this most sacred and most solemn embassy, sent from the king of heaven, not to any of the great ones, or potentates of this world, but to a poor and humble maid, to treat with her upon the highest matters, even upon the great business of the incarnation of the Son of God, the establishment of his everlasting kingdom, and the redemption and salvation of man. Admire and adore the depth of the wisdom of the ways of God, (so much exalted above the maxims and ways of the worldly wise) by which he is pleased to bring about such great things, without noise, or pomp, in so humble a manner, and by such humble instruments. And give thanks for that infinite goodness and love for us, which he has shown in the mystery of this day.

Consider, secondly, the great lessons the blessed Virgin teaches us by her whole comportment on this occasion. She is favoured with an embassy from God: she is greeted by one of the highest of the angels, as *full of divine grace*: she is told that *the Lord is with her*, and that *she is blessed among all women*: and instead of being puffed up with these high favours, or taking any vain complacency in these titles and encomiums, she is troubled at the words of the angel, and, through the humble sentiments she has of herself, wonders what should be the meaning of such a salutation. She is assured by the angel that *she has found grace with God*; and is chosen by him, to conceive and bear the Saviour of the world, even the Son of the

Most High : and so great is her love for virginal purity, that she is ready to forego the dignity of *mother of God*, rather than part with her virginity. *How shall this be done*, saith she, *because I know not man?* as being consecrated by vow to God, and determined to keep my vow. The angel informs her, that she shall conceive by the Holy Ghost, and be overshadowed by the power of the Most High, so as still to remain a pure maid. And then, with a most profound humility, and a most perfect oblation of herself to God, and an entire conformity to his blessed will, she cries out, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.* Let us study well, and learn of her the practice of these great lessons of humility, love of purity, and perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God.

Consider, thirdly, how, as soon as the blessed Virgin had thus given her consent, she immediately conceived by the Holy Ghost; who, by his almighty power, formed a body out of her purest blood, and created an immortal soul for that body; and this body and soul were in that instant assumed, and united to the eternal Word, the Son of God, the second person of the adorable Trinity. And thus was celebrated in the Virgin's womb the sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God, to the feast of which we are all invited, Matthew xxii. Thus *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*, St. John i. This great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the original source of all our good; in making God man, it has made man God. The Son of God, by taking upon him our humanity, makes us partakers of his divinity. He comes to be our Saviour and our Redeemer, to deliver us from all our evils: he comes to be our Advocate and our Physician: he comes to be our Father, and our Friend: he comes to be our King and our Priest, and *to make us kings and priests to his Father.* He stoops down to our dust, to raise us up from the dust, and to bring us to *sit down with him in his throne*, Apoc. iii. 21. See then, my soul, in what manner thou oughtest to celebrate this great festival of the conception of the Son of God! What homage and adoration, what praise and thanksgiving, thou owest him for these wonders he has wrought in thy favour! what return of love for his love to thee! O welcome him, at least to the best of thy power; and, since he comes to dwell amongst us, beg he would accept of the lodging of thy heart.

Conclude to keep for ever in thy soul a faithful, grateful and loving remembrance of the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, and a sincere affection for his Virgin Mother; and with these dispositions, frequently in the day repeat the angelical salutation; more especially at the regular hours of the morning, noon and night.

ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.

CONSIDER, first, how God calls upon us, by his prophet, in the lesson of this day. *Be converted to me, saith he, with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God, Joel ii. 12, 13.* Christians, hearken to this summons from heaven. O let it sink deep into your souls; and if, this day, you hear the voice of God, sweetly inviting you to return to him in good earnest, now, at this holy season, harden not your hearts, lest, provoked by your impenitence, he turn away from you, and you die in your sins. O let us repent and amend, as we are admonished by the church on this day, whilst we have time, lest, being overtaken by death, which is ever following at our heels, we should seek for time of penance, and not be able to find it.

Consider, secondly, the meaning of the ashes which are put on our heads this day with those words: *Remember, man, that thou art dust; and into dust thou shalt return.* Sackcloth and ashes were the ancient habit of penitents. The Ninivites, by fasting in sackcloth and ashes, found mercy. Let these ashes then, which we receive on our heads, at the beginning of this penitential fast, be a lesson to us, to enter upon it with the like penitential spirit. They are an emblem of contrition and humility; let us receive them with a contrite and humble heart. They are also a remembrance of our mortality, of our frail composition, and of our hasty return to our mother earth. O let us think well on this, and renounce henceforward our unhappy pride and presumption: O let us make good use of this our short time, and prepare for that moment which shall ere long send away our souls into another region, and turn our bodies into dirt and dust.

Consider, thirdly, Christian soul, those words, as if they were addressed to thee: *yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed.* Jonas iii. 4. Alas! have not thy sins, like those of Ninive, called to heaven this long time for vengeance? And hast thou not too much reason to fear, lest the mercy, which thou hast so long abused, should now quickly give place to justice, and should suffer thee to die in thy sins. Perhaps this is the last reprieve that God will grant thee. In all appearance, the good use or the abuse of these forty days may determine thy lot for an eternity.

Conclude, then, to spare no pains to avert the judgment that hangs over thy head, and so to spend these forty days of reprieve in suing for mercy, after the manner God has appoint

ed, that is, by fasting, weeping, and mourning, that thou mayst effectually find it.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On Fasting.

CONSIDER, first, how much *fasting* is recommended to us, in the word of God, by the great example of Christ, and of his saints, as well of the Old as of the New Testament; how we are there called upon to turn to God with *fasting*, Joel. ii.; how the greatest sinners have there found mercy by *fasting*, Jonas iii.; how we are there taught, that all Christ's children are to *fast* during his absence from us, St. Matt. ix. 15.; and that the devil is not to be cast out, but by prayer and *fasting*, St. Mark ix. 28. Man fell from God originally by intemperance; he returns to him by *fasting*. The gratifying our sensual appetite betrays us both to the flesh and to the devil: we overcome them both by *fasting*, by which (as the church daily inculcates in the preface for Lent) God restrains our vices and passions, elevates our souls to himself, and bestows upon us his heavenly gifts and graces. O happy fasting, which drivest away all our evils, healest both soul and body, and bringest us to our sovereign good!

Consider, secondly, that there are three great advantages found in fasting. First, it appeases the wrath of God, provoked by our sins; inasmuch as, by fasting for them, we acknowledge our guilt, and take part with his justice, in condemning and punishing ourselves. For there is nothing sooner moves God to show us mercy, than the homage we pay to his justice, by exercising a wholesome severity against the wretch that has dared to offend God. O let us conceive a just indignation against this sinful flesh! Let us not spare the traitor, that has so often betrayed us into sin! Let a penitential fast be our regular exercise.

Consider, thirdly, that another great advantage of *fasting* is, that we are enabled by it to overcome our passions and concupiscences. Fasting, when performed with a due spirit, humbles the soul exceedingly, and consequently restrains the irregular motions of all the passions that are the daughters of pride. It keeps the flesh in subjection, by depriving it of the principal nourishment of its rebellions and disorders, and obliges it to submit to the spirit; and, which is a third advantage, in proportion to its weakening the passions of the flesh, it gives strength and vigour to the soul, sets it at liberty from the clogs that hinder

its free application to heavenly truths, and enables it to fly upwards towards God, by purer prayer and contemplation.

Conclude to set a due value on this wholesome exercise, which has been the favourite of all the saints, and has greatly contributed to make them the favourites of heaven. But take care that your fasting be accompanied with its proper attendants, that it may be such a fast as God has chosen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the Rules of Fasting.

CONSIDER, first, that fasting, according to the present discipline of the church, implies three things. First, we are to abstain from flesh meat on fasting days : secondly, we are to eat but one meal in the day : and thirdly, we are not to take our meal till about noon. The ancient discipline of the church was more rigorous, both in the point of the abstinence, and in not allowing the meal in Lent till the evening. These regulations are calculated to mortify the sensual appetite, by penance and self-denial. If you find some difficulty in the observance of them, offer it up to God for your sins. Fasting is not designed to please, but to punish. Your diligent compliance on this occasion with the laws of your mother, the church, will also give an additional value to your mortification, from the virtue of obedience.

Consider, secondly, that we must not content ourselves with the outward observance of these regulations, that relate to our diet on fasting days ; but we must principally have regard to the inward spirit, and what we may call the very soul of the fast ; which is a penitential spirit. Without this, the outward observance is but like a carcass without life. This penitential spirit implies a deep sense of the guilt of our sins, a horror and detestation of all our past disloyalties and treasons, and a hearty sorrow for them ; a sincere desire to return to God, and to renounce our sinful ways for the future ; and particularly a readiness of mind to make the best satisfaction we are capable of to divine justice, by penancing ourselves for our sins. Fasting, performed in this spirit, cannot fail of moving God to mercy. O my soul, let thy fasting be always animated with this spirit !

Consider, thirdly, that fervent *prayer*, and *almsdeeds* also, according to each one's ability, ought to be the inseparable companions of our *fasting*. These three sisters should go hand in hand, *Tob. xii. 8*, to help us in our warfare against our three mortal enemies—the flesh, the world, and the devil. The practice of these three eminent good works we must oppose to that

triple concupiscence, which reigns in the world, and by means of which Satan maintains his unhappy reign. By fasting we overcome the lust of the flesh; by almsdeeds we subdue the lust of the eyes, by which we are apt to covet the mammon of the world, and its empty toys; and by fervent and humble prayer we conquer the pride of life, and put to flight the devil, the king of pride. O let us never forget to call in these powerful auxiliaries to help us in our warfare. Let almsdeeds and prayer ever accompany our fasts.

Conclude to follow these rules, if you desire your fast should be acceptable: if you fail in them, it will not be such a fast as God hath chosen.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the great Fast of a Christian.

CONSIDER, first, that the great and general fast of a Christian is to abstain from sin. This fast obliges all sorts of persons, young and old, sick and healthy, at all times, and in all places. To pretend to fast, and yet to go on in wilful sin, is a mockery, rather than a fast. What were the Pharisees the better for their fasting, while their souls were corrupted with pride, covetousness, malice, and hypocrisy? Did not God reject the fasts of the Jews, (*Isaias lviii.*) because on the days of their fasting, they continued to provoke him by their customary sins? And will he be better pleased with us, if we, in pretending to fast, are guilty of the like disorders? No certainly. If, then, we would fast to the purpose, *Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and then he will have mercy on him, Isai. lv. 7.*

Consider, secondly, that the true Christian fast should not only put a restraint upon the sensual appetite, in point of eating; but also extend itself to a more general mortification of every one of the senses and faculties, in and by which we have been liable to intemperance or excess. The eyes, the ears, the tongue, and so of all the rest, ought likewise to fast from curiosity, sensuality, vanity, carnal pleasures, idle conversations, theatrical shows, and other worldly and sensual diversions, unbecoming a serious Christian penitent at all times, but much more on days of fasting. But especially we are warned, *Isai. lviii. 3,* on the days of our fasting, to fast from our own will, humour, and passion, as that which of all things is the most opposite to the fast which God hath chosen. O my soul, see thou take good notice of this lesson. Beware lest thou break thy fast, by indulging self-will, pride, and passion.

Consider, thirdly, and weigh well the description given by the prophet Isaias, chap. lviii, of the fast that is acceptable to the Lord, and of its happy effects in the soul. *Is not this (saith the Lord) the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness—and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear, &c. If thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee, and cease to speak that which is good for nothing. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness.—And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and fill thy soul with brightness—And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain whose waters shall not fail.*

Conclude ever to make it the great business of thy fast to break thy bands asunder, and to put away from thee the chains of sin; and then, by exercising works of mercy, thou thyself wilt be entitled to mercy, and to all that is good.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the Fast of Lent.

CONSIDER, first, that a fast of forty days has been recommended by the law and the prophets, and sanctified by the example of Christ himself. Moses fasted forty days (*Exod. xxiv. 18.*) whilst he conversed with God in the mountain, when he received divine law. And again, when the people had sinned, he returned to the Lord to the mountain, and fasted other forty days, *Exodus xxxiv. 28.* Elias fasted forty days in the wilderness, before he came to the mountain of God; where he was favoured with a vision of God, as far as man is capable of seeing him in this life, *3 Kings xix. 8.* * Christ our Lord, before he entered upon his mission of preaching his gospel, retired into a wilderness, and there employed forty days in prayer and fasting, *St. Matt. iv. 2.* How happy shall we be, if, by imitating, according to our small ability, these great examples, we may also draw near to God, by this forty days' fast of Lent! But then, in order to this, we must join, as they did, retirement and much prayer with our fasting.

Consider, secondly, that the forty days' fast of Lent, amongst Christians, is primitive and apostolical: it began with Christianity itself, and with Christianity has been received by all people and nations which have received the faith and law of Christ

Embrace, then, O my soul, this solemn penitential fast, this apostolical practice, this precious remnant of primitive discipline. But see it be with a penitential spirit. *Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2.* Take thou care not to receive so great a grace in vain. These forty days, if thou make good use of them, will be happy days to thee. *O seek the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near, Isai. lv.*

Consider, thirdly, that the great business of Lent is to do penance for our sins; to go daily with Magdalene to the feet of Christ, to wash them in spirit with penitential tears; to make our confession to him, and to lay down all our sins at his feet, begging that he would cancel them with his precious blood; to renounce them for ever; to detest them, and to bewail them in his sight; to offer him our poor hearts with all our affections, in order to make him the best amends we can, for our past disloyalties, by loving him with all our power for the time to come; that, as he said of Magdalene, St. Luke vii., *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much*, so he may also say of us. In this spirit we should make a daily offering of our fasting, and of all the other self-denials, and penitential exercises of this time, to be united to the passion and death of the Son of God, and so to be accepted of, through him, in satisfaction for our sins. O do this, my soul, during these forty days, and thou shalt live.

Conclude to make good use of this holy time, in which mercy flows. O admire and adore that mercy which has endured thee so long, and which presses thee, now at least, to return to thy God. O take care, lest, provoked by thy impenitence, he cut thee off in thy sins!

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the Ends of the Institution of Lent.

CONSIDER, first, that besides the great business of doing penance for the sins of the year, and of our whole lives, which is the main design of Lent, it is also instituted to be, in a particular manner, a time of devotion, in which we may worthily commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, and make them the subject of our daily meditations; in which also we may, by more than ordinary recollection and prayer, dispose our souls for duly celebrating the great paschal solemnity, and imitating therein the resurrection of the Son of God; and in which we may in such manner cleanse and purify our souls by spiritual exercises, as to be fit to approach worthily (as the church commands us) to the

divine mysteries at Easter. See, my soul, thou keep Lent in such manner as to answer these ends.

Consider, secondly, that Lent is a time which God particularly claims for himself, as being the tithe of the year, which therefore ought to be set aside for him, as in the law he appointed that the tithes of all things should be sanctified to him, *Leviticus xxvii*. And surely nothing could be more just, than that we should offer our tithes, at least, to him that gives us all. How justly then does he require of us the tithes of our years, by our dedicating these forty days, in a special manner, to his service! How religiously then, and how holily ought we to spend this time of Lent, that our performances may answer this great design of consecrating the tithe of the year to the divine service! An offering made to God ought to be without blemish: let our Lent-offering be such.

Consider, thirdly, that the time of Lent ought to be for people that live in the world what a spiritual retreat is for regular communities; that is, a time in which, retiring as much as may be from the noise and distractions of the world, they may enter into themselves, and take a serious view of the whole state of their interior. Now is the time for them to see and examine how the soul stands affected, with relation to her God, to her neighbours, and to herself; how she acquits herself of all her duties, as well those incumbent on all Christians, as those that are proper to her respective calling, or relative to those under her charge. Now is the time to search diligently after such secret sins as are apt to lie lurking in the soul, disguised by some pretext of good, or wrapt up under the folds of self-love. In a word, now is the time to acquire a true knowledge of ourselves, in order to apply a proper remedy to all our evils, and to lay a solid foundation of a good life for the future.

Conclude to answer, in the best manner thou art able, all these ends of the institution of Lent; and particularly apply thyself, at this time, to take, as it were, in pieces the whole method of thy life, and to reform all that thou findest amiss.

TUESDAY.

On the Examination of the State of our Interior.

CONSIDER, first, the dreadful mischiefs that follow from our not knowing the true state of our own souls. Alas! what would it avail us to have all other sciences, and to know all things else, if we should not know what passes within ourselves, and so should want this most necessary of all sciences, the knowledge of ourselves! Ah! how many are there in the world, who pass their

whole lives in mortal sin, and yet, for want of looking into themselves, are not aware of it! How many imagine themselves to be alive, and *have the name of being alive, and yet are dead!* Apoc. iii. 1. How many imagine their souls *to be rich and wealthy, and to stand in need of nothing, and they know not that in the very truth, and in the sight of God, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,* Apoc. iii. 17. *O from my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord; and for the sins of others spare thy servant,* Psal. xviii. 13.

Consider, secondly, that to prevent so great an evil, every Christian ought often to examine into the true state of his interior, and to consider seriously what are the real dispositions of his soul, especially with regard to his God. He cannot be in the state of grace, or in the way of salvation, if he love not God above all things. Reflect, O my soul; is there nothing thou lovest more than God? Is there nothing that takes place of him in thy affections? How comes it then, that commonly God is so seldom thought on in the course of the day? How comes it that, upon every occasion, worldly honour, temporal interest, sensual pleasure, the gratifying thyself, or the world, makes thee turn thy back on him? The true lover is ever thinking on the object of his love, and never better content than when in company, and conversing with his beloved. Is thy love of God such as this? Art thou resolutely determined, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, no interest, no pleasure, no human respect, no fear, no love, for nothing, in fine, that the world can give or take away, to be disloyal to thy God? If not, the love of God is not in thee, and thou art none of his. This is the best rule, by which thou mayst know, whether thou really lovest God or no. But then to know thy true disposition in this regard, examine thy works. *If you love me, saith the Lord, keep my commandments,* St. John xiv. 15.

Consider, thirdly, that thou must also examine how thy soul stands affected with regard to thy neighbour. For here is another great branch of the Christian's duty, in which his soul is no less interested, and in which too many deceive themselves. O my soul, art thou *just* in thy thoughts, words, and works, to thy neighbour? Dost thou live up to the rules of *charity* in his regard? Art thou not censorious in thy judgments, bitter in thy speeches, hasty and passionate in thy carriage to him? Dost thou never injure him in his reputation, by backbiting and detraction; in his honour, by affronts; in his friends, by tale-bearing; in the peace of his mind, by derision or contempt? Art thou just in all thy dealings with him? Dost thou pay him his dues? Dost thou keep nothing from him unjustly? Dost thou do by him, in whatever station of life he may be, as thou wouldst be done by, if thou wert in his case? Is there no

rancour in thy heart against any one soul upon earth? no secret hatred, malice, or envy? Examine thyself well upon all these heads, in which millions affect to deceive themselves, to their eternal perdition.

Conclude to labour seriously for the knowledge of thyself, that thou mayst effectually amend thy life, and secure thy soul. For why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be any longer blindfolded by passion, or affected ignorance, with evident danger of falling down the dreadful precipice which leads to a miserable eternity?

EMBER-WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

On a further Examination of the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that we must also examine the state of our souls, as to hidden sins, and as to such sins as we may be guilty of in others; for, in these kinds, many are guilty of great disorders, while they flatter themselves that all goes well with them. Few, indeed, are ignorant of their *carnal* sins; though, even in these, sometimes persons deceive themselves; but very many take little or no notice of their *spiritual* sins, which are more interior, and, though less infamous in the eyes of men, are more heinous in the sight of God: see then thou examine thyself thoroughly upon these heads; for spiritual sins are commonly very subtle, and not easily discerned without a diligent search. Nay, oftentimes such as are the most guilty will not believe themselves guilty of them. These spiritual sins are of one of these five kinds, viz. pride, covetousness, envy, secret malice, and spiritual sloth. Look into them one by one, and if thy self-love will suffer thee to be impartial in thy search, in all appearance thou wilt find thyself more guilty than thou art aware of.

Consider, secondly, in partioular, how full thou art of thyself, how fond of every thing that flatters thee; how presumptuous of thy own sufficiency; how apt to compare thyself with others, in thy thoughts, and to give thyself the preference; how apt to despise others; how unwilling to suffer any reproof or contradiction; how ready to swell with indignation upon every trifling opposition or contempt; how apt to break out into a storm upon every supposed affront; how much concerned at what the world will think, or say, of thy performances; how much more solicitous for thy worldly honour than for the glory of God. And what is all this but an unhappy pride, which is laying waste thy soul, and corrupting its very vitals, whilst thou art insensible of it? See also, as to covetousness, whether the love of the mammon of the world does not reign in thy heart. Alas, the greatest miser does not

think himself covetous ; but the tree is to be known by its fruits ; such as an anxious care and a perpetual solicitude about the things of the world ; and upon this account neglecting prayer, and other spiritual duties ; or being continually distracted in them ; thinking more of thy money than of thy God ; locking up thy heart in thy chests ; losing thy peace upon every loss or disappointment ; and a strange unwillingness to part with thy money, even when the honour of God, or thy neighbour's necessities, call for it. See if nothing of this be thy case. See if thou art not more afraid of losing thy worldly substance than thy God. If so, thou art not in the way to heaven.

Consider, thirdly, as to the other *spiritual* sins, whether there be no person for whom thou hast a secret *envy* ? no one whose praises, whose endowments, corporal or spiritual, whose virtues or performances, make thee uneasy, and gnaw thy soul, as if their advantages were a lessening to the honour, praise, and esteem which thou affectest ? O ! how common is this mortal crime ! and how many detractions and other evils does it produce ! and yet how many take very little notice of it ! is it not thy case ? Then as to secret *malice*, rancour, and hatred, how dost thou stand affected ? Look well into thyself ; for here again we are too apt to deceive ourselves : but we must judge of the tree by the fruits ; that is, by our way of thinking, speaking, and acting, with relation to our supposed enemies. Now there is so very wide a difference between the fruits of charity and those of malice, between love and hatred, that if we are sincere in our examination, we cannot well be deceived therein. And as to *spiritual sloth*, which is a clog upon the soul, infinitely opposite to the love of God, to the spirit of prayer, to a due care in frequenting the sacraments and other duties ; is not this also a most common evil, which frequently amounts to a mortal sin ? and yet how seldom do lukewarm souls take notice of it !

Conclude upon declaring an eternal war against all these vices ; and particularly against that which thou hast reason to apprehend is thy predominant passion, that is to say, the chiefest and most dangerous of all thy enemies.

THURSDAY IN EMBER-WEEK.

On other Sins which we are to examine into.

CONSIDER, first, that in order to know the true state of our souls, we must also examine how we discharge ourselves of all our duties ; and not only of all such duties as are common to all Christians, but also of all such as are particularly incumbent on us in our station of life. Alas ! how many take notice of their

sins of commission, but not of their sins of omission! How many make some account of such duties as relate to the regulating *themselves*, but are not concerned to see that others, under their charge, serve the Lord! How many examine themselves upon the commandments of God, and the precepts of the church, as far as they appertain to all Christians in general, but pass over the particular duties and obligations annexed to their calling or state of life; to which nevertheless they are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of the calling. Reflect thou, my soul, on all these things. The grand duty of man, the great end for which he came into the world, his whole business in life, is to dedicate and consecrate his very being and his whole life to the love and service of his Maker. All thy days, O man, are given thee for this end. The omission of this great duty is highly criminal: it is usually the first sin that man falls into. And yet how few sufficiently reflect on it! Alas! how many millions of souls are lost by this omission; who, though they are neither guilty of blasphemy, nor murder, nor adultery, nor theft, &c., are justly condemned for the omission of dedicating themselves in earnest to the love and service of God!

Consider, secondly, Christian soul, what care thou takest of thy children, of thy servants, and of all under thy charge. The regularity of thy own life will never bring thee to heaven, if, through thy negligence of them, their lives be irregular. Reflect well on this; and see if thou art not guilty of many criminal omissions in this kind. Again reflect on the particular obligations annexed to thy calling; and how far thou performest what the law of God, or man, requires of thee in thy station; for example, that of a pastor, a teacher, a lawyer, a physician, a tradesman, a servant, &c. See whether thou makest good thy covenants. And if any oath were required at thy first admission, or afterwards, see what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself of the obligation of it. Alas! how many, in entering upon their respective callings, take certain oaths, and afterwards, perhaps, think no more of them! And can this be the way to heaven? See, then, how necessary it is that a Christian, who has a mind to secure his soul, should look well into himself.

Consider, thirdly, whether thou hast nothing to apprehend with regard to thy salvation, from the sins of other men. And this not only from thy *omissions*, or thy neglect of restraining those under thy charge from sin, or of keeping away from them the occasions of sin, but because of thy *commissions* too, in promoting or encouraging sin by word or work; in enticing, or provoking to sin, in flattering or applauding people in their sins; and in contributing to keep up the pernicious maxims of the world, in point of

honour, interest and pleasure, by which numbers of poor souls are enslaved to sin, and dragged into hell. Reflect, withal, how little guard thou generally hast upon thy words, in thy ordinary conversation, and whether thy carelessness therein may not frequently be attended with very bad consequences to the souls of thy neighbours, by giving them some occasion or other of sin, either in thought, word, or deed. Alas! how many sins will be brought to light in the great day, which careless souls, in the time of this life, but little apprehend, and so continue till death in the guilt of them.

Conclude to make such good use of the spiritual exercises of this time, and especially to study so well what passes within thee, as to be no longer blind to thy own sins, and a stranger at home. O my God! do thou give me grace, now at least, perfectly to know myself. O grant that I may renounce, and do penance for all my past sins, and henceforward settle my soul upon a more secure bottom, which may stand for eternity.

FRIDAY, EMBER-WEEK.

On exercising Works of Mercy.

CONSIDER, first, that in order to find mercy, we must show mercy. *Blessed are the merciful*, saith our Lord, *for they shall obtain mercy*. Matt. v. 7. And on the other hand, *judgment without mercy*, saith St. James, *to him that hath not done mercy*, chap. ii. 13. God expressly rejects the fasts of them that refuse to show mercy to their neighbours, *Isaias lviii*. He declares he will neither give ear to their prayers nor accept of their sacrifices, *Prov. xxi. 13. Isai. i. 11, 15, 16, 17, 18*. If then, my soul, thou desirest, at this time, effectually to sue for the divine mercy, in the forgiveness of thy sins, see that thy fasting and prayer be accompanied with almsdeeds. *If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to be willing to bestow a little*, Tob. iv. 9. This mercy and charity, exercised by thee, will recommend thy fasting, and thy prayer to that God who is all charity, and whose *tender mercies are above all his works*.

Consider, secondly, how many ways, and upon how many occasions, the word of God recommends almsdeeds to us. It promises an eternal kingdom in heaven, to all them that are diligent in this exercise, and threatens with eternal damnation all them that are negligent, *St. Matt. xxv*. It shows that the definitive sentence, which is to decide our eternal doom, is to pass upon each one of us according to his behaviour in this respect. *Ibidem*. It encourages even the greatest sinners *to redeem their*

sins with alms, and their iniquities with works of mercy to the poor, Daniel iv. 24. It assures them, that by the means of *alms all things shall be made clean to them*, St. Luke xi. 41; that *alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness*, Tob. iv. 11; that Christ considers what is done for the poor as done for himself, and will reward it accordingly, St. Matt. xxv; that *he that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him*, Prov. xix. 17; to pass over many other texts, promising all kinds of good, both for this world and the next, to works of mercy, and threatening the hard hearted and unmerciful with the worst of God's judgments. O my soul, attend to these heavenly oracles; embrace, with all the affection of thy heart, this lovely virtue of Mercy, the favourite daughter of the great King. It was mercy brought him down from heaven to thee, and mercy must carry thee up to him thither.

Consider, thirdly, the conditions that must accompany our alms, that they may be capable of producing these great effects. First; they must be liberal, and proportionable to our ability: *He that soweth sparingly shall reap but sparingly*. What, then, can the worldling expect, who, for every penny he gives to God, in the person of the poor, gives a pound to the devil, and to his own passions and lusts? Secondly; our alms must be given with a pure intention; that is, not out of ostentation or vain-glory, or for any other human motive; but for God's sake; otherwise they will have no reward from God. Thirdly; our alms can never effectually procure for us the remission of our sins, except we join with them a sincere repentance for our sins, together with an effectual resolution of loving and serving God for the future. Christians, take good notice of these three articles; and particularly remember, that neither alms, nor any thing else, can give any manner of security to any man that wilfully persists in mortal sin.

Conclude to esteem, love and practise, upon every occasion, this blessed virtue of mercy. But see that thy intention be pure; and beware of losing the benefit of it by an impenitent heart.

SATURDAY IN EMBER-WEEK.

On the spiritual Works of Mercy.

CONSIDER, first, that the *spiritual works of mercy*, by which we relieve our neighbours in the necessities of their souls, are of far greater value, in the sight of God, than such as merely relate to their bodies. If, then, he is pleased to promise such ample rewards to the feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and

such like good works, which relate only to these corruptible carcases, and to the short time of our mortal pilgrimage; how much more will he esteem and reward those works of mercy and charity, by which immortal souls, made after God's own image, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, are drawn out of darkness and sin, rescued from Satan and hell, and brought to God and a happy eternity! *He that causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, saith the Scripture, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins, St. James v. 20. And they that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity, Daniel xii. 3.*

Consider, secondly, that the spiritual works of mercy are principally exercised by reclaiming sinners from their evil ways, even the ways of death and hell; by admonitions, remonstrances, fraternal corrections, &c.; by enlightening and instructing such as, through ignorance, are in danger of losing their precious souls; or by procuring them this light and instruction from other proper persons; by comforting the afflicted, encouraging the pusillanimous, upholding and assisting them that are under temptations, reconciling such as are at variance, bearing with all, forgiving all, ever overcoming evil with good, and praying for all. O how happy, how precious in the sight of God, is a life spent in such works of mercy and charity as these are! And how happy will that death be, that shall conclude such a life! O my soul, that we may lead such a life! O that we may die such a death!

Consider, thirdly, that these spiritual works of mercy are not only the most acceptable of all, and the most meritorious in the sight of God, but also are of strict obligation; and this not only to pastors, but to all other Christians, according to their circumstances and abilities. Charity is a virtue of universal obligation; and the principal object of that love, which charity obliges us to have for our neighbours, is the eternal welfare of their immortal souls. If, then, we can unconcernedly see numbers of souls crowding into hell, without affording them all the help that lies in our power, in order to rescue them from that extremity of endless misery; is it not evident, that we have no charity for them? and if not, may not our case one day be as bad as theirs? What, then, must we do? We must gladly lay hold of every opportunity of contributing what lies in us to the conversion and salvation of any one of these poor unhappy souls; and we shall quickly find, that opportunities of this nature will not be wanting, if we take the matter to heart. At least there are two ways, and those the most effectual of all, of reclaiming sinners, and bringing them to God, which are certainly in the power of every one, and from which no one can be excused; and these are the

example of a holy life, and the efficacy of fervent prayer poured out to God in behalf of poor sinners.

Conclude ever to make use of these two, the most effectual ways of bringing sinners to God; yet so as not to neglect any other means that lie in thy power. What a comfort will it be to thee, what an honour, what a happiness, to be the instrument of God in the salvation of souls; that same great work, which brought the Son of God from heaven! But what dreadful punishments mayst thou not justly apprehend, if, for want of this charity, any of these souls should perish, because thou wouldst not lend them a helping hand, to withdraw them from the precipice to which they were running. Ah! will not their blood one day cry to Heaven for vengeance against thee?

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that the time of Lent is not only a time for fasting and giving alms, but is also, in a particular manner, a time of devotion and prayer. Fasting, alms and prayer are three sisters, which ought to go hand in hand, and with united forces, to offer a holy violence to heaven, which is not to be taken but by violence. If, then, prayer be at all times necessary; if it be the very life of a Christian soul; it is certainly a most indispensable part of our duty at this holy time. But what is prayer? It is a conversation with God; it is a raising up of the mind and of the heart to God; it is an address of the soul to God, in which we present him with our homage, our adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; we exercise ourselves in his presence in acts of faith, hope and love; and we lay before him all our necessities, and those of the whole world; begging mercy, grace and salvation at his hands. O, my soul, how happy it is, how glorious, how pleasant, to entertain thyself thus with thy God! Is it not, in some measure, anticipating the joys of heaven? for what is heaven but to be with God?

Consider, secondly, more in particular, the most excellent advantages the soul enjoys by the means of prayer. It gives her a free access, whensoever she pleases, to come before the throne of his divine Majesty, and to make her addresses to him at any hour of the day or night, with a positive assurance from him of meeting with a favourable audience; it admits her, as often as she pleases, into his private closet, where she may find him all alone, and treat him with all freedom as long as she will; and she may be assured he will never be wearied with her importunity, nor shut the door against her. Will any prince of

the earth allow any thing like this, even to his greatest favourite? O, Christian soul, what an honour is this! and why art not thou more ambitious of it?

Consider, thirdly, how delightful prayer is to the soul that truly loveth God. The true lover finds the greatest pleasure in thinking of, and speaking with, the object of his love. If, then, the soul truly love God, nothing will be more sweet to her, than this heavenly intercourse and conversation with her sovereign Good. The saints have found it so, when they have passed whole nights in prayer, and thought the time very short, through the delight they found in the company of their Beloved. O, my soul, if thou find no such delight in prayer, see if it be not for want of love.

Conclude to embrace this heavenly exercise of prayer, at all opportunities. Here is to be found thy greatest honour, interest, and pleasure, and, in a word, thy whole happiness both for time and eternity.

SECOND MONDAY IN LENT.

On the Necessity of Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that all Christians are indispensably obliged to prayer; because it is a homage and worship we owe to God. He is our first Beginning, and our last End; he is the inexhaustible Source of all our good: therefore he justly expects we should daily worship him, and daily acknowledge our total dependence on him, by a diligent application to him by prayer. We are all bound, both by our creation and redemption, frequently to present ourselves before the throne of God, with acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; we are all bound to honour him, by frequent acts of faith, hope, and love; and it is in prayer, and by prayer, we perform these duties: they are all neglected, if prayer be neglected. It was appointed in the divine law, that twice every day, viz. morning and evening, an unspotted lamb should be offered in sacrifice, in the temple of God, as a daily worship he expected from his people; and shall not the children of the new law be equally obliged, twice a day at least, to offer up their homage of prayer in the temple of their hearts? Daniel chose rather to be cast into the den of the lions, than not worship his God by prayer, three times a day; and shall not this convince Christians of the strict necessity of this exercise?

Consider, secondly, the necessity of prayer, inasmuch as it is, by divine appointment, the channel through which the graces and blessings of God are to flow into our souls. We can do nothing towards our salvation without the grace of God; but with his

grace we can do all things. Now, prayer is the great means of procuring and obtaining this all-necessary grace: *Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.* O, how often is this repeated and inculcated in holy writ! How much are we there pressed to be earnest and fervent in prayer! Does our God, then, stand in need of us, or our prayers? No, certainly. He stands not in need of us; but we continually stand in need of him; and therefore, out of love to us, he is so often pressing us to pray; because he sees that without frequent and fervent prayer, we must be for ever miserable. Blessed be his name for this his infinite charity.

Consider, thirdly, the necessity of prayer, from the warfare in which we are engaged, the whole time of our mortal pilgrimage, with three most desperate enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are surrounded with dangers on all sides, and with dangers that threaten us with nothing less than the loss of God, and a miserable eternity. We walk in the midst of snares: our way is beset with robbers and murderers: we breathe a pestilential air: we live in a *world* that is very wicked; in the midst of worldlings, a deluded people, who are strangers to the gospel; who, by word and work, encourage sin, and seek to drag us along with them into the broad road of perdition. We carry about with us a load of *flesh*, which weighs down the poor soul, and tyrannises over her with its passions and lusts: these hold a correspondence with the third enemy, the *devil*, and are ever ready to betray us to him, to make us his companions in never-ending woe. We have whole legions of his wicked angels to fight against; crafty and malicious spirits, bent upon sparing no pains to destroy us. And what shall we do? or what can we do, to escape all these dangers, and to overcome all these enemies? We must *watch and pray*; and God will watch over us, and give us the victory over them all. Prayer will engage God on our sides; and all our enemies shall fall before us; for if God is with us, it is no matter who is against us.

Conclude to have recourse to prayer in all dangers and temptations; and since our whole life is full of dangers and temptations, let us make our whole life, as much as possible, a life of prayer.

SECOND TUESDAY IN LENT.

On Attention in Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that the most essential condition to make our prayer either acceptable to God, or beneficial to ourselves, is a serious attention: it deserves not the name of prayer without it.

To pray with wilful distractions, is a mockery: it is affronting the divine Majesty. *This people, saith he, honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Isai. xxix. See, my soul, if this be not too often thy case. And if so, seek a speedy remedy for so great an evil. There needs no greater to sink thee into the very depth of all misery, for time and eternity. For as he cannot fail to live well, who has found the way to pray well, so he that prays ill must not expect to live well or die well.

Consider, secondly, that, in order to pray well, our heart and mind must go always along with what we are about; or, which is the best attention of all, and most conducing to bring us to the love of God, our thoughts must then be fixed in God; not considered as abroad, but as within our own souls; not as represented by corporeal images, but as the Being of all beings, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite Truth. But that we may be better able to keep this attention in the time of prayer, we must hearken to the admonition of the wise man: *Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not like a man that tempteth God.* This preparing the soul for prayer consists in discharging beforehand, as much as possible, all foreign thoughts; restraining, even at other times, all the roving of the imagination, and vain amusements; untying the heart from its disorderly affections, and beginning by a serious recollection of the soul in the presence of God, and an earnest address to him to teach us and help us to pray as we ought.

Consider, thirdly, that if, after taking these precautions, we still find ourselves hurried away with a multitude of distractions, in the time of prayer, we must not be discouraged. For as long as our will has no share in these distractions, they will not be imputed to us, nor hinder the fruit of our prayers. It is the heart, it is the will, that God regards: our care must be to keep this right; to set out at first with a good heart, and a will to seek our heavenly Father, and not to retract this by any wilful turning aside from him; and we may be assured, that he that seeks and sees the heart will not be offended at the involuntary wanderings of the imagination, which can never separate the soul from him.

Conclude upon ever keeping a close guard upon thy mind, and upon thy heart, if thou desire to pray well; and this not only at the time of prayer, but at all times. For if thou live in a constant dissipation of thought at other times, and with a heart set upon irregular affections and cheating vanities, how canst thou expect, but that both thy mind and heart, in the time of prayer, will be still running after those things they are accustomed to, and which they have unhappily made their treasure, instead of God?

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On other Conditions of Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, those words of St. James iv. 3, *You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss.* Great promises are made in holy writ in favour of prayer; but these are to be understood, provided we ask for *what* we ought, and in the *manner* we ought. But if we are more concerned for the temporal goods of this transitory life, than for the eternal welfare of our souls, and make such things as those the principal subject of our prayers, we must not think much if God does not hear us. For in these cases, we often know not what we ask, or we know not, at least, what is expedient for us; and it is a mercy of God not to grant us those things which, if he were to grant them, might be the occasion of the loss of our souls. In our prayer, we must *seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice*; and as to those other things, God will give us them as far as he sees expedient for us. And if at any time we pray for such things, or pray to be delivered from sufferings and crosses, we must ever pray with submission, and conformity to the will of God,—*if it be his will*, and if he sees it expedient, and not otherwise: *Not my will, but thine be done.*

Consider, secondly, that we must not only pray for such things as are truly good; as being agreeable to God's holy will, and conducing to our true and everlasting welfare; but we must also pray in a proper manner; that is, with a pure intention, and with a lively faith, and confidence in God. Great promises are made in Scripture to prayer; but it is to prayer made with faith, and confidence in God. The honour of his divine Majesty is engaged to stand by those that pray with a strong belief and trust in him. But as for him that prayeth *wavering in faith, let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*, James i. 6. If, then, we would pray to the purpose, we must come before God with a lively sense of his boundless power, goodness, and mercy; with a conviction of his being ever faithful to his promises; and that his divine truth cannot fail. And we must not trust in the least in ourselves, nor ground ourselves upon any merits of our own; but put an entire confidence in God, who is more desirous to give us his grace than we are to ask it; and we shall quickly experience how ready he will be to show us mercy, and to hear our prayers. So true it is, that no one ever trusted in him and was confounded.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to obtain our requests, we must take care to present them in the name of Jesus Christ, and

through the merits of his death and passion. What we ask of God is mercy, grace, and salvation: now, our faith assures us there is no means of coming at mercy, grace, or salvation, but through Jesus Christ: *No one can come to the Father but by him*, St. John xiv. 6. Whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, shall be given to us; chap. xvi. 23, 24. But *there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. Here, then, is the great grounds of that faith and confidence, with which we draw near to God, and address our prayers to him: the Son of God has died for us: he has made over to us the merits of his death and passion: he has purchased for us those graces which we pray for: his blood continually pleads in our behalf. Through him, then, *let us go with confidence to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*, Hebr. iv. 16.

Conclude to take the blood of Christ along with you, as often as you desire to go within the veil, by prayer, into the sanctuary of God. This will open to you the way to all mercy, grace, and salvation.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Fervour in Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, the necessity of fervour in prayer; that is to say, that we should be quite in earnest in our addresses to God. For how can we expect that God should hear or regard our supplications, when we present them with so much indolence and indifference, as if we told the Almighty we did not care whether he heard us or no? Such luke-warm prayer as this, instead of drawing down his blessing upon us, will rather move him to indignation. It is doing the work of God negligently; which is a thing of the worst of consequences to a Christian soul. Fervour and earnestness in prayer is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God, *who, in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up his prayers and supplications*. Hebr. v. 7.: it is recommended by the doctrine and example of all the Saints; not a fervour of the imagination, but of the will; not expressed by the motion of the head, or any outward gestures of the body, but consisting in the strong desires of the soul, suing with all her power for the mercy and grace of God

Consider, secondly, how our Lord recommends to us, St. Luke xviii. 1, *That we should always pray, and not to faint*; that is, not to be discouraged, nor to give over if we do not immediately find the effect of our prayers; but, by the example of the

poor widow, whose importunity prevailed even upon a wicked judge, still continue to knock at the gate of heaven, till God is pleased to open to us, according to his merciful promise. Perseverance in prayer, and a holy importunity, were the means by which the saints obtained such great things of God. It is well if the want of these be not the true reason why we are not favoured in the like manner. The hand of God is certainly not shortened. But alas! we have not that faith, that fervour, that perseverance, which they had, who, like their Lord, passed sometimes even whole nights in prayer.

Consider, thirdly, that nothing contributes more to render our prayers effectual with God, than a profound humility. *A contrite and humble heart* God never despises. *The prayer of him that humblth himself*, saith the wise man, Eccle. xxxv. 21, *shall pierce the clouds—and not depart till the Most High behold.* Humility always finds admittance with God, who ever *resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.* If then, my soul, thou desire that thy prayers should find admittance, see they be ever accompanied with humility. *I will speak to my Lord*, said holy Abraham, Gen. xviii. 27., *whereas I am but dust and ashes.* Alas! poor soul of mine, thy whole being is a mere nothing in the sight of that great God, before whom thou presentest thyself in prayer. His majesty fills heaven and earth; and both heaven and earth dwindle away to just nothing at all in his presence. But what a figure, then, do thy crimes and abominations make in his eyes? And how wretched an object do they make of thee! See, then, what pressing motives thou hast to humble thyself in prayer, in consideration of thy sins, and of what thou hast deserved by them. Nothing but humble prayer can remedy all thy evils, and this will effectually do it.

Conclude ever to pray with fervour and humility; and in order thereto, begin always thy prayer by placing thyself in the presence of God, and humbly imploring the assistance of his divine Spirit. None but he can teach thee to pray well.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

On Mental Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that the great advantages and excellence of prayer are chiefly found in *mental prayer*; that is to say, in such kind of prayer as is not confined to any form of words, but is made in the secret closet of the heart; where the soul, all alone, finds her God alone, and entertains herself with him. The advantages of this kind of prayer, beyond that which is only *vocal*, are, that it brings us nearer to God, and to his heavenly light; that it em-

plays all the powers of the soul, viz. the memory, the understanding, and the will, about him; that it opens the eyes of the soul to the knowledge of God and of ourselves; and is the true school in which we learn to despise the world, and its cheating vanities, and to love God with our whole hearts. O my soul, see thou daily frequent this school of divine love!

Consider, secondly, that the saints, and other masters of a spiritual life, have prescribed certain rules and methods of mental prayer, with a variety of subjects to make the practice easy. According to these rules and methods, the soul begins by placing herself in the presence of her God, and by humbly imploring his divine assistance: then the memory represents the subject of the prayer, and the understanding is employed in considering the heavenly truths discovered therein; till the will is properly affected therewith, and stirred up to the fear and love of God; to an humble confidence in his goodness; to a sense of gratitude for his benefits; to a horror of sin, and a sincere repentance for past offences; and such like affections; which ought to be followed by good and firm resolutions of avoiding evil and doing good, and in particular, of the immediate amending such failings as one is most subject to. Such is the method of mental prayer, by way of meditation, recommended by St. Ignatius, St. Francis Sales, and other saints, and both very easy and beneficial to Christian souls, by its serving greatly to enlighten their understanding, and to inflame their will. Give thanks, my soul, to thy God, for the lights he has communicated to his saints, to direct thee, in this sovereign exercise of mental prayer; and, particularly, practise what they recommend, with regard to the insisting principally in thy prayer upon affections and resolutions; lest otherwise thy meditations fall short of answering the chiefest end of prayer, which is the love of God, and the amendment of thy life.

Consider, thirdly, that although this method of mental prayer be excellent, and such as ought to be followed, where the soul does not find herself invited and attracted another way; yet, as *the Spirit breatheth where he will*, (John iii. 8,) and as we must not pretend to set bounds or give rules to him, who expects to be ever acknowledged as sovereign Lord and King within our souls, and to establish his reign there by mental prayer; if he should be pleased to advance the soul to the more perfect prayer of contemplation, (in which she finds herself drawn nearer to God, quite alone with him, and absorbed in his love,) she must not be restrained, by any of these usual forms or methods, from following that happy call, and thankfully yielding herself up a captive to divine love. For it must ever be the rule of the soul, which desires to have the kingdom of God established in her

interior, by way of mental prayer, to follow God and his divine attractions; yet so as to take a guide along with her, for fear of being imposed upon, by taking the suggestions of Satan, or of her own pride and self-love, for the motions of the Spirit of God.

Conclude to exercise thyself daily in mental prayer, as the great means to bring thee to God. Let no pretext of business call thee off from this exercise: nothing can be of half so much importance to thy future welfare: it is the very way to heaven. The morning is the best time for it and half an hour, at least, ought to be dedicated to it.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the Practice of Mental Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, the great error of many Christians, who imagine the practice of mental prayer to be very difficult; and therefore are discouraged from undertaking this exercise, by the vain apprehension of not being able to succeed in it; an error which the devil endeavours to propagate with all his power, because he fears nothing more than mental prayer, as being the direct ruin of his usurpation, and the establishment of the kingdom of God in the soul. To confute this error, and to take away this prejudice against so necessary an exercise, reflect, that there is no such mystery in mental prayer as people vainly imagine; that it consists in considerations and affections, that is, in *thinking* and *loving*; and this in *thinking* on subjects generally the most easy and the most copious that can be, and, at the same time, of the utmost importance to the soul; and in *loving* him, whom, by *thinking*, we find to be every way the most worthy of our love. We can easily *think* of our other affairs, and even of every trifle that comes in our way; nay, thinking is so natural to us, that we cannot help thinking of something, whenever we are awake. And shall *thinking* be then only difficult, when we are to think of matters of the utmost consequence to our everlasting welfare? Or shall *loving* be difficult to a soul that was made to love, and that never can find rest but in her love; and whom God, by his grace, is continually inviting and pressing to love him?

Consider, secondly, that the subjects for mental prayer, which are the most necessary, are withal the most easy; such as those that are recommended by St. Teresa, in her writings, and by her own practice: viz. "the true knowledge of ourselves, and what we are, both as mortals and as sinners; how much we owe to God, and how much we have offended him, and how ungrateful

we still are to him ; what he is, and how much he loveth us, and what he hath done for us ; the great humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God, for our redemption from sin and Satan ; the sudden vanishing of all present things ; and the eternal punishments and rewards to come." Such meditations as these are no ways difficult or curious, but easy for every capacity, and withal open a wide field for the soul to expatiate in ; and from these it will be easy for her to pass on to a variety of pious affections, suitable to the subject of the meditation. But, more especially, such considerations as these serve very much for enkindling in the soul the *love* of God, and a desire of being grateful to him, and of never more offending him ; when we reflect what he, the Lord of glory, infinite in majesty, has done and suffered for us, such poor wretches as we are, to deliver us from such torments, which we had deserved, and to purchase for us such glory, of his own pure mercy and goodness.

Consider, thirdly, that it is also easy for the soul to practise mental prayer, in the way of familiar colloquies or entertainments with our Lord ; conversing and discoursing with him, as we would do if we had him visibly present with us, as when he was here amongst men in his mortal life ; treating with him as with a parent, a friend, a benefactor, as with our high priest, our advocate, our physician, our director, our brother, our spouse, our head, our redeemer, &c. ; sometimes humbling ourselves before him, confessing and begging pardon for our many disloyalties ; at other times representing to him our many infirmities, minding him of his promises, thanking him for his great patience towards us, condoling with him in his sufferings, and the daily affronts he receives from obstinate sinners, promising a new life for the future, offering all that we have, and our whole being to him, petitioning him for our many spiritual wants and necessities, &c. For, "since we never want words," saith St. Teresa, "to talk with other persons, why should we to speak with God?" And surely none can want matter to converse and discourse about with him, but such as think they owe nothing to him, and, neither here nor hereafter, desire or expect any thing from him.

Conclude to let no apprehensions of difficulties discourage thee from the daily practice of mental prayer. The grace of God will make it easy to thee, if thou continue resolute in using thy best endeavours. Be not frightened, if thou meet with nothing at first but dryness and distractions ; let thy will be good, and these will not hurt thee : God, in his good time, will let the light of his countenance shine upon thee. By perseverance in this exercise, thou wilt, at length, dig out a treasure, which will abundantly recompense whatever labour thou hast taken in digging.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Devotion to the Passion of Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that meditating on the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, ought to be a principal part of the Christian's devotion, during the time of Lent. For the season approaches, in which we celebrate the yearly memory of our Lord's passion; and therefore the Church, which at no time can forget the sufferings and death of her heavenly spouse, at this time particularly recommends to her children, to set before their eyes their crucified Saviour, and to make him the great object of their devotion. His passion is the overflowing source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us: all our good must be derived from his cross: therefore, the more we approach to him in his sufferings, and station ourselves near the cross, by pious meditations on his passion, the more plentifully shall we partake of that mercy and grace which flow continually from those fountains of life, his precious wounds. The great design of Lent is, that the sinner should now return to God, and sue for pardon and mercy; and what better means can he have for this, than by taking along with him to the throne of mercy, the blood of Christ, by daily meditating on his passion?

Consider, secondly, that the passion of Christ has been always, from the beginning of the world, the great object of the devotion of the children of God. In all their bloody sacrifices of old, of oxen and sheep, they celebrated beforehand the death of the Lamb of God, slain in figure from the beginning of the world. And as, from the time of the fall of Adam, no grace could ever be derived to any man, but through the channel of the merits of the death and passion of our Redeemer, whose future coming was revealed to man immediately after his fall; so no sacrifices could ever be acceptable to God, but such as had relation to him, and through faith in him. Much more now, under the new law, are all the faithful obliged to make the passion of Christ the great object of their devotion; since he has instituted the eucharistical sacrifice and sacrament, and left us therein the sacred mysteries of his body and blood, for this very end, that, in our most solemn worship, we should have always before our eyes his passion and death. See, my soul, how much thy God desires thou shouldst remember what he has suffered for thee! And why? Doubtless that, by this means, thou mightst be confirmed in his love. O blessed be his goodness for ever!

Consider, thirdly, how ungrateful all such Christians are, as forget the sufferings and death of their Redeemer. May they not all be reckoned in the number of those, of whom he com-

plained of old, by the royal prophet, that they left him alone in his passion, and took no notice of him. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me*, Psalm cxli. Had the meanest man upon earth suffered but the tenth part of what our Lord has suffered, for the love of one of us, we should be basely ungrateful, if we ever forgot his sufferings and his love. What, then, must we think of ourselves, if we forget the unspeakable sufferings, and infinite love of the Son of God himself, nailed to a cross, to deliver us, by his death, from the eternal torments of hell? Ah, Christians, let us never be so ungrateful!

Conclude, O my soul, at this holy time at least, daily to accompany thy crucified Jesus, by meditation on his sufferings. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross*, said St. Paul, Gal. ii. 19. *My love is nailed to the cross*, said St. Ignatius the Martyr. O that, like these generous lovers, we could always adhere to our crucified God.

MONDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

On the great Advantages of Devotion to the Passion of Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that the consideration of the passion of Christ is the sovereign means of all good to Christian souls. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up*, said our Lord to Nicodemus, (John iii. 14, 15.) *that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have everlasting life*. As, then, the looking at the brazen serpent (which was a figure of the death of Christ) was the means of divine appointment, to heal the Israelites, who were bitten by the fiery serpents sent amongst them for their sins, and to rescue them from temporal death; so the contemplation of the passion of Christ is the great means to heal Christian souls from the bites of the infernal serpent, and to deliver them from everlasting death. Every sinner, that looks for mercy, must return to God with his whole heart, and that by faith, hope, love, and repentance. Now, it is in meditating on the passion of Christ we contemplate the great object of our faith, the chiefest ground of our hope, the most pressing motive of divine love, and the strongest and most effectual inducement to repentance for our sins. O! let us embrace then this great means of bringing us to God and to all good.

Consider, secondly, that as the belief of Christ *crucified* is the most fundamental article of the Christian's faith; so it has the greatest influence of all other articles on our justification;

according to that of the apostle, Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25, that we *all have sinned, and need the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be* A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, &c. It is, then, *through faith in his blood* we are to be introduced to the divine mercy; and it is by meditating on his passion we are to be introduced to a lively *faith in his blood*. So that the devotion to the passion of Christ is the shortest way to come at justifying faith. It has no less influence on our hope, by setting before our eyes how much God has loved us in giving his only Son, and the great grounds we have to look for all good through him. For as the apostle writes, Rom. viii. 32, *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, hath he not also with him given us all things?* O, what an earnest indeed has God given us of mercy, grace and salvation, in the blood of his Son! O, what may not poor sinners hope for, from such and so great a Redeemer, if they apply to his sacred passion by daily meditations, and offer up their humble supplications to his Father, through him and his infinite merits!

Consider, thirdly, that as nothing contributes so effectually to our justification and sanctification, as the love of God; so nothing contributes more effectually to excite this heavenly love in our souls, than the devotion to the passion of Christ. For here we most clearly discover the incomprehensible goodness of God, and the inexhaustible treasures of his divine love for us. This excites in us a desire of returning love for love life for life. This attracts us, like Magdalene, to the feet of our crucified Saviour, with an earnest desire to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from and enlivened by divine love. This makes us grieve for our past ingratitude, in having had hitherto so little sense of his goodness and love; this makes us lament the share our sins have had in nailing him to the cross; this teaches us to offer our whole hearts to him, in order to make him the best amends we are capable of, by loving him henceforward, both in time and eternity. Thus the devotion to the passion of Christ introduces that *penitential love*, to which our Lord attributes the remission of sins, when he says of Magdalene, Luke vii. 47, *Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much.*

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross, and, by the daily contemplation of the sufferings of thy Redeemer, so to exercise thy soul in faith, hope, love, and repentance, as to secure to thyself mercy, grace, and salvation.

TUESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT

On the Lessons Christ teaches us in his Passion.

CONSIDER, first, that the devotion to the passion of our Lord brings with it other great advantages to the soul, inasmuch as it teaches us many excellent lessons for the regulating our lives according to his blessed example. The Son of God came down from heaven, not only to shed his blood for us, to pay our ransom; but also to give himself to us as a perfect pattern of all virtues, for us to follow in the practice of our lives; that so the image of God in man, which had been disfigured by sin, might be repaired and reformed according to this great original. Now, although the whole life of Christ was full of admirable examples of all Christian virtues; yet they no where shine forth more brightly than in his passion, in which he has drawn, as it were, under one view, all the great lessons of virtue he had taught in his life, both by his words and his works. So that the passion of Christ is the great school, that the Christian must frequent by devout meditations, if he desires to learn the virtues of his Redeemer. He must look on by contemplation, and execute in work what he sees in this great pattern, which his Lord here shows him on mount Calvary, if he desires to make his soul a living tabernacle for the living God. *As it was said to Moses, when he was to make the tabernacle of the covenant; See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount,* Hebr. viii. 5.

Consider, secondly, what the lessons are, that Christ more particularly desires to teach us in his passion. The apostle informs us, Philip. ii. 5, 8, that they are principally his *obedience* and his *humility*. *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross;* and this, that we might learn to be of *the like mind*. O, let us study well these great lessons. Adam fell from God by *disobedience*; to gratify himself, he transgressed the holy law of God, and so entailed both sin and death upon all his offspring. By the *obedience* of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we are delivered from sin and death; but upon articles of learning and practising his *obedience*, and that also unto death, by a constant and perpetual will of sticking close to the commandments of God, at all events, and of rather dying than transgressing his holy law. This is the obedience that Christ expects we should learn from his cross, viz. so as to be ever willing to part even with our dearest affections, rather than offend our God, and to submit to any sufferings whatsoever, rather than to disobey. This is true Christian *obedience*, and

nothing less will bring us to God. My soul, thou must learn this lesson at the foot of the cross.

Consider, thirdly, what a lesson of humility Christ has given us in the whole course of his passion; becoming therein *as a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*, Psalm xxi. 7. See how he humbled himself, under the malediction of our sins, in his prayer in the garden; how he humbled himself, in suffering with silence all manner of calumnies, affronts, and disgraces; how he humbled himself under those ignominious and infamous torments, of scourging at the pillar, crowning with thorns, and his carriage of the cross; in fine, how he humbled himself, in his being crucified between two thieves, and in dying that most disgraceful death of the cross. But who is this, my soul, that thus humbles himself, and makes himself thus mean and contemptible for thee? Why, it is the Lord of glory: it is the Most High: it is the great King of heaven and earth. And why does he thus debase himself? it is to teach thee his humility; a lesson so necessary, that without learning it thou canst never please God, nor have any part with him.

Conclude to study well these necessary lessons, by a daily attendance upon our Lord in his passion. He came down from heaven to be our teacher, and his cross is the pulpit from which he most feelingly and effectually preaches to our souls.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On other Lessons, to be learned from Christ in his Passion.

CONSIDER, first, that in the passion of Christ, his meekness is no less admirable than his humility. These two he jointly recommended in life, to be learnt of him. *St. Matt. xi. 29.* And these two he jointly taught in death, by his great example. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer he opened not his mouth, Isai. liii. 7. The Lord God hath opened my ear, saith he, Isai. l. 5, 6, and I do not resist.— I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me.* And why all this, but to leave us an example, that we should follow his steps? *1 Pet. ii. 21, 23.* *Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.* O, let us learn, from the consideration of the behaviour of our Lord in his sufferings, to suppress all the risings of our passion and pride, and to imitate his meekness and silence, who,

in the midst of affronts and injuries of all kinds, *became as a man that heareth not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.*

Consider, secondly, that the devotion to the passion of Christ is the great means to learn a Christian *patience*, under all the crosses and sufferings we are exposed to during our mortal pilgrimage. We cannot live without crosses and sufferings; and *in our patience* under them, we are *to possess our souls*, Luke xxi. 19. *Patience both sweetens and sanctifies all our sufferings; patience is necessary for us; that, doing the will of God, we may receive the promise, Heb. x. 36. Patience hath a perfect work; that we may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing, James i. 4.* As none hath ever gone to heaven but by the way of the cross, so none can ever come thither without patience. Now, this all-necessary virtue of *patience* is best learned in the school of the passion of Christ, by the consideration of the multitude and variety of his sufferings, and the manner with which he endures all, for the love of us. How shall a sinner (who has deserved hell for his crimes) pretend to complain, or think much of any sufferings in life or death, when, by serious meditations, he sets before his eyes the far greater sufferings of the innocent Lamb of God, endured with an unwearied patience for his sins!

Consider, thirdly, what further lessons are to be learned from the contemplation of the passion of Christ;—first, of charity for our enemies, by considering the Son of God praying for them that crucified him, and dying for his enemies;—second, of perfect resignation, and conformity in all things to the holy will of God; by the great example of the prayer of our Lord in his agony—*not my will, but thine be done*; and the consideration of the great sacrifice that he made of himself to his Father upon the cross, without the least reserve;—third, of the spirit of voluntary mortification, and self-denial, by seeing how the Son of God allows himself no ease or comfort in his sufferings, but, both in life and death, makes choice of what is most disagreeable to natural inclination. O, my soul, these are necessary lessons indeed. See thou study them well, at the foot of the cross, sitting under the shadow of thy Beloved. O, dear Jesus, do thou, by thy internal grace, teach me effectually these virtues, by that mercy and love that nailed thee to the cross.

Conclude by loving and blessing thy God, for having sent thee so excellent a Master from heaven, to teach thee thy way thither by his sufferings and death. Let these be always before thy eyes, and thou shalt never miss thy way.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN
LENT.

On the Love that Christ has shown us in his Passion.

CONSIDER, first, those words of our Saviour, St. John xv. 13, *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* And, indeed, history scarce furnishes us any instances of a friendship so perfect, as that one friend should be willing to lay down his life for another. But, O, divine Saviour of our souls, how imperfect is all human friendship compared with thine! What love, betwixt man and man, could ever bear the least resemblance with that divine charity which burnt in thy sacred breast, and which obliged thee to offer up thyself in sacrifice, in the midst of all kinds of ignominies, and the very worst of torments, for thy very enemies; for those very wretches that crucified thee; for us miserable sinners, who were like to make no better return, for all thy love, and for all thy sufferings, than sin and ingratitude; and this to that degree as scarce ever to think of thy sufferings, or thank thee for them, but rather, by repeated treasons, to be daily treading under foot thy precious blood! O blessed by all creatures, for evermore, be this infinite goodness, and love of our dearest Redeemer! O my dear Saviour, I beseech thee, by all this love, and by all this precious blood, which thou hast so lovingly shed for me, that thou wouldst never more suffer me to be thus ungrateful to thee.

Consider, secondly, what the world would think of a prince, the only son and heir of some great monarch, who should entertain such love and friendship for one of the meanest of his slaves, as to offer himself to die a cruel and ignominious death, to rescue this slave from the just punishment of his crimes. Would not all mankind stand amazed at such an extraordinary love? and this much more, if the crime, for which this slave was condemned to die, were no lesser than a treasonable conspiracy against this prince, by whom he was so tenderly beloved? Ah! Christian souls, this is but a faint resemblance, a very imperfect image, of that inconceivable and inexpressible love, which our Saviour has shown to us, in laying down his life upon a cross, to rescue us, his ungrateful creatures, rebels and traitors to him and his Father, from the eternal torments of hell, which we have a thousand times deserved by our treasons against him. For as there is an infinite distance between the sovereign majesty of God and any of his creatures, how dignified soever; so there is between that love which our God has shown in dying for us, worms of the earth, and slaves of hell, and that love which would oblige

one mortal to die for another. O dear Jesus, never suffer me to forget this love, which thou hast shown me! O give me grace to return thee love for love.

Consider, thirdly, how truly *sweet* our Lord has showed himself to us in his passion, and how *rich in mercy*. For, supposing it was his pleasure to deliver us from sin and hell, he could have brought this about with the same ease with which he created all things out of nothing; one only word, one act of his, would have been sufficient; or, if he must needs suffer, and shed his blood, for our redemption, one drop alone of his sacred blood, by reason of the infinite dignity of his divine person, would have been abundantly enough to atone for all the sins of ten thousand worlds. But his infinite love for us, and the desire he had to gain our hearts, and to oblige us to love him, would not be content with this, nor with any thing less than with pouring out the last drop of his most sacred blood, by suffering for us the worst of torments, and the worst of deaths. O infinite goodness, how little art thou considered by us here! O, how astonishing shalt thou appear to the saints and angels for all eternity!

Conclude with admiration at the ingratitude and insensibility of Christians, who make profession of believing this infinite goodness, mercy and love; and yet are so little touched with it, or restrained by the consideration of it, from going on, daily crucifying their Lord with their sins. O divine love, let me never be so unhappy! O let me never forget thee! O come and take full possession, at least, of my soul; and let nothing in life or death ever separate me from thee!

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Other Considerations to excite in the Soul the Love of our suffering Jesus.

CONSIDER, first, how *affectionate* is the love that Christ bears us in his passion. It is stronger than death: he loves us more than his own life, since he parts with his life for the love of us. It is more tender than the love of the tenderest mother; since he voluntarily embraces the pangs of death to give us life: he sheds his blood to cleanse our souls from sin: he offers his own body in sacrifice, to be our victim, our ransom, and our food. At the very time he is suffering and dying for us, he has every one of us in his heart: he embraces each one with an incomparable affection, weeps over each one, prays for each one, and pours out his blood for each one, no less than if he had suffered for that one alone. O my soul, had we, then, a place in the heart of our Jesus, when he was hanging upon the cross? and

shall we ever refuse him a place in our heart? No, dear Saviour, my heart is thine; it desires nothing better than to be forever a servant of thy love.

Consider, secondly, how *effectual* is the love that Christ shows us in his passion: it contents not itself with words, or professions of affection, nor with such passing sentiments of tenderness as we imagine we have for him, in certain fits of devotion, at times when nothing occurs for us to suffer for his sake; but it shows itself by its effects; by his taking upon himself all our evils, to procure effectually all good for us. His love has made him divest himself of all his *beauty* and *comeliness*, and hide all his glory and majesty, that he might become for us *despised*, and *the most abject of men*, a *man of sorrows*, and *acquainted with infirmity*, Isai. liii. *He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows*, out of pure love: He has made himself, for the love of us, *as it were a leper*, and *as one struck by God*, and *afflicted*: *He was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins. All we like sheep were gone astray—and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered, because it was his own will. And it was his own will*, because he loved us, and desired to transfer upon himself the punishment due to us, that he might deliver us from the wrath to come, and open to us the fountains of mercy, grace and life. This was an *effectual* love indeed. Does our love for him show itself by the like effects? Are we willing to renounce our own wills, to mortify our inclinations and passions, to suffer, and to bear our crosses for him? A generous lover is as willing to be with him on mount Calvary, as on mount Thabor: is this our disposition?

Consider, thirdly, how *disinterested* is the love that Christ shows us in his passion. He loves us without any merit on our side: we deserved nothing from him but hell. He loves us without any prospect of gain to himself from us, or any return that we can make to him: we can give him nothing but what he must first give us: we can offer him no good thing but what his love has purchased for us: we can have nothing but what is his. He stands in no need at all of us, or our goods. O, how truly generous is this love of our Redeemer in his passion! How bountiful is he to us! He makes over to us the infinite treasures of his merits; he wants them not for himself, but bequeaths them all to us. His love for us knows no bounds. It hath possessed his heart from the first instant of his conception; it burned there for every moment of his life; it carried him through all his sufferings, even to death. It is without beginning or end; it endures from eternity to eternity. O bright fire, mayst thou take possession of my soul, for time and eternity.

Conclude, since thou canst make no better return, to offer at least daily thy heart, with all its affection, to thy loving Saviour. But, that it may be worthy of his acceptance, beg that he would cleanse it by his precious blood, and inflame it with his love.

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the Sufferings of our Saviour before his Passion.

CONSIDER, first, how true that is, of the devout author of the following, of Christ—*The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom.* He came into this world to be a Victim for our sins; and from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, he offered himself to all the sufferings he was to undergo in life and death. Hear how he then addresses himself to his Father. Psalm xxxix. 7, 8. *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* And what was this will, and this law, which from his first conception he embraced in the midst of his heart, but that, instead of all other sacrifices, he should become himself both our Priest and Victim, and, through his sufferings, should mediate our peace, and reconcile us to his Father? Thus he accepted beforehand all that he was afterwards to endure; and, by the clear and distinct foresight, which he had all along of his whole passion, suffered, in some measure, all his life time, what afterwards he endured at his death. O how early did my Jesus embrace his cross for the love of me! O how early did I prefer my pleasures before his love.

Consider, secondly, divers other sufferings, which our Lord went through in the course of his mortal life;—his nine months' confinement in his mother's womb, most sensible to him, who from his first conception had the perfect use of reason, and who, by a violence which he offered to his zeal and love, was kept so long from action; the hardships he endured at his birth, from the rigour of the season, and the poverty of his accommodations; his circumcision; his flight into Egypt; the sense that he had of the murder of the innocents; the austerity of his life; his frequent hunger, thirst, and want of necessaries; his labours and fatigues. But all this was nothing to what his boundless charity, and his zeal for the honour of his Father, and the salvation of souls, made him continually suffer, from the sight and knowledge of the sins of men. He had all the sins of the world always before his eyes,

for the whole time of his life, with all their enormity, and opposition to the infinite majesty and sanctity of God, and his divine honour and glory; and the dreadful havock they did and would make in the souls of men, with all the dismal consequences of them, both in time and eternity; and this sight, which was always present to him, was infinitely more grievous to his soul than the very pangs of death. For if St. Paul had such a sense of the evil of sin, as to be quite on fire when he saw any one fall into sin, 2 *Cor.* xi. 29, how much more did this fire devour our Saviour!

Consider, thirdly, how much our Lord suffered from being obliged to live and converse amongst men whose manners were so widely different from, and so infinitely opposite to his: how sensibly he was touched with the crying disorders of the people of the Jews, amongst whom he lived; with their malice, their violences, their injustices, their deceits, their blasphemies, and the licentiousness of their lives; the pride, ambition, covetousness, and hypocrisy of their priests, scribes, and Pharisees; the oppressions of the poor, their contempt of virtue and of truth, and their general forgetfulness of God and their salvation. Add to this, how sensibly he must have been afflicted with the hardness of their hearts, with which they resisted his graces; their obstinacy in their evil ways; their ingratitude; the opposition they made to his heavenly Gospel; their blasphemous judgments of his person and miracles; their slanders and murmurings against him; and their continually laying snares for him, and persecuting him, even unto death. O, who can sufficiently apprehend how much our Saviour's soul was affected with all these evils; with this reception and treatment he met with from his chosen people; and with those dreadful judgments they were thereby drawing down upon their own heads, instead of that mercy, which he came to purchase for them by his blood! Death itself was not so sensible to him.

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, to conform thyself to a life of crosses and sufferings: thus shalt thou wear his livery, and shalt be entitled to a share in his heavenly kingdom. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.* Yet so, if we suffer with his spirit.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

On our Saviour's Prayer in the Garden.

CONSIDER, first, that our Saviour's passion began the night before his death; when, after having eaten the paschal lamb with his disciples, humbly washed their feet, instituted the great pass-over of the new covenant, and given them, in an admirable

sacrament of love, his own most precious body and blood, he went out with them to mount Olivet, the place to which he was accustomed to resort, after the preaching and labours of the day, to spend the evening, if not the whole night, in prayer. Hither he went on this his last night, to prepare himself for his passion by prayer; not for any need he had of it for himself, but to give us an example, and for our instruction. O learn, my soul, by this great example, how thou art to arm thyself against all trials and temptations. Learn from whence all thy strength is to come, in the time of battle. Give ear to what our Lord said to his disciples upon this occasion, Matt. xxvi. 41; *Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* O take heed, lest if thou sleep, as Peter did, when thou shouldst pray, thou deny thy Lord, when thou comest to the trial!

Consider, secondly, how our Saviour begins to disclose to his disciples the mortal anguish, fear, and sadness, which he then suffered in his soul. *My soul*, saith he, *is sorrowful, even unto death*; that is to say, with a sadness, which is capable of even now taking away my life, if I did not, by miracle, support myself, for enduring the other torments of my passion. Sweet Jesus, what can be the meaning of this? Didst thou not, from the first instant of life, accept of, and embrace, in the midst of thy heart, all that thou art now going to suffer; forasmuch as it would be for the glory of thy Father, and the redemption of man? Hadst thou not even a longing desire of accomplishing this great sacrifice of our redemption? And how comes it that thou art now thus oppressed with sadness and anguish? Where is that courage and fortitude, which thou hast imparted to thy martyrs; which has made even tender maids despise the worst of torments, when they endured them for the love of thee? And shalt thou, who art the Strength of the martyrs, shrink at the fear of death? But O! I very well understand, that it is by thy own choice thou hast condescended to all this sadness, fear, and anguish; it is to the end that thou mightst suffer the more for me, and engage me to love thee the more; it is that thou mightst teach me how to behave under all my interior anguishes and afflictions, and how to endure them for the love of thee.

Consider, thirdly, the prayer our Saviour made on this occasion, that, if it were agreeable to the will of his Father, the bitter cup might pass away from him. But O, with what fervour did he pray? *With a strong cry and tears*, Heb. v. 7. With what reverence and humility? Lying prostrate upon the ground, Matt. xxvi. 39. With what earnestness and perseverance? continuing a long time in prayer, and repeating again and again the same supplication. Learn, my soul, to imitate him; under

all thy distresses, betake thyself to prayer; but see thou pray, as thy Lord did, with fervour, humility, and perseverance: see thou pray with the like resignation; *Not my will but thine be done.* Remember that in thy prayers thou art not to seek thy own pleasure or comfort, but the holy will of God. O make this holy will thy comfort and pleasure, and thy prayer will be always accepted. *Stay you here and watch with me,* said our Lord to his disciples; but at every time that he came to them, he found them still asleep; and no help or comfort had he from their company in this his desolate condition. O my soul, do thou, at least, pity thy Saviour under all this anguish and desolation: do thou stay and watch with him, by a frequent meditation on his sufferings.

Conclude never to forget what thy Saviour suffered for thee in his soul, during his prayer in the garden. No sufferings can be greater than such as immediately affect the soul. St. Teresa did not let a night pass, from her very childhood, without reflecting, before she fell asleep, on our Saviour's sufferings in that part of his passion; and, by this means, she gradually arrived at the perfection of mental prayer, and of all holiness. Do thou the like.

MONDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's Agony and bloody Sweat.

CONSIDER, first, what pangs, what anguish, what floods of sorrow, overwhelmed the soul of our dear Redeemer, during his prayer in this his last night. Alas! no tongue can sufficiently express, nor heart conceive them! However, that thou mayst make some sort of judgment of them, from their effects, consider how they cast him into a mortal agony; how they forced from all his body a wonderful sweat of blood, which not only embrued all his garments, but also trickled down from his body upon the ground, on which he lay prostrate in prayer. O how inconceivable a torture must he have endured in his interior, when the pangs of his soul had such a strong operation exteriorly, and produced such strange effects in the body! But why all this agony, dear Lord? Why these pangs? Why this prodigious sweat of blood? Was not the death of the cross sufficient for our redemption? Why then these anticipated sorrows? Thy love alone can account for them. O blessed be thy infinite charity!

Consider, secondly, how bitter were the ingredients of this chalice, which our Saviour so much dreaded to drink. Ah! my soul, they were bitter indeed: he had at this time before his

eyes a most lively apprehension, a most clear and express representation, of all and every particular injury and indignity, stripe and torment, that he was afterwards successively to endure, in the whole course of his passion, now all at once assailing his soul, and making him feel beforehand all the sorrows which afterwards only came one by one. But what was far more terrible to our Saviour, was the clear sight and lively sense he had then of all the sins and abominations of the whole world, from the first to the last, with all their filthiness and horror, all now laid upon him, as if they were his own, and himself like the *emissary goat*, Levit. xvi. 21, charged with all the maledictions due to them, and with the wrath of his Father, justly enkindled by them. Sweet Jesus, any one of these monsters is more odious to thee than hell. And how, then, must thou be affected, when thou not only hast before thy eyes this infinite number of millions of millions of these odious monsters, mortal enemies of thy Father, mustered up all against thee; but also feelest their enormous weight laid upon thy shoulders? O, what a share had my sins in this tragical scene! how did they oppress the soul of my Redeemer! how did they force from him this shower of blood, as if all the pores of his body were turned into eyes, to weep for my sins! O let thy agony and bloody sweat teach me effectually how heinous my sins are in thy eyes, and in what manner I ought to bewail them!

Consider, thirdly, another bitter ingredient of that cup of thy Redeemer, which was the foresight he then had of the little sense the greatest part, even of Christians, would have of all his sufferings; of their ingratitude for his infinite charity; of their abuse of all those graces he was going to purchase for them with the last drop of his blood; of their perverseness in taking occasion from his very passion to sin more freely, and to draw down the more dreadful judgments upon their own heads; and, in fine, of the eternal loss of innumerable souls, who, notwithstanding all his sufferings, through their obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence, would incur the second and everlasting death. Consider that every one of these poor souls was more dear to Christ than his own life, since he parted with his life to save them. What a cruel anguish, then, must it have been to his tender and charitable heart, to see so many of them blindly and wilfully running into the bottomless pit of endless and irremediable evils, and plunging themselves for ever into the flames of hell! No wonder, after this, that so many lamentable objects, presenting themselves at once before the eyes of his soul, and joined with all those mentioned in the foregoing consideration, should cast him into a mortal agony and bloody sweat.

Conclude to admire and adore the wondrous ways of God, in bringing about the redemption of man. Embrace, with all the

affections of thy heart, the infinite charity of thy Redeemer, which shines forth so bright in this mystery. And see thou be no longer one of that unhappy number, who repay all his mercy and love with sin and ingratitude.

TUESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the Treason of Judas.

CONSIDER, first, how sensible an affliction it was to our Lord to be betrayed and sold by one of his own apostles into the hands of those that sought his life. Insomuch that he who bore in silence all the insolences of the Jewish rabble, and the Pagan soldiers; he who suffered the whips, thorns, and nails, without complaint; could not but complain of this treachery, ingratitude, and perfidiousness of a false friend, both in his words to his disciples, the night before his passion, and to the traitor himself, when he offered him the treacherous kiss; and long before by the royal prophet. Hear how he expresses himself in the Psalms. *Even the man of my peace, (the friend whom I had taken into my bosom,) in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, (even the bread of life,) hath greatly supplanted me,* Psalm xl. 10; and again, *If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hid myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me, (even the sacred body and blood of thy Redeemer;) in the house of God we walked with consent,* Psalm liv. 13, 14. Yes, I had associated thee to the communion of all my goods and graces in my church; I had admitted thee to be one of my individual companions, a witness of all my doctrine and miracles, and even one of my twelve apostles. And that thou, so highly favoured, without any merit of thine, should be thus ungrateful, thus false and perfidious, as, without any injury or provocation, for a petty, trifling interest, to betray me into the hands of my enemies, and to join thyself with them to persecute me unto death! O, this it is that afflicts my soul! and the more insupportably, because, in betraying and selling me, thou betrayest and sellest thy own soul (which is so dear to me) to be an eternal prey to devils. O take care, my soul, thou never imitate the traitor! O dear Jesus, be thou my Keeper, or else I shall also betray both myself and thee. Alas! how often have I betrayed thee already by wilful sin! O, never suffer me to be so miserable any more!

Consider, secondly, what an aggravation it was to the injury which the traitor offered to our Redeemer, that he should set no greater value on him, but sell him at so low a rate as thirty pieces

of silver, the price, it is likely, of the meanest slave; and that he should prefer such a trifling consideration before his Lord and his God, who made both him and all things, and who set such a value upon his soul as to employ his whole life and death, and give his own most precious blood, to redeem it. My soul, dost thou not loudly condemn and detest this monstrous treason? But hast thou never been guilty of the like, or worse? Hast thou never sold, for a more trifling consideration, the grace and friendship of thy Redeemer? Hast thou never preferred before him a petty interest, a filthy pleasure, a punctilio of honour, or the gratifying some unreasonable passion? And what was all this but selling both thy God and thy own soul for something of less value than the traitor's thirty pieces of silver? Alas! it is what thou hast been guilty of as often as thou hast committed mortal sin. Be confounded, repent, and amend.

Consider, thirdly, and see, in this example of Judas, that no state of life, or calling, how holy soever, can secure us from danger, since an apostle, called by Christ, and trained up in his school, so well instructed by his heavenly doctrine, and great examples, and empowered by him to cast out devils, and work wonderful miracles, is fallen nevertheless, and fallen so as to rise no more, even into the bottomless pit. O, let him that stands be sensible upon what slippery ground he stands, and by whose grace he is supported, and kept from falling; that so, by distrusting entirely in himself, and placing his whole confidence in God, he may work out his salvation with fear and trembling. But what was it that brought Judas to this enormous treason? It was the love of money. This was his predominant passion. This he indulged at first in lesser injustices, by the opportunity of carrying the common purse; and thus, whilst he took no care to mortify his evil inclinations, by degrees they gained ground upon him, till they introduced Satan into the full possession of his soul, and so prevailed upon him to betray and to sell his master, and then to hang himself in despair. Christians, beware of your passions; stifle them betimes; lest they grow headstrong, by being neglected in the beginning. Especially take care of that cheating vice of the love of money, the source of innumerable evils; and yet the poison works so insensibly, that few or none are willing to think themselves infected with it. Alas! how many pretexts and pretences are made use of to cloak the evil! how many ways of palliating even frauds, injustices, usuries, and what not! And how ingenious are men, where their interest is concerned, to persuade themselves that their *way is right, the latter end of which* (as they will find to their cost, when it is too late) *leads to the second death!*

Conclude to mistrust thyself, and thy own judgment, in all cases where thy worldly honour, interest, or pleasure, is con-

cerned; because it is natural, on these occasions, to be biased to that side of the question that is most agreeable to self-love. O, how hard it is to be an impartial judge in one's own case! But O, how happy then are they, that, in simplicity of heart, seek God, and his holy will and law, on all occasions; and do not desire to bend down the law of God to their will, but their will to the law of God!

WEDNESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the Apprehension of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, how our Saviour, rising up from the ground, where he had lain prostrate in prayer, all imbrued in his own blood, which he shed during his anguish and agony, goes, for the third time, to his disciples, whom he had desired to pray, and to watch with him; but, alas! he finds them still asleep. So little comfort did they afford their Lord in his distress! O my soul, has not this been often thy case, to be unconcernedly sleeping, when it behoved thee to be watching and praying with thy Saviour? And what has been the consequence of this! Why, thou hast run away, and hast abandoned him, in the time of trial and temptation. But now, by this time, the traitor, who was not asleep, has conducted to the place a multitude, headed by some of the priests and Pharisees, and armed with swords and clubs, to apprehend our Lord. See, my soul, how thy Saviour goes forth to meet them; how ready he is to suffer; how willing to deliver himself up for the love of thee. See in what manner he receives the traitor's kiss. *My friend*, says he, *to what end art thou come hither?* Reflect what thou art about, and repent whilst thou hast time, and I will show thee mercy. *Judas, wilt thou betray the son of man with a kiss?* O the meekness and charity of our Redeemer; who is ready to receive with open arms even Judas himself, if his hardened heart had not been proof against all the charms of his mercy. Sinners, see what an encouragement we have to run to him for mercy, since he was desirous to show it even to the traitor himself.

Consider, secondly, how our Lord was pleased, on this occasion, to manifest his power, by casting down to the ground all that armed multitude, that were come to apprehend him, with these only words, *I am he*; to show the world that no power of man could apprehend him, but by his own will and consent, in consequence of his own free love. O blessed be that free love for evermore! On the same occasion, when Malchus, a servant of the high-priest, more busy than the rest in apprehending our Saviour, had his ear cut off by the sword of Peter, our Lord not only restrained

his apostle from using any further violence in his defence, but instantly showed both his power and his goodness, in healing the wretch, and restoring his ear upon the spot by his only word, to teach us by his example to overcome evil with good. Then, after having meekly expostulated with the priests and the Pharisees, for their coming out in this manner in the night, with an armed mob, to take him, as if he had been some highway robber, he gave them leave to use their pleasure with him; but this upon condition that they should not meddle with any of his disciples. So solicitous was our dear Redeemer that none of his little ones should suffer any thing, upon his occasion, whilst he was going to offer up himself in sacrifice for the love of them.

Consider, thirdly, that our Lord had no sooner delivered himself up, with these words, *This is your hour, and the power of darkness*, but they immediately rush in upon him; and, as we may presume from the rest of their carriage, and from their hatred to him, load him with injuries and blasphemies. Then they bind him fast, as if he were some notorious criminal; and drag him violently along with them in the dark, through thick and thin, into the city. See, my soul, and contemplate the meekness, patience, and silence of the Lamb of God, under all these outrages: accompany him in spirit upon this occasion, (for his apostles have all left him in the hands of his enemies,) and strive to enter into his interior, and to learn from the secret conversation he has all the while with his Father, from the prayer he is there making for his enemies, and from the charity with which he offers up both his present and future sufferings for thy sins, and for the sins of the whole world, what ought to be thy dispositions under all the sufferings thou meetest with, what thy interior exercises of devotions, and what thy spirit of charity for them that afflict thee, and persecute thee.

Conclude to follow thy Saviour in spirit, through all the different stages of his passion, with a sincere desire to study and learn the great lessons he teaches thee in his sufferings; and withal to make the best return of love thou art able, for the infinite love he has shown thee, in suffering so much for the love of thee.

THURSDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Lord's being brought before Annas and Caiphas.

CONSIDER, first, how the rabble that had apprehended our Saviour, having dragged him into the city with loud shouts and cries, brought him first before Annas, one of the chief priests, to give him the pleasure of seeing their prisoner, and of

insulting over him. Go in, my soul, with him, and see the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, standing with his hands tied behind him, before this insolent Jewish priest. Hear the impertinent questions he puts to him concerning his disciples and his doctrine; and admire the courage, meekness, and evenness of soul, which thy Saviour shows in his whole comportment on this occasion. See how he suffers even a vile servant, not only to rebuke him in words, for his modest and just answer, but also to strike him on his face before all the company; an affront which, if offered to the meanest of men, would be thought insupportable, by the children of this world; but our great Master has taught us, both by word and example, that true courage consists in bearing, and not in revenging injuries. And surely nothing can be more honourable to a Christian than to walk in the footsteps of his King, and to keep his laws.

Consider, secondly, how our Saviour, bound as he was, is hurried away, with the like shouts and insolences, from Annas to the house of Caiphàs, the high priest, where the senate, or council, was assembled, determined to destroy him, right or wrong; and therefore, notwithstanding it was now late at night, they immediately proceeded to his trial, and to the examining the witnesses, of whom they had provided a good store, to depose against this innocent Lamb of God. Christians, what shall we most admire on this occasion; the malice of the enemies of our Saviour, and the gross falsehoods they impose upon him, or the force of truth, and the wonderful innocence of our Lord, which would not suffer their testimonies to be of any weight against him, even in the judgment of so partial and so wicked a court? But what is the most admirable of all, is that invincible meekness and patience, that perfect peace and tranquillity of soul, with which our Lord suffered in silence, to hear himself charged by these wicked impostors with so many false crimes, tending to rob him both of his honour and his life! O, surely, one must be more than man to be silent on such occasions. Learn at least, thou, my soul, from this silence of thy Saviour, not to be so excessively nice with regard to thy honour; and if thou must speak in defence of thy own innocence, see thou do it with that calmness and modesty that becomes a disciple of such a master. A noisy and passionate defence will only make thy cause worse, and will rob thee of thy peace, which is a more valuable good than any thing the world can either give or take away.

Consider, thirdly, how the high priest, finding that his evidence did not agree in their story, stood up, and adjured our Saviour, by the living God, to tell them if he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Our Lord, in reverence to his Father's name,

and to give testimony to that capital truth, the great foundation of the Christian religion, which he came to seal with his blood, immediately answered that he was, and that hereafter they should see him sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Christians, give thanks to your Saviour for this solemn profession of what he was, though standing now in the midst of enemies, determined not to believe him. They rejected and condemned this grand truth to their own condemnation; do you embrace and adore it for your salvation. Upon this open declaration of his divinity, the high priest rends his garments, and cries out, *Blasphemy!* and they all, with one voice, condemn him to death. See, my soul, the Saint of saints trauced now as a blasphemer, and the Author of life judged worthy of death, and this by the whole council of the priests and ancients of his people; and learn thou henceforward not to be so much concerned about the judgment of the world: if it condemns thee wrongfully, what wonder, since it has condemned Christ himself: he was innocence itself, whereas thy sins deserve other kinds of punishments than the world can condemn thee to.

Conclude, in opposition to this unjust sentence given against the Lamb of God, to join with all the heavenly spirits, and with all the elect of God, in that solemn canticle, Apoc. v. 12, *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.* But learn withal, from his great example, when thou art called to the trial, never to be ashamed of him, nor his truth, though thou wert even to lay down thy life with him and for him.

FRIDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's Treatment in the House of Caiphas.

CONSIDER, first, how this sentence of condemnation was no sooner pronounced against our Lord, than the whole multitude of them began to fall upon him, and to treat him with all kind of outrages, and unheard of barbarity. *They spit in his face, and buffet him,* St. Matthew xxvi. 67. *They blindfold him, and smite his face, and ask him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that struck thee?* St. Luke xxiii. 64. *They pluck his hair and beard, whilst he, with his hands tied behind him, makes no resistance, but, as he tells us, Isai. l. 5, 6, gives up his body to them that strike him, and his cheeks to them that pluck them, and turns not away his face from them that rebuke him, and spit upon him;* not to speak of many other shameful abuses and in

juries; so that here he is treated indeed as *a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*, Psalm xxi. Here, as the prophet foretold, Lament. iii. 30, he is *filled with reproaches*. See, my soul, what the Son of God has willingly submitted to, to save thee from sin and hell. O, embrace that infinite charity of his, which has made him stoop so low, that he might take thee up from the dunghill, and place thee with him on his throne. But O, detest thy sins, which have so often buffeted him, and spit in his face.

Consider, secondly, what a kind of a night our Saviour passed in the hands of the rabble, after the council was broke up, and the priests and ancients had retired to rest. These brutish men, instigated by the example of their masters, and by those wicked spirits that possessed them, would not suffer our Lord to take any rest, during that last night of his mortal life; but continued acting over and over again the same tragedy, by mocking, beating, and abusing the Lord of glory, and discharging their filthy phlegm on his sacred face; whilst he has no hand at liberty, nor friend, to ward off any of their blows; nor any one so much as to wipe their filthy spittle off from his face, all bruised, and quite disfigured with their buffets. Ah! who shall be able to recount one half of what our Saviour suffered that night from these wretches! Besides all the reproaches, slanders, curses and blasphemies, with which they loaded him, more intolerable than their blows, *many other things*, says St. Luke, chap. xxii. 65, *they said against him, blaspheming*: whilst he, all the while, replied not a word: *when he was reviled, he did not revile; when he suffered, he threatened not*, 1 Peter, ii. 23; *but delivered himself, not only to him that judged him unjustly*, but also to these vile wretches, that so shamefully abused him at their pleasure. Be astonished, O ye heavens, to see your Lord and Maker treated in this outrageous manner, by the vilest of men! But, alas! my soul, they were thy sins that were the chief actors in all this tragedy. O, repent and amend.

Consider, thirdly, and set before thy eyes, the image of thy Saviour in the hands of these miscreants. Take a view of his face all bruised; his eyes black and blue; his whole countenance disfigured, so that no one of his heavenly features can now be distinguished; his forehead and cheeks defiled with their spittle; his beard plucked; his hair all rent and torn; and his whole person strangely metamorphosed. Then reflect who this is that suffers all this, and for whom; how freely he suffers, all by his own choice; and what lessons he gives thee in his sufferings; and thou wilt find abundant matter for thy meditation. But carry the eyes of thy soul still farther, and look into his interior, and see the peace and tranquillity that reigns there, in the midst of all

these sufferings, from his perfect conformity to the will of his Father. See how he prays for his enemies; see the joy with which he suffers, in consideration of the greater glory of his Father, and of our salvation, which he is to purchase by all these his sufferings.

Conclude with admiration and love of the infinite charity of thy Redeemer; and a resolution of imitating his patience, his meekness, his humility, and his conformity in all things to his Father's will.

SATURDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On Peter's Denial.

CONSIDER, first, that amongst all the sufferings of that last night of our Saviour's life, nothing went so much to his heart as the behaviour of his own apostles. One of them betrayed him, all of them abandoned him, and Peter, the very chiefest of them all, who had been the most favoured by his Master, and who, upon all occasions, had professed the greatest zeal and love for him, thrice denied that he knew him. O my soul, pity thy Saviour, thus forsaken by all his friends. Hear his complaints: *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me. Flight hath perished from me; and there is no one that hath regard to my soul*, Psalm cxli. 5. And again: *Friend and neighbour thou hast put away far from me, and my acquaintance because of misery*, Psalm lxxxvii. 19. But what was it that could induce Peter to deny his Lord and Master, who a little while before had drawn his sword, to defend him against an armed multitude, and had cut off the ear of the man that offered to lay hands on him; and who had boasted, that very night, that, though all the rest should forsake him, he would always stick by him; that he was ready to go with him to prison and to death; and that, though he were to die for it, he would never deny him? What was it? Alas! the voice of a poor maid, putting the question to him, if he were not one of his disciples, put him in such a terror, that he not only denied, but even swore, and cursed himself, if ever he knew the man! Good Jesus, what is man? what is he not capable of, if thou support him not by thy grace? O look well to me, Lord, and stand by me, or I shall also deny thee.

Consider, secondly, how Peter came to fall so quickly, after such strong resolutions, and so much zeal for his Master. Alas! he depended too much upon his resolutions; he did not sufficiently know himself; he thought himself stronger than his companions, and built too much upon his own strength; and this

secret presumption was the chief cause of his fall. Ah! my soul, beware of any confidence in thyself. Thou art never nearer falling, than when thou seemest to have the strongest resolutions, if thy resolutions are built upon thy own sandy bottom, and not upon the rock, which is Christ. Peter slept, when he was admonished to watch and to pray, lest he should fall in the time of temptation. This neglect was another occasion of his sin, by depriving him of that grace, which otherwise would have effectually preserved him. See, my soul, if thy frequent falls be not owing to thy neglect of watching and praying. In fine, Peter was too rash in exposing himself to the danger, by going into the company of the enemies of our Saviour, and giving ear to their discourses, which so far influenced him as to make him ashamed of his Master. Beware lest the like causes should have the like effects in thee. Beware of bad company, and of all such conversation as may make thee ashamed of Christ or his maxims, or any ways influence thee to the prejudice of thy soul.

Consider, thirdly, in Peter's three denials, how easily one fall draws on another, and, generally speaking, a deeper; and learn from hence the necessity of a speedy repentance. Alas! Peter, now fallen, as he passed over unregarded the crowing of the cock, so might have continued in his sin, and died in his sin too, had not his loving Redeemer, in the midst of all the outrages he was suffering, cast an eye of pity upon him; and, touching his heart, at the same time, with a strong and efficacious grace, sent him out from the wicked company he was in, to weep bitterly in private for his sins; a practice which he is said ever after to have retained, as often as he heard the cock crowing. Bless thy Lord, my soul, for the mercy he showed to this apostle. Learn to imitate him, by a ready correspondence with divine grace, when it invites thee to go out from Babylon, the society of the wicked, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. But O! content not thyself with short, passing acts of repentance, but, if thou wouldst be secure, bewail thy sins, like St. Peter, as long as thou livest.

Conclude to be always upon thy guard; and if thou seemest to thyself to stand, take heed lest thou fall. Thou hast not half the strength that Peter had. Be not then high-minded, but fear. Humility is thy best security.

PASSION SUNDAY.

On our Lord's being led away to Pilate.

CONSIDER, first, how the high priest and his fellows in iniquity, (notwithstanding their late sitting up at night,) very early

in the morning, convene a more numerous assembly of the sanhedrim, or great council, to carry on and to bring to execution their wicked designs against the Son of God. Alas! how often are the children of this world more industrious in rising early to wickedness, than the servants of God to advance his glory, and their own eternal salvation! Here our Lord is again brought before them, and the question is put to him again, *Art thou Christ, the Son of God?* And upon his answering again in the affirmative, they all renew their former sentence, and declare him worthy of death. But see the depth of the malice of these unhappy men against the Lord of life, which will not suffer them to be content with putting him to death privately, or with stoning him, as they afterwards did St. Stephen, or with any other ordinary death; but they must needs have him die upon a cross, as being the most disgraceful, and at the same time the most cruel, of all deaths; and therefore, as they could not of their own authority inflict this kind of death, they determined to deliver him up to Pilate the governor, in order to his being crucified by him. See what envy and malice is capable of, when once it has taken possession of the soul. But remember withal, that their envy and malice could not make the Son of God suffer any thing more than what his infinite charity had freely made choice of to suffer for the love of thee. Blessed be that infinite charity for evermore, which has freely chosen so disgraceful and so cruel a death, for our redemption from sin and hell!

Consider, secondly, the manner of their conducting our Lord to Pilate, through the streets, lined with an immense multitude of people, assembled at Jerusalem upon occasion of the paschal solemnity. Hear how they publish, all the way as they go, that now they had found him to be a cheat and a hypocrite; had discovered all his impostures, and convicted him, by his own confession, of blasphemy, and therefore had condemned him to die. See how the people, who, a little while before, had revered him as a prophet, are now all changed in his regard, and join with his enemies. O see what a wretched figure he makes in their hands, after the treatment he had received in the night. See how his enemies take occasion from thence to triumph, and to insult over him; and how his friends grow cold, and are ashamed of him. O my soul, do thou, at least, follow thy Lord with compassion and love, in these his last ways, that he walks for thy redemption; painful and humble ways indeed, and quite opposite to the ways the world is fond of, and distasteful to flesh and blood; but O, how wholesome to all such souls as willingly embrace them, and follow them in the company of Jesus Christ!

Consider, thirdly, how the high priest and the rest of the council, being come to Pilate's house, made a scruple of going in, for

fear of contracting a legal uncleanness, that might disqualify them for partaking of the sacrifices that were offered on that day, it being the very day of the feast of the passover, celebrated in memory of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. And yet, unhappy men, whilst they scruple going into the house of a Gentile, for fear of an uncleanness, that could only reach the body, they are not afraid of polluting their souls with the most heinous of all crimes, and profaning thereby the greatest of all their solemnities. But what are not men capable of, when they suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passions! But see the wonderful providence of God. Whilst they, on their part, are so bent upon their wickedness, that no other day will serve their turn, but the very day of their sacrificing the paschal Lamb, without thinking, or designing it, they are concurring, as instruments, to bring about the merciful designs of God, for the redemption of the whole world, by the sacrifice of the true paschal Lamb, on that same day; of which their yearly passover was an illustrious figure.

Conclude to beware of thy passions, which, if indulged, are capable of blinding thee to that degree, as to pervert the greatest good into evil. And, on the other side, embrace and love the wonderful ways of divine providence, which so often draws the greatest good out of the greatest evils.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is sent from Pilate to Herod.

CONSIDER, first, how, Pilate going out to inquire what accusation they brought against our Saviour, these children of iniquity made no scruple of laying many notorious untruths to his charge; such as raising seditions, stirring up the people to rebellion, forbidding tribute to be paid to the emperor, and treasonably giving himself out for the king of the Jews. Under all these wicked slanders, that tended nothing less than procuring his condemnation to the worst of deaths, our Lord still showed the same peace and tranquillity of soul, and still kept silence, to the great astonishment of the governor. Admirable lessons for Christians! to learn to possess their souls, at least, in patience, if they cannot be wholly silent, under calumnies and detractions; and to learn that calmness and meekness will be a better proof and defence of their innocence, than passion and rage, or returning injury for injury. We see here that Pilate himself, though otherwise a wicked man, was so far from interpreting our Saviour's silence, joined with that tranquillity of soul, for an acknowledgment of his guilt, that he concluded it to be an argument of his innocence;

and clearly perceived in the Jews' way of acting, that they were carried on by envy and passion, and not by zeal for justice ; and therefore, after inquiring of our Lord concerning his being king, and understanding from him, that his *kingdom was not of this world*, and therefore no way prejudicial to Cesar's authority, he declared himself fully satisfied, and sought to discharge him.

Consider, secondly, how, the Jews still urging to have our Lord condemned, Pilate, to get rid of their importunity, sends him away to Herod, king of Galilee, as one of his subjects, and refers his cause to him. Follow thy Saviour, O my soul, in this new stage ; and admire the serenity of his countenance, and the peace of his soul, whilst he is hurried through the streets, in the midst of an insulting mob, and loaded with reproaches and injuries. See how he is brought in bonds before that prince, attended by the whole council, who there renew all their false accusations against him ; whilst Herod, who is overjoyed to see him, in hopes of being eye-witness of some miracle, puts a thousand idle questions to him. But our Lord is silent still ; and neither takes any notice of the falsities laid to his charge by his accusers, nor seeks to gratify the vain curiosity of Herod, or to do any thing that might incline him to set him at liberty. No, my soul, thy Saviour has too great a love for thee, to work a miracle to deliver himself from that death, which he so gladly embraces, as the only means to give thee life. Blessed by all creatures be his goodness for ever.

Consider, thirdly, how Herod, provoked with our Lord's not consenting to gratify his inclinations of seeing a miracle, revenges himself on him by treating him with mockery and scorn ; exposes him to the scoffs of all his soldiers, and orders him to be clothed, in contempt, with a white garment, as with a fool's coat, or as a mock-king ; and, in this garb, sends him back again to Pilate, attended as before, with the priests and scribes, and an insulting rabble, taking fresh occasion of abusing him, from this disgraceful habit. See here, my soul, with astonishment, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, treated by the world as a fool ; see the great King of heaven and earth abused as a mocking and an idle pretender to royalty. And learn from hence not to be solicitous about the judgment of the world ; nor to repine, if they charge thee with folly ; for why shouldst thou expect better treatment than thy Lord ? O remember, that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God ; and that what the world censures as foolishness, is indeed true wisdom. Remember that *Whosoever will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God*, James iv. 4.

Conclude to adhere to thy Lord, in the midst of all his reproaches and sufferings ; to embrace his wisdom, hidden under

the fool's coat, which the world hath flung over it; and ever to acknowledge him for the true King of thy heart. O beg that his kingdom may be established there, and the reign of sin be totally abolished.

TUESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Barabbas is preferred before our Lord. He is scourged at the Pillar.

CONSIDER, first, how Pilate, seeing our Lord brought back to his tribunal, and the high priest and council still bent upon destroying the innocent, thinks of another way to bring him off, without giving them offence. It was the privilege of the people, to have their choice of a prisoner, to be set at liberty, on that day of the paschal solemnity, in memory of their being delivered on that day from the bondage of Egypt. He proposes, therefore, to their choice, our Saviour on the one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious malefactor, robber and murderer, on the other; making sure that they would rather choose to have our Saviour released to them, in whom neither he nor they could find any crime, than Barabbas, the worst of criminals. O, eternal Son of God, how low dost thou here stoop for my sins, when thou sufferest thyself to be put in competition with the vilest and most wicked of men, and to have it put to the votes of the rabble, which of the two is the most deserving of death! O the unparalleled humility of my Saviour! O the unparalleled injury here offered to him by Pilate, whilst he pretends to favour him! But O, the unparalleled blindness of this unhappy people, who make choice of Barabbas before their Messiah; and demand with loud cries, that the former may be released, and the latter crucified. See, my soul, in this wonderful humiliation of thy Lord, how deep, how desperate was the wound of thy pride, which could not be healed but by such and so great humility. Learn henceforward, at least, from him, to be humble of heart, and never to think much, if others, how mean soever, be preferred before thee, since Barabbas was preferred before Christ. Alas! how often hast thou thyself preferred something worse than Barabbas, even that ugly monster Sin, before this Lord of glory.

Consider, secondly, how, the Jews still insisting, in a tumultuous manner, that our Lord should be crucified, Pilate, in hopes of appeasing them by a kind of composition, and so making them relent, orders him to be cruelly scourged; a torment most grievous to our dear Redeemer, (who therefore, on divers occasions, speaking of his passion, takes special notice of it,) and, at the same time, most disgraceful, and most ignominious. Look on

now, my soul, in spirit, and see in what manner thy Saviour is treated for thee. See how the bloody executioners lay violent hands on this Lamb of God; see how they tear off his clothes, and expose him, all naked, before a great multitude, to cold and shame; see how they bind him fast to a stony pillar; see how they discharge upon his sacred back, shoulders, and sides, innumerable stripes, lashes, and scourges; see how his body is all rent, torn, and mangled by their barbarity; see how the blood comes spouting out on all sides. See in his gaping wounds the handiwork of thy sins. O take pity of his mangled flesh; and let the sight of so much blood, shed for thee, mollify thy heart, and determine thee, from this hour, never any more to scourge him by sin. Run in now, and cast thyself at his feet, and bathe thyself in his precious blood; mingle, at least, some few tears with his sacred gore; and repent, from thy heart, for the share thou hast had in this scourging of thy Lord.

Consider, thirdly, in this scourging of our Saviour, who *thou* is, that is thus barbarously and ignominiously treated, and who he suffers all this. O my soul, it is the God that made thee. It is the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who suffers at this, by his own free choice, for the love of thee: it is to deliver thee, by his sufferings, from the grievous and eternal torment thy sins have deserved; and to purchase for thee everlasting joys, which thou never couldst deserve: O infinite love of my God! O never suffer me, dearest Saviour, to forget what thou hast here endured for the love of me! But see in what manner our Lord suffers all this barbarous usage—without resistance, without complaint, in silence, with a perfect resignation and conformity to the will of his Father, in perfect charity, praying for his enemies, whilst they stand by insulting over him, and rejoicing at his torments. My soul, let us study well, and learn these lessons of our suffering Redeemer.

Conclude to make the best acknowledgment thou art able of the love thy Saviour has showed thee in his sufferings, by a return of thanksgiving and love; and by a constant detestation of sin, as his and thy mortal enemy, and the occasion of all his sufferings.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is crowned with Thorns.

CONSIDER, first, how the barbarous ruffians, being wearied at last with scourging our Lord, untie him from the pillar, all covered with wounds, and with his strength quite exhausted by the loss of so much blood; and now, whilst they rest themselves

they leave him to seek out and to pick up his clothes, which they had scattered about, and put them on, as well as he can: for he is so stiff and weak, so mangled by their barbarity, as to be but little able to help himself; and he has no friend at hand to help him. But O, how ill do these rough woollen clothes suit with his green wounds! how does the rubbing of them, at every step or motion, increase the smart! But now behold, my soul, another scene of barbarity, not to be paralleled in all history, acted by these bloody soldiers, in crowning our Lord for a king, by a most cruel mockery, and sporting themselves in his sufferings. To perform this tragical ceremony with more solemnity, they drag our Saviour into the court of the governor's hall, and assemble the whole regiment about him; then they strip him again of all his garments, which now were beginning to stick to his wounds, which they rend and widen by this violence. See, my soul, how thy Lord now stands, as a lamb in the midst of innumerable wolves; see how, from head to foot, he is imbrued in blood; see at how dear a rate he has purchased thy redemption.

Consider, secondly, what a throne, what royal robes, what a crown, what a sceptre, these wretches have provided for the Lord of glory. See, my soul, how they make him sit down on some dirty stool for a throne, and how they throw about him, for his royal robes, an old ragged purple garment, to the great annoyance of his wounded back, shoulders, and arms. After this, they press down on his sacred head a twisted wreath of long, hard, and sharp thorns, for a royal diadem or crown. Then they put into his hand, for a sceptre, a reed, or a cane. And having thus arrayed him, they come and kneel before him, in mockery, to pay him their homage; saluting him, scornfully, with a *Hail, King of the Jews*; and then, by turns, they buffet him, spit in his face, and strike him over the head with the sceptre they had given him; and by that means drive the thorns deeper in; whilst the blood trickles down apace from the numberless wounds which he receives from their points. Ah! who shall be able to number the multitude and variety of sufferings which our Lord endured upon this occasion! in which it is hard to say whether the torment, or the ignominy and disgrace, was the more intolerable. Yet our dear Lord bore all in patience and silence for the love of us.

Consider, thirdly, and take a view at leisure of our Saviour sitting on this stool of ignominy, in the midst of this whole regiment of insolent and barbarous pagan soldiers. Reflect on what he suffers in his sacred head and temples from those hard, sharp thorns, which pierce his flesh with so many wounds. O! who can conceive the greatness of this torture! See, my soul, how the blood

trickles down his face and neck; see the many bruises he receives from the violent blows they give him with their hands; see his divine countenance covered with the filth they cast upon him; see through the ragged purple all the wounds of his mangled body, bleeding plentifully for thy sins; in fine, see how this lawless, insulting multitude strive which shall outdo each other in their scoffs, affronts, and injuries; whilst our Lord, on his part, still preserves the same serenity in his countenance, the same tranquillity in his soul, and the same charity in his heart. But, O my soul, whilst thou art contemplating him under all these barbarous mockeries and torments, cast thy eyes upwards, and see him sitting on his throne of glory, adored by all the legions of angels; and do thou join with them in paying him the best homage thou art able; and ever remember, that the more he has debased himself for thee, the more dear he ought to be to thee.

Conclude by acknowledging thy Saviour, in the midst of all these ignominies, for the true King of thy heart, and begging him to come and establish his throne there. Learn from him to bear, and to submit to, the thorns which are appointed for thee in this thy mortal pilgrimage. O, pretend not to a crown of roses, to a life of worldly pleasures, whilst thy Lord makes choice of a crown of thorns for the love of thee.

THURSDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

*Our Lord is shown to the people, with Ecce Homo!
Behold the Man!*

CONSIDER, first, how Pilate, hoping now that the malice of the Jews would be so far abated as to insist no longer on our Saviour's death, after they should see in what a barbarous manner he had been treated, in compliance with their passion, leads him out, just as he was, with his crown of thorns upon his head, and his ragged purple on his shoulders, and, from an eminence, shows him to the people, with these words, *Ecce homo!* Behold the man! As much as to say, Take a view of him now, from head to foot; see how he is all covered with wounds, how his whole body is rent, torn, and mangled with scourges, his head and temples pierced with bloody thorns, his face all black and blue, and his person quite disfigured. See how cruelly he has been handled in complaisance to you; though neither I, nor Herod, could find any crime in him. Let, then, this outrageous treatment he has received from the soldiers, let all this blood he has shed, satisfy you; take pity on him, now at least, and cease to seek his death. But O! how vain it is to expect that men's passions should be abated by giving way to them!

Pilate imagined the sight of so much innocent blood already shed would extinguish the thirst of the Jews; whereas it did but increase it, and make them the more eager after our Lord's death. See, my soul, thou never suffer thyself to be imposed upon in the like manner, by thinking to rid thyself the easier hereafter of thy troublesome temptations or passions, by making a kind of composition, and giving them at present what they crave. The more thou givest them, the more they will demand, and the more they will tyrannise over thee. It is not by yielding, but by fighting resolutely against them, thou art to conquer.

Consider, secondly, my soul, thy Saviour presenting himself to thee on this occasion, with all his wounds, and all the disgraceful attire of his ragged robes and thorny crown, with an *Ecce homo!* Behold the man! But see thou look upon him with other eyes than those unhappy miscreants did, who only took occasion from the sight of his sufferings to cry out more eagerly, *Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him.* O, behold the man, even the eternal Word of the Father, made man for the love of thee. Behold his head, crowned with a wreath of sharp thorns, piercing and entering in on all sides, with excessive pains; behold his face, bruised beyond measure, and all covered with blood and spittle; behold, through his ragged purple, the innumerable stripes and wounds of his mangled body. Behold and see to what a condition thy sins and his own infinite charity have reduced the Lord of glory. Then see and consider what return thou wilt make him for all his sufferings, and for all his love. He desires no other return but that of thy heart; but then it must be an humble and a contrite heart; it must be a loving and an obedient heart.

Consider, thirdly, the eternal Father presenting his Son to us in his passion, all covered with wounds, and imbrued in his blood, with another *Ecce homo!* Behold the man!—setting before our eyes all that he has suffered out of pure love for us; representing to us his infinite goodness and mercy, and the heinousness of our sins and ingratitude to him; encouraging us to hope in him; inviting us to love him, and to detest our sins for the love of him; and offering us all good things through him; only desiring that we would cease to persecute him by sin. O give attention, my soul, to this loving voice of thy God, and to all the sufferings of his Son; but, in return, do thou also present him to his Father, with the like *Ecce homo!* Behold the man!—laying before him all that his Son has endured for thee, in the whole course of his passion; and putting in thy claim to all that mercy, grace, and salvation, which he has purchased for thee, by all these sufferings. In particular, insist upon this one favour to be

granted thee, through his passion and death, that thou mayest never more be disloyal to him.

Conclude by representing all thy miseries and sins to thy Redeemer, and, through him, to his Father, with another *Ecce homo!* Behold the man! and begging a redress from him, and through his precious blood, of all thy miseries, and the remission of all thy sins.

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On the Part the blessed Virgin bore in her Son's Sufferings.

CONSIDER, first, the foresight the blessed Virgin had of the passion of her Son, from the time that she heard that prophetic prediction addressed to her by holy Simeon, Luke ii. 34, 35, that he should *be set for a sign which should be contradicted; and that a sword should pierce her own soul.* Yes, blessed Lady, a sword indeed, far more sharp and penetrating than any earthly steel, which can only pierce the body, and cannot reach the soul; whereas this sword, of more than mortal anguish, which thou sufferest by occasion of the passion of thy Son, inflicts a most bitter, deep and deadly wound, in the very midst of thy soul; a wound, which began to be inflicted at the time of this prophecy, by the sense which the heavenly Father then gave to thee of what thy Son was to suffer; a wound, which was a most bitter alloy of all those consolations which thou receivedst from the sight, conversation, and embraces of thy Jesus; a wound, which thou carriedst about with thee in thy soul all the time of his mortal life, still growing upon thee, as the time of his passion grew nearer, and not healed but by his glorious resurrection. Christians, see how the greatest favourites of Heaven, by divine appointment, meet with the greatest crosses in this mortal pilgrimage. But no wonder: Christ himself was first *to suffer, and so to enter into his glory:* his blessed Mother and all the saints were to walk in the same road, in order to follow him, and to partake in his glorious kingdom. O think not much if your Lord chooses for you what he chose for himself, for his blessed Mother and for all his elect.

Consider, secondly, how much the affliction and anguish of this Virgin Lady was increased when the news was brought her of her Son's being betrayed by Judas, apprehended, bound, and dragged away, in that inhuman manner, before the council; and what treatment he had met with there, after being condemned by them. But as the sight usually affects us more than the hearing, so doubtless this blessed Mother was oppressed with a far more killing grief, when, on the next morning, she was an eye

witness of all the injuries, outrages, and torments, which he suffered in the different stages of his passion. For as no love, that any person upon earth has ever experienced, could any ways approach to the love she bore our Lord, not only as her son, but much more as her God; so, in proportion to her love, her anguish and sorrow, to see him treated in that cruel, barbarous and outrageous manner, was the greatest that any pure creature could ever sustain; and nothing less than a miracle could support her, or keep her alive, under so dreadful a torture. Ah, Christians! the whips, thorns, and nails, that pierced his flesh, pierced her heart with unexpressible pain and sorrow, which none surely could ever exceed, but those of her Son, *the man of sorrows*. O take pity, my soul, on the sorrows of them both, and see thou never more concur to grieve them by sin.

Consider, thirdly, more in particular, how the blessed Virgin was affected when she first saw her Son, in the morning, in the hands of his enemies, all disfigured by their blows, with his hands tied behind him, his face covered with spittle, and his hair all rent and torn. O, my soul, even so hard a heart as thine could scarce bear such a sight as this; much less her tender heart. But what was this, in comparison with what she endured when he was so cruelly scourged at the pillar; when he was crowned with piercing thorns, and buffeted by a whole band of soldiers? O what pangs did she suffer, when she saw him presented to the people with the *Ecce homo!* Behold the man! How did she then feel in her soul all those wounds she there discovered in his head and body! Nor did she suffer less, but rather much more, when she followed him in his last journey to mount Calvary, bearing his cross on his mangled shoulders, and marking the way with his sacred blood. But what was all this, if compared with what she endured, when she heard the strokes of the hammers driving the nails into his hands and feet; when she saw him hoisted up into the air, and there hanging extended, as upon a rack, and supported by his wounds; when, standing near the cross, she saw the extremity of the torture he there endured; contemplated the multitude and variety of his sufferings; heard his last dying words; and saw him give up the ghost! O how truly might she then cry out with the prophet, *O all you that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be sorrow like to my sorrow!* Lament. i. 12. Learn, my soul, from this Queen of sorrows, with what eye thou oughtest to look upon the sufferings of the Son of God, and how to bewail those sins which have given cause to them.

Conclude to imitate the virtues, of which this blessed Lady has given us an illustrious example, in this martyrdom she endured under the cross of her Son: especially learn her courage

and fortitude under such bitter sufferings; her patience and perfect conformity to the will of God; her lively faith and hope. These must support thee, also, under all thy crosses.

SATURDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is condemned to the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, how the Jews, perceiving that Pilate was bent upon releasing our Saviour, told him, that if he released that man, he could be no friend of Cesar, (the emperor,) for whoever made himself a king, opposed Cesar, (*St. John* xix. 12.) See here, my soul, what evils human respects are capable of producing; and how sad a thing it is, either to fear or to love any thing more than God. Pilate's resolution in a moment falls to the ground, upon the apprehension of being accused to Cesar, and of losing his favour: rather than risk this, he is determined to make a sacrifice of his conscience, in condemning the innocent. Alas! have we never had a share in the like guilt? Has not human fear, or the apprehension of what the world would say, too often influenced us to condemn, at least in fact, our Lord and his doctrine, by mortal sin? Has not a much less consideration than the fear of losing the favour of an emperor, prevailed, on these occasions, over our best resolutions? O, what hold do we give to the enemy, by these human fears, and by our irregular affections to this cheating world! But see the vain excuses by which men seek to palliate the guilt of their sins, and to salve their conscience: Pilate washes his hands, and cries out, *I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it*, *Matt.* xxvii. 24; as if this ceremony and verbal declaration could clear him, in the sight of the just Judge, from the guilt of concurring to the death of the innocent. But see, also, into what dismal extremities unhappy souls cast themselves, when they are once obstinately bent upon sin, in that dreadful sentence which the Jews pronounced against themselves on that occasion: *His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*

Consider, secondly, how Pilate proceeds to give judgment of death against the Lord of life, and sentences our Saviour to the cross, in compliance with the cry of the whole people, still calling out, in a tumultuous manner, *Crucify him, crucify him!* But, O my soul, reflect that it was the voice of thy crying sins that far more effectually called for the death of the Son of God, than the cry of the Jews; for that tumult could have had no power to bring on his crucifixion, had not he been determined to suffer this kind of death for the expiation of thy sins. But see with what loud huzzas, with what triumph and joy, this sen-

tence is received by the enemies of our Lord; and with what sighs and tears, with what grief and anguish, by his friends, and most especially by his blessed Mother. But how does this Lamb of God behave on this occasion? In what manner does he receive this sentence of death? He receives it in silence and peace, with perfect submission and conformity to the will of his Father; he receives it even with joy, out of his infinite charity for us, as the only means of our redemption and salvation. See, my soul, whether thou submittest to thy crosses with the like dispositions. Dost thou embrace them as the means of divine appointment to bring thee to heaven?

Consider, thirdly, that this sentence of death, pronounced against our Lord, was an act of the highest injustice on the part of Pilate; but highly just on the part of God, in consideration of our sins, which his Son had taken upon himself. And therefore our Saviour, who was infinitely holy, could not indeed but abhor the crime of Pilate, though he suffered it; but as to the judgment and sentence of his Father, he embraced it, as being most holy and just; he bowed down, and adored it with all the powers of his soul;—to teach us, and all that desire to be his disciples, to distinguish, on the like occasions, when we have any thing to suffer from others, between man's injustice and God's justice; and to receive our sufferings, from what hand soever they come, and how unjustly soever, as highly just from the part of God. punishing us, by these instruments, for our sins.

Conclude with thanksgiving to the infinite charity of the Father, who, for the love of us, spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, and sentenced him to die; and to the infinite charity of the Son, for embracing so cordially this sentence of death for the love of us. Make an oblation, in return, of thy whole self, both to the Father and to the Son; and desire henceforward to live only for him, who has delivered himself up to death for the love of thee.

N. B. Palm-Sunday being kept in memory of our Saviour's solemn entry into Jerusalem, five days before his passion; to correspond to the devotion of the day, we shall here insert a meditation upon that subject, and interrupt the course of the considerations on the passion.

PALM-SUNDAY.

On our Lord's triumphant Entrance into Jerusalem.

CONSIDER, first, how, the time now drawing near, when our Saviour was to offer up himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he was pleased to come to the place where he was to complete this sacrifice. And as, in order to fulfil the ancient figures, he chose that very night for the institution of the passover of the new law, which was set aside for the immolation of the paschal lamb in the old law; and that very day for the redemption of the world, in which God's people had formerly been redeemed from their Egyptian bondage; so also he was pleased to make his entry into Jerusalem, in order to his sacrifice, on the very day on which, by the appointment of the law, *Exodus* xii. 3, the lamb was to be brought to town, which was to be sacrificed for the passover. Contemplate here, O Christian soul, the greatness of that love and charity for thee, which pushes thy Saviour forward on this occasion: see the joyful readiness with which he goes to offer up himself to death for the love of thee: admire and adore the dispositions of his providence, who was pleased that the glory of his birth should be hidden in the obscurity of a poor stable in little Bethlehem; whilst he chose for the ignominy of his passion, the great theatre of Jerusalem, and the paschal time, when the whole nation of the Jews was assembled thither.

Consider, secondly, the manner in which our Lord was pleased to be received on this day, by a solemn procession of the people; strewing their garments in the way, and bearing branches of palm-trees in their hands, to testify his victory over the prince of darkness; and accompanying him with loud acclamations, and hosannas of joy, to honour him as their King and Messias. See, my soul, if thou art in proper dispositions to join in this triumphal procession, and, with a palm-branch in thy hand, to celebrate the victory of thy Lord over death, sin, and hell. Alas! with what face canst thou attend him on this occasion, if thou art still a slave to death, sin, and hell? Reflect also here on the inconstancy of the world, and how little account thou art to make of the esteem and applause of men; when thou seest how this same people, who on this day received our Lord with these loud hosannas, and acknowledged him for their King and their Saviour, five days after, cried out, *Away with him; away with him: crucify him; crucify him!*

Consider, thirdly, the dispositions of the soul of our Redeemer, in the midst of these honours and acclamations, and how little he is affected with them. See how, upon this occasion, he weeps over the unhappy Jerusalem, and over every impenitent

soul, that, like Jerusalem, takes no notice *in this her day of the things that are for her peace; but lets slip the time of her visitation*, St. Luke xix. 42, 44. Learn, from his very triumph, his love of poverty, and his meekness, in the manner of his riding into Jerusalem, upon an ass's colt. Give ear to the prophet (Zach. ix. 9.) *Rejoice, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king will come to thee; the just, and the Saviour: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, &c.* O see thou imitate his humility, whilst thou rejoicest in his victory.

Conclude to honour the triumph of thy Saviour, in the best manner thou art able, in the procession of this day. Acknowledge him for the King and Lord of thy heart, and invite him in thither. But see that sin and hell have no place there.

MONDAY IN HOLY-WEEK.

Our Saviour carries his Cross.

CONSIDER, first, how, upon Pilate's pronouncing sentence against our Lord, they immediately proceed to execution: and first they strip him of his purple robe, and clothe him again with his own garments: then they bring him the cross, which he was to carry on his shoulders to mount Calvary, as Isaac formerly did the wood upon which he was to be offered in sacrifice. But O! who can express, or conceive, the affection of soul, with which our Saviour embraces this cross, which he is now going to consecrate with his precious blood; this cross, designed to be the happy instrument of our redemption, the altar of his sacrifice, the throne of his mercy, the trophy of his victory, the eternal monument of his love, the refuge of sinners, the comfort of the afflicted, the glory of his elect, the school of all virtues, and the source of all our good! O my soul, what are thy sentiments with regard to the cross of Christ? Thou must embrace the cross with him, if thou desirest to reign with him. Give ear to a great servant of God, expressing his affection to the cross in this pathetic manner:—"I bow down to thee, O precious cross, consecrated by the embraces and by the blood of Jesus, my Lord and my King. I look upon thee as the standard of his armies; as the watch-tower showing forth its light to guide his elect in this stormy ocean; as the defence of his servants; and as the mark and badge of his children. I adore thee, O hidden wisdom, O light unknown to the world, the honour of them that follow thee, the safety of them 'hat carry thee, the crown of them that embrace thee, the reward of them that love thee, and the salvation of them that cast themselves into thy arms. To die on thee is to live, and to live on thee

is to reign. He that loves thee is content; he that desires thee is easy; he that possesses thee is rich. I bow down to thee, O tree of life, the fruit of which is the solid food of the children of God; O balance, ever even, in which alone we discover the just value, and the true price of all things. In thee is found health and life, the victory over hell, the sweets of Paradise, strength of heart, joy of spirit, perfection of virtue, and assurance of eternal goods, &c. I embrace thee, O holy cross, consecrated by the sweat and by the blood of my Saviour. Thou shalt be henceforward my refuge, my light, my knowledge, and all my wisdom. Forsake me not, keep not at a distance from me, though this flesh of mine dreads thee, and seeks to fly from thee. O fasten me to the cross with thee, my sweet Jesus, and enlighten me with thy admirable light; that my spirit may penetrate into the depth of the mysteries, and of the wisdom of the cross." *Sufferings of Jesus*, chap. xlii. My soul, are these thy sentiments?

Consider, secondly, and take a view of the Lamb of God, setting out upon this his last, most wearisome, and most painful journey of his mortal life; loaded with the enormous weight of the cross, and with the far more intolerable weight of the sins of the world. See the length, and whole size of the cross, proportioned to bear the weight of a human body suspended in the air; and reflect how little strength remains in his body, after so many sufferings and fatigues, and the loss of so much blood. Ah! how rough, how hard, how insupportable then, is this load, to his shoulders and back, all mangled, rent and torn with the whips and scourges! How does it press upon his green wounds, and squeeze out his sacred blood all the way! O mark this his last procession. A crier leads the way, publishing his pretended crimes and blasphemies. Then follow the soldiers and executioners, with ropes, hammers, nails, &c. And after them goeth, or rather creepeth along, our High Priest and Victim, all bruised and bloody, and staggering under the burden of his cross; attended with a thief on each hand, and surrounded with a multitude of his enemies, insulting over him, and loading him with scoffs, reproaches, and curses; whilst the cruel hangmen, at every turn, are hastening him forward with their kicks and blows. Follow thy Lord, my soul, in this his last and most painful procession; offer him what service thou canst, to ease him of some part of his burthen; weep over him, at least, with the good women that followed him; but take notice of his admonishing them rather to weep for themselves, and for their children; and see how, in the midst of all his sufferings, he is much more concerned for our miseries and sins, than for any thing he himself endures. O, blessed be his infinite charity for us poor sinners.

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord, having for some time, with unspeakable labour and torment, carried his cross through the streets, at last falleth down under the enormous weight of it, unable to carry it any longer. But with what a shock does he fall! with what an additional torture to his wounded body, now quite exhausted with pain, and labour, and loss of blood! See how the bloody executioners employ their kicks and blows, to oblige him to rise again with his burthen; but all in vain; his strength is quite gone; he is not able to carry it any farther. Therefore, lest his execution should be delayed, they lay hold on Simon of Cyrene, whom they met coming out of the country, and they oblige him to take up the cross, and to ease our Lord of part of the burthen, by carrying it after him. But O, who shall ease him of any part of that other load, infinitely more insupportable, which his heavenly Father has laid upon him, of the sins of the whole world! My soul, do thou give him what little ease thou canst, by lamenting the share thy sins have in this tragedy, and by ceasing henceforward to afflict him by sin.

Conclude to run in, and offer thy service to thy Redeemer, on this occasion, to take up his cross for him, and to help him, like Simon of Cyrene, in the carriage of it; or rather offer thyself to him, to take up thy own cross, with perfect resignation and patience, and to follow him. It is this he particularly calls for, and expects at thy hands.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.

Our Saviour is nailed to the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, how, our Lord being at length arrived at mount Calvary, quite wearied and spent, the untired malice of his enemies, pursuing him still, finds out a new torture for him, by mingling gall with the wine, that, according to custom, was presented, as a strengthening draught, to criminals that were to be executed. Our Lord, that he might suffer the more for us, was pleased, by tasting it, to imbitter his palate, parched up before with a violent thirst; but he would not admit of the comfort, that the drinking of it might have afforded his stomach; *when he had tasted, he would not drink*, St. Matt. xxvii. 34. And now they strip him violently of his clothes, which by this time began to cleave fast to his mangled body, being pressed into the wounds by the weight of the cross; so that all his wounds are now opened afresh, and this Lamb of God is in a manner flayed alive, in order to be laid on the altar of the cross. O my soul, see how he stands, all covered with his blood, with his eyes lifted up to heaven; with infinite charity praying for poor sinners, and even for his very execu-

tioners. O, run in now, and cast thyself at his feet, and bathe thyself in that precious blood which he so plentifully sheds for thee; but see thou mingle with it thy penitential tears, in consideration of the share thou hast had in bringing these sufferings upon him by thy sins.

Consider, secondly, how, all things being now ready, they order him to lie down upon the cross. He obeys without resistance or demur, and lays himself down upon this hard bed, on which he is to die; this bed of sorrow, on which he is to bring us forth to God. Here he lies, with his eyes fixed on heaven, as High Priest of all mankind, offering himself a Victim of propitiation for our sins, to his eternal Father, and freely giving up his hands and feet to the executioners, to be pierced with the nails. See now, my soul, how one of these ruffians comes with a large sharp nail, and, fixing the point of it upon the sacred palm of one of our Saviour's hands, violently drives it with his hammer into the tender flesh, forcing its way, with inconceivable torment, through the nerves, sinews, muscles, and bones, of which the hand is composed, deep into the hard wood of the cross. The extremity of pain, which was caused by the violent piercing of so many nerves and bones as meet in the hands, made all the nerves and sinews shrink up, and draw the body towards that hand that was nailed; so that great violence was used by the executioners in dragging the other arm and hand to the opposite side, to the place prepared for it, where they served it in like manner. And then, with equal barbarity, they drew down his sacred feet, and nailed them also to the cross. Verifying that of the prophet, Psalm xxi, *They have dug my hands and feet: they have numbered all my bones*: inasmuch as, by the violence of their pulling, the bones of our Lord were so drawn from their places, and disjointed, that they might be numbered. Ah! sweet Saviour, who can conceive the least part of what thou hast here endured for the love of me!

Consider, thirdly, what shocks, what tortures, our Lord, being now nailed fast to the cross, must have suffered in his whole body, when they dragged the cross along the ground, to the hole prepared for it; how much, when they began with ropes to raise him up into the air; how much, when they let the foot of the cross fall with a jolt into the hole; how much, when they fastened it in the ground with large stakes, which they drove in with their mallets! O, who can think, without horror, on the racking pains that every motion or shock of this nature must have caused to a body all disjointed, and supported only by the bones and sinews of the hands and feet, pierced through with gross nails! But though this torture, which our Lord here endured, was so great and insupportable, that one would think it might have

moved the hardest heart to compassion, to have seen even a brute beast undergo so much; yet such was the insatiable malice of the enemies of our Saviour, that, instead of showing him any pity, or relenting at the sight of his torments, they shout and triumph, when they see him appear above the heads of the people; and, drawing nigher, they stand shaking their heads at him, rejoicing at all his sufferings, scoffing, and insulting over him. Christians, whilst you detest this Jewish malice, see you have no share in it, by your obstinacy in sin; *crucifying again to yourselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of him*, Heb. vi. 6.

Conclude by detesting the handy-work of your sins, which have nailed your Saviour to the cross; and by loving him, who, out of pure love for you, has endured so much. O that we could say here, with the martyr Ignatius, and with the like affection *My love is fastened to the cross!*

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY-WEEK.

On the Sufferings of our Saviour on the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, what our Lord suffers upon the cross, for the whole time that he continues living upon it, till he consummates his sacrifice. Draw near, my soul, and sit down under the shadow of thy true Lover, with a longing desire to be his scholar in this school of love. Contemplate at leisure the multitude and variety of his sufferings. And first, as to his sacred body; see how, *from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, there is now no soundness therein*; see how it is all covered with wounds and blood. O how rough is this hard bed of the cross to a body all torn and mangled! O how uneasy is this pillow of a thorny crown to his wounded head! See all the cruel bruises, with which his divine face is disfigured, and reflect on the smart and the pain of them. See how the whole body is violently stretched and extended as upon a rack, with an unexpressible torture in all the joints and limbs. But, above all, remark those four streams of blood, those fountains of paradise, that flow from the four most painful wounds of his hands and feet; and consider how the whole weight of the body, hanging by those gross nails, that pierce the nerves and bones, whilst it naturally sinks downwards, is continually rending and tearing his wounds, and increasing his pains.

Consider, secondly, what our Saviour suffers interiorly in his soul, and thou shalt find it to be much more insupportable than all he endures in his body. Witness the unexpressible horror he has for the sins of the world, all now lying upon him, and oppressing his soul with their infinite weight; his deep sense of those

blasphemies he hears uttered against the Deity, and the contempt they show for his person, and his divine truths. Witness the anguish of his soul, to see the hardness, blindness and reprobation of his once chosen people, the Jews, together with the final impenitence of Judas, and the eternal damnation of so many millions of souls, for whom he is now offering himself in sacrifice, every one of whom he loves more than his own life. Add to this, his grief to see the unspeakable desolation of his blessed Mother, and of all his friends; and himself left, without any manner of relief or comfort from any creature whatsoever; and even forsaken by his heavenly Father, and given up to the will and pleasure of his enemies. Ah, Christians, no tortures can be comparable to those of the soul.

Consider, thirdly, that, besides these sufferings, both of body and soul, which our Lord endures on the cross, for the love of us, he is pleased, moreover, to suffer in all other ways which any mortal can be liable to in this life. He suffers in his honour, by the disgrace of being hanged between two thieves, and loaded with all kinds of reproaches and affronts: he suffers in his reputation, by outrageous calumnies and impositions: he suffers in his goods, by being stripped of his very clothes, (the all he had in this world,) and exposed naked to shame and cold; he suffers from all sorts of people; from Jews and Gentiles, great and small, priests and laity; all conspiring, as much as they can, to add to his afflictions. His enemies insult and triumph over him; his friends are ashamed of him; those whom he had favoured with his miracles declare against him; his disciples keep at a distance, and are afraid of being involved in his punishments. His eyes see nothing but what may add to his anguish; his ears are entertained with nothing but injuries and blasphemies; his palate is afflicted with a mortal thirst; and his own body, by its weight, is a continual and most grievous torment to him. O sweet Jesus, how dearly hast thou paid for my sins!

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross, and there to contemplate, in the sufferings of thy Saviour, the enormity of thy sins, and the goodness of thy God, that thou mayest there learn how thou art to detest thy sins, and to love thy God.

HOLY THURSDAY.

On our Saviour's preaching from the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, that the whole life and doctrine of Christ was a continual lesson to his followers to renounce self-love, with its three wretched branches; namely, *the lust of the flesh*, that is, the love of sensual pleasures; *the lust of the eyes*, that is, the love

of the perishable goods of this world; *and the pride of life.* These are the unhappy sources of all our evils, which withdraw us from our allegiance to God, and make us exchange the fountain of life for poisonous puddles, that can never satisfy our thirst. These are the foundations of a worldly and sinful life, and the broad road to death and hell. Alas! we love ourselves, and our own will, more than God; we are ever full of ourselves; sensual, covetous, presumptuous, as if we were something; and we can bear with nothing that opposes or contradicts us. But mark, in particular, my soul, the sermon which the Son of God preaches from the cross; and see how loudly he there condemns, from that pulpit, all the illusions of our self-love, with all the maxims and practices of the world, and the unhappy attachments of worldlings to their carnal and sensual affections. O, remember that what he suffers is all by his own choice; and this not only to the end that he may expiate our sins, but also in order to undeceive us in the preposterous judgment we make of things, and to teach us to embrace what he embraces, to despise what he despises, and to condemn what he condemns. Learn then, my soul, at the foot of the cross, to overcome thy pride, by the great example of the voluntary humiliations of the Son of God; thy love of the world, by his voluntary poverty, and by his being stripped of all things, and abandoned by all; and thy love of pleasure, by his voluntary sufferings and unexpressible torments.

Consider, secondly, that Jesus Christ, in offering himself upon the cross a sacrifice to his Father, without any manner of reserve, and in dying in pure obedience to his heavenly will, preaches another excellent sermon to us, containing the whole perfection of a spiritual life, which consists in giving our whole selves to God, and in being obedient unto death. Yes, Christians, if you desire to be perfect, you must learn of your dying Saviour to make this offering of yourselves, without reserve, to his Father and to your Father; you must join your offering with his, and make it by his hands, that it may be acceptable. You must make it every day, and oftentimes in the day. O, give him, then, daily, your soul and body; give him your understanding, your memory, and your will; give him your whole being, with all that belongs to it, both for time and eternity; and he will give his whole self to you. O happy exchange! Offer yourself, then, daily, to do for him whatsoever he pleases, to suffer for him whatsoever he pleases; dedicate yourselves eternally to his love, and resolve to die a thousand deaths, rather than to forfeit, in any thing, the obedience you owe to this your Father, Maker, King, and God.

Consider, thirdly, the particular lessons that our Lord also gives us in his seven last dying words upon the cross. First

of *perfect charity* to our enemies, by his praying for his, and excusing them to his Father: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Secondly, of *mercy and compassion* for sinners, by the plenary indulgence he imparts to the penitent thief: *Amen. I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* Thirdly, of *duty to our parents*, in his recommending his Virgin Mother to the care of his beloved disciple; and of a *filial devotion* to her, as recommended for a mother to us all: *Woman, Behold thy son—Behold thy mother.* Fourthly, of an earnest *thirst* for the conversion and salvation of all men, by that which he expresses in this word, *I thirst.* Fifthly, of *fervent prayer* to God, under anguish and desolation, by the fervour of his prayer: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Sixthly, of *perseverance* to the end, till we have *consummated*, that is, completely finished, the work for which we came into the world, by that word of his, *It is consummated.* Seventhly, of committing ourselves, both in life and death, by a *perfect resignation*, into the hands of God, by his great example: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* O let us learn these last lessons of our dying Lord.

Conclude to frequent daily this school of the cross, if thou wouldst learn to be wise indeed. But, more especially, take care to study well, at the foot of the cross, those two most essential lessons, the renouncing thy own will, and embracing the will of God, by a resolute conformity and obedience, even unto death.

GOOD FRIDAY.

On our Saviour's Death upon the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, having uttered those last words of his, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, with a loud and strong voice, leans down his head, in perfect submission to his Father's will, and gives up the ghost, to consummate the great sacrifice of the redemption of the world. Stand astonished, my soul, in the contemplation of this incomprehensible mystery, that Life itself should die, to deliver thee from a second death, and to impart to thee eternal life. O consider well who this is that hangs here dead before thy eyes. The Word, the Wisdom, the Son of the eternal God; the Lord of glory; the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the great Creator of heaven and earth. But O, how strangely has he here debased himself! How wonderfully is he here metamorphosed for the love of thee! Draw near, however, in spirit, and cast thyself down at the foot of the cross; and there exercise thyself in acts of faith, hope

love, and contrition for thy sins ; there pour forth thyself, in the sight of thy God, in acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving ; there make a total oblation of thyself to thy crucified Saviour, to be his, both in life and death, time and eternity.

Consider, secondly, how our Lord, in the midst of all the ignominies and torments of his passion and death, begins to reign from the cross ; and is even there highly honoured and exalted by his heavenly Father. The title that hangs over his head declares him to be *the King of the Jews*, even their Messiah, of whom the prophets had delivered such wonders. All nature loudly proclaims him her King and her God. The sun withdraws his light, for the three whole hours that he hangs upon the cross ; at his death the whole earth trembles ; the rocks are split ; the monuments are opened ; the dead arise ; the veil of the temple, that hangs before the inward sanctuary, is rent from top to bottom, to show that the law, and its figures, are all now accomplished, and the sanctuary of heaven laid open. See, my soul, how he already begins from the cross to verify what he had said, St. John xii. 32, *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself*. One of the thieves, that were crucified with him, is the first that experiences this miraculous attraction, and in an instant is changed into a saint ; the centurion, or captain of the soldiers, that assisted at the execution, is the next, and loudly declares him to be the Son of God ; *and all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, return striking their breasts*, St. Luke xxiii. 48. O dear Jesus, let my poor heart share also in this mercy ; look down upon it now from thy cross, which thou hast chosen for the throne of thy mercy and grace ; and be pleased to draw it also to thyself ; and to make it wholly thine, from henceforth and for ever.

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord, by his death, triumphs over all his enemies. He casts out Satan, the ruler of this wicked world, from his usurped dominions ; and binds him up in chains, by greatly abridging all the power of death, sin, and hell : he judges and condemns the world, with all its favourite maxims : he exposes and pulls down human pride : he shows forth the folly of worldly wisdom, and the vanity and deceitfulness of earthly honours, riches, and carnal pleasures, and of all that is not agreeable to his cross : and he sets up this victorious standard for all nations, as the royal ensign of his kingdom, under which his true soldiers shall ever fight and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, till they arrive at the crown of life, which he has purchased for them by his death. But see, my soul, how, in the midst of all his triumphs, he invites, in a particular manner, all poor sinners to his mercy. See how, with his head bowed down towards

them, he offers them the kiss of peace : see how his arms are open to receive them : see how all his gaping wounds invite them to come and shelter themselves there from the divine wrath. O let us embrace these his offers of mercy, on this day of mercy.

Conclude to celebrate, on this day, in the best manner thou art able, thy Saviour's victory over sin and hell. Adore him most profoundly under all the ignominy of his cross; acknowledge him for thy King, for the true King of thy heart, and beg that he would henceforward abolish the reign of sin in thee. Embrace, with all thy affection, the sacred wounds of his passion, and choose them for the place of thy habitation for ever.

HOLY SATURDAY.

On our Saviour's Burial.

CONSIDER, first, how, after our Lord had expired upon the cross, one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, making a wide and deep wound, out of which there presently issued forth blood and water, to wash and cleanse us from all our stains. See, my soul, how the heart of thy Saviour is now laid open for thee. O, enter into it, in spirit, through this gate: O, make it thy dwelling-place for evermore. Consider, in this mysterious blood and water, issuing from the side of our Lord, the heavenly sacraments, which issue from his wounds, (inasmuch as they have all their virtue from his sacred passion,) but especially the sacrament of his body and blood, and that of the sacred laver of baptism. See, also, here, how, our second Adam being now cast into the deep sleep of death, his side is opened, to form from thence his church, designed to be his everlasting bride.

Consider, secondly, how Joseph of Arimathea, (who before durst not declare himself a disciple of Christ,) having obtained of Pilate leave to take away his body for decent burial, being accompanied with Nicodemus, and joined in this last duty with St. John and other disciples, unnailed the sacred body, and took it down from the cross. Run in, Christian soul, in spirit, and offer thy service upon this occasion: receive into thy arms the dead corpse of thy Redeemer, and lay it on the sacred lap of his Virgin Mother; and learn from her whole comportment at this melancholy ceremony, the sentiments of a most affectionate devotion towards the passion and death of her Son. Join in embalming thy Saviour's body, and wrapping it up in clean linen, and laying it in a new monument, by learning the exercise of those virtues, which are signified by those aromatical spices and perfumes, and by that clean linen and new monument. Especially, whenever thou approachest to the body of our Lord, in the blessed sacra-

ment, see thou take along with thee the sweet odours of devotion, a pure conscience, and the cleanness of the new man.

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord, lying now in his monument verifies that of the Psalmist, Psalm lxxxvii, *I am counted among them that go down to the pit: I am become as a man without help, free among the dead. Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cast off from thy hand. They have laid me in the lower pit; in the dark, and in the shadow of death. Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me, &c.* Yes, my soul, thy Saviour lies now shut up, in a lonesome monument, in darkness, like one dead for always, and as such is left and forsaken by his living friends and acquaintance. See thou leave him not, but stay with him, and watch at his sepulchre in prayer. Weep there over him, with tears of compassion for his sufferings, of compunction for all thy sins, and of a tender love for his infinite goodness, and his love for thee.

Conclude, to keep thyself always near to thy Saviour, by daily meditating on his life and death; and thou mayst confidently hope, that he will always be near thee, both in life and death.

EASTER SUNDAY.

On the Resurrection of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, how the soul of our Saviour, immediately after his death, descends into the lower parts of the earth, to visit and comfort the spirits of the just, to discharge them from their long confinement, and to change their prison, by his presence, into a paradise of delights. O how happy, how joyful a day was this to all the patriarchs and prophets; when they were first blessed with the sight of him, for whom they had longed for so many ages! How glorious was the sight of his triumph over all the powers of darkness, of his breaking down the strong holds of hell, and giving a plenary indulgence to as many souls as were capable of it, by their having died in the true faith, and in the state of grace. In the mean time, whilst the soul of our Lord is exercising this charity, the blind malice of his enemies suggests to them, to make fast his sepulchre, and to guard it with soldiers, under pretence of preventing his disciples from stealing away his body, and then publishing that he was risen from the dead. But O, how vain are all the projects of men against the decrees of God! All this industry of theirs only serves to put the resurrection of our Lord out of all dispute, by rendering it absolutely impossible for his disciples (had their terrors and troubles allowed them so much as the first thought of such an unheard of enterprise) to steal him away, though they had ever so great a desire

of it. So true is that of the wise man, Prov. xxi. 30, *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel, against the Lord.*

Consider, secondly, how, early in the morning, on Easter Sunday, being the third day, the day appointed for our Lord's resurrection, his soul returns in triumph from the regions below; and, entering into his sacred body, imparts to it a new and immortal life; and, instead of the winding sheet, in which it had been wrapped up, clothes it now with all the glorious qualities decreed for the bodies of the saints, in a supereminent degree, and so brings it forth without resistance, through the monument, (though hewed out of a rock, and close covered with a very great stone, fastened down with irons,) unperceived by the guards, who were not worthy to see him in this glorious state. Yet, that they, and all the world, might know that he was risen indeed, they felt a great earthquake; and an angel, visibly descending from heaven, removed the stone that covered the entrance of the monument, and sat down upon it. The sight of this bright messenger of heaven carried with it such a terror, that the guards became like men dead, and, as soon as they were able to recover themselves, run away into the city, publishing the wonders they had seen, till the chief priests and elders stopped their mouths with a large sum of money. Rejoice thou, my soul, to see thy Saviour thus victorious over all his enemies; and learn, from this great example, to bear up with courage under all thou mayst have to suffer from the wickedness of men; trusting in God, that he will one day turn all these thy sufferings to thy greater good.

Consider, thirdly, those words of the Psalmist, which are applied by the church, in the office of this day, to the resurrection of our Lord; *This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein*, Psalm cxvii. Yes, Christian souls, if you have taken part in the sufferings of your Redeemer, by the affections of compassion and grief, at the sight of all those outrages and torments he endured in the course of his passion; it is just you should rejoice, now the scene is changed, at the sight of his being risen from the dead, victorious over death and hell, and his being now entered upon a new and everlasting life, so that he can die now no more, nor suffer any more. Rejoice, then, with a holy joy, in the Lord; and join with the Church on this day in her repeated alleluias; because your best Friend, your true Lover, your dear Father, your King, your Lord and God, is risen again; and this is the day of his triumph; he is now out of all reach of his enemies, and shall live and reign glorious for evermore. But see, my soul, whether thou art in proper dispositions to celebrate with this holy joy the resurrection of thy Lord. Hast thou endeavoured to die with him, in order

to rise again with him? Hast thou put off the old man and his deeds? Hast thou crucified the flesh and its lusts? Or does not sin still live and reign in thee? If so, how melancholy a reflection must it be, to think that this monster, for the destruction of which Christ died, should still keep thee under slavery, struggling with the worst of deaths, whilst thou art celebrating the festival of thy Saviour's rising to a new and immortal life!

Conclude, if thou desirest to have a share in the triumphs of thy Redeemer, to imitate his death, by dying to thy sins; that so thou mayst also imitate his resurrection, and walk henceforward in the newness of life, after the great model given to thee by Jesus Christ.

EASTER MONDAY.

On the Lessons we are to learn from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that, according to the doctrine of the apostle, Rom. iv. 25, *Christ was delivered up to death for our sins, and rose again for our justification*; inasmuch as his rising again from the dead was designed to be the model of our resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace. But in what must our resurrection imitate that of Jesus Christ? First, we must imitate him, by rising *verily* and *indeed*; that is, *truly* and *really*, and not in appearance only. Alas! how many, at this time of Easter, pretend to rise again with Christ, by going to confession and communion, according to the custom of Christians at this season; and yet, after all, only deceive themselves, and impose upon others, with false appearances of life, and never rise in effect! because they do this great work but by halves; their heart is not changed; they do not effectually renounce their sins; their pretended resurrection is but an empty, airy phantom; they are still dead in their sins. See, my soul, that this be never thy case. Ah! what will it avail thee, to deceive thyself and thy confessor with these treacherous appearances of a false life, which can only serve to plunge thee deeper into the worst of deaths!

Consider, secondly, that, when Christ rose again from the dead, he presently quitted his monument, he left his winding sheet behind him, and retained nothing at all of death; and from that time he had little conversation with mortals, but only with his heavenly Father; to teach us, that, if we would rise with him to the purpose, we must also quit our winding sheets, and monuments, and all the appurtenances of death, by renouncing bad company, and the dangerous occasions of sin, by keep-

ing our passions under, and by breaking the force of all former bad habits, till no symptoms of death remain in us. But then, in order to walk in this newness of life, we must aim, as much as we can, to walk with God, by an inward solitude and a recollection of spirit; and to have our conversation in heaven by frequent and fervent prayer. Give ear to the apostle, Coloss. iii. *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with him in glory.* O that we were always possessed with these sentiments! O that we could die to all things else, that we might truly live in God, with Christ, and through Christ!

Consider, thirdly, that *Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth now no more; death shall no more have dominion over him; Rom. vi. 9;* so that, if we would imitate his resurrection, we must also rise in such manner from the death of sin as to die no more, by returning again any more to our sins, but *to reckon ourselves, henceforward, to be dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord; ver. 11.* This, then, is the great lesson we must learn from the resurrection of Christ: we must rise with him, so as to continue for ever to live with him, and to return no more to the dominion of death. Ah, Christians, if you be now risen indeed from the death of sin to the life of grace, dread a second death, by relapsing into mortal sin, above all other evils that can possibly befall you. O remember, that if the devil, who has been now cast out of your soul, should take possession of you once more by a relapse, he would *bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and your last state would be worse than the first,* St. Matthew xii. 45.

Conclude with a hearty resolution of imitating, in all these particulars, the resurrection of our Lord. But especially take your precautions against returning any more to the death of sin, after rising with Christ to a new life. To prevent so great an evil, be diligent in all your religious duties; be constant and fervent in prayer; flee all dangerous occasions; and keep up in your soul a perpetual horror for that hellish monster, sin. O, beg of God, daily and hourly, that you may rather die a thousand deaths, than once consent to deadly sin.

EASTER TUESDAY.

On our Lord's showing himself to his Disciples after his Resurrection.

CONSIDER, first, the haste that our Lord made to comfort his blessed Mother and his afflicted disciples, by manifesting himself to them immediately after his resurrection. As to his blessed Mother, though the gospel is silent, we cannot doubt but she was favoured with an early visit; that, as she loved him most, and partook more than any other in the sorrows of his passion, so she might also in the joy of his resurrection. Learn, my soul, from hence, that the way for thee also to experience something of the visits and comforts of heaven, is to suffer and to love. The good women, that went early in the morning to the monument with their sweet spices and ointments, to perfume the body of our Lord, were likewise favoured, first with a vision of angels, and then with the sight of Christ himself; to teach us that the true way to find Christ, is to rise early to seek him; to go in quest of him, with the aromatical perfumes of ardent desires and devout affections; and to persevere in the search, without being discouraged with apprehensions of difficulties and oppositions. These holy women were concerned, who should roll away the stone for them from the monument, that they might come at the body of our Lord, for it was exceeding great; but lo, when they came to the place, they found the stone was rolled away to their hands; to teach us, that if we continue constant in our good resolutions, God will remove those difficulties we apprehend, or enable us by his grace to overcome them.

Consider, secondly, the favour our Lord was pleased to show to penitent sinners, at his resurrection, by honouring Magdalene amongst women, and Peter amongst men, with his first visits. Magdalene, from the time of her conversion, had constantly adhered to our Lord; she followed him even to the cross; she attended on him there till he gave up the ghost; she saw his body laid in the monument; and, after the repose of the Sabbath-day, she was up before light, and was the first at the monument with her perfumes: when she found him not, she ran to the apostles, to tell them the body was taken away. Peter and John ran to the monument; and finding there the linen cloths without the body, went their way home again; but Magdalene staid, and continued her search, weeping and lamenting that she could not find him whom her soul loved, till at length she saw his heavenly messengers, and shortly after himself in person, and was sent by him as an apostle, to carry to the apostles themselves the joyful tidings of his resurrection. O happy tears of love! O happy

perseverance! O see, my soul, thou seek thy Lord in the like manner, and thou wilt infallibly find him.

Consider, thirdly, that Peter, who, from the time of his fall, had been continually weeping and bitterly bewailing his sins, was the first of the apostles that was favoured with the sight of our Lord, 1 *Cor.* xv. 5. and *Luke* xxiv. 34. At the first news, brought by Magdalene, of our Saviour's body being missing, he took the alarm, and ran to the monument; and not finding the body there, went home, believing it had been taken away. But our Lord was pleased to remove this error, by manifesting himself to him, and showing him that body alive, which he had sought among the dead. O what sentiments of confusion and repentance for his having denied this Lord of glory, mixed with a holy joy at the sight of his being now risen from the dead, filled the soul of this apostle, upon this occasion! O how did he cast himself at the feet of his Lord, and there confess his crime! and how lovingly was he received to mercy, and favoured upon the spot with a plenary indulgence and absolution! And not only that; but, to show the unspeakable bounty of our Lord to repenting sinners, a little while after, when our Lord manifested himself to him again, *St. John* xxi, he was pleased to advance him to the supreme pastoral charge over all his flock, by committing to him all his lambs and all his sheep; and to promise him the glory of *following him*, even to the dying upon a cross for him; all in consequence of that most ardent love, of which he three times required a profession of him, (*Lovest thou me more than these?*) as it were in opposition to his three denials.

Conclude, whatever thy case may be, and however thou mayst have denied thy Saviour, by word or deed, to return now to him by repentance and love; and *if thy sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow*, *Isai.* i. 18. Love is the shortest way to the remission of sins, and to all other good.

EASTER-WEDNESDAY.

On our Lord's showing himself to the Disciples going to Emmaus. Luke xxiv.

CONSIDER, first, how two of the disciples, going from Jerusalem to a neighbouring town called Emmaus, on the very day of our Lord's resurrection, while they were discoursing together in the way, and making him the subject of their conversation, were also favoured with his presence; yet in such manner as not to know him. He overtook them in the way, and joined their company; and, after upbraiding them with their slowness of belief, explained to them the scriptures that related to his passion

and resurrection, and enkindled in their hearts the fire of devotion. See, Christians, the great advantage of pious conversation such, especially, as has Christ for its subject: it even draws him down from heaven into our company. We may, in some measure, apply to it what our Lord says, St. Matt. xviii. 20: *Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* What a pity, then, there should be generally so little of God in the conversation of Christians! Alas! how can this forgetfulness of God be reconciled with our loving him! We naturally delight to speak of what we love; for *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*: how, then, can we flatter ourselves that the love of God is the master of our hearts, when we so seldom care to speak of him! Surely this is not the way to engage Christ to be in our company.

Consider, secondly, that our Lord was not known at first by these disciples, because their faith in him was weak and imperfect. See, my soul, if the weakness of thy faith be not also the reason why he does not manifest himself to thee, so as to let thee know him indeed, as the saints have done. St. Gregory takes notice, that these disciples were not enlightened, so as to know Christ, whilst they only heard his words; but were quickly enlightened, in the fulfilling of his commandments, by the exercise of hospitality and charity; to teach us, that the way to come at the knowledge of God, and of those truths which as yet we are ignorant of, is to practise, to the best of our power, what we know already of his heavenly will. These disciples *knew our Lord in the breaking of bread*; to teach us, that there is no better way to come at the perfection of the knowledge and love of God, than a worthy participation of the bread of life in the blessed eucharist.

Consider, thirdly, how these disciples took notice, that *their heart was burning within them*, whilst they were in the company of our Lord, and enjoyed his heavenly conversation, St. Luke xxiv. 32. My soul, dost thou desire to experience something of these sacred flames? Seek them in the company and conversation of Christ. Alas! the reason why thou art so lukewarm, or rather downright cold, in thy devotions, is the continual dissipation of thy thoughts at other times, and a habit of indulging vain amusements, which fill thy inward house with such disagreeable company, as keep Christ away from thee, and rob thee of his sweet conversation. O how happy mightst thou be, if, by banishing all these impertinences, by a spirit of recollection, thou wouldst endeavour to keep thyself always close to thy Saviour, and, like the ancient saints, to walk with him! A diligence in this would make thee begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclude to study well these lessons which our Lord desires we should learn from his manifestations of himself after his resurrection. But especially learn to seek always the happiness of his company and conversation in thy own interior: there is the school of divine love.

EASTER-THURSDAY.

On our Lord's manifesting himself to all the Apostles.
 Luke xxiv. John xx.

CONSIDER, first, how, on the evening of the same day of our Lord's resurrection, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, our Saviour came in, and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, *Peace be to you*; and then showed them the wounds of his hands, of his feet, and of his side. Admire the qualities of his glorious body, now risen from the dead, which, like a spirit, passes through the doors, and is seen on a sudden in the midst of his disciples; and yet shows itself to be true and palpable flesh, by exhibiting those sacred wounds, to be felt by their hands. See how, on this occasion, he at once both informs their faith, and inflames their love, by bearing about him these marks of his passion, the most convincing testimonies of his love. My soul, thou hast this same glorious body, with all its endowments, in the blessed sacrament; and though thou neither seest it, nor feelest his wounds, with thy bodily senses, thy faith assures thee that he is there; and discovers to thy inward eye, both his whole passion endured for the love of thee, and the glory of his resurrection. Let this suffice to enkindle the fire of his love in thy heart. Do not desire to see or to feel his wounds, like Thomas, nor to lodge thy hand in his side, but thy heart. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed*, John xx. 29.

Consider, secondly, how our Lord said again to his disciples, *Peace be to you; as the Father hath sent me, I also send you*. Then, breathing upon them, he said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained*. See how ample this authority is, which he here imparts to his apostles, and to their lawful successors; that is, to the pastors of his true church, descending from the apostles. As his heavenly Father sent him, even so he sends them; furnished, as he was, with all spiritual power and jurisdiction for the rule of his church, and the dispensation of his word and of his sacraments, and commissioned by him, as he was by his Father. Give thanks, my soul, to thy

Saviour, for having left, for thy benefit, this ample power and commission with the pastors of his church, and furnished thee, by this means, with guides, divinely commissioned and divinely assisted, and given to them the keys, that they might open heaven to thee. See thou despise not the ordinance of God, nor proudly resist his commissioners, to thy own condemnation.

Consider, thirdly, more in particular, the power of forgiving, or retaining sins, here imparted by our Lord to the lawful pastors of his Catholic church. *Receive ye the holy Ghost, said he: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven to them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* In these words our Lord was pleased to communicate his divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to his disciples and their successors; in order to make them his delegates in the court of conscience, to sit as judges there, to take cognizance of all spiritual causes, and to pass sentence, either in favour of (penitent) sinners, to loose them from their sins by absolutions, or to bind them, as the case should require, by censures, penances, or delay of absolution. Give thanks for this sacred institution, sovereignly wholesome to Christian souls, in which poor sinners, that desire to return to their God, may, by applying to the delegates of Christ, have the sentence of eternal damnation, that stood against them, reversed; and their absolution, pronounced on earth, ratified in heaven; upon the easy conditions of an humble and secret confession, joined with a hearty repentance; and, in consequence of such absolution, may be again received, and admitted to the participation of all those goods, from which their sins had excluded them.

Conclude to adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for all those blessings he brought with him at his resurrection, and not only imparted to his disciples then living, but entailed upon his church for ever. Particularly acknowledge and embrace that last legacy, of his perpetual presence with his church, which he bequeathed on the same occasion, in the three last verses of the gospel of St. Matthew, when he said, *All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, &c.; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*

EASTER-FRIDAY.

On the Peace of a Christian.

CONSIDER, first, that as our Saviour, the night before his passion, bequeathed his *peace* to his disciples, saying, (St. John xiv. 27,) *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you: so*

also, after his resurrection, he three times wished them his peace, saying, *Peace be to you*, St. John xx. But what kind of peace is this that he so much inculcates, and so earnestly desires to impart to us? Not the peace which the world pretends to give, which is false and deceitful, like itself; they say, *Peace, peace, and there is no peace*, Ezech. xiii. 10; but *the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding*; Philip. iv. 7;—a three-fold peace, viz. a peace of the soul with God, a peace with every neighbour, and a peace with herself. It is both the duty and the happiness of a Christian, to maintain this triple peace. And first, whosoever desires any degree of happiness, either here or hereafter, must take care to keep an inviolable peace with God, by ever fleeing wilful sin, which is at enmity with God. For how can there be any good for them that are at war with God? *Who hath ever resisted him, and hath had peace?* Job ix. 4. *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest: and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire: there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord God*, Isai. lvii. 20, 21.

Consider, secondly, that the Christian cannot maintain his peace with God, if he does not also *follow peace with all men*, (Heb. xii. 14,) and, as much as lies in him, keep peace with all men. Rom. xii. 18. For as no man can love God, that does not love his neighbour, (1 St. John iv,) so no man can be at peace with God, that breaks peace with his neighbour. It is, then, another branch, both of the duty and of the happiness of a Christian, to be at peace with every man, at least as far as lies in him, and in the unfeigned disposition of his soul; to renounce all animosity and rancour, all discord and contention, all malice and envy, and whatsoever else is opposite to fraternal charity; and to learn to *bear* and to *forbear*, which are the two great means of keeping peace with our neighbours, when, on our parts, we *forbear* giving them any offence or provocation, either by word or deed, and, at the same time, *bear*, with Christian meekness and charity, with all the offences or provocations we receive at their hands, and strive to overcome them, by rendering good for evil. O how amiable is this character of the peaceable Christian! O how much happier is such a soul, than one that is always in war, with one neighbour or another, and always in a storm at home, in his own interior!

Consider, thirdly, that another necessary branch of the Christian's peace, is to be at peace within himself, by striving to banish from his own interior whatsoever may disturb the tranquillity of his soul. This inward peace, when it is perfect, is a certain foretaste of heaven; it is a kind of heaven upon earth. In such souls God is pleased to dwell; of whom the royal prophet sings, Ps. lxxv, that *his place is in peace, and his abode in Sion*.

To come at this happy peace, (besides taking care to keep peace with God, by a clean conscience; and with every neighbour, by concord and charity,) we must have our passions mortified, our affections well ordered and regulated, and our desires restrained; we must banish all hurry and over eagerness, all sadness and melancholy, all scrupulous fears, anxious cares, and uneasiness about the things of the world, and, above all things, and in all things, we must conform ourselves to the holy will of God. Practise these lessons, my soul, and thou wilt be at peace, at least as far as the condition of thy mortal pilgrimage will allow of.

Conclude ever to aim at this three-fold peace, with thy God, with thy neighbour, and with thyself: pray daily for it; and whatsoever fear, affection, or desire, or any other thing whatsoever, offers to disturb thy heart, shut the door against it, as an enemy, as a messenger of Satan, who comes to rob thee of thy treasure, the peace of thy soul.

EASTER-SATURDAY.

On Perseverance in Good.

CONSIDER, first, that every Christian ought, at this time, pursuant to the precept of the church of God, to have made his peace with God, and to have signed and sealed it with a worthy communion. So that it is the business of every Christian, now at least, to begin a new life, and to walk henceforward in the newness of life, even to the end. *Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life*, saith our Lord, Apoc. ii. 10. Alas! what will it avail us to have made a good beginning at this time, if, after having been *enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, &c.* (Heb. vi. 4.) we should quickly *fall away*, and return to our former darkness, and to the husks of swine, under the slavery of Satan? Would not our latter condition become worse than the former? That this may never be our case, we must consider upon the means, that may effectually preserve us from relapsing into mortal sin, and that may maintain us in the happy state of the grace and love of God. In particular, we must labour to establish in our souls a horror of the dreadful evil of sin, and of all the dangerous occasions of it; to keep up in ourselves a penitential spirit for what is past, joined with a lively sense of that infinite mercy, that kept us so long out of hell, and so graciously received his prodigal children, when they offered to return to him; and with a firm resolution, (which should be renewed every day and every hour,) for no consideration whatso-

ever, to turn our backs upon him any more by wilful sin. O how happy is that Christian, who is ever ready to lay down his own life, rather than to return any more to sin!

Consider, secondly, that another great means to persevere in good, is to live by rule and order; to renounce an idle life, as the mother of all evil; and to regulate our time, and all our daily exercises; to be constant in the performance of our devotions, and in frequenting the sacraments; and to take care to do well all that we do. Sanctity and perfection does not so much depend upon doing extraordinary actions, as upon doing our ordinary actions extraordinarily well. Now, we shall do them extraordinarily well, if we do them with a pure intention, for the love of God, and if we take care to season them with frequent and fervent aspirations to God. Thus, like the ancient saints, shall we walk with God, and be perfect. This is the surest way to perseverance.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to perseverance in grace, it will be also necessary to set out, and to continue, in a full persuasion and conviction, that we have not a more dangerous enemy to our souls than our own self-love, with all its branches and passions; that the gratifying our own humours, is gratifying a mortal enemy; that we must deny ourselves, renounce ourselves, and hate ourselves in this life, if we would save our souls for eternity. In a word, the mortification of our passions, and the total victory over ourselves, is the sovereign means of perseverance. In order to this, every Christian ought to study well to know himself, and the true state of his own interior; that he may discover what passions are predominant there, and may turn all the forces of his soul against them, till he has quite subdued them. This warfare is one of the most essential duties of every disciple of Jesus Christ: no one shall be crowned by him that has not fought and conquered himself. *To him that overcometh, he will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God, Apoc. ii. 7.*

Conclude, in order to perseverance in good, to practise well all these lessons, and particularly to be earnest with God in prayer, that he may be thy Keeper, to keep thee from sin. O beg of God every day, that thou mayst rather die a thousand deaths, than once commit a mortal sin.

LOW-SUNDAY.

On the Sacrament of Baptism.

CONSIDER, first, that we are often put in mind by the church, in the office of this time, of our baptism; to the end we may be

rightly sensible of the dignity to which we have been raised by this sacrament, and of the obligations incumbent upon us in consequence of the same. Baptism is to our souls the gate of life, an introduction to all that is good. It is called by the apostle, Tit. iii. 5, *the laver of regeneration and renovation in the Holy Ghost*; inasmuch as we, who, by our natural birth from the old Adam, were born in sin, children of wrath, slaves of Satan, and liable to an eternal damnation, are *cleansed* from sin, and *sanctified*, in this sacrament, by *the laver of water in the world of life*, Eph. v. 25, in virtue of the blood of Christ, here applied to our souls; and by virtue of the same we receive a new birth, by which we are *regenerated and renewed*, being *born again of water and the Holy Ghost*, St. John iii. 5, to a new and everlasting life; and are made children of the living God, and heirs of his eternal kingdom. See, my soul, and admire the riches of the bounty of thy God, poured out in thy favour in this sacrament. But O! take care never to forfeit these excellent treasures by sin, nor to degenerate from this heavenly birth, by an unworthy conversation.

Consider, secondly, that by baptism we are incorporated in Christ, and made living members of his mystical body, which is his church; we are made Christians, brethren of Christ, and temples of his holy Spirit: we, who before *were not his people, are now the people of God*, 1 Pet. ii. 10; *a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, called out of darkness into the admirable light of Christ*, ver. 9. We are dedicated, sanctified and consecrated to God, by this sacrament, to be irrevocably his, eternally devoted to his divine love. O happy dedication! O my soul, how little hast thou hitherto reflected on these truths! How little hast thou considered the dignity conferred upon thee in baptism! O remember, that what is once dedicated to God, ought to remain always his, and that it is a sacrilege to profane or violate what is once consecrated to him. See, then, how pure and holy thy whole life ought to be, in consequence of thy being dedicated to God in baptism.

Consider, thirdly, that *all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death; for we are buried together with him by baptism unto death; that as Christ is risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life*, Rom. vi. 3, 4. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer*, ver. 6; so that henceforward, in consequence of our baptism, we must *reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord*, ver. 11; and therefore we *must not let sin reign in our mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof*, ver. 12: but as *Christ, rising again from the dead, dieth*

now no more, as death shall no more have dominion over him, ver. 9, so we must now die no more by sin, sin must no more have dominion over us. *For as many of us as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ*, Gal. iii. 27, and ought to live so, as to show forth *the life of Christ, in our mortal flesh*; that we may be able to say with the apostle, *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. Christians, compare your lives with these divine lessons; see what they ought to be, by the obligation of your baptism, and see what they have hitherto been. And now, at least, labour in earnest to begin to live worthily of your calling, and of the glorious name and character of a Christian and of a child of God.

Conclude to bear always in mind both the dignity, to which you have been raised by your baptism, and the obligations of it; and ever to show forth in your lives, that you are Christians indeed, by a constant imitation both of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

MONDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On the Covenant of Baptism.

CONSIDER, first, that in baptism we make a solemn covenant with God, by which he, on his part, adopts us for his children, admits us to all the great and glorious advantages and prerogatives which belong to his children, and gives us an unquestionable right and title to the inheritance of his everlasting kingdom. But, then, all this is upon articles to which we, on our part, bind ourselves by the strongest engagements and vows, which if we violate, in that moment we forfeit both the dignity of children of God, and all the other excellent treasures we received at our baptism, together with all title either to the favour or the kingdom of God. The first of these articles, by which we engage ourselves to God in baptism, is the promise we there make, ever to adhere to him by a firm and constant *faith* of all his divine truths. My soul, hast thou been true to this part of thy covenant? The faith, which thou hast promised, was not a barren, speculative belief, like that of those who *make profession of knowing God, but deny him in their works*, Tit. i.; but a *faith that worketh by charity*, Gal. v. 6; a faith that showeth itself by thy life; *the just man liveth by faith*. Hath thy faith been such?

Consider, secondly, that another article of our baptismal covenant was, to wage a perpetual war with Satan; to renounce him for ever, with all his works of darkness and sin, and all his pomps of worldly pride and vain glory; and to adhere to God, by a strict and perpetual allegiance to his divine majesty. My soul,

what has thy life hitherto been? Hast thou kept this covenant! Has: thou effectually renounced Satan? Hast thou constantly waged war against that usurper, that cruel tyrant, that mortal enemy of thy God? Or hast thou not suffered him to take possession of thee again by sin? Hast thou not been all thy life long his slave? Have not his works, and his pomps, had a greater share in thy affections, than thy duty and allegiance to thy God? O, be confounded at thy past disloyalty, and breach of covenant! O, dread the consequences of this perfidiousness! Repent and amend.

Consider, thirdly, that in our baptism we also engage ourselves to a strict observance of the whole law and the commandments of our heavenly Father, our King, and our God; but more especially of the great commandment of *loving him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with our whole strength*; and of *loving our neighbours as ourselves*. For, inasmuch as he there adopts us for his children and his heirs, in return, he strictly requires of us the obedience due from children to such a Father; with a love of preference of him before all things else, and a perpetual conformity in all things to his blessed will. See now, my soul, upon how many titles thou longest to God, and art bound to love him, and to serve him, with all thy powers. Thou art his by creation: he made thee for himself. Thou art his by redemption: the Son of God has purchased thee with his own blood: Ah, at how dear a rate! Thou art his by dedication, being consecrated to him in baptism. And thou art his by all the articles of the covenant then made with him.

Conclude to observe, henceforward at least, these thy baptismal vows; and, since God claims thy whole being upon so many titles, give thyself to him, without reserve, for time and eternity, by perfect obedience, conformity and love. O beg of him continually, that nothing in life or death may ever be able to separate thee any more from him.

TUESDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On the Ceremonies of Baptism.

CONSIDER, first, that the ancient ceremonies, used by the Catholic church in administering baptism, are very instructive, inasmuch as they show forth both the effects of this sacrament in the soul, and the duties incumbent on them that receive it. The person that is to be baptized is initiated as it were in Christ, by professing his desire of coming to him, by faith, and the observance of the commandments, and then receiving upon his forehead, and upon his breast, the sign of the cross; to signi

fy that the cross and passion of Christ is the source of all our good, that by this sacrament we are dedicated to Christ crucified, and must ever wear his badge both on our forehead and in our heart. Then the catechumen is seasoned, as it were, for baptism, by a grain of salt, solemnly blessed for that purpose; to signify the *salt* of true wisdom, and that Christian prudence and discretion which ought to season all we do, as also the seasoning of divine grace, which is to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. Moreover, to make room for the Spirit of God to come and take possession of the soul, and to fix his dwelling there, the devil is cast out by solemn exorcisms, exsufflations and prayers; and the senses of the soul are opened as it were to God, by the application of the spittle to the ears and nostrils, with the *Epphetha* pronounced in imitation of our Lord, *Mark vii. 34.* O how great must that grace be, for which the soul is prepared by so many mysterious ceremonies!

Consider, secondly, that after this follows the solemn renunciation of Satan, and of all his works, and of all his pomps, as a declaration of an eternal war against this mortal enemy; and then, to give us to understand what kind of arms we are to furnish ourselves with for this warfare, we are anointed with consecrated oil on the breast and between the shoulders; to signify, by this outward unction, the inward unction of the Holy Ghost, and of his fortifying grace, here given to strengthen our *breasts* with heavenly charity, to love and to keep the divine commandments, and to give force to our *shoulders* to take up our cross, and to bear, in a Christian manner, all the labours, difficulties and adversities, of this mortal pilgrimage. To which is added, immediately after baptism, another unction, on the top of the head, with the holy Chrism; to signify our being by baptism incorporated in Christ, the great *Anointed* of the Lord, and being solemnly consecrated to God for ever, by the unction of his grace; as all such things, as are anointed with the holy Chrism, are by the church dedicated to God for ever. Hence all Christians are called by St. Peter a *kingly priesthood*, from partaking in the dignity of Christ, and being anointed, through him, with that holy unction, with which God has of old anointed his priests, prophets, kings, and martyrs.

Consider, thirdly, that, immediately after baptism, we are also clothed with a white linen garment, which the minister of God gives us with these words: *Receive this white garment, which thou shalt carry, without spot or stain, before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayst have eternal life: Amen.* And then, in allusion to the parable of the virgins, that went forth with their lamps to meet the bridegroom, (*St. Matt. xxvi.*) and of the servants, that, with their lights in their hands, were ever

ready to open the door to their Lord, (*St. Luke xii.*) we receive a lighted taper in our hand, with these words: "Receive this burning light: and keep thy baptism, so as to be without reproof. Keep the commandments of God, that, when the Lord shall come to his nuptials, thou mayst meet him, together with all the saints, in the heavenly court, and mayst live with him for ever and ever. Amen." Which ceremonies put us in mind of the strict obligation of leading a holy and innocent life, after baptism; of holding forth the light of faith in our lamps, to the edification of all men; and keeping them ever burning with the oil of charity and good works, till we meet our Lord in his heavenly kingdom.

Conclude, from the consideration of all these mysterious ceremonies used in baptism, to settle in thy soul a great idea both of the dignity and of the obligations of a Christian, and to make it the business of thy life to correspond both with the one and the other. But O, take care, above all things, not to stain that robe of innocence by wilful sin!

WEDNESDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On the Evil of falling from the Grace of Baptism.

CONSIDER, first, that how much the greater the dignity is, to which we are raised in baptism; and how much the more excellent the advantages are which we there receive; together with the inestimable treasures of baptismal innocence, grace, and sanctity; so much the more dismal is that fall, by which we forfeit and lose in a moment, all that dignity, with all those advantages, and treasures. A dreadful fall indeed! by which the poor soul falls from heaven to hell, from God to the devil; from being a child of God, to be a slave of Satan, and of sin, that is worse than Satan; from being the spouse of Christ, to be the prostitute of unclean spirits; from being the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be the habitation of the wicked one. This abominable tyrant, in the very moment she sins, enters in, and takes possession of her; he robs her at once of all her treasures, of virtue, grace, and merit, of all her share in Jesus Christ, of all her right and title to his kingdom, and of all true peace and joy; and, in exchange for all these good things, he offers her nothing but husks of swine, which cannot satisfy her appetite; nothing but mere toys, and fooleries; poisonous baits, which delude her with a momentary sweetness, presently followed with a bitter remorse, and a long train of other evils, ending in death and hell.

Consider, secondly, the folly and madness of the soul that consents to such an exchange. Alas! she exchanges all her

good at present, and all her title to any good hereafter, either in time or eternity, for a mere bubble, a brutish passion, an irksome slavery, an eternal misery! Ah! unhappy sinner, open thy eyes, and see the wretched bargain thou hast made! See how strangely thou hast been deluded; to part with thy God, and all thy good, for something so base, so vile, so empty, so filthy, so short, so foolish, and miserable; accompanied with so much remorse, with so much danger, and with so much falsehood and deceit. Before thy sin, heaven was thine; God himself was thine; but now thou hast parted with thy God; thou hast sold him for a mere nothing; thou art no longer his; thou hast made him thy enemy. Thou hast exchanged heaven for hell; thou standest upon the very brink of a miserable eternity, thou art just ready to fall down that dreadful precipice. Can any folly or madness bear the least comparison with this?

Consider, thirdly, the enormity of the treason which the soul is guilty of, when she falls from the grace of baptism. She renounces her allegiance to her King and God; she rebels against him to follow Satan; she even drives him from his throne, which he held within her; she expels him out of his temple, to make room for his enemy. She sets up an idol in the house of God, which she worships in contempt of the living God. She violates all her solemn vows; she sacrilegiously profanes the temple consecrated to God; she breaks his holy covenant; she treads under foot the precious blood of his Son; and, as much as lies in her, she crucifies him again. O my soul, hast thou had no share in all this guilt? Alas! how early didst thou fall from thy baptismal grace, into the bottomless pit of sin and misery! How quickly didst thou exchange thy God for Satan! Thou wast strictly bound, in consequence of thy creation, thy redemption, thy baptismal dedication, and the covenant then made in thy name, to turn thyself to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing him, and to consecrate thy whole self to his love and service for evermore; and, instead of this, hast thou not, at thy very first coming to the use of reason, like the rebel angels, turned away from thy God, by running after empty toys and lying follies preferably to him, and thinking but little or nothing of him?

Conclude, if thy conscience charge thee with this guilt, to bewail, for the whole remainder of thy life, the loss thou hast sustained, the misery thou hast incurred, the folly and madness, the heinousness and enormity, of this thy fall from God. And, in order to make amends, after the best manner thou art capable of, endeavour now at least, and for every day and hour thou hast yet to come, to make a frequent offering of thy whole self, without reserve, to the love and service of the divine Majesty.

THURSDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On the theological Virtues.

CONSIDER, first, that as God is the sovereign Spirit, and the sovereign Truth, so they that would offer him an acceptable homage must worship him in spirit and truth, (*John iv. 24.*) by joining with the external adoration, praise, prayer and sacrifice, which are offered him in the church of Christ, the eternal homage of their heart, and the pure worship of the three divine virtues, or faith, hope and love. Where these are duly exercised, all is well; there God is, and all good; but where any one of these is wanting, all goes wrong; nothing else can supply that defect. Embrace then, O my soul, these three virtues, with thy whole heart and affection, and they will bring thee to thy God. There is no other way to heaven and a happy eternity, but by faith, hope and charity.

Consider, secondly, that these three virtues are called *theological* and *divine*, from the immediate relation they have to God. They flow from him into our souls, and they take our souls along with them to him. They tend to him as the sovereign Object, with which they are taken up, and upon which they are wholly employed; and they are entirely grounded on him, and on his divine attributes, as their sole motive and foundation. Thus *Faith* believes in him, as the sovereign Truth, and obliges the soul to bow down and to adore him as such, and to give an undoubted assent to all the truths revealed by him, because he is the sovereign Truth, who neither can deceive, nor be deceived. Thus *Hope* puts her whole trust in him, worships him as the inexhaustible Source of all good, and raises the soul to a lively expectation of mercy, grace and salvation from him; grounding herself upon his almighty power, goodness, promises and mercy, and the precious blood of his Son. Thus *Charity*, or divine *Love*, embraces him above all things; worships him, by offering herself and all things else to him; loves him for his own infinite goodness' sake, and all others that are made after his image and likeness, for his sake. Thus these three virtues derive their excellence, which they have above all others, from this immediate relation to the Source of all excellence. O my soul, see thou give them the first place in thy inward house, and continually entertain them there. Make them thy favourites, and they will make thee the favourite of Heaven.

Consider, thirdly, that, to entertain these divine virtues in the soul, we must make frequent acts of them; otherwise they will quickly fade away and die. The soul that does not often exercise her *faith*, by employing her thoughts upon the great truths

of God and eternity, quickly forgets both God and herself, and, by forgetting God and herself, is exposed to all manner of evils. In like manner, where *hope* is not frequently exercised, by the help of prayer and consideration, it quickly degenerates into presumption. And as for *charity*, or *love*, which is the nature of a fire, that is always active, it must needs die away, if it be not maintained, and kept alive, by frequent exercise. As *the just man lives by faith*, according to the Scripture, so he must also live by hope and by charity; so that the whole life of a Christian ought to be continually influenced by these three virtues; which cannot be, without frequent acts of all the three. And this is the shortest and easiest way to all perfection.

Conclude to labour to acquire, and to entertain, these divine virtues, by frequent acts of them; and, in order thereunto, to be diligent in the daily exercise of mental prayer. In this school they are best learnt, improved, and brought to perfection.

FRIDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On Faith.

CONSIDER, first, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Hebr. xi. 6. This virtue is the groundwork and first foundation of all our good. Here we must begin the work of our salvation. But what is faith? Not, as some vainly imagine, a presumptuous confidence of the remission of our sins, and of our justification, and eternal beatitude; excluding that humble fear, with which the Christian is taught to work out his salvation, (*Philip. ii. 12. Rom. xi. 20.*) but a firm belief of all those things that God has any ways revealed or promised; a close adhesion of the soul to all the divine truths, as coming from the eternal Truth; a firm assent, a bowing down of the soul, to all that God has taught, how much soever above our comprehension or understanding. *Faith*, says the apostle, (*Heb. xi. 1.*) is the substance (that is, the strong foundation) of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that are not seen. These good things we hope for; these truths unseen are made, as it were, visible to the soul by faith; she embraces them; she adheres to them, with a strong and undoubted assent; she casts down all proud thoughts and imaginations that raise themselves up against these truths of God; and she directs the whole conduct of her life according to this heavenly rule. This is that divine virtue of faith, to which the apostle gives those great encomiums, *Hebr. xi.* This was it that brought forth so many wonderful fruits in the ancient saints, and made them the friends and favourites of God

Consider, secondly, that the merit of faith, which makes it so acceptable to God, consists in this, that it pulls down the pride of man, by captivating his understanding, and obliging it to believe what it cannot see, to adore what it cannot conceive, and to submit to truths that it can no ways reach to. Man fell originally from God, by a proud affectation of a superior and more excellent knowledge than God was pleased to allow him, and which might make him like to God, *Gen. iii. 5*. And therefore it has pleased his divine Majesty, that the first and most essential step for man to arise from sin, and to return to him, should be the humble assent of divine faith, which makes a sacrifice of what is most dear to our pride, that is, of the liberty we are so fond of, of thinking as we please, in all matters, without restraint or control; and casts down all the powers of the soul, to worship in the dark truths, generally speaking, most incomprehensible to the understanding, most shocking to the will, and most humbling to the whole man.

Consider, thirdly, that the faith which God requires of us, and without which we can neither please him here, nor be happy with him hereafter, must be *Catholic*, that is, it must be *universal*: it must extend itself to all revealed truths, without exception. For, as they all equally come from God, by divine revelation, and are all built upon the same foundation, are all recommended to our belief by the same authority of the church of God, and all supported by those strong testimonies and evidences, by which the Scripture and Christianity itself are supported; it would be calling in question the divine veracity, to dispute the truth of any one article duly proposed by the church; it would be, in effect, the utter loss of all divine faith; because it would be believing by humour, and not by divine authority. Here we may say with St. James, chap. ii. 10, *He that offends in one point, becomes guilty of all*; because he is a rebel against that truth by which they are all delivered. O, never suffer us, dear Lord, to be rebels to thy divine truth, or proudly to oppose our petty reasonings against any part of thy Word, or the authority established by thee.

Conclude to lay this strong foundation of faith, if thou hopest to raise a spiritual building within thee, in which God may choose to dwell, and which may entitle thee to an everlasting dwelling with God. To build upon any other foundation is to build upon sand.

SATURDAY AFTER LOW-SUNDAY.

On the Grounds of Faith.

CONSIDER, first, that divine faith is grounded always upon God's infallible truth; inasmuch as every assent of divine faith is given by the soul, upon the motive of divine revelation: she believes all these truths, because God has taught them, who is the Truth itself, and who cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Whosoever believes upon any other motive, and not upon the testimony of God, may have an opinion indeed of heavenly truths, or a *human faith* concerning them, but falls short of *divine faith*, which wholly builds itself upon God's truth. And therefore *divine faith* carries with it a greater and higher degree of certainty than any human sciences whatsoever; because nothing can be so certain, as that truth itself cannot lie, and that what God has taught must needs be true. See then, my soul, what kind of assent God expects thou shouldst yield to all the truths he has revealed: he expects thou shouldst bow thyself down to them, earnestly embrace them, and firmly adhere to them, as most certain and divine.

Consider, secondly, that, though the only proper *motive* upon which a Christian believes, with divine faith, the truths of religion, be divine *revelation*, or the *word* and *testimony* of God, either contained in the Scriptures, or conveyed down by tradition; yet, as this testimony, or revelation, first delivered to the saints, must come to us recommended by such evidences as may be sufficient to convince us that God has spoken indeed, and has revealed these truths, and does require our assent to them as divine; therefore this sovereign Truth has been pleased to set such marks upon all the truths that come from him, and has stamped them in such manner with his broad seal, as may fully satisfy all sincere seekers and lovers of truth, of their coming indeed from his divine Majesty; so that it would be highly unreasonable for them not to yield to them that assent of faith, which is due to divine truths. Of this nature are all the prophecies, and miracles, and other arguments of credibility, upon which the Christian religion is grounded; together with the innumerable tokens of divine favour, which recommend to us that illustrious society of the Catholic church of Christ, which bears testimony to the divinity of all these truths.

Consider, thirdly, by descending to particulars, some of the many strong and weighty arguments and motives, that give force to the testimony and authority of this church of Christ, considered as an illustrious society, bearing witness to those truths

which she delivers, as having received them from God himself. This great and most ancient society is, and has been for 1700 years, spread far and near through all the world: she was foreshown and foretold long before, by many plain and glorious prophecies: she was established by Christ and his apostles, by signs and wonders, and innumerable miracles, the gift of tongues, and other gifts of the Spirit of God: she was miraculously propagated in a short time, throughout the world, in spite of all the opposition of the whole earth and hell; she has been maintained ever since by the blood of millions of martyrs; and by the saintly and miraculous lives of millions of other servants of God, in all ages, and in all nations: she has been embraced and followed by all the best and wisest of men, and defended by the most godly and learned: she has, in fine, all this time, held forth the light of God to the whole world, by her constantly and fervently preaching all holiness; by the purity and sanctity of her doctrine; and by the efficacy of it, in the conversion of innumerable sinners; in the withdrawing thousands of all conditions from the broad way of the world, to a recluse and penitential life; and in inspiring thousands of her children with a desire of wholly dedicating themselves to divine love: so that she has, at all times, and in all places, produced many eminent saints, whose whole lives have been standing miracles of divine grace, and standing testimonies of the truth of that faith and church which they all professed. These, and many other arguments and motives of credibility, loudly proclaim to all mankind, that the hand of God and his truth is and always has been, with this illustrious society of the church of Christ; and that she is entirely to be credited in the testimony she bears to the divine revelation of all that she proposes as matters of faith.

Conclude with giving thanks to the goodness and all-wise providence of the Almighty, who has not only revealed to his church his heavenly truths, for the healing our souls from all their maladies, and bringing them to the very fountain of health and life, which is with him; but also has given that illustrious authority to her, whom he has made the guardian and depositary of his truths, that, if we are sincere in seeking, we cannot well fail of finding both her and them. But then remember, that the faith of divine truths, how infallible soever, will never bring thee to God, except it be a living faith that *works by charity*, in Jesus Christ, *Gal. v. 6.*

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On a lively Faith.

CONSIDER, first, that the faith to which the word of God gives such high encomiums, and to which it attributes all the great things that have been done by the ancient saints, is not a *dead faith*, like that of the devils, or of those wretched souls, that are spiritually possessed by the devils, and who have little or no sense of divine truths; but a *lively and active faith*, that penetrates into the invisible things of God, and makes them familiar to the soul that sets them continually before her eyes, in their proper light, and gives them a constant influence over every step that is to be taken in her mortal pilgrimage. Such a faith as this is the source of all good to the soul; it keeps her in the remembrance and presence of God; it teaches her to watch diligently, and to pray fervently; it encourages her to hope and to love; it gives her a horror for sin; it completely arms her against all her spiritual enemies, with a shield that is proof against all their *fiery darts*; with the *helmet of salvation*, and with the *sword of the spirit*, (which is *the word and truths of God*,) which puts to flight all the legions of hell, when employed against them, by a lively belief. But where this lively faith is wanting, all goes to wreck and to ruin. *Lord, do thou increase our faith, and make it lively.* O grant us this true heavenly wisdom, and all good things will come to us along with her, and she will effectually bring us to thee.

Consider, secondly, how true it is, that the want of a *lively faith* is the source of all the evils that overrun Christendom. Look into all conditions of Christians, and see how sin and Satan every where reign; and how few there are, in comparison, that dedicate themselves in good earnest to what should be their only business. And whence comes all this? Do not these men all believe there is a God, and an eternity? Do they not all believe that they were made by this God in order to a happy eternity? Do they not believe that there is a heaven and a hell? and that living in mortal sin is the broad road to hell? Do they not believe a judgment to come; and an all-seeing Eye ever upon them; and that is, one day, to decide their cause, according to their works, for life or death everlasting? Surely they believe all this, or they are not Christians. But the misfortune is, that their faith of all these, and such like Christian truths, is lulled asleep, or rather it is quite dead; it has no influence on their lives; it puts little or no restraint upon their passions and lusts. So that, in reality, it is the want of a *lively faith*, that fills the Christian

world with all sorts of crimes, and that continually crowds hell with souls.

Consider, thirdly, that the Christian must come at this *lively faith*, by desiring, seeking, and heartily praying for it. But the most effectual means for arriving at it, is by serious considerations and daily meditations. The great Christian truths relating to God and eternity, are very moving, when they are duly weighed and considered; but they make little or no impression upon worldlings, who live in a perpetual forgetfulness of them. To bring forth a lively faith in the soul, they must take deep root there. But how shall they take deep root, if they are not suffered to sink deep into the soul by consideration? Hence the great difference between the good and the bad Christian, the saint and the sinner, is, that the one thinks, and the other does not think; the one keeps his faith alive, by frequently meditating on divine truths; the other's faith is dead, and his whole soul is laid waste, with utter desolation, because he seldom or never *thinks in his heart*.

Conclude to labour for the acquiring and maintaining this lively faith, by praying well, and living well; but more especially by *thinking well*; for without this, thou wilt have little or no sense of God in thy prayer, and little or no sign of God in thy life.

MONDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On divine Hope.

CONSIDER, first, that hope is also a theological, or divine virtue, and is no less necessary than faith to our eternal salvation. As by faith we believe in God, so by hope we put our whole trust in him. Faith builds itself upon God's truth; hope builds itself upon his power, goodness, promises, and mercy. Faith believes all he teaches, as coming from the sovereign Truth, that cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Hope looks for all good from him, as the inexhausted Source of all good, with an assured confidence, that he will not fail, on his part, of showing mercy, giving grace, and imparting salvation to us, through Jesus Christ, if we fail not, on our part, of applying to him in a proper manner, and performing the conditions he requires of us. This divine virtue produces many excellent fruits: it comforts the soul under all the afflictions of this life; it supports her under all her labours; it encourages her to go on with vigour in her mortal pilgrimage; it raises her above this miserable world, and all its toys, and fixes her heart in heaven. It is styled by the apostle, (Hebr. vi. 19,) *the anchor of the soul, sure and firm*, (not fastened

in the earth, but in heaven,) *entering in, even within the veil*, to the true sanctuary, where our *high priest Jesus Christ is entered for us*, and there fixed in God himself. O happy anchor, which keeps our souls ever steady, in the midst of all the storms we are liable to, in this boisterous sea of the world, and by the help of which they are raised up to God!

Consider, secondly, that divine *hope* keeps the golden mean between the two extremes, of *despair* on the one hand, and *presumption* on the other; both of them reckoned amongst the sins against the Holy Ghost, because of their obstructing, in a particular manner, all the motions and graces of this Divine Spirit; *despair*, by wholly giving up the cause of God and the soul; and *presumption*, by rashly expecting salvation, without complying with the necessary conditions, or using the means for it. *Despair* shuts out the Holy Ghost, by wilfully shutting up the gate of prayer, and excluding all other means of grace; and *presumption*, by setting up a way to heaven opposite to his divine appointments, and in which his grace will have no share. See, my soul, thou fly these two rocks, both of them infinitely injurious to thy God, and destructive of divine hope. Never give thyself up to despondence or despair; seeing thou hast so good a God, so rich in mercies towards all that call upon him, who has redeemed thee with the precious blood of his own Son, and who has promised all good, through him, to all such as properly apply for it. But, then, beware also of the opposite extreme, of presuming upon what he has not promised, or expecting to come to him by walking in a way that leads from him.

Consider, thirdly, that divine *hope*, as well as *faith*, serves very much for the arming the soul for her spiritual warfare, and for the overthrowing of all her enemies; because, by the means of this virtue, we are *strengthened in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, Eph. vi. 10. We exchange our own weakness for his almighty strength and power; and, having our God with us, and for us, we run to the combat set before us with vigour and courage, and fight our way to heaven, in spite not only of flesh and blood, but of all the legions of hell. Yes, my soul, put thy whole trust in God, and thou wilt ever be victorious in all thy conflicts. He never forsakes them that put their whole trust in him. *Divine hope never confoundeth*. It is *the helmet of salvation*, which protects our head against the enemy, by covering it, as it were, with the Divinity itself, whose divine word and honour is engaged to stand by and defend all such as put their trust in him.

Conclude ever to pray and labour for this divine virtue of hope, the sweet companion of thy pilgrimage, and safeguard in all dangers. She will teach thee to keep close to God; and will engage him to keep close to thee.

TUESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On joining a Distrust in ourselves with Confidence in God.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to succeed in the spiritual warfare, an entire distrust in ourselves must go hand in hand with our confidence in God. For if we build in the least upon our own strength, we build upon a sandy bottom, and our house will certainly fall, at the first shock of trial or temptation. The wise man builds his house upon a rock, (*St. Matthew*, vii. 24,) and it is proof against all storms and floods; but the foolish man builds his house upon the sand, without a foundation; and when the rains fall, and the floods rise, and the winds blow, and beat against that house, it presently falls, and great is the fall thereof. He that entirely trusts in God, and not in himself, is a wise man, and builds upon a rock, which can never fail him. But he that puts the least confidence in himself, is a foolish man; because the bottom he builds upon is mere sand, that cannot support the least weight. *Cursed is the man*, saith the prophet, (*Jerem. xvii. 5*,) *that trusteth in man, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*; which curse falls upon all such as trust in the strength of their own resolutions, or in any power or ability of their own. They perfectly drive away from them the grace of God, by their pride and presumption

Consider, secondly, that, as God's honour is engaged to stand by them that put their whole trust in him, and to assist them with his most powerful and effectual graces; so, he is, in a manner, obliged to oppose and resist all such sacrilegious wretches as would rob him of his glory, by ascribing any good to themselves, or expecting any good from themselves, or from their own strength. And are not all they guilty of this sacrilegious presumption, who, in their undertakings or resolutions, build upon themselves, instead of building upon God; or, at least, divide their confidence between themselves and God, and so would make themselves partners at least in his glory? See, my soul, thou never be guilty of any such extravagance and madness. For what greater madness can there be, than for mere weakness and nothing, a miserable, sinful nothing, to presume of itself, and of its own strength! what greater extravagance than for man to put himself in the place of God, or to attribute to himself what can only be the work of God! Good God, deliver us from any such extravagant madness!

Consider, thirdly, that one of the principal reasons, why many Christians, that otherwise seem to be men of good will, make little or no progress in the way of God; and why numbers of others, after repeated confessions, and (as they imagine) strong

purposes of renouncing their sinful habits, still return, like dogs to the vomit, by relapsing into the same sins, and too often die in their sins; is because they trust too much to themselves, and to their own resolutions, and are not sufficiently divested of all self-confidence. Alas! this evil is a mortal poison, which is apt to creep in imperceptibly, and to lie lurking in the midst of the soul, and to corrupt its very vitals. It makes it barren, with regard to the bringing forth any true fruit to God, either in itself, or in others; and fruitful in nothing but in weeds, that are only fit for the fire. My soul, examine well thyself, and see if this unhappy self-confidence have no share in thy enterprises? Are thy resolutions wholly built upon God's grace, to be sued for, and obtained, by humble prayer. Art thou practically and sensibly convinced of thy own nothing, misery and sinfulness; and that thou canst not make one step towards God, but inasmuch as he shall help thee? Does no secret opinion of the strength of thy resolutions make thee rashly expose thyself to temptation? O remember thou hast not half that virtue and love of God, which St. Peter had; and yet, alas! a secret confidence in his own resolutions betrayed him into that grievous crime of denying his Lord.

Conclude so to hope for all good from God, as to be ever mistrustful of thyself; and therefore, as the apostle admonishes, to work out thy salvation with fear and trembling. *Philip. ii. 12.*

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On the Lord's Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that divine hope cannot lie idle in the soul, nor suffer her to be idle; but exercises the soul in prayer, as the great means of obtaining all the goods she hopes for. Now, all the good that we are to hope and pray for is marked out to us by our Lord, and comprised in a very few words, in that excellent prayer which he has taught us, commonly called, *The Lord's Prayer*. Here, in seven short petitions, we pray for all that we are any ways authorized by the Word of God to hope for, for ourselves or for our neighbours, for body or soul, for time or eternity. Here we are taught to make acts of all the most necessary virtues, of faith, hope, love of God, conformity to his blessed will, charity for our neighbours, forgiveness of injuries, and repentance for our sins. Here we daily make a spiritual communion, by aspiring after the bread of life. O the excellence of this heavenly prayer! so short in words, that the meanest capacity may easily learn it; and so copious in its contents, that they might fill whole volumes! And what a pity that the generality of Christians should run

over this admirable prayer with so little sense of what they are saying, and with dispositions so opposite to the import of those sacred petitions !

Consider, secondly, that, in the beginning of this divine prayer, we call God *Our Father*; and we are authorized to call him so by the Son of God himself. Stand astonished, my soul, at this high favour. What greater dignity can any creature be raised to, than to be called, and to be, a child of God; to have him for our Father, who made heaven and earth, and who fills heaven and earth with his infinite majesty ! O my soul, see thou never degenerate from this dignity of a child of God, by behaving thyself unworthily of such a Father. See thou never more make thyself a slave to sin or Satan. O child of heaven, lie no longer grovelling in the mire of the earth. In this prayer we are taught to address ourselves to *our Father, who is in heaven*, to the end that we may reflect whither we are to direct our thoughts, when we pray, and that we may not suffer any attachment to the things of the earth, by love and affections, to hinder them from freely flying up to heaven. My soul, where are thy thoughts in the time of prayer ? Do no irregular affections chain them down to the earth, when they ought to be in heaven ?

Consider, thirdly, what encouragement it ought to be to a Christian, when he goes to his prayers, to remember that he is presenting his petitions to *his Father*, and to such a Father; who has an incomparable love for his children, who encourages them to ask, who teaches them, in this excellent prayer, what they are to ask for; who has frequently promised to grant them what they ask, provided it be good for them; and whose power, riches, bounty, and mercy, are all equally infinite. O let this title of *our Father*, which we give to God in the Lord's prayer, raise our hopes in him; let it inflame our hearts with love for so amiable a Father; let it bespeak a reverential awe, a filial fear of offending such a parent, and an earnest desire of being ever a dutiful and obedient child.

Conclude ever to esteem and love this divine prayer, and daily to use it with a serious attention, and suitable devotion.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

On, *Hallowed be thy name.*

CONSIDER, first, that the first petition of the Lord's prayer is contained in these words: *Hallowed be thy name*; that is, *May thy name be ever blessed and praised, honoured and glorified.* This petition claims the first place in the Lord's prayer as its undoubted right; because the first and principal duty of a Chris-

man is to love his God with his whole heart and soul; and therefore, the first and principal thing he ought to desire and pray for, is the greater honour and glory of God. His love for his God makes him rejoice to think that he is, in himself, infinitely happy and glorious, and will be so for all eternity; and that he is, and will be eternally adored, praised and glorified by all his angels and saints. But then it grieves him to think how little this infinite goodness is known, in this miserable world; how little this great object of his love is loved here below; how little he is honoured, praised and glorified, by these very souls of ours, made by him, and for him, and which can never be happy but in the love and enjoyment of him. And therefore the intent of this petition is to remedy so great an evil, by earnestly begging of the sovereign Good, the Source of all grace and good, that he would glorify his own most sacred name in us, by effectually teaching us to love, serve, and glorify him.

Consider, secondly, that this petition contains an act of divine love, even of perfect charity and benevolence, inasmuch as it expresses the longing desires of the soul for the greater honour, praise, and glory of her Maker, as the only good she can wish or procure, to his infinite majesty. It contains also an act of the most perfect charity for herself; because, in praying that God's name may be glorified in all, and by all, she desires, in the first place, that it may be glorified in herself; and by herself. Now, what greater good can she wish or procure for herself, than that God may be ever glorified in her, and by her; and that her whole being may be ever consecrated to his glory, for time and eternity? And as the most perfect act of charity for our neighbours is that by which we labour to procure their greatest good, and the like good as we desire for ourselves; whilst by this petition, we dedicate our whole selves to the divine glory, we do as much for our neighbours also, by praying that God's name may be sanctified in them all, and by them all, both now and forever. And this love we here exercise, both with regard to ourselves and to our neighbours, is pure and perfect charity; because God is both the beginning and the end of it, inasmuch as we love both ourselves and our neighbours, with relation to the greater glory of God. Thus divine charity, in all its branches, is exercised in this first petition.

Consider, thirdly, that in praying for the *hallowing*, or sanctifying, of the name of God, we pray, in effect, for the sanctification of the whole world; that the knowledge of the true and living God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, may be spread over all the earth; that all nations may serve him, all tongues may praise him, and all hearts may love him; in a word, that all men upon earth may be saints, and may be all happily united in publishing the

glory of God's name, not merely by their words, but much more by their lives. For this is the most perfect way of *sanctifying* the name of God. See then, my soul, the vast extent of this petition, by which we pray for all glory to God, and for all good to man, both for here and hereafter; and let thy heart go along with thy tongue, as often as thou repeatest it.

Conclude to let this earnest desire of the greater glory of God in all things, be ever the predominant passion of thy heart, and he will glorify thee for all eternity.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

Thy kingdom come.

CONSIDER, first, that, in this second petition, we pray for *the kingdom of God*. Now, we find in Holy Writ, that *the kingdom of God* is understood in three different ways. First, of the eternal kingdom of God in heaven. Secondly, of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in his church upon earth. Thirdly, of the mystical kingdom of God, in our souls, according to that of our Saviour (St. Luke, xvii. 21.) *The kingdom of God is within you*. And in this petition, *thy kingdom come*, we pray for the kingdom of God, according to all these three acceptations of his kingdom. See, my soul, how ample and extensive this petition is, and how noble and sublime those things are, which thou art here taught to petition for. Stand astonished that a poor worm of the earth, extracted from nothing, and, which is infinitely more humbling, taken up from the dunghill of sin and corruption, should be authorized to aspire after a kingdom, even an eternal kingdom; to live and reign for endless ages, with the living God. Yet this we are here taught to pray for, with an assurance of being heard, if we pray as we ought, from him who has the disposing of this kingdom. And this is one part of the import of this petition, and contains an act of divine hope.

Consider, secondly, that as the kingdom of God is often taken in the Scriptures to signify that spiritual kingdom, which Christ came to establish upon earth, and his reign in his church, in which he is both King and Priest for ever; so, in this petition, we are also to have an eye upon the propagation and exaltation of this kingdom of Christ, by earnestly begging that the reign of Satan and of sin may have an end; that all infidels may be enlightened by the light of the gospel; that all heresies, schisms, errors, and abuses, may be rooted out; that all vices and scandals may be abolished amongst Christians; and that divine faith, hope, and charity, with all other virtues, may reign both in all the pastors of God's church, and in all the people of God. So that

here is also exercised an act of perfect love, both with relation to God, by desiring that his kingdom, his grace, and his truth, may be victorious over all the world; and with relation to all mankind, by praying that all men may be subdued to that happy kingdom, and may be true and faithful subjects to this great King.

Consider, thirdly, that, as true charity should begin at home, we are particularly to have in view, in this petition, the establishment of the kingdom of God in our own souls; by heartily desiring, and earnestly praying, that God may come to us, and take full possession of our souls by his grace; that he may set up his throne within us, and reign without control, and without rival, in our hearts; that he may suppress all rebellions there, subdue all our passions, and make our whole interior his own, by giving us a strong and perfect love for him. O blessed kingdom of divine love! when wilt thou come to me? when shalt thou be established in my soul? when shall thy sacred flames consume in me all that is any ways displeasing to my God, or that dares to rebel against him?

Conclude to make it thy business to seek, in the first place, this kingdom of God, by procuring his justice in thy soul; and, as he has promised, nothing else shall be wanting to thee. God must first be King in thy soul here, if thou ever hope to arrive at his eternal kingdom hereafter.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

CONSIDER, first, that, in this third petition, the soul embraces, with all her heart, the holy will of God; earnestly desiring and praying that both she herself, and every soul upon earth, may ever be both a faithful servant and a true lover of the divine will, even as the saints and angels are in heaven, who are so absorbed in the love of God, that they have no other will but the will of God. So that this petition, like the two former, contains an act of divine love;—a love of benevolence to God; inasmuch as the soul here desires to give all to God, and to bring both her own will, and all other wills, to him; that all may embrace, bow down, and adore, love, serve, and obey, the sacred will of God, and conform to it in all things;—and a love of the most perfect charity to ourselves and to our neighbours, in desiring and procuring for ourselves and them so great a good as is this perfect conformity to the will of God; and that God's holy will may be ever done, both in us and by us

Consider, secondly, how just it is that we should ever adhere to the holy will of God, and pray with all our hearts, that his holy will may be done in all things. The will of God is always good, is always wise, is always right and equitable, is always beautiful; and therefore we ought always to embrace it, and love it. He perfectly knows what is best, and what is best for us; and if we will leave ourselves in his hands, he will certainly order all things for the best; and therefore it is our wisest way, if we love ourselves, to give ourselves up to his holy will. The will of God is all-powerful, and must take place; and therefore it is a madness to set ourselves against his almighty will; it serves for nothing but to make us miserable. The will of God, in effect, is God himself; and therefore we must ever submit, and obey it; we must always bow down and adore this sacred will.

Consider, thirdly, that the will of God ought to be the Christian's rule in all things. In all our deliberations, whether with regard to temporals or spirituals, we ought first to consult the holy will of God, crying out to him, with the convert St. Paul, (Acts ix. 6,) *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* And this with a sincere desire to know, and a perfect readiness of mind to follow his will, which ever way he is pleased to order or direct; not seeking that his will should bend to ours, but that ours may ever conform to his. And as, in all our doings, we must, to the best of our knowledge and power, follow the will of God; so, in all our sufferings, we must resign and submit ourselves to his blessed will; assuring ourselves, that nothing happens to us in this kind, but by the appointment of heaven, and that all comes from the hand of him that knows what is best, because he is infinitely wise; and sends what is for the best, because he is infinitely good, and good to us.

Conclude ever to recite this third petition of the Lord's prayer, with these dispositions of the love of God, and of his holy will, and of a perfect conformity in all things to his holy will. We read of a servant of God, (Gregory Lopez,) that, for some years, at every breath, repeated this petition, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* O that we could always be in the like happy sentiments!

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Give us this day our daily bread.

CONSIDER, first, that after seeking, in the three first petitions, the greater glory of the name of God, the propagation of his kingdom, and the execution of his will, both in heaven and in earth: we are taught, in the fourth petition, to pray for all neces-

saries for ourselves, both for soul and body, under the name of our *daily bread*, which we here beg for this short day of our mortal life, in order to support us in our pilgrimage, through the wilderness of this world, till we come to our true country, and to the happy day of everlasting light and life, in the heavenly kingdom of our Father. As to the things of this world, we pray for them with more indifference, as for things of lesser consequence, and which, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, our Father has promised to furnish us with, namely, as far as he shall see expedient for us; and we pray for them for *to-day*, being forbidden to be solicitous for them for *to-morrow*. But what we are here more earnestly to pray for, is, the bread which is to support the spiritual life of our souls, namely, the grace of God, the word of God, and the holy sacraments. And this we beg, both for ourselves, and for all the world, from the great Pastor of souls.

Consider, secondly, that the holy fathers expound this petition, as meant in particular of the *bread of life*, which we receive in the blessed eucharist, for the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls. This bread is the sacred body and blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who calls himself *the living bread which came down from heaven*, (St. John vi. 51,) and assures us, that he *that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*; and that *the bread which he will give is his flesh, for the life of the world*, ver. 52. This is here styled our *daily bread*, because given us for this *our day of life*; and given to be our *daily* support, by our partaking of it, either really, or spiritually, every day. O! my soul, ever aspire after this heavenly bread, the source of all grace, and true life. Admire and adore the incomprehensible ways, by which thy God seeks to communicate himself to thee; and see thou correspond with his goodness and love, by running daily to him, and giving thy whole self to him.

Consider, thirdly, that the best way to answer the principal intent of this petition, is by making a spiritual communion (as often as we repeat those words, *give us this day our daily bread*) by a lively faith and hope in Jesus Christ, the true Bread of life; by aspiring after him, by love and desire, and by inviting him to come, and to take full possession of our souls, and to unite them to himself, for time and eternity. Happy those souls that frequently in the day communicate in this manner!

Conclude to pray for thy *daily bread* in such manner as to have ever principally in view this *bread of life*; and to labour to partake of it daily, at least, by a spiritual communion.

MONDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

CONSIDER, first, that, in this fifth petition, our Lord has furnished us with a daily remedy for those many evils into which we daily fall. *We all offend in many things*, (James iii. 2,) and not a day passes, in which we are not contracting fresh debts to our great Master, either by omission, or commission, in thought, word, or deed. Therefore we ought daily to sue for a discharge, and to call for mercy and forgiveness, with a truly penitent heart; and this is the design of this petition of the Lord's prayer; which, when recited with fervour, readily obtains the remission of these daily debts, and reinstates us in the good graces of our Master. These lesser faults, into which we daily fall, if neglected, and suffered to grow, and multiply upon us, are of worse consequence to our souls than we can well imagine. The water that comes into the ship by small chinks, if not daily pumped out, may, in time, increase in such a manner as to sink the vessel. That the like may never happen to our souls, we must be daily repenting for these daily sins, and offering up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, as often as we repeat this petition of the Lord's prayer.

Consider, secondly, that, besides the obligation of daily labouring to procure the discharge of these daily debts, we must see if we have not reason to apprehend a more heavy load of debt, lying upon our souls, on account of our past sins, more especially if, in any part of our life, we have lived in mortal sin. Alas! the load of such debts as these is immense, a sum of ten thousand talents, which we are utterly unable to discharge of ourselves; and whether our repentance has been sufficient to apply to our souls the discharge purchased by the blood of Christ, we cannot tell. And, therefore, our best security is to be always repenting for our past sins; and to beg daily of God to forgive us all the sins of our youth, and our ignorances; to cleanse us from our hidden sins; and to be merciful to us, with regard to the sins we may have any ways occasioned in others. And with this penitential spirit for all our past sins, known or unknown, we ought to recite this petition of the Lord's prayer; and, with it, daily present ourselves, like Magdalen, at the feet of our Redeemer, imploring his mercy, both for ourselves and for all poor sinners.

Consider, thirdly, that, in this petition, we beg of God to *forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us*; which words were added by our Lord, to put us in mind

that we must not look for forgiveness from God, of the offences we commit against him, if we do not forgive, from our hearts, the offences which our neighbours commit against us. See, Christians, how much our Lord takes to heart our forgiving one another, and loving our very enemies; since, not content with frequently inculcating this duty on all other occasions, he was pleased to insert it in the very prayer he would have us daily to say, to the end we might never forget it. Let us, then, examine well our dispositions in this regard; and lay aside all rancour and animosity against our neighbours, when we go to sue for mercy from God; otherwise we shall never obtain the mercy we ask.

Conclude to take occasion, from this petition of the Lord's prayer, to practise daily these three lessons; first, of a hearty repentance for thy daily sins; secondly, of daily renewing thy sorrow and contrition for thy past offences; and lastly, of daily exercising charity and mercy, in forgiving from thy heart all that have offended thee.

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Lead us not into temptation.

CONSIDER, first, that, after begging of our Lord, in the foregoing petition, the forgiveness of the sins we have already committed, we here beg of him to preserve us from relapsing into any of our former offences, or being ever any more guilty of wilful sin. The true penitent abhors the monster sin, beyond all other evils whatsoever; and therefore he is not content with seeking the remission of all his offences, but is ever solicitous to avoid the like evils for the time to come; and, therefore, he flies the occasions of them; seeks to keep out of all dangerous temptations; and, being sensible of his own weakness, he is earnest in prayer, to beg of God to stand by him, and to help him to overcome all the enemies of his soul, and rather to let him die a thousand deaths, than to commit any one wilful sin. And this is the principal meaning of this petition, *Lead us not into temptation*; which ought to be recited by all Christians, with these dispositions of a great horror of sin, and a most earnest desire to be ever preserved from it.

Consider, secondly, in what sense we here beg of God *not to lead us into temptation*; since, as St. James says, (chap. i. 13.) *God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempteth no man: viz. so as to incite, allure, or provoke to sin.* No, certainly: such temptations as these cannot be from God, who is essentially good, and ever abhors sin; but they are from the world, the flesh, and the devil: yet, as these never have power to tempt us but with

God's permission, nor strength to overcome us, but when we neglect to apply, in a proper manner, to God for his grace; therefore we make use of this expression, to signify our total dependence on God; and to beg that he would not give the enemy any power over us, nor suffer us to give ourselves up to him. Moreover, as those trials, which God often sends for the exercise of our virtue, and for the proof of our fidelity, are also in Scripture called *temptations*,—such as afflictions, crosses, pains, &c., of which God is certainly the Author and Distributer,—we beg of him by these words, *Lead us not into temptation*, that, with relation to all such trials as these, he would ever have regard to our weakness, and never lay upon us any load above our strength.

Consider, thirdly, with regard to temptations, that they are no sins to us, if we give no way to them, nor bring them upon us by our own fault; so far from it, that they are often the occasions of very great good to our souls; by obliging us to watch and to pray the more, from the sense of our danger; by keeping us humble; and by affording us the opportunity of gaining as many victories, and consequently as many glorious crowns for all eternity, as we have had conflicts with the enemy, by occasion of temptations. Wherefore it is not the meaning of this petition, to pray that we may never have any temptation, (for this might not be expedient for us,) but that we may never yield to temptation. But as for the seeking, or desiring temptations, it would be too great a rashness to weak souls; and more especially with regard to temptations against purity, it would be a crime to affect them, or, without necessity, to expose one's self to them. Christians, let us learn to arm ourselves for this warfare with the armour of the fear of God and a lively faith; let us stand upon our guard by watching and praying; let us readily and heartily resist the first attacks of the enemy: let us bear with patience and humility the labour and trouble of the conflict, but ever reject with horror the criminal satisfaction proposed by the enemy.

Conclude to observe these rules with regard to temptations; to join always an humble distrust in thyself, with a firm confidence in God; and ever to have recourse to him, in all thy conflicts, by humble and fervent prayer; and thou shalt always come off with victory.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

Deliver us from evil.

CONSIDER, first, that this petition is near akin to the two foregoing petitions; inasmuch as the main drift of the former of

them was to deliver us from the *evil* of our past sins, and of the latter to keep us from the *evil* of sin for the time to come; and this, in general, begs to be delivered from *all evil*, past, present, or to come. Now, of all these evils, sin is not only the greatest, but is, in some sense, the only thing that deserves to be called evil; because all other things, that we call evils, are either the consequences of sin, or cease to be real evils, when not accompanied with sin. So that the main business of this petition is, to beg of God that he would deliver us from all sin, past, present, or to come; from all the consequences of sin, and the punishments which our sins have deserved; from the slavery of our passions and sinful habits; and from the tyranny and possession of the evil one, who has the dominion over all wilful sinners. Good God, for thy mercy sake, and through the precious blood of thy Son, our Redeemer, deliver us from all these dreadful evils.

Consider, secondly, by descending into particulars, all that scene of numberless evils, to which we are liable, on account of sin, in this miserable world, and from which we here pray to be delivered by the mercy of God; such as all public calamities, wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, tempests, inundations, &c., besides a multitude of private evils, to which each particular person is so frequently exposed; then all spiritual evils, which are much more deplorable, whether public or private—heresies, schisms, persecutions of the church, errors, abuses, oppressions of the poor, sacrileges, scandals, national vices, and the general reign of Satan and sin in the thoughts, words, and actions of the children of this world; and, with regard to the future, the dreadful evil of unprovided death and final impenitence, the dismal sufferings of another world, the judgment and sentence of eternal damnation, and the second death of a miserable eternity. And do not so many and such lamentable evils well deserve that we should continually pray, that God in his mercy would deliver us all from having any share in them?

Consider, thirdly, as to thyself in particular, how many and how great evils thou hast reason to apprehend, to be either actually upon thee, or to threaten thee on every side. Reflect on the multitude of thy past and present sins, infinitely more numerous and more enormous than thou imaginest; the uncertainty of the forgiveness of them, because of the uncertainty, the weakness, and inconstancy of thy repentance; the dreadful debt of punishment due to thy sins, and how little thou hast done towards the discharge of it; the vices and passions thou art daily subject to; the many enemies that encompass thee, and are continually laying snares for thy soul; the corruption of thy own heart, the blindness of thy understanding, thy weakness in all

that is good, and the violence of thy concupiscence, and inclinations to evil. Then see what thou hast to apprehend of evil for the future, from the judgments of God, ever hanging over the head of impenitent sinners; from the malice and subtilty of thy enemies, ever intent upon thy ruin; and the hold thou givest them by thy passions, and that unhappy self-love which keeps a continual correspondence with them; lastly, from that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are the portion of all who, by occasion of mortal sin unrepented of, fall into the hands of the living God; and thou wilt be convinced of the necessity of thy continually crying out to thy only Redeemer, *Deliver us from evil. Amen.*

Conclude to embrace humble and fervent prayer, as the sovereign means to be delivered from all evils, past, present, or to come; and as these evils continually threaten thee, so let thy prayer also be in some measure continual.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On Morning Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that every servant of God ought to begin the day with the worship of God, and to *give his heart*, as the wise man says, (Eccles. xxxix. 6,) *to resort early to the Lord that made him*; and to pour forth his *prayer in the sight of the Most High*. The manna of heaven melted away, and was lost, if the people of God did not get up before the sun to gather it; *that it might be known to all men*, says Solomon, (Wisdom xvi. 28,) *that we must prevent the sun to bless God, and worship him at the dawning of the light*. *O God my God*, says the royal prophet, (Psalm lxii.) *to thee do I watch at break of day*. My soul, see thou never neglect this morning worship of thy God. Let not the devil run away with thy first thoughts; but give them to God, by a pure and perfect offering of thy whole self to his love and service, for that day, and for all eternity; and whilst thou art rising and dressing thyself, keep thyself in his company, and speak to him.

Consider, secondly, what are the particular acts of virtue and religion, that ought to be the ingredients of thy morning prayer, viz. First, an act of adoration of the infinite majesty of God, and of homage to him; by bowing down both body and soul to worship him with all thy powers, as thy first Beginning, and thy last End; and to acknowledge his absolute sovereignty, and thy total dependence on him. Secondly, an act of *thanksgiving* for all his benefits in general, and in particular to thee and to all the world; for creation, preservation, redemption, vocation to

the true faith, &c., as also for his eternal love, and, in consequence of this love, his bringing thee to the beginning of this new day, in order to bring thee forward to the happy day of eternity. Thirdly, an act of contrition for all thy past ingratitude, and for all thy sins, with a sincere resolution of renouncing them all for the future. Fourthly, an offering of all thy thoughts, words, and actions of the day, to the honour and glory of God; and of thy whole soul, to be employed in loving and serving him. Fifthly, an humble and fervent supplication, to beg the grace of God, and his blessing, for thyself and for the whole church; that he would keep all from sin, and teach all effectually to love him, and serve him for ever. Sixthly, conclude always with acts of faith, hope, and charity; and recommend thyself to the prayers and protection of the blessed Virgin, of thy good Angel, and of all the Angels, and glorified Saints.

Consider, thirdly, that thou must also remember, in thy morning exercise, to declare war against thy customary failings and sins; but more especially against thy predominant passion, which is the most dangerous of all thy enemies. This is that daily warfare, in which all, of necessity, must be engaged, who have a mind to save their souls: we must all fight, and fight continually, against our vices and passions, or they will carry us to hell. Now, this it is that obliges us to renew every morning our good resolutions, yet without trusting at all in ourselves; and to arm, and prepare ourselves beforehand for these conflicts, by forecasting the occasions and temptations we are like to meet with in the day, and by concluding upon the measures proper to be taken, in order to overcome them, either by flight or fight; but principally, by fervent prayer to our Lord, to help us in the combat, and to grant us the victory.

Conclude to be ever diligent in this morning exercise. A good beginning of the day is a great matter. He will have the whole day, to whom thou givest the beginning of it.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On Evening Prayer.

CONSIDER, first, that as God is our *first Beginning*, forasmuch as we are made *by* him; so is he also our *last End*, because we are made *for* him; and, therefore, as we ought to *begin* the day with him, by morning prayer; so we ought to *end* the day in his company, by evening prayer. Morning and evening prayer are like the two daily meals of the soul, that ought not, upon any account, to be omitted; lest the soul should languish and grow sick, for want of her daily food; and if, upon any occasion, we

are hindered from taking these meals, at their usual times, we ought to observe what we practise with regard to our bodily meals, that is, we must procure to take them afterwards, at the first opportunity. Moreover, as we make it our care, that our families, and such as are under our charge, should not want their daily corporal sustenance; so we ought much more to make it our care, that their souls may not starve, for want of our assembling them to prayer, or seeing that they are regular in this daily exercise.

Consider, secondly, that one of the principal businesses of the evening exercise, is the daily examination of conscience, which may be made in this manner:—First, place thyself in the presence of God; bow thyself down, and adore him, and give him thanks for all he has done that day for thee and for the whole world. Secondly, earnestly beg his light and grace, that thou mayest discover all thy sins, and be heartily sorry for them. Thirdly, endeavour to call to mind how thou hast spent the day, from morning till night; what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself well, both of the common duties of a Christian, and of the particular duties of thy station or calling; and especially how thou hast behaved thyself with regard to thy customary failings, and thy predominant passion. Fourthly, endeavour to be heartily sorry for all the sins of the day, and for all the sins of thy whole life, known or unknown: go in spirit to the feet of Christ, to make an humble confession of them to him, and implore his mercy. Fifthly, resolve upon a serious and thorough amendment for the future: determine to begin, from that very hour, a new life, and think upon the means of accomplishing it. O, how happy are those souls, that labour in this manner, every night, to wash away their sins with penitential tears, and that never venture to lie down to rest under the guilt of sin! unhappy they, who, for want of this precaution, expose themselves, every night, to the evident danger of dying in their sins, and even of finding themselves in hell before morning.

Consider, thirdly, that in order to end the day well, we ought every night to endeavour to put ourselves, as much as possible, in the condition in which we should be glad to be found at the hour of our death. And therefore, besides offering up to God, every night, the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart for all the sins of our life, the Christian should also think seriously of his last end, and dispose himself for it by acts of a lively faith, and of an entire confidence in his Redeemer; by a perfect oblation and resignation of himself to the holy will of God; and by aspiring to an eternal union with him; and, in the mean time, hiding himself, with great affection, in the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, and there composing himself to rest. See, my soul, thou never forget this practice.

Conclude never to neglect any part of this evening exercise, and to see that it be not neglected by any under thy care. A religious performance of this duty will be a great means to secure to thy soul a happy death.

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY.

On praying always.

CONSIDER, first, that we are not only to address ourselves to God by prayer, in the morning and in the evening; but we are also called upon in the word of God, *to pray always*, (St. Luke xviii. 1;) *to pray without ceasing*, (1 Thes. v. 17;) and to *seek the face of the Lord evermore*, (Psalm civ. 4.) The soul that truly loves her God, will never bear to stay all the day long, without often thinking of him and speaking to him; seeing he has both his eye and his heart always upon her. Love ever seeks the company and conversation of its beloved. Now, it is by the means of prayer, that we are introduced into the company and conversation of our great Lover; and we quickly lose both his love and him, if we pass whole days in the forgetfulness of him; besides other dangers, that continually threaten us, when we do not run under the wings of God, and keep close to him by continual prayer. So that, if we love either God or ourselves, we must frequently in the day have recourse to prayer. It is the very breathing and life of the soul; and therefore, to think to confine it to the morning or evening only, is to expose the soul to the danger of perishing for want of breath.

Consider, secondly, that the practice of this continual prayer does not require that we should be always upon our knees, nor yet that we should always have a prayer-book in our hands, or be always reciting a form of prayer; nor does it any ways break in upon our other employments, so as to be any hindrance to them; no, not even to our common conversation or recreations: but it only consists in a certain sense and conviction of the presence of God, and in frequent conversions of the soul to him. Thus, for example, in the beginning of every action, the soul should turn to her God, (who is always near her, and in the very midst of her,) by offering up to his honour and glory what she is going to do, and, at the same time, offering her whole self to him. Thus, in the midst of all her actions and conversations, she should frequently tend to him, by aspirations or breathings of love; and call him to her assistance, by short ejaculatory prayers. This way of proceeding will sanctify all her common performances, and make them all partake both of the nature and of the benefit of prayer.

Consider, thirdly, how diligent the ancient patriarchs were in this exercise of *praying always*; since the Scripture says, *they walked with God, and in his sight*; which implies their ever thinking of him, and having a constant attention to please him. The like was the practice of the fathers of the desert, and of many other saints, who, even whilst their hands were at work, took care to have their hearts on God. Christians, let us imitate these servants of God; and, since no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation, can exclude the divine immensity, which fills heaven and earth; nor hinder God from being so near to us, that our very souls are not more present to our bodies, which they animate, than God is to the very centre of our souls; let no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation, divert us from often thinking of him, and often speaking to him in our hearts. No conversation can be so honourable, so profitable, or so agreeable, as this which we hold in the closet of our souls with our Sovereign Good.

Conclude to aim, with all thy power, at this inward conversation with God, in the midst of all thy external occupations. In order to this, keep thy mind pure from impertinent amusements, and roving imaginations; and thy heart from all disorderly ties and affections to creatures; and God will fill both thy mind and thy heart, and will effectually teach thee to pray always.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

On the great Commandment of divine Love.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the divine law, quoted Mark xii. 30; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength.* This, says our Lord, *is the greatest, and the first commandment,* Matt. xxii. 39. Yes, my soul, it is the *greatest* of all the commandments of God, in his divine eyes, and that which he takes most of all to heart, since he has made our souls to his own image and likeness, to this very end, that we should love him, and should dedicate our whole being to his divine love, for all the time of our pilgrimage here upon earth; that so we might come to be happily united to him, in an eternal band of love, in his heavenly kingdom. O the excellent dignity of this divine commandment, which tends directly and immediately to raise our souls above this earth, and above the heavens of heavens, and the whole created universe, and to bring them to the God that made heaven and earth, and to unite them to him, by a most perfect love, both for time and eternity!

Consider, secondly, the incomprehensible goodness of God, manifested to us in this commandment, in his insisting so much upon our loving him, and upon our tending with all our power to a union with him. Is, then, our love of any consequence to him? Or can we add any thing to his happiness by loving him? Or will he lose any thing, if we refuse him our love? And what is there in us, poor little ants, if compared to his infinite majesty, that he should concern himself whether we love him or no? Would it not be an unspeakable favour to us, that he should even suffer us, considering who he is, and who we are, to aspire so high as to pretend to his love? But that this great God should make it a commandment, and the very first and principal of all his commandments, that we should love him, and love him with our whole heart; that he should insist upon our entering into this strict league of eternal friendship with him, promising all happiness for eternity upon our compliance, and threatening us with most dreadful and eternal evils if we love him not; it is this that shows forth, and sets in so wonderful a light, the goodness of our God, and his love for us; that we should be not only most wretched, insensible, and ungrateful beyond expression, but even, in some sense, worse than devils, if we should refuse him our love.

Consider, thirdly, the excellence of this commandment of divine love, with regard to the fruits it brings to our souls. Divine Love is the queen of virtues; she never comes alone, but brings all other virtues along with her; she gives life to them all; even faith and hope are dead, when she is not in their company. She brings with her the remission of all our sins; she makes us the friends and favourites of the Most High; she makes us his children, his spouses, his temples; she is *the bond of all perfection*. O my soul, how glorious it is, how happy, how delightful, to be thus united to thy God by a strict bond of friendship and love! O embrace, then, with all thy powers, this great commandment, which, by obliging thee to give thy whole self up to the love of God, brings down thy God, with all his treasures, to thee.

Conclude to make it henceforward the business of thy life, to learn this great lesson of loving God; and as no one but God himself can effectually teach thee so sublime and so divine a science, continually beg of him to introduce thee into his school which he holds in thy interior, and there to be thy Master.

MONDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving the Lord our God above all Things.

CONSIDER, first, the import of these words—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*; and thou shalt find in them innumerable motives to dedicate thyself to divine love. For who is this thou art here commanded to love? THE LORD! that is, the eternal, self-existent, incomprehensible, and infinite Being of beings, who alone properly is, and who is being itself. For all this is implied in that ineffable name, which is here rendered, THE LORD. *I am, who am, saith he*, Exod. iii. 14. *And he who is, hath sent me to you.* THE LORD! that is, the Creator and absolute Master of the whole universe, of all things, visible and invisible: infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely beautiful; the one true sovereign Good; infinite in all perfections! Goodness, Beauty, Perfection and Truth itself; compared with whom all things else are just nothing at all. See, my soul, how many motives thou hast to love this great Lord, who comprises in himself all that is lovely and charming, who is the immense Ocean of all good.

Consider, secondly, the motives of divine love implied in those words, THY GOD; forasmuch as they signify that this Lord of infinite majesty is also pleased to be thine. Yes, he is *thy God*: he is *thy* first Beginning, and *thy* last End: he is *thy* Maker, who has made thee for himself, and who many ways daily communicates himself to thee: he is *thy* Father, *thy* Spouse, *thy* Pastor, *thy* Keeper, *thy* constant Benefactor, *thy* ever faithful Friend, *thy* ancient and most disinterested Lover, *thy* sovereign Good, and the Source of all *thy* good, for time and eternity. And whereas thou wast fallen from him, and from his love, by sin, he has been pleased to give himself to thee, in a manner still more endearing, by sending his own Son to be *thy* Saviour and Redeemer. O reflect, my soul, on what the Son of God has done and has suffered for the love of thee. From the first moment of his conception, thou wast always in his heart. His love for thee brought him down from his heavenly throne, to take flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin; his love for thee made him offer up his flesh and blood on the altar of the cross, a sacrifice for thy sins; his love for thee made him bequeath thee this same flesh and blood, in an admirable sacrament, to unite thee to himself for eternity. And shall not all this oblige thee to love him, and to love him with thy whole heart?

Consider, thirdly, that this love which we owe to our God, both as infinitely good in himself, and as infinitely good to us,

must be a love of preference ; that is, we must love him above all other things whatsoever. For he that loves his worldly honour, his interest, his pleasure, his own will, the gratifying his humours and passions, or the pleasing of any person, how near or dear soever, more than his God, is not worthy of God ; but is guilty of high treason against him, and of a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. And not only he that prefers any creature before God, but he that even offers to put himself, his own life, his dearest affections, or any other thing created, or even the whole creation, in balance with his God, so as to love them as much as God, is in like manner unworthy of God, and offers him the greatest outrage imaginable ; because the whole universe, compared with God, is a mere nothing, and therefore cannot, without an intolerable injury, be put in balance with him. Ah ! what must I then think of myself, when I have so often preferred empty toys, mere vanities, and lying follies, before the living God ?

Conclude, henceforward at least, to love the Lord thy God above all things, and nothing else with him, but what thou lovest for his sake, and with relation to him. Cry out with St. Michael, *Quis ut Deus ?* Who is like to God ? And who but he deserves our heart ?

TUESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Heart.

CONSIDER, first, that the first sacrifice which divine love calls for, by this great commandment, is that of our *heart*. My son, *give me thy heart*, says the Wisdom of God, *Prov. xxiii. 26*. This sacrifice must be of the whole heart, and in the nature of a *holocaust*; that is, of a sacrifice, in which the *whole* victim is given to God, without reserve ; being first slain, and then laid upon the altar of God, and there consumed with fire, even with that fire which originally came from heaven, (*Levit. ix. 24*), and which was commanded to be kept always burning upon God's altar. Wherefore, in this mystical sacrifice of love, this heart of ours, in order to be made a holocaust, should also first be slain,—that is, should first die to itself, and to all its disorderly affections, by mortification and self-denial, and so be laid on God's altar, to be wholly dedicated and consecrated to him, and to evaporate, as it were, to him, in the flames of divine love, which is the true fire that comes down from heaven, to carry us up thither, and which ought always to be kept burning in the mystical temple of God in our souls.

Consider, secondly, how just, how reasonable, how necessary it is, that we should love our God with our *whole heart*; so as to give no part of it away from him, since it belongs wholly to him by all manner of titles. He made our heart for himself, to be the eternal seat, and the living temple of his love; and he has given it a certain appetite after him, together with an immense capacity of love, which nothing less than God can fill or satisfy. He has shed his own most precious blood, to purchase our heart, to cleanse it for himself, and to fill it with his love. It has been solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to him, at our baptism. He has sent his divine Spirit to take possession of it, to make it his kingdom, and to establish his throne in it. It must be, then, a most crying injustice, if we offer to alienate any part of our heart from him, who claims it all, upon so many titles. O Christians, let us give him what is his, without reserve; let us divert no part of this small heart of ours away from the immense Lord of heaven and earth: it would be a sacrilege to attempt it.

Consider, thirdly, that the love of God will not admit of a divided heart. He will not suffer a rival in his kingdom, a partner in his throne, or an idol in his temple. Our God is a jealous God, and therefore, if we follow any other lovers, we lose his love, and drive him away from us. Alas! my soul, who is this that thou wouldst associate with God in thy heart? Is it thy worldly pride, thy carnal affections, thy sensual inclinations? Assure thyself his love cannot endure such company as this. Or is it some favourite creature, which thou art unwilling to dislodge from the place it has occupied in thy heart? Ah! the bed is too narrow; it will not hold two; thou must either part with the creature or the Creator. He loves God too little, who loves any thing else with him, which he does not love in him, for his sake, and with subordination to the love of him.

Conclude to love thy friend in God, and thy enemy for God's sake; and all such things as thou mayst lawfully love, according to the measure and rule prescribed by divine love; and thus no love of the creature will take off any part of thy heart from the love of the Creator; thus thou shalt *love him with thy whole heart*.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that we are not only to love God with our *whole heart*, that is, with our whole affection, but also with our *whole soul*, that is, by applying and employing all the powers of our

soul in his divine love and service; because he made these souls of ours after his own image and likeness, for this very end, that they might be wholly dedicated to his love, and might turn all their powers and faculties towards him, to serve and glorify him for ever. Bring then, my soul, bring all thy powers to thy God, and oblige them all to bow down to this divine law of love, and ardently to embrace its happy service, which will ennoble and perfect them all. O, let thy understanding be ever directed by its bright light into the ways of truth. The light of divine love will expel the dark mists raised by thy passions and self-love, which so often over-cloud thee, and make thee go astray. Let thy memory be ever recollected by divine love. Let all thy words and actions, let all thy desires, be ever guided and actuated by this heavenly charity. O blessed kingdom of divine love, when wilt thou come to me and take full possession of my *whole soul!*

Consider, secondly, that as the will is that ruling power of the soul, which is the proper seat of love, so it is the will, amongst all the powers of the soul, that ought, in a special manner, to be dedicated and consecrated to *divine love*. The will ever has *good* for the object of her love, so as not to be able to love or embrace any thing but under the form, or appearance at least, of *good*. Now God alone is the true and sovereign Good; and he alone can satisfy the inbred appetite she has for good. In the love of him alone she finds herself happy; all other loves do but impose upon her, and deceive her with empty, airy appearances. Therefore, for his sake, and because he is infinitely *good in himself*; as well as for her own sake, and because he is *her only true and sovereign Good*; she ought to give her whole self up to his heavenly love. O how happy is that will, that is thus wholly dedicated to the love of God! How happy is that will, that is the eternal servant of divine love, and makes a constant sacrifice of her whole liberty and property to the all-wise, all-powerful, and ever-loving will of God!

Consider, thirdly, how the great Pattern of divine love, Jesus Christ our Saviour, began the work of our redemption by devoting his whole will, without reserve, and with all the ardour of his soul, to do and to love the blessed will of his Father. Hear how he expresses himself, Psalm xxxix. 8, 9; *Then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* This will of his Father was, during his whole life, the continual object of his love, the subject of all his thoughts, the motive of all his words and actions; he loved it so that it was his very food; he laid down his life for the love of it. And didst not thou also, my soul, come into this world to do

and to love the will of God? Is not thy will given thee for the end? Hast thou any other business here? Is it not also written of thee in the book of life, that thou shouldst do the will of God? and canst thou say with thy Saviour, *O my God, It is what I have willed and desired in the midst of my heart!* O take heed, lest, if thy will fall from this love of the will of God, and of his holy law, thy name be blotted out of the *book of life*, which, in effect, is the same as the *book of love*.

Conclude to dedicate thy whole soul, with all its powers, to the love of God, and especially to make over thy whole will to him, without reserve. This is a devotion the most solid and the most secure; the most agreeable to God, and the most advantageous to thyself.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Mind.

CONSIDER, first, that our *whole mind* ought also to be consecrated to divine love, according to the import of that greatest and first commandment of our heavenly Lover. Now, the mind is the seat of thought, and consequently of consideration, meditation, and recollection in God. Wherefore, to love God with our whole mind, is to have our thoughts ever turned towards him; to consider him; to meditate daily upon him and his truths, and upon all that relates to him, or helps to bring the soul to him; to walk always in his presence; and to keep ourselves recollected in the remembrance of him. This love of the *whole mind* was required of all the servants of God, even in the old law; and much more in the new, which is the law of love. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.* said he, (Deut. vi.) *and these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising: and thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them on the doors of thy house.* See, my soul, how strongly thy God inculcates the perpetual remembrance of him and of his divine law, but more especially of the great commandment of love, which is the fulfilling of the whole law. See how he expects that thy *whole mind* should be ever full of him.

Consider, secondly, how reasonable and just it is, that we should love our God with our whole mind, by ever remembering and thinking on him. He always remembers us, and thinks on us; his eye is always upon us; from all eternity, we have ever had a place in his eternal *mind*, in which he has cherished us

with infinite love : and shall we refuse him the place he calls for in our mind, or put him off with any thing less than our *whole mind*? Alas! what worthless things are we! How unworthy that this great God should give us any place in his thoughts, or concern himself at all about us! But O my soul, let us never be so wretched, so ungrateful, so wicked, (since he is pleased to show so much love to us,) as to suffer any more every empty toy, every idle, roving imagination, every vain amusement, to take place of him in our mind, and banish him from our thoughts. We cannot be without thinking of something all the day long ; and what can we think of so noble, so desirable, so lovely, so charming, so profitable, so delightful, as our God? What are we then doing, when we let whole days pass in thinking of every thing else but him? Surely this can never be loving him with our whole mind, or indeed loving him at all ; for where the treasure is we love, there both our heart and mind will be.

Consider, thirdly, the great advantages of ever keeping God in our mind, by a recollection of thought and a remembrance of his presence. It is a most powerful restraint to keep us from all sin ; it is a perpetual spur to make us run on in the way of virtue ; it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts, comfort in our afflictions, encouragement in our labours, defence against all our enemies, protection in all dangers ; it enlivens our faith, animates our hope, gives a continual increase to divine charity, and brings us, in some measure, into heaven, whilst we are here living upon earth, by ever keeping us in the company of God, invested, as it were, with him on all sides, and employed about him, by contemplation and love. O how true it is, that, as dissipation of thought, and forgetfulness of God, is the source of all our evils, so recollection of the mind in God is the source of all our good! O how happy, then, are those souls that always seek in this manner the face of the Lord, and turn their whole mind to him and his love!

Conclude to banish from thee all impertinent thoughts and vain amusements, all roving imaginations and useless schemes, which have too often hitherto occupied thy mind, and shut out thy God ; and then thy Beloved will quickly return to thee, and make thy soul his paradise.

FRIDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On loving God with our whole Strength.

CONSIDER, first, that the great precept of divine love claims also our whole strength : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*

with thy whole strength. As then, by virtue of the commandment of loving God with our *whole mind*, we are bound to give him our *thoughts*; so, by being commanded to love him with our *whole strength*, we are to give him also our *words* and *actions*. We ourselves are his, and that by many titles; we are made by him alone, and for him alone; and therefore, as the whole fund is his, so also ought the whole produce; as the tree is his, so ought all the fruit to grow for him; it would be a crying injustice to alienate it from him. Wherefore, the love of God is not only to reside in our *heart*, to reign in all the powers of our soul, and to fill our *mind*, but ought also to show itself in our whole conversation, and to regulate all our words and actions, so as to give to each one of them its due perfection. And this is loving God with our *whole strength*.

Consider, secondly, that the true love of God is like a fire which cannot lie idle; neither does it content itself with affection only; it always proceeds to *effects*. It works great things, when occasion and opportunity serve; and, when these are wanting, it will do wonders at least, by the perfection it will give even to the least and most ordinary of our actions. This constant aiming at perfection, in our daily and ordinary actions, is one of the most important lessons of a spiritual life, and is the true practice of loving God with our *whole strength*. Now this perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity and perfection of the intention from which these actions flow. The intention is *pure*, when it aims at God alone; it is *perfect*, when it does all for the love of God, and for the greater glory of God. *Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31. The meanest action in life is ennobled by this intention; it becomes even an act of divine love, and a new step to unite the soul with God. So that the readiest way to come to love God with all our strength, is to direct the whole body of our common actions to him by the pure and perfect intention of ever doing his holy will, and procuring in all things his greater glory.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to love God with *all our strength*, by the perfection of our ordinary actions, besides this purity of intention, which ought both to go before, and to accompany all we do or say; we should also labour, in the progress of all our actions and conversations, to season them, as it were, and to sanctify them, by the exercise of frequent aspirations of divine love. This may be practised by often turning our souls, on every occasion, to our Beloved, considered as intimately present within us; by longing after him, offering our whole selves to him, rejoicing in his glory, begging for the advancement of the kingdom of his love, both in ourselves, and in the whole

world, and lamenting to see him every where so much offended, and his love so much slighted, &c. Nothing contributes more to advance the soul in the love of God, than a diligence in this exercise.

Conclude to season all thy actions, in this manner, with divine love, both by beginning them with a pure intention of the glory of God, and accompanying them with frequent acts of love; thus thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with thy whole strength.*

SATURDAY AFTER THE FOURTH SUNDAY.

On returning Love for Love.

CONSIDER, first, that, besides the most pressing motives we have to love God, by reason of his own infinite beauty and perfection, and the infinite charms that all centre in him, to command our love, besides all those attractions, which are found in his infinite mercy, his infinite bounty, his infinite wisdom, his infinite truth, &c., which are all infinitely amiable, beyond all that can be expressed or conceived by the heart of man; besides also, that all our happiness is found in him, and that his love is our greatest honour, our greatest interest, our greatest pleasure, and that which alone can bring us to our sovereign Good, even to the possession of God himself; in fine, besides that the whole creation in general, and every creature in particular, calls upon us to love God, and publishes aloud his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, to engage us to love him; a generous soul finds a most strong and urgent motive to love God, in the consideration of the love that he has for us, and has had for us, from all eternity, and the innumerable benefits he has bestowed upon us, in consequence of this eternal love. And yet, (O strange ingratitude and insensibility!) the far greatest part of poor mortals, notwithstanding all these innumerable motives of love, are still cold, in the midst of so much fire, which surrounds them, as it were, on all sides; they still refuse a return of love, and still prefer the meanest of these earthly toys, and even mere filth, before their most loving and most lovely God. *O ye heavens, be astonished at so much baseness, so much blindness, and so much wickedness!*

Consider, secondly, what kind of love this is that God bears to us. *He has loved us first*; his love is ancient; his love has no beginning; his love is eternal; his love is continual; his thought and heart is always upon us. His love is most faithful and constant: his love never forsakes them, that do not first forsake his love. His love is most generous; it imparts all good to his beloved; it prepares an eternal kingdom for them; it gives them himself for eternity. His love is most pure and disinterested;

he desires no other return from his beloved, but their love: and this not for any service it will do to him, (for it can do him none,) but to unite them to himself, and make them happy. In fine, his love is infinite, both in its origin, which is himself, and in its communications, by giving us an eternal and infinite good, which is also himself. O, my soul, stand astonished to see that this great God, this boundless Majesty, should have such a love for thee! O give him, in return for his love, all that thou canst give him, by loving him with all thy power; and he will be thine for ever.

Consider, thirdly, the benefits, as well general as particular, that we have received, and daily do receive, from the infinite goodness of this our eternal Lover. "He is the Author of all our good: our very being, our whole soul and body, is his gift. He has preserved us, he has nourished and cherished us, from the first moment of our conception to the present hour: he has watched over us with an incomparable love; he has defended us from a thousand evils. He has given his Angels a charge over us. He has sent his own Son from heaven for us, to deliver us from sin and hell, and to procure all mercy, grace, and salvation for us. The whole life of the Son of God upon earth was employed in serving us: he suffered for us the very worst of torments; he shed all his most precious blood for the love of us. He has left with us all manner of helps, in order to bring us to himself, and to his heavenly kingdom—his word, his church, his sacrifice, his sacraments, his body and blood, his graces, his inspirations, &c. He has even then heaped favours upon us, and kept us from death and hell, when we were his enemies by mortal sin: he has waited for us with infinite patience: he has called us back with an infinite tenderness: he has received us with open arms, when we have returned to him; and has mercifully overlooked all our follies, all our disloyalties, all our ingratitude and repeated treasons against him; besides many instances of his particular providence, which every one of us has met with, in some part or other of our life. And shall not all these, and innumerable other benefits and favours, oblige us to love him? O, blessed by all creatures be his goodness for ever!"

Conclude to have thy thought and heart always upon him, whose love is always heaping favours upon thee, and to make a perpetual return of love to thy eternal Lover.

ROGATION SUNDAY

On the Devotion of the Time.

CONSIDER, first, that these days, between this Sunday and the ascension of our Lord, are days of devotion, and are called *Rogation days*, because they are set aside by the church for solemn prayers and supplications, joined with abstinence and penance; in order to turn away the wrath of God, provoked by our sins; to remove far from us his scourges, of wars, plagues, famines, &c; to implore his mercy, for ourselves and for all his people; and to beg his blessing upon the fruits of the earth. As the first institution of the devotion of these days was occasioned by a terrible scene of disasters and visible judgments of God upon the people, to which a stop was put by dedicating these three days to prayer and penance; so the success, that attended this first essay, has encouraged the church to an annual practice of the like devotion ever since. Hence we may learn with what dispositions of soul we ought to present ourselves before the throne of grace at this time; with what a lively sense of the guilt of our sins, and of the judgments we deserve for them both here and hereafter; with what desire to return to God from our sins, and to offer him the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart for them; and to join, as it were, in a body, at this time, with the whole people of God, in suing, in a proper manner, for his mercy, with most humble supplications and fervent prayers. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions.

Consider, secondly, that although we do not every day feel the heavy hand of divine justice, by the experience of public calamities, or other visible judgments; yet, if we consider the guilt of so many crying sins, not only of particular persons, but even of whole nations, which are continually calling to God for vengeance, we shall find too much reason to apprehend that the sword of God's justice is even now hanging over our heads, and that the worst of his judgments will quickly fall upon Christendom in general, if not averted by prayer and penance. This consideration ought to determine all Christians in general (even the most innocent, if they have any concern for the public danger, or true charity for the souls of their neighbours) gladly to embrace so happy an opportunity as this, of joining with all the children of God in humiliations and prayer, in order to prevent the thunder of heaven from suddenly breaking over our heads, and hurrying away thousands into the bottomless pit. And, as for every particular sinner, now is the most favourable time for him to sue for mercy, because at this time the whole church joins, in a particular manner, in praying for all sinners.

And if he should neglect this opportunity, what may he not justly fear from his repeated treasons; from the wrath of God above, ready to fall upon him; from the mouth of hell below, gaping to devour him; from the devil, to whom he has sold himself, and from that monster mortal sin, (which is even worse than the devil,) which he always carries about with him? O sinners, neglect not these days of salvation, lest they never return to you any more. Now is your time; hereafter there may be no time for you.

Consider, thirdly, the encouragement we have, both in the epistle and the gospel of the Rogations, to look for mercy, and for all good, both for ourselves and for our neighbours, from humble and fervent prayer. In the epistle (St. James v.) we are taught the great efficacy of continual prayer, with an exhortation to pray for one another, in order to salvation; and a declaration of what the reward will be of them that contribute to the salvation of others. In the gospel (St. Luke xi.) we are exhorted by Christ our Lord to a holy importunity and perseverance in prayer; and we are taught, by the example of a friend and of a father, to look for all good gifts from our heavenly Father, by the means of earnest prayer. O what a Friend indeed, what a Parent, have we in him! or who is like to him in bounty and mercy? Let us, then, be encouraged by these divine oracles, *to go with confidence at this time to the throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*, Hebr. iv. 16.

Conclude to join at this time with the whole church of God in prayer and penance, that thou mayst obtain mercy both for thyself and for thy neighbours. Heaven can never resist a general assault, made by the whole people of God, by the means of prayer, when joined with a contrite and humble heart.

ROGATION MONDAY.

On the Means of attaining to the Love of God.

CONSIDER, first, that as the desire of wisdom is the true beginning of wisdom; so the first step to the love of God (which is true wisdom indeed) is an earnest desire to love God. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after this heavenly justice; for they shall be filled*, Matt. v. This desire makes us pray fervently, seek incessantly, knock earnestly, at the gate of divine love. It makes us rise early in quest of this heavenly wisdom: it makes us glad to part with all things else, that we may purchase this precious pearl, that we may acquire this incomparable treasure. He that, with this desire, aspires after divine love, already begins to possess what he desires; and the more he relishes the

sweetness of what he begins to possess, the more he aspires after it. Thus the desire of love begets love; and love begets a strong desire, which begets a stronger love. So that the great means of learning to love God, is, by repeated desires and acts of love, to taste and see how sweet God is, and how sweet a thing it is to love him.

Consider, secondly, that divine love will not be found by us, nor come to dwell in our souls, if we take no care to keep our inward house clean and pure for our Beloved. *Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God*, Matt. v. So that, if we entertain in our interior any irregular company; that is, if our affections are set upon worldly vanities, upon filthy lucre, upon sensual pleasures, upon gratifying our corrupt inclinations; divine love will not come near us, because it cannot endure such unclean company as this is, nor dwell in a soul that is enslaved to worldly desires and disorderly passions. These are to be parted with, or at least brought into order and subjection, if we would learn to love God. This is the meaning of that Gospel lesson of selling all, to acquire the precious pearl of the kingdom of God, by his love's reigning in our souls. The kingdom of divine love will allow of no rival, no usurper, no rebel in its dominions. The spouse of divine love must belong wholly to her spouse alone: she must be a *garden close shut* to all others, a *fountain sealed up* for him alone, *Cantic. iv.* So that another necessary means of attaining to divine love, is a general mortification of all foreign and irregular affections.

Consider, thirdly, that the sovereign means of acquiring divine love, is the daily exercise of mental prayer; which employs all the powers of the soul in waiting upon God. Here the *memory* represents all the motives we have to love him; here the *understanding* is taught to know him; here the affections of the *will* are inflamed at his presence: this, then, is the true school of love. O, my soul, let us daily frequent it, not only by having a regular time fixed for this great exercise of love, but by practising it in some measure at all times; by a spirit of recollection; by a continual sense and remembrance of God's presence; by frequently calling back the soul to him from all her distractions and evagations; by repeated aspirations and ejaculations of love, &c. This is *walking with God* indeed, like the ancient saints; this is taking God along with us, wherever we are going and whatever we are doing; this is *walking in love*. O how happy is that life which is thus dedicated to divine love!

Conclude to embrace all the means that may bring thee to this happiness. O, begin now, from this hour, to set out in quest of this fountain of life. Let no opposition of earth or hell discourage thee. Never leave off thy search, till thou come to drink

of this heavenly water, which will become in thee a fountain springing up to everlasting life.

ROGATION TUESDAY.

On Acts of divine Love.

CONSIDER, first, that the love of God is like a fire: its nature is to be always in motion, and always tending upwards, towards its heavenly element; it quickly expires, and dies, if it lies idle. Wherefore, if we would keep it alive, we must nourish it, and blow it up, by frequent acts of love; and those not mere *verbal* acts, by telling God that we love him, whilst our heart perhaps is far from him; but by the *real* exercise of *loving* God, both in *our heart*, and in *our works*. We exercise the love of God in *our heart*, by affection; we exercise the love of God in *our works*, by effects. We love God with a love of *chaste concupiscence*, when, in *heart* and *work*, we tend to him as *our sovereign good*, and aspire after the eternal enjoyment of him. We love him with a love of *benevolence*, that is, of sincere and perfect friendship and charity, when, both in *heart* and *work*, we give our whole selves, with all our thoughts, words, and deeds, and all things else to him, as being *infinitely good in himself*. It is just we should exercise ourselves in acts of the love of God in both these ways, as in both these ways he is infinitely amiable; but more especially that we should tend to love him with the *love of benevolence*, by giving ourselves and all things to him.

Consider, secondly, that *benevolence* is a love, by which we wish all manner of good to the person beloved; a love, by which we earnestly seek and procure whatever may be for his honour, interest, or pleasure; by which we delight in all his advantages, and are concerned at all his losses, &c. Wherefore, if we would make proper acts of the *love of benevolence* towards God, we must desire, seek, and procure, as much as lies in us, the greater honour and glory of his name, and the propagation of his kingdom, both in our own hearts, and throughout the whole world, and pray that all men may know him, love him, and serve him: we must rejoice at every thing that is agreeable to his holy will, and be concerned at every thing that offends him. This is the proper exercise of the love of benevolence; these are far better acts of divine charity, than merely telling God that we love him. My soul, what are thy dispositions? Dost thou sincerely desire, and heartily pray, that all the world may know, love, and serve thy God; that all his creatures, in heaven and earth, may give perpetual glory to him; that the reign of sin may be abolished, and that the kingdom of God may take posses-

sion of all hearts; that none may resist or rebel against his orders, but that all may embrace, and bow down, and adore his divine will? If so, there is no doubt but thou lovest God. Such as these are perfect acts of the love of God.

Consider, thirdly, that the exercise of the love of God, which, above all others, is recommended in holy Scripture, is the loving of his divine law, and the keeping of his commandments. *This is the charity* (that is, the love) *of God, that we keep his commandments*, 1 John v. 3. *He that keepeth his word, in him, in very deed, the charity of God is perfected*, chap. ii. ver. 5. The beloved disciple continually recommends the acts of this kind of divine love; and the Psalms are full of aspirations or breathings of a soul, that is in love with the holy law and commandments of God. This devotion to the commandments of God is loving God indeed, with a true and effectual love; because it is giving up, for his sake, what is most dear to us, namely, our own will and liberty, and making a present of it to him; it is giving him what he chiefly calls for at our hands; whatsoever else we give him can never content him. He always preferred the sacrifice of obedience before all other sacrifices; because here we sacrifice to him our own dear will, and immolate it, as it were, to his honour and glory. This kind of love is the safest from illusions; for whosoever loves the commandments of God, and his divine will, and makes all that is in him submit thereunto, most certainly loves God, and is in the right way that will bring him safe to God. No other devotion, without this, can secure any man.

Conclude to exercise thyself daily in all these ways of loving God; and ever remember, that loving God and keeping his commandments go always hand in hand; because we cannot love God without loving his will, notified to us by his commandments.

ROGATION-WEDNESDAY.

On other Exercises of the Love of God.

CONSIDER, first, that divine love is also exercised in the penitential way, by souls that, like Magdalene, (of whom our Lord pronounced that *many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much*,) go daily to the feet of Christ, in spirit, to wash them with their tears, flowing from a heart full of a sense of the infinite goodness of God, and of a deep regret for having offended that infinite Goodness by their sins. This exercise of *penitential love*, as we see in the case of Magdalene, is most acceptable to our Lord, and most effectual for obtaining the discharge of all our

sins; and, if diligently pursued, is capable of advancing, even those that have been the greatest sinners, to a high degree of virtue and sanctity. And whosoever has forfeited his baptismal innocence by mortal sin, if he would follow the rules of Christian prudence, in choosing the safest way, in a case where his all is at stake, should endeavour to pursue this exercise of *penitential love*, and never end it but with his life. Thus did all those great penitents of old, who became afterwards such glorious saints. And this kind of exercise of love will become in a manner natural to all such as have a right sense of what God is, and what sin is, and of the dreadful evil they have been guilty of in offending, though it were but once in their life, so great and so good a God.

Consider, secondly, that there are also other ways of *mourning*, in which we may exercise a love of God most agreeable to him and beneficial to ourselves; as, when we sit down at the foot of the cross, and there, contemplating the extreme anguish and distress, the stripes and wounds, the racking pains and torments of our dear Redeemer, with all that complication of sufferings in all kinds, which he endured in his passion, for the love of us,—we excite in our souls suitable affections of an ardent love in the way of compassion for our crucified Lover, and feed this fire with tears flowing at the sight of his blood, which, as it shows forth, in the most sensible manner, his tender affection for us, so it most strongly calls for a return of our love, accompanied with a bitter grief to see our Beloved treated with so much cruelty and contempt. Upon the same principle of the concern that every true lover has to see the outrages offered to his beloved, we may also exercise a love most agreeable to our Lord, in mourning for the innumerable sins that are daily committed against him throughout the whole world; to see his infinite goodness slighted, his sacred laws and ordinances trodden under foot, his mercies continually abused, and his most adorable Majesty treated with the utmost contempt, by poor blind mortals, made by him, and for him, redeemed by the blood of his Son and loaded with innumerable favours, to engage them to love him, and serve him. O, how can any true lover of God endure to see these outrages offered to his infinite Majesty, without having his heart perfectly broken with grief to see his Love thus abused?

Consider, thirdly, that, besides these exercises of the *love of benevolence*, in the *penitential* and *compassionate* way, there is another most perfect exercise of love, and which comes the nearest to the love of the blessed in heaven; and that is, in the way of *joy* and *congratulation*; as when we rejoice in God, and in his boundless perfections; when we are delighted to think that he is

what he is,—infinitely good, infinitely holy, infinitely happy, infinitely perfect; that he is the sovereign Lord of all; and that nothing can be added to him, because he is every way infinite. O, what a comfort, what a pleasure, what a joy it is, to a true lover of God, to think that, whatsoever may come to himself, or to any other thing in the world, his Love at least, whom he loves without comparison more than himself, and all things else, will always be infinitely glorious, infinitely rich, and infinitely happy! O, how like is this love to that of the blessed, even to that love that makes them blessed, which is an eternal joy in God, and in all the beauties and perfections they contemplate in him! This is their eternal delight.

Conclude to dedicate thyself, for time and eternity, to this most perfect love of God. Make it thy employment here, and it will be thy eternal reward hereafter. In the mean time, labour also to promote, as much as thou canst, upon every occasion, the praise and glory of thy Maker, the interests of his kingdom, the fulfilling of all his wills, as well in thyself as in all others: be concerned at every thing that displeases him; put thy heart continually in his hands; give thyself, and all things else, to him, a hundred times in the day. Such acts as these, frequently repeated in the day, will ensure to thee the rich treasure of divine love: by such exercises, thou wilt effectually choose the better part, which will never be taken from thee.

ASCENSION-DAY.

On the Ascension of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, that our Lord, after having employed forty days upon earth, to comfort and encourage his disciples, to confirm them in the faith of his resurrection, and to instruct them in the mysteries of his kingdom; on the fortieth day, taking them out with him to mount Olivet, lifted up his hands, and gave them his blessing; and so ascended up visibly to heaven, before their eyes, till a cloud interposed, and took him out of their sight. Bow thyself down, my soul, to receive with joy and gratitude this blessing of thy Saviour, *ascending now to his Father and to thy Father*; follow him in spirit, and contemplate the triumphs and joy of all the heavenly legions, that come out to meet him, and attend him to his Father's throne. See how he brings along with him all the patriarchs, prophets, and spirits of the just, into those regions of eternal bliss, and presents them to his Father, as the first fruits of his purchase, which he had made upon earth with his precious blood. See with joy thy human nature, in the

person of thy Lord, raised above all the cherubims and seraphims, and seated at the right hand of God; and exercise thyself, upon this occasion, in acts of love, in the way of congratulation, and of rejoicing at the exaltation and at the triumphs of thy Saviour.

Consider, secondly, that our Lord, by his ascension, has taken possession of the kingdom of heaven, not only for himself, but also for us. He purchased this kingdom for us with his own blood; he opened the gates of it by his death; he showed us the way to it by his resurrection; and, by his ascension, has given us, as it were, an earnest of our coming one day to reign there with him. He is our Head; we are his members: it is but natural that where the head is, there the members should also be: it would be unnatural, it would be keeping them in a state of violence, to keep them separate from their head. What comfort, then, to Christian souls, to see their Head, by this mystery of his ascension into heaven, raised to the highest seat in that eternal kingdom, in order to draw them thither after him, and, in the mean time, preparing a place for them there, that he may, in proper time, come and *take them to himself, that where he is, they also may be*, St. John xiv.

Consider, thirdly, what further motives we have for rejoicing in the ascension of our Lord, when we reflect that he has entered into heaven, in quality of our Parent, of our Friend, of our Advocate and Mediator, of our High Priest, &c. O what encouragements are here to raise our hopes! We have a tender Father in heaven, the true Parent of our souls, who has all power in the court of heaven, and takes exceedingly to heart our true interest; we have there, in the person of our Redeemer, a most affectionate Friend, who loves us with an incomparable love; we have a most faithful Mediator and Advocate, who ever pleads for us with the powerful eloquence of his sacred wounds, which he continually represents to his Father, in our behalf; we have a High Priest, who, to make atonement for us, has carried in to this heavenly sanctuary, not the blood of oxen or of goats, but his own most sacred blood, shed for obtaining for us an everlasting redemption. O see, my soul, upon how many accounts thou oughtest to rejoice, on this festival of the ascension of thy Lord, if thou either lovest him or thyself.

Conclude to consider this festival of the ascension of our Lord as one of the principal solemnities of the year. The church of God considers it as such, and therefore daily commemorates, in a particular manner, in the most sacred mysteries, not only the passion and resurrection, but also the ascension of her heavenly Spouse; as the mystery which put the last seal, as it were, to the great work of our redemption, and placed this flesh of ours in heaven, even at the right hand of the Father, which, at the fall

of our first parents, had been sentenced to return to its original earth.

FRIDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

On the Lessons we are to learn from the Ascension of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, that as we ought to imitate the resurrection of our Lord, by a *spiritual resurrection* from the death of sin to the life of grace; so we must also imitate the ascension of our Lord, by a *spiritual ascension* into heaven, and by dwelling there in spirit with him; that, as we hope one day to ascend thither after him in effect, we may learn the way, by ascending after him, every day, in affection. Our Lord has told us, that *where our treasure is, there our heart shall also be*. Our treasure is that which we love the most, and the best of all things: now if this be Christ, as it ought to be, as he is ascended into heaven, our treasure is in heaven; and therefore, our heart should follow its treasure, by ascending after him, in spirit, into heaven, and by fixing there its abode with its Beloved. O happy *ascension of love*, which teaches the soul to find, in some measure, a heaven upon earth; and, interiorly, to have always her conversation in heaven, whatever occupation or company she may be exteriorly engaged in upon earth.

Consider, secondly, that in order to be qualified to ascend after Christ our Lord into heaven, we must first get rid of our vices, and criminal passions; for none of these can be admitted into that blessed abode; there is no room for them there. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life*, can have no place in heaven: all their pursuits are earthly; instead of carrying the soul upwards towards heaven, they press her down towards hell. They are all slaves to Satan; they bind the poor soul fast in his chains; they will not suffer her to follow after Christ; they are his mortal enemies. See then, my soul, if none of these have dominion over thee: see if pride, avarice, passion, or lust, have not more influence on thee, to keep thee afar off from Christ, in this region of sin and death, than the love of God has to draw thee up to heaven after him. O beg of thy Lord, through his triumphant ascension,—by which, *ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men*, (Eph. iv. 8,)—that he would break all thy bonds in sunder, which keep thee from ascending after him, and, by the precious gifts of his grace, set thee at liberty, to fly upwards with the wings of the dove, till thou canst come to repose in him, and with him.

Consider, thirdly, that the soul can never be rightly qualified to fly up towards heaven, by this spiritual ascension, as long as

her wings, that is, her affections, are not disengaged. For, as the bird cannot fly, if its wings be either entangled, or daubed over with bird-lime; so the soul cannot fly, if her affections are either entangled in the nets of the world, or defiled with the bird-lime of a misplaced love. So that it is not enough, for a soul that desires to ascend to heaven after Christ, to be free from downright lust, or other scandalous excesses and passions; but she must also be disengaged in her affections from every love of person or thing, that ties her down, as it were, to the earth; that captivates her thoughts, that fills her with solitudes and perplexities, or otherwise takes off her heart from the love of God. All such love as this disqualifies the soul from flying towards heaven; it keeps her far below, groveling in the mire. Nor let her flatter herself that her affections are innocent because the object is not of itself criminal; for, let the object be what it will, it is a crime to prefer it to God, or to love it so as to forfeit, for its sake, the love of God.

Conclude to be jealous of thyself, how thou place thy affections here upon earth, lest they hinder thy flight towards thy true treasure in heaven. *My love is my weight, says St. Augustine; that way am I carried, whithersoever I am carried.*

SATURDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

Other Lessons to be learnt from the Ascension of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, that as, in consequence of the ascension of our Lord, we ought to be daily carried, as it were upon the wings of love, up to him in his heavenly kingdom; so we ought, by this frequent ascending thither, to be daily more and more enamoured with that kingdom of love; to conceive the highest ideas of that incomprehensible happiness, of the soul's being there eternally united to her God, and absorbed in him, and with the most ardent desires to long daily more and more for this Fountain of life. But what, then, must the sentiments of the soul be, when, after she has begun, by the practice of this devotion, to relish something of the sweetness of the good things of her Lord, in the land of the living, she finds herself still a prisoner in this foreign land, in this earthly Babylon! O, how does she wish to be delivered from this captivity; to see an end of this long pilgrimage! How does she lament her banishment in this vale of tears, at so great a distance from her true country. How does she despise this miserable world, and even loathe its choicest enjoyments! O, my soul, that these were our sentiments!

Consider, secondly, and give ear to the exhortation of the apostle, Coloss. iii. 1, &c. *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with him in glory.* How happy are those Christians, that enter into these sentiments, upon occasion of the ascension of our Lord; who consider Christ as the great Object of their love, and their true Life; and, as he is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, turn all their intentions and affections towards heaven; who consider this their true life as absent, and as hidden from them here below; and therefore continually aspire after that happy revolution, when they shall cease to die, and begin to live! And, in the mean time, whilst they remain in this region of death, they seek, as much as they can, to divest themselves of *this body of death*, by *mortifying*, as the apostle admonishes, *their members that are upon earth*; and by *crucifying the flesh, with its vices and concupiscences*.

Consider, thirdly, that as we are informed by church history, our Lord, at his ascension, left the last prints of his feet upon the top of mount Olivet, in the place from whence he ascended; which no length of time, nor encampments of armies, or other accidents, or even industry of man, could ever efface, or cover over; that we might learn, that the true way, for all that desire to follow Christ, by ascending after him into heaven, is to have his footsteps always before their eyes, and to walk in them by a diligent imitation of his life and conversation. They that are careful to walk in his footsteps, are his *disciples indeed*; and they that are his *disciples indeed*, will infallibly, if they persevere, ascend to heaven after him, and be forever with him.

Conclude to lay up in thy heart all these lessons, which Christ desires to teach thee in his ascension; and so to adhere to his footsteps, that nothing in life or death may ever separate thee from him.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Precept of Charity to our Neighbours.

CONSIDER, first, that, after that greatest and first commandment, of *loving God with our whole heart and soul*, the next of all the divine precepts is, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. This, saith our Lord, is *like to the other*; and indeed it has so necessary a connexion with it, that we cannot fulfil the one with-

out the other. *God is charity*, says the beloved disciple, (1 John iv. 16,) *and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him.* And again, *he that loveth not (his neighbour) knoweth not God; for God is charity*, v. 8. And again, *if any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*, v. 20. These two precepts of charity, by which we are commanded, in the first place, to love God above all things, and, in the next place, to love our neighbours as ourselves, contain an abridgment of the whole duty of a Christian. They are two branches that spring from the same root, and belong to the self-same divine virtue; because the same motives that oblige us to love God for his own goodness' sake, oblige us also to love all that are made after his image, and redeemed by the blood of his Son, for the sake of their Maker and Redeemer. It is he that requires this love of us, and requires it in such manner, as that we should love him in our neighbours, and love them in him. O the infinite goodness and bounty of our God! that notwithstanding the immense distance there is betwixt us and him, he should be pleased to put us, as it were, upon an equality, by requiring that we should love one another with the like love, and upon the same motive, as we love himself.

Consider, secondly, that this charity to our neighbours is so essentially necessary to salvation, that without it, though we spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge of the deepest mysteries, and faith strong enough even to remove mountains, we should still be nothing; and though we should give our whole substance to the poor, and our bodies to the flames, it would profit us nothing, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. *He that loveth not*, saith St. John, *abideth in death*, 1 John iii. 14. *He is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes*, chap. ii. 11. And this charity, which is so necessary to salvation, must be general; for, as we learn from our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan, (*St. Luke x.*) all men, without exception of nations or opinions, are here to be considered as our neighbours; and if there should be any one mortal, whom we should exclude from our charity, our heavenly Father would exclude us from his mercy. *St. Matt. xviii. 35.*

Consider, thirdly, how much our Lord takes to heart, that we should have this mutual love and charity for one another. He has made it his favourite commandment; the very badge by which he would have his disciples known and distinguished. *I give you a new commandment*, saith he, (*St. John xiii. 34, 35.*) *that you love one another, as I have loved you.—By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*

And, chap. xv. 12, *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.* And this mutual love for one another he desires may be so perfect, that it may, in some measure, resemble the love and union that there is between him and his Father; as he has declared in that heavenly prayer that he made for his disciples, St. John xvii. 20, 21: *And not for them only, said he, do I pray, but for them also, who, through their word, shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* This mutual love, this union and charity, he inculcates in these strong terms, in this last conference, of his mortal life, with his beloved disciples; that both they and we might consider it as his last dying injunction; and as a most precious legacy, which he has bequeathed to us all. O my soul, embrace this legacy of love, which has been thus left thee by thy Lord, dying for the love of thee.

Conclude to prove thyself henceforward to be a disciple of Christ indeed, by this spirit of universal charity for all, as he has died out of charity for all. In the beginning of the church, *the multitude of the believers had but one heart, and one soul,* Acts iv. 32. Such was their mutual love and union. O blessed charity, when shall we see thee once more reign in this manner amongst Christians?

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Excellence of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER, first, that Charity is the queen of virtues, and the most excellent of them all, according to the doctrine of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 13; and this, not only as she loves God in himself, but also as she loves him in our neighbours, by loving them for his sake; for, as the motive is the same in both these loves, so the virtue is the same. Hence St. Peter calls upon all Christians, 1 Peter iv. 8—*BEFORE ALL THINGS, have a constant and mutual charity; for charity covereth the multitude of sins.* And St. Paul, Coloss. iii. 14—*ABOVE ALL these THINGS, have charity, which is the bond of perfection.* He adds, Rom. xiii. 8, 10, that the love of our neighbours is the fulfilling of the law and commandments of God; and, Gal. v. 14, that *all the law is fulfilled in this one word: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Hence also St. John, the beloved disciple, both in his words and in his writings, continually inculcated this duty of loving one another, as the favourite virtue of Jesus Christ, and, in a manner, the whole duty of a Christian. O my soul, let us then em-

brace, with all our affections, this amiable virtue, this chief favourite of Christ and his saints; let us value it as an inestimable treasure, and be ever willing rather to lose any thing else than this blessed charity.

Consider, secondly, that we may with truth apply to charity, what the wise man writes of Wisdom—that *all good things came to him together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands*, Wisdom vii. 11. What these riches are that come through the hands of Charity, we learn from the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c.: *Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own, (that is, she is not selfish:) she is not provoked to anger; she thinketh no evil; she rejoiceth not in iniquity, (that is, in any thing that is wrong,) but rejoiceth with the truth, (being pleased with all that is right and true;) she beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, &c.* See, my soul, how many virtues are the constant attendants and offspring of Charity. O how amiable is this character of the truly charitable Christian! O how lovely is this parent of all this heavenly train!

Consider, thirdly, that Charity, in the strictest sense, is indeed *a heavenly virtue*; as well because she maintains her ground in heaven, and receives her full perfection there, where faith and hope are no more; (*Charity*, saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, *never falleth away*;) as also because the eternal charity of the saints is no small part of their *heavenly* happiness: their love of God is their essential bliss; their love of one another in God, and the joy that they conceive at one another's happiness, multiplies, as I may say, their heaven to as many fold as there are happy spirits and saints in heaven. And no wonder, since charity, even here below, when it is perfect, brings with it unspeakable joy, and, in a manner, a heaven upon earth, by keeping all the passions under, and establishing the reign of peace and joy in the soul. As on the other hand, where there is no charity, the passions are all let loose; hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, &c.: she soul is always in a storm; she is a stranger to peace; she is in confusion and darkness, and the very image of hell, where it is no small part of their misery that they cannot love.

Conclude to aspire, as much as thou art able, after this heavenly Charity: she will teach thee, whilst thou art here upon earth, to emulate the love of the blessed in heaven; she alone will bring thee to their happy company.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the Exercise of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER, first, that the charity which we owe to our neighbours, like that by which we love God, is in the nature of a fire, which is ever in motion, and must be kept alive by being nourished with its proper fuel, by the means of repeated acts, and these not exercised only by affection, but by effects. *My little children*, saith St. John, (1 John ch. iii. 15,) *let us love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed, and in truth.* Fraternal charity is not a love of *concupiscence*. It is not a *selfish love*, that looks no farther than at the honour, profit or pleasure, which may accrue to one's self from our neighbours: it is a love of sincere *benevolence*. Now, as it is the nature of the love of *benevolence* to desire, to seek, to procure, and to promote, whatever may be for the real good of the person beloved; to be delighted with all that is to his advantage, and to be concerned at all that hurts him; so this *benevolent love*, which we owe to our neighbours, by virtue of the precept of fraternal charity, is to be kept alive in our souls by repeated acts of its own kind; by frequently exercising, in favour of our neighbours, as well the spiritual as the corporal works of mercy, with a pure intention of God's glory, and their welfare; by bewailing their errors and vices, by earnestly praying for their conversion and salvation, and neglecting nothing in our power to procure it. Do we evidence our charity for our neighbours by the exercise of such acts as these?

Consider, secondly, that the love of *true charity*, which we are commanded to bear to our neighbours, is to love them for God's sake; to love them in God, and in order to God. Fraternal charity is a branch of that same divine virtue, by which we love God, and ought ever to be grounded upon the same divine motive of God's own infinite goodness. No carnal, worldly, or natural affection, influenced by flesh and blood, or by any other consideration but God, can be called *charity*. If, then, we would fulfil this great precept, we must not content ourselves with loving our neighbours at any rate. Heathens and publicans often love one another, and assist one another, and yet they are void of divine charity. But we must love according to God, and with relation to God; we must love in our neighbours the image of God; we must consider them as made by him, and for him, and as redeemed by the precious blood of his Son; we must love them for his sake, and because it is his holy will and commandment. And we must exercise the acts of this

love by contributing, on every occasion, all that lies in us, to bring them to the love of God here, and to his kingdom hereafter, that they may glorify him in a happy eternity. This is true charity indeed.

Consider, thirdly, by what *rules* we are to be directed and regulated, in the exercise of the love of our neighbours. The *old commandment* of the divine law was, *to love every neighbour as ourselves*. The *new commandment* of the gospel of Christ, is, *to love every neighbour even as Christ has loved us*, John xiii. 34. Have we ever seriously reflected upon the perfection of the love which these rules require of us? *To love our neighbours as ourselves*. O how tender is the love we bear ourselves! how intent upon our own welfare! how sensible of every thing that we apprehend as an evil to us! Is the love of our neighbours any thing like this? Do we treat them as we would desire to be treated ourselves? Do we wish them the same good as we wish ourselves? Are we concerned at the evils which befall them, as if they had befallen ourselves? I fear we cannot say it. Again: *To love our neighbour as Christ has loved us*. O what a love was this! He has laid down his very life for the love of us; and this without any desert on our side; for we deserved nothing but hell; we were his enemies by sin. Can our love for our neighbours stand the test of this rule? Are we willing to part with so much as our own humour, our convenience, our inclinations, our pleasure, or satisfaction, for the love of our neighbours, and rather than give them occasion of grief or sin? If not, how far are we from loving our neighbours as Christ has loved us!

Conclude to exercise, daily, repeated acts of fraternal charity, both in the affective and the effective way; lest otherwise thy love for thy neighbours, for want of nourishment, quickly languish away and die. Have thy eye always upon those two great rules of charity, and regulate thy love by them.

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the different Branches of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER, first, that charity is fruitful in its offspring, and spreads itself into different branches, in order to make the whole man perfect, by regulating both his judgment and his will, and directing him in his thoughts, in his words, and in his actions. For there is a charity that corrects the natural bent of our corruption, which is ever tending to suspect and *judge* the worst of our neighbours, and to be harsh and censorious in their re

gard. And there is a charity that inclines the will in their favour, so as to wish them well in every respect, and to forgive all injuries. There is a charity that employs the thoughts in studying to promote their good, and to prevent and remedy their evils; and there is a charity that directs the tongue, and restrains it from uttering any words to the prejudice of any one. In fine, there is a charity that seasons and sweetens the whole body of our actions, as far as they relate to our neighbours, and squares them all according to that golden rule, of doing in every thing as we would be done by. The practice of all these branches of charity, in God, and for God, makes a perfect Christian, and brings to God.

Consider, secondly, that, amongst the branches of fraternal charity, there is one that our Lord seems to take in a special manner to heart; insomuch that he has declared our eternal lot shall be decided by our diligence or negligence in the exercise of it, (*Matt. xxv,*) and this is *charity to the poor*. These he declares he has substituted in his own stead; and what we do for them, he takes as done for himself, *ver. 40, 45*. This branch of charity, duly exercised, in proportion to every man's circumstances, will bring thousands one day into the happy tabernacles of everlasting life. But where shall the unjust stewards then appear, who, having the substance of their master, viz. their worldly riches, intrusted in their hands, with express orders to employ their superfluities, at least, in relieving the necessities of his poor children, either covetously detain, or prodigally squander away, that which should be their support, and to which they have an indisputable title? Alas! what a figure will their extravagant expenses then make! What account will they be able to give of all that they have sacrificed to pride and vanity, to luxury and intemperance, to gaming and criminal diversions! Will not all these robberies of the substance of the poor cry to heaven against them for vengeance at that day?

Consider, thirdly, that there is still another branch of charity, the most difficult of all, and yet absolutely necessary to salvation, and that is to love our enemies. *I say to you,* saith our Lord (*Matt. v. 44,*) *love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you*. And this he insists upon in such manner as to exclude from his mercy here, and from his kingdom hereafter, all such as exclude any one, how much an enemy soever, from their charity. But how shall we acquire, or how shall we practise, this charity for our enemies? O! it is not a virtue of our own growth; it must come down to us from heaven, from our great Father, *who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust*. It is by fervent prayer we must obtain it; and, when

we have got it, we must lay it up in our hearts as a rich heavenly treasure, and exercise it, as the saints have done, by praying for our enemies in sincerity of heart, and seeking, on all occasions, to overcome, in their regard, evil with good. O how happy shall we be, if, by any such means as these, we prevail to bring them, that before were our enemies, to be, for the time to come, friends both to God and to us! It is what the saints have often done, by their charity, by their meekness, and by their prayers.

Conclude to labour with all thy power, both to acquire and to exercise all these branches of charity, if thou desirest to come to *God*, who is *charity*, and who is not to be come at but by charity.

THURSDAY THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On the great Pattern of Charity.

CONSIDER, first, how Christ Jesus our Lord has given us himself for a Pattern of perfect charity, in the parable of the good Samaritan, (Luke x.) He himself came down in person from his throne above, to save poor man, who had unhappily fallen among the infernal robbers, and was stript by them of all grace, and grievously wounded in all his faculties. He was the good Shepherd, that came down to seek with sorrow the lost sheep, in order to lay him upon his own shoulders, and carry him home, with joy, to his heavenly fold. It is here we plainly discover the infinite charity both of the Father and of the Son. *By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us*, says the beloved disciple, *because God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity; not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins*, 1 John iv. 9, 10.

Consider, secondly, that the whole life of Christ was a continual exercise of divine charity. From the first moment of his conception, in the womb of his blessed mother, till his expiring on the cross, his soul was ever employed in loving his heavenly Father, and in offering himself to all his wills; and for the love of his Father, and because it was his Father's will, he dedicated his whole life also to the love of us; ever thinking on us, praying for us, and labouring for our eternal salvation. But O, the infinite charity he has shown us in all that he endured in his passion and death for the love of us! Christians, pass over in your minds all the stages of his passion, from his prayer and agony in the garden, to his expiring on the cross, and see the multitude and variety of torments he has there suffered for us. Ah! how much have our sins cost this innocent Lamb of God!

Ah! how dearly has he loved us! O, my soul, in the midst of all these tortures, he had thee in his heart; and, even then, was pleading thy cause with his eternal Father, when, by thy sins, thou wast crucifying him. O, what return shall we make him for this infinite love!

Consider, thirdly, that the Son of God has not only loved us, during the whole course of his mortal life, and loved us even to death, by laying down his life for the love of us; but he has carried his love for us beyond the bounds of death, in an admirable legacy, which he has bequeathed us, the night before his passion; by means of which, to satisfy his love, he remains always with us, in the divine mysteries, even to the end of the world. Here he feeds our souls with his precious body and blood; here he unites us to himself, in such manner as to abide in us, and we in him; here he is a perpetual Source of grace, of love, and of true life, to our souls: here he communicates himself to us like the manna of heaven, for the support of our pilgrimage, till he brings us to the true land of promise, where he will lovingly give himself to us for all eternity. And shall not so much charity on his part oblige us to dedicate also our whole souls to this divine virtue.

Conclude to have always before thy eyes this great Pattern of love, that thou mayst learn from him how thou art to love both thy God, and thy neighbour.

N. B. As the festivals of *St. George*, of *St. Philip* and *St. James*, and of the Finding of the Cross, usually fall between *Easter* and *Ascension*, we shall set down in this place the meditations that are to be read on those days.

APRIL 23.

On St. GEORGE.

CONSIDER, first, that we know little more of the particulars of *St. George's* life, but that he was a Christian soldier, an illustrious martyr, and a glorious saint. He was a soldier; we all ought to be soldiers of Christ. In our baptism, we have declared a perpetual war with the world, with the flesh, and with the devil, as the mortal enemies of our great King, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the mortal enemies of our true country, the heavenly Jerusalem; and the mortal enemies of our own dear souls; we have enlisted ourselves soldiers, in our confirmation, under the royal standard of the cross of Christ; and have obliged ourselves to bear him per-

petual allegiance, and fidelity. But have we fulfilled these engagements? Have we behaved ourselves as becomes the soldiers of Christ? Have we stood to our colours? Have we fought manfully the battles of our Lord? Or have we not rather deserted the cause? Have we not been rebels to our true King? Have we not changed sides, and preferred the following the standard of Satan, before that of Jesus Christ? O be confounded at your past disloyalties, and now, at least, return to your allegiance.

Consider, secondly, that St. George was a *martyr*; that is, a *witness* to the divinity of Christ, and to the truth of his doctrine, by choosing rather to lay down his life, by the worst of torments, than to renounce Jesus Christ and his gospel. We are all obliged to be witnesses also to Jesus Christ and to his gospel, both by our profession and by our lives. We are all obliged to be in a constant disposition of suffering death itself rather than renounce our allegiance to Christ by wilful sin. We must all make our way to heaven through many tribulations and persecutions, in one shape or other; and so far we are all obliged to be martyrs. But, alas! how far are we from the dispositions of the martyrs, who suffered cheerfully all kinds of torments for the love of Christ, when we are so unwilling to suffer the least contradiction to our humour, or to part with any of our pleasures, for the love of him, and are quickly overcome with every slight temptation!

Consider, thirdly, that St. George, though living in the world, in a condition of life which one would think most opposite to sanctity, was, nevertheless, a glorious saint; to teach us that sanctity is consistent with every lawful calling, and that if we are not saints, the fault is not in the station of life in which Providence has placed us, but in our not corresponding with those graces which God daily offers us to sanctify us in our calling. It is the love of God and of our neighbours that makes saints; and the more perfect this love is, the more perfect saints. As, then, no lawful calling excludes the love, either of God or of our neighbours; so no lawful calling can hinder us from being even eminent saints, if we are truly desirous of it. The soldier that loves God better, is a greater saint than the monk that loves him less.

Conclude to aim, with all thy power, at this heavenly love, as St. George did; and he that crowned St. George will also crown thee. The best way to honour the saints of God, is to love and to imitate in them that which made them saints.

MAY 1.

On St. Philip and St. James.

CONSIDER, first, that St. Philip and St. James were both disciples of Christ, trained up in his heavenly school. In quality of Christians, we ought all to be such, as the very name of a Christian signifies a *disciple*, that is, a scholar, and follower of Jesus Christ. They were both called by Christ, and readily left all things else to follow him, and from that time inseparably adhered to him. How often have we also been called by him, by his interior graces! But have we ever yet followed him in earnest? Have we ever yet seriously renounced the love of the world, and every tie that offered to keep us from him? Have we as yet ever stuck to him, so as to be his constant attendants? They were both chosen by Christ to be of the number of the twelve apostles; they were both zealous preachers of the faith, and, after gaining innumerable souls to God, they both sealed their doctrine with their blood. Happy we, if, by our words or works, we can also be instrumental in gaining souls to God! Happy we, if we might suffer, or even lay down our lives for so good a cause!

Consider, secondly, that St. Philip had no sooner found Christ, but he was willing to make his friend Nathanael partaker of the same happiness; and therefore brought him also to Christ. This was friendship indeed; this was true charity, to take his friend with him to Christ. Alas! how many now-a-days engage their friends in a partnership of their errors and vices! How many lead them with them to their criminal diversions, or otherwise bring them into sin! But how few have the charity to carry them effectually to Christ! How few labour to reclaim them from the errors of their ways, and from the broad road in which they are walking! How few suggest to their friends, how they may find Christ, by a spiritual retreat, by a good general confession, by the daily practice of meditation, &c. This would be friendship indeed.

Consider, thirdly, that St. James was remarkable for the great austerity of his life, and for his continual prayer. Do we desire to come to a share in his heavenly glory? The mortification of our own humours and passions, frequent voluntary self-denials, and a spirit of penance for our sins, joined with constant and fervent prayer, will bring us effectually to his company. We are told that, by reason of the great sanctity of his life, he alone was allowed to enter into the *sancta sanctorum*, or the inward sanctuary of the temple. But what was a much greater advantage to him, was, that he was allowed to enter into the true sanctuary of God, in his own interior, as often as he pleased, and there to

find him all alone, and to converse as familiarly with him as pleased, by the means of mental prayer. This kind of entering into the sanctuary, God is both willing and desirous to allow to us all; and it is the practice of this which is the securest way to introduce us hereafter into his eternal sanctuary.

Conclude to honour and to imitate these blessed saints, in such manner, during thy mortal pilgrimage, that they may receive thee one day into the everlasting mansions of bliss.

MAY 3.

On the Finding of the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, that, on this day, the church of God, to honour the passion of Christ, celebrates the yearly memorial of the finding of the Cross, that sacred instrument of our redemption, sanctified by the blood of the Son of God. This holy tree of life had lain long deep buried in the earth, and a statue of Venus had been erected by the infidels over the place, when the pious empress St. Helen was inspired to seek after it, and at length happily discovered it, together with the title that had been fastened to it, and the nails with which our Lord had been pierced. This discovery of the cross of Christ was followed by illustrious miracles, to the greater glory of his name, who had humbled himself to the death of the cross for our redemption. Give thanks, Christians, for this miraculous finding of the cross of your Redeemer. Turn this day your devotion towards the triumphs of his sacred passion: it was by the cross he was lifted up from the earth; and, beginning his reign from that tree, he drew all things to himself. O beg of him now, by all his mercy, to draw at least your poor hearts to him.

Consider, secondly, the lessons we are to learn, by occasion of this festival; especially the dispositions we ought to be in with regard to the cross. If we have not the courage to seek it, like St. Helen, at least we ought to receive it, when, without our seeking, it comes to us from the hand of Providence; and to lay it upon our shoulders, in order to follow him, who redeemed us by the cross. O! if we did but know the treasures of grace and of comfort here, and of heavenly glory hereafter, which are laid up for us in the cross, we should not only submit to it with patience, but embrace it with joy, as the inexhaustible source of all good, both for time and eternity. Christians, assure yourselves there is no going to heaven without a cross upon your shoulders. We must suffer with Christ, before we can reign with him.

Consider, thirdly, that the cross is the school of all Christian virtues. As our Lord was pleased to give us most excellent lessons of them all, from *his* cross; so he gives us the means and opportunity of exercising them all, in the carriage of *our* crosses which he allots us. Here we learn to imitate his perfect conformity to the will of his Father; here we learn to practise his humility, by humbling ourselves under the hand of God; here we learn the practice of his meekness, his patience, his charity for his enemies, and his obedience unto death, and (that which is hardest of all for us to attain to) his preferring, in practice, the poverty, pain, and ignominy of the cross, before all the riches, pleasures and honours of this world. O blessed school, in which we learn such heavenly lessons!

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, not to fly from the cross, but to take it up willingly, wheresoever thou findest it, and to follow him. O never be of the number of those unhappy Christians whom the apostle laments, *as enemies of the cross of Christ*; who, by indulging their passions and lusts, seek to bury the cross under the statue of Venus.

FRIDAY AFTER THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

On preparing the Soul for the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER, first, that when we celebrate the Christian solemnities, we ought not only to honour the mysteries we commemorate, and give praise and glory to the Author of all good, for his benefits to his church; but also to enter into the spirit of the solemnity, by aiming, as much as possible, at the dispositions of soul, which are suitable to the mysteries we celebrate. And thus, when we are preparing to keep the solemn feast of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Ghost came down upon the first Christians, it ought to be the great subject of our devotion, to prepare our souls for the Holy Ghost; that so we may be also favoured with his visit, at this holy time, and may plentifully partake of his gifts and graces. O my soul, do thou aspire after this nappiness, (the greatest of any thou canst enjoy on this side of eternity,) to have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the living God, to come to thee, to take full possession of thy interior, and to abide forever with thee! O spare no pains in preparing a proper lodging for him.

Consider, secondly, how the apostles prepared themselves for the Holy Ghost, Acts i. 14. *They were persevering, saith the Scripture, with one mind in prayer.* And, Luke xxiv. 53, *They were always in the temple, praising and blessing God.* They prepared their souls for this heavenly guest, by a spiritual exercise of ten

days; they spent the whole time, from the ascension of our Lord till Whitsunday, in recollection and prayer. Retired, as much as might be, from the hurry and distractions of a busy, noisy world, they attended in silence to God and their souls. They were always at prayer in the temple of God, and, by that means, they prepared their souls to be the temple of God. Happy they that endeavour to make the like preparation! Happy they that make it their practice to prepare themselves, every year, at this time, for the coming of the Holy Ghost, by a spiritual retreat of some days! If thy circumstances, O my soul, will not allow thee this retirement and solitude, therein to breathe the purer air of devotion, and to aspire, in a more suitable manner, after the coming of the Spirit of God, at least wish for this happiness; and, if thou canst do nothing more, at least, in the midst of all thy other employments, call in thy thoughts, as often as thou canst, into thy closet within, and there entertain thyself with thy God. Nothing will contribute more effectually to fix the Holy Ghost in thy soul, than this practice of aiming at an inward recollection, in the midst of all thy works.

Consider, thirdly, that the great means to bring the Holy Ghost into our souls, is to invite him thither by ardent desires and fervent prayer. Thus the apostles obtained him; and the word of God, in many places, assures us, that this is the way for our obtaining all good; that our heavenly *Father will give his good Spirit to all that ask him*, (Luke xi. 13:) and that an ardent desire, a perfect hunger and thirst, after this heavenly Spirit, the Fountain of all justice, is the means to be filled both with him and his gifts. *I wished*, says the wise man, (Wisdom vii. 7,) *and understanding was given me: and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me.* O my soul, see thou seek him in this manner, by fervent desires and prayer; but let it be with thy whole heart. In finding him, thou wilt find all good; for he is the ever-flowing Source of all good: without him thou art nothing but misery and sin. O come, divine Spirit, to my soul, that longs after thee, and bring with thee all thy heavenly treasures. O do thou prepare thyself a proper lodging in my heart, and then take full possession of it, for time and eternity.

Conclude to spare no pains, in using all means in thy power to engage this divine Spirit to come to visit thee, and to take up his abode with thee: frequently invite him with the *Veni, sancte Spiritus, &c.*, a hymn that he himself has inspired. He willingly comes to those that sincerely and heartily invite him.

WHITSUN EVE.

On the Dispositions necessary for receiving the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER, first, that the soul which desires to receive the Holy Ghost, must prepare a clean lodging to entertain him in; that is, a conscience and heart pure and clear from wilful sin. If any person of distinction were to honour us with a visit, and to take up a lodging with us, we should certainly take care to have our house clean, and to remove from the apartment designed for him whatsoever might offend his eyes; how much more, when we pretend to the honour and happiness of having the Spirit of God to abide with us, and in us, ought we to take care to have our inward house clean, and to remove from thence, by the virtue and sacrament of penance, the filth of sin, infinitely odious in his eyes? Alas! all the while the soul is under the guilt of mortal sin, not removed by a serious repentance and conversion to God, she is spiritually possessed by Satan; she is become a den of thieves, and carries as many devils about with her as there are unruly passions, to which she is enslaved. And can she expect a visit from the Holy Ghost, without first ridding herself of such company? No: the Spirit of God can never reside in the same lodging with sin and Satan.

Consider, secondly, those words of the wise man, (*Wisdom i. 4, 5,*) *Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins. For the holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful.* And learn from hence, what sins have a more particular opposition to the visits of the Spirit of God; that, by the contrary dispositions, thou mayst prepare thy soul for him. He is the Spirit of love, union, peace, and *charity*; and therefore *can never enter into a malicious soul.* He is the Spirit of *purity*; and therefore cannot *dwell in a body subject to carnal sins.* He is the Spirit of sincerity and *truth*; and therefore *will flee* from all *deceitful* souls, that is, from all double dealers and hypocrites, that seek him not in simplicity of heart. Banish, then, far from thee all uncharitable animosities and rancour against thy neighbour, all wantonness and impurity, and all deceit and double dealings, if thou hopest to have any share in the Spirit of God.

Consider, thirdly, that there is also an infinite opposition between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God: they cannot both reside in the same breast. *We have received,* says the apostle, (*2 Cor. ii. 12,*) *not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God.* The Paraclete, *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,* saith our Lord, *John xiv. 17.* For as the love of the world, and its friendship, is the great enemy of the

love of God, (James iv. 4, and 1 John ii. 15,) so the spirit of the world is the great adversary of the Spirit of God. The spirit of the world is a spirit of pride and vanity; it is selfish; it is fond of mammon, *the god of this world*, (2 Cor. iv. 5,) and of sensual pleasures, even to idolatry. The spirit of the world is a spirit of dissipation, ever forgetful of God and eternity, and full of disorderly affections to empty, vain, and perishable toys. And what room, then, can there be for the Spirit of God in such a soul? No: the Spirit of God will not come any where, if he is not allowed to be supreme Lord and Master there. He will not admit of such worldly idols in his temple.

Conclude, if thou wouldst effectually invite the Holy Ghost to take up his residence in thy soul, to cleanse the heart thou designest for him, not only from all wilful sin, and affection to sin, but also from loving the world, and the things of the world; and from every love or affection, that shall dare presume to claim any part of thy heart, so as to hinder thee from giving it all to him.

WHITSUNDAY.

On the coming down of the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER, first, that on the feast of Pentecost, when the disciples were all assembled together, *suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak*, Acts ii. 2, 3, 4. Thus they received the promised Comforter, with all his gifts and graces. Thus were they quite changed into other men. Weak and cowardly as they were before, they are now on a sudden courageous and perfect. They begin boldly to preach, and to publish the faith and law of their crucified Lord, and bring thousands to embrace it. O heavenly Spirit, how wonderful are thy operations! O, when wilt thou work the like change in my soul! Christians, praise and bless your God, for sending down, in this manner, his holy Spirit upon his church; and for all the wonders that he wrought in the first establishment of it. The Israelites observed the solemnity of Pentecost, as one of the three principal feasts of the year, because, on that day, the old law was published from mount Sinai, in thunder and lightning: how much more ought Christians religiously to observe this solemnity, because, on this day, the new law, of grace and love, was published on mount Sion, by the com-

ing down of the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire? O, far more sweet and amiable flames!

Consider, secondly, that the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles in the shape of *tongues*, to signify that he came to make them fit preachers of his word; and to endow them with the gift of *tongues*, accompanied with heavenly wisdom, and understanding of the mysteries of God, and all the Gospel truths; to the end that they might be enabled to teach and publish, throughout the whole world, the faith and law of Christ. And these *tongues* were *of fire*, to signify how this divine Spirit sets those souls on fire, in which he abides; inflaming them with divine love, consuming the dross of their earthly affections, putting them in a continual motion of earnest desires and endeavours to go forward from virtue to virtue, as fire is always in motion; and carrying them upwards towards the God of gods in his heavenly Sion, as the flame is always ascending upwards towards its element. O blessed fire, when shall I partake of thy sacred flames? O come, and take possession of my heart; consume all these bonds that tie it to the earth, and carry it up with thee towards the heavenly furnace from whence thou comest. Sweet Jesus, thou hast said, (Luke xii. 49,) *I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?* O cast this fire into my soul, that it may be kindled there.

Consider, thirdly, that the coming of the Holy Ghost was not promised only to the apostles, or to the first Christians, nor confined to the primitive ages, but was designed for a blessing, to be entailed on the people of God throughout all ages. *I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, (or Comforter,) that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth,* St. John xiv. 16, 17. He was promised to be *for ever* with the pastors of God's church, to *guide them into all truth* in teaching God's people; and to be *for ever* with the sheep of Christ, to *guide them into all truth* in their belief and life, and to be the source of all grace to their souls. Wherefore, though we are not now to look for his visible coming down any more in tongues of fire; we are nevertheless entitled, if we sincerely seek and sue to him, to expect a share in his invisible graces and communications, and to aspire to the honour and happiness of being made his temples. Christians, what a happiness indeed, to have the Spirit of God in us! This we must all aim at, with our whole power; this is the great devotion of this holy time; this we must pray for at all times.

Conclude with this humble address of the church to the divine Spirit:—*Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of thy love;* or that other of the sacred hymn,—*Come, O Spirit our Creator, visit these souls of*

line; and fill with thy heavenly grace the breasts which thou hast made for thyself. Frequently repeat these or the like invitations, and trust in the infinite goodness of him, who delights to be with the children of men, that he will come to thee, and be thy guest.

WHITSUN-MONDAY.

On the Happiness of having the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, how happy a guest the soul entertains, when she has in her the Holy Ghost. He is called in scripture the *Paraclete*, (a name that signifies both *Comforter* and *Solicitor*,) from the *consolations* and *graces* he imparts to the soul, to sweeten all her crosses and labours, in her mortal pilgrimage, and to help her to overcome all difficulties and oppositions; and from his *soliciting* for her, by the spirit of prayer, which he inspires, teaching her to pray, and as it were praying with her, and in her. He is called, by excellence, *the gift of the Most High*, as being the greatest *gift* that God can give; for what can he give greater than himself?—a gift comprising all other gifts. He is called *the living fountain*; or *the fountain of living water*, *springing up to everlasting life*, refreshing the inward man, assuaging the heat of concupiscence, extinguishing all thirst after the things of this world, and watering the soul with a never-failing stream of grace. He is called a *fire*, from the bright flames of love, with which he inflames the soul. And he is called the *unction* of the soul, from sweetly diffusing himself through all the soul, and giving strength and vigour to it. O, what can be wanting to a soul that entertains such a guest as this? Does she not, in some measure, anticipate the joys of heaven, having within her the King of heaven, with all his graces?

Consider, secondly, the happy fruits, which the presence of the Holy Ghost produces in the soul, as they are reckoned up by St. Paul, Gal. v. 22, 23. First, *Charity*, or the love of God, for his own infinite goodness sake; and the love of every neighbour in God, and for God; a fruit so remarkable in the first Christians, upon their receiving the Holy Ghost, that, through their love of God, they had all *but one heart, and one soul*. Acts. iv. 32. Second, *Joy*, from the testimony of a good conscience, and from the sense of the presence of this divine guest, and the experience of his sweetness. Third, *Peace* with God, with our neighbours, and with ourselves; a *peace* not granted to the wicked. Fourth, *Patience* in supporting crosses and adversities, which this heavenly Spirit makes light and easy. Fifth, *Benignity*, or kindness, in relieving the distressed. Sixth, *Good-*

ness, or a willingness to impart all that is good to every neighbour. Seventh, *Longanimity*, or long-suffering, and perseverance, without being wearied out with labour, in overcoming evil with good. Eighth, *Mildness*, in restraining wrath and bearing injuries. Ninth, *Faith*, or fidelity, to all our engagements, both to God, and our neighbours. Tenth, *Modesty*, or moderation in all things, regulating every motion both of soul and body. Eleventh, *Continency*, or temperance, in restraining all irregular inclinations; and, twelfth, *Chastity*, or purity, in keeping both soul and body from the defilements of lust. O, what happy fruits are these! O, how happy is that soul in which the Spirit of God produces all these fruits! O my soul, bring in this heavenly Spirit into thy inward house, and entertain him there, and all these fruits will be thine.

Consider, thirdly, that, as nothing can be more happy than to have the Holy Ghost in the soul; so nothing can be more miserable than to be without this heavenly guest. Where the Spirit of God is not, there Satan is! Alas! can there be a greater misery than to be possessed by Satan! *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ*, says the apostle, (Rom. viii. 9,) *he is none of his*. If he be none of his, whose, then, must he be? Or what share can he have in Christ or his kingdom? O how true is that which the church sings at this time, in her address to this divine Spirit, *sine tuo numine, nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium*. That, without his deity, there is nothing in man, there is nothing that is innocent. O, dread, then, the misery of being without him, and flee from all those evils that may drive him away from thee.

Conclude to neglect nothing that is in thy power, by which thou mayst procure to thy soul the happiness of being the living temple of the living God; and of having the Holy Ghost there, not as a visitor only, but as taking up his abode in thee, both for time and eternity.

WHITSUN-TUESDAY.

On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER, first, what precious gifts the Spirit of God brings with him, wherever he comes, and what treasures he imparts to the soul in which he takes up his abode. The prophet reckons up seven most admirable gifts of this holy Spirit, (Isai. xi. 2, 3,) when he styles him *the Spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge, and of godliness, and—the Spirit of the fear of the Lord*. O, how precious indeed, how admirable, are these gifts! O, how

rich is that soul, which, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, is put in possession of these treasures! But what is this *wisdom* that the Holy Ghost imparts? Not the *wisdom* of this world, which is downright folly in the sight of God, because it looks no farther than earthly toys, and contriving for the transitory enjoyments of this world, whilst it forgets God and eternity;—not the *wisdom* of the philosophers, who busy themselves in studying the courses of the stars and the secrets of nature, and neglect to seek truth in its fountain, because they do not seriously apply themselves to know God, and their own interior;—but that *wisdom*, which alone deserves this glorious name, which consists in the knowledge and love of God, which tends continually to him, and which seeks and finds him in all things.

Consider, secondly, how precious also are those other gifts, which the Spirit of God communicates to the soul;—the gift of *understanding*, which opens the eyes of the soul to the light of God, and sets the truths of God in their proper light; which clearly discovers to the soul the shortness and vanity of all temporal honours, riches and pleasures, and convinceth her that nothing is truly great, or worthy of her affection, but that which is eternal. By the help of this light, the end of our creation, the dignity of an immortal soul, the nature of our mortal pilgrimage, the four last things, and other Christian truths, sink deep into the soul, and have a wonderful influence upon the whole conduct of our lives. But then, as we are strangers and travellers here below, and are obliged to make the best of our way towards our true country, through the midst of difficulties and dangers, and with infinite opposition from strong and subtle enemies; the Spirit of God comes in to our assistance, with two other admirable gifts, viz. the gift of *counsel* to show us our way, to discover to us the snares and artifices of our enemies, and to guide us safe through all dangers; and the gift of *fortitude*, or heavenly courage and strength, to animate us to encounter all opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to help us to come off with victory in all our conflicts. O, how happy is that traveller who has such a Guide, such a Counsellor, such a powerful Helper and Protector!

Consider, thirdly, the rest of the gifts, which the Holy Ghost imparts to that soul in which he dwells, viz. the gift of *knowledge*, to instruct her in every virtue, and every duty, and in every step she is to take, in order to God and a happy eternity;—then the gift of *godliness* or *piety*, which makes the soul quite in earnest, and perfectly fervent, in the service of God, so that she runs on with vigour and alacrity, in the ways of all his divine commandments;—and lastly, the gift of *the fear of the Lord*, which the scripture calls *the beginning of wisdom*; which restrains the soul

from all that may offend God, and makes her fear his displeasure more than any other evil whatsoever. Can any treasures upon earth be comparable to these ?

Conclude to set a high value upon these heavenly gifts, the least of which is worth more than all the world can give. How rich, then, is that soul which enjoys them all, by enjoying the Spirit of God, who is the Source of all good, and who alone can impart such excellent gifts.

WHITSUN-WEDNESDAY.

On the Means of keeping the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that the soul which has been favoured with a visit from the Holy Ghost, if she desires a continuance of that happiness, must take care to entertain him in a proper manner. For if she takes little or no notice of this heavenly Guest ; if she quickly turns her back upon him, to attend to every idle and impertinent amusement that offers itself ; if she do not frequently go in, to wait upon him, in her inward house ; if she love not to converse with him there ; she will quickly lose him ; she will drive him away from her. He delights to be with them that delight to be with him. He expects a correspondence and return of love. And therefore withdraws himself from such souls as take no care to entertain him, by recollection and love, but choose to give themselves up to dissipation of thought, and to squander away that precious time, which they should spend in his company, in following empty phantoms, and roving imaginations. O, my soul, is not this too often thy case ? Amongst the many thoughts, which successively occupy thy mind, all the day long, how few are there that are any thing to the purpose ! how few that are fit to come in, to appear in presence of the Holy Ghost ! How, then, canst thou expect he will stay with thee, if thou introducest such company as this into his lodging !

Consider, secondly, that as the Spirit of God will not dwell in a soul that does not attend on him by *recollection of thought* ; so neither will he dwell in a soul that does not serve him with *purity of heart* and *affection*. He will be sole master of the heart in which he resides ; he will allow of no partner there. He is a jealous *lover*, that will bear no rival. A heart, divided in its affections between the Creator and the creature, excludes the Holy Ghost ; he will suffer no division ; he claims the whole heart : as our supreme Lord, he demands this tribute of regard. Christians, if, then, you pretend to the happiness of being temples of the Holy Ghost, you must not admit of any idols in your souls. Now, all disorderly affections are idols, inasmuch as, by them, you

prefer the creature before the Creator; and all such affections are disorderly, as captivate your hearts, and take them off from God. Let the object of your love be ever so innocent in itself, it is no longer innocent when it is loved without a due subordination to the love of God. It becomes then impure; it defiles the heart; it chases away the Spirit of God, who will not dwell but in a clean heart.

Consider, secondly, that, in order to keep the Holy Ghost in the soul, so that he may choose to dwell there, as in his temple, we must not only keep this temple clean and undefiled, (for *if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17,) but we must also take care that it be made a *house of prayer*, as the house of God should be. We must frequently go into this temple, there to worship this *Spirit of truth, in spirit and truth*. We must apply and employ all the three powers of the soul, the will, the memory, and the understanding, in frequently attending there upon their God, in the way of mental prayer. In a word, the worship of God should be ever going forward in this temple of his. This is the true way to engage him to stay with us, and to make our souls the place of his rest for ever and ever.

Conclude to make use of all these means to entertain this sovereign Guest, and to fix him in your souls. Give him full possession of your memory and understanding, by recollection of thought, and attention to his presence: and make him the absolute Master of your will, by simplicity of intention and purity of heart and affection, and he will be yours for ever.

WHITSUN-THURSDAY.

On the Marks of the Holy Ghost's abiding in the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that the surest way to make a judgment, whether the Holy Ghost abides in the soul, or no, is by his fruits. The Spirit of God never lies idle; he is a *fire* that is always active, always in motion, always tending upwards. If we find nothing of this in our souls, we have reason to fear he is not there. His fruits are *charity, joy, peace, patience, &c.* If we have none of these fruits, he is not with us. My soul, what is thy faith? Is it firm? Is it lively? Or is it not rather dull and dead? Does it show itself in the practice of thy life? Dost thou live by faith? What is thy hope? What is thy sense of the things of eternity? What is thy esteem of spiritual things? What is thy devotion? What is thy love for God and thy neighbour? What is thy desire of making a daily progress in the way of God? By examining thyself upon these heads, it will be easy to judge whet-

er the Holy Ghost be with thee, or no. But especially, there is no surer mark of this divine Spirit abiding in the soul, than a constant and fervent desire of loving God daily more and more, and of ever knowing and doing his holy will in all things. Dost thou find in thyself this earnest desire of loving and pleasing God? If so, the Spirit of God cannot be far from thee.

Consider, secondly, that as there is an infinite opposition between the Spirit of God and wilful sin; so one of the surest marks of the Holy Ghost's residing in the soul, is a settled, constant abhorrence of wilful sin, with a fixed determination of the soul never to admit, for the future, any such sin, upon any consideration whatsoever. My soul, what is thy disposition in this regard? Art thou fully determined to be ever faithful and loyal to thy God, both in life and death? Dost thou resolutely renounce Satan, and all his works, both for the present time and for ever? Is it thy constant and settled resolution, never to transgress the holy law and commandments of God, for any worldly honour, interest or pleasure, for any respect of person, for any fear or love, for any thing that the world can give or take away, or for any other consideration? If this be thy sincere disposition and determination, the Holy Ghost is with thee; but if thou art not thus determined, there is no room for him in thy soul, because Satan is there.

Consider, thirdly, that where the Holy Ghost comes, he *convinceth the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment*, John xvi. 8. He convinces the soul of sin, inasmuch as he gives to the soul, which he enlightens with his presence, a sense of the enormity of *sin*, and of the multitude and greatness of her own sins in particular; a horror for that hellish monster, and a desire of abolishing it by penance. He discovers also many stains, where the soul before perceived none; and humbles her exceedingly, by the conviction of her manifold guilt. My soul, dost thou experience in thyself this *conviction of sin*? The Holy Ghost, by his coming, *convinceth* also the soul of the *justice* of Christ, and of his heavenly law, of the beauty of virtue and holiness, and of the pleasure and happiness, that is found in serving God in earnest. Art thou, my soul, practically *convinced* of all this? Dost thou practically prefer this manna of heaven before the flesh-pots of Egypt? Again, the Holy Ghost, by his coming, *convinceth* the soul of the *wrong judgment* she has hitherto made, in following the world, and the *prince of this world, who is already judged*, and condemned; and of the *right judgment* she ought to make of all things, in order to escape that *judgment*, which God will otherwise one day make of her. Dost thou, my soul, find in thee this *conviction of judgment*? Is thy *judgment* rectified by the Holy Ghost, in regard to truth and falsehood, verity and van-

ity, time and eternity? Dost thou not still follow, by a perverse *judgment*, the prince of this world, rather than Jesus Christ; the maxims of worldlings, who are liars in their balances, rather than the practice of the saints, who weigh all things in the scales of the sanctuary? Will thy way of judging be able to stand the test of the last great trial?

Conclude to examine well, by such marks as these, whether the Spirit of God be with thee or no. If thou seemest to find in thyself these marks of his presence, return him humble thanks; but be not too secure, lest the artifices of thy self-love should deceive thee, or thy pride should drive him away from thee. But if thou discoverest not in thyself these marks of his being with thee, bewail thy misery, and give thyself no rest, till by penitential tears, and fervent prayer, and all the other means by which the Holy Ghost is to be invited into the soul, thou hast grounds to hope that he is returned to thee.

WHITSUN-FRIDAY.

On the Sacrament of Confirmation.

CONSIDER, first, that confirmation is a sacrament, by which the faithful, if duly disposed, receive the Holy Ghost, together with all his gifts and graces, in order to make them strong and perfect Christians. The apostles were *confirmed*, in a wonderful manner, by the Holy Ghost's coming down visibly upon them, on Whitsunday; but the rest of the faithful were to be confirmed by their ministry, and by that of their successors, the bishops of God's church; receiving the Holy Ghost by the imposition of their hands, and prayer, *Acts* viii. 15, 17, 18, and chap. xix. 6 Give thanks to our Lord, for this sacred institution, by means of which he perpetuates in his church the mission of his Holy Spirit, and the communication of his graces. What a dignity, what a happiness, to receive the Holy Ghost, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the inexhaustible Source of all grace! Wheresoever he comes, he brings with him all his treasures; and he is infinitely liberal in imparting them to all such souls as are disposed to receive them. How much, then, are they their own enemies, who either neglect this great means of receiving the Holy Ghost, or else come to it without due dispositions, and so lose the benefit of it, and even pervert it to their own damnation!

Consider, secondly, that the proper and peculiar grace of the sacrament of confirmation is a heavenly *fortitude*; that is to say, a spiritual strength, valour, and courage, in order to maintain the cause of God and our souls against the visible and invisible enemies of our faith. By this sacrament we are made soldiers of

Christ: here we give in our names to be listed in the service of this great King; we put ourselves under his banner; we receive the sacred mark of his *cross* on our foreheads; his cross, which is the royal standard of all his troops: here we engage ourselves to fight his battles, against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and we are equipped out with proper arms for this warfare. () how gloricus is this title of a soldier of Christ! How happy this service! What have we to apprehend, following Christ for our Captain, and having his holy Spirit with us, to guide, strengthen, encourage, and defend us? But O, the noble pay, which this great King gives to his soldiers! For he gives them nothing less than himself, and that for eternity. *Be thou faithful until death, saith he, and I will give thee the crown of life.* Apocal. ii. 10.

Consider, thirdly, that, in the sacrament of confirmation, the soul is, in a particular manner, dedicated and consecrated to God, by the unction of his holy Spirit, at the same time as the forehead is anointed with the holy Chrism. This Chrism is a compound of oil and balm of Gilead, solemnly consecrated by the bishops of God's church, on Maunday-Thursday; kept in the church with the utmost reverence; and only used in the consecration of such things as are more solemnly dedicated to God, or more nearly deputed to his divine service. So that the using of this holy oil in confirmation, is to give us to understand, that, by this sacrament, we also are solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God, to be the temples of his Spirit; inasmuch as this visible unction and consecration of the body is the outward sign of the invisible unction and consecration of the soul, by the Spirit of God; as all the sacraments are outward signs of inward grace. Christians, what are your thoughts of this consecration, which your souls have received? Have you hitherto considered yourselves as a people particularly dedicated to God, and sanctified by the unction of his Spirit? Have you reflected, that you have been sanctified with the like consecration to that with which the altars and temples of God are solemnly dedicated to his service? Remember this, at least, for the future; and let your lives show forth, that you are indeed the living temples of the living God.

Conclude to set a high value upon the grace of your confirmation, and to live up to the glorious character you there received. See you behave in every respect as becomes strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Christ. Beware of receiving so great a grace in vain.

WHITSUN-SATURDAY.

On the Obligations of our Confirmation.

CONSIDER, first, that confirmation is one of those three sacraments, which imprint a character, or spiritual mark, in the soul. The nature of this character of confirmation is such, as to carry with it a certain dedication of the soul to the service of God in the quality of his soldier; as the character of baptism marks us out for the people of God, and the character of Holy Orders for the ministers of God. Hence it is, that these three sacraments, after they have been once received, cannot be received any more, because the character which they leave in the soul, which is the mark of the consecration of the soul to God, can never be lost, and therefore can never be repeated. But then these three sacraments carry also with them a strict obligation of living up to this character, and to this consecration, which they impart to the soul; and thus this sacrament of confirmation, in particular, obliges us to observe the whole discipline of the soldiers of Jesus Christ; to stand to our colours; to fight manfully the battles of our Lord; and rather to die than to change sides, or to go over to the enemy, by any wilful sin. This is the allegiance we owe to Christ in quality of his soldiers; this we oblige ourselves to, when we receive the character of confirmation.

Consider, secondly, that the soldiers of this world profess a strict regard to all the laws of their calling, and to the orders of their officers. They expose themselves to all kind of labours and dangers, in marches, in sieges, and in battles. They endure heats and colds, and all the inclemency of the weather and the seasons; they suffer hunger and thirst, watchings, and all other hardships, to which their station of life exposes them; and all this for a trifling consideration of a small pay. What lessons are here for Christians, who, by the sacrament of confirmation, have enlisted themselves soldiers of Christ! How much more ought they to embrace with courage all the labours and sufferings to which their spiritual warfare exposes them! especially as they fight under the banner of so great a King, in his presence and company, and for so great a reward. But, alas! the soldiers of this world will, I fear, one day rise up in judgment, and condemn us, for having done and suffered so little in the warfare of Christ, in comparison with what they have done and suffered in the warfare of the world.

Consider, thirdly, that whatsoever is once dedicated and consecrated to God, ought to continue for ever dedicated and consecrated to his divine service. And it is no less a crime than sacrilege, to pervert any thing, dedicated to him, to profane uses.

Therefore the soul which, by the sacrament of confirmation, has been dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God, and which always carries about with her the mark of this consecration, is strictly obliged thereby to be ever his, to be ever faithful, and to be ever holy, as a thing dedicated to his divine service, both in quality of his soldier and of his temple. O remember, Christians, that the character, which the soul receives in this sacrament, can never be effaced, neither in this world nor in the world to come; that, if we live up to the obligations of it, it will shine most brightly in our souls to eternity, and be no small addition to our everlasting glory and happiness; but if we should defile and profane this sacred mark of Christ, by a sinful life, and, after these solemn engagements, and the consecration of our souls to him, should become rebels and deserters, that this same mark would appear in judgment against us; it would condemn us at the bar of divine justice; it would continue with us for ever, as a mark of disgrace, a perpetual reproach among the damned, and an additional torture and gripe to the soul, for having once been dedicated to God, and having been so mad, so wretched, so wicked, as to apostatize from him.

Conclude to bear always in mind the sacred character of thy confirmation, as well as that of thy baptism, that thou mayst live up to the obligations of them both. Be not terrified at the prospect of the conflicts thou must sustain, or the crosses and hardships thou wilt have to go through in this warfare: the grace of God, and his *peace, which surpasseth all understanding*, (Phil. iv. 7,) will support thee, and never *suffer thee to be tempted above thy strength*, (1 Cor. x. 13,) but bring thee off with comfort and victory; in token of which, the bishop, when he confirmed thee, gave thee a blow on the cheek, as a declaration of the adversities thou wast to sustain, but at the same time gave thee God's *peace*, that thou mightest understand, that God would be with thee, in them all, and never leave thee.

TRINITY-SUNDAY.

On the blessed Trinity.

CONSIDER, first, that, on this day, the church sets before the eyes of our souls this principal mystery of the Christian faith, by which we believe one eternal God in three several persons; which we call the mystery of the blessed Trinity, or of three in one, three persons in one God. This is the great object of the Christian's worship. This we ought to adore every day and every hour. Every Sunday in the year might be called Trinity Sunday; because every Sunday is set aside for the worship of

this adorable Trinity, our Lord and our God. Yea, all our time belongs to him; and the great sacrifice, that is offered daily, on millions of altars, throughout the world, is principally designed to give sovereign adoration, homage, praise, and glory, to the most holy Trinity. But then this day is more particularly appointed by the church, (which has now just finished the celebrating the other great festivals, relating to the mysteries of our redemption and sanctification, wrought by the three divine persons,) in order to honour, in a more particular manner, this chiefest mystery of our religion. Come then, my soul, and come all ye Christian souls with me this day, and let us bow down all our powers to adore this incomprehensible mystery. The more it is above our reach, the more worthy it is both of our faith and veneration.

Consider, secondly, more in particular, what our faith teaches us with relation to this mystery. We believe there is but one true and living God, and no more; eternal, incomprehensible, omnipotent, and infinite in all his attributes and perfections. In this one God, we believe three distinct persons, of the same substance and essence, and perfectly equal in age, in power, in wisdom, and in all perfections; the *Father*, who has no beginning, and proceeds from no one; the *Son*, who proceeds from the *Father*, by an eternal and ineffable generation, as his living word, and wisdom, the brightness of his glory, and the most perfect image of his person; and the *Holy Ghost*, the *Spirit of God*, who proceeds eternally from the *Father* and the *Son*. We believe that these three are one, by having all three the same Godhead, that is, the same divine nature. The *Father* is God, the *Son* is God, the *Holy Ghost* is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God, one Lord, one Almighty, in three several persons. This is the true Christian catholic belief of the mystery of the blessed Trinity, essentially necessary for our eternal salvation. Let us, then, make frequent acts of faith concerning this sovereign truth; let us cast down every proud thought, that offers to rebel against it: God himself has taught it, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

Consider, thirdly, that it is not our faith alone, but our lives also, that must render proper homage to this adorable mystery of the eternal Trinity. *What will it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, saith a servant of God, if, through want of humility, thou be disagreeable to the Trinity?* Humility of mind and heart is the most agreeable homage that man can pay

Learn also from the Epistle of this day, as a part of the homage thou owest to the most sacred Trinity, to adore in silence the depth of the secret counsels and judgments of God, and the wisdom of his unsearchable ways; and, in all events, to give glory to him. *For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory for ever: Amen.* Rom. xi. 36.

Conclude to come daily before the throne of the eternal Trinity with thy best homage of faith, love, and humility. Adore the almighty power of the Father, the infinite wisdom of the Son, and the incomprehensible goodness and love of the Holy Ghost. And give up the three powers of thy soul, and thy whole being, without reserve, to be ruled and disposed of, for time and eternity, by this infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

MONDAY AFTER TRINITY-SUNDAY.

On the Figures of the blessed Eucharist.—And first of the paschal Lamb.

CONSIDER, first, that the Old Testament was a figure of the New; and that all the most remarkable events that are there recorded by the Spirit of God, have relation, in the way of prophetic figures, to Christ and his church of the New Testament. Thus the redemption or deliverance of the children of Israel out of the slavery in Egypt, was a figure of the redemption of man by Christ, from the bondage of Satan and sin; and the means that were then ordered and appointed to be used, as a preparation for that deliverance, were a figure of what was to be afterwards done by our Redeemer, for the deliverance of all mankind from a far worse slavery. Now it was appointed, (Exod. xii,) that the children of Israel, the night before their going out of Egypt, should, in all their families, offer up an unspotted lamb in sacrifice; and that they should sprinkle their door-posts with the blood of the victim, as a sign for the destroying angel, who slew that night all the first-born of Egypt, to pass over their houses; and that they should eat the flesh of the lamb, that same night, roasted at the fire, with unleavened bread and wild lettuce; having their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands, in readiness to take the journey, which they were immediately to begin, in consequence of the deliverance of that night. See here, my soul, this illustrious figure: but now let us come to the application of it.

Consider, therefore, secondly, that this unspotted lamb, first offered in sacrifice, and then eaten in a sacred and mysterious sign, or sacrament, was a lively figure of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, offered up in sacrifice for our redemption from sin

and all, with the sprinkling of whose blood, our souls are rescued from the power of Satan, and from the second death; and whose sacred flesh we are commanded to eat in the divine mysteries, as an earnest of the share we have in him and his sacrifice; as a sovereign means of communicating to our souls the fruit of our redemption, and all the grace purchased by our Redeemer; as a pledge of our eternal happiness; and as a preparation, and a viaticum, for the great journey we are to make out of this Egypt of the world, to the true land of promise, the land of the living. O my soul, let us adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for these wonders he has wrought in our favour, in these heavenly mysteries. Let us embrace, with all affection, this Lamb of God, immolated for our sins; this Christian Pasch; this Victim of our redemption; this new Sacrifice of the new covenant, the covenant of life and love. Let us frequently approach to these mysteries, but see it be with due dispositions.

Consider, thirdly, that the paschal lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and wild lettuce, to signify the dispositions of soul with which we ought to come to the Christian passover. Christ is now our paschal Lamb. *Therefore*, says the Apostle, (1 Cor. v. 8,) *let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* So that a purity of intention, uprightness, and simplicity of heart, and the sincere disposition of a soul, which desires to give herself up, without reserve, to her Redeemer, are signified by the unleavened bread, with which the pasch was to be eaten; as the wholesome bitterness of a true repentance, and contrition for our sins, is signified by the bitter taste of the wild lettuce. And whereas it was also ordered, that, in eating the paschal lamb, they should have their loins girt up, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands; we are to learn from these ceremonies, that, if we would worthily approach to the Lamb of God, in the sacred mysteries, we must gird up the loins of our soul, by a resolute restraint of our passions and lusts; and have our feet, that is, the affections of the soul, *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*, (Eph. iv. 15,) that is, with a readiness of heart to follow, in all things, the rules of the Gospel, as the only way to true peace; and hold our staves in our hands, as pilgrims and travellers, not having any propriety, or lasting dwelling here, but wholly bent on making the best of our way to our true country.

Conclude to frequent, henceforward, the great Christian passover of the most blessed Eucharist, with the disposition of true Israelites, leaving Egypt, and marching towards the land of promise. Ever consider it as the sacrifice and sacrament of your deliverance and redemption, and approach to it with the devo-

tion which this consideration requires; as the Israelites were commanded to solemnize, by the annual devotion of the sacrifice and sacrament of the paschal lamb, the memory of their redemption from their Egyptian bondage.

TUESDAY AFTER TRINITY-SUNDAY.

Of the Manna, and the Bread of Elias.

CONSIDER, first, that the manna, with which God fed the children of Israel, for forty years in the wilderness, from their going out of Egypt till their entering into the land of promise, was another prophetic emblem of the true bread of heaven, which we receive in the blessed Eucharist. *He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, says the Psalmist, (lxxvii. 23, 24, 25.) And he rained down manna upon them to eat; and gave them the bread of heaven; man did eat the bread of angels.* And yet this miraculous food, formed by angels, and sent down from the clouds, and therefore called the bread of heaven, and the bread of angels, was but a figure of that bread of life which we receive in the blessed sacrament; an illustrious figure indeed, but nothing in comparison with the truth. *Moses did not give you bread from heaven, says our Lord to the Jews, John vi. (for the manna only came down from the clouds,) but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven—I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.—As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever. ver. 32, 51, 52, 58, 59. O my soul, see thou embrace this living and life-giving bread.*

Consider, secondly, that the manna was the food upon which the people of God lived, for forty years, in the wilderness, but which ceased as soon as they came to eat of the fruits of the land of promise; to give us to understand, that the bread of heaven, which we here receive, veiled under the sacramental species, in the blessed Eucharist, is to be the food, nourishment, strength and life of our souls, during our mortal pilgrimage in the wilderness of this world, till we come to the true land of promise, and there eat of the happy fruits of that blessed land of the living, by the beatific vision and contemplation of the Divinity; and that then all sacramental veils shall be removed, and we shall see and feed upon Life and Truth itself, face to face for all eternity. Christians, if you hope to arrive one day at this

happy and of promise, see you neglect not to gather for your journey the manna of heaven, by the frequent and worthy approaching to the bread of life in the most holy sacrament; without this support, you will perish in the wilderness, and never reach your journey's end. But, if you would truly relish this heavenly manna, you must take care not to let your palate be depraved, like the carnal Jews, by an affection to the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt.

Consider, thirdly, another figure of this heavenly food, in that *hearth-cake* of the prophet Elias, with which he was fed by an angel in the wilderness, when he was fleeing from the persecution of Jezabel, (3 Kings xix,) *in the strength of which food, he walked forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God, Horeb,* (v. 8,) where he was favored with the vision of the Deity, as far as man is capable of seeing him in this life. *Arise, eat,* said the angel to him, (v. 7,) *for thou hast yet a great way to go.* All which expresses to us, that, retiring from the dangers and the contagion of a wicked world, as from the impious Jezabel, in order to make our journey to the mountain of God, the mountain of eternity, we must have recourse to this bread of heaven for our support in our way; for we have yet a great way to go, being far off from that perfection which is required before we can come to the vision of God; and this barren wilderness, through which we are to travel, affording us no proper food, for our sustenance in the way, but what we must have from heaven.

Conclude, my soul, if thou aspirest after this mountain of God, and the happy vision of him, diligently to procure this bread of life, in the strength of which thou mayst also walk, during the forty days of thy pilgrimage, to that blessed mountain. But remember that this bread was only given in the wilderness, that is, in retirement and solitude; and that the manna was not given till the people had left Egypt; and learn from thence, that a spirit of recollection, and a purifying of the heart from the affections to the Egypt of this world, are the best dispositions for the bread of heaven.

WEDNESDAY AFTER TRINITY-SUNDAY.

Of other Figures of the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER, first, that the sacrifice of Melchisedech, (Gen. xiv. 18,) in bread and wine, was another figure of the sacrifice and sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, in the Eucharist; as Melchisedech himself, and his priesthood, was an illustrious figure of Christ, and his eternal priesthood, as we learn from Psalm cx. 4. and Hebr. vii. And so likewise, in the law of Moses, al'

those sacrifices commonly called *peace-offerings*, in which both the priest and the people were partakers of the victim, were also figures of Christ sacrificed for us, and received by us. So many ways was the divine Majesty pleased, both before the law and in the law, to show forth to us, not only the sacrifice, in which his Son should be both our priest and victim, but also the sacrament, by which he should communicate his own flesh to us. Learn from hence, my soul, what reverence, what devotion, thou owest to our tremendous mysteries, the very figures of which were so sacred and so venerable. It was a great crime, if any one, that was not clean and pure, presumed to approach to these ancient sacrifices. What purity, then, is the Christian now obliged to bring with him, when he approaches to the truth, of which these were but shadows ?

Consider, secondly, that God appointed twelve loaves, made of fine flour, to stand always in his temple, before the veil of the *sancta sanctorum*, or the inward sanctuary ; placed there upon a table, made for that purpose, of incorruptible wood, and overlaid with gold ; and that the clearest frankincense should be put upon them ; that *the bread might be for a memorial of the oblation of the Lord, by an everlasting covenant ;* Levit. xxiv. 5, 6, 7, 8. These loaves, called the *holy bread*, and the *loaves of proposition*, or show-bread, were also a figure of the holy Eucharist. They always stood before the Lord in his temple, as an offering made to him by his people ; as a figure of that solemn offering which should be afterwards daily made, under the form of bread, in the church of Christ ; the clearest frankincense was put upon them, to denote the pure prayer, and devotion, with which this offering was to be made. And they stood before the veil, with the golden candlestick, and the altar of perfumes, to signify that the sovereign means to bring our souls to God, and to introduce us within the veil, into his eternal sanctuary, would be the right use of the bread of life, which we have in the blessed Eucharist, joined with devout prayer, and the lights and graces of the Spirit of God, signified by the seven branches of the golden candlestick.

Consider, thirdly, that *the tree of life*, planted in the midst of the earthly paradise, (Gen. ii. 9,) was also a figure of the blessed sacrament. The fruit of this tree had that excellent property, that, if sin had not banished us from that happy abode, we should have been maintained thereby in a constant vigour, strength, and health, and so should have never died. O how well does the blessed Eucharist answer this noble figure !—seeing we here feed upon life itself, in its very source ; and, by frequently and worthily approaching to it, receive a plentiful supply of heavenly grace, for the maintaining of the vigour, strength, and health, of the soul ; that so we may never incur the second death, but may

pass from life to life, from the life of grace to the life of glory, from life concealed under sacramental veils, to life seen and enjoyed, without shadow or change, for all eternity.

Conclude, from all these ancient types and figures, so noble, and so expressive of the blessed Eucharist and its fruits, to raise thy thoughts and heart above this earth, and all that is earthly, in the use of this heavenly sacrament. And assure thyself that this divine mystery, so many ways prefigured, both in the law of nature and in the law of Moses, must needs be something far superior to all types and figures.

CORPUS-CHRISTI DAY.

On the Institution of the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, having finished the course of his mortal life, when *his hour was now come that he should pass out of this world to the Father; having loved his own who were in the world*, says the beloved disciple, (John xiii. 1,) *he loved them unto the end*; and gave them, in the last stage of his life, the most evident tokens of his boundless love, as well in what he endured, out of pure love for us, in his passion and death, as in the institution of the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament, at his last supper, as an admirable legacy of love; in which, and by which, he might not only *be always with us to the end of the world*, but might also unite himself to us, in such a manner as that *we should abide in him, and he in us*; John vi. 57. O how wonderful are the ways of his divine love! How incomprehensible the riches of his bounty and goodness to us! What could he give us more, than when he gives us himself? What could he do more to testify his affection for us? Is it possible, my soul, we should ever forget, or be ungrateful to such a lover?

Consider, secondly, the infinite treasures which our Lord has bequeathed to us in the institution of these divine mysteries, which contain an inexhaustible source of divine grace; the living bread, the food, the nourishment, the strength, and the life of our souls; the manna of heaven; the tree of life; spirit, truth, and life itself; the remedy of all our evils; the most powerful medicine for all our diseases; the sovereign antidote against the poison of the infernal serpent; the comfort of our banishment; the support of our pilgrimage; the price of our ransom; the earnest of our eternal salvation; the great sacrifice and victim of the New Testament; by means of which we are enabled to give worthy praise, adoration, and homage, to God; to return him acceptable thanks; and to apply daily to our souls, all the fruit of the death and passion of the Son of God, as well for the

remission of all our sins, as for the obtaining of all good through him, both for time and eternity. In a word, he has bequeathed to us, in these heavenly mysteries, his own sacred body and blood, together with his soul and divinity ; so rich a present, that heaven can give nothing greater.

Consider, thirdly, what could be the motive that induced our Lord to communicate himself and all his treasures to us, in this wonderful manner, by the institution of that blessed Eucharist. O, my soul, it was no other but his own pure goodness and love. It was that by this means he might be always with us ; *for his delight is to be with the children of men*, Prov. viii. 31. It was that he might unite us to himself, that he might abide in us, and we in him. O, who ever heard of such love as this ! But what didst thou see in me, dearest Lord, that could claim thy love, and such a love ?—in me, a poor worm of the earth, and, what is infinitely worse, a most ungrateful, wicked sinner, a traitor to thee and to thy Father, and who have so often crucified thee by my repeated crimes ? O ye heavens, be astonished at this prodigy of my Saviour's bounty and love for me, and of my wickedness and ingratitude in not making him a better return. O my soul, let us now begin at least to be wholly his ; let nothing henceforward be capable of separating us any more from this divine Lover.

Conclude to be ever thankful for this unspeakable benefit of the institution of the blessed sacrament and sacrifice of the altar. Join now with the church, in celebrating this octave with an extraordinary devotion, in acknowledgment of thy Saviour's goodness and love, which he has shown to us in these mysteries, and make the best amends thou art able, by thy diligence in this devotion, for the many affronts, abuses and sacrileges, to which thy Saviour has here exposed himself for the love of thee.

FRIDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS-CHRISTI.

On the Mysteries contained in the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER, first, that all the sacraments are sacred and mysterious signs of divine graces, and of heavenly truths, which lie concealed under these outward appearances, and, through them, are conveyed to our souls ; but that the blessed Eucharist in particular, as it is the greatest of all the sacraments, contains more and greater mysteries than any of the rest. Here our Lord gives himself to us in quality of our *food* ; that, as sin and death, and all our miseries, came to us originally by *eating* of the forbidden fruit ; so grace and life, and all our good, should come to us by *eating* here of the fruit of *the tree of life*, which he has commanded us

to eat And he gives himself to us under the form of *bread*, as being a form the most expressive to us, both of his *real* and his *mystical body*. *He is the living bread which came down from heaven, for the life of the world*, John vi. 51, 52. And his body has all the qualities of *bread*, in regard to our souls; inasmuch as it is the true food and nourishment of our souls unto life everlasting. Therefore this form of bread is the most proper to express to us the true *living bread*, which it contains, namely, the true and *real body* of Christ, and its qualities and effects, in being the food, nourishment, strength and life of our souls; and, at the same time, is also most proper to express to us the mystical body of Christ, which is his church, and the union of concord and charity, by which all its members, like so many grains of corn, are closely united, as it were in one bread, by means of the holy communion, according to that of St. Paul, (1 Cor. x. 17,) *We, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread.*

Consider, secondly, that, in this most holy sacrament and sacrifice, the death and passion of the Son of God is also, in a lively manner, represented to us, and all the mysteries of our redemption are solemnly celebrated; inasmuch as, by the separate consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the true Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, presents himself to his Father, upon our altars, under the figure of death, that is, under the sacramental veils, which represent his body as delivered up, broken and slain for us, and his blood as shed for us. So that here the whole passion and death of Christ is solemnly acted, as a most sacred tragedy, by himself in person. Here that death, which is the fountain of all our good, is showed forth in such manner as not only to be kept up in our remembrance, but also to live in us, and bring forth always in us the fruit of life. Here the blood of Christ most powerfully pleads and intercedes for us. Here, in fine, not only the passion and death, but also the victorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension of our crucified King, are solemnly commemorated. O my soul, admire and adore these divine mysteries.

Consider, thirdly, that the participation of the body and blood of Christ, under the sacramental veils, is no less mysterious, in the many benefits it ensures to us, with relation to our redemption and salvation. For here we receive an assurance of the share we have in our Redeemer and in the sacrifice of his cross. Here we are mystically incorporated in him, and are made partakers of his Spirit. Here we are admitted to that blood which is the seal of the new covenant; importing the remission of our sins, and our reconciliation with God, through the death of his Son; together with an admittance to all graces and blessings through him. Here, in fine, we have a most certain pledge of a

happy resurrection, and everlasting life, and of an eternal enjoyment, in our blessed country, of him who thus lovingly gives himself to us in this place of banishment.

Conclude ever to approach with all reverence and love to these mysteries, so full of majesty and love. The high priest, in the Old Testament, was but once a year to enter into the inward sanctuary, called *the Holy of holies*, and then not without divers purifications and sacrifices, and a solemn fast of all Israel. See, then, how pure, how holy, thou oughtest to be, who art so often admitted, by the means of this heavenly sacrament, into the sanctuary of the New Testament, that is, to these divine mysteries, sanctified by the presence of Jesus Christ himself, the true *Holy of holies*, of which that Jewish sanctuary was but a shadow.

SATURDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Of the real Presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER, first, that what, above all things, renders these divine mysteries venerable to a Christian, and that which principally calls for his faith and devotion, is the real presence of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and of all that he contains, both as God and as man, in the blessed Eucharist. This *real presence* we learn from the express words of truth itself, so often repeated in the holy Scripture, and from the express declaration of the church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Upon these two pillars of truth, the word of God, and the church of God, the humble and faithful Christian securely rests. Bow thyself down then, my soul, to adore this sacred truth. Let no proud thought of opposition arise in thee, against this great mystery. Captivate thy understanding to the obedience of faith. Remember that the glory and merit of faith is to believe what thou canst not see; that the Almighty can do infinitely more than thou canst comprehend; and that no effort of mercy, bounty, and love, can be too great for him who has died for love.

Consider, secondly, how many ways this Lord of ours, who is both our Creator and our Redeemer, communicates himself to us. He came down from heaven, and took our flesh and blood, in order to make us partakers of his divinity, and to carry us up to heaven. He offered up that flesh and blood upon the cross, as a sacrifice for us, to deliver us from sin and hell, and to purchase mercy, grace and salvation for us. And he gives us here, verily and indeed, the same flesh and blood, to be our food, comfort, and support, in our pilgrimage, till he brings us, by the

virtue of that food, to our true country, where he will give himself to us for all eternity. Thus, in his incarnation and birth, he made himself our Companion; in his passion and death, the Price of our ransom; in the banquet of his last supper, our Food and Nourishment; and, in his heavenly kingdom, our eternal Reward. O my soul, what return shall we be able to make him, for giving himself so many ways to us. Alas! dear Lord, we have nothing to give but what is thine already; we have nothing to give that is worthy of thee. But be pleased to accept of all that our poverty can afford; and let this whole being of ours be for ever dedicated to thy love, as a whole burnt-offering, to lie always upon thy altar, there burning and consuming with that divine fire, which thou camest to cast upon the earth, and which thou so much desiredst should be enkindled.

Consider, thirdly, what ought to be our sentiments, in coming to these divine mysteries, in consequence of our faith of the real presence of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, in this blessed sacrament. O, what reverential awe ought we to bring with us, when we draw near to so tremendous a Majesty, in whose sight the whole creation is a mere nothing! what fear and dread, when we enter into his sanctuary, who is infinitely pure and holy, who sees all our guilt, and cannot endure iniquity! what sentiments of humility, when we reflect what he is, and what we are! what sorrow and contrition for all our past treasons and offences against this infinite goodness! what sentiments of gratitude, for his giving us here his own self, in this wonderful manner! what desires of returning him love for love! O, how would a Christian be affected, if he visibly and evidently saw his God before him, in his approaching to this blessed sacrament! A lively faith, which apprehends things invisible, as if they were visible, would produce the like affections. O, give us, sweet Jesus, this lively faith.

Conclude ever to admire and adore the incomprehensible ways by which God is pleased to communicate himself to us. Resolve to correspond, in the best manner you are able, with the riches of his bounty and goodness, by approaching to these divine mysteries with faith, with fear, and with love.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On Christ's inviting us to this heavenly Banquet.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the parable of this day's Gospel, *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many,* (Luke xiv. 16;) and reflect how our Lord has indeed prepared

a great banquet for us, in the institution of the blessed sacrament, and has invited us all to it. *O sacred banquet*, says the church, in the anthem used during this octave, *in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion is kept up, the soul is filled with grace, and a pledge is given us of the glory to come!*—a happy banquet, in which we feed upon the bread of heaven, and drink at the very source of the fountain of life. To this heavenly banquet, the Son of God invites all the faithful, in the most loving manner. *Come to me*, says he, *all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you*, St. Matt. xi. 28. Ah Christians, we all labour, and lie under many and very heavy burthens, from the sins and miseries to which we are exposed, during our mortal pilgrimage; and, in this heavenly banquet, we come to Christ, to be refreshed, nourished, and strengthened by him. O sweet invitation! O happy call to the source of grace here, and of endless glory hereafter!

Consider, secondly, how much our Lord is offended by all such as refuse to correspond to his loving invitation, and to come to his banquet. He has prepared this banquet out of pure love; that we may feast with him, and he with us. He desires, out of pure love, to impart himself and all his goods to us; and therefore justly resents his love being slighted by us, and our preferring the farm, the oxen, the wife, in a word, the world, and the things of the world, before him and his banquet. Christians, if you have any love for Christ, surely you must be desirous of going to him, and entertaining yourselves with him, in this great banquet of love. Love tends to union; and here it is that you are to be in so perfect a manner united to him, as *to abide in him and live by him*. If you have any love for yourselves, and for your own souls, you must gladly go to this banquet, in which you find all your good, and all that can make you truly happy, both here and hereafter.

Consider, thirdly, that, in staying away from Christ, in the blessed sacrament, we do not only neglect his invitation, and slight his love, but also break through his ordinance, and violate his commandment. The very institution of these heavenly mysteries, to be the support of our spiritual life, for the time of our mortality, implies a commandment for us to approach to them, and to make use of them. We should be guilty of self-murder, if we suffered the body to perish, by refusing to take that food which God has appointed for its sustenance; and are we not equally guilty of murdering our souls, if we suffer them to starve, for want of the food and sustenance which our Lord has allotted them in this life-giving banquet? Truth itself assures us, (St. John vi. 54,) that, without this heavenly food, *we have no life in us*. As, then, we are most strictly bound to maintain the

life of our souls, we are most strictly bound to use this food of life; and it is no less certain death to stay away from this blessed sacrament, than it is to come to it unworthily.

Conclude, my soul, to correspond henceforward with the loving invitation of thy dear Redeemer, by a frequent and worthy communion. Remember that the blessed sacrament is named *our daily bread*, in that prayer which our Lord himself has taught us. O, how happy should we be, if we lived in such purity and holiness, as to be worthy to be *daily* admitted, like the primitive Christians, to this *bread* of heaven! O, let us do our best, so to live, so to behave, in every respect, that we may at least very often approach to this heavenly table, and there feast ourselves with Jesus Christ.

MONDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the excellent Fruits of this divine Banquet.

CONSIDER, first, that, in all the sacraments, the worthy receiver is made partaker of divine grace, which is conveyed into the soul through those heavenly channels; but the sacrament of the Eucharist has this advantage above all the rest, that it imparts to the soul the very Source itself, from which all graces flow, by giving us Jesus Christ himself, the Author of all grace; his own body, his blood, his soul, and his divinity; and therefore it is the most excellent of all the sacraments, and the most plentiful in its fruits; amongst which fruits, that which is most peculiar to this divine sacrament is, that it has the like qualities and properties, with regard to the soul, as our corporal food has, with regard to the body; according to that of our Saviour, (John vi,) *the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world; and again, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* Inasmuch as this bread supports our spiritual life, by the abundance of graces which it furnishes for the food and nourishment of our souls, it repairs the daily decays we are liable to, from our natural infirmity and corruption, and adds new strength and vigour to carry us on happily in our journey towards heaven. This is that *bread that strengthens the heart of man*, (Psalm ciii. 15;) that gives us force against all temptations; that weakens our passions and concupiscences; that enables us to grow daily in virtue, and to run forward in the way of all the divine commandments, till we arrive at the mountain of God, that is, at the very top of the perfection of a Christian life.

Consider, secondly, that this heavenly sacrament not only feeds, nourishes, and strengthens the soul, in order to the main-

taining in us the life of grace here, and the bringing us to the life of glory hereafter, but also tends, in a particular manner, to unite us, by a *union of love*, with our sovereign good, and to transform us into Christ himself. *He that eateth my flesh*, saith our Lord, (John vi. 57, 58,) *and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* The corporal food which we take, by the means of our natural heat and digestion, is changed into our corporal substance; but this spiritual food is not changed into us, but, by its heavenly heat, changes us into itself. Christ is *the food of them that are grown up*, saith St. Augustine; *grow thou up, and thou shalt feed on him; yet thou shalt not change him into thyself, but thou shalt be changed into him. Our God is a consuming fire*, says the apostle, *Hebr. xii. 29.* Fire has a power of transforming all things into itself, by communicating its nature and properties to all such things as it lays hold on: how much more shall this bright flame, which communicates itself to us by the sacred mysteries, set our souls on fire with divine love, and change us into our Beloved!

Consider, thirdly, that the best disposition for this happy transformation, and blessed union of love, is to approach to this divine sacrament with an entire resignation of ourselves, and of our whole being, into the hands of him, whom we are going to receive. "As I willingly offered myself to God my Father for thy sins, saith the *Beloved*, (l. iv. c. 8. *Of the following of Christ*) with my hands stretched out upon the cross, and my body naked, so that nothing remained in me which was not turned into a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath; even so must thou willingly offer thyself daily to me in the mass, (and communion,) together with all thy powers and affections, as heartily as thou art able, for a pure and holy oblation. What do I require more of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to me? Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself, I shall not regard; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things but me; so neither can it please me, whatever thou givest, as long as thou offerest not thyself. Offer thyself to me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted. Behold I offered my whole self to the Father for thee, and have given my whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and thou mightst be always mine; but if thou wilt stand upon thyself, and wilt not offer thyself freely to my will, thy offering is not perfect, nor will there be an entire union between us.—My sentence stands firm: *Except a man give up all, he cannot be my disciple*

If, therefore, thou desirest to be my disciple, give thyself up to me, with all thy affections."

Conclude to give all for all, if thou hopest to relish the fruits of this heavenly sacrament; that is, to give thy whole self, without reserve, to him that gives his whole self to thee. Let this oblation of thyself to God ever go before, accompany, and follow thy communion; there can be no *better* devotion.

TUESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

On the Dispositions we ought to bring to the holy Communion.

CONSIDER, first, those words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. xi. 28,) *Let a man prove himself*, that is, let him try and examine himself, by looking well into the state of his conscience, and setting all right in his interior, and *so eat of that bread, &c.*, lest otherwise, approaching to it *unworthily*, he make himself *guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord*, (verse 27,) and receive his own *judgment and condemnation, not discerning the body of the Lord* (verse 29;) so that the first, and most essential disposition, to a worthy communion, is purity of conscience, at least from all mortal sin. Whosoever presumes to approach to purity itself, in these sacred mysteries, must be clean and pure. *Sancta Sanctis*. Holy things are for them that are holy. *God will be sanctified in them that approach to him*, (Levit. x. 3,) and will execute justice and judgment on them that defile and profane his sanctuary, by entering in thither, and receiving *the Holy of holies*, with a soul polluted with wilful sin. Good God, keep me from being ever so miserable.

Consider, secondly, how great is the guilt of a communion made without this disposition of purity of conscience. It is a most grievous sacrilege, by profaning the most holy of all the sacraments. It is a most heinous injury and affront offered to our Lord himself in person, by bringing him into a polluted habitation. A soul under the guilt of mortal sin is possessed by devils. The unworthy communicant, therefore, introduces the Lord of glory into a den of unclean spirits. He imitates the treason of Judas, by betraying him, as much as lies in him, to his enemies. He lays violent hands on our Lord, like the Jews; and, like them, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ. We should have a horror of the wretch, who, by wilful murder, had been guilty of innocent blood, though it were but of the meanest person living; what, then, ought we to think of ourselves, if, by an unworthy communion, we should be *guilty of the blood of the Son of God himself*? Would not such a crime as this

cry to heaven for vengeance? Would it not very much darken the understanding, and harden the heart? Would it not put the soul even in the broad road of final impenitence? It would be, according to the apostle, receiving *judgment*, that is, damnation, *to ourselves*. Ah, what penance, what floods of tears, would be required, to expiate so great a guilt.

Consider, thirdly, that a soul which approaches to the Holy of holies, in these sacred mysteries, ought not to content herself with only aiming at being pure from mortal sin, and, for that end, preparing herself by contrition and confession; but ought, also, as much as possible, to purify herself from all affections to venial sins, and all habits of any such sins, which, when fully deliberate, do a deal of mischief to the soul, and, in particular, hinder her very much from being sensible of the heavenly sweetness, and excellent fruits, of this divine sacrament. Ah, Christians, could we but see those spots, those stains, those filthy scabs, that scurf, that leprosy, which these habits of lies, of excuse, of anger and impatience, of vanity, of curiosity, of indulging our sensuality in eating, drinking, &c., bring upon the soul; we should be sensible how unfit they make us, for the embraces of this, our heavenly Spouse, who is *beautiful above the sons of men*, Ps. xliv. 3.

Conclude ever to look to the state of thy conscience, and to purify it from all known and deliberate sin, whenever thou art preparing thy soul for Jesus Christ. Let thy intention also be *pure*, by having no other view, in thy communion, but his glory, and thy salvation, and thy affections *pure* from all inordinate love of creatures, when thou presentest thyself at his table, and thou shalt not fail to be a welcome guest.

WEDNESDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Of Devotion before Communion.

CONSIDER, first, that the soul which desires to prepare a fit lodging for Jesus Christ, whom she is to receive in the blessed sacrament, must not only drive out Satan from her, and rid her inward house of the dirt and filth of sin; but must also procure the proper ornaments and furniture of virtue and devotion, to deck out herself and her lodging, that it may be agreeable to the great King that comes to visit her. *The work is great*, said David, (1 Paralip. xxix. 1.) *for a house is preparing, not for man, but for God*; yea rather, in our case, for him that is both God and man. The ground-work of this preparation must be a lively faith, and a serious consideration of the work we are about,

who it is that we are to receive, how great and glorious, how pure and holy, &c. ; and who we are that are going to receive him, how wretched, and unworthy. This consideration must be accompanied, or followed, with earnest prayer, to beg of this infinite Majesty, that, since he knows our great poverty, and inability to prepare him a fit lodging, he himself would prepare one for himself, by sending beforehand those graces and virtues, and that fervour of devotion, which may fit our souls for him.

Consider, secondly, that the devotion, which we ought to bring with us to this blessed sacrament, consists, in the first place, in a most profound humility, and awful reverence, for these tremendous mysteries, sanctified by the real presence of Jesus Christ himself, the Lord of glory, and the Fountain of all sanctity. O, how ought we to annihilate ourselves in the sight of this great Lord and Maker of heaven and earth ! How ought we to fear and tremble, in consideration of our manifold treasons against him, and our base unworthiness ! With what profound reverence ought we to approach to the Holy of holies, who lies here concealed under these sacramental veils ! But, then, lest this fear and reverence should go so far as to drive us away from this Fountain of life, it must be qualified with an humble confidence in the infinite goodness and mercy of him who invites us to come, and who is ever ready to receive, with open arms, his prodigal children, when they leave the husks of the swine, and return to him, with a true sense of their unworthiness. O, blessed be his holy name for evermore !

Consider, thirdly, that as nothing but pure love brings our Lord to us, in this divine sacrament, so the devotion he principally expects of us, when we approach to him, is a return of love. Whichever way we consider these sacred mysteries, we shall find that all things here call for our love, and indispensably oblige us to consecrate our whole heart, with all its affections, to this most lovely and most loving Lord. His death and passion, endured for the love of us, which we here commemorate ; an incomprehensible mystery of love, which will astonish men and angels to all eternity ; the wonders he has wrought in this heavenly sacrament, that he might make himself our food, and unite us to himself ; the inestimable treasures he here imparts to us ; the pledge he here gives us of our redemption, and of our everlasting salvation ; all concur to show forth his love for us, and to claim a return of our whole heart. O my soul, can we see so much love on his part, and not be inflamed with a desire of loving him with all our power ? Can we remain cold, when we approach to so great a fire ? Remember thou art going to thy sovereign Good, to the Source of all grace, to the Fountain of life. Go then, with a hunger and thirst, with an ardent desire, to this

great banquet of love, where thou art to feed upon thy Lover himself, and he will not fail to fill thee with all that is good.

Conclude to exercise thyself always, before communion, in acts of faith, reverence, and humility; in acts of hope and confidence in thy Saviour; in acts of divine love, and in ardent desires after him, accompanied with a grateful remembrance of the love he has showed thee, in dying for thee, and in here giving himself to thee; and the more thou bringest with thee of this preparation and devotion, which enlarges as it were the vessel of thy heart, the more plentifully wilt thou draw off the waters of divine grace from this fountain of life.

THURSDAY THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI

On Devotion after Communion.

CONSIDER, first, that, as the soul must prepare herself to go to receive Jesus Christ, by proper devotion before communion; so she must also take care to entertain him in a proper manner after she has received him, and to make good use of that favourable time, (most happy to her above all times, if well employed,) during which she has him really present with her, both in his divine and human nature, that is, both as God and man. It would be a gross affront, after being favoured with a visit of the King of heaven, desiring to feast himself with us, and bringing all his treasures with him, to enrich our souls, if we should turn our backs immediately upon him, and take no farther notice of him. The very meanest of our friends would have reason to resent so contemptuous an usage; how much more so great a Lord! See, my soul, if the little care thou hast taken to manage, to the best advantage, those happy minutes in which thou hast Jesus Christ with thee, by a proper devotion after communion, be not the true cause why thou hast reaped so little fruit from thy repeated communions, which otherwise might long since have made thee a saint. O repent and amend.

Consider, secondly, what this devotion is, with which we are to entertain our Lord after receiving him. First, we are to welcome him, by faith, hope, and love—by a lively faith of all his mysteries; but, in particular, that we have here really with us, in this blessed sacrament, him who is our Maker and our Redeemer, infinite in majesty and infinite in mercy, and who brings with him all the treasures of heaven to enrich us; by a firm hope, that he will now, by this blood of the covenant, take full possession of our souls, and make them his, both for time and eternity;—by an ardent love, aspiring with all our power and affections to an eternal union with our beloved, whom we here receive: I have

found him whom my soul loveth; I will hold him fast, and will never let him go. In the next place, we ought to cast ourselves down at his feet, and to pay him the best homage and adoration we are capable of, bringing all the powers of our soul before him, and obliging them all to bow down to him, and worship him. But as all this ought to be accompanied with a lively sense of our unworthiness and sins, we must also take this opportunity of making an humble confession, like Magdalene, of all our treasons, at his feet, craving his mercy for what is past, and the grace of a change of heart and life for the time to come.

Consider, thirdly, that, after these first homages, the soul must, for some time following her communion, keep close to our Lord, and give space for his grace to penetrate more and more into her interior, and to bring forth there its proper fruit. For this end, she must entertain him with praise and thanksgiving; inviting all heaven and earth, all angels and saints, together with the whole creation, to join with her in his praises; and wishing she had the hearts and tongues of all his creatures, that she might employ them all in loving and glorifying him, in return for all the wonders of his love and goodness to her. She must also offer herself, and all that she has, without reserve, into his hands; that she may be for ever his, and that her whole being may be made as an holocaust, or whole burnt-offering, to evaporate to his glory. In fine, she must remember that she is now before the throne of grace, and that the Lord, whom she has with her, carries about with him all the treasures of divine grace; and therefore she must lay before him all her wants and spiritual necessities, and beg of him, by this opportunity, plentiful supplies of grace both for herself and for the whole church.

Conclude, O my soul, to entertain thy Saviour in this manner, as often as thou shalt receive him in the divine mysteries. Take care, also, to be more than ordinarily recollected, on the whole day following thy communion, and to keep a great guard upon thyself, lest the enemy, who knows what a treasure thou hast received, and is therefore most busy about thee on this occasion, in hopes of robbing thee of it, should fling some stumbling-block in thy way, to make thee fall into sin, either by passion or concupiscence, that so, by this means, he may drive Christ away from thee, and get possession of thy soul.

N. B. That as often as the Octave of Corpus Christi shall fall before the thirteenth day of the month of June, the meditations that shall then be wanting, in this place, are to be taken out of the number of those that are marked for the month of February, which were omitted at that time, to give place to the meditations appointed for Lent.

JUNE 14.

Of the blessed Eucharist as it is a Sacrifice.

CONSIDER, first, that the blessed Eucharist is not only a *sacrament*, in which we receive the body and blood of Christ, for the food and nourishment of our souls, but it is also a *sacrifice*, in which this same body and blood of Christ is offered up to God, in remembrance of his death and passion, for the honour and glory of God, in thanksgiving for all his benefits, to obtain pardon for all our sins, and grace in all our necessities. *Sacrifice* is a sovereign act of religious worship, due to God alone, inasmuch as it testifies, by the oblation made to him, that he is the sovereign Lord of all things, the Master of life and death, our first Beginning and last End. Now from the beginning of the world, the children of God were accustomed to offer *sacrifices* to him; and this was the solemn worship in which they met together to join in paying their homage and adoration to him. In the old law, a great variety of these *sacrifices* was prescribed of *burnt-offerings*, of *sin-offerings*, of *peace-offerings*, &c.; but all these were but figures, and imperfect shadows, of the great *Sacrifice*, which was reserved for the law of grace, and which we celebrate in the blessed Eucharist; a *sacrifice*, in which the Son of God himself is both Priest and Victim.

Consider, secondly, that as the law of Moses was to give way to the law of Christ, of which it was a figure, and the priesthood of the sons of Aaron was to yield to him that is a *Priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech*; so all those ancient sacrifices of the old law, which were but figures and shadows, were to make way for the new sacrifice of Christ's institution, which is no other than that of his own body and blood, not as prefigured by the flesh and blood of calves or lambs, but as exhibited in truth; once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross; daily, to the end of the world, in an unbloody manner, on our altars, under the forms of bread and wine, agreeably to the priesthood and sacrifice of Melchisedech, which he offered in bread and wine; *Gen. xiv. 18.* Hence, in the thirty-ninth Psalm, spoken in the person of Christ, the sacrifice of his own body is substituted in the place of all those ancient victims in these words—*Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; but thou hast fitted a body to me* (for so St. Paul reads it, *Heb. x. 5.*) *Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, Behold I come.* And this new sacrifice of the Christian church, this *clean offering*, which should be *offered in every place among the Gentiles*, is foretold *Malachi. i. 11*, and there accept-

ed of by the Lord, at the same time as he declares he will receive no more of the Jewish sacrifices, ver. 10.

Consider, thirdly, that this great sacrifice of the Eucharist essentially consists in the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and in the offering up of this same body and blood to God, by the ministry of the priest, as a perpetual memorial of the sacrifice of the cross, and a continuation of the same to the end of the world. For, by the separate consecration of the bread into the body of Christ, and of the wine into his blood, performed by the priest, in the name and person of Christ, our great High Priest, Christ Jesus presents himself to his Father upon our altars, as slain for us, and his blood as shed for us, and under this figure of death, offers up his own body and blood, to answer all the ends and intentions for which we ought to offer sacrifice to God. Not as if there were any insufficiency in his sacrifice of the cross, by which he completely redeemed us, and opened to us the fountain of all mercy, grace, and salvation; but that we might have, in this eucharistic sacrifice, a standing memorial of our redemption; a daily means of applying the fruit of it to our souls; a daily communion one with another, by joining together in the solemn worship of sacrifice, as the children of God had always done from the beginning, and a daily means of uniting ourselves, in these mysteries, with our High Priest and Victim, Christ Jesus, and of coming to God, with him and through him.

Conclude to frequent, daily, this great means of salvation, which our Lord has prepared for us, in the eucharistic sacrifice: admire and adore the wonders of the power and goodness of God manifested to us therein, and resolve to correspond with them by faith, hope and love.

JUNE 15.

On the Excellence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

CONSIDER, first, that the excellence and dignity of a sacrifice is to be estimated by the excellence and dignity of the victim that is offered, of the priest that makes the offering, and of the ends for which the oblation is made. Now, all these things concur to recommend, in the highest degree, the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist; which, in substance, is the same with that which the Son of God offered upon the cross, because both the victim is the same, and the chief priest is the same; and both the one and the other answer the same ends, though in a different manner. See then, my soul, and admire the excellence of this great sacrifice which is offered on our altars; a sacrifice in

which the whole passion and death of Jesus Christ is solemnly acted by himself in person, in such manner as to be himself both the Priest and the Victim; the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, was the great High-Priest of God and men, who solemnly offered his own body and blood upon the cross, a sacrifice to God for all mankind; his body and blood was the Victim by which we were redeemed. And this same great High-Priest of God and men officiates also in person in the sacrifice of the altar, and there offers up the same Victim of his body and blood to his heavenly Father, in our behalf. O, can any thing be more divine than such a sacrifice, in which a God is the Priest, and a God the victim!

Consider, secondly, the noble ends and intentions, for which this sacrifice is daily offered, by the Son of God in person, upon our altars; where he presents himself, attended by his heavenly host, as the High-Priest of heaven and earth, and solemnly offers his body, as delivered up, broken and slain, and his blood as poured out. First, as a sacrifice of sovereign *adoration* and homage, praise and glory to God on high, infinitely more honored by this worship, which he here receives from his own Son, mystically dying on our altars, than by all the holocausts and burnt-offerings of the patriarchs and prophets, and all the homage, which all the saints put together either have, or ever could offer to him, although their whole being were to evaporate to his glory. Secondly, he offers up his body and blood as a sacrifice of a general *thanksgiving*, of most sweet odour in the sight of God, for all his graces, blessings, and communications of his goodness, to any of his creatures; for our creation, preservation, redemption, &c.; for his own great glory; for the whole church of heaven and earth; and for all that he has done in favor of Christ, (the great Head of the church of heaven and earth,) according to his human nature. Thirdly, he offers his body and blood, together with his whole passion and death, as a sacrifice of a general *propitiation* for the sins of the living and the dead, in favor of whom he represents to his eternal Father the blood of the everlasting covenant. And fourthly, he offers the same body and blood, as a sacrifice of a general *supplication* for his whole family, that is, for his whole church, and for all its pastors and people; that all graces and blessings may be derived to their souls, from the fountains of their Saviour. O, infinite Goodness, what treasures hast thou opened for us, in these divine mysteries!

Consider, thirdly, that, as often as we go to celebrate or assist at these sacred mysteries, it may be proper to represent to ourselves, that we are called upon, as by a royal proclamation from heaven, to be sanctified, and to come along with our great High-Priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and with his whole church

of heaven and earth, and to join in a most solemn sacrifice, that is going to be offered to God for all the great ends above-mentioned. Yes, Christians; for it is a most certain truth, that, in this divine sacrifice, we present ourselves at the altar of God, before the throne of his mercy, with Jesus Christ, his Son; at our head; and in the society of his whole family, the whole people of God, wherever they are, (for this sacrifice is offered by Jesus Christ in the name of them all,) and that, by the hands of this our High-Priest, and with the concurrence of his whole church, we here offer up to God the most acceptable victim that can be presented to his divine Majesty, the most agreeable adoration and thanksgiving that can be offered, the most powerful atonement for sin, and the most effectual means for obtaining all graces and blessings, by offering up the passion and death of the Son of God.

Conclude to approach always to these most sacred and sublime mysteries, with the most profound veneration, lively faith, and ardent devotion; and ever to join your intention, according to all these four ends, with the principal Offerer, Jesus Christ, and with his whole church.

JUNE 16.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Adoration and Praise.

CONSIDER, first, the indispensable obligation incumbent upon man, as a rational creature, made by God, and for God, to present his homage of adoration, praise, and glory, to his Maker. For this reason, the children of God, from the beginning, offered up sacrifices to the Deity; for this reason, they instituted *holocausts*, or whole burnt-offerings, in which the whole victim was consumed by fire, evaporating on God's altar, in testimony of his being the sovereign Lord of all; for this reason, the Psalms were composed by divine inspiration, and appointed to be sung, together with musical instruments, to the praise and glory of God, and to accompany the sacrifices offered in the temple of God. Such was the zeal of these ancient servants of God for paying him the best homage they were able of adoration and praise; and such ought to be, at all times, the sincere disposition of all that believe in God, as to be willing to adore and praise, worship and serve, this their first Beginning and last End with all their power, and to consecrate their whole being to his glory. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition.

Consider, secondly, how little is all that man can offer, of his own fund, even though his whole being were to evaporate to the glory of God, when compared with the infinite majesty of God,

and the homage and adoration which he deserves. If the whole creation could be made one holocaust, or burnt-offering, for the glory of God, alas! it would be all no more in the eyes of so great a King, than as if a grain of chaff were to be burnt in honour of some earthly monarch; because there is no proportion between that which is finite, and that which is infinite; and therefore the whole creation, compared to God, is less than one grain of chaff, compared with an earthly monarch, or even with the whole creation. How mean, then, is all that man can offer of his own, or of any other creature's! and how unworthy and insufficient to be made a sacrifice of adoration and praise to the divine Majesty! See then, my soul, how greatly we are obliged to the Son of God, who, by the institution of the blessed Eucharist, has furnished us with a sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise and glory, worthy of God, as being of an infinite value, by reason of the infinite dignity, both of the Priest and Victim.

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord, expiring and dying upon the cross, in obedience to his Father's will, offered himself in sacrifice in such manner, that his death was not only in the nature of a *sin-offering*, or a sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the world, but also in the nature of a *burnt-offering*, (in which the whole victim is given to God without reserve,) or a sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise and glory. As then, in the blessed Eucharist, Christ himself, in person, celebrates his own death, and offers up the same sacrifice, in substance, with that which he offered expiring upon the cross; so we have here the same adoration, homage, praise and glory, offered by Christ, as God's High-Priest, and our High-Priest, to his eternal Father; and this sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise and glory, he has made over to us; so that we are enabled, by joining with him in these sacred mysteries, to offer up daily to our God a homage and adoration of infinite value.

Conclude with admiration of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, manifested to us in the institution of this divine sacrifice, by means of which a Victim of infinite value is daily offered, and will be daily offered, to the end of the world, upon a million of altars, by a Priest of infinite dignity, to give infinite honor and glory to his divine Majesty, and to be, at the same time, an inexhaustible Source of all good to us. O, let us daily and hourly join our adoration and praise with that which is, in every place, offered by our High-Priest, in these divine mysteries, and it will not fail of being acceptable through him.

JUNE 17.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

CONSIDER, first, that we are also indispensably obliged to return due thanks to God for all his bounties, favors, and mercies to us; and that, as these are boundless and infinite, he has a right to call for a return of all the gratitude and love we are capable of; and that nothing less than an infinite thanksgiving can be equivalent to the debt we owe him. But O, how little is all that our store can afford towards discharging so immense a debt! If we should even offer him our whole being, and this could be a return for the great benefit of our creation, by which he has given us this being, what should we have left to give him? or what return should we be able to make him for our redemption, for our preservation, for our vocation, and for so many others his benefits; and above all, for that eternal free love of his for us, which is the source of all these benefits? See, then, how good our God has been, in furnishing us, by the means of the eucharistic sacrifice, with a standing fund to enable us to discharge this infinite debt, and to render him a thanksgiving worthy of him.

Consider, secondly, that, as all the *thanks-offerings* of the law of nature, and of the law of Moses, fell infinitely short of answering, in a proper and sufficient manner, the obligation incumbent on mankind, of returning due thanks to God; the Son of God himself became man, to make himself our Priest and Victim, and, in that quality, to offer up in our behalf a worthy sacrifice of thanksgiving, no less infinite, by reason of the dignity of his person, than those favors and mercies were, for which he makes this return of thanks. This sacrifice of thanksgiving he offered once upon the cross, and now offers daily in the Eucharist, upon a million of altars, throughout the world; and, in this offering, he expects that his whole family of heaven and earth should join with him, that with him, and through him, they may make a daily return of worthy thanks for all God's blessings, bestowed upon both him and them. See, my soul, thou be never wanting in this duty.

Consider, thirdly, what this thanksgiving is, that we are to offer up daily to God, in the sacrifice of the blessed *Eucharist*—a sacrifice which takes its very name from *thanksgiving*. First, we are to return thanks to God for his own great glory, manifested in all his works. Secondly, we are to thank him, in particular, for the great work of our redemption. Thirdly, we are to offer up to him this sacrifice, in thanksgiving for the incarnation and birth of his Son, and for all the blessings bestowed upon him, according to his human nature; for his doctrine and

miracles, for his passion and death, for his resurrection and ascension, and for all that power which is given him in heaven and earth. Fourthly, we are likewise to offer up this sacrifice, in thanksgiving for ourselves, and for the whole church, triumphant, militant and patient; and for all that mercy, grace, and salvation, which has, at any time, been derived upon any man from the sovereign Source of all good, through Jesus Christ. See, Christians, how much we all, in general, have to thank God for, besides the special favours, for which each one in particular stands indebted to the divine bounty. But infinite thanks be to his infinite goodness, who has provided for us this sacrifice of infinite value, in which we may daily present ourselves before him, in the company of Jesus Christ his Son, and make him a suitable and acceptable offering, through him, for all his favours.

Conclude to unite, daily, thy intentions with those with which Jesus Christ daily offers this sacrifice upon all the altars throughout his church. The thanksgiving offered by him, and nothing less, will be equal to thy debt.

JUNE 18.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Propitiation.

CONSIDER, first, that the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is also a *sin-offering*; or a sacrifice of propitiation, for obtaining mercy and pardon for our sins. The debt man contracted to the divine justice by sin, was infinite; and nothing that any one pure man, or even all mankind put together, could do or suffer, for the expiation of sin, could bear any kind of proportion with that debt, or go any part of the way towards the cancelling of it; much less could the blood of oxen or of goats, used in the ancient *sin-offerings* of the law, have any virtue in them to wash away sin. Therefore did the Son of God take a body and blood for us, to substitute this new victim in the place of those old ones, *Psalms xxxix*. This body and blood he offered in sacrifice upon the cross, for the sins of all mankind; with this he paid our ransom, and completely redeemed us; this same he hath bequeathed to us in the sacrament, and in the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist, in which, as our Priest and Victim, he daily appears before his Father in our behalf, and represents his passion and death to him, to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Thus the sacrifice of the Eucharist is truly *propitiatory*, in virtue of that blood of the New Testament, the fruit of which it applies to our souls.

Consider, secondly, what an advantage it is to our souls, to have here daily celebrated amongst us, this *propitiatory* sacri-

fice, in which the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world presents to his eternal Father, upon our altars, under the mystical veils that represent his death, his body, as broken and slain for us, and his blood, as shed for our sins; and, with this body and blood, intercedes to obtain mercy and pardon for us. What sinner can despair of the forgiveness of his sins, (if, like the prodigal child, he desires to return home to his true father,) when he sees here before him, bleeding as it were upon the altar, the Victim, by whose blood all our sins were cancelled? when he sees the great High-Priest of God and man offering a sacrifice for the remission of his sins? *O, let us go, therefore, with confidence to this throne of grace; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid, Heb. iv. 16.*

Consider, thirdly, my soul, how much occasion thou hast for this sacrifice of propitiation. Alas! how great is the debt thou owest to divine justice, for thy numberless sins! *Recount to thyself, O sinner, in the presence of thy God, all thy years in the bitterness of thy soul, Isai. xxxviii. 15.* See how very early thou didst incur the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, by turning away from God to follow vanity, and thereby breaking through thy baptismal engagements, profaning God's temple within thee, affronting the Spirit of God, and treading under foot the blood of the Son of God! Reflect how much thy sins have been multiplied, after so bad a beginning, every day, from that time to this very hour. Ah, *what shalt thou offer to the Lord that is worthy? Wherewith shalt thou kneel before the high God? Mich. vi. 6.* Neither *holocausts*, nor *thousands of rams*, nor yet thy own blood, can expiate thy guilt. The blood of Christ alone can do it; and with this thou kneelest before the Most High, when thou assistest at the sacrifice of the altar, where this blood is applied to thy soul. Neither is it applicable to thy soul alone; but the inexhaustible treasures of mercy, which are laid open in these sacred mysteries, give us a confidence to join all here in a body, with our great Advocate and High-Priest at our head, and to plead for mercy, through this same blood, for our brethren also, both living and dead; that we may obtain for them all the remission of their sins, and the discharge of all the debt of punishment due to their sins.

Conclude to embrace this great means of obtaining mercy and grace, by assisting daily, if it lies in thy power, at this propitiatory sacrifice, with a contrite and humble heart; and making, on this occasion, a confession of all thy sins, at the feet of Jesus Christ, who is here both Priest and Victim. If thou art diligent in this practice, the blood of Christ will infallibly obtain for thee the remission of thy sins.

JUNE 19.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Prayer and Supplication.

CONSIDER, first, that the blessed Eucharist, inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, does not only, in a most perfect manner, answer the designs and intentions of the *burnt-offerings*, *thanks-offerings*, and *sin-offerings*, of the law, by being offered up for the adoration and praise of the Deity, in thanksgiving for all his benefits, and for the remission of all our sins; but also, with infinite advantage, answers the ends of the *peace-offerings* of the ancients, by being offered up for obtaining all graces and blessings from God, through the blood of Jesus Christ. *No one can come to the Father, but by him*, St. John. xiv. 6. Here we approach to God, both by him and with him too; both as our Priest, and as our Victim. *If you ask the Father any thing in my name*, saith he, (St. John xvi. 23,) *he will give it you*. O, how wholesome, then, must the sacrifice of *supplication* be to all Christian people, in which we not only ask in the name of Jesus Christ, but come with his sacred blood before the throne of grace; and in which he himself, in person, pleads for us!

Consider, secondly, how many and great our necessities are, both in general and in particular, and how great the miseries we are liable to; that you may set a greater value upon this never-failing source of all blessings, which the divine bounty has opened to us, in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Alas! of ourselves we can do nothing; we can neither believe, hope, love, nor repent, nor make so much as any one step towards our justification or salvation, without the help of Heaven; we are encompassed on all sides with dreadful dangers, that threaten us with the worst of evils, both for time and eternity. Ah, how true it is, that we are indeed *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!* Apoc. iii. 17. But, in this sacrifice, our Lord has provided us with an inexhaustible fund of grace; supplied, without ever decaying, *out of the fountains of our Saviour*, (Isai. xii. 3,) in order to answer all our necessities, to heal all our infirmities, to guard us against all dangers, and to redress all our miseries. O blessed be his infinite goodness! O my soul, whatsoever thy wants are, here they are to be supplied: run here to Jesus Christ, thy Priest and Sacrifice, and, with him and through him, to his Father, and he will give thee all good, and himself into the bargain.

Consider, thirdly, that in this sacrifice of supplication and prayer, we are not limited or confined in our addresses, as if we were to ask and to receive for ourselves alone; but, as we have

here upon the altar the Victim slain for the general redemption of the whole world, and as the High-Priest of God and man here appears before his heavenly Father, in behalf of all mankind, we are authorized to put up our petitions, with him and through him, for the general necessities of the whole church of God, and of all mankind; that the holy name of God may be sanctified by all; that his kingdom of grace may be propagated through all nations, and through all hearts; that his will may be done by all, and in all things; that his church may be exalted by the sanctity of her prelates and pastors, and propagated throughout the world; that all infidels, heretics and sinners may be converted; that all errors and abuses may be corrected; that we may be preserved from wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, and all other evils; and that, *being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we may serve God, without fear, in holiness and justice before him, all our days*, St. Luke i. 74, 75. All this, with all other graces and blessings, we are encouraged to ask with confidence, for the whole world, in this sacrifice, where Christ is both Victim and Priest.

Conclude to manage always, to the best advantage, that favourable time, when thou art assisting at the sacrifice of the altar; for it is then thou art near the fountain's head, from whence all our good must flow.

JUNE 20.

On the Devotion, with which we are to assist at the Sacrifice of the Altar.

CONSIDER, first, that these heavenly mysteries, which we celebrate in the sacrifice of the altar, and the real presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom we believe to be truly there, both as Priest and Victim, require that we should assist thereat with all possible devotion, but especially with a lively faith, a most profound reverence, and a heart inflamed with love for that Lamb of God, who there offers himself in sacrifice for us. The servants of God have sometimes seen angels assisting round the altar, and adoring their Lord. Open thou thy eyes, my soul, as often as thou art present at the sacred mysteries, to contemplate, with a lively faith, this Lord of angels upon our altars, accompanied with these heavenly spirits; and see thou worship him there, with that awful reverence and tender affection, which his infinite majesty, and his infinite love for thee, require at thy hands. Reflect on that profound respect, with which the people of God, in ancient times, revered the sanctuary, in which the ark of the covenant was deposited; so that no one but the high-priest, and he but once a year, was allowed to enter within the veil. O

how much more profoundly oughtest thou to reverence this true sanctuary of God, and the Lord himself of the covenant, present in our tremendous mysteries!

Consider, secondly, that, as this sacrifice has an especial relation to the passion and death of the Son of God, in such manner as to be, in effect, the same sacrifice, the same victim, and the same priest; so the devotion with which we are to assist at the altar, should have a particular relation to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour himself here officiates in person, and acts, as in a sacred tragedy, his whole passion and death. We ought, then, to accompany him in this action with suitable affection and devotion. Had we been present, with a true belief in him, when he was offering upon the cross the sacrifice of our redemption, with what sentiments of love and gratitude, with what deep sense of sorrow and repentance for our sins, with what fervour of devotion, should we have waited upon him there; meditating upon his infinite goodness and love for us, manifested in his passion, and on the heinous enormity of our sins, which could not be expiated but with his sacred blood! With the like sentiments of devotion ought we to assist at this solemn memorial and representation of his passion in the eucharistic sacrifice.

Consider, thirdly, that as often as we assist at this sacrifice, we are not only to commemorate, by meditation, the passion and death of the Son of God, but also to take along with us, as it were, to God the Father, his Son, slain for us, and his precious blood, shed for us; and this in such manner as to offer up ourselves also to him, with the whole church, which is the mystical body of his Son, by his hands, and in union with the offering which he, who is our Head, there makes of himself. We are also, at the same time, to join our intentions with his, as he is our chief Priest, and principal Offerer; and with those of the whole people of God, according to the four great ends of sacrifice; going as it were in a body, with Christ Jesus at our head; and, with him, we are to offer adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, to God; and to pray and beg mercy, through him, both for ourselves and for all the world. Thus the whole church of God daily joins herself with Christ Jesus her Head, both as the Offerer and the Offering, in these divine mysteries.

Conclude with a resolution of doing thy best to assist daily at this great sacrifice with a suitable devotion. Go thither in the same spirit, as if thou wert going to mount Calvary, to contemplate there thy divine Redeemer, offering himself a bleeding Sacrifice for the sins of the world. And see thou remember to join thy offering of thyself by his hands with the offering he there makes of himself, and thy intentions with his intentions

JUNE 21.

On a spiritual Communion.

CONSIDER, first, that, next to the consecration, in which consists the very essence of the sacrifice of the altar, (inasmuch as the body and blood of Christ are thereby exhibited, and presented to God, for all the four ends of sacrifice,) the principal part is the communion. Now, as all the assistants ought to join with the priest in offering up, by his hands, and by the hands of the invisible High-Priest, Christ Jesus, this most holy sacrifice, for all those great ends; so it were to be wished that all would join with him in the communion also, at least by making a *spiritual communion*, as often as they hear mass. This *spiritual communion*, when made with proper devotion, brings Jesus Christ to our souls in spirit, so that, though we do not receive verily and indeed his body and blood, we partake plentifully of his heavenly grace, and unite ourselves in spirit to him, who is the Fountain of all grace. O, let us continually aspire after this happy union of grace and love.

Consider, secondly, that, in order to make this spiritual communion with fruit, we must be in the state of grace. Jesus Christ will not unite himself to a soul in which Satan dwells. Then we must invite our Lord into our inward house,—first, by a *lively faith* of his real presence on our altars; of what he is, of what he has done and suffered for the love of us, and what those treasures are, which he carries about with him in this sacrament, and which he desires to impart to us;—secondly, by an *ardent desire*, in the way of hunger and thirst, after this life-giving food;—thirdly, by a *profound humility*, in the acknowledgment of our great unworthiness to receive him sacramentally; and bewailing our manifold sins in his presence;—and lastly, by *inflamed affections* of love, offering our whole selves to him, and pressing him to come, and take full possession of our souls, for time and eternity. Such devotion as this will not fail to bring him to us, and engage him to open his heavenly treasures in our favour.

Consider, thirdly, that a spiritual communion may be made, with fruit to the soul, not only as often as we assist at the sacrifice of the altar, but also at any other hour we please, either of the day or night; and this by sighing after Jesus Christ, by inviting him into our souls, by offering our whole souls to him, by embracing him, and loving him, with all our power. For he loves all them that love him, he is quickly found by all that seek him, and gives himself to all that give themselves to him. O happy exchange! Give then thyself, my soul, at all times, to

this thy true Lover, to this thy sovereign and infinite Good, and he will communicate himself to thee. This kind of communion is not tied to time or place, but will bring thy God to thee whenever thou pleasest; and what canst thou receive or desire, either greater or better?

Conclude to make a spiritual communion, every day of thy life, and even to repeat it often in the day; the oftener the better. This frequent repetition of acts of faith, love, and desire, will unite thee to thy sovereign Good; so that he will live in thee, and thou in him.

JUNE 22.

On the Sacrament of Penance.

CONSIDER, first, the infinite goodness of God, who, not content with instituting in our favour the sacrament of *baptism*, for the forgiveness of all foregoing sins, and to give a new birth to our souls, to make us his children; the sacrament of *confirmation*, to give us the Holy Ghost in our souls, to make us strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Christ; and the sacrament of the blessed *Eucharist*, to feed and nourish our souls to everlasting life, with the body and blood of Christ; has also considered our frailty and misery, (by which we are so unhappily liable to lose the grace of our baptism, and to fall away from him by sin,) in the institution of the sacrament of *penance*, for the forgiveness of the sins we fall into after baptism; as a plank, by which we may still escape to the happy shore of eternal life, after having, by mortal sin, suffered shipwreck, and lost the treasures of baptismal grace and innocence. Embrace, O my soul, this infinite goodness of thy God; adore, praise, and give thanks to thy Saviour, for this his merciful institution. Alas! what must have become of thee, after so many sins, if he had not ordained for thee this wholesome bath, of easy access, to wash away, with his own most precious blood, those stains of thine, which otherwise must have been the eternal fuel of hell's merciless flames?

Consider, secondly, what this sacrament of penance is, and of what extensive virtue and efficacy. We have the account of the institution of it, St. John xx. 21, 22, 23, where he, to whom *all power is given, in heaven and earth*, was pleased to impart one branch of this power to his apostles, and their lawful successors in the ministry, in these words:—*As the Father hath sent me, I also send you—Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* This absolution of penitent sinners we call the *sacrament of penance*. And a *sacrament* it is; because it is

an outward sign of inward grace, even of the grace of the remission of our sins, *by virtue of the institution of Jesus Christ*, ascertained in the ample commission above rehearsed ;—a commission that comes to the church stamped with the broad seal of heaven, from him that has in his hands the whole power of heaven ; a commission that is not restrained as to time or place, nor makes exception of any sin whatsoever, provided the sinner applies, with proper dispositions, to the power of the *keys*, granted by Christ to his church. *St. Matt. xvi.* O, how rich art thou, O Lord, in mercy ! O, how true it is, that *thy tender mercies to us are over all thy works !* The angels committed but one sin, and that in thought only ; and they were cast off, and condemned for ever, without being allowed either time or grace to repent, or any means of forgiveness or reconciliation. We sin again and again ; and thou hast still a mercy in store for us, in this sacrament of reconciliation. O, may all heaven and earth give glory to thee, for ever, for the wonders of thy goodness, and thy love for us.

Consider, thirdly, that the sacrament of penance, besides the *absolution* given by the minister of Christ, in his name, and by his authority, requires also, on the part of the sinner, *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction*, at least in desire. The absolution pronounced by the priest will have no effect ; it will only serve to the sinner's greater condemnation, without those three necessary ingredients of this sacrament. *Contrition* is a hearty sorrow for having offended so good a God, with a full determination, by the help of his grace, not to be guilty of the like for the future. *Confession* is a full and sincere accusation of ourselves, as to the kind and number of our sins, to the pastors of the church, who have received from Christ the charge of our souls. *Satisfaction* is a faithful performance of the penance enjoined by them for our sins. Christians, see upon what articles you are to be admitted to a reconciliation with your Father, after you have gone away from him by sin. You must renounce, by sincere contrition, the husks of swine, which you have unhappily preferred before him ; you must humble yourselves by a sincere and sorrowful confession to his vice-gerents, of your past errors and disloyalties ; and you must offer yourselves to make all the *satisfaction* that lies in your power ; and then he will receive you with open arms, as he did the prodigal son. *St. Luke, xv.*

Conclude to set a great value upon this sacred institution ; and to have a speedy recourse to it, whenever you find you have fallen into sin. But see it be with due dispositions.

JUNE 23.

On the Confession of our Sins.

CONSIDER, first, that God always expected from sinners a humble confession of their sins. This he prescribed in the old law, (Numb. v. 6, 7;)—*When a man, or woman, shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done, &c.* This he ordained in the new law, by the very institution of the sacrament of penance, which necessarily includes, or presupposes, confession. This was signified by the ordinance of the law, (Levit. xiii. and xiv.) prescribing, that such as were infected with the leprosy, which was a figure of sin, should show themselves to the priests, and be under their inspection and direction. This was practised by the people who came to St. John the Baptist, (St. Matt. iii. 6,) and by the primitive Christians, disciples of the apostles, (Acts xix. 18, and St. James v. 16.) This was always insisted upon in the church of God. And surely nothing could be more just, than that the sinner should submit to this little humiliation, as some small atonement for the pride and presumption, by which he has rebelled against his God.

Consider, secondly, the many advantages the soul receives from the Catholic practice of humbly confessing our sins to the ministers of Christ, whom he has tied up by all laws to a perpetual and indispensable secrecy. It procures us proper medicines and prescriptions for all our spiritual maladies, which we here lay open to the Physician of the soul; it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts, comfort in our sorrows, and remedies against temptations; it gives present ease to the wounded conscience; it rectifies our errors, enlightens our ignorance, restrains our passions; it gives new strength of resolution, and courage to do better for the time to come; and, what is one of its greatest advantages, it humbles the soul, and teaches us to know and to despise ourselves. O, what blessings are entailed upon this sacred institution of confession! O, how much do these out-balance the momentary confusion, that may accompany the declaration of our sins.

Consider, thirdly, that the principal advantage of an humble and sorrowful confession of our sins is, that it is the means of divine appointment, for obtaining the absolution and remission of all our transgressions, and reinstating us in God's favor and grace; and this by virtue of the commission given by Jesus Christ to his ministers, with a solemn asseveration, that *whatsoever they should bind upon earth, should be bound also in heaven;*

and that whatsoever they should loose upon earth, should be loosed also in heaven, St. Matt. xviii. 18. O, how happy would that criminal account himself, who should be allowed to escape the hands of human justice, by a sorrowful acknowledgment of all his crimes in secret to his judge, or to one appointed by his judge! But O, how much more happy is the penitent Christian, when, by an humble confession of all his sins, with a sincere repentance, to the minister of Jesus Christ, he is assured of being delivered, not out of the hands of men, that can only kill the body, and then can do no more, but out of the hands of the living God, who otherwise will cast both body and soul into hell; and not only of being delivered out of the hands of divine justice, but of being received into the arms of his loving kindness, and made once more a friend and a child of God, and an heir of his eternal kingdom.

Conclude by giving thanks to the divine bounty, for having ordained for us this easy means of reconciliation after sin, and annexed so many graces and blessings to it. But beware of abusing this most wholesome and sacred institution, by making it an occasion of sinning more freely; or by using it only as a thing of course, or as an empty ceremony, without any true change of heart.

JUNE 24.

On the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

CONSIDER, first, how just it is, that we should show a particular honor and veneration to this saint, of whom our Saviour tells us, (St. Matt. xi. 18,) that *there hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist. He was a burning and a shining light*, (St. John v. 35;) *the special friend of the bridegroom*, (chap. iii. 29;) *the angel sent before his face to prepare his way*, (St. Matt. xi. 10;) *a prophet, and more than a prophet*, (v. 9;) *an apostle sent from God for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him*, (St. John i. 6, 7;) *a martyr*, in laying down his life for justice and truth; *a hermit*, in retiring from his childhood into the deserts, and there consecrating his days and nights to the exercises of devotion and self-denial; *a zealous preacher* of penance, to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, and to prepare them for Christ; *a virgin*, by the perpetual purity of his life. See here, Christians, what we have to honor in this great saint, what we have to embrace and love in him, and what lessons we are to learn from him.

Consider, secondly, that, in other saints, the church honors

the day of their departure out of this transitory life, which she celebrates as their *birth day*; because on that day they pass from this dying life here below, to their true life with God above, and are happily born there, where they shall never die. But in St. John Baptist, we honor also the day of his birth into this mortal life, by reason of his being sanctified in his mother's womb, and of the wonders which accompanied his birth, which was to the world, sitting till then in darkness and in the shades of death, like the first dawning of the new day-light, which the Son of God, whose fore-runner he was, was coming to bring amongst us. Therefore we *rejoice in his nativity*, as the angel foretold, (Luke i. 14,) and glorify the Author of all these wonders, by celebrating, with love and gratitude, this birth of St. John, as a prelude of our redemption. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions on this day.

Consider, thirdly, that St. John was a saint from his *birth*; he always preserved his innocence, and wholly dedicated himself, from his very childhood, to the love and service of his Maker. To this end he retired, when very young, to the wilderness, to fly the corruptions and distractions of the world. *The child grew*, says St. Luke, (chap. i. 80,) *and was strengthened in spirit; and was in the deserts, until the day of his manifestation to Israel.* Happy they that imitate this early piety of our saint! Happy they that wholly consecrate themselves, from their tender years, to divine love! O, how good it is for a man, when he hath borne the sweet yoke of the Lord from his youth! Lament. iii. 27. O my soul, that we had been so happy! Let us begin now at least; and from this moment, let us dedicate ourselves to be servants of divine love, henceforth and for ever.

Conclude, if thou desirest to imitate the early piety and innocence of St. John, to follow him, as much as possible, into the wilderness; by retiring at least from the wicked ways of the world, from the infected air of the world, from the company and conversation of the slaves of the world, from the dangerous pastimes of worldlings, and from all the occasions of sin, so common in the world. And especially take care to make a private cell for thyself, in thy own interior; and to keep thyself there, by inward recollection, in a holy solitude with thy God.

JUNE 25.

On the Lessons we are to learn from St. John Baptist.

CONSIDER, first, that the design of keeping the festivals of the saints, is not only to honor God in his saints, and to give him thanks for the grace and glory bestowed upon them, through Jesus Christ, but also to encourage the faithful to an imitation

of their virtues, in hopes of arriving one day at their blessed company, by walking in their footsteps. If, then, we desire to keep the festival of St. John in a suitable manner, we must endeavour to learn the lessons he teaches by his great example. His whole life in the desert was one continued exercise of prayer and mortification. These are lessons that all Christians must, in some measure, learn, that desire to come to the eternal society of the saints. If our daily occupations, if human frailty, will not allow us to have that *continual* attention to God, which St. John had; at least, we must *frequently* and *fervently* aspire after him, in the midst of all our other employments, and give, every day, a regular and competent time to the holy exercise of prayer. If we cannot think of bringing ourselves to such hard diet, clothing, and lodging, as his was; at least, we must daily retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, clothing, sleep, and unnecessary diversions; we must mortify our vanity, curiosity, and sensuality; and learn, on many occasions, to renounce our own will, to give up our own humours, and to contradict our darling inclinations.

Consider, secondly, the humility of St. John; how mean an opinion he had of himself; how little regard he had to the esteem and applause of the world; how he freely and openly professed to the people, who had the highest opinion of him, that he was neither Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet, but only a *voice of one crying in the wilderness, &c.*, and unworthy of doing the meanest office to him that was to follow him; how glad he was, when he saw himself decrease in the opinion of the world, and his glory eclipsed by the preaching and miracles of Jesus Christ. O blessed humility, which alone art capable of making any one *great before the Lord!* All other virtues are grounded on thee: without thee they degenerate into vices. Christians, let us study well this most necessary lesson.

Consider, thirdly, the zeal of St. John for the glory of God, and his constancy in maintaining justice and truth, without respect of persons, even to the laying down his life in the cause. He was not *a reed shaken with the wind*; he knew not what it was to flatter worldlings in their evil ways, or to comply, through human respects, with any thing contrary to conscience; he would not *call evil good, nor good evil*. He zealously preached, to sinners of all degrees and conditions, the necessity of effectually renouncing their evil ways, and bringing forth worthy fruits of penance; he denounced the heavy judgments of God to the impenitent, and encouraged the penitent with the prospect of his mercy. Christians, let us attend to these lessons, which the Baptist so strongly inculcated, both by word and work. The God whom we worship is the sovereign Justice and the sovereign

Truth. If, then, we would be Christians indeed, we ought, like St. John, to be willing to lay down our very lives, rather than to offend against justice and truth.

Conclude to walk in the footsteps of St. John, and they will bring thee to Christ. He was sent to prepare the people for him, and to direct them to him. Attend to his preaching and to his example, and he will do this good office for thee.

JUNE 26.

On the Preparation we ought to make for Confession.

CONSIDER, first, that confession, without due dispositions, will only serve for our greater condemnation; so that the great business of a sinner, that desires to receive such an absolution from his sins as may be ratified in heaven, must be to procure the necessary dispositions, by making a due preparation for confession. And as these dispositions must come from the Giver of all good gifts, and the sinner has removed himself to a great distance from him, amongst the husks of swine; the first part of his preparation must be, to begin to turn towards God, with a great sense of the misery of his present condition, by fervent prayer and desire. The raising up of a soul to life, which is dead to God by mortal sin, is, in effect, no less a miracle of the divine power, than the calling of Lazarus out of his grave, after he had been four days dead and buried. There can be, then, no expectation of succeeding in so arduous an undertaking, without taking him along with us, by earnest prayer, who alone can raise the dead. No, my soul; the most essential conditions of a good confession are a change of heart, and a perfect sincerity in the accusation of ourselves, even of those sins which we are most ashamed of; and who but God can change the heart of man, or bring him to overcome his pride, by a full confession of his shameful sins? or how can so great a grace as this is be procured without hearty prayer?

Consider, secondly, that another necessary part of the preparation for confession, is to find out, by a serious examination, the true state of our interior. Alas! it is one of our greatest misfortunes not to know ourselves; and it is much to be feared, that many pass their whole lives under the guilt of mortal sins,—of pride, envy, hatred, detraction, of omissions of essential duties, &c.—which, for want of a serious and impartial examination of the true state of their consciences, they neither confess, nor repent of, nor amend. Hence their confessions are null, their communions sacrilegious; they go on, all their life time, in their sins; and they die in their sins. O my soul, see this be not

thy case; see thou labour in earnest to know thyself; see thou examine seriously thy whole interior, that thou mayst be able to discover, by the light of God, which thou must implore, those lurking evils, which thy busy self-love, or the false maxims and practices of deluded worldlings, may otherwise disguise, under false pretences, and hide from thy eyes.

Consider, thirdly, that the principal and most necessary preparation for a good confession, is true *contrition*; that is, a hearty sorrow and detestation for our sins, by which we have offended so good a God; with a firm resolution of a thorough amendment for the time to come, and of making the best satisfaction we can for our past offences. This is the most essential part, both of the virtue and of the sacrament of penance. This we must take the most pains about, when we are to go to confession. This we must labour to procure by serious and deep considerations of the most moving truths, and by repeated and fervent prayers; and never leave off knocking at the door of the divine Mercy, till he is pleased to open to us and to touch our hearts. Alas! none but he can bring forth the waters of true compunction out of these hard rocks.

Conclude to be diligent in every branch of this necessary preparation, as often as thou pretendest to make thy peace with God by confession, lest otherwise, instead of obtaining a discharge, thou increase thy debt.

JUNE 27.

On Motives of Repentance.

CONSIDER, first, the motives we have to repent for our sins, from the consideration of the filthiness of that ugly monster sin, and of its heinous enormity in the sight of God. Mortal sin is infinitely odious to him, because infinitely opposite to his sovereign goodness, and to all his divine attributes. It is infinitely pernicious to our souls; it makes them like very devils in the eyes of God. It robs us of divine grace, which is the true life of the soul, and of all our good; it is a poison, which, in a moment, brings present death, and condemns us to a second and eternal death. It is an evil so black, so odious, so hideous, that hell itself has nothing worse. It leaves behind it a cursed stain, the perpetual fuel of the merciless flames of hell, which endless ages will never be able to efface. Alas! my poor soul, how wretched, then, has thy case been all this while thou hast been in sin! How ugly and abominable hast thou been in the sight of God and his angels! For the foulest creature upon earth is a beauty in comparison with a soul in sin. Ah, couldst thou but

see thyself as thou art, in this wretched state the very sight would strike thee dead ! O detest, then, this abominable monster, and spare no pains to get rid of it.

Consider, secondly, the woes that are pronounced in scripture against unrepenting sinners, and the judgments of God that are perpetually hanging over their heads, and threatening them on all sides, both with temporal and eternal evils. Ah, what good can they expect, who have made God their enemy, and are fighting against him ! He holds the thread of their life in his hands which they are provoking him to break ; and if he breaks it, in the moment they drop into hell. They have made themselves slaves of the devil ; they are possessed by him, and are at his mercy, who knows not what mercy is. Death is always following them at the heels, and a sudden, or, at least, an unprovided death, is commonly the reward of their presumption. Hell below opens wide her jaws, and is gaping to swallow them up ; and thousands of them are daily going down into that bottomless pit, *where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished*, St. Mark ix. 43. Ah, who can bear everlasting fire ! who can endure to burn for ever ! Fly then, my soul, from sin. Detest that evil, which can, and will, without repentance, condemn thee to hell.

Consider, thirdly, that sin makes a dreadful separation between the soul and God, which is begun here, and extends to all eternity hereafter. *You are not my people*, says he, (Osee i. 9,) *and I will not be yours*. Alas ! the loss of God, which begins from mortal sin, is the very worst of all the ingredients of hell. Sin is a rebellion against this Sovereign Good, a blasphemous preference of Satan before him, a sacrilegious attempt to rob him of his glory, and to divest him of his kingdom. It is murdering both the Son of God and our own souls. The folly and madness of it, as well as the monstrous presumption and treason, is infinite. O how much, then, does that evil deserve to be detested, which robs us of an infinite good, which otherwise should have been ours for all eternity, and brings us nothing, in exchange, but endless and infinite evils !

Conclude to labour, with all thy power, to drive away sin from thy soul by penance, and God will return to thee, and be thine for ever.

JUNE 28.

Other Motives of Contrition.

CONSIDER, first, the monstrous ingratitude that is found in sin. God is our first Beginning and our last End ; he has given us our whole being, out of pure love, having no need at all of us :

he has made us, and made us for himself; he has thought of us from all eternity, he has loved us from all eternity, and has prepared for us a happy eternity in the enjoyment of himself. In the mean time, he is ever loading us with his benefits; his eye is always upon us; he preserves us from innumerable evils; all his other works are appointed to serve us; his very angels, by his orders, wait upon us; his own Son came down from heaven to redeem us. O reflect, my soul, on the particular obligations thou hast to his divine goodness;—How he preserved thee in thy mother's womb, and brought thee safe to the waters of baptism, where he washed thee from sin, made thee his child, and heir to his kingdom; how he gave thee an early knowledge of himself, and of his heavenly truths; how he favoured thee with many graces, and opportunities of good, beyond thousands; how often he has admitted thee to his sacraments; how he has borne with thy repeated provocations and treasons, for so many years, and, notwithstanding all thy unworthiness and ingratitude, has been still thy constant Benefactor. Alas! how many are now howling and burning in hell, for the like sins to those thou hast so often committed; and how mercifully has he, all this while, dealt with thee. O detest, then, this sinful life thou hast hitherto led, and all thy past ingritudes, and, now at least, with thy whole heart, return to thy God.

Consider, secondly, my soul, what thy sins have cost thy dear Redeemer, the innocent Lamb of God. His whole life was a continual suffering; but what dreadful torments did he endure for thee, in his passion and death! Call over in thy mind the particulars of his sufferings, (which we have seen elsewhere,) from his agony and bloody sweat, even to his expiring upon the cross, and learn, from that multitude and variety of torments, willingly endured for thy sins, how much he abhors sin, and how much he loves thee. For he had thee in his heart all this while; and for thee he was weeping and praying, bleeding and dying; to teach thee to return love for love, and to detest thy sins, which have crucified thy God. See, then, what motives thou hast for contrition, from the remembrance of the passion of thy Saviour

Consider, thirdly, the innumerable motives we have to love God, and consequently to detest our sins, as infinitely opposite to his divine goodness. He is infinitely *good in himself*, infinitely beautiful and charming; the overflowing Ocean of all goodness and beauty, ravishing all that are so happy as to see him, so that they can never cease to love him. His mercy, his bounty, his wisdom, his truth, is infinitely charming; all perfections are infinite in him. No tongue can express, no heart can conceive, the incomprehensible greatness and multitude of his attractions. All created beauty and perfection quite disappear, and dwindle away

to a pure nothing, when compared with him. He is infinitely *good to us*. The happiness of heaven consists in seeing, loving, and enjoying him. All our good is from him, and in him; he is our sovereign and universal Good; the Being of our being, the Life and the Light of our souls. He is our Maker, our Redeemer, our Father, our Friend, our Spouse, our God, and our All. To love him is our greatest *honour*, our greatest *interest*, our greatest *pleasure*; it is the source of all our happiness, both here and hereafter. All these reasons oblige us to love God; all these motives strongly call upon us to detest and to repent for our sins, because, by them, we have offended so good a God.

Conclude, if thou wouldst secure to thy soul the remission of thy sins, to seek it by a repentance and contrition enlivened by love. Remember what our Lord said of that glorious penitent, St. Luke vii. 47—*Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much*. Go thou, in like manner, to the feet of thy Saviour, with penitential tears, proceeding from love, and he will pronounce the like sentence in thy favour.

JUNE 29.

On St. Peter and St. Paul.

CONSIDER, first, the wonders of God in these two glorious saints. Reflect what they were before their being called by Jesus Christ; how admirably they were afterwards exalted by divine grace; and how perfectly they corresponded with divine grace, by their zeal and by their labours, by their lives and by their death. The wisdom of God came down from heaven to build a house, to found a city, to establish a kingdom, here upon earth, which should be ever victorious over all the powers of hell, and should subsist till time itself should end. And see what choice he has made of men to be his principal instruments in this great work. See, in the person of St. Peter, a poor, weak, illiterate fisherman, made the master-builder, under Christ, of this house and temple, and, at the same time, the strong rock and foundation of it. See him raised to be the first governor of this city, the prime minister of this kingdom of God upon earth, *St. Matt.* xvi. 18, 19, and *St. John* xxi. 15, &c. O, how true it is, that *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world, that he may confound the strong;—and the things that are contemptible, and things that are not,—that no flesh should glory in his sight*, 1 Cor. i. 27, &c. O divine Wisdom, how incomprehensible are thy ways, and how much exalted above the ways of men! O, how do these thy dealings with us confound the proud, and comfort the humble!

Consider, secondly, in the person of St. Paul, another still more admirable instance of the power of divine grace, and of the incomprehensible wisdom of the ways of God. An ignorant fisherman, as St. Peter was, seems, indeed, no ways qualified to be a preacher and teacher of Jews and Gentiles, a founder of churches, an apostle, and prince of the apostles; but then he was humble and simple; and such God usually chooses for the greatest things. But as for St. Paul, he was not only not qualified to be a preacher of the gospel, but positively disqualified, by dispositions directly contrary to the humility and simplicity of the gospel. He was a proud, blasphemous Pharisee, a fiery zealot, a bloody persecutor, a ravenous wolf, scattering and destroying the sheep of Christ. And yet he is made, in a moment, by a miracle of grace, a vessel of election, to carry the name of Christ before nations and kings, and the children of Israel; he is changed, in an instant, from a wolf into a lamb; he puts off at once the Pharisee, the blasphemer, the persecutor; he lays down his own will at the feet of Christ, and has now no other passion, but that of employing his whole life in propagating the name, the will, and the kingdom of his God. O, here is a change of the right hand of the Most High. Here the wonders of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, shine forth much more brightly than even in the raising of the dead to life.

Consider, thirdly, the lives of these two great saints, after their call and election; their ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord; their unwearied labors in preaching and propagating his kingdom; their constancy in a long course of sufferings, dying, in a manner, daily, for the cause of God; and, above all things, that divine love and charity, which continually burnt in their breasts, which animated all their words and actions, supported them in all their labors and sufferings, kept them always, in their interior, united to their God, and was daily growing stronger and stronger in them, till it made them victorious over death, and brought them to true life, in the eternal enjoyment of the great Object of their love.

Conclude to give praise and glory to God, for all the graces and glory bestowed upon these two princes and pillars of his church. Study to learn the great lessons they taught, both by word and work. But especially learn of them the practice of divine love; nothing else can make us saints.

JUNE 30.

On Sincerity in Confession.

CONSIDER, first, the necessity of being sincere in the confession of our sins, if we hope for the forgiveness of them. All

hypocrisy and double-dealing, in matters of this consequence, is abominable in the sight of God. The prophet pronounces a *curse* against them that *do the work of God deceitfully*, Jerem. xlviii. 10. And surely they must be guilty, in the highest degree, of doing the work of God deceitfully, that go to confession with fraud and deceit, and, while they outwardly profess humility and sincerity, conceal, through the pride of their heart, and disguise by lies, the guilt of their conscience. Ananias and Saphira were struck dead, by a visible judgment of God, for telling a lie to the *Holy Ghost*, Acts v. And are not all such as are insincere in the confession of their sins, guilty, in like manner, of telling a lie to the Holy Ghost, whilst they seek to impose upon the minister of God, in this most solemn and sacred function? They are guilty, also, of a grievous sacrilege, as often as they receive absolution in this case, by their profaning the sacrament of penance; which sacrilege is commonly followed by another still greater—by their making themselves, also, guilty of the body and blood of Christ, by an unworthy communion, and thereby receiving damnation to themselves. Good God, preserve us from so heinous and so dreadful an evil!

Consider, secondly, the dismal consequences of suffering one's self to be imposed upon in such manner by the father of lies, as to conceal any matter of moment in confession, either through shame, or fear, or pride of heart. Alas! to avoid a little present confusion, which would be immediately followed with the recovery of God's favour, with peace of conscience, comfort, and joy, what a bottomless pit of dreadful and endless evils does the soul cast herself headlong into! what inextricable difficulties, pains, and perplexities! For she has no sooner yielded herself up to the old serpent, by this criminal concealment, but this dumb devil takes such possession of her, as to make her apprehend the confession of her guilt more than either death or hell. Hence she goes on, adding sin to sin, sacrilege to sacrilege; butchered all the while by her own conscience, gnawed with a remorse which she seeks in vain to stifle, and carrying about with her a painful impostume in her heart, which never suffers her to be easy. She deludes herself, indeed, with vain purposes of confessing some time or other hereafter; but, in the mean time, her difficulties increase, the devil daily acquires more and more power over her, and the grace of God is removed still farther and farther from her; till, at length, mercy abused gives place to justice, and, when she least expects it, she is cut off in her sins, and carries down with her the guilt of them all, to be confessed, too, too late, in hell.

Consider, thirdly, how little reason there is for a penitent to be so much ashamed of the confession of his sins. Sin, indeed,

is shameful ; but the confession of one's sins is not so. No ; the humble confession of a sinner gives glory to God, is honourable to the penitent himself, and affords joy to the whole court of heaven. And as to the confessor, besides that he is tied up by all laws to an eternal secrecy, and can make no manner of use of the knowledge he receives by confession, that can any ways be disagreeable to the penitent ; he is so far, even in his own mind, from despising, or thinking worse of the prodigal child, returning home by confession, or having less regard or affection for his penitent on that occasion, that, on the contrary, as he more clearly sees the hand of God in the humility and sincerity of the confession, he rejoices in this happy change, he likes the penitent better than before, and conceives greater hopes of him for the future ; and, thinking no more of what is past, he has a more tender regard than ever to a soul that has thus unbosomed herself to him. In the mean time, the penitent finds himself, in a manner, in Paradise, by the comfort and joy that he feels in having discharged his conscience of its load, and let out the impostume that would not suffer him to be easy.

Conclude to beware of the tricks of the father of lies, who hates nothing so much as an humble confession, and therefore makes use of innumerable artifices to induce Christians to pass over, or disguise, at least, their sins, in the sacrament of penance. Ah, how many thousands of souls has he deluded by these artifices, and drawn down into the bottomless pit ! Alas ! how easy it is for persons to be deceived in these occasions, who, in effect, have a mind to be deceived, and are willing, at any rate, to form to themselves a false conscience, by some pretext or other, to spare themselves the shame of confessing their sins. See, my soul, this never be thy case ; and therefore, whensoever thou findest a repugnance to confess any part of thy guilt, and a willingness to find some reason to dispense with thyself, be sure to confess the sooner that which thou findest this repugnance to declare, for fear of thy being imposed upon by pride or self-love.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

Christian Truths and Christian Duties

DIGESTED INTO

MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY THE RIGHT REV. DR. RICHARD CHALLONER,
BISHOP OF DEBRA, V. A.

PART II.

FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the LORD ; and he shall meditate on his law day and night.

And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.—*Psalm* i. 1, 2, 3.

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MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

JULY 1.

On Time and Eternity

CONSIDER, first, how precious a thing time is, which we are so apt to squander away, as if it were of no value. Time is the measure of our lives; therefore as much as we lose of our time, so much of our lives is absolutely lost. All our time is given us in order to our employing it in the service of our Maker, and by that means securing to our souls a happy eternity; and there is not one moment of it, in which we may not labour for an eternity, and in which we may not store up for ourselves a treasure for an eternity; so that, as many as we lose of these precious moments, they are so many lost eternities. Our time is a talent, with which God has intrusted us, and of which he will one day demand of us a strict account, how we have spent every hour of it. Our salvation or damnation for eternity, will depend upon the good or bad use of our time. Ah, how little do we think of this! How little do we think of the sins we are daily guilty of, in squandering away so much of this precious time!

Consider, secondly, how short is the whole time of this mortal life—a mere nothing compared with eternity—and how very quickly it passes away. When past, it is gone; it is no more; it leaves no footsteps behind it. Time to come is not ours; we cannot promise ourselves one moment of it. The present time is all we can call our own; and God only knows how long it will be so. It flies away in an instant; and when once it is gone, it cannot be called back. Our hours, one after another, all pass away with precipitate haste, into the vast gulf of eternity, and are swallowed up there, and then appear no more. The very moment in which we are reading this line is just passing, never, never more to return. And as many of these hours, as many of these moments, as are once lost, are lost for ever: the loss is

irreparable. Learn hence, O my soul, to set a just value upon thy present time; learn to husband it well, and employ it all to the best advantage.

Consider, thirdly, that as all time is short, and passes quickly away, so all the *temporal* enjoyments of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, are of the like condition; they all pass away with time; they are all transitory, uncertain, and inconstant. Only eternity, and the goods or evils which it comprises, are truly great; as being without end, without change, without comparison; admitting of no mixture of evil in its goods, nor any alloy of comfort in its evils. O, how quickly does the glory of this world pass away! How very soon will all temporal grandeur, all worldly pride and state, all the riches and pleasures of worldlings, be buried in the coffin! A few short years are more than any one can promise himself; and after that, poor sinner, what will become of thee? Alas! the worms will prey upon thy body, and merciless devils on thy unrepenting soul! Thy worldly friends will all forget thee. The very stones, on which thou hast got thy name engraved, will not long outlive thee. O, how true is that sentence: *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but to love God and to serve him alone!* Kempis.

Conclude to make such use of this present time, and of all temporary things, as to make them serviceable to thy soul in her journey towards eternity. But take care not to let thy heart cleave to them, by any disorderly affection, lest thou be entangled in them, and perish with them.

JULY 2.

On the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, how the Blessed Virgin, having now conceived in her womb the Son of God, and having learnt from the angel Gabriel that her kinswoman, St. Elizabeth, had also, by a miracle, conceived a son, in her old age, makes haste to visit her; and, being now full of God herself, carries her treasure with her to the house of Zachary, to impart, out of the abundance of it, grace and sanctity, both to the mother and to the son. See, my soul, how the Son of God, incarnate for us, whilst he is yet in his mother's womb, begins to communicate his graces, not only to his Blessed Mother herself, by elevating her soul daily more and more to a greater fulness of grace, but also to John Baptist his forerunner, (by sanctifying him before he is born,) and to holy St. Elizabeth, by filling her with the Holy Ghost; and making his Blessed Mother the instrument of these his wonders. Give ear to the Gospel (*Luke i. 39, &c.*) "Mary, rising up in

those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished, that were spoken to thee by the Lord, &c." This visitation, so full of mysteries, and the source of many extraordinary graces, is honoured by the church in the festival of this day.

Consider, secondly, more in particular, the wonders of this day's visit. See how, at the first voice of the Mother of God, by the all-powerful grace of him whom she bears in her womb, the Baptist is immediately cleansed from original sin; see how he is justified and sanctified in his mother's womb; see how the use of reason is advanced in him; and how, in that darksome prison, he is made sensible of the presence of the *true Light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*; see with what ardour of devotion and love he is carried towards his Lord and his sovereign Good, and leaps for joy at his presence, longing, as it were, to break forth from his confinement, and to go before him, and publish aloud to all the world, *Behold the Lamb of God! Behold he that taketh away the sin of the world!* John i. 29. But see also the wonderful lights, and extraordinary graces, that are communicated to St. Elizabeth, by this visitation; see how she is filled with the Holy Ghost; see in how clear a manner the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, with all its consequences and fruits, is revealed to her; what a sense she has of the high dignity of the Virgin Mother of God, and with what ardour of devotion she publishes aloud the sentiments of her soul, and glorifies both the Son and the Mother, acknowledging herself infinitely unworthy of so great a favour as that of a visit from them. Bless thy Lord, my soul, for all these wonders of his grace; and learn with what sentiments of devotion, with what faith, with what hope, with what love, with what humility, thou oughtest to draw near to this same Lord, on our altars, lying hid in the sacred mysteries. Learn, also, what extraordinary graces may be drawn from this inexhaustible source of all grace; as also how great the benefit is of his visiting mankind, by his *being made flesh, and dwelling amongst us*; and how powerful and effectual is the intercession of his Blessed Mother, for the procuring from him the greatest blessings to Christian souls.

Consider, thirdly, how the soul of the Virgin Mother was affected upon this occasion. She has expressed the sentiments of her heart in that admirable canticle she then pronounced. *My soul, saith she, doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is his name, &c.* See, my soul, in these words, as well as in all the rest of that divine canticle, the wonderful sense this Blessed Virgin had of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, in the great work of the incarnation of his Son; her exceeding great joy in God, joined with love and praise, on that occasion; her gratitude, for her having been freely chosen by the divine bounty to be the happy instrument of God in effecting that admirable work; and her most profound humility, in ascribing nothing at all to herself, but giving all the glory to God, and admiring his wonderful ways, in choosing for so great a work so weak, so mean, so lowly an instrument, as she esteemed herself. Learn, O my soul, to imitate these her sentiments.

Conclude to give thanks to our Lord, for all his wonders wrought at this visitation, and for the many visits with which he so frequently favours thee. Beware lest any want of correspondence on thy part, deprive thee of thy share in the great blessings and graces, which he usually imparts to such souls as give proper entertainment to his divine visits.

JULY 3.

On the good Employment of Time.

CONSIDER, first, how great a treasure *time* is, when well employed. Every hour of it is of far greater value than all the kingdoms of the earth; because, in every hour of it, if well employed, we may purchase an eternal kingdom in heaven; but all the kingdoms of the earth put together are not able to purchase for the dying sinner one hour of time, in his greatest want of it. Ah! it is then that sinners will begin to be convinced of the value of *time*, and of the infinite importance of employing it well, when they shall see themselves upon the brink of eternity, and when there shall be no more time for them. But O, what would not the damned in hell give for one of these hours! and how well would they employ it, if it could be allowed them! But, alas! they would not work whilst the time was, whilst they had the daylight before; and now the dismal and eternal night has overtaken them, in which there is no time to work, and in which they shall, with a bitter, but fruitless repentance, eternally

condemn their past folly and madness in misemploying and squandering away, during life, so much precious time. O, Christians, let us learn to be wise at their expense.

Consider, secondly, the strict obligation incumbent upon us all, of employing our whole time to the best advantage. Our time is not our own; it belongs to our Maker; it is lent us by our Lord and Master. The servant is strictly bound to employ his time in the service of his master; he is both an idle and a wicked servant, if, being hired to work, he spends his time in play. What, then, must we think of ourselves, if, being made, and sent into this world, by our great Master, for nothing else but to spend the short time of our mortal life in serving him, and doing his will, we squander it all away in empty amusements, worldly diversions and vanities, or in doing our own will rather than his! Ah Christians, deceive not yourselves: such a crying injustice as this calls to heaven for vengeance; the wasting and destroying so much of your Master's precious time (more precious, by far, than all the goods of the world) will never pass unpunished. If you are to be accountable for every idle word, how much more for every idle hour! O, reflect how much it cost your dear Redeemer to purchase for you this time. By sin you had forfeited your life, and consequently your time, and incurred the guilt of a double death; and whatsoever time God has allowed you, since your sin, has been purchased for you by the blood of Christ, in order to your repentance and a new life. It has cost him an infinite price; it belongs to him: the alienating it from him is a robbery; it is a sacrilege; it is perverting to your greater damnation what he purchased for your salvation.

Consider, thirdly, the immense treasures of grace, and the everlasting glory, that may be continually stored up by a good employment of time. There is not one moment, of all the time of this mortal life, in which, if well employed, we may not purchase a new degree of eternal bliss: now, every new degree of eternal bliss is something infinitely more precious and more desirable than all the riches and all the kingdoms of the earth. What a loss it is, then, to lose any of these happy moments! it is losing so many immense and eternal treasures;—a loss so great, that, if the happy state of the blessed in heaven could admit of any such thing as grief, they would certainly regret to all eternity all those moments of the time of their mortal pilgrimage, which they had not employed to the best advantage; when they shall clearly see, in the light of God, what an immense increase of eternal glory and happiness they might have acquired by the due employment of all those precious moments.

Conclude to have ever before thy eyes the infinite advantages that are to be found in employing well thy time, and the strict

obligation thou wast of spending it all in the service of thy Maker; and this according to his ordinance, and agreeably to the end for which he sent thee hither, and for which he gives thee all thy time. And ever remember that, in his account, all that time will be considered as idly spent, and quite squandered away that has not been dedicated to the doing his will.

JULY 4.

On remembering our last Things.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the wise man (Ecclus. vii. 40;) *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin;* and reflect how true it is, that the memory of the four last things has a wonderful efficacy to restrain the soul from sin, and to take off the heart from the affections to it. The remembrance of death, the view of the grave, of the coffin, of the shroud, of the worms and the maggots, and of the speedy corruption of this carcass of ours; the serious and frequent consideration of the necessity of our quickly parting with all that we love in this world, and of our being forsaken, and presently forgotten by all, must needs humble our pride and vain-glory, abate our fondness for this world, and its deluding toys, check our sensual and carnal inclinations, and keep all our passions under O, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, can never endure the sight of the grave. But then, when we look beyond the grave, and meditate at leisure on the strict account we must one day give to an all-wise, all-powerful and most just Judge, who cannot endure iniquity; when we consider that his eye is ever upon all our thoughts, words and works, and that they are all to be weighed in the scales of his divine justice; and according as they are there found, we are to be rewarded or punished for endless ages, and to be either infinitely happy, or infinitely miserable; how is it possible that, in the midst of such considerations as these, we should dare to sin!

Consider, secondly, that the remembrance of the four last things wonderfully serves to correct the errors of worldlings, to open their eyes to truth, and to shut them to vanity. The transitory things of this world, its goods and its evils, as we call them, are apt to make a great impression on our poor souls, shut up, as they are, in this earthly prison. We take them for something we are fond of honour, riches and pleasures, as if they were solid goods; and we are afraid of contempt, poverty, and pain, as if they were real evils. But the meditating on our last end undeceives us; it quickly convinces us, that all is nothing that passes with time; that nothing is truly great, but what is eternal; that

those things deserve not the name of *goods*, that contribute nothing to make us either good here, or happy hereafter; and that those are no evils which help to bring us to an infinite *good*. In fine, as to all the false maxims of the world, and the prevailing opinions and practices of its unhappy slaves, and their abettors; this kind of consideration on the last things exposes the folly and madness of them all, and sets it in such a light, as to determine the soul to adhere no longer to such perverse and erroneous notions as will certainly be changed in death, condemned at the last judgment, and, if not recalled in time, punished in hell, for all eternity.

Consider, thirdly, the manifold fruits which have been heretofore, and are daily produced, by the serious consideration of the four last things. Even the most hardened sinners have often been converted from their wicked ways to a penitential life, by the terror of those thundering truths—death, judgment, hell, eternity. The preaching, the reading, and meditating on these truths, has sent numbers into deserts, or religious houses, there to secure their eternal salvation by a saintly life; and such considerations as these have generally laid the first foundation even to the most eminent sanctity. O, what lessons may we not learn among the silent monuments of the dead, who made some noise heretofore in the world, but now are thought of no more! What lectures, what instructions, what exhortations, may we not daily receive, by attending in spirit at the trials of the great bar; by going down, while we are alive, into the darksome dungeons below, and viewing at leisure what is doing there; and by ascending up into heaven, and contemplating those happy mansions of eternal bliss, prepared for the reward of the momentary labours and sufferings of the servants of God! O, let us daily frequent these schools.

Conclude to make it thy practice to think often on these important subjects, which so nearly concern thy everlasting welfare. It will be a sovereign means to prevent an unprovided *death*; it will teach thee to be always in readiness for *judgment*; it will keep thee out of hell, and bring thee to heaven.

JULY 5.

On the Certainty of Death.

CONSIDER, first, that there is nothing more certain than death. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after that judgment,* Hebr. ix. 27. The sentence is general; it is pronounced upon all the children of Adam; *Ecclus. xli. 5.* Neither riches, nor dignity, nor strength, nor wisdom, nor all the power of the world,

can exempt any one from this common doom. From the first moment of our birth, we are hastening towards our death; every moment brings us nearer to it. The day will come, when we shall never see the night; or the night will come, when the sun will no more rise to us. The day will most certainly come, when thou, my soul, who art reading these lines, must bid a long farewell to this cheating world, and to all thou hast admired therein, and even to thy own body, the individual companion of thy life; and take thy journey to another country, a strange and unknown land to thee, where all thou settest a value on here will appear as smoke. O learn, then, to despise all these perishable things, and to set thy heart on nothing, since all must be taken away by death.

Consider, secondly, that death is not only certain, but, generally speaking, much nigher than we imagine. If ever we look upon death, it is generally with the wrong end of the perspective glass, that removes the object to a great distance, when indeed it is very near. We are apt to flatter ourselves, with the worldling in the gospel, (Luke xii.) with the expectation of many years enjoyment of our worldly goods and pleasures; and, when we least of all suspect it, we are called away; we must suddenly be gone. *Thou fool, saith our Lord, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* Thousands are dying, this very hour, throughout the world; and perhaps not one of them all but expected to have lived many more years. We daily hear of sudden deaths; we daily hear of young and strong people carried off by short sicknesses, in the very flower of their age; and why will we deceive ourselves? Why will we vainly imagine ourselves out of the reach of these arrows of death, that are falling so thick on all sides of us? *Ah, fool, why dost thou think to live long when thou art not sure of one day?* Kempis.

Consider, thirdly, the wretched blindness and stupidity of mortals, that think so little of death, and live as if they were to be always here, and by this means expose themselves, every day, to the dreadful danger of dying in their sins. And yet, alas! all this while they cannot be ignorant, that death is continually following them at their heels; they even carry it about with them in the frail composition of their mortal frame. All the things about them, by their continual fading, remind them of their mortality. They daily see or hear of deaths or burials; or meet with the monuments of the dead, who, from their silent tombs, cease not to admonish them, in the words of the wise man, (Eccclus. xxxviii,) *Remember my judgment: for thine also shall be so: Yesterday for me, and to-day for thee.* O my soul, do thou, at least, give ear to this admonition; keep death always be-

fore thy eyes; and, when it comes, thou shalt have nothing to fear.

Conclude, since thou must so quickly be gone from hence, to set thy house now in order, and to make all necessary provisions for that long journey, which thou must shortly take; and ever strive to be such in life as thou desirest to be found in death.

JULY 6.

On the Uncertainty of the Time and Manner of our Death.

CONSIDER, first, that death is the passage from time to eternity. If we die well, it will be well with us for all eternity; but if we die ill, it will be ill with us for endless ages; so that upon this one moment of death depends a long eternity. But when shall this moment come? When shall we die? Shall it be this night, or to-morrow? Shall it be a week, a month, a year hence, &c. ? Oh! of all this we know nothing at all, only that it will be when we least look for it; for our Lord has assured us, that he shall come like a thief in the night, that is, when we least think on it: (*Luke xii.*) And therefore he tells us we must always *watch*, and always *be ready*; for if we are surprised, and die in our sins, we are lost for ever.

Consider, secondly, that we are not only wholly ignorant of the time of our death, but also of all other circumstances relating to it. We neither know the place where we shall die, nor the manner how we shall die; nor whether our death shall be violent, or natural; by fever, or consumption; gentle, or sharp; of quick despatch, or more lingering; at home, or abroad; whether our last illness shall deprive us of our senses, or no; whether we shall have the assistance of our ghostly father, and the helps of the sacraments, or no; what dispositions our souls shall then be in, or what ability we shall then have to make proper use of those last moments, upon which our all depends for eternity. Alas! all these things are quite hidden from us; no wit, no learning, no wisdom upon earth, can help any man to the knowledge of any one of these things. O, let this dreadful uncertainty, of all the particulars that relate to our death, determine us to live always in the expectation and preparation for death; that we may not have that great work to do at a time when we shall have no convenience or ability to do it.

Consider, thirdly, that, death being so certain, and the time and manner of it so uncertain, it would be no small satisfaction to a poor sinner, if he could die more than once; that so, if he had the misfortune once to die ill, he might repair the fault, by taking more care a second time. But, alas! we can die but once;

and when once we have set our foot within the gates of eternity there is no coming back; and if it be a miserable eternity into which we have stepped, there is no redemption; we pass from death to a second death, to the very extremity of misery, without end or remedy. O, how hard it is to do that well which we can do but once, and can never try or practise beforehand! O my soul, see, then, thou take care to study well this important lesson by a continual preparation for death.

Conclude to make it the great business of thy life to learn to die well. Remember there is no security against an evil death, but a good life; every thing else leaves thee exposed to dreadful uncertainties.

JULY 7.

On preparing for Death.

CONSIDER, first, that the preparing for death is a business of the utmost importance; it is the great business of life. We came into this world as pilgrims and travellers, to make the best of our way towards our true and everlasting home, a happy eternity. The great business of our whole life is to secure this happy eternity; and nothing else can secure it but a good death. This is the necessary gate, through which we must pass to eternal life: if we think of arriving at it by any other way, we shall miss the road. A good death, then, must be the study and business of our whole life: our whole life ought to be a preparation for it. Happy they who are continually preparing for it by a good life! Unhappy they who defer their preparation to their death-bed, and thereby put the issue of an eternity upon the poor chance of a death-bed performance!

Consider, secondly, the great but general error of men, who promise themselves to do great things in point of devotion and contrition, when they are sick and like to die; and, upon the confidence of this, are often careless in preparing for death, during the time of their health. Alas! how strangely will they one day find themselves deceived! For if a small pain, or indisposition, be enough, at any time, to spoil all our devotion, what must a mortal illness be; when either the dulness and stupidity caused by the distemper, or the anguish of body and mind, scarce allow of any application at all of our thoughts to the greatest of all our concerns! O my soul, see thou suffer not thyself to be thus imposed upon. Do, now, all thou art able; prepare thyself now for thy last end, by daily and fervent acts of devotion and contrition; every night strive to put thyself in the condition in which thou desirest to be found at thy death: but never tempt God, by designing to live in sin, and then to die in

grace ; or by expecting so extraordinary a miracle of grace, as to pass from being a slave, all thy life-time, to sin and Satan, to the loving of God above all things, at thy death. No, no ; *God is not to be mocked* in this manner.

Consider, thirdly, that the best manner of preparing for death is to die daily to our sinful inclinations and passions, to the love of the world, and of the flesh, and to our own unhappy self-love, the root of all our evils, and this by the means of a general mortification and self-denial. This is that great lesson, perpetually inculcated by the Son of God, in the gospel, of leaving all to follow him ; of disengaging our hearts from all things else ; of renouncing our dearest affections for his sake ; of denying and hating ourselves in this world, that so we may save our souls, and possess our God for ever, in the world to come. O how sweet, how happy, how secure, shall our death be, if it finds us thus untied from the earth and all earthly clogs ! O how shall we then long for the wings of the dove, to fly away from this land of misery and sin, and to repose eternally in God !

Conclude to be ever preparing thyself for death, by refraining from all that thou wouldst then wish not to have done ; and by living every day, and doing every work, as if it were to be the last of thy life ; and thou shalt not fail to die happily.

JULY 8.

On the Sentiments we shall have at the Hour of our Death.

CONSIDER, first, how different a judgment the soul will make of all things at the approaches of death, from that which she is apt to make in life. O, how shall the world then turn upside down before her eyes ! Ah, my soul, how wilt thou then despise all worldly honours and preferments, when thou shalt see thyself at the brink of the grave, where the worms shall make no distinction between the king and the beggar ! How little account wilt thou then make of the praise, esteem or love of men, who will now think no more of thee ! How wilt thou then undervalue thy riches, when thou shalt see them slipping away from thee, and leaving thee nothing but a coffin and a shroud ! How contemptible shall all worldly pleasures then appear in thy eyes, which at the best could never afford thee any true satisfaction, and now shall show what they really are, and dissolve into smoke ! O, let us make the same judgment now, concerning all these things, as we shall do then ! Let us weigh them all in these scales, and we shall not be cheated. For why should we set our affections upon such short-lived, slippery toys ? Why should we admit of a love that cannot stand the test of death ?

Consider, secondly, O my soul, what shall then be thy sentiments with regard to thy sins, of which, perhaps, thou hast hitherto made but small account. O, how hideous, how odious, will they begin to appear to thee, how numerous, how enormous, when the curtain shall begin to be withdrawn, with which thy busy self-love has industriously hidden them, or disguised the deformity and malice of them, and they shall be set before thy eyes in their true light; when that false conscience, which thou hast framed to thyself, and under the cover of which thou hast passed over many things in thy confessions, as slight and inconsiderable, which thou wast ashamed to declare, or unwilling to forsake, shall no longer be able to maintain its ground, at the approach of death! O, what anguish, what remorse, what dread, what confusion, what despair, will invade a poor dying sinner, at the sight of this dreadful scene, of this army of his sins drawn up in battle array against him! Ah, Christians, let us be wise in time, and prevent so great an evil, by taking all such precautions now, with regard to our sins, as we shall certainly wish to have taken then.

Consider, thirdly, my soul, what thy sentiments shall be, at the time of thy death, with relation to the service of God, to virtue, and devotion. O how lovely then shall the way of virtue appear to thee! O how wilt thou then wish to have always followed that charming path! But what shall thy sentiments be with regard to the value of *grace*? How bitterly shalt thou then regret the neglect of so many calls and invitations of thy gracious God, the loss of so many favourable opportunities of storing up eternal treasures, the squandering away of so much of thy precious time, the misemploying of so many of God's gifts and talents, the abuse of the sacraments, &c.! Ah, how many great, but ungrateful truths, shall then discover themselves to the sinner, against which he had shut his eyes before! How shall the false reasonings of the world, the delusions of his passions, the subtleties of his self-love, together with the affected ignorance of such things as he had no mind to know, all forsake him at the approaches of death, and leave him in the lurch, at the time of his greatest distress!

Conclude to enter into those sentiments now, with regard to all these things, that shall stand by thee at the hour of thy death. For why shouldst thou any longer suffer thyself to be the dupe of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and give into their impostures, with evident danger of the eternal loss of thy immortal soul?

JULY 9.

On the Death of the just Man.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the royal prophet, (Ps. cxv,) *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*; and reflect how true it is, that the death of such as have served God in good earnest, is indeed both precious in the sight of God, and edifying in the eyes of men; because of those happy dispositions, with which they meet death, especially that faith and confidence, which they have in the goodness and mercies of their heavenly Father, and in the infinite mercies of Jesus Christ their Redeemer; and that perfect conformity to the divine will, accompanied with a profound humility, a deep sense of sorrow for sin, and an ardent love of God, with which they close their eyes, and yield up their souls into their Creator's hands. O, what a happiness it is for a dying man to be in these dispositions! With what willingness does such a Christian as this leave this world! What peace and tranquillity does he find in his soul, from the testimony of a good conscience! How joyfully does he fling himself into the arms of his tender Father, who, he is well assured, will never reject his loving children, that cast their whole care upon him! *O let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to theirs.* Numb. xxiii. 10.

Consider, secondly, what a comfort it is to a good man, at the approaches of death, to see himself now so near to the end of all his labours, of all the miseries of this wretched life, and of all those dangerous conflicts and temptations, to which he has hitherto been exposed, from those mortal enemies of his soul, the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to find himself just upon the point of being delivered from his long prison, from *the body of this death, from the servitude of corruption, and from sin, that surroundeth him* on all sides, in this vale of tears; and of being called home from his banishment to his true country, which he has always longed for. O, what a satisfaction it is to a lover of God, to see himself now at the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, where he is to see, love and enjoy his God for ever! What a pleasure to look forward into that blessed eternity, into which he is just now entering, and to sing with the psalmist, (Ps. cxxi,) *I rejoice at the things that are said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord. O blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever,* Ps. lxxxiii. To such souls as these, when they are near their death, those words of our divine Saviour are directed, (Luke xxi. 28,) *Look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption is at hand.*

Consider, thirdly, the particular providence of God, in favour

of his servants at their death, expressed by the prophet, (Ps. xl. 4,) in those words: *The Lord helps them on the bed of their sorrow; he turns all their couch for them in their sickness.* He restrains their enemy at that time, he mitigates their fears and apprehensions, he supports them under their pains and agonies, he encourages them against the terrors of death and judgment, he protects them in that critical hour under the shadow of his wings, that they may be able to say with the psalmist, (Ps. xxii,) *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils; for thou art with me.* In fine, he never forsakes them in death, who in their life have been faithful to him; but more particularly helps them then, when they stand most in need of his assistance, and when all the world besides forsakes them. O, blessed be his goodness for ever!

Conclude, if thou desirest to die the death of the just, to live the life of the just, and to do the works of the just; for such as thy works are during life, such will thy death also be. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, they may rest from their labours: for their works follow them;* Revel. xiv. 13. See, then, that thy *works* be such as may make thy life holy, and thy death shall not fail to be happy.

JULY 10.

On the Death of the Wicked.

CONSIDER, first, that, as nothing is more desirable than the death of the just man, by which he puts a happy conclusion to all the labours and miseries of this dying life, which we are leading here below, and enters into the never-ending joys of his Lord; so, on the other hand, nothing can be conceived more wretched, more dismal and deplorable, than the death of the wicked. *The death of the wicked is very evil,* saith the Holy Ghost, Ps. xxxiii. 22. It is *very evil* indeed, as often as they are unexpectedly hurried away in their sins, and go down in a moment into hell; it is *very evil*, also, as often as they die hard, and with little or no sense of God or eternity. But, supposing neither the one nor the other to be the case, the death of the wicked is still *very evil*; from the torture of their conscience, from the sense of present misery, and the dreadful apprehension of a miserable eternity; and whatever way they look, all things seem to conspire against them, to denounce the judgments of God to them, and to set before their eyes a dismal scene of wo. Ah, how feelingly do they now experience that of the psalm, (cxiv,) *The*

sorrows of death have compassed me, and the perils of hell have found me!

Consider, secondly, more in particular, the principal ingredients of this bitter cup, which the wicked, that will not think during life, are so often constrained to drink of in death. And, first, the remembrance of their past sins, appearing now quite in other colors than they had represented them to themselves before; all staring them now in the face, in their most ugly shapes, and, with their united forces, making a vehement assault upon them, to push them down headlong into the bottomless pit of despair. O, how gladly would the dying sinner rid himself now of this odious company! What would he not give to shake off from his breast this viper's brood of his own offspring! But all in vain; they will not be shaken off. O, how sensibly do they make him feel the gripes of their gnawing—not unlike those of that never-dying worm, which is one of the worst of the torments of hell! Then, the remembrance of the graces they have so long resisted, of the opportunities of good they have so often neglected, of the talents they have buried, of the time they have squandered away, (one hour of which they cannot now recall, though they would give ten thousand worlds for it,) of their past abuses of the sacraments, of the word of God, and of prayer, (those great means of salvation,) and the little good they can find, in their whole lives, to put in the scales against so much evil, must add very much to their unspeakable anguish and distress, coming in upon them at this sad time, when they have so little presence of mind, so little leisure, opportunity, or ability, of doing any thing themselves, and have too much reason to apprehend that God has forsaken them.

Consider, thirdly, what anguish it is, also, to the dying sinner, to see himself violently torn away from all those things he had set his heart upon in this world. *O cruel death*, shall he then say, *dost thou make so bitter a separation?* (1 Sam. xv. 32.) What sad farewells will he be then constrained to bid to his honours, riches, pleasures, and all other worldly enjoyments—to his friends, kindred, house, and family, together with the whole world, and his own body too, in order to depart into an unknown country, and to take nothing with him thither but his works, which he would gladly leave behind him. O, how does the sight of all about him, his wife, his children, and his worldly goods, which he has loved more than his God, now serve for nothing but to increase his misery! And if, to change the melancholy scene, he endeavours to divert his thoughts from the remembrance of his past extravagances and present miseries, and to look forward, he meets there with still more frightful objects, from the just apprehension of what shall follow after death, what hands

he shall fall into then, what a severe trial he must immediately go through, and what the sad consequences must be, if he be there cast. Alas! he sees himself just now launching forth, with all his evils, into eternity, an immense ocean, to whose farther shore the poor sailor can never reach, and which, he has too much reason to fear, will be to him an eternity of woe.

Conclude to lead a virtuous life, and thou shalt have no share in this dismal scene of evils, which attends the death of the wicked.

JULY 11.

On the Condition of the Body after Death.

CONSIDER, first, that the soul is no sooner departed from the body, but this wretched carcass, which she leaves behind, immediately becomes pale, stiff, loathsome, and frightful, insomuch that the dearest friends of the deceased can scarce endure to watch one night in the same room with it, and would not be induced, by any consideration, to lie in the same bed. Even the greatest beauties are now turned ugly and hideous, and their former admirers can no longer bear the sight of them. O, ye children of men, how long will you be fond of these painted dunghills? We read that St. Francis Borgia was so touched with the ghastly countenance of the corpse of the empress Isabella, (whom he had seen, a little while before, in all her majesty and all her charms,) seeing the strange change that death had so suddenly wrought in her, that he conceived upon the spot an eternal disgust for this world, and a happy resolution of wholly consecrating himself to the love and service of that great King that never dies. O, that the like consideration of the dismal change that death shall so quickly make in all mortal beauties, might effectually move us to the like resolution!

Consider, secondly, that a person is no sooner dead, but the body begins to corrupt and stink, and, in a very short time, it becomes so insupportable that surviving friends are obliged to make haste to get it out of the house, and to lay it deep under ground, that it may not infect the air. And were the grave, after some weeks, to be opened again, and this carcass to be brought out to view, what a filthy carrion should we meet with! What a sight, what a smell, would it afford! And what should we think of a person that should be tied down to such a companion—a barbarity said to have been exercised by a certain tyrant, in binding the living to the dead, and letting them linger away in these noisome embraces! Surely the worst of torments would not be half so insupportable—so foul, so detestable a thing

is a dead corpse that is half putrefied. O mortals, why will you, then, not remember what your composition is, and what you are quickly like to come to? O filth and corruption, why wilt thou be proud?

Consider, thirdly, what companions, what attendants, these bodies of ours must meet with in the grave. Ah, no others than worms and maggots, or such like foul insects. *Under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering*, Isaiah xiv. 11. For these, O man, thou art preparing a banquet when thou art pampering thy body. These are to be thy inheritance, or, rather, they are to inherit thee; whatever thou art to-day, to-morrow thou art to be the food of worms. See here, vain worldlings, what will soon be the end of all these beauties which you are so fond of, and which are so apt to draw you into sin; filthy maggots shall very shortly prey upon these pretty faces.

Conclude to make small account of the beauty of the body, or of any thing else that death can take away, and to turn thy thoughts towards the better part, by laying up immortal riches for thy immortal soul, and procuring for her such ornaments of Christian virtues as may be out of the reach of death.

JULY 12.

On the Soul's first entering into another World.

CONSIDER, first, how the soul, in death, shuts her eyes, in a moment, to this world, and to all persons and things which she has affected here, never to take any more part in the transactions of this life, and immediately opens them to a new and surprising scene, quite strange to her, in a region of spirits, an unknown land, of which before she had no idea. She awakes, as it were, out of a dream, which is now slipt away from her, and leaves both her hands and her heart empty; all is over with her as to this world; she is estranged for ever from all conversation of mortals; no one of her dear friends can accompany her, or attend her now; she finds herself abandoned by all her lovers, quite naked, and, what is most frightful, encompassed with infernal furies, that use their utmost efforts to lay violent hands upon her. Good God, who shall protect us, at that hour, from these our mortal enemies!

Consider, secondly, the immense difference there is found, at this time, between the souls of the servants of God, and the souls of the wicked. For, although both the one and the other are to expect that the common enemy, with all his hellish forces, will exert himself on this occasion, and do his worst to get their souls into his claws; yet the servants of God are defended from

his assaults, by the care of their guardian angels, and, under the covert of their wings, go forward with joy and security; being also encompassed, on all sides, with their good works, as with a strong rampart, which both keeps the devil at a distance, and gives them a comfortable assurance of coming off well at their trial. Whereas the wicked, that have made no such provision for themselves, shall now lie at the mercy of the infernal spirits, having nothing else to carry with them to the bar, but the conscience of their past crimes, which shall be more terrible to them than the devil himself. O, my soul, let us at least be more wise, and take care; whilst we have time, to lay up for ourselves a store of good works, and thus make ourselves friends, to stand by us at that hour that is to decide our eternal doom. Such as these will be friends indeed, that will never forsake us, but will effectually plead our cause at the bar where no other eloquence shall be regarded.

Consider, thirdly, in what a wretched plight poor worldlings shall find themselves now, who have provided no such friends as these to plead for them; who have seldom or never thought of this hour, but have lived as if they were never to die. Alas! what will all their honors, riches, and pleasures, avail them now? Where is now their state and retinue? Where are all their servants and attendants? What is become of the multitude of their flatterers and visitors? See how they have left them all alone in the evil day; and, whatever way they now look for help or comfort, they meet with none; their time is past; they are hurried away, to be immediately tried and examined at the dreadful bar of a just Judge; and all things, both within and without them, declare to them the horrible sentence that is just going to fall upon their heads for an eternity. Sweet Jesus, preserve me from ever having any part to act in so dismal a tragedy.

Conclude to live now in such a manner as to have no reason to apprehend this scene of evils, which shall terrify the sinner at his departure hence, but that thy passage into eternity may be to thee the gate of a life that knows no death. O, take care to carry nothing with thee hence that may give the enemy any hold of thee then.

JULY 13.

On the particular Judgment after Death.

CONSIDER, first, that, besides the general judgment, that shall be at the end of the world, there is a particular judgment, that passes upon the soul presently after death, according to that of the apostle, (speaking of the time when we are discharged from

the body,) 1 Cor. v. 10, *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil.* Thus we see, in the case of Dives and Lazarus, (Luke xvi,) that their doom was immediately decided after death, and the one sentenced to the torments of hell, the other carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. See then, my soul, what thou art to look for, as soon as thou art parted from the body: thou must be presented before the judgment seat of Christ, in order to give an account of thy whole life, even of all that thou hast thought, said or done, during thy abode in the body, and to receive sentence accordingly, for life or death eternal: and the sentence that shall pass then shall be ratified in the general judgment at the last day. O reflect, then, how thy accounts stand at present with thy God. O, what couldst thou be able to say for thyself, if, this night, thou shouldst be cited to the bar! It may perhaps be thy case; for the Judge has long ago declared, that he will come when thou least expectest him: take care, then, to be always ready.

Consider, secondly, the qualities of this Judge, by whom we are to be tried after death. He is *infinitely holy*, and therefore cannot endure iniquity. He is *infinitely wise*, and therefore cannot be deceived: his all-seeing eye is ever upon all our ways: all the thoughts and motions of our hearts are *naked and open* to his sight: they are all recorded in his book: no one of them all can slip his notice or memory. He is also *infinitely powerful*, and therefore there is no resisting or withstanding his judgment: no dignity, no authority, no strength, no subtlety, no fraud, no learning or wit, can be available at his tribunal: he made both great and little; king and beggar are equally his subjects; and there is no respect of persons with him, nor appeal from him. In fine, he is *infinitely just*, and therefore *will render to every man* at that time *according to his works*. No favour is to be expected then for sins unrepented of. The time of merit, and of acceptable repentance, is now at an end. Ah, Christians, let us think well on these truths, whilst it is *our day*, in which mercy reigns; let us clear up all our accounts, whilst we have time; let us wash away our sins now with penitential tears; let us store up to ourselves immortal treasures, before the night overtakes us. All that we can then do will come too late.

Consider, thirdly, some other circumstances of this great trial particularly the *law* by which we are to be tried, the *accusers* and *witnesses* that shall appear against us, and the nature of the *sentence* that shall be pronounced, after the hearing of the whole cause. The *law*, by which we shall be tried, shall be the commandments of God, and the gospel of Jesus Christ: by this law, by these heavenly rules, we must stand or fall: these shall acquit us or

condemn us for eternity. O, let us, then, study them well, and in practice conform our whole lives to them. Our *accusers* shall be the devils, and the unhappy accomplices of our crimes, more especially such as we have drawn into sin, the blood of whose souls shall cry to heaven for vengeance against us. The *witnesses* shall be our own guilty consciences. And the *sentence* shall be an unchangeable, irrevocable, eternal doom, either to heaven or hell. O, let us remember these things, and we shall never sin.

Conclude to let thy whole life, henceforward, be a preparation for this great trial, and thou shalt not fail of a happy issue.

JULY 14.

On the Examination of the Soul in Judgment.

CONSIDER, first, my soul, what an account will be here demanded of thy stewardship. For thou shalt be here examined; how thou hast discharged thyself of every branch of thy duty, both in general and in particular, to thy God, to thy neighbour, and to thyself; how thou hast employed all thy precious time; what use thou hast made of the talents God has intrusted thee with; in what manner thou hast corresponded with the graces thou hast received; what profit thou hast reaped from the sacraments, from the word of God, and from the favourable circumstances in which God has placed thee; how thou hast acquitted thyself of the duties of thy calling, &c. O, poor wretch, what shalt thou be able to answer, under so strict an examination, where thy all is at stake for eternity. *O what shall I do, said holy Job, (chap. xxxi. 14,) when God shall arise to judge? And when he shall examine what shall I answer him? Alas! who shall be able to endure his scrutiny, or to answer one thing for a thousand! O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight no man living shall be justified.* Ps. cxlii.

Consider, secondly, that, at this great trial, the whole history of thy life shall be set before thee; and all thy hidden sins, all thy sins of commission or omission, even to every idle word, and every thought and motion of thy heart, shall be exposed in their true colours. Ah, what treasures of iniquity shall here come to light, when the veil shall be removed, which hides at present the greatest part of our sins from the eyes of the world, and even from our own, and it shall be said of us, Behold the man, with all his works; behold all his abominations; behold all his pride, and contempt of God; behold all his filth, &c. O my soul, how shalt thou be able to bear such a sight! O, let us, then, make it our study now, to know our sins, and to efface them by

penance, while we have time, that they may not then appear in judgment against us, and condemn us at the bar.

Consider, thirdly, that the poor soul shall not only be brought here to a strict examination, with regard to all the evil she has done, and to all the good she has left undone, during the whole time of her pilgrimage in this mortal body; but even all the good she thinks she has done, the very best of her works, her prayers, her fasts, her alms-deeds, her confessions and communions, shall all be nicely sifted, as well with relation to the intention with which she has undertaken them, as to the manner in which she has performed them, &c. And all shall be weighed, not in the deceitful balance of the judgment of men, but in the unerring scales of the sanctuary, that is, of divine justice, in which the works that are most admired by deluded mortals, are often found to be of no weight at all. Alas! poor soul, what an astonishment, what anguish, what confusion, shall it be to thee, to see so many things rise up in judgment against thee, now charged upon thee as heinous sins, of which, in thy life time, thou hast made but small account; and to find, at the same time, that these good works, with which thou wast in hopes the scales should be turned in thy favour, have either not been accepted of, for want of just weight, or have been corrupted and vitiated by pride or self-love.

Conclude to have always before thy eyes this exact account, thou must one day give, of every thought, word, deed and omission of thy whole life. Remember they all pass from thy hands to the hands of God, to be recorded in his great book, by which thou art to be tried. See thou order them accordingly.

JULY 15.

On the different States of departed Souls, before the last Day.

CONSIDER, first, that, according to the different issue of this trial in the particular judgment, the condition of departed souls shall be very different. For such as, like the rich glutton, (Luke xvi,) shall be found, at the time of their departure, quite void of grace and charity, and, in a word, all such as have died in mortal sin, shall, like the rich glutton, be immediately buried in the flames of hell, *where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished.* Ah, how strangely shall the men of riches, the great ones of this world, the ladies that have been slaves to their pleasures, here find their condition altered! A bed of fire, instead of their soft couches; the want of every thing that can afford the least comfort, even to a drop of water, instead of their former affluence: insulting devils, instead of servants and attendants; eter-

nal torments for momentary satisfactions, &c. In fine, they that could never brook the least thing contrary to their own humour, appetite or will, now find themselves in an instant plunged into that bottomless pit, where they shall never know what it is to be indulged in any one desire or inclination. O that the children of this world, the unhappy slaves of their passions and pleasures, would think of this whilst they have time!

Consider, secondly, the very different condition of the souls of the children of God, after their departure hence. For as many of them as, like the martyrs and other saints, shall be found, when they are presented before the Judge, without blemish of sin, or debt of punishment due to divine justice, on account of former offences, not sufficiently expiated; shall be immediately translated to heavenly joys. *Their earthly house of this temporal dwelling is now dissolved, but they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven, 2 Cor. v. 1. They are absent from the body, but present with the Lord, v. 8.* They enjoy what the apostle so much loughed for, when he desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, Philip. iii. 23. They are now before the throne of God, and in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne dwelleth over them—and the Lamb leads them to the living fountains of waters, (Revel. vii. 15, 17,) even the happy waters of eternal life, which ever flow from the throne of God. They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, (chap. xiv. 4,) and they live and reign with him, chap. xx. 4. They even sit with him in his throne, (Revel. iii. 21,) and exercise with him power over the nations, chap. ii. 26. See, Christians, if you will but dedicate yourselves in good earnest to the love of God, during your short pilgrimage, what great things are prepared for you in your true country, and that immediately after your departure hence. How little reason, then, have the true lovers of God to apprehend a death, that shall bring them in an instant to the very fountain's head of true and everlasting life! O what a happiness it is to shut in a moment the eyes, with which we see this world and mortals, and to open them immediately to the sight of God, and of Christ! S. Cyprian.

Consider, thirdly, that, as all are to be tried, after their departure, by their works, and to be rewarded according to their works, which they carry with them hence to the judgment seat of Christ; so those whose *dead-works* have not been fully expiated by penance, whose devotions and other good works have been full of imperfection, who have built only with wood, hay, and stubble, though not to the destroying of the foundation of the faith and grace of Christ, shall suffer loss in this fiery trial; and, instead of being immediately admitted into the presence of God, in his heavenly temple, where nothing defiled shall enter, must wait

till the dross they have carried with them out of the world be purged away, and they be fitted for the sight and enjoyment of their sovereign Good. O, how few souls shall be found, at their departure, so perfectly pure, as to be qualified to fly up immediately to the embraces of God! How very few are there that carry with them no spot, no blemish, no debt, not even of *an idle word*, into the other world, where, by the fixed decrees of Heaven, every soul shall be judged and rewarded, according to what she carries hence!

Conclude to spare no pains now to rid thyself, by penitential exercises, of all thy spots, stains and debts, *whilst thou art on the way*; lest, if thou leave them to be discharged in another world, thou mayst be cast into that prison, of which it is written, (Matt. v. 26,) *Amen; I say to thee, thou shalt not go from thence, till thou pay the last farthing.*

JULY 16.

On the Sufferings of Souls in the middle State.

CONSIDER, first, that, in this middle state of souls, (which are neither so perfect and pure as to be presently associated with the angels and saints in heaven, nor yet so bad as to be condemned to that lower hell, out of which there is no redemption,) these spirits in prison suffer much from their being kept at a distance from their God, their only true and sovereign Good. They are perfectly sensible, now, how infinite he is in himself, in goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfection, and what an infinite happiness it is to be with him, and to enjoy him eternally. All those created goods, that before claimed any share in their affections, are all now vanished away; and their *whole* hearts are now carried towards him with such vehement longing desires as, by us mortals, can neither be expressed nor conceived; so that their being detained from him, in whom alone they can find repose, is an unspeakable anguish to their souls. And what adds to their torture is the sense they now have of their sins; of all those spots and stains, that disqualify them for the enjoyment of their God; and of those unhappy debts, that keep them at a distance from him; which they resent with so great horror, that heaven itself would be no heaven to them, if their sins were to follow them thither.

Consider, secondly, that, besides these two kinds of sufferings, from the absence of God and the presence of sin, which are common (though not in an equal degree) to all these imprisoned spirits, there are other great torments inflicted on such as have been great debtors and negligent penitents, but all with a just

proportion to their sins. *They shall be saved*, says the apostle, *yet so as by fire*, (1 Cor. iii. 15;) but what kind of fire? O! a fire kindled by the wrath of God; a fire which shall penetrate their whole souls, and burn, without consuming, in some for many years, in some perhaps even to the day of judgment. But *because it is said they shall be saved—this fire is made light of*, saith St. Augustine (Psal. xxxvii.); *but surely though they shall be saved by it, yet is this fire more grievous than whatsoever a man can suffer in this life*. Christians, see, then, how much you are enemies to your own souls, when, for fear of hurting these sinful carcasses, you neglect to punish your sins by mortifications and penance, and by this means reserve so much more fuel for this purging fire.

Consider, thirdly, that, however rigorous the divine justice is in the punishments it inflicts on account of sin, upon these souls, that are in this state of a fiery purgation, yet their condition admits of many comforts that are denied to the damned, which make an immense difference between the one fire and the other. For as these souls have departed this life in the state of charity and grace, true penitents, though imperfect, they are here comforted with a good conscience, and with the assurance they have that they love God, and are loved by him; they know that they are his children and under his protection, and that their sufferings shall soon have an end, (for all time is short,) and shall terminate in the never-ending joys of a happy eternity. In the mean while, the love they have for God gives them a perfect conformity with his blessed will, and a certain peace, content and joy in all they suffer, because such is his will; they even desire that divine justice should be satisfied, and lovingly embrace those flames that are to purify them from the rust of sin, and to fit them for him. O, how happy should we be, if, under all our sufferings here, we entered into the like sentiments! Such a purgatory as this of temporal sufferings, endured with resignation, humility and love, would go a great way towards purifying our souls from our sins, and fitting them for heaven.

Conclude, since nothing impure can ever come to be united to the infinite purity of God, till it be first thoroughly purged, either in this world or the next, to make it thy business to get thyself thoroughly purified here, by penitential labours, by patience in suffering, and by fervour in the practice of all virtues, but especially of divine charity. For this will be to thee a far more easy, mild, and wholesome purgatory, than the dreadful fire of the world to come.

JULY 17.

On the Terrors of the last Day.

CONSIDER, first, that nothing can be conceived more terrible than the prospect the Scripture gives us of the last accounting day, with all the prodigies that shall go before it. The sun shall be darkened, the moon red as blood, the stars without light, and seeming to fall from the firmament, the earth shall be shaken with violent earthquakes, the sea swelling and roaring with unusual tempests, the elements all in confusion, and whole nature in disorder. *The great day of the Lord is near, saith the prophet, (Sophon. i. 14, 15,) it is near, and exceeding swift:—That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, &c.* But, oh! what shall then be the thoughts of unhappy sinners, who shall see themselves threatened with all these frightful signs of the divine indignation! Alas! they shall perfectly *wither away*, according to the expression of the gospel, (Luke xxi. 26,) *for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world*, and through the apprehension of that dismal tragedy, which shall suddenly follow after these frightful preludes.

Consider, secondly, that these terrors shall chiefly affect the wicked, against whom they are all levelled; so that *they shall then begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us; and to the hills, Cover us, (Luke xxiii. 30,) and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of their wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? Apoc. vi. 16, 17.* But as for the true servants of God, who are his friends and children, *when these things shall begin to come to pass, they are told (Luke xxii. 28,) to look up, and to lift up their heads, because their redemption is at hand.* And surely the more they love God, and take to heart the interest of the glory of Christ, and the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the more will they rejoice at the approaches of that day, that shall be so glorious to him and so happy for all his elect,—the day in which he shall be publicly acknowledged by the whole universe, for the great Lord and Judge of all; the day in which he shall finally triumph over all his enemies, and make all his servants sharers in his triumph and glory; the day in which he shall put an end to the usurpation of Satan, and to the reign of sin and death, and send them all to their proper place, never to come out any more; the day in which he shall abolish for ever the corruption of the flesh, together with the old man, and all the errors and lying fooleries of a deluded and deluding world, and shall establish

the eternal reign of incorruption, justice, and truth;—in fine, the day in which he shall wonderfully renew both heaven and earth, and bring all his servants into the never-ending joy of their Lord. O, when shall that happy day come?

Consider, thirdly, that after all those frightful symptoms above rehearsed, of the last agony and final expiring of this sinful world, a fire shall come raging like a torrent, that shall at once involve all the kingdoms of the earth in devouring flames, sweeping off and consuming all it shall find upon the whole face of the globe and reducing all to smoke and ashes. Where then, O ye worldlings, will be all these painted toys you are now so fond of? Where will be your gardens and palaces? where your gold and silver, your costly plate and jewels, your pompous equipages, and whatsoever else you seem to possess, in this *dream* of your mortal life? Alas! all these things shall end in smoke; and when you wake, you shall *find nothing in your hands*, Ps. lxxv. *O that men would be wise and understand, and would provide for their last end!* Deut. xxxii. 29. Do thou, at least, O my soul, learn to be wise, by the consideration of this last fire, that shall so suddenly put an end to all these worldly bubbles; and take thou care to provide for thyself, by laying up thy treasure in heaven, where alone it shall be out of the reach of this fiery deluge.

Conclude to be always afraid of sin, to fly and abhor it above all evil, and thou shalt have nothing to fear at the last day.

JULY 18.

On the general Resurrection.

CONSIDER, first, that, this world being now at an end, the archangel shall sound the last trumpet, and with a loud voice shall call for all the dead to arise, and to come to judgment. This voice shall at once be heard over all the universe, and presently obeyed; it shall pierce the highest heavens, and penetrate down to the lowest abyss of hell. At this voice, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, by the almighty power of our great Creator, all the children of Adam, from the first to the last, shall arise from the dust; and every soul shall again be united to its own body, never more to part for eternity; that as the soul and body have in this world been partners in good or evil, so they may in the world to come be sharers also in reward or punishment. Christians, let the sound of this last trumpet always echo in your ears.

Consider, secondly, the wonderful difference there shall be, at the time of this general resurrection, between the bodies of the

just and those of the wicked. The just shall rise in bodies most beautiful, purer than the stars, brighter than the sun, immortal and impassible; but the wicked shall rise in bodies suitable to their deserts, foul, black, hideous, and every way loathsome and insupportable; immortal it is true, but to no other end than to endure immortal torments. Oh! what an inexpressible torture shall it be to these wretched souls to be forced into such odious carcasses, and to be condemned to an eternal confinement in such a horrid and filthy prison! O learn, then, my soul, to keep thy body now pure from the corruption of carnal sins, lest otherwise it come to be at that day a sad aggravation of thy never-ending misery.

Consider, thirdly, with how much joy and delight the souls of the just shall be again united to their bodies, which they have so long desired; and with what affection they shall embrace those old companions and partners of all their labors, of all their sufferings and mortifications, and now designed to share with them in the glory of the heavenly Sion, and to give no small addition to their everlasting happiness. But oh! what dreadful curses shall pass at the melancholy meeting of the souls and bodies of the reprobate! Accursed carrion, shall the soul say, was it to gratify thee, and to indulge thy brutish inclinations, that I have forfeited the immortal joys of heaven! Ah, wretch! to give thee a filthy pleasure of a moment, I have damned both myself and thee to all eternity. O thrice accursed carcass, it is just that thou, who hast been the cause of my damnation, shouldst be my partner in eternal wo. But oughtest not thou rather, O unhappy soul, to be a thousand times over accursed by thy body, since it was thy business, and was in thy power, to have subjected its passions and lusts to the rules of reason and religion; and thou didst rather choose, for the sake of a momentary delight, to enslave thyself to its sensual inclinations, and so to purchase hell, both for thyself and it? Ah, Christians, let us at least learn to be wise, and to keep both our body and soul in good order here, that they both may be eternally happy together hereafter.

Conclude to prevent the terrors, that shall seize the wicked at that great summons, of the last trumpet, which shall call the dead from their graves, to go forth to meet the Judge, by giving ear now to another summons of the great trumpet of the Holy Ghost, calling upon thee by the apostle, (Eph. v. 14.) *Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, (that is, from the death of sin to the life of grace,) and Christ shall enlighten thee.* Thus, by *having part in the first resurrection*, thou shalt provide in time against that great day when *time shall be no more*. Thus thou shalt escape *the second death*.

JULY 19.

On the Coming of the Judge.

CONSIDER, first, that the dead, being risen, shall immediately be assembled together from all places, to meet the Judge; and this, as it is thought, near Jerusalem, in the sight of mount Olivet and of mount Calvary; where our Lord heretofore shed his blood for our redemption. O what a sight will it be, to behold here all the children of Adam, an innumerable multitude of all nations, ages and conditions, standing together, without any distinction now of rich or poor, great or little, master or servant, monarch or subject, excepting only the distinction of *good* and *bad*, which shall be wonderful and eternal. Alas! how mean a figure shall an *Alexander*, or a *Cesar*, make at this appearance; or any of those celebrated heroes of antiquity, whose very name has made whole nations tremble! Those mighty monarchs, that had once the world at their beck, are now levelled with the meanest of their slaves, and would wish a thousand times they had never worn the diadem. And hast thou, my soul, ever well considered the part thou shalt have to act in this last scene?

Consider, secondly, how the great Judge shall immediately make his appearance; and every *eye shall see him*, coming down from heaven, *with great power and majesty*, armed with all the terrors of his justice, and surrounded with all his heavenly legions. O, how different from his first coming shall this his second appearance be! His first coming was with wonderful meekness and humility, because that was *our day*, in which he came to redeem us by his *mercy*; but at his second coming, it shall be *his day*, in which his *justice* shall take place, to revenge upon sinful man the cause of his injured *mercy*, with a final vengeance, once for all. Ah, miserable sinners! how shall you then be able to stand before his face, or bear his wrathful countenance! How shall you then wish to hide your guilty heads, even in the lowest hell, rather than to endure this dreadful appearance! But all in vain: you must stand it out.

Consider, thirdly, how, upon this occasion, the royal standard of the cross (*the sign of the Son of man*) shall be carried before the Judge, shining more bright than the sun, to the unspeakable comfort of the good, and the intolerable anguish and confusion of the wicked, for having made so little advantage of the inestimable benefit of their redemption. Here they shall plainly see what their God has suffered for their salvation, and how great has been his love for them; that boundless and unparalleled love, which brought him down from his throne of glory, and nailed him to the cross. O, how shall they now condemn their past

obstinacy in sin, with all their blindness and ingratitude! O, how shall this glorious ensign justify, in the face of the whole universe, the conduct of God, and the dreadful torments he has prepared for unrepenting sinners! for what less than a miserable eternity can be punishment enough for so much obstinacy in sin, after so much goodness and love?

Conclude to take care, whilst thou hast time, to make a proper provision for this great appearance, by turning now to God, with thy whole heart, and embracing a penitential life; for why shouldst thou go on any longer, adding daily sin to sin, and so *treasuring up to thyself wrath against this day of wrath?* Rom. ii. 5.

JULY 20.

On the Separation of the Good and the Bad.

CONSIDER, first, how the sovereign Judge, being seated on his glorious throne, aloft in the air, attended with all his millions of millions of angels, in their different orders and hierarchies, shall presently give his command, which shall be instantly obeyed, for the final and eternal separation of the good from the bad; after which, these two companies shall never, never more meet. Then shall all the true servants of God *be caught up in the clouds, to Christ in the air*, (1 Thess. iv. 16,) and shall be placed with honour on his right hand; and such of them as, like the apostles, have in their life time quitted all things else to follow him, shall also take their seats with him, as judges both of angels and men, *Matt. xix. 25*; *1 Cor. vi. 2, 3*. But all the wicked, together with the devils, whom they have followed, shall be driven with ignominy to the left hand. And thou, my soul, where dost thou expect to stand at that day? In which of these two companies shalt thou be ranked? Thou hast it now in thy choice; but shalt not have it then. Choose then now, in *this thy day*, that *better part that shall never be taken from thee*, Luke x.

Consider, secondly, what shall then be the thoughts of the grandees of the world, of the rich, of the worldly wise, of the great heroes, of the fine ladies, &c. when they shall see the poor in spirit, the meek, the humble, that were so contemptible in their eyes, when they were here in this mortal life, now honoured and exalted, and crowned with immortal glory, dignity, strength and beauty; but themselves depressed to the lowest extremity of disgrace, contempt, and irremediable want of all things. O, what horror, what confusion, what envy, what rage, shall oppress their souls, to see this strange catastrophe! O, what shall then be their sentiments of all those empty toys,

which they had been so fond of in their life time! How shall they now condemn their own madness, in having set their hearts upon those lying follies, to the eternal loss of their immortal souls! How shall they now wish, a thousand and a thousand times, they had followed the examples of the saints, and walked in the charming paths of virtue and devotion!

Consider, thirdly, in what manner the sentiments, which the wicked shall have on this occasion, are expressed by the Spirit of God, (Wisdom. v.) *These seeing it (viz. the glorious exaltation of the just) shall be troubled with horrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation; saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit; These are they whom we had heretofore in derision, and for a parable of reproach: we fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour: behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us: we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction; and we have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found—so we, being born, forthwith ceased to be; and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness.* Ah, Christians! mark well these speeches of the reprobate, and take effectual measures, whilst you have time, that their misfortune may never be yours.

Conclude to *fly now from the midst of Babylon*, by standing off from the corruption and infection of a wicked world, and separating yourselves from the society of the wicked, in time, that you may not be involved in their eternal misery.

JULY 21.

On the Opening of the Books.

CONSIDER, first, what we read in the word of God of the opening of the books, when God shall sit down to judge, (Daniel vii.) *I beheld, saith the prophet, till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat down.—Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him: the judgment sat, and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED.* And (Revel. xx. 11, 12,) *I saw a great white throne, saith St. John, and one*

sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works. Christians, attend to these awful truths, and think well on these *books*, by the contents of which you are to be judged. The study of these will be of infinitely more importance to you, than the knowledge of all the books of the belles lettres and human sciences, which must all perish in the last fire.

Consider, secondly, what these books are, which shall be produced and set open at the day of judgment. In the first place, there shall be the books of our consciences, with all the divine records, in which our thoughts, words and actions, are punctually registered. In the second place, the books of the Gospel, of the rules of life prescribed by Jesus Christ, and of the commandments of God. And lastly, *the book of life*; even that book, in the first line of which it is written of Jesus Christ, (Ps. xxxix,) that he should *come, to do his Father's will*; and in which the names of all stand recorded, under the name of Jesus Christ, who, with him and through him, have made it the main business of their life to do the will of him and of his Father; and who have embraced the law of his love in the very midst of their hearts. Christians, examine yourselves now by these books, judge yourselves now by these books, and all shall be well with you then. See how your accounts now stand in your own consciences; but O! beware of the delusions of self-love. Reflect how all your thoughts, words and actions, in the moment they go from you, are presently enrolled in the divine books. Ah! in what condition are yours to appear there? Shall your life be able to stand the trial of the book of the Gospel? Or shall not rather your faith rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you, for having renounced in practice what you professed to believe? Has your name any place in the book of life, where none are entered but such as do the will of God?

Consider, thirdly, how, upon the opening of these books, the sins of the reprobate shall not only all appear, in their most odious shapes, to their own eyes, but also be exposed to the public view of that whole immense assembly of all heaven and earth visible and evident to the eyes of all, both angels and men, good and bad. Ah, poor sinner! where shalt thou then hide thy head? What shame, what anguish, shall oppress thee, when all thy filth and abominations, all thy works of darkness, which thou hadst committed in the greatest secrecy, and which thou wouldst not have had known to thy friends and acquaintance for

all the world, and perhaps couldst not find in thy heart to disclose even to one person, tied by all laws to an eternal secrecy, shall now be displayed before thy face, with all their aggravating circumstances, in this great consistory of the whole universe?

Conclude to prevent, by a hearty repentance, and a sincere confession of all thy guilt, now, whilst thou hast time, the dreadful confusion which otherwise thou shalt suffer at that day; and the great Judge shall then ratify the absolution, that has been given thee here, by virtue of his commission, and clear thee from all thy sins.

JULY 22.

On the Conversion of St. Mary Magdalene. Luke vii.

CONSIDER, first, the sudden and wonderful change God was pleased to work in the heart of this glorious penitent. *Behold, a woman in the city, that was a sinner, (says St. Luke,) when she knew that Jesus was at meat in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and standing behind at his feet, she began to wash his feet with her tears, and she wiped them with the hairs of her head, and she kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment, Luke vii. 37, 38.* See here, my soul, a penitent indeed; thoroughly penetrated with the sense of the dreadful evil of her sins, and therefore not to be restrained, either by shame or fear, or any considerations of what the world would think or say, from running immediately to her Saviour, though then at table, and in the midst of the Pharisees, and there to do public penance, without regard to their censures or contempt. O, see what it is for a soul to have her eyes truly opened, to discover the deformity of her sins, and to view those odious monsters, in their true shape, which have so long possessed her! She thinks every moment an age, till, by running to our Lord, she can get rid of her guilt, whatever it may cost her, or whoever may scoff at her, or censure her for it.

Consider, secondly, the chiefest ingredients in Magdalene's conversion; her faith, her humility, her love, her penitential tears, and her dedicating now, to the service of her Lord, all that she had before employed in sin. Her *faith*, joined with her humble confidence in the goodness and mercy of her Saviour, appears in her running to him, to be washed and cleansed by him from all her filth, in the true fountain of life. Her *humility* appears in her not daring to come before his face, nor to address herself to him in words; but standing behind at his feet, and speaking to his heart by floods of tears. Her ardent *love* shows itself, in her

often kissing his feet, and in the *penitential tears* it produces, and is therefore taken notice of by our Lord as the main disposition towards her justification: *Many sins are forgiven her, said he, for she hath loved much*, verse 47. And now her hair, her precious ointments, her whole person, are wholly dedicated to her Saviour, to whom, from this time forward, she adheres with such an inviolable fidelity, and unalterable affection, as not even to suffer herself to be kept off from him, either by the ignominy of the cross or the horror of the sepulchre. See, sinners, what it is to be a perfect convert, what it is to be a penitent indeed.

Consider, thirdly, the lessons all Christians may learn from Magdalene's conversion. And first, a sense of the wonderful mercies of God, who thus changes in an instant the greatest sinners into the greatest saints; that so we may never despair of the conversion of any one, nor ever presume to despise poor sinners, how abandoned soever, or to prefer ourselves before any of them, since whatever they are to-day, to-morrow they may be great penitents and great favourites of Heaven. Secondly, we must learn, from this great example, a ready compliance with the graces and calls of God, with a courage and resolution to overcome the opposition we shall be sure to meet with in our return to God, from old habits, human respects, or any other considerations. Alas! if Magdalene had regarded the censures of the world, or delayed her conversion, for fear of what the Pharisees should say or think of her, in all appearance, she would have died in her sins. Thirdly, we may learn by her example, that the most effectual means for the remission of all our sins, and the advancing of our souls to the perfection of all holiness, is an ardent love of our blessed Redeemer, and a repentance influenced by love. Happy we, if we can but learn of her to go daily in this penitential spirit to the feet of Christ! He never rejects a penitent lover.

Conclude, if thou hast followed Magdalene in her sins, to imitate her also in her conversion; and, the more and the greater thy sins have been, to make the greater return of love to him, who has so mercifully spared thee in thy sins, and so lovingly forgiven thee that immense debt, which thou owedst to his justice.

JULY 23.

On the last Sentence of the Good.

CONSIDER, first, that the great assizes of the Lord concluded by a definitive sentence, by which the glorious rehearsal of all their good works, shall be in the *kingdom* where sorrows never enter and

wicked shall be condemned to the dismal dungeons of *everlasting fire*. But first give ear, O my soul, to that sweet and amiable invitation, (which thou hopest shall be one day thine,) by which their dear Lord shall call all his servants, his friends, and his children, into the glorious mansions of eternal bliss. *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, shall he say; *possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. 34. O happy invitation! O happy, thrice happy they, that shall be found worthy to partake of this joyful sentence! What unspeakable satisfaction and delight, what torrents of joy and pleasure, shall flow into their souls at the hearing of it! But, oh! what envy, what rage, shall possess the souls of the reprobate, when they shall hear this invitation, and shall see several of their own acquaintance going to take possession of that eternal kingdom, which they might also have so easily purchased, but, by their folly and stupidity, have blindly exchanged for the flames of hell!

Consider, secondly, and weigh well at thy leisure, the words of this happy sentence: *Come*, says the Judge, *ye blessed of my Father, &c.* *Come* (O sweet invitation!) from the vale of tears, to the blissful regions of never-ending joys. Come from a tedious banishment to your true heavenly country; from your mortal pilgrimage, in the midst of crosses, labours, conflicts and dangers, to your blessed home, in the fair and lovely mansions of rest and peace, in the eternal Sion, where you shall meet with all that your heart can desire, to complete your happiness, where you shall be for ever inebriated by the plenty of my house, and drink for ever at the fountain of life. *Arise, my beloved, the winter is now past*, the floods and storms are all over, *arise and come. Come, enter into the joy of your Lord, the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning*, a universal good, a blessing including all blessings, and extended to endless ages. O my soul, learn thou to despise all other happiness, in hopes of having a share, one day, in this blessed sentence.

Consider, thirdly, that what is most to be admired and loved in this heavenly sentence, is, that it brings our souls to an eternal union with God himself, our only true and sovereign Good. This *come*, this sweet word of salvation, draws us to our God, unites us to him, receives us into the very bosom of his goodness, and in a manner transforms us into him. And nothing less could ever truly satisfy our souls. O happy *blessing* indeed, to be thus *blessed of the Father*, by an eternal union with himself! O happy *kingdom*, in which we shall eternally live and reign with the ever-living God! *I rejoiced*, said the royal prophet, (Ps. cxxi,) *at the things that were said to me: we shall go into the house of the Lord*. But, O my soul, how much more oughtest thou to rejoice at the happy prospect of thy being one day

called, not only into the house of the Lord, but even to a union with the Lord himself!

Conclude to spare no pains to secure to thyself this happy sentence, by a diligence in all good works, more especially works of mercy and charity, which, by the Gospel, are particularly entitled to the sentence of the elect.

JULY 24.

On the last Sentence of the Wicked.

CONSIDER, first, how the great Judge, after having invited the just to his glorious kingdom, turning himself towards the wicked on his left hand, with fire in his eyes, and terror in his countenance, shall thunder out against them the dreadful sentence of their irrevocable doom in these words: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. O sinners, weigh well every word of this frightful sentence. *Depart*, saith he, *go*, be gone for ever, far from me; far from the joys of my kingdom, and the society of my children, into the place you have chosen, and blindly preferred before heaven; into the darksome dungeons of hell below, prepared for Satan and his associates, whose part you have taken against me. O terrible excommunication, to be cut off for ever from the society of Jesus Christ and his saints! O cruel divorce, to be eternally separated from God, and all that is good! O dismal and everlasting banishment, to be excluded from the city of God, and sent into the low and horrid region of *the second death*: Ah, wretches! who make so little now of losing God and his grace by mortal sin, what shall you then think, when you shall be doomed to this eternal separation from the Source of all good? But whither are you to go from him? Alas! *into everlasting fire*, there to burn as long as God is God, in the company of *the devil and his angels*. O dreadful eternity!

Consider, secondly, that terrible and universal curse, which this sentence of condemnation involves: *Depart from me, you cursed*, says the sovereign Judge; as if he should say, You shall go from me, but take my *curse* along with you. I would have given you my *blessing*, but you would not receive it: a *curse* you have chosen, and a *curse* shall be your everlasting lot. It shall stick close to you like a garment, which you shall never put off; it shall enter into your very bowels, and search into the very marrow of your bones:—a *curse* upon your eyes, never to see the least glimpse of comfortable light; a *curse* upon your ears, to hear no other music for all eternity but frightful shrieks and groans: a *curse* on your taste, to be ever imbittered with the

gall of dragons ; a *curse* on your smell, to be always tormented with the intolerable stench of the bottomless pit ; a *curse* on your feeling, and on all the members of your body, to be for ever burning, and never to consume, in a fire that shall never be quenched. O dreadful complication of irremediable evils !

Consider, thirdly, that this terrible *curse* shall not only be extended to the body, and all its senses and members ; it shall also reach the soul, and all its powers and faculties. As if the great Judge should also say, A *curse* upon your understanding, never to be enlightened with any ray of truth ; a *curse* upon your will, never to attain to any thing it loves or desires, but to be always bound down to what it hates and abhors ; a *curse* upon your memory, to be ever revolving, in the bitterness of a fruitless repentance, the folly and vanity of all those short-lived pleasures and worldly toys, for which you have forfeited a happy eternity ; a *curse* upon your conscience, to be ever gnawed by the worm that never dies ; a *curse* upon your whole soul, to be a hell to itself, ever torn in pieces with most violent passions, of fury, envy, hatred and despair. Good God, let me never be so miserable as to incur this dreadful and irrevocable curse. But see how this sentence is no sooner pronounced, but the earth opens, and swallows down at once all this wretched multitude, with the devils that seduced them, into the lowest hell ; and then *the gate is shut* upon them, never, never to be opened ! O, the fatal consequences of all worldly pride ! O, the dismal end of carnal pleasures !

Conclude to turn now to God with thy whole heart, and henceforward to stick close to him : thus thou shalt secure to thyself a *blessing* at that day, instead of a curse.

JULY 25.

On ST. JAMES.

CONSIDER, first, that St. James, the son of Zebedee, the elder brother of St. John the apostle, was one of those disciples to whom our Lord was pleased to show a more particular favour and love ; he was one of the three that were chosen to be witnesses of the glory of his transfiguration ; one of the three that were admitted to be present when he raised to life the daughter of Jairus ; and one of the three, whom he took along with him to stay and watch with him in his prayer and agony in the garden. O how great must the faith and love of St. James have been, that he should be such a favourite of Jesus ! How happy are they that, like St. James, stick close to Jesus, in his sorrows and sufferings, no less than in his joys and glory ! The zeal and fervour of St.

James, and of his brother St. John, in the cause of Christ, obtained for them, from our Lord, the surname of *Boanerges*, or *sons of thunder*. This glorious name they made good in their preaching and in their labours; and St. James with this advantage, that he was the first of all the apostles that laid down his life for the love of his Master, and sealed his doctrine with his blood. O glorious death! to die for love, not of any mortal beauty, or worldly honour, or friends, or country; but for the love of our Lord, the true and everlasting Life. O how happy are all those sufferings, that are endured for the love of Christ!

Consider, secondly, that the Epistle of this day (1 Cor. iv.) shows what kind of sufferings St. James and his fellow apostles endured daily for the love of Christ, and with what patience and charity they supported them. *I think*, says St. Paul, *that God hath set forth us apostles, the last, as it were men appointed to death; because we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake—we are weak—we are without honour. Even unto this hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no fixed abode; and we labour, working with our own hands; we are reviled, and we bless; we are persecuted, and we suffer it; we are ill spoken of, and we entreat; we are made as the refuse of the world, the offscouring of all, even until now.* See, Christians, in what manner the greatest favourites of heaven were treated by the children of the world. But no wonder; for their Master himself was treated no better; and all that will reign with him must be content to suffer with him. O happy those crosses, that bring the soul to the eternal enjoyment of her God!

Consider, thirdly, from the Gospel of this festival, that St. James and St. John, though they had been now trained up for three years in the school of Christ, yet, before his passion and death, and their receiving the Holy Ghost, had not yet perfectly put off the old man, or purged away the old leaven of ambition and self-seeking, and therefore they induced their mother to petition for them, that they might sit, the one on the right hand of Christ, the other on the left, in his kingdom. Christians, beware of ambition; beware of desiring to be honoured, to be praised, to be exalted, or preferred before others; beware of all the subtleties of pride and self-love; if it found its way even into the school of Christ, (as it had done before into the earthly paradise, and even into heaven itself,) it is recorded as a warning for us, that so dangerous and subtle an evil may not make its way with far greater ease into our unguarded souls. But hearken to the words of our Lord, upon this occasion. "You know not (says he) what you ask." "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink?" &c. O, how true it is, that *we know not what we*

ask, when we ask for honours, preferments, riches, pleasures, &c., which, instead of bringing us nearer to our God, are too apt to carry us away far from him! It is *drinking* with Christ of *the chalice of his passion*; it is taking up our cross, and following him, is the true means of divine appointment, which is to bring us to Christ, and to entitle us to sit down with him on his throne, and to reign eternally with him.

Conclude to let it be thy great ambition to keep as close as thou canst to thy Lord, with thy cross upon thy shoulders, by diligent working, suffering and loving; and instead of pretending to high things, sit thee down by humility in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given thee.

JULY 26.

On ST. ANN.

CONSIDER, first, that what gives us the highest idea of the supereminent sanctity of St. Ann, and of her blessed consort, St. Joachim, is that they were chosen by the decrees of Heaven, to be parents of that immaculate Virgin, who was to bring forth the Saviour of the world, and to be the Mother of God. O what graces did they not receive, to qualify them to furnish this virgin Spouse to the Spirit of God, and this virgin Mother to the Son of God! What a saintlike, what a heavenly education, did they not give to their blessed child! How perfectly did they make good thereby that sentence of their divine grandson, that *the tree is to be known by the fruits!* What reverence, then, what esteem, what affection, what devotion, do we not owe to this blessed couple! All the true children of Christ have ever loved his Mother, and considered her as their Mother. How, then, can we do otherwise than love also these two great saints, to whom we stand indebted for such a mother?

Consider, secondly, from the Lesson or Epistle that is read on the feast of St. Ann, (out of *Proverbs*, xxxi,) the properties of a *valiant*, that is, of a wise and virtuous woman, as all perfectly agreeing to this great saint; particularly her perpetual attention to do *good, and not evil, all the days of her life*; her unwearied industry in acquiring the spiritual riches of all virtues, and storing up a treasure for eternity; her diligence in the exercise of the works of mercy and charity, &c. *Strength and beauty are her clothing*, saith the wise man, speaking of her interior, *and she shall laugh in the last day*, (even in that day when the foolish admirers of worldly vanities shall all be sad and sorrowful.) *She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue*, (by her being ever prudent

in her words, and charitably compassionate in excusing the defects of her neighbours.) *She hath looked well on the paths of her house, and hath not eaten her bread idle,* (by a serious application to keep herself always well employed, and to see that all under her charge are orderly.) Such was St. Ann, such ought all Christian matrons to be; of such as these the Spirit of God adds, in the conclusion of the chapter, *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.* Yes, the Lord himself shall give her the eternal reward of the fruit of her hands, and the gates of the heavenly Sion shall resound with her praises for ever.

Consider, thirdly, from the Gospel of this day, that excellent *treasure* which St. Ann found, and made her own, by giving up all things else to purchase it for herself. "The kingdom of heaven," says our Lord, (Matt. xiii. 44,) "is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. The *kingdom of heaven*, in this, and other passages of the Gospel, is understood of *the kingdom of God within us*, by his grace in the soul; that kingdom by which he lives and reigns in our interior, by faith, hope, and love, and the spirit of recollection and prayer. Now this kingdom of God in our souls is a *treasure* indeed, of infinite value, which enriches us by the possession of God himself, here by grace, and hereafter in glory. This *treasure* is *hidden* from the children of the world, who are strangers to the value of it, and have a very mean idea of the happiness of a spiritual and internal life; but the children of God, whose eyes are opened to the truth, discover this inestimable treasure, and spare neither pains nor cost to get it into their own possession; *they ever sell all they have to purchase it*; that is, they give up their humours, their passions, their worldly affections, their sensual inclinations, their own will, and every thing else that opposes so great a happiness; and thus this kingdom of God becomes their own, and they themselves become God's kingdom. Thus they begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclude to *seek first this kingdom of God* in thy soul above all things, *and all other things shall be added unto thee*: thou shalt also be reimbursed, with infinite advantage, whatever thou hast expended in the purchase of it, and *all good things shall come to thee along with it.*

JULY 27

On Hell

CONSIDER, first, that it will be of no small service to thee, in order to keep thee from going down into hell after thy death, if thou wilt now, by a serious meditation, go down thither whilst thou art alive, and take a view of that wretched place, by the help of those lights which the unerring word of God shall furnish thee with. Give ear, then, first, to what is said of hell in the Old Testament, where it is called, (Job x,) *a land* (from which there is no coming back) dark, and covered with the obscurity of death; a land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth: and Isai. xxx, where it is called *Topheth*, (from the name of that dismal valley, near Jerusalem, otherwise called Gehenna, where the idolaters burnt their children in sacrifice to the devil,) of which he says, "Topheth is prepared from yesterday; prepared by the king, deep and wide. The nourishments thereof is fire, and much wood; the breath of the Lord, as a torrent of brimstone, kindleth it." And what kind of torments are there prepared for the wicked, the same prophet informs us, (chap. xxxiii. 14,) when he puts the question to them, "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The wise man adds (Ecclus. xxxix,) "that there are spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments: in the time of destruction they shall pour out their force, and shall appease the wrath of him that made them. Fire, hail, famine and death, all these were created for vengeance; the teeth of beasts, and scorpions, and serpents."

Consider, secondly, what a description our Lord himself has given us of hell in his Gospel, where he calls it the gehenna of fire, or the fiery gehenna, *St. Matt. v.*; "a fire that cannot be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished; and where every one shall be salted with fire," *St. Mark ix.*; "an eternal fire, and everlasting punishment," *St. Matt. xxv.*; "a place of torments in flames," where the wicked shall not be allowed even so much as one drop of water to cool their tongue, *St. Luke xvi.*; "a furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," *St. Matt. xiii.*; "a binding hand and foot, and casting into exterior darkness," *St. Matt. xxii.* To which St. John adds, (*Revel. xiv.*) that the damned "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God—and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone—and that the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever; and that they have no rest day nor night," *Revel. xx.*; that they shall be "cast into

the pool of fire and brimstone, which is the second death." To which St. Jude also adds "darkness and everlasting chains," *verse 6*; and St. Paul, (2 Thes. 1,) "that they shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction from the face of the Lord.

Consider, thirdly, what a dreadful scene of misery and wo is here set before our eyes, in these texts of Holy Scripture; what a complication of all the worst of evils, and all of them eternal; how many bitter ingredients of this cup of the divine wrath, of which the wicked must drink in hell for evermore. Take a view of them, O my soul, at thy leisure, that the sight of them may imprint in thee a wholesome fear of sin, the only evil that can condemn thee to that place of torments. O, consider well this dying life, or rather this living death, of the damned; this darksome land, these dungeons of horror and misery, this binding hand and foot in eternal chains, this pool of fire and brimstone, this salting with fire, these devouring flames, which always burn, and yet never consume; this feeling ever fresh for sufferings, these gnawing serpents, this worm that never dies, this dreadful second death, this eternal separation from God and all that is good, this perpetual weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, &c., and that all this is endured in the company of devils, and other damned wretches, all hating and cursing one another, all hating and blaspheming God; and that all these insupportable sufferings are to be without end, intermission or remission. Ah, such is hell according to holy writ, according to God's infallible word; and who can bear the least part of it? And shall Christians, that believe the word of God, dare to sin?

Conclude, seeing thou canst endure so little here, to take the most effectual means thou art able, now, whilst thou hast time, to keep thyself from ever coming into this place of torments. The fire of hell can burn nothing but wilful sin. Get rid of this enormous evil, and hell can have no hold on thee.

JULY 28.

Some other Considerations on Hell.

CONSIDER, first, that as it is said in holy writ, (1 Cor. ii. 9,) that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him*; so we may also say with truth, that neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of any mortal to conceive, what dreadful torments are prepared in hell for obstinate sinners, that wilfully die enemies of God. The Almighty is infinite in all his attributes; as in his power, wisdom, goodness, &c., so in his avenging justice too. He is a God in

hell, as much as in heaven. So that, by the greatness of his love, mercy, and patience here, we may measure the greatness of his future wrath and vengeance against impenitent sinners. By his pure goodness and love, he has drawn them out of nothing, and made them for himself and a happy eternity; he has preserved them, and sustained them, for a long time, ever loading them with his benefits; he has even come down from his throne of glory, to seek them when gone astray; he has suffered himself to be nailed to a disgraceful cross, for their eternal salvation; he has frequently delivered them from the dangers to which they were daily exposed, has patiently borne with their repeated insolences and treasons, still graciously inviting them to return to him by repentance, and still offering them his mercy, and all good, both for time and eternity. Ah, how justly, then, does his patience and goodness, after being so long abused, turn into fury! His mercy at length gives place to justice, and a thousand woes to those wretches, that must for ever feel the dreadful weight of the avenging hand of the living God.

Consider, secondly, that beatitude, according to divines, is defined, *a perfect and never-ending state of happiness, comprising at once all that is good, without any mixture of evil*. If, then, damnation be the opposite to beatitude, it must needs be an everlasting deluge of all that is evil, without the least mixture of good, without the least alloy of ease, without the least glimpse of comfort; a total privation of all happiness, and a chaos of all misery.

Consider, thirdly, that the misery of the damned is *unchangeable*;—because they carry with them out of this world the enormous guilt of mortal sin; an infinite debt, of which they can never discharge the least part; a dreadful poison, which has tainted and corrupted their whole souls, for which there is now no medicine; a dismal stain which has penetrated them through and through, and never can be effaced, which is even proof against all the flames of hell, which it continually nourishes, and all the gnawings of the never-dying worm, which eternally preys upon it. For as there is no remission of sins in hell, the whole guilt remains unchangeably in the soul, with all the debt, and all the stain; and consequently calls, without ceasing, for all the wrath of God's avenging justice, which cannot but eternally hate and eternally punish everlasting sin. Oh! how true it is, that this dreadful evil of mortal sin is the very worst of all the ingredients of eternal damnation, and the source and cause of all the rest!

Conclude ever to detest and fly from this monster sin, which is thus odious to thy God, and pernicious to thy soul, and thou shalt have no need to apprehend eternal damnation.

JULY 29.

On the Prison of Hell.

CONSIDER, first, hell is a prison, that lies deep in the bowels of the earth, in which the damned are confined for all eternity: a prison whose gates are eternally shut down, and bolted upon them, by the irreversible decrees of heaven, so as to prohibit for ever to them all intercourse or communication with the world above, to stop up all access to all manner of good, comfort or ease, and to shut in with them all that can make them completely miserable. Hell is a dismal dungeon, of black and stinking flames, and crammed brim full with the black and stinking carcasses of the damned, eternally frying in those dark flames. O my soul, what a prison! what a dungeon! what dreadful locks and bars, which shut out all good, and admit of nothing of God but his avenging justice!

Consider, secondly, that this prison of the damned is every way most hideous and loathsome, and full of horror and darkness. No sun, no moon, no stars, ever appear in that gloomy region; but a dismal night reigns eternally there; a night that knows no morning, nor ever expects a return of the dawning of the day. No breath of air from above, no glimpse of light, can ever penetrate into that deep, that bottomless pit. The very fire that rages there is black and darksome; it affords no light to the wretched prisoners, except it be to represent to their eyes such odious objects as may serve to increase their misery. O, who can bear the thought of such a scene of wo!

Consider, thirdly, that, in this frightful dungeon, the damned are bound down in eternal chains, so that they can neither stir *hand* nor *foot*, (St. Matt. xxii;) in fiery chains that wrap up their whole bodies, and penetrate them on all sides, and fix them immovably to their place of torments. That head, which, by their pride and rebellion, they had lifted up against God, is now eternally nailed down at an immense distance from him; that stiff neck, which they refused to submit to his sweet yoke, is now loaded with the enormous weight of the chains of hell; and all their senses and members, which they gratified in their life, by indulging them the false liberty of sinful pleasures, are now condemned to an everlasting confinement and slavery, in links of grinding flames. O that sinners would be wise, and would think on these things, and would cease from sin!

Conclude thou at least, my soul, to take care of one, and, whilst thou hast time, to provide effectually for thy eternal welfare, that thou mayst never come to be cast into this dreadful and everlasting prison.

JULY 30.

On the Entertainments of Hell.

CONSIDER, first, what kind of entertainments are prepared in a miserable eternity, to succeed the banquets and revellings, and other extravagances of a voluptuous life, in which worldlings pass this short time of their mortality. O, how strangely shall the scene be altered, when, immediately after death, they shall find their souls buried in hell! Ah! what kind of feasting shall they meet with there! what ravenous hunger and thirst, without being ever able to obtain so much as one drop of water! *Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable,* Deut. xxxii. 33. *Their cups are full of the wine of the wrath of God,* Revel. xiv—cups of liquid fire, and stinking sulphur. Their gardens of pleasures are turned into a *pool of fire and brimstone*, their carnal embraces into the eternal gnawings of infernal serpents ever preying upon their bosoms.

Consider, secondly, the music with which these wretches shall be for ever entertained in hell: eternal howlings and yellings, eternal shrieks and groans, eternal curses and blasphemies; the insulking voices of the tormentors, scoffing at their sufferings, the lashes of their scourges, &c. Ah, unhappy sinners, who shall have such entertainments as these! Surely if there were nothing else in hell but the being condemned to an everlasting night, in the midst of all this horror and confusion of so many frightful noises, dismal groans, and horrid blasphemies, any reasonable man would choose the worst of temporal evils, rather than to be condemned to eternity to such a melancholy entertainment.

Consider, thirdly, that the sense of smelling, in the damned, shall also have its share in this infernal feast, where it shall be for ever regaled with the loathsome exhalations of those filthy dungeons below, and with the intolerable stench of those half-putrefied carcasses that are broiling there. And what shall come in to complete the misery of their entertainment, shall be the abominable company, which they must have with them for endless ages, of so many hideous spirits, so many merciless devils, and, what shall be worse to them than devils, the unhappy partners of their sins. O, what bitter hatred, what hellish rage and fury, shall their former love be turned into! O, how shall they now curse, how shall they tear and torment one another, being eternally chained together, in those black fiery links, which, by their dark passions and lusts, they have in their life time made for themselves! O worldlings, break then your bonds in sunder now, whilst you have time; withdraw yourselves now from all the objects of your criminal passions, and all disorderly affections,

lest, if you carry them with you out of this world, they serve for nothing else but to add so many fiery links to your everlasting chains, and to bind you down to as many devils.

Conclude to fly, for the future, from a voluptuous life, and all the sinful entertainments of the children of this world, *who have their consolation here, and who laugh now, but shall mourn and weep hereafter*, (St. Luke vi. ;) and, for thy part, to lament henceforward the share thou hast had with them, whilst thou hast walked on with them in the broad road of a worldly life; and by these penitential tears, joined with a new life, thou shalt escape having a share with them in the entertainments of hell.

JULY 31.

On the Fire of Hell.

CONSIDER, first, that in hell every vice shall meet with its peculiar torment. There the proud shall be debased and confounded, and trodden under foot by insulting devils. There the covetous, and the lovers of the mammon of this world, shall groan under the extremity of want and misery; there the lascivious shall exchange their dark and filthy pleasures for stinking sulphur and black flames; there the gluttons and drunkards shall be oppressed with an insupportable hunger and thirst; and so of the rest. But the general punishment of all the damned, and that which is most frequently inculcated in holy writ, is that they shall *burn* in everlasting fire. O who can endure the thought of this *eternal burning*, in that dreadful *pool of fire and brimstone*? Christians, what are you doing? Do you believe this *eternal fire*? and do you dare to sin? If you believe it not, you are no Christians; and if you believe it, and still persist going on in such sins as you know are the high road to this everlasting *burning*, you must be worse than madmen.

Consider, secondly, that, of all bodily torments which we can suffer in this world, there is none more terrible than to burn alive. But, alas! there is no comparison between burning here, and burning in hell. All our fires upon earth are but painted flames, if compared to the fire of hell. The fire of this world was made to serve us, and to be our comfort; that of hell was created to be an instrument of God's vengeance upon sinners. The fire of this world cannot subsist, without being nourished by some combustible matter, which it quickly despatches and consumes; the fire of hell, kindled by the breath of an angry God, requires no other fuel than sin, and on this it feeds without ever decaying or consuming. The fire of this world can only reach the body; but the fire of hell not only pierces the body

through and through, in all its members, and penetrates into all the inward parts with most exquisite tortures, but also reaches the soul herself, in her very inmost recesses, with its searching flames. Ah, who could endure such a fire as this, even for one moment? How much less for an endless eternity!

Consider, thirdly, that there is no man upon earth, that has not quite lost his senses, who would be willing, even for the empire of the world, to be broiled, like a Laurence, on a gridiron, or roasted for half an hour by a slow fire, though he was sure to come off with his life. Nay, where is the man that would even venture to hold his finger in the flame of a candle for half a quarter of an hour, for any reward this world can give? Where is, then, the judgment of the greatest part of Christians, who pretend to believe hell fire, and yet live on, with so little apprehension and concern, and that oftentimes for years together, in the guilt of mortal sin, in danger every moment of falling into this dreadful and everlasting fire, having no more, all this while, than a hair's breadth, that is, the thin thread of an uncertain life, between their souls and a miserable eternity? Good God, deliver us from this wretched blindness, from this desperate folly and madness.

Conclude never to expose thyself to the danger of this everlasting fire, by mortal sin; nor to endure any such guilt, though it were even for one moment, lest, in that very moment, God should break the thread of thy life, and let thee drop into that fire that shall never be quenched. O, what a mercy it is of thy God, that it has not been thy case long ago!

AUGUST 1.

On the Pain of Loss in Hell.

CONSIDER, first, that, though the fire of hell, with all the rest of the *exterior* torments, which the damned must for ever endure in that woful place, be terrible beyond all that can be expressed or conceived; yet is it no ways comparable, in the judgment of divines, to the *interior* pangs and agonies of the soul, caused by the *pœna damni*, or the eternal *loss* of God, and of all that is good, and the perpetual sense they shall ever have of the greatness of this their loss, and of all its dreadful consequences. Alas! they have lost their God for ever; they are divorced eternally from him; they are stripped of all his gifts and all his graces; no light is left them in their soul, no glimpse of hope, no sense of good, no power of love either for God or their neighbours. Ah, unhappy wretches, that cannot love! They are excommunicated from God; they are sent into an eternal banishment, far from

him, far from his glorious kingdom and the happy society of his children, far from their true country, and all its blissful joys, which were once purchased for them by the blood of the Son of God. They are eternally separated from the ocean of all good.

Consider, secondly, how much the damned shall resent this most dreadful of all evils, this eternal separation from God. Alas! poor sinners, here, while they lie groveling in the mire of the earth, diverted from the thought of God, by a thousand impertinencies, and yet continually partaking, many ways, of his sweetness and goodness, in some or other of his creatures, have little or no idea of what it is absolutely to lose God for evermore. But the damned, by their own woful experience, shall be fully convinced, now it is too late, that none of all the rest of the torments of hell can be compared to this loss. God is *an infinite Good in himself*; and he is the inexhausted *Source* of all our *good*, and of every thing that is any ways *good* in his creatures. he is *our universal Good*. In losing him, then, the damned have lost an *infinite Good*, their first Beginning and their last End, by whom and for whom they were created; they have lost *their sovereign Good, their universal Good, their immense, eternal Good*; the overflowing Fountain, the very ocean of all good, their true and only happiness. They have lost him totally; they have lost him irrecoverably; they have lost him eternally; they have lost him in himself; they have lost him in themselves; they have lost him in all his creatures. There is an immense gulf between them and him, never, never to be passed.

Consider, thirdly, still further, how dreadfully the damned shall be tormented with the perpetual thinking on this most rueful of all losses. Ah! their lively sense of this most dismal and irreparable loss, and of all the sad consequences of it, shall continually rack their despairing souls; they shall not be able so much as to turn away their thoughts one moment from it. For, whichever way they shall turn, to seek any one drop of ease or comfort, in him or from him, they shall meet with none; all things shall seem to conspire against them; all things shall tell them they have lost their God. They shall always find themselves bound down fast in eternal chains, which shall keep them in a state of violence, far away from him; and all the efforts of their vehement longings after him, shall only serve to redouble their misery. Hence there flow a thousand other evils, that make their whole soul a hell to itself. Hence black despair, sadness, rage, hatred, and blasphemy.

Conclude never to turn away from God in this life, nor to lose him by wilful sin, and then thou shalt effectually prevent this last and worst of all evils, of being eternally separated from him.

AUGUST 2.

On the Worm of Hell.

CONSIDER, first, that as we are assured by the word of God that the *fire* of hell *shall never be quenched*; so are we also assured by the same unerring word, that *the worm* of the damned shall *never die*, St. Mark ix. This never-dying worm of a wicked conscience, like a black poisonous serpent, shall for ever fasten itself upon their breasts; it shall continually gnaw them; it shall eat its way into their hearts; it shall perpetually prey upon their very souls. O who can conceive the greatness of this torment! this eternal remorse, this most bitter, but fruitless repentance, this dismal melancholy, this extremity of anguish, accompanied with everlasting horror, confusion and despair! O, how hateful, how abominable, shall all their former crimes now appear in the eyes of the damned! O, how shall they now be convinced, when it is too late, of the enormity of them! O, how shall they now detest them!

Consider, secondly, that what eternally feeds this never-dying worm, is the enormous guilt of mortal sin, with which the souls of the damned are eternally stained, infected and corrupted. This dreadful guilt is ever written on their foreheads; it penetrates them on all sides; it renders them more ugly and filthy than the very dungeons of hell, eternally odious in the eyes of their Creator, and most intolerable and insupportable to their own selves; the very devils are not more hateful to them, than their own souls are, as long as they see them thus strangely tainted and corrupted, and eternally possessed by this hellish monster, or rather by as many hellish monsters as they have committed mortal sins. Ah, Christians, see by this what the guilt of mortal sin is, see what the dreadful consequences of it are for eternity; and learn from hence to detest it above all evils. O, be assured that hell itself can produce nothing worse.

Consider, thirdly, what a racking torture it shall be to the damned, to all eternity, to be revolving, without ceasing, in their memory, their past folly, stupidity and madness, in forfeiting the eternal joys of heaven, which they might have obtained at so easy a rate, and selling both their God and their souls for an empty toy, for a filthy satisfaction, that lasted but one moment, and left nothing behind it but guilt and remorse; or for some punctilio of honour, or petty interest, by which they were then robbed of all their true treasures, and all their true honour, and for which they are now reduced to the extremity of all kinds of misery. Oh! what will their judgment be of this cheating world, and of all its short-lived fooleries and vanities, when, after

having been millions of years in hell, looking back, and scarce being able to find, in that immense duration, the small point of their mortal life, they shall, with most bitter regret, be continually comparing together time and eternity, past enjoyments and present punishments, virtue and vice, heaven and hell.

Conclude to keep off from the guilt of wilful sin, and the worm of hell shall never come near thee ; it can prey upon nothing but mortal sin.

AUGUST 3.

On a miserable Eternity.

CONSIDER, first, that what, above all other things, makes hell intolerable, is the eternity of its torments. It is this eternity that is an infinite aggravation to all and every one of them. It is this bitter ingredient, which makes every drop of that cup of the divine vengeance, of which all the damned are forced to drink, so insupportable. Were there so much as the least glimpse of hope, that the miseries of the damned should one day have an end, though it were after millions of ages, hell would be no longer hell, because it would admit of some comfort. But for all these inexpressible torments to continue for ever, as long as God shall be God, without the least hopes of ever seeing an end of them, O, this it is, that is the greatest rack of the damned ! O eternity, eternity ! how little do worldlings apprehend thee now ! How unwilling are they to believe thee, (notwithstanding the express declaration of God's unerring word,) for fear thou shouldst put a restraint upon their vicious inclinations ! O, how terrible wilt thou be to them hereafter, when they shall find themselves engulfed in thy bottomless abyss !

Consider, secondly, if one short night seems so long and tedious to a poor sick man in a burning fever ; if he tosses and turns, and no where finds rest ; if he counts every hour, and, with so much impatience, longs for the morning, which yet will bring him but little relief or comfort ; what must this dreadful night of eternity be, in the midst of all the pains of hell ? No man in his senses would purchase a kingdom, at the rate of lying for ten years confined to a soft bed, without once coming off. Ah ! what a misery, then, must it be to be chained down to a bed of fire, and of such a fire as that of hell is, with all the rest of its torments, not for ten years only, nor for ten thousand times ten years, but for as many hundred thousand millions of ages, as there are drops of water in the ocean, or atoms in the air, in a word, for a never-ending eternity !

Consider, thirdly, in order to frame a better idea of this miserable eternity, what an immense space of time would be required for any one of the damned, if he were to shed but one tear in a thousand years, to shed tears enough to fill the sea. The world has not yet lasted six thousand years; so that the first of all the damned would not have shed six tears. And yet, (O dreadful eternity!) the time shall most certainly come, when any one of those wretches shall be able with truth to say, that, at the rate of one tear for a thousand years, he might have shed tears enough, not only to make a sea, but to drown the whole world, and to fill up the vast space between heaven and earth. And yet, alas! after these millions of millions of ages, he shall be as far off from the end of his misery, as he was the first day he came into that place of wo. Compute, after this, if thou pleasest, as many hundred thousand millions of years as thy thoughts can reach to; suppose, if thou wilt, the whole surface of the earth to be covered with numeral figures; cast up, if thou canst, this prodigious sum of years, and then multiply it by itself, and multiply again a second time the product by itself; and then, at the foot of this immense sum, write down, *Here begins eternity!* O terrible eternity! is it possible that they who believe thee should not fear thee? Is it possible that they who fear thee should dare to sin?

Conclude ever to fly, with all thy power, for the time to come, all such sins as lead to this miserable eternity; and, as to thy past guilt, to take the best care thou art able to wash away now all the stains of thy soul in the blood of the Lamb, by the means of a hearty repentance, and sincere confession. Penitential tears are capable of effacing those stains at present, which everlasting flames shall never be able to burn away hereafter.

AUGUST 4.

On the Happiness of Heaven.

CONSIDER, first, and ponder well, those words of the apostle, (1 Cor. ii. 9,) that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.* O, what then must this happiness of heaven be, what must this eternal glory be, which so far exceeds all our thoughts and conceptions? God is infinite in all his attributes, in his majesty, power, wisdom, justice, &c.; but his goodness and mercy, his liberality, bounty and magnificence, in his gifts and rewards, overflow, as it were, the banks, and show themselves in a most extraordinary manner, above all his works, *Ps. cxliv* If, then, his justice be so terrible, as we have

seen, with regard to his enemies, how much more shall his mercy, his goodness and his bounty, declare themselves in favour of his friends! O, what, then, must this blessed kingdom of heaven be, which, in his *infinite goodness*, he has prepared for his beloved children! which he has contrived by his *infinite wisdom*, and effected by his *infinite power*, for the manifestation of his glory, and for the entertaining them all with an eternal banquet worthy of himself!

Consider, secondly, that if, by the cost and price of a thing, we may guess at its worth, we cannot make too advantageous a judgment of the happiness of heaven, the purchasing of which has cost the precious blood and life of the Son of God himself, which is indeed an infinite price; and which, notwithstanding his purchase, is not to be obtained by us without much pains and labour, without many crosses and sufferings, and without giving our whole selves in exchange for it; and after all, though we were to labour ever so hard, all our life time, for the acquiring of it, and should give ourselves and all things else for it, yet our labours and all whatsoever we can give, bear so little proportion with the greatness of this happiness, that we are said even so to receive *this water of life free cost*, Apoc. xxii. 17. Nay, though we should even suffer a thousand deaths for the sake of this eternal life, we are still assured (Rom. viii. 18,) *that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with this heavenly glory that is to come*. So much does the bliss of heaven exceed all that we can say, think or conceive.

Consider, thirdly, the definition divines give of beatitude or eternal happiness, when they term it *a state made perfect, by assembling together and comprising in itself all good things*; [*Status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus*:] that is to say, a permanent and everlasting state, replenished with all that is good, without the least mixture of evil; a general and universal good, comprising at once, and for ever, all manner of good things, filling brimful the vast capacity of the affections and desires of the soul, and eternally securing her from all fear or danger of want or change. O, my soul, see then thou turn all thy pursuits after this true and eternal felicity: all things else are but mere toys in comparison with this thy sovereign and universal good.

Conclude with most humble and hearty thanks to the infinite goodness of God, who, before thou wast born, hath prepared such an eternal happiness for thee, and provided all necessary means for thee to obtain it. But resolve, at the same time, to be diligent in the use of all these means of thy salvation. For *he that made thee without thy concurrence, will not save thee without thy concurrence*, St. Augustine.

AUGUST 5.

On the good Things of our Lord in the Land of the Living.

CONSIDER, first, that the things which are most apt to allure the children of this world, and to draw their affection after them are honours, riches and pleasures; but their error is, that they seek these things where they are not to be found, and suffer themselves to be imposed upon by false appearances. *True* honours, *true* riches, and *true* pleasures, are not to be found in the broad road of the world, nor in the ways of sin; but are to be met with, together with all other good things, *in the land of the living*. Here all the inhabitants are advanced to the highest dignity, even to a fellowship with the living God, and a partnership with Jesus Christ in his throne. Here all are most noble and most renowned, most wise and most holy. Here all are of blood royal, children and heirs of the King of kings. All are kings and queens, crowned for ever with wreaths of immortal glory, and shining far more brightly than the sun. These are honours indeed, and truly worthy of the Christian's ambition. And all these, O my soul, if thou pleasest, may be thine for ever.

Consider, secondly, the riches that flow in this happy *land of promise*, where the inhabitants want nothing, covet nothing, and enjoy all things. This beatitude of the saints is called in Scripture a *kingdom*; and such a *kingdom* indeed it is, to all those happy souls, as in plenty of all things, wealth, power, greatness, and endless duration, infinitely exceeds all the kingdoms of the world. It is likened to a *treasure* of immense value, which all the riches of the world are not worthy to purchase. For the riches of this kingdom are of a far superior kind to all earthly treasures: gold and precious stones are valued no more than dirt here, where the inhabitants have the stars under their feet. The great treasure of the blessed is the eternal possession of God himself, with all his riches. And, O my soul, what more can be desired?

Consider, thirdly, that this heavenly land *flows also for ever with the milk and honey* of pure and immortal delights, pleasures and joys. For here all are eternally *incubriated* (according to the Psalmist) *with the plenty of God's house, and are made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure: For here with him is the fountain of life, &c.* (Psalm xxxv.) *yea, the great river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb, to water all the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, having the tree of life growing upon its banks, with all the variety of its excellent fruits, Apoc. xxii.* And this same is that

torrent of pleasure, that eternally flows (bringing with it all these delicious fruits) into the souls of God's servants, quite replenishing them, and filling brim full all their powers, senses and faculties, with inconceivable delight. O, who would not gladly part with all the satisfactions this world can afford for such immortal pleasures as these!

Conclude to be no longer a slave to worldly toys, vain honours, false riches, and fading pleasures; but to turn away, without loss of time, from this Egypt, that can afford thee nothing but muddy water, incapable to quench thy thirst, and to bend thy course towards thy true country, where thou shalt meet with all thou canst desire, and that for eternity.

AUGUST 6.

On the Transfiguration of our Lord. St. Matthew xvii.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, "taking with him Peter, James and John, brought them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them;" so that "his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as snow. And there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him, (concerning his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem," *Luke ix. 31.*) Now Peter, being transported with the glory of this vision, cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him," *Matt. xvii.* This transfiguration of our Lord, full of lessons and instructions for us, is honoured by the church, in the festival of this day, with a particular view to the raising up the thoughts and hopes of her children, in the midst of the hardships and labours of their mortal pilgrimage, to the eternal repose and glory of their heavenly country, that blessed Jerusalem, which the true Israelites must never forget, though constrained as yet, by a miserable captivity, to sit down and weep upon the banks of the rivers of Babylon, and lament their distance from the house of God in Sion.

Consider, secondly, in this mystery of the transfiguration of our Lord, how wonderfully he was here pleased to confirm our faith, as well by the joint testimonies of the law and the prophets, bearing witness to the gospel, represented by the glorious apparition of Moses and Elias with Christ, as by the testimony of God himself, in all the three persons, by the voice of the Father, by the glory of the Son, and by the manifestation of the

Holy Ghost in the bright cloud. See how he was pleased, by the same glory of his transfiguration, to encourage all his followers to bear with patience the afflictions, labours, crosses, and persecutions of this life, in hopes of a share in that eternal glory, of which he has given us, as it were, a sketch in this mystery; ever remembering that of the apostle, (2 Cor. iv. 17,) "that our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." But O, let us take along with us that other lesson also, which we are taught by the voice of the heavenly Father, in the transfiguration of our Lord, that the true way to happy eternity, and to all good, ever to hear and to obey the Son of God.

Consider, thirdly, how St. Peter, being out of himself with the joy of this vision, was desirous to be always in the same happy situation, and always enjoying the like glory; and therefore he cried out, *Lord it is good for us to be here; not knowing*, saith St. Luke, *what he said*, chap. ix. 33. Because, though it was inconceivably delightful to see and enjoy (though for a short time) the least glimpse of heavenly light and glory, yet as this present life was not to be the time of enjoyment, but of labours and of sufferings, and the Son of God himself was to enter into his glory by labours and sufferings, (Luke xxiv. 26,) it was inordinate to desire here for a continuance that which was reserved for hereafter, and for such only as should be entitled to it by labours and sufferings. Learn from hence, O my soul, with regard to divine consolations, and such like favours, that though thou art to receive them, when given with humility, gratitude and love, admiring the goodness and bounty of God, who is pleased thus to look down upon thee, the most unworthy of sinners, yet art thou not to set thy heart upon them, nor to be disturbed and discouraged when they are taken away; for merit and perfection consists not in them, but in working, suffering and loving; and for the time of this mortal life, ordinarily speaking, it is far better for thee to be with thy Lord upon mount Calvary, than upon mount Thabor.

Conclude, instead of being eager after these transitory consolations, which, at the best, are but as small drops of water, that fall from the clouds of heaven, to refresh us for a moment in this dry desert, through which we are now travelling, to aspire rather continually after that great overflowing river above, which gives joy without end to the city of God, and which alone is capable of fully quenching thy thirst, and satisfying thy soul.

AUGUST 7.

On the Glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

CONSIDER, first, how glorious and beautiful those mansions are, that are prepared for the eternal abode of the servants of God, in the heavenly Jerusalem. *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts*, cries out the royal prophet, (Ps. lxxxiii;) *my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord*. The beauty and glory of this city of God every way correspond with the riches, bounty, and magnificence of this Almighty Monarch, who has built it for the manifestation of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and for to be the eternal habitation of his dearest friends and children. And what great things will he not do, when both his own glory and his love for us call upon him to exert himself! See, my soul, how noble a palace he has given us here below, even in this place of our banishment, beautified with this sun, moon, and stars, accomplished and furnished with this almost infinite variety of minerals, plants, flowers, trees, and living creatures, in the earth, air, and waters, all subservient to man, and all wonderfully beautiful in their kinds, &c. If, then, he has so richly provided for us in this vale of tears, in this *region of the shade of death*, what must our eternal habitation be in the *land of the living*! If here he is so bountiful even to his enemies, in affording them so commodious and so noble a dwelling, what may not his friends and children expect in his eternal kingdom, where alone, according to the prophet, *our Lord is magnificent*, Isaiah xxxiii. 21.

Consider, secondly, how the Scripture, to accommodate itself to our low way of thinking, describes the glory and beauty of this heavenly city, by representing it to us under the figures of such things as we most admire here below, when it tells us that the walls of this city of God are built with precious stones, and that its streets are of pure and transparent gold; that these streets are watered with the bright crystal streams of the river of the water of life, flowing from the throne of God, and that, on the banks of this river, on both sides, grows the tree of life; that there shall be no night, nor any want of sun or moon, but that God himself shall be its everlasting Light, and that every one of the just shall shine like the sun, &c. O, how *glorious* are these *things that are said of thee, O city of God!* Psalm lxxxvi. But O, how much more glorious are those great things that are veiled under these figures!

Consider, thirdly, that *Jerusalem* is interpreted *the sight or vision of peace*; and therefore this name is given to the city above, because there alone is the true seat of *eternal peace*.

There is *the tabernacle of God with men, and he shall dwell with them, and he shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away*, Apocal. xxi. 3, 4. No heats, no colds, no rain, no storms, no diseases, no pains, no conflicts or adversities of any kind, have any access to this city, or can ever come near this blessed abode; but a most bright day, a most serene calm, an everlasting peace, perpetually reigns here; *a solid peace, a peace never to be disturbed, but always secure, a peace both within and without, a peace every way firm*. Kempis.

Conclude ever to aspire after this blessed Jerusalem, and to despise all earthly toys in comparison with this heavenly city. O, how good is our God, who has prepared such lovely and everlasting mansions for us! O blessed for ever, by all his creatures, be his infinite goodness!

AUGUST 8.

On the happy Society of the heavenly Jerusalem.

CONSIDER, first, the multitude, beauty, and glory of the inhabitants of this blessed Jerusalem, those millions of millions of bright, heavenly spirits, that always surround the throne of God, as we learn from the vision of the prophet, (Daniel vii.) *Thousands of thousands minister to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before him*; that immense number of cherubims and seraphims, all on fire with divine love; that infinite multitude of saints and martyrs, and other servants of God, of both sexes, gathered out of all nations, tribes, and tongues; and, above them all, the blessed Virgin Mother of God, the Queen of saints and angels. The number of these heavenly citizens is innumerable. They are all ever beautiful, and ever young; they are all most bright and most glorious. They wear the name of God on their foreheads, expressed by the unalterable serenity, joy, peace, and light, that shines from their countenance. The very sight of any one of them, as we learn from the experience of some of the saints and servants of God, is enough to ravish the soul into an ecstasy, and to fill it with inexpressible delight; and what shall it be to see them all, and to enjoy their happy society for all eternity!

Consider, secondly, that one of the most happy things that a good Christian could meet with or desire, on this side of eternity, would be to live quite separated from the company and conversation of the wicked, and of all the fools and the slaves of this world, and to converse only with the wise, and with the holy,

and to be joined with them, in a perfect band of fraternal charity, friendship and union. *O how good and how pleasant it is*, says the Psalmist, *for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Ps. cxxxii. But O, what company, what conversation, what friendship here upon earth, how pure soever, can bear any comparison with that of the blessed in heaven! For there we shall meet with millions of millions of brethren and friends, all most loving, all most wise, all most holy, in a word, all full of God. Their communications one with another are most pure, their conversation most sublime and heavenly; the praises of God, and his eternal truths, are their perpetual theme; harmonious hymns of divine love are their constant entertainment.

Consider, thirdly, more in particular, the inexpressible charity and love, which the blessed have one for another, which is so great that they all have but one heart and one soul. This makes them take such an inconceivable delight in each other's happiness, through the love they bear each other, as to look upon the happiness of their brethren as their own, and to rejoice in it as if it were their own; so that, by means of this their heavenly charity, the joy and satisfaction of every individual is multiplied to as many fold as there are angels and blessed souls in heaven. O, how lovely is this heavenly friendship! O, let us aspire after this happy society; let us aim, as much as human weakness will permit, at an imitation of this blessed charity, by rejoicing at every real good we discover in our neighbours, as if it were our own; and by inviting all we can to join with us here in the love and praises of God, and in the practice of all other virtues; that so both we and they may hereafter be happily united together, associated for eternity in singing to our Lord the immortal songs of Sion.

Conclude, if thou desirest to be eternally happy in the society of the saints, in the heavenly Sion, to flee now from the midst of the Babylon of a wicked world, and to associate thyself, as much as thou canst, with the true servants of God. There is nothing will be of more service to thy soul during thy mortal pilgrimage.

AUGUST 9.

On the eternal Enjoyment of God.

CONSIDER, first, that although the kingdom of heaven abounds with all that can be imagined good and delightful, yet there is but one sovereign Good, in the enjoyment of which consists the essential beatitude of heaven; and that is God himself, whom the blessed ever see, as he truly is, *face to face*, and see him in the

very centre of their own souls; and by the eternal *contemplation* of his infinite beauty and truth, together with all his divine attributes and attractions, they are quite ravished, and set on fire with seraphic flames of eternal love. By means of this contemplation and love, they are closely united, by a most pure and amiable union, with this sovereign and infinite Good; and they eternally enjoy him: he surrounds and penetrates them on all sides with inexpressible delights; he fills their whole souls with himself, the overflowing Source of all good; he gives himself to them to be their Joy, their Treasure, their never ending Bliss, he transforms them in a manner into himself; as, when brass or iron, in the furnace, is perfectly penetrated by the fire, it loseth, in a manner, its own nature, and becomes all flame and fire. O happy creatures, what can be wanting to complete your joys, who have within and without you, the immense ocean of endless felicity!

Consider, secondly, that what makes God himself infinitely and eternally happy, is the eternal knowledge, love and enjoyment of himself. For God himself is his own happiness: nothing less than his own immense divinity could ever make him happy. See then, my soul, the infinite riches of the bounty and goodness of thy God, who giveth his servants in reward of their loyalty, so great a good, that nothing greater can be given; even God himself can give nothing greater, since he giveth himself to them to be their possession and eternal inheritance; and what can be given greater than himself? O, shall not that suffice, my soul, to make thee happy, which maketh God himself happy? Who, then, can be able to conceive the least part of the joy, peace and pleasure, which that soul must experience, that sees herself thus full of God, and enjoying him! O, how happily does she here lose herself, drowned in an ocean of delights! an immense ocean, where she can neither find surface, nor bottom, nor any shore, because it is on every side incomprehensible and infinite.

Consider, thirdly, in what manner all the powers of these blessed souls, which are thus full of God, are eternally employed. Their *understanding*, elevated by the light of glory, and *in this light of God, seeing God the light*, ever contemplates, with infinite delight, this sovereign and universal truth; and in him sees all truths, penetrates into the secrets of God, and the sublimest mysteries, and is even let into the closet of his heart, to see there the immense treasures of his love for us, and all the wonders he works in time and eternity, in consequence of this love. Their *memory* is continually occupied with the remembrance of all their God has ever done for them, his creating them out of his own pure goodness, for the eternal enjoyment of himself; his redeem-

ing them with the blood of his divine Son, and, through him, opening to them an inexhaustible source of mercy, grace, and all good; his manifold preservations, by which he has so often delivered them both from a temporal, and an eternal death; and his innumerable other benefits and distinguishing favours. Their *will*, all set on fire with the sight of the infinite beauty and infinite goodness of their God, loves him without ceasing, and without measure, and perfectly consumes herself in the flames of an eternal love; she lays fast hold on this her sovereign Good, she embraces him, she eternally adheres to him, and, by a thrice happy union, she becomes in a manner the same thing with her divine Lover.

Conclude to employ here all the powers of thy soul upon God, by the practice of mental prayer and recollection, and to accustom them now to that kind of exercise, which thou hopest shall be their eternal occupation. Thus mayst thou in some measure anticipate here upon earth the joys of heaven by contemplation and love.

AUGUST 10.

On St. Laurence.

CONSIDER, first, how St. Laurence, being archdeacon to the holy pope Xystus, in the time of the persecution of the church, under the heathen emperor Valerian, seeing his holy bishop led away to martyrdom, and himself left behind, addressed himself to him in these words: *Whither art thou going, O father, without thy son? Whither art thou hastening, O holy priest, without thy deacon? Thou wast never accustomed to offer sacrifice without me, thy minister: try me then now, and make the experiment, whether thou hast chosen a fit minister, to whom thou hast committed the dispensing the blood of our Lord.* To whom the holy pope replied: *I am not going to leave thee, my son, nor to forsake thee; but am only going a little before thee; after three days thou shalt follow me. I am old, and therefore my conflict is more light and easy; but thou art young, and shalt sustain far greater conflicts for the love of Christ, and shalt triumph in a more glorious manner over the tyrant.* See, my soul, what a spirit animated these blessed martyrs, what an ardour they had to suffer for the love of Christ; and let it be thy grief to find so very little in thyself of these holy dispositions.

Consider, secondly, that what made St. Laurence so great a saint, was his divine charity, that is to say, his ardent love for his God and for his neighbour. His charity for his neighbour was evidenced as well by his diligent discharge of his office in

the care and support of all the poor of the city, as by his distributing amongst them in the time of the persecution, all the plate and treasures of the church committed to his charge. His fervent love of God was evidenced by that invincible courage and fortitude, with which he endured the worst of torments, even with cheerfulness and joy, because he was suffering for the sake of his Beloved. His love was truly stronger than death; and the fire, with which he was outwardly broiled on the gridiron, was no ways to be compared with the flames of divine love, which were enkindled within his soul, and which made him proof against all the efforts of his enemies, and victorious over all the powers of earth and hell. O, 'tis divine charity that makes saints; 'tis love, 'tis an ardent love of God and our neighbours that carries souls to heaven. O, let us but love as we ought, and as we are all strictly bound to love, and we shall be all saints; and he that loves the most, shall be the greatest saint. O teach us, dear Lord, but this divine heart of love, and in all things else do with us as thou wilt.

Consider, thirdly, the great lessons given us in the Gospel of this festival, (St. John xii. 24, &c.,) in which we are taught by our Lord, that the grain of corn must die before it can bring forth fruit; that he that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal; that the minister or servant of Christ must follow him, and that where he is, there also his minister shall be; and that, if any one shall duly minister to Christ, he shall be honoured by his Father. See, my soul, thou study well these gospel lessons; see that thou learn to die to thy self-love, to thy own will, to thy disorderly passions and sensual inclinations, by the practice of daily self-denial and mortification; and then thou shalt bring forth much fruit. We must all be so far at least martyrs of Christ, as to die to ourselves for the love of him. Thus we shall be his servants and ministers indeed; thus we shall follow him, and where he is, we shall also be; thus we shall come to be eternally honoured by his heavenly Father.

Conclude to honour this glorious martyr, St. Laurence, by an imitation of his fervour, zeal and constancy in the cause of God, and of his ardent love for God and his neighbour; and learn from the consideration of the grievous torments the martyrs have endured for Christ, to suffer, with patience at least, whatever share shall be allotted to thee in the cross of Christ.

AUGUST 11.

(On the Endowments of the glorified Bodies in Heaven.)

CONSIDER, first, that as the body and soul are individual companions and partners in this life, in the good or evil we do, so shall they be in the rewards or punishments of the next. Hence besides the essential beatitude of the soul, consisting in the eternal sight and enjoyment of God, and the happy exercise of all the powers of the soul employed eternally about him. The body also of the servants of God shall meet with its eternal reward in heaven, and with such and so happy a reward, as no human understandings can be able to conceive. These bodies of ours, at the resurrection, shall be most wonderfully changed. *This corruptible*, says the apostle, (1 Cor. xv,) *must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* And again, *it is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body;—spiritual*, not in its substance, (for it is still a *body*, and not a *spirit*;) but in its qualities, like the body of Christ, after his resurrection, penetrating through the doors that were shut, and all other obstacles; clothed with perpetual health, strength, vigour and youth; swift as thought, immortal, and impassible.

Consider, secondly, the glory and beauty of these heavenly bodies, far exceeding all earthly glory and beauty. *The just*, saith our Lord, *shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*, Matt. xiii. 43. Yea, the very least of God's servants, in that eternal kingdom, shall be far more resplendent and beautiful than any thing that can be seen by mortal eye here below, or represented by man's imagination. But O, how happy then shall the eyes of the blessed be, that shall be eternally entertained with the sight of all these heavenly beauties, every one of which is so charming and ravishing to behold! O how happy shall those eyes be, which shall be perpetually fed with the view, at once, of all that is delightful in the new heavens and the new earth! And what, again, is all this in comparison with the happiness of their eternal contemplation of the great King of beauty himself, and King of glory, Jesus Christ, whom they shall always see, in all his beauty and in all his glory.

Consider, thirdly, that the other bodily senses shall also have their reward in heaven; not by their enjoying there any of those gross or brutal pleasures, which carnal and worldly-minded men are so fond of, which are so apt to defile the soul, and can give her no true satisfaction; but by the eternal experience of pleasures of quite another nature, pure and immortal, which will

affect all their senses, and fill them with unspeakable delight, from the most delicious sweets of the heavenly paradise. And as for the *hearing* in particular, it shall be for ever entertained, with an unspeakable harmony, formed by the melodious concerts of all the celestial choirs, and the united voices of millions of millions of heavenly citizens, all sweetly singing together divine hymns of eternal praise and love to their ever-glorious and ever-loving King. O, my soul, the hearing of any one of these heavenly voices, could it be allowed us here, would certainly be enough to ravish any mortal with inexpressible delight. And what must it be eternally to hear them all!

Conclude to admire and adore the infinite bounty and goodness of thy God, who, not content with giving the soul so great a reward as the eternal enjoyment of the sovereign Good, which is himself, has been pleased to prepare such excellent gifts and endowments for the body, to make it also eternally happy. But then thou must remember, that, if thou wouldst secure to thy body these heavenly endowments, and all this happiness for endless ages, thou must keep it pure and holy during this mortal life, and ever mortify its disorderly appetites and carnal inclinations.

AUGUST 12.

On a happy Eternity.

CONSIDER, first, that what completes the happiness of the servants of God in his heavenly kingdom, is the eternity and the absolute security of all their enjoyments, in every branch of their bliss. Their joys are even linked with God's eternity; and, by the unalterable decrees of his divine love, they can no more cease to be happy, than he can cease to be God. The honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, are all, alas! short and momentary. Could they even continue with us for the whole time of our life, (which is seldom or never the case,) they could be of no better condition than this our mortal life, which is but *a vapour, which appeareth for a little while*, and presently *vanishes*, and is seen no more, *St. James iv. 15*. And though we would give the whole world to *secure* to ourselves but one day of the enjoyment of them, we should not be able to purchase any such security. How long then, O ye children of men, will you be in love with these empty vanities? How long will you suffer yourselves to be imposed upon with lies and deceits? Give but your hearts in earnest to God, give yourselves up to divine love, and, instead of these vain worldly toys, which at the best can only be enjoyed for an uncertain moment, you shall secure to yourselves *all good* from your God, for endless ages.

Consider, secondly, Christian soul, and look forward into this immense eternity of incomprehensible and never-ending felicity, which is prepared for thee in heaven, to reward thy fidelity in the love and service of thy God, and to recompense the short labour and sufferings of thy mortal life. O what a pleasure it is, to lose one's self in the happy prospect of this boundless ocean of eternity! O what an unspeakable joy, to think of being *for ever* plunged into the immense abyss of the divinity itself! What a delight to be counting up millions of millions of millions of ages, crowned with all the honours, riches and enjoyments of the heavenly paradise, and after all to find one's self no nearer the end of this felicity, than when one first set out. The thought of this blessed eternity inspired St. Teresa, when yet an infant, with a contempt of all those things that pass away with time, and with a desire of giving up her life for the love of Christ. She often repeated, with great feeling, these words; *For ever, For ever, For ever*; and in the meditation on these eternal years, a bright fire of devotion was enkindled in her soul. O let the like thought inspire us with the like affections.

Consider, thirdly, that, in this eternal bliss, there is not only an absolute security of their joys never having an end, but also an assurance that they shall never suffer the least decay or diminution, or any ways become tedious or less agreeable by the infinite length of the possession of them. For as the God whom the blessed perpetually enjoy, is every way infinite and incomprehensible, being an immense Ocean of all good, and an inexhaustible Treasure of all happiness; so the joy, pleasure, and delight of those that eternally enjoy him, is ever fresh and ever new, and continually fills the whole capacity, and fully satisfies the whole appetite of their souls. O, how *blessed then, must they be, that dwell in thy house, O Lord! For ever and ever they shall praise thee.* Ps. lxxxiii. *O, how lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord.* Yea, my soul thirsteth after this fountain of eternal life, which is with her God, and which perpetually inebriates all his heavenly guests, flowing without ceasing into their happy breasts.

Conclude to despise henceforward all that is earthly and transitory, and from this hour to set out, and to begin thy journey towards this glorious, heavenly and eternal kingdom. There thou shalt find all that thy heart can desire; immortal honours, never-failing riches, pure and everlasting pleasures. There thou shalt meet with beauties that never fade, perpetual health, perpetual life, &c. O, this alone is thy true home, the land of the living!

AUGUST 13.

On Conformity with the Will of God.

CONSIDER, first, that a conformity of our will, in all things, with the holy will of God, is the sovereign perfection of a Christian life; inasmuch as it is the very perfection of divine love and charity, which is the queen of virtues. For there can be no greater love, than to have no other will than the will of our divine Lover, so as ever to adore in all things his holy will, ever to embrace and love his holy will. This kind of love is perfect indeed; it resembles the love of the angels and saints of heaven. The most acceptable offering we can make to God, out of our poor stock, is that of our will. Whatsoever else we give him, as long as we keep any part of our will from him, will never content him: he claims our *whole* will without reserve, when he says, *My son, give me thy heart*, Prov. xxiii. Now, this we give him, when we conform our will in all things with his blessed will. But if we refuse to submit our will, in any thing, to his holy will, we refuse him our heart, or, at the best, we only offer him a divided heart, which he will never accept of. O my God, let my *whole heart* be ever thine; let my whole soul be ever subject to thee; let my will be ever a faithful servant, and a true lover of thy ever blessed and holy will.

Consider, secondly, the great advantages that come to our souls from a perfect conformity with the will of God. It gives a certain dignity and perfection to all, even the meanest, of our actions, and to all our sufferings, by making the will of God the rule of them all. It *purifies* our *intention* in all things, by continually directing the eye of the soul towards God. It brings with it a certain uprightness and simplicity of heart, which is highly agreeable to God; it makes us even as the Scripture says of David, men *according to God's own heart*. It places the soul in the hands of God, for him to dispose of her in all things, according to his holy will and pleasure. It brings along with it a perfect peace and tranquillity of mind in all events, as being all ordered and directed by him who is infinitely good and infinitely wise, and who orders all things for the good of them who cast their whole care upon him, and seek to have no other will but his. O blessed conformity, how rich, how sweet and delicious to the soul, are thy happy fruits! Thou makest us enjoy even a heaven upon earth.

Consider, thirdly, that this conformity of the soul with the will of God, rids her of all her evils, and puts her in possession of all other virtues. It is the sovereign means to bring all our passions into *order* and subjection, and to mortify all our *irregu-*

lar inclinations; for that which makes them *disorderly* and *irregular*, is their opposition to, or their resistance of the will of God; whereas this blessed conformity obliges them all to stoop down, and submit to his sacred will. It *humbles* the soul under the mighty hand of God; it teaches her to be *meek* under all injuries, affronts, and provocations, considering them all as coming from the just appointments of Heaven; it makes her willing to take up her cross, and to bear it till death, with perfect *patience* and resignation; in a word, it teaches her to be *obedient unto death*. O grant us, dear Lord, this blessed conformity.

Conclude to set a great esteem upon this excellent virtue of conformity with the will of God. It is the greatest treasure thou canst enjoy in this mortal pilgrimage. But then it is not to be obtained without thy being in earnest in seeking it, fervent in praying for it, and ready to part with thy own will and humour for the purchasing of it.

AUGUST 14.

On the Motives that oblige us to a perpetual Conformity with the Will of God.

CONSIDER, first, that all kinds of motives concur in recommending to a Christian this best of all devotions, which has for its object the holy will of God. It is our greatest *honour* and *glory* ever to follow God, to submit to him, to be servants of his divine will, to be servants of his divine love, to be so closely united to him as to have no other will but his. It is our greatest *interest* to conform ourselves in all things with his blessed will: it brings with it all kinds of good to our souls, both for time and eternity; for by giving up our will without any reserve to God, we engage him to give himself without reserve to us. It is the source of the greatest, and indeed the only true and solid *pleasures*, to embrace the will of God in all things, forasmuch as it unites the soul with the Fountain of all sweetness, which is God. The will of God is always right, always wise, always good, always beautiful, &c. The will of God is God himself. What motives, then, have we not to conform ourselves continually with this ever right, ever wise, ever good, ever beautiful will, of our ever-loving God? How wicked it is to rebel against his sovereign will! How mad it is for us to pretend to withdraw ourselves from the will of the *Almighty!*

Consider, secondly, that the only business for which we come into this world, is to do in all things the holy will of God. The Son of God himself had no other business during his mortal life than to do the will of his Father. *I came down from heaven,*

says he, (John vi. 38,) *not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.* And, (Psalm xxxix,) *In the head of the book, says he, it is written of me, that I should do thy will; O my God, I have desired it—in the midst of my heart.* In this same great book of life, it is written also of all the children of God, that they likewise should do the will of their heavenly Father: this is the test by which we are all to be examined: all they that, with Jesus Christ, *desire in the midst of their hearts,* and, like him, embrace and love the holy will of God, and always conform themselves to it, shall be acknowledged for the true children of God, and the brethren of Jesus Christ; but as many as shall revolt, and fall off from their allegiance to the blessed will of God, shall have their names blotted out of the book of life. See then, my soul, that the true way to heaven is to conform thyself with the divine will.

Consider, thirdly, that by all manner of titles, God claims of us a conformity with his heavenly will. He claims it as our Creator, because he made us to serve him, and gave us our will, with the rest of the powers of the soul, only to be employed in the service of his holy will. With what face, then, can we refuse him the sacrifice of that will, which he made for himself! or how can we pretend, that his divine will should at any time stoop to our silly will; and not rather we give up at all times our whole will, by a perfect conformity to the will of our Creator! The Son of God also claims our will as our *Redeemer*, by the title of purchased; because he has ransomed our souls, enslaved before to Satan and sin, and bought them for himself and his Father, at a great price, even with his own most precious blood; so that our will ought to be always at his disposal, as his property, and therefore ought ever to conform itself with his blessed will. The Holy Ghost also claims our will, by the title of *sanctification*; because our whole soul has been, at our baptism, dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated by the Spirit of God, to be the eternal temple of God; and therefore our will, which is the principal power of the soul, and which commands the rest, is strictly bound to be ever obedient to the will of him who has chosen and sanctified it for himself.

Conclude to give always to God what, upon so many titles, belongs wholly to him; and never more to be a rebel to the will of God, or to give the preference to thy own will, or any other creature, before the will of God.

AUGUST 15.

On the Assumption of the blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, in the festival of this day, and contemplate in spirit, the glorious entry of the blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, into the everlasting kingdom of her son. See, my soul, with what joy of the whole court of heaven, with what heavenly hymns, she was escorted thither by legions of angels. See how all the citizens of heaven went forth to meet her; with what affectionate embraces she was welcomed by her divine Son, and presented by him to his eternal Father. See how she was placed above all the angels and saints, above all the cherubims and seraphims, on a most glorious throne, the highest in heaven next to that of her son, and crowned by him with a diadem of such supereminent brightness and glory as not to be expressed or conceived. Rejoice, O my soul, in this glorious assumption of the *mother of thy Lord*, who, as he has been pleased to make us his brethren, has been pleased to make her also *our mother*. O what a happiness it is for us to have such a *mother* (who has so great an interest with the King of heaven, and who takes our welfare so much to heart) so near the throne of all mercy and grace! O blessed Virgin, graciously look down upon us, in this our banishment, and always show thyself a mother to us.

Consider, secondly, what brought this ever blessed Virgin to this supereminent glory, which we honour in this festival of her Assumption. First; It was her most profound *humility*: she was exalted above all, because she was the most humble of all. For he that humbleth himself the most upon earth, shall be the most exalted in heaven. Secondly; It was her perfect *purity* of soul and body, mind and heart, from all the defilements of sin. Thirdly; It was principally her supereminent *love of God*; for the degree of the enjoyment of God in his eternal glory, is ever proportioned to the degree of our love of God in this mortal life. If, then, we hope one day to follow this blessed Virgin to heaven, and to have a share in the glory of her assumption, we must endeavour to imitate her humility, her purity, and her love of God. No soul can ever ascend to heaven by any other way than that of humility, purity, and the love of God.

Consider, thirdly, that this imitation of the virtues of the blessed Virgin is an excellent way of honouring her, and of showing our real esteem, love and devotion to her. For how can we better testify our affection and veneration for the saints of God than by honouring and loving in them that which made them saints, and that which God himself honours and loves in them,

that is, their virtues? or how can we better express our esteem and love for their virtues, than by studying to imitate them? This kind of devotion is most pleasing to the saints, and to the Queen of the saints, and to the God of the saints; it is most honourable to them, and most profitable to ourselves. This will bring us effectually to the eternal society of the saints, which, without this, no other devotion can secure unto us.

Conclude so to rejoice in the exaltation of our blessed Lady, in this day of her glory, as to take up on this day a generous resolution of walking in her footsteps, by a diligent imitation of her life; but more especially by following the great examples of her humility, purity, and love of God. This generous resolution of thine will be so agreeable to her, as to add a new satisfaction and joy to the immense felicity she possessed before.

AUGUST 16.

On the Gospel, read on the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Luke x. 30, &c.

CONSIDER, first, how, our Lord going into a certain town, a certain woman named Martha received him into her house; and she had a sister called Mary, who sat also at the Lord's feet, and heard his word, &c. O how happy, my soul, were these holy sisters, who had it thus in their power to receive the Lord of glory into their house, to entertain him there, to hear his word, to converse familiarly with him, and to minister to him! O how happy should we have been, if we had lived at that time, and could have been favoured in the like manner! But stay, my soul, and see if this same Lord does not offer thee the like favours at present; and if it be not entirely thy own fault, if thou art not a great saint in consequence of them. For does he not still abide amongst us, in the blessed sacrament? Does he not there come in person into our house? Does he not bring all his treasures of divine grace with him, to enrich our souls? May we not, by a spiritual communion, invite him to us, whenever we please? May we not, by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer, entertain him, and converse with him as long as we please? Does he not often visit us with his graces? Does he not often stand at the door of the heart and knock? Have we not his heavenly word with us? May we not minister to him when we please, and serve him in the persons of the poor? which service he declares he looks upon as done to himself. If so, what reason have we to regret our not having lived at the time of our Saviour, seeing he is always living with us?

Consider, secondly, how very differently these two holy sisters were then employed; the one being *busy about much serving*, and full of care in providing for the entertainment of our Lord; the other sitting still at his feet, and quietly attending to his divine word. And yet they were both employed about him; they both dedicated themselves to his love and service. In this they represent to us two different kinds of lives of the servants of God, the *active* and the *contemplative*; or, if you please, two different kinds of functions of a Christian life, the one consisting in *action*, the other in *contemplation*; the one in a variety of good works, done with a good intention, for the service of Christ; the other in a more quiet retirement and recollection, and a more close attention to God by mental prayer. Both of these are good, both of them highly commendable, because both of them tend to the love and service of God; but the latter is preferred by the judgment of truth itself, because it makes that its occupation here, which is to be its eternal employment hereafter. *Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.* Learn thou, my soul, of Martha, ever to direct thy common actions, with all the functions and labours of thy calling, by a pure intention, to the service of Christ; learn to sanctify them all by calling in Mary, that is, recollection and prayer, to thy assistance. But learn also of Mary, to retire, as often as thou canst, from the noise and hurry of the world, to the feet of Christ; learn of her, as often as thou hast thy choice, to choose that better part of contemplation and love, which is to be thy eternal occupation.

Consider, thirdly, that this gospel is applied by the church to the blessed Virgin and to her assumption, because she was the happy woman that *received*, in an extraordinary manner, *Christ into her house*; she perfectly fulfilled in her life, both the functions of Martha and of Mary; of Martha, in the services she rendered to our Lord, in his humanity, for all the thirty years he was under her roof; and of Mary, by the perpetual contemplation and love of his divinity; so that, even in the midst of the duties of the active life, the eye of her heart was always upon her God, she ever attended to the *one thing necessary*, she ever made *choice of the better part*, and, on this day of her exaltation, she was put in the full possession of it for eternity, according to that, *Mary has chosen the better part, which shall not be taken from her.*

Conclude, O my soul, to follow her great example in choosing always the better part, that thou mayst partake in her everlasting happiness.

AUGUST 17.

On Resignation to the Will of God, in all our Sufferings.

CONSIDER, first, that it is a most certain truth, that nothing happens in the world, excepting sin, which does not come directly from the hand of God, and which is not the effect of his holy will. So that all our sufferings, of what kind soever they may be, are all ordained by him, and all thus pass through his hands, before they can reach us; which is so true, that even those sufferings, which seem to be brought upon us immediately by the wickedness of men, are, in effect, all of them sent by the ordinance of God, who, though he abhors whatsoever there is of malice and sin, in the will or design of the men or devils, whom he suffers to afflict or persecute us, yet, most certainly, he not only permits, but absolutely wills the afflictions, trials or punishments which we suffer on these occasions. And it is his intention, and our duty, that, in all these sufferings, we should not look so much at the visible hand of the unjust creature, as at the invisible hand of the just God; and that, in all these cases, we should in such manner detest the malice or wickedness of the men that afflict us, as ever to submit to, and even to embrace, the chastisements of the Lord, as of a tender Father, who often makes use of a rod for the correction of his children, which he afterwards casts into the fire. O how resigned should we be, if we always remembered these truths!

Consider, secondly, that all our sufferings not only come to us from the hand of God, but are also all designed by him for our greater good. He is the best of Fathers; his fatherly providence, and his tender love for us, exceed all that we can express or conceive; the Holy Scriptures are full of repeated declarations of this truth; it cannot be called in question without contradicting both the divine word and the perpetual experience of the servants of God. So that we ought to be always fully assured, considering God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and love for us, that all that he sends is for the best, and is indeed the best for us. See, my soul, that thou always rememberest this truth, in all thy pains, sicknesses, crosses and afflictions, and in general in all things that happen to thee contrary to thy desire, expectation or inclination. Upon all these occasions, thou must consider Jesus Christ himself as offering thee this cup, or this cross, desiring thee to receive it for his sake, and assuring thee that it shall be the means to bring thee to heaven. O, how true it is, as we shall clearly see one day, in the light of God, that these very things, which we are apt to consider as evils, are indeed great and solid goods; and that, through them, millions of souls

shall be brought to eternal happiness, which, without them, might have been eternally miserable. O let us learn, then, to resign ourselves, without reserve, to all the appointments of an all-wise and loving Providence.

Consider, thirdly, the degrees by which we ought to endeavour to advance towards the perfection of this great virtue of the resignation of ourselves in all things to the divine will. The first and lowest is, to support at least with *patience* the evils that befall us, and this because they come from the hand of God; and humbly to submit to them, as the just punishment of our sins, saying with the prophet, *I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*, Mich. vii. 9; and with the Psalmist, under afflictions, *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because it is thy doing*, Ps. xxxviii. 10. The second degree, which is much more perfect than the first, is when we not only endeavour to bear our sufferings with patience, so as not to murmur or repine on those occasions, or otherwise offend God, but also are *ready and willing to suffer*, because such is the will of God; so that the consideration of God's holy will and pleasure makes the cross (which, according to nature, we dread and abhor) *agreeable* to us, inasmuch as the will of God is thereby accomplished in us. The third and most perfect degree of resignation, and which carries with it the perfection of divine love and charity, is, when we not only *readily and willingly* accept of the cross from the hand of God, but even rejoice in suffering for the love of him, and take an unspeakable content in crosses, in adversities, in humiliations, in poverty, in being condemned by the world, &c., so that we would not even wish to be without them, out of the pure love of him who chose a suffering life for the love of us, and because the accomplishment of his will is the whole object of our desire, of our love, and of our joy. O, what a heaven should we find upon earth, if we could once arrive at this third degree of divine resignation! For what can disturb that soul, that always rejoices in the accomplishment of the will of God, and finds her pleasure and content in suffering?

Conclude to make it thy study, to ascend by these steps, of resignation to the holy will of God in all things, from virtue to virtue, till thou arrive at the top of the ladder, where thou shalt find thy God, and be for ever inseparably united to him.

AUGUST 18.

On Self-denial.

CONSIDER, first, that the capital enemy of the love of God, and of all our good, especially of the resignation and conformity of

our will to the will of God, is the vice of *self-love*, or a disorderly inclination to gratify and please ourselves, which is the unhappy consequence of the corruption of man by sin, and the fruitful parent of all our evils. All our vices and passions spring from this poisonous root; all the seven capital sins are but so many branches of this inordinate inclination to ourselves. Take away *self-love*, and you shall shut up all the avenues of hell, and establish every where the reign of the love of God, and a most blessed heaven upon earth. Hence the virtue of *self-denial*, the business of which is to suppress and root out this dreadful evil of *self-love*, is one of the most necessary of all Christian virtues, and must ever go hand in hand with the great virtue of conformity to the will of God, which can never take root in our souls as long as we are unhappily attached to our own wills, and fond of gratifying our own inclinations. Hence the very first condition the Son of God requires of all that would be his disciples, is to *deny themselves*. Matt. xvi. 24. This *self-denial* is the great lesson he came down from heaven to teach. Happy we if, by his grace, we can but effectually learn it in practice!

Consider, secondly, that this virtue of *self-denial* is usually called *mortification*, from a word signifying *slaying*, or *putting to death*, inasmuch as, by this continual fighting against ourselves, and against our own corrupt inclinations and passions, we put to death, as it were, and *crucify the old man* of corruption, (Rom. vi. 6,) with his vices and sins, (according to that of the apostle, Gal. v. 24, that *they that are of Christ have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences*,) and so die to ourselves, that we may put on the new man, Jesus Christ, and live in such manner to him, as to be able to say with the same apostle, *I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. See, my soul, what this virtue of *mortification* means, which is much talked of, and but little understood, and less practised; and yet no virtue is more necessary for our true welfare. We may even apply to it, what St. Paul says of *charity*, (1 Cor. xiii.) that *if we speak with the tongues of men and angels—and have the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge, and all faith, so that we could remove mountains, and are not mortified, we are nothing*; and that whatsoever other qualifications we may have, or whatsoever good we may do, as long as our passions and corrupt inclinations remain *unmortified*, we shall still be nothing in the eyes of God.

Consider, thirdly, how this general mortification of our passions and our inordinate inclinations is every where strongly inculcated in the word of God. We are even assured there, that we must hate ourselves in this life, if we hope to be either true disciples of Christ here, or to be eternally happy with him hereafter, (St. Luke xiv. 26, and St. John xii. 25;) that, *if we live according to*

the flesh, we shall die; but if by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live, (Rom. viii. 13;) and that *they who are in the flesh*, that is, they who are unmortified, *cannot please God*, (ver. 8;) besides many other texts, which abundantly demonstrate, that no one can be a good Christian, without waging a perpetual war against his own sensual inclinations, and diligently *taking up the cross of daily mortification*. Hence *the flesh*, with its passions and lusts, is always reckoned by divines amongst the three great enemies of the soul, and is indeed, of all the three, by far the most dangerous enemy; because the *world* and the *devil*, with all their suggestions, would not easily draw us into sin and hell, if our own flesh, that is, our corrupt inclinations and passions, did not pave the way, and furnish them with the arms with which they fight against us. The world and the devil besiege us from without, but could never force their way into the soul, if our own evil inclinations did not hold a correspondence with them, and open the gates of the soul to let them in.

Conclude, if thou desirest to overcome the world and the devil, to make it thy business to subdue the flesh, and to bring it under subjection, by wholesome self-denials and mortifications. Without this restraint upon thy passions and inclinations, there will be *no soundness in thy soul; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad*, Isai. i. 5, 6.

AUGUST 19.

On the Mortification of the Interior.

CONSIDER, first, that, as the business of *mortification*, in general, is to reform the whole man, and to retrench all that is evil and vicious in us, or that might disqualify us for that union with God, by divine love, for which he made us, and gave us these immortal souls, by tying down our hearts or minds to created objects; so that kind of *mortification*, in particular, ought to be most diligently exercised by a Christian, that refines, polishes, and reforms our interior, in which we ever carry about with us the image of God, and in which he delights to reside, provided he finds it in a proper condition to receive and entertain him, that is, provided he finds it *mortified*. O, my soul, what ought we not, then, to do, to qualify ourselves for so great a happiness as this, of having God with us, and of being interiorly united to him! In order to this, thou must observe well all the irregularities which thy inward powers and faculties are liable to, that thou mayst retrench them by mortification, and so purify thy interior. Believe me, this mortification of thy interior is an exercise far more difficult, but withal far more necessary for thee.

and far more acceptable to God, than any corporal austerities whatsoever.

Consider, secondly, what those irregularities are, of thy inward powers and faculties, that stand in need of being retrenched by mortification. Alas! if thou wilt but give thyself the leisure to study well what passes in thy own interior, and to know thyself, thou shalt find thy understanding liable to pride, self-conceit, self-sufficiency, presumption, a variety of empty curiosities, and many errors, of dangerous consequence in practice; such errors, I mean, as oppose the maxims of the Gospel, and represent things in false lights, and weigh them in false weights, so as to influence the poor soul to prefer the temporal before the eternal. Thou shalt find thy *judgment* liable to be rash and precipitate, and quite clouded with the exhalations that arise from thy passion and self love. Thou shalt find thy *memory* liable to many vain wanderings and evagations, ever full of empty things, and forgetful of God. Thou shalt find thy *imagination* ever dissipated in the pursuit of worldly toys, vain schemes, or sinful objects; and all thy *affections*, appetites and desires, strangely bent upon evil, and averse to every thing that is painful or laborious. See, my soul, what a piece of work is here cut out for thee, and how much thou hast to mortify in thy interior, to qualify it for a union with God.

Consider, thirdly, that, amongst the powers of the soul, that which most of all stands in need of being mortified is the *will*; as the will is, or should be, the mistress of the rest, and is obliged to keep them all in order, which she can never do if she herself be disorderly. Hence the Holy Ghost admonishes us, by the mouth of the wise man, (Ecclus. xviii. 30, 31,) *Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thy own will: if thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies.* Hence also he tells us, (Proverbs xxix. 15,) *The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame.* Because this will of ours, when indulged, is capable of hurrying us away to all that is evil. And therefore we are called upon in the Gospel to *hate our own souls*, (*animam suam*,) that is, *our own wills*, in this world, if we hope to be happy in the next. For *the fire of hell*, says St. Bernard, *can burn nothing but our own will.*

Conclude to apply thyself seriously to this most necessary mortification of thy interior, and more especially of thy own will and desires. This mortification is to be exercised, first, by denying to thy own will whatever it craves contrary to the will of God; secondly, by accustoming thyself, in things indifferent, often to contradict thy own will, and never to do any thing merely to gratify thy own inclinations; thirdly, by curbing, even in things that appear to be good, that eagerness and hurry, which nature.

passion and self-love are apt to prompt thee to, and setting before thy eyes, and quietly following, on these occasions, the will of God, and not thy own

AUGUST 20.

On the Mortification of the Passions.

CONSIDER, first, the necessity we lie under, ever since the corruption of our nature by sin, of keeping our passions also in order, by a continual mortification of them. Before man was corrupted by original sin, his whole soul was regular and orderly, and all his passions were under proper command. But as soon as the superior part of the soul had withdrawn herself from her allegiance to God, the inferior part began to rebel against the superior, and all its appetites and passions were let loose, to run into all manner of disorders, because the bridle of original justice was now flung off, with which they were kept in and restrained before. Hence arises an indispensable necessity of our ever mortifying our passions, if we would secure our souls. For as our nature is now corrupted, our love and our hatred, our desires and our fears, our joy and our grief, our anger, &c., all share in this corruption, and are all apt to be disorderly, if not curbed and corrected by daily mortification.

Consider, secondly, that this most necessary branch of mortification, which relates to our passions, chiefly consists in the duly regulating all their motions, by directing them in a proper manner to their proper objects, and restraining all their excesses; so that they may all be brought under subjection to reason and religion, and made even serviceable to the true welfare of our souls. Thus we are to regulate our *love*, our *desires*, and our *joy*, by turning them away from all disorderly affection to perishable creatures, to the living God; from running after vanity and lying fooleries, to the pursuit of virtue and truth; and by keeping them always within their proper bounds, that they may not disturb the peace of the soul, or distract its application to God. In like manner, we must mortify our fear, our anger, and all our other passions, by watching over all their motions, and restraining all their disorders and excesses. O, how happy are they, who, by the daily practice of this mortification, are arrived at that command of their passions, which is the blessed parent of true peace, and a certain image of heaven upon earth! Happy they, who turn all their *fear* and all their *love* to God, and to what God would have them *fear* and *love*! who *hate* nothing but the offence of God, *desire* nothing but the will of God, *rejoice* in nothing but

God, *grieve* at nothing but what is contrary to his honour, and the good of souls, and are *angry* at nothing but sin!

Consider, thirdly, that as *love* is the strongest of all the passions, and that which principally influences all the rest, so the regulating of our love, and mortifying its disorders, ought to be, at all times, the great object of the Christian's attention. My love is my weight, says St. Augustine; thither am I carried whithersoever I am carried. Now, our love is regular and orderly, when we love all things according to the great rule of the will of God; when we love our friends in God, and our enemies for God's sake; when we weigh all things in the scales of the sanctuary, prize them according to the weight they have there, and allow them no other love than what will stand this test. But then, on the other hand, whatever love, whether of any person, or any creature, or any thing else, offers to captivate our affections, or to divide or take off any part of our heart from God, or to carry us any way out of the bounds of moderation, reason or religion, is disorderly, and must be restrained, corrected and mortified. All such love as this strikes at the very root of the welfare and salvation of the soul, by violating the very first and chiefest of all God's commandments, which is to love the Lord our God with *all our heart*.

Conclude to watch over thy passions, that thou mayst keep them all in subjection; but principally to take care to restrain thy love, and thy desires, from all unlawful, dangerous, or vain objects, and from all excess and immoderation, in being too strongly bent, or too eagerly carried, even to lawful ones. For whatsoever the object be, it is a criminal love to affect any thing more than God.

AUGUST 21.

On the Mortification of the predominant Passion.

CONSIDER, first, that the passions of love and desire, when they are unmortified, branch out into all manner of vices and vicious inclinations, commonly ranged under the seven heads, which are usually called the seven capital sins; though St. John brings them into a narrower compass, when he reduces them all to those three, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, 1 John ii. 16. Now, amongst these vicious inclinations, which wage war against the soul, there is usually some one or other, that is stronger or more violent than the rest, or that occasions more or greater sins, and this is named by divines *the predominant passion*, the mortification of which is one of the chief businesses of a spiritual life. For this predominant passion being, as it were, the captain and commander of the rest, when this is overthrown, the rest will more easily be subdued, and

brought under; as when their champion Goliath was slain, the Philistines were all immediately put to flight.

Consider, secondly, that as this predominant passion, this reigning love, this strongest desire or affection, whatever the object of it may be, has already unhappily gained the heart, it is but too apt to impose upon the poor soul with specious pretexts in order to keep its hold, and to maintain its ground against the remonstrances of conscience, and all the calls and graces of heaven. It is the Agag which the deluded soul, by a false compassion, would willingly spare, though with the risk of being cast off by God, as Saul was, for so doing, 1 *Sam.* xv. Ah, Christians, deceive then not yourselves: this predominant passion, this favourite affection, which has taken possession of your heart, is indeed the capital enemy of God and your souls; it must be slain, it must be sacrificed to the living God. Beware of the traitor, which you carry about with you; suffer him not to impose upon you. It is very easy, if you have not a mind to be wilfully blind, to discover what he would be at, because, upon the least examination of your hearts, you shall find him always busy in undermining the reign of the love of God, thrusting himself upon his throne, and setting up an idol in his temple, by challenging the chiefest place in your heart, to the prejudice of divine love.

Consider, thirdly, what you must do in order to get rid of this worst of all your enemies. O! you must make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the depth of his malice, and all his stratagems, that you may not be surprised or imposed upon by him; you must observe all his motions, to resist them at the very beginning; you must study all the secret springs, by which he acts upon the heart, and sets the other passions on work, to fulfil his irregular inclinations. Ah, Christians, it is of infinite importance, in this spiritual warfare, to know the true state of your interior, and to watch all the motions and secret ambushes of your enemies. You must also single out this enemy in such manner as though you are not to allow any one of your passions or vices to remain unresisted in your soul, yet you are, in a more especial manner, to turn all your forces against this predominant passion, by directing your daily and most fervent prayers, your confessions and communions, your particular examinations every night, and the rest of your spiritual exercises, towards the total subduing of this evil, and acquiring the contrary virtue.

Conclude, if you hope to succeed in the great work of the mortification of your passions, to begin by declaring an eternal war against their chief, and never ceasing to attack him, upon all occasions, till you have brought him down. All the rest will

yield themselves up, when he is subdued ; and you shall begin to relish the sweets of peace and true liberty, which you shall never enjoy till you have broken the chains with which he enslaves you.

AUGUST 22.

On the Mortification of the Sensual Appetite.

CONSIDER, first, that our *sensual appetite*, that is, the strong inclination we have to gratify our senses, and to indulge them their pleasures, is one of the most dangerous enemies the soul has, and stands most in need of being restrained and corrected by *mortification*. The flesh, with its senses, was designed to be the servant of the soul, and to be subservient to its true welfare and happiness. But if the sensual appetite be not kept under subjection by mortification, the servant will quickly become mistress, and the poor soul will be made her slave, and will be dragged along by her irregular inclinations into all kind of evils. Our sensuality, therefore, must be mortified ; we must absolutely deny ourselves all *unlawful* sensual and carnal pleasures ; we must fly them more than death ; we must retrench all excess and immoderation in the use, even of lawful pleasures and diversions ; we must never suffer ourselves to affect them, much less to have a passion for them ; we must accustom ourselves to curb and thwart the inclinations of our senses, in things lawful, or indifferent, that so we may acquire a greater facility in overcoming our sensual appetite, when it inclines to things unlawful, and may, at the same time, punish our having formerly indulged ourselves in them. In fine, we must never do any thing *merely* for our pleasure.

Consider, secondly, the opposition there is between a *sensual* life, or a life of pleasure, and a truly Christian life, which is agreeable to the maxims of the gospel, and to the practice of Christ, and of all his saints, who have taken up their crosses to follow him, and have always borne in their bodies the mortification of Jesus, and have been, as it were, crucified with him. This opposition is so great, that the apostle cannot speak without weeping of those half Christians, who give themselves up to their pleasures ; of whom he says, (Philip. iii. 18, 19,) *that they are enemies of the cross of Christ ; that their end is destruction ; that their god is their belly ; that they glory in their shame, and mind only earthly things*. Christ did not study his own pleasure ; *he did not please himself*, Rom. xv. 3. His whole life was a cross, which he voluntarily chose for the glory of his Father, and for the love of us. The apostle *chastised his body, and brought it*

into *subjection* by voluntary mortifications, 1 *Cor.* ix. 17; all the saints have walked in the same footsteps; they have all *crucified their own flesh*, Gal. v. 24. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*, and none but they that use violence upon themselves *bear it away*, Matt. xi. 12. And shall Christians think that a sensual life shall ever bring them thither? No: true *wisdom is not found in the land of them that live in delights*, Job xxviii. 13. And we are not to imagine we may give ourselves up to our pleasures here, and yet promise ourselves *the good things of the Lord in the land of the living* hereafter, *St. Luke* xvi. 25.

Consider, thirdly, that there is no one but what may and ought to practise the mortification of the flesh and of its sensual appetites, and that too by restraining it often from things otherwise lawful. The guilty must do it to punish themselves for their past sins; the innocent must do it, in order to keep themselves from falling into sin, which will be the unavoidable consequence of their not mortifying, and keeping under, so dangerous an enemy. None must excuse themselves here on account of their want of strength or health. It is easy for a Christian of a good will to contrive and to put in execution a variety of self-denials, that neither require any bodily strength, nor prejudice the health. If we are not able to wear the hair shirt, or to use the discipline; if we cannot fast, or lie upon the hard floor, we may, at least, retrench many superfluities, and affected niceties, in our eating, drinking, clothing, &c.; we may shorten the time we give to unnecessary lying in bed; we may, upon many occasions, withdraw ourselves from such things as we are inclined to, and which, perhaps, are less wholesome for us, and choose such things as are less agreeable to our own inclinations; in fine, we may daily and hourly mortify, in many things, our eyes, our ears, our tongue, &c.

Conclude to make it thy daily business to mortify, on every occasion, thy sensual appetite, lest otherwise *flesh and blood* prevail over thy soul, and she fall an everlasting prey to her mortal enemies.

AUGUST 23.

On the Mortification of Curiosity.

CONSIDER, first, that, besides the evil of *sensuality*, which must be mortified, in order to subdue *the concupiscence of the flesh*, there is another dangerous evil, that must also be mortified, in order to subdue *the concupiscence of the eyes*; and that is the vice of *curiosity*, which *St. Augustine* (*Confessions*, L. c. 35,) supposes to be understood by this name;—a dangerous evil in-

deed, and the mother of many evils, which makes men busy themselves about things either hurtful, or at least nothing at all to their purpose, whilst they neglect things profitable and necessary, yea, *the only thing necessary*. Alas! how many things are there, that men take much pains to inquire into, which are dangerous to their souls! how many, which are absolutely useless and unprofitable, and which answer no manner of end, either of the glory of God, or of their own or neighbours' good! And how much loss is here of their precious time! What dissipation of thoughts! What distractions in prayer! What forgetfulness of God and eternity! What an enslaving of the soul to mere toys and vanities! And what account shall they be able to give at the last day of a life spent so unprofitably, so unworthily of the great end for which they came hither; and so perversely, because so contrary to the holy will and law of their Maker! Ah, the dismal consequences of indulging this unhappy curiosity!

Consider, secondly, the particulars in which we must mortify *the lust of the eyes*, if we hope to keep the soul pure, and to prevent death from coming in at those windows. We must *turn our eyes away from vanity*, and much more from all such objects; as allure the soul to impure love; an unguarded glance of an eye has a thousand and a thousand times been the death of the soul. Unhappy they, who are ever indulging their curiosity in looking after such dangerous objects! And much more unhappy they, who affect, by their light carriage and undecent dress, to draw the eyes and hearts of others to lust! For the same reason, we must mortify also our curiosity with relation to public shows and comedies, as being full of dangers, and of allurements to lust; as also with relation to the reading of all such books as, being either lewd, or profane, or irreligious, tend to debauch the soul, and to draw her into sin; in which number romances, play-books, and such like, are certainly to be comprised, because they only serve to heighten the passions, to soften the soul, and to dispose her to carnal love, and to shut out from her the spirit of devotion and of the love of God.

Consider, thirdly, the necessity of mortifying, in like manner, the curiosity of the ears; since these also are an avenue, through which, if not well guarded, death oftentimes makes its way into the soul. This branch of curiosity must be corrected, first, by stopping the ears to all loose narrations, jests, or songs, all which are apt to convey a mortal poison into the soul; secondly, by restraining them from hearkening to scandal and detraction, with danger of either taking pleasure in it, or countenancing and encouraging so great an evil; thirdly, by keeping a guard upon them, to prevent their taking in a still more dreadful infection,

by hearkening to irreligious and impious discourses, which strike at the Deity and his revealed truths, or tend to the discouraging of virtue, or promoting of vice. In a word, the Christian, that would save his soul, must ever have a guard upon himself, in all company and conversation, lest the curiosity of his ears induce him to hearken with pleasure to any such speeches or words as may let in the corruption of sin into his heart.

Conclude ever to watch and pray against the evil of curiosity, which has so many ways of poisoning the soul. But if thou wouldst indulge the desire of knowledge, (which is so natural to man,) let it be by inquiring into useful truths, and such as may serve to bring thee to the sovereign truth. *But wo to them that inquire of men after many curious things, and at the same time are but little curious of knowing the way to serve God.* Kempis.

AUGUST 24.

On the Gospel for St. Bartholomew, Luke vi. 12, &c.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, designing to make choice of his twelve apostles, by way of preparation for this great work, *went out into a mountain to pray*, and there *passed the whole night in the prayer of God*, that is, in most earnest and fervent prayer. Learn from hence, my soul, in all thou takest in hand, to begin with prayer, in order to draw down the blessing of heaven upon thy undertakings; learn also of thy Saviour to be fervent and earnest in thy prayers; learn to retire with him, as often as thou canst, for thy private devotion, from the noise and distractions of the world. Recollection, solitude, and the silence of the night, are great helps to devotion. O, what oughtest not thou to do, to secure the salvation of thy own soul, when the Son of God has passed even whole nights in prayer for the love of thee! He stood not in need of prayer for himself; but has given us an example, to teach us how much we ought to take to heart, upon all occasions, this exercise of fervent prayer.

Consider, secondly, the fruits of this night's prayer, in the great things our Lord performed the next morning; which we may reduce under three heads;—first, his choice of his twelve apostles; secondly, his divine sermon on the mount; thirdly, his many miracles he wrought, when, as the Gospel informs us, *a very great multitude of people came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and a virtue went out from him, and healed them all*, verse 17, 18, 19. Contemplate, my soul, all these wonders of divine grace, wrought in consequence of the prayer of that night. See a company of poor, weak, illiterate fishermen, wonderfully advanced on a sudden to be the great pillars and

founders of the church of God, and prime ministers of his kingdom upon earth. Bow thyself down, and embrace the heavenly law, published on this occasion by thy Redeemer, in that admirable sermon, in which, with a most amiable simplicity, joined with a wonderful authority, he has laid down all the fundamentals of Christian morality; and do thou also learn to *approach* in spirit to his feet with his disciples to receive of his doctrine, (Deut. xxxiii. 3,) and to be healed by him of all thy diseases. O, ever remember, that the true way of all good, and the source of all light, grace, and benediction, is to go up with him to the mountain, and to converse with God by recollection and prayer.

Consider, thirdly, what we read here in the Gospel, that *all the multitude sought to touch* our Lord; *for virtue went out from him and healed all*, verse 19. If virtue went out from our Lord to heal the *corporal* diseases of all them that touched him, whilst he was here visibly present, during his mortal life, can we suppose he has either less power, or less goodness, to heal the *spiritual* maladies of all such as properly apply to him, now he has entered into his glory, after shedding his precious blood for us? No certainly; but as *all power is given him in heaven and earth*, so *virtue* never ceases to go out from him, in favour of all that spiritually approach to him, and that seek to keep him company in their own interior; and how much more in favour of them that verily and indeed touch him, and receive him within their house, by means of the holy communion. O, let us always endeavour to keep close to him, and his virtue will always be with us.

Conclude to go up with Christ, upon all occasions, into the mountain, by retirement and prayer. In all thy deliberations, thou must consult this oracle. In all danger, let this be thy refuge. Run hither to be delivered from all thy evils. Here thou shalt meet with thy sovereign Good.

AUGUST 25.

On Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that the most necessary of all mortifications, is that which teaches us to mortify our pride by the virtue of *humility*. It is humility is the favourite virtue of Heaven; all other virtues are nothing without it; they even degenerate into vices, when they are tainted with pride. Humility makes us to become as little men; low, mean, and despicable in our own eyes, and willing to be such in the eyes of others. Humility makes us quite sensible of our own nothing, of our misery and sinfulness; teaches us to divest ourselves of all conceit of our own performances or abilities, and to ascribe all good to God

alone. Humility sits down in the lowest place; makes us sincerely prefer all others before ourselves, and pretend to no esteem, or praise, or honour, or glory, as due to us, or to any excellence of our own; but to be fully and feelingly convinced, not only that we are good for nothing of ourselves, fit for nothing but to do mischief, and deserve nothing but punishment, but also that it is owing to God's pure goodness, that we are suffered to live upon earth, and that any one at all shows us the least regard, or does us the least service; and that all God's creatures have not a general license to rise up against us, and to punish us in all manner of ways, for our offences against their Creator; in fine, that we are not long since in hell.

Consider, secondly, that what makes this virtue of humility so acceptable to God, is because God is the *Truth*, and cannot help loving the truth. Now, all pride is made up of errors and lies; in taking ourselves to be something in pretending to what is not our due, or ascribing to ourselves what belongs not to us, or, in fine, in being puffed up with the gifts of God, as if they were our own property, or of our own growth. And what is all this but *lies*—*sacrilegious lies*, that offer to rob God of his glory, to challenge to ourselves what belongs to him, and, Satan-like, to pretend to set ourselves on his throne! But *humility* goes always hand in hand with *truth*, and ever grounds herself upon the truth, by giving always to God what belongs to God, and to man what belongs to man; by acknowledging, with all simplicity, conviction, and affection, God to be *all* and man to be *nothing*; and by ever ascribing to God whatever there is of good in one's self, or in any thing created, and reserving to one's self nothing but one's own defects. This is true humility; this is the *truth* that shall stand for ever. This was found in the greatest perfection in the most eminent saints upon earth; this shall reign with them in heaven for all eternity, where God shall be *all in all* for ever.

Consider, thirdly, that humility is not only a virtue absolutely necessary for arriving at Christian perfection, but that there is even no salvation at all for us without it. There is no going to heaven without God's grace. Now, *God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble*, St. James iv. 6. And our Lord expressly assures us, that *except we become as little children, by humility, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 3. No, my soul, let us not deceive ourselves; there is no room in heaven for pride. Satan and his companions were cast down from thence by their *pride*, and their places are not to be filled up but by the *humble*. Only they that *humble themselves* upon earth, shall be *exalted* in heaven. The Most High and the Most Holy, who inhabiteth eternity, will only

dwelt with a contrite and humble spirit, (Isai. lvii. 15;) and will have respect to none, to bring them to his heavenly kingdom, but such as, in their mortal life, by the virtue of humility, are poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and tremble at his words, Isai. lvi. 2.

Conclude, if thou wouldst have any part with God in his eternal kingdom, to be ever little and humble here upon earth. The more thou stoopest down, and castest thyself under the feet of all, by humility, the more God will lift thee up, and exalt thee; for he alone is truly great and high, and ever looks down, with a favourable eye, upon them that are low and humble, to exalt them here by his grace, and hereafter in his glory. But as for such as lift up their heads by pride, and take themselves to be great and high, he keeps them off at a distance, and regards them with horror; *for the proud and arrogant are an abomination to the Lord, Prov. xvi. 5.*

AUGUST 26.

On the School of Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that the school in which we are to learn true humility, is the serious consideration and true knowledge of God and of ourselves. To know God, and to know ourselves, is the true science of the saints. These two branches of Christian knowledge usually go hand in hand, and mutually promote and assist one another. The more we know our God, and the infinity of all his perfections, the more sensible we are of our own nothing, and of our total dependence on him; and the more we know ourselves and all our miseries and sins, the more clearly we perceive that God alone is good, and that he is infinitely good in bearing with us. Here we learn true humility, because here we learn to annihilate ourselves in the sight of that infinite Majesty, in whose presence the whole universe dwindles away to a mere nothing, and both heaven and earth quite disappear. Here we learn to ascribe all good to this sovereign Good, and nothing of good to ourselves. Here we learn to descend even beneath our nothing, by the consideration of our sins, and of the hell we have deserved by them. Here, in fine, we learn to have so great a sense of our manifold miseries and sins, as to keep our eyes only open to our own defects, and shut to those of others; and by that means we learn to despise no one but ourselves, and to prefer all others before ourselves.

Consider, secondly, O my soul, and, in order to acquire a more perfect knowledge of thyself, that so thou mayest always be little and humble, take a more particular review of thy whole self,

and seriously reflect on what thou art, both as a mortal, and as a sinner;—that thy extraction is from nothing, that thou wast conceived and born in sin; that thou art perpetually liable to innumerable miseries, both of soul and body; that all thy powers and faculties are strangely impaired and disordered by sin; that thou art ever prone to evil, and hard to be brought to good; that thy passions are headstrong and rebellious, thy affections ever bent upon vain toys and lying fooleries, and thy thoughts, words, and actions full of corruption. In the mean while, thy time is hastening on, without intermission, to its last period; death is following close at thy heels, and shall quickly overtake thee, and send away this body of thine, which thou art so fond of, to be the food of maggots and worms; and the poor soul to another world, to be tried there at an unerring tribunal, under a dreadful uncertainty whether she shall not be delivered up to be an eternal prey to merciless devils. And is it possible that we should be sensible of all these humbling truths, and should seriously reflect on them, and yet be proud!

Consider, thirdly, that, amongst all these humbling considerations, that which ought most effectually to abate, or rather quite to beat down our pride, is the remembrance of our sins, and of what we have deserved by them. Ah! wretched creature that I am, I have been guilty of mortal sin, of high treason against my God, and that perhaps a thousand times; and consequently I have deserved a thousand hells; and what can I have to be proud of! Ah! what a wretched figure did my soul then make in the sight of God and his angels! How odious, how filthy, how abominable was she all that time! And is she not so still? She stood then condemned to hell; and has that sentence ever been reversed! What pretensions, then, can I have to any honour, esteem or regard from any one? what title to any favour from God, or man? what just reason to complain, if even all God's creatures should combine against me, to revenge upon me the wrong done to their Creator; and should tread me under their feet, to punish the pride, by which I have lifted up my head against the Almighty? What would all this be in comparison with my deserts? How, then, shall I dare to entertain any proud thought, either of conceit of myself, or of seeking to be esteemed by others, or of resenting any affront, contradiction, or contempt from any man, since I have no title to any thing else but hell? And what room can there be for glorying there?

Conclude daily to frequent this school of humility, by studying well to know thy God, and to know thyself. This kind of science is infinitely more to thy purpose, than all other arts and sciences put together; all which, indeed, would only serve to puff thee up, and to betray thee to thy mortal enemies—the world,

the flesh, and the devil—if not accompanied with the knowledge of God and of thyself.

AUGUST 27.

On the Master of whom we are to learn Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to teach us humility, God has sent us down a Master from heaven, even his own eternal Son, who is no less God than his Father. Of what importance, then, must it be for us, my soul, to study well this great lesson, which the Son of God himself has come down from heaven to teach! O, who could have thought, that we, who are of ourselves so very little, so very wretched and contemptible, so near the brink of nothing, and, by our sins, beneath nothing, should be so strangely conceited of ourselves, and so monstrously corrupted with pride and self-love, that nothing less should suffice to teach us to be little and humble, than the great example of the Son of God himself, coming down from heaven, and becoming a little one amongst us; yea, as *a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*, Ps. xxi. And yet even so, how few are there of us, that are content to be little and contemptible with him! How few are willing to be scholars of this heavenly Master, or even to submit to the least humiliations for the love of him!

Consider, secondly, the sweet invitation of our Lord, (St. Matt. xi. 28, 29,) calling us all to *come to him, and to take up his yoke upon us, and to learn of him, because he is meek and humble of heart*; and promising us *refreshment, and rest for our souls*, upon our compliance with his invitation. O what encouragements are here, my soul, to engage us to spare no pains in learning in this heavenly school of humility, opened by the Son of God, and to make us quite in love with this study of truth! A most excellent Master; the Son of God himself, the sovereign Truth! Blessed school-fellows, all the saints of God, and favourites of heaven! A most excellent science, which brings the soul through the gate of her own nothing to the contemplation of her God, the pure Truth! Excellent fruits, the peace of the soul, refreshment and rest from her labours and burdens, a victory over all her passions, and a happy acquisition of all other virtues! O, let us frequent this heavenly school of Christ.

Consider, thirdly, the great example of humility given us by the Son of God, *who, being in the form of God, (true God, no less than his Father,) and therefore thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet debased himself, taking the form of a servant, viz. the servile nature of man, and humbled himself, becoming*

obedient unto death, even the most disgraceful death of the cross, Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8. His whole life was full of lessons of humility. He chose to be born in a stable; to be circumcised as a sinner; to flee into Egypt, as if he were unable to resist a petty mortal; to be brought up in poverty and labour; to work at a mean mechanic trade; to be obedient to his creatures; to be baptized amongst sinners; to suffer himself to be tempted by the devil; to make choice of the poorer and meaner sort of men for his companions and disciples; to make himself as their servant, even to the washing of their feet; to fly from honours, and applause; to conceal his glory; to enjoin secrecy with regard to his wonderful works; and to embrace, on all occasions, both in life and death, whatsoever was most humbling and most despicable in the eyes of men. O divine Jesus, teach us to follow thy blessed example. O teach us to be meek and humble of heart, like thee, that so we may be thy disciples indeed.

Conclude to set always before your eyes the life and doctrine of Jesus Christ, in order to conform yourselves to his divine maxims and examples, and to learn of him to be truly humble. No other master but he can effectually teach you this divine lesson.

AUGUST 28.

On the Fruits of Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that *humility* is the ground on which other virtues must be built; they have all of them a necessary dependence on this foundation, and are all of them more or less perfect in proportion to the degree in which we possess humility. *Faith* itself, which is commonly looked upon as the foundation of all our good, absolutely depends upon *humility*; even that humility which obliges the soul to adore what she cannot understand, to submit to the most humbling truths, and to *cast down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. x. 4. 5. Because, as all heresies proceed from pride, self-conceit, and refusing to give up, or submit one's own judgment to divine authority; so nothing else but humility can secure the soul from this danger, and keep her firm to her faith. In like manner, *divine hope* depends also upon humility, which alone can keep the soul in the golden mean between the two extremes of diffidence and presumption; whilst it teaches her to have no opinion or confidence in herself, nor any ways to build on her own sandy bottom, but wholly upon the rock, which can never fail us, of the power, goodness and mercy of God. For the less we trust in ourselves, the more we trust in God. And thus we

shall always find that they that are the most humble have also the strongest faith and hope, and are usually instruments in the hand of God of his greatest works.

Consider, secondly, that *divine Charity*, the queen of all virtues, as to both her branches, viz. both the love of God, and the love of our neighbours, has also a close connexion with humility, and can never maintain her ground in our souls, without being supported by humility. Because humility furnishes the soul with the most pressing motives to assist her to love her God; humility sets his goodness in its proper light; makes the soul admire that he, being what he is, should have any regard to her, or even bear with such a sinful wretch as she is: humility teaches her that she is nothing, and that God is the great ALL, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to her: and, indeed, this infinite goodness of God, which is the proper object of divine love, is never rightly apprehended but by the humble. And as to that other branch of charity, that relates to our neighbours, it is very evident it can never be maintained but by humility; for all the vices that oppose and destroy fraternal charity, such as hatred, envy, contention, rash judgment, detraction, anger, &c. all spring from pride, and are not to be vanquished but by true humility, which teaches us to prefer all others before ourselves, and to be angry with no one but ourselves.

Consider, thirdly, that *prayer*, which is the general means of all our good, must also be presented before the throne of God, and recommended by humility, or else it will never be effectual with God; but when it is accompanied with humility, it can do all things. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself*, saith the wise man, (Eccl. xxxv. 21,) *shall pierce the clouds—and he will not depart till the Most High behold him*, viz. with a favourable eye, to grant his petition. For, as the Psalmist assures us, (Ps. ci. 18,) *God hath regard to the prayer of the humble, and despiseth not their petitions. And from the beginning the proud have never been acceptable to him; but the prayer of the humble and of the meek hath always pleased him*, Judith ix. 16. Even the prayer of the greatest sinners, when it is presented with *a contrite and humbled heart*, is *not despised* by him, (Ps. l.) as evidently appears in the case of the publican, (Luke xviii.) who, by this one short prayer, *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*, accompanied with a profound humility, and a perfect contrition, was immediately *justified*. O blessed humility, what canst thou not effect! O dear Lord, teach us to be humble.

Conclude, if thou desirest to raise in thy soul the fabric of virtue, to lay, in the first place, the foundation of humility; and the higher thou hopest to erect this fabric, the lower must thou sink the foundation, by a more profound humility. Virtue, without

this foundation, will prove no better than a house built upon sand, which, at the first storm or inundation, will fall to ruin.

AUGUST 29.

On other Fruits of Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that the moral virtues, as well as the theological, have all of them a necessary dependence on humility. That *prudence* will come to nothing, which is self-conceited, and builds upon the devices of man, rather than upon the light and grace of God, procured by *humble* prayer. *Justice* will be deficient in many of its branches, if corrupted by pride, which always makes men partial to themselves, and so full of themselves, as to be ever ready to judge, censure, despise and condemn their neighbours, and unwilling to regulate their thoughts, words and deeds, by that golden rule of doing in all things as they would be done by. That *fortitude* will fail, when it comes to the trial, which, for want of humility, is built upon sand, and not upon the rock. And that *temperance* can never be perfect, which only withholds the sensual appetite from excess, and does not withhold restrain the irregularities of the other passions, and qualify the fumes of pride, that they may not turn the head with self-conceit: now, this is the proper business of humility, and can never be effected without humility.

Consider, secondly, that not only the four *cardinal* virtues, but all the others, depend, in like manner, on the foundation of humility. *Meekness*, which restrains anger, and bears, with equality of soul, all affronts and provocations, goes always hand in hand with *humility*, and is recommended to us, jointly with *humility*, by the great example of our Lord. Learn of me, saith he, *for I am meek and humble of heart*. *Poverty of spirit* (which disengages the soul from the love of the world) is either *humility* itself, or the offspring of *humility*. *Purity* and *chastity* can never be maintained, but by *humility*: the most shameful falls into the worst of impurities are often the punishment of pride, *Rom. i. 24*. *Modesty*, when it only regulates the exterior, and is not accompanied with *humility* of heart, is but hypocritical and Pharisaical, and deserves not the name of virtue. *Obedience* is the favourite daughter of *humility*, as *disobedience* is the first-born of *pride*. *Patience* under crosses and sufferings springs also from *humility*, which teaches us to *humble* ourselves *under the mighty hand of God*, in all his appointments; ever to kiss the rod, and to be convinced that what we suffer is nothing to what we deserve. In a word, a perpetual *conformity* with the blessed will of God in all things, is ever the inseparable companion of true *humility*,

and brings along with it to the soul the happy fruits of *tranquility* and *peace*, which are the joint offspring of these two virtues.

Consider, thirdly, that *humility* is also the parent of these two necessary virtues of *penitence* and *self-denial*. Because the more *humble* we are, the more we know ourselves, and the greater sense we have of our sins, and consequently the greater horror and hatred for them, and the greater desire of punishing them by *penance*, and of making satisfaction for them by a *penitential* life. And in like manner, the more humble we are, the more we are also sensible of our own weakness, and of all the dangers that surround us on all sides, from the devil and the world, and most of all from our own passions, and that unhappy self-love, which is the root of all our evils; and thus the humble knowledge of ourselves puts us upon keeping a greater guard upon ourselves, and a closer hand upon our passions and disorderly inclinations, in order to restrain all their irregularities, and bring them all under perfect subjection. Now, this is *self-denial*; the business of which is to subdue *self-love*, and to force it to submit to the love of God. Thus all virtues depend upon humility. O lovely humility! O how blessed it is to be thus little in our own eyes! There is no other way to any degree of true greatness.

Conclude, if thou aspirest at perfection, to enter upon the path of humility; no other way can bring thee thither: if thou aim at arriving thither by any other road, thou wilt be sure to fall down some dreadful precipice.

AUGUST 30.

On the Degrees of Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that true humility does not consist in speaking ill of ourselves, by saying we are great sinners, or the like; nor yet in wearing plain apparel, or employing ourselves in mean offices; nor in looking down upon the ground, &c. We may do all this, and yet be far from being humble; because all this may be done out of pride, either to acquire the esteem of others by this outward show of humility, or to please and applaud ourselves with the conceit of our being humble. True humility consists not in words nor in the outside, but in the inward sentiments of the heart. Humility, says St. Bernard, is *a virtue by which a man, out of a most true knowledge of himself, becomes mean and contemptible in his own eyes*; so that, for a man to be truly humble, is to have a low opinion of himself, through the deep sense he has of his own nothing and his sins; and therefore to despise himself, and to be willing to be despised by all the world. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions: if not, thou art not truly humble.

Consider, secondly, that the first degree of true humility is that which is expressed in the definition given by St. Bernard, viz. that we should have that knowledge of ourselves, and of all our miseries and sins, such a conviction of our having nothing at all to be proud of, and very many things that make us wretchedly mean and contemptible, as sincerely to despise ourselves; seeing there is nothing in us of good, that is our own, and that whatsoever is in us of our own proper growth, or of our own stock, is all good for nothing, yea, filthy and abominable. What room, then, can there be in us for any self-conceit, or self-esteem? How many and how pressing inducements have we, to oblige us to think meanly of ourselves, and to despise ourselves! And yet how much does this unhappy pride prevail, in spite of all these humiliations which we carry about with us! O, let this misery of ours at least be a motive to despise ourselves the more.

Consider, thirdly, that the second degree of true humility advances us still farther, and makes us not only to despise ourselves, but to be willing, and even desirous, to be despised by all others and that all others should have the same mean opinion of us, as we pretend to have of ourselves. And indeed, since, in all other things, we are ever willing to have others to be of the same opinion with ourselves, did we sincerely despise ourselves, we should certainly be glad that all others should have the same way of thinking as we have, and should in like manner despise us also. Alas! how far am I from these dispositions! The third and most sublime degree of humility is that of the saints, who, in the midst of the greatest favours, and highest elevations, and all the supernatural gifts of divine grace, are so established in God's truth, as to ascribe nothing at all to themselves, but all to God; and by how much the more they are exalted by him, are so much the more mean in their own eyes, by descending so much the deeper into the abyss of their own nothing. Happy they that in all things know how to distinguish what belongs to God from that which belongs to themselves, and to reserve to themselves only that which is their own, and to give all the rest to God!

Conclude to aim at ascending from step to step, by the help of the knowledge of thyself, and not to rest till thou arrivest at the perfection of humility. She will bring to thee all good things along with her, and conduct thee safe to the kingdom of God.

AUGUST 31.

On the Practice of Humility.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to acquire this most necessary virtue of humility, we must have a great esteem of it; we must

greatly desire it and seek after it ; we must earnestly pray for it, every day of our lives ; and must neglect no opportunity of learning it, or improving ourselves in it, by the practice of it, that is, by daily exercising ourselves in the acts of it. Now, as the *humiliations* which come to us, either from the hand of God or man give us the best opportunity of practising or exercising humility we must learn to welcome these humiliations, and to embrace them in such manner as to take occasion from them to humble ourselves daily both to God and man. For as we shall never learn patience without sufferings and crosses, so we shall never learn humility without *humiliations*. But as, in the sufferings and crosses which come to us through the hands of wicked men, we must ever distinguish that which is the work and will of God, from that which is of the malice of man, so that we embrace the one, whilst we detest the other ; so likewise in our humiliations, if they be attended with the evil of sin, either of our own or of others, we must in such manner humble ourselves under them, as to embrace the abjection or humiliation, whilst we abhor the sin.

Consider, secondly, that in learning humility by practice, it will be proper to proceed gradually, by setting ourselves certain lessons, beginning with those that are more easy, and, when these are learnt, proceeding to such as are more difficult. Thus, for instance, let us begin by learning,—First, not to seek, in any thing that we do, the praise, esteem, or applause of man ; nor to say any word tending, directly or indirectly, to our own praise or honour ; but rather to mortify that inclination we have to be ever speaking of ourselves and of our own performances ;—Secondly, never to excuse or palliate our own faults or defects, nor to fling the blame upon others ;—Thirdly, not to take pleasure in hearing ourselves praised, nor in our being honoured or applauded by men, nor to be displeased at others' being extolled or preferred before us ;—Fourthly, carefully to shun all occasions of honour and praise, as far as we can without being wanting to the duties of our calling. See, my soul, how much work is here cut out for thee, and yet these are but the beginnings of the virtue of humility.

Consider, thirdly, that, to proceed in the practice of humility we must not content ourselves with the not seeking, nor affecting, nor taking any complacency in the praise, honour or esteem of others, but rather shunning and flying from it ; but moreover we must put off all *self-esteem*, and learn to despise ourselves from our hearts ; and not to leave off, till, according to the Gospel lesson, we can, with all simplicity and sincerity, *sit down in the lowest place*, by giving the preference, in our own esteem, to all others before ourselves, and thinking ourselves the worst of all.

Then, as to the sentiments of others in our regard, and their treatment of us, we are to proceed in the study and practice of humility by these three steps:—First, we are to learn to suffer with meekness and patience our being despised, reproached, or affronted by others. Secondly, we are to learn to receive this kind of treatment with a willingness and readiness of mind, and to be pleased with our being slighted and contemned. Thirdly, we must even learn to embrace all these kinds of humiliations with joy; and not to stop, till, with the apostle, we not only are dead to the world, and to all it can say, either for us or against us; but are even glad that we should be crucified to the world, and the world to us.

Conclude to continue, by a diligent application, both the study and practice of these great lessons, till thou become perfect in them all, and go through the whole course of this heavenly science, the science of the saints.

SEPTEMBER 1.

On the eight Beatitudes, St. Matt. v.

CONSIDER, first, how the Son of God, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, being come down from heaven to be our Father, our Light, and our Guide,—in order to reclaim us from all our errors, to dispel our darkness, to redress all our evils, and to conduct us into the way of true and everlasting happiness,—opened his heavenly school for these purposes, by his divine sermon upon the Mount; in the beginning of which he has laid down, in a few words, the principal maxims of true wisdom, and all the fundamentals of Christian morality, comprised in what we commonly call the *eight beatitudes*. Christians, we all desire to be happy for ever; and behold here the wisdom of God, which can neither deceive nor be deceived, declares to us, in clear and distinct terms, what it is that is to make us happy here, and to conduct us safe to a happiness that shall never end. O, let us embrace, then, these blessed lessons. Who would not study them well, since the learning of them is to make us wise indeed, and to bring us infallibly to the very Source of all wisdom and happiness, even to an eternal union with God himself! O heavenly Master, who would not frequent thy divine school, since, in the very first entrance into it, thou thus directest us into a plain and easy way to eternal bliss!

Consider, secondly, that the ancient philosophers, with all their pretensions to wisdom, were strangely in the dark with regard to man's true happiness, his last end, and his sovereign good, about which they ran into many errors, and not one of

them all ever came near the truth. And as they knew not the end, so were they also strangers to the true means that were to bring us to this end. They never once imagined that, to be *poor in spirit*, to be *meeke*, to *mourn*, to *suffer persecution*, &c. was the way to happiness: much less did they suspect that such as these alone were actually happy. This was a doctrine never heard of in their schools. This was a lesson that was to be taught by the Son of God. This truth he brought down with him from heaven, and delivered to his disciples in his first divine sermon. O my soul, let us embrace, with all our affections, these divine truths, taught us by so great a Master; let us be practically convinced of them, and conform ourselves to them in the whole conduct of our lives.

Consider, thirdly, how miserable are all the children of Babylon, that is, all poor deluded worldlings, who, under the name of Christians, whilst they profess themselves followers and disciples of this divine Master, take no notice of these lessons which he came from heaven to teach, but live on in an affected ignorance of them, so as to apprehend all those to be miserable, whom he pronounces *blessed*, and those alone to be happy, who wallow in riches and sensual pleasures, whom he declares to be miserable, and against whom he pronounces his *wo*. And do such people as these believe the gospel indeed, whilst they pretend to seek for happiness, in the very way, which (if the gospel be true) must needs betray them into many errors, labours and sorrows here, and shortly conduct them into endless misery? O, let us at least be more wise! Let us open our eyes to this great light, which is come down from heaven, to shine upon them that before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. Let us believe and adhere to this great Teacher, who *has the words of eternal life*. Let us follow him, and we shall not fail, under his conduct, to find the true way of solid happiness and eternal life.

Conclude to be ever thankful to the Son of God for all these great gospel truths, which he has brought us down from heaven, in order to set loose our souls from the earth, and so to carry us up to heaven. O! if we desire to fly up to this happy region of pure and immortal joys, it must be with the wings of these virtues, that are recommended to us in these eight beatitudes.

SEPTEMBER 2.

On Poverty of Spirit.

CONSIDER, first, that the first of the eight beatitudes is expressed in these words: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. v. 2. This beatitude or happiness,

which brings with it a title to the kingdom of heaven, belongs, in the first place, to them that are *poor by condition*, and in effect, (Luke vi. 20,) provided they be contented with their poverty, and cordially embrace it, as the beloved companion and favourite of Christ and his saints. The Son of God came down from heaven to seek poverty upon earth; he was born in poverty, he lived in poverty, and he died in poverty. And shall we, my soul, disdain, shall we fly and abhor, what the wisdom of God made choice of for him and his, especially since he has declared, that to be poor here, is the true way to be rich hereafter; and that the men of riches, *who have their consolation here*, after they have slept out their short sleep, shall find their hands empty; whilst the poor, after their short sufferings, shall be admitted to the immense treasures of a happy eternity.

Consider, secondly, that this beatitude belongs, in the second place, to them that are *poor in affection*; that is, who set not their heart on their worldly wealth, but are in readiness of mind to part with their riches, whenever God shall call for all or any part of them, and in effect willingly resign them up, when he, by any occasion, is pleased to take them away; as also to all such as are poor by choice, for the love of Christ, who, when they understand such to be the will of God, actually relinquish all they have to follow him; in fine, to all such as have their affections disengaged from all perishable things; from all worldly honours, possessions, and pleasures; from all that is earthly and temporal; in a word, from all that is not God. For such as these, and only such as these, are in a proper disposition to fly up to the kingdom of heaven. There is no flying thither, as long as we are tied down by affection to any thing upon earth. *O, who will give me the wings of the dove*, that is, of simplicity and purity in all my intentions and affections, that, being let loose from this wretched earth, by this true poverty of spirit, I may fly up freely to my God, and eternally repose in him!

Consider, thirdly, that this beatitude belongs, in a particular manner, to the *humble*; for such as they are truly *poor in spirit*; forasmuch as they have not their *spirit* puffed up with windy *pride*, nor with any conceit of any ability of their own; like him to whom it is said, (Apoc. iii. 17,) *Thou sayest, I am rich and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing: and thou knowest not thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; nor are they *high spirited*, or *high minded*, which is being *rich in spirit*; but are poor, mean, little in their own eyes, and therefore exalted by God, who, to such little ones as these, gives his grace in this world, and his heavenly kingdom in the next. *O teach us, dear Lord, to be thus poor in spirit: teach us to be little and humble.*

Conclude to begin thy study of true wisdom, by applying thyself to learn well this first lesson of *poverty in spirit*; especially since thy great Master expects and requires of all his disciples, that they should enter into his school with a disengagement of their heart and affection, at least, from every thing else; that they should leave all to follow him.

SEPTEMBER 3

On Meekness

CONSIDER, first, that, after *poverty of spirit*, in the next place *meekness* is recommended to us, as the true road to everlasting happiness: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.* These two virtues of *poverty of spirit* and *meekness* are nearly allied to each other; they go hand in hand. Our Lord joins them both together, and expects we should learn them both from him, (Matt. xi,) when he calls upon us all, *to take up his yoke upon us, and to learn of him, because he is meek and humble of heart.* But what will he give us, do you think, if we learn to imitate his meekness? O, he assures us, that we shall find, in the exercise of this virtue, *refreshment, rest, and peace* for our souls here; and shall inherit *the land* of the living hereafter. Happy portion of meek souls, even the possession of the Lord of life himself, in *the land of the living!* Christians, who would not embrace this lovely virtue, which brings with it a calm serenity and tranquillity of soul, even during our pilgrimage through this region of the dying, and secures to us, in our true country, the eternal repose and life of the saints!

Consider, secondly, what this *meekness* is, which is entitled to this beatitude. *Meekness* is a virtue which restrains all anger and passion, which suppresses the swelling of the heart under real or imaginary provocations or injuries; which stills the tumults of the soul on all these occasions, keeps in all heat or violence of words, and allows no thoughts to the soul of any other than that truly Christian revenge of *overcoming evil with good.* Such was the practice of the *Lamb of God*, both in life and death; of whom it was written, (Isai xlii. and Matt. xii,) *He shall not contend, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets: the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not extinguish, &c. He shall not be sad nor troublesome, &c.* And (1 Pet. ii. 23,) *When he was reviled, he did not revile, when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.* Now, it is this meekness, this sweet, mild, gentle behaviour, this evenness of soul, joined with courtesy in words, and affability to the little and to the poor as much as

to the great and to the rich, when joined with true humility of heart, makes up the proper and distinctive livery of the true servants and followers of Jesus Christ, which if we do not all endeavour to put on, he will not own us for his. It was this made up the amiable character of the primitive Christians. The sweet odour of these truly Christian virtues attracted thousands in those days to the faith of Jesus Christ, and will be found, at all times, more effectual, in order to the conversion of souls, than the strongest arguments, or even miracles, if not recommended by meekness and humility. O, let us embrace these lovely virtues. *My son*, says the Spirit of God, *do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men*, Ecclus. iii. 19.

Consider, thirdly, what we must do, that we may effectually learn to be meek, and may obtain a complete victory over anger and passion, and all that train of evils which are the usual attendants or consequences of anger and passion. First, we must *watch*; secondly, we must *pray*; thirdly, we must *fight*. We must *watch* over our own hearts, that we may not be surprised by the sudden motions of anger, and hurried away before we are aware; we must forecast the occasions in which we may meet with temptations or provocations, that we may be prepared for them, and armed against them. We must, upon all occasions, *pray*, with all the fervour of our souls, for the divine assistance against so dangerous an evil as passion, as being a capital enemy of charity, the queen of virtues; we must often lament our misery in this kind, at the feet of the Lamb of God, and sue for redress, by the intercession of the blessed virgin and of all the saints; we must, for this purpose, frequent the sacraments, the sources of heavenly grace. We must *fight*, by diligently suppressing the first motions of wrath: we must be convinced that no man upon earth, nor all the men upon earth, no, nor all the devils in hell, with all their malice, can do us half so much harm as we do ourselves by venting our passion, and seeking revenge; and therefore we must resolve to *fight* till death, with the best arms we are able, against this wicked passion, as an enemy which is continually seeking to betray our souls to Satan.

Conclude to spare no pains, that thou mayest effectually learn of Jesus Christ to be meek and humble of heart; there is no other way to peace here, nor to heaven hereafter.

SEPTEMBER 4.

On Mourning.

CONSIDER, first, those words of our Lord, in the third beatitude, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*:

and reflect how widely different are all the maxims and notions of worldlings with relation to a happy life, from the doctrine of this beatitude, which yet is the doctrine of truth. The children of this world imagine that mirth, and jollity, and pastimes, and worldly pleasures, are the chief ingredients of a happy life; and that such as laugh now are much more happy than such as weep and mourn. But they are certainly deceived; for he that cannot err has pronounced a *wo* (implying the worst of miseries) against them that laugh now, for they shall mourn, saith he, and weep, (Luke vi. 25;) whilst, on the other hand, he has declared them happy, that now weep and mourn. And his Holy Spirit long before has told us, by the wisest of men, (Eccles. ii. 2,) *Laughter I have counted error, and to mirth I have said, Why art thou vainly deceived?* And again, (Eccles. vii. 5,) *The heart of the wise is where there is mourning, and the heart of fools where there is mirth.* O let us, then, mourn now with the wise and with the saints, that we may rejoice with them for ever.

Consider, secondly, what kind of *mourning* is here recommended in this beatitude. Not worldly sadness, of which it is written, (Eccles. xxx. 25,) *Sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it,* and (2 Cor. vii. 10,) *The sorrow of the world worketh death.* Not a sullen melancholy, or any such mourning as is turbulent, or accompanied with impatient wishes for death, or anxious solitudes, or despondency; but a more calm and peaceful *mourning*, viz. of *compunction* for our sins, daily bewailing them in the sight of God, and doing penance for them; of *compassion* for our neighbours, lamenting their miseries, and the dismal havoc that sin is continually making amongst souls; of *condolence* with Jesus Christ, for the outrages he daily receives from impertinent sinners, who are continually crucifying him by their wicked lives; in fine, of *devotion*, in consideration of our long and wretched banishment, our great distance from our true country, in the midst of wars and dangers, and no security but in continual watching, praying, and labouring to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; of our absence from God, our sovereign Good, who alone can satisfy our souls, and therefore daily mourning for the length of our sojourning in this Babylon, with longing desires after our heavenly Sion. Happy they that are always mourning in this manner!

Consider, thirdly, what the reward is, that is here promised to them that mourn: *They shall be comforted*, saith the Lord. Yea, they shall be *comforted*, even in this life, with the sweet visitations and graces of the Spirit of God, the true *Comforter* of souls; with the satisfaction and peace of a good conscience; and with the experience of the unconceivable sweetness that is found in the love of God, one hour of which is capable of affording more

solid pleasure and delight to the soul, than many years of worldly enjoyments. And in the life to come, they shall be comforted without measure or end, where they shall be eternally incubriated with the plenty of God's house, and shall be made to drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life, (Ps. xxxv. 9. 10,) the streams of which afford immortal joys to the whole city of God above. O, when shall we, my soul, be so happy as to drink at this fountain!

Conclude to make it thy choice to *mourn* now, that thou mayst rejoice for ever. Remember that *they that sow in tears shall reap in joy*, Ps. cxxv. 5, as on the other side the children of the Babylon of this world, who seek their delight and comfort here, must expect hereafter to fall under that sentence of Babylon, pronounced Apoc. xviii. 7, *As much as she hath glorified herself, and hath been in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her.*

SEPTEMBER 5.

On Hungering and Thirsting after Justice.

CONSIDER, first, the words of the fourth beatitude; *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.* O happy hunger and thirst, which brings the soul to the possession of all true justice, virtue and perfection, and to a blessed union with the very Fountain of justice, which is God himself! Reflect, my soul, how the desire to be good is indeed the beginning of all good; the desire of wisdom, according to the scripture, is the beginning of wisdom; the desire of the love of God is the beginning of the love of God; and so of all other virtues. But, then, this desire must not be a half desire, like that of the sluggard, of whom the wise man says, that *he willeth and he willetth not*, (Prov. xiii. 4,) but a full and earnest desire. And when this desire is strong and perseverant, when it grows to be a vehement *hunger and thirst* after divine love, and after all true justice and Christian perfection; it then sets the soul upon seeking diligently, praying heartily, knocking earnestly at the gate of the divine mercy, and employing all possible means to procure the satisfying of this hunger and thirst; and thus it easily overcomes all obstacles, and never leaves off its pursuit, till it has obtained what it so earnestly seeks and desires. O happy souls, that hunger and thirst in this manner!

Consider, secondly, more in particular, what it is we are to hunger and thirst after, in order to be entitled to this beatitude. The justice of God in ourselves; the justice of God in our neighbours; the justice of God in himself. *We hunger and thirst af-*

ter the *justice* of God in ourselves, when we earnestly seek and desire that we ourselves may, by the grace of God, *fulfil all justice*; that we may acquit ourselves of every branch of our duty; and that the love of God may take full possession of our souls, both for time and eternity. We *hunger and thirst after the justice* of God in our neighbours, when we earnestly desire, and, as much as lies in us, seek and procure, that all others may know, love, and serve God, and be eternally his. We *hunger and thirst after the justice* of God in himself, when we are in love with his own infinite goodness, as it is in itself; with the beauty of his divine attributes; with his *greater glory* in all things, and with the perfect accomplishment of his holy will. Such was the *hunger and thirst after justice*, that our Lord himself had here upon earth, who says of himself, (St. John iv. 34,) *my meat is to do the will of him that sent me*. My soul, have we any share in this *blessed hunger and thirst*? or do we not rather loathe this heavenly food, and only hunger after the fleshpots of Egypt, and thirst for muddy waters drawn out of broken cisterns, which can never satisfy us?

Consider, thirdly, the reward here promised to them that *hunger and thirst after justice*: *they shall have their fill*, saith the Lord; *their fill* here, of divine grace, of true devotion, of heavenly charity, of all Christian virtues, of a store of good works and merit, of all the gifts and the fruits of the Holy Ghost, in a word, of that *justice* which *they hunger and thirst after*; and hereafter they shall be still more happily *filled* with the beatific vision, and the eternal enjoyment of God himself, the only true and sovereign Good, which alone can satisfy the heart of man; according to that of the psalmist, (Ps. xvi. 15,) *I shall be satisfied when thy glory shall appear*. Here they shall be *filled* with the grace of God, raining down upon them from the great ocean above; hereafter they shall be drowned in that immense ocean of the Deity, where they shall be brim-full of God, for all eternity.

Conclude to direct thy appetite towards *the good things of the Lord, in the land of the living*, and in the mean time towards *the fulfilling of all his justice*. But O! take care it be not depraved with the false sweets of worldly, sensual and carnal pleasures. These will take away from thee all relish for the things of God; they will neither fill thee or satisfy thee themselves, nor suffer thee to *taste*, either in time or eternity, *how sweet is the Lord*

SEPTEMBER 6.

On being merciful.

CONSIDER, first, the words of the fifth beatitude, *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*; and reflect on the necessity we continually lie under of the mercy of God, and how easy a means our Lord has here furnished us with for obtaining this mercy. All our good must come from God; and as we have rendered ourselves absolutely unworthy of any good at all by our sins, we can allege nothing for ourselves, but can only appeal to the divine mercy, that he may give us the graces we have not deserved, and forgive us the punishments we have deserved, and the sins by which we have deserved them. So that the finding mercy with God is all in all; and the means of finding this mercy is to show mercy to one another. *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given to you.* Luke vi. 37, 38. O, how lovely, how beautiful, how beneficial, both for time and eternity, is this virtue of mercy! How sweet are all her fruits! She is the favourite of Heaven, and makes all her lovers favourites of heaven; she is the eldest daughter of the great King, (whose mercy distinguishes itself, and shines most brightly over all his works); she shows herself to all them that seek her, she runs to the embraces of all them that are in love with her; she carries them home with her to her Father's house, even to the sacred mansions of a happy eternity.

Consider, secondly, the diverse ways of showing mercy, that are recommended to us by the word of God. Such are, first, the *works of mercy corporal*, by alms-deeds; by feeding and clothing any of the poor members of Jesus Christ; by visiting and relieving the sick, or imprisoned, &c. Such works as these, according to the scripture, (Tob. xii. 9,) *deliver from death, they purge away sins, and make us find mercy and life everlasting.* Such works as these entitle us to an eternal kingdom, Matt. xxv. 34, 35. Secondly, the *works of mercy spiritual*, by assisting or relieving our neighbours in their spiritual necessities; by giving them good counsel or instruction; by comforting them under their afflictions; by encouraging them in temptations; but especially by reclaiming them from their errors and vices, and by that means delivering their souls from the second and everlasting death, and putting them in the right way of coming to live for ever with the ever living God. O, how acceptable to God, how precious in his sight, are these spiritual works of mercy! The Son of God came down from heaven to exercise these kind of works upon earth; in these he employed the days of his mortal

life. O, let us be glad to follow this great Example, as far as our weakness will allow us.

Consider, thirdly, the reward that is here promised to the *merciful*, viz. that *they shall obtain mercy*; and that both here, as well temporally as spiritually, by having their own wants redressed and their sins forgiven them; and hereafter, by their being *received into everlasting dwellings*, by those to whom they had here shown mercy, and finding there the fruit of all the seed of the works of mercy they had here sown, multiplied to a hundred fold. Alas! how wretched shall the best of us be, if God does not show us *mercy*! For who can stand the judgment of God, if his *mercy* be set aside? How happy, then, are they, who, by being *merciful* to one another, ensure to themselves the *mercy* of God, to stand by them in the time of need! But, on the other hand, how unhappy are they who refuse to show mercy to their neighbours! For *judgment without mercy to them that have not done mercy*, saith St. James, ii. 13.

Conclude to be ever merciful to thy neighbours, that thou mayst find mercy with God. For *with the same measure you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again*, Luke vi. 38. Yea, with infinite advantage, according to that of the same gospel; *good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom*. Ibidem.

SEPTEMBER 7.

On Cleanness of Heart.

CONSIDER, first, the words of the sixth beatitude: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*. God is not to be seen by the eyes of the body, but only by the eyes of the heart, that is, by the interior eyes of the soul. Now, as the bodily eyes, in order to contemplate their proper objects, must be *clean*, (for if any speck interpose itself, and cover the sight, the object cannot be seen;) so the interior eye of the soul, in order to see God, must be *clean*; the sight must not be covered with any speck of earthly dirt, that is, with any disorderly affection to any thing in this world. This *cleanness* of the inward eye requires two things, viz. *simplicity* in the intention, *purity* in the affection. With these two wings, a man is lifted up above the things of the earth. *Simplicity* aims at God alone; *purity* takes hold of him, embraces him, and adheres to him. *Seek God*, says the wise man, *in simplicity of heart*, (Wisd. i. 1,) that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of a *single* heart; of a heart free from all double-dealing, and all the guile of an artful self-seeking, instead of seeking God. Let the *eye* of the intention be *simple*, that is,

single and sincere, and truly directed to God, and then the *whole body* of the actions *shall be lightsome*, Matt. vi. 22. Let God be the great object of thy love, so as to admit of no affection that takes off thy heart from him; and thy heart will be truly *pure* and *clean*, and qualified to contemplate and embrace God.

Consider, secondly, the degrees by which we are to ascend to this perfect *purity* and *cleanness* of heart. The first, and most necessary *purgation*, is from all mortal sin, and from the affections to it; for the heart that voluntarily admits of the affection to mortal sin, (whether it be the sin of impurity or any other vice,) is absolutely *unclean*, and is possessed by an *unclean* spirit, and therefore can have no share in God. The second *purgation* goes farther, and not only settles the soul in a fixed determination never to consent, upon any account, not even in thought, to any one mortal sin, but also cleanses the heart from all wilful affections to venial sin, and fixes her in a resolution never, with full deliberation, to commit a known venial sin, much less to indulge any habit or custom of any such sin. All these sins, when fully deliberate, are so many spots and stains, which strangely disfigure the beauty of the soul, make her unworthy of the embraces of her heavenly spouse, and darken the eye of the heart, so as to disqualify it for the seeing of God. And therefore such spots and stains as these must be purged away, if we would be truly *clean of heart*.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to be perfectly *clean of heart*, the heart must also be *purged* from all affections to worldly honours, riches and pleasures; from all disorderly love of the creature, to the prejudice of the love of the Creator; and from every affection that takes off any part of the heart from God, which indeed is always the case, when we love any person or thing which we do not love for God's sake, or with a due subordination to the love of God. Whatsoever love cannot stand this test is more or less an *unclean* love; it divides the heart, it makes the heart *unclean*, it sullies its purity, and disqualifies it for the seeing of God. O see then, my soul, what an evil it is, to suffer any irregular affection to possess thy heart; since it hinders thee from so great a good, even the sight of God, thy only true and sovereign Good!

Conclude to be ever jealous of the purity of thy heart; labour daily to purge it more and more, not only from all wilful sin, but also from every earthly affection that can any ways sully it, or overcloud its inward sight, with the exhalations that are always arising from sensual and worldly love.

SEPTEMBER 8.

On the Nativity of the blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day the church devoutly celebrates the birth-day of the great Queen that brought forth to us the King of heaven, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Source of all our good. This birth of hers was like the first dawning of that happy day, which the Son of God, the true *Sun of justice*, brought us from heaven; in the light of which, if we duly walk, during our mortal pilgrimage, we shall come securely to that blessed day which knows no night. On this festival of the blessed virgin Mother-of God, we ought, in the first place, to praise and bless God, and to give him thanks for all his graces bestowed upon her, by which he prepared her soul and body, from her very conception, to be a worthy dwelling for his son, holy and without spot or blemish; secondly, to honour him, in this blessed virgin, and to rejoice in all the wonders of his power, goodness and mercy, by which he paved the way for our redemption; thirdly, to show a true and solid devotion to our blessed Lady, by an earnest application to her for her prayers and intercession, and a zealous imitation of her virtues.

Consider, secondly, the grounds which all good Christians have, and always had, to be devout to the blessed Virgin; as we find in every age, the more eminent any persons have been in the love of Jesus Christ, the more devoted they have also been to this blessed Mother; verifying by their practice, in this regard, that prophecy of hers, (St. Luke i,) that *all generations should call her blessed*. These grounds may be reduced to three heads, her *dignity*, her *sanctity*, and her elevation in *glory*: First, her super-eminent *dignity of Mother of God*, the nearest *alliance* which any pure creature can have with him; and how can we love him, and not love his mother? Secondly, her super-eminent *sanctity*; for she was *full of divine grace*, even before she conceived, (St. Luke i. 16;) how much more after carrying in her womb, for nine months, the Source of all grace and sanctity! And what shall we say of the thirty years she had him always before her eyes, and still more in her heart, and of all the remaining space of her life, during which she was continually growing in grace! God, on his part, never ceasing to bestow, with a most bountiful hand, and she, on her part, never receiving his grace in vain, but ever corresponding and co-operating with it, and by this means continually drawing down new blessings. Thirdly, her super-eminent *elevation, in the eternal glory of heaven*, in proportion to the super-eminent *grace and sanctity*, to which she arrived here upon earth, (as the one is always the measure of the other,) and the *interest*

she has with her divine Son, in consequence thereof. See, my soul, how many and how pressing motives thou hast to be devout to this blessed Lady.

Consider, thirdly, that, as God is the sole Author, and the original Source of all the dignity, sanctity and glory, which we honour in the blessed Virgin ; so all that veneration, which the Catholic church pays to this blessed Lady, has God both for its beginning and its end. Our devotion to her proceeds from the love we bear her son ; we honour in her his gifts and graces ; we love and honour her for his sake ; and all the extraordinary respect we at any time show to her, we refer to his greater glory. So far, then, from robbing God of any part of his honour, by the veneration we give her, we honour him indeed so much the more, because all this our devotion finally tends to him, and terminates in him. And thus we always find, that such as are truly devout to the blessed Virgin, fail not to be also true lovers of God, *and pursuers of all good works.*

Conclude to embrace this devotion to our blessed Lady, as an excellent means to advance thee in all good ; but do not imagine thyself to be truly devout to her, if thou art no ways solicitous to imitate her virtues. True devotion loves, esteems and honours in her that which God loves, esteems and honours, viz. her virtues and sanctity. And how can we better show our love, esteem and honour for virtue and sanctity, than by labouring to imitate it ?

SEPTEMBER 9.

On being Peace-makers.

CONSIDER, first, the words of the seventh beatitude : *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* God's own abode is in eternal peace ; and the heavenly Jerusalem is the vision and enjoyment of an undisturbed, everlasting peace. They, therefore, that truly love peace, and, as much as lies in them, both keep it in themselves, and with all others, and contribute all they can to make peace among such as are at variance with one another, and to bring all their neighbours to be at peace with God, are entitled to this beatitude, and to the glorious character of *children of God.* O, how amiable is this spirit of peace ! How blessed are its fruits ! It is the paradise of the soul ; it makes a kind of a heaven upon earth. O, may this *peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep both our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord.* Philip iii. 7.

Consider, secondly, the different ways there are of being *peace-makers*, with relation to our neighbours, with relation to ourselves, and with relation to God. It is a blessed thing to bring our neighbours to *peace*, and mutual charity; as it is an abomination in the sight of God to *sow discord among brethren*, Prov. vi. 19. It is a more blessed thing to make *peace* at home in our own souls, by suppressing the rebellious disorders of our passions, by bringing the flesh under subjection to the spirit, the inferior part of the soul to the superior, and the superior to God. It is the most blessed thing of all, to bring both ourselves, and as many others as we can, to a constant and perfect *peace* with God; that he may reign without control in all our souls; that his kingdom may be perfectly established within us, that his holy will, his holy law, his grace, and his peace may live in us and with us for ever. O happy peace, indeed, that unites us here to God by grace and hereafter in eternal glory.

Consider, thirdly, the reward promised in this beatitude to the *peace-makers*;—*they shall be called the children of God*. O reflect, my soul, what a dignity here is, to be children of so great a king even the King that made heaven and earth. *Behold what manner of charity*, saith St. John (1 John, iii. 1,) *the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God*. *Sons of God* even now, by his grace, bearing a resemblance with his true Son, (who is styled in scripture *the prince of peace*) and as such in a particular manner loved, cherished, and protected by him here as a parent; and hereafter to be admitted to a more perfect likeness, union, and, as it were, transformation into him, according to that of the same apostle, (v. 2,) *Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when we shall appear, we shall be like unto him; because we shall see him as he is*. O Christians, what blessings, both for time and eternity, are prepared for the lovers and promoters of peace!

Conclude, my soul, to endeavour to be always a friend and a *child of peace*, and *the peace of God shall always rest upon thee*, (Luke x. 6,) and never leave thee till it bring thee to the region of everlasting peace.

SEPTEMBER 10.

On the Means of preserving and maintaining the Peace of the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that it is of great advantage to the soul, both in order to defend her from all evil, and to advance her in all good, to keep herself always in *peace* within her own interior; because

this inward *peace*, when it is *true*, brings along with it courage, strength and grace, by the favours which God always shows to the truly *peaceable*. Now, the first, and most necessary means for the acquiring or preserving of this peace in the soul, must be to banish all wilful sin from the soul; for there can be no *true peace* where wilful sin resides. For no one can be at war with God, and have any peace within himself, except it be that *false peace*, which is sometimes formed by an erroneous conscience, that shuts its eyes against God's light, that it may not be obliged to embrace his truth. O, dear Jesus, never let me be so miserable as to be deluded by any such false peace, or ever to be a rebel to thy light.

Consider, secondly, that the true peace of the soul is not to be acquired without subduing the passions and keeping them in order. For what peace can there be in the midst of daily storms, tumults and rebellions, such as are raised by headstrong and untamed passions? What peace can there be for the slaves of pride and ambition, of avarice and worldly solicitude, of wrath and envy, &c. ? Alas! all these and the like passions disturb and disquiet the soul; they put her in a ferment; they suffer her not to find any solid rest or tranquillity, or any manner of share in that calmness and evenness of soul, which those enjoy that are perfectly masters of themselves, by the victory they have acquired over all their passions. O, how true it is, that our peace and happiness, even here, is not to be found by yielding to our disorderly inclinations, but by mortifying and overcoming them!

Consider, thirdly, that the way to acquire true peace, and true liberty of soul, is thus marked out by a servant of God, (Following of Christ, *L. 3. Ch. 23*;) " Endeavour, my son, rather to do the will of another than thy own; ever choose rather to have less than more; always seek the lowest place, and to be inferior to every one; always wish and pray that the will of God may be entirely fulfilled in thee. Behold such a man as this enters upon the coasts of peace and rest." Whosoever will but observe these rules shall not easily be disquieted, but rather shall meet with a paradise of delights in his soul. And we shall find, upon examination, that whenever we are disturbed, it is because we have transgressed some or other of these rules; either by being too much bent upon our own will; or by the desires of having more, or of being higher; or at least by not being entirely resigned to the will of God.

Conclude to set out in quest of this happy way that leads to true peace, by giving up thy own desires, and ever embracing the holy will of God.

SEPTEMBER 11.

On suffering Persecution for Justice' Sake.

CONSIDER, first, these words of the eighth beatitude: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* And again, *Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward, is very great in heaven.* O, how opposite is this gospel doctrine to all the sentiments of flesh and blood? Alas! we have naturally so little relish for such sufferings as these, that we are apt to pity all those, and look upon them as unhappy and miserable, that are exposed to such kind of evils; and so far from rejoicing, when it is our own case, we are too often dejected and sorrowful. But surely we are in the wrong; since Truth itself, that cannot be deceived, not only assures us, that these sufferings are the way to be *blessed*; that is, to be *happy* hereafter; but that, even now, whilst we are actually suffering, we *are* in very deed happy, and *blessed* and therefore he calls upon us *to be glad and rejoice*, under the experience of these reputed evils, as being indeed real goods in our regard, by their manifold fruits they produce, both in time and eternity.

Consider, secondly, what these fruits are, that proceed from suffering for Christ's sake, and for his justice. They are fruits of grace here, and of glory hereafter. These kinds of sufferings wean the soul from the love of this world, and of all its empty toys and short-lived enjoyments, and give her a longing desire after her true home, the happy region of truth, and of life, the sight and enjoyment of her sovereign Good. These sufferings entitle the soul to the sweet consolations of the Holy Ghost, which are usually bestowed more abundantly in proportion to the greatness of the suffering; according to that of the Psalmist, (Ps. xciii. 19,) *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy comforts have given joy to my soul.* These sufferings give the soul a relish for the cross, and a new kind of love for her crucified Saviour. These sufferings teach her humility, meekness, patience, conformity to the will of God, with all the other lessons that are to be learnt in the school of the cross; besides the happy opportunity they afford the soul, of discharging the debt of punishment due for former sins by offering up to God, and bearing in a Christian manner these present afflictions.

Consider, thirdly, that the principal fruits of these sufferings are reserved, to be gathered in another life; according to that

of the apostle, (Rom. viii. 17, 18,) *If we suffer with Christ, we shall be glorified with him; for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us.* And again, (2 Cor. iv. 17,) *Our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* O, look forward, my soul, into this immense eternity, and contemplate the infinite rewards that are there laid up, to recompense our little sufferings here; and learn to *be glad and rejoice* in the experience of these small temporal afflictions; because these put thee in the true way to joys that shall never end; and the greater thy sufferings are here, the greater shall be these joys hereafter.

Conclude not to pretend to a life without sufferings, if thou hopest to live for ever with God; but then take care not to draw down these sufferings upon thy head by any crime; for this would not be *suffering for justice' sake.* Give ear to St. Peter, (1 Pet. iv. 15, 16,) *Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a railer, or a coveter of other men's things; but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name.*

SEPTEMBER 12.

On the Virtue of Patience.

CONSIDER, first, that *patience* is a virtue, by which we bear up, with courage and constancy, under a variety of evils, to which we are continually exposed in this mortal life; such as afflictions, exterior or interior, sicknesses, pains of body or mind, losses, disappointments, wants, affronts, injuries and other crosses of divers kinds, which, more or less, are incident to men in every station of life, and in every part of life, from the king to the beggar, and from our childhood to our decrepit age. Now, under all these evils, the good Christian is supported by the virtue of *patience*, in such manner as neither to be over much dejected or cast down by any cross accidents or sufferings; nor upon these occasions to be put out of the road of virtue, or hindered from the love and service of God: but so as still to go on with courage in his way to heaven, carrying his cross after his Redeemer, without murmuring or repining. O, my soul how lovely is this Christian patience! It has even the admirable property of turning all the evils of life into so many great and solid goods, by making them all serviceable to eternity; and in the mean time it makes them both light and easy, and sweetens all that is bitter in them, by seasoning them with the consideration of the holy will of God.

Consider, secondly, how much this virtue of *patience* is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God, who, as he was never free from sufferings in any part of his life, so he both lived and died in the exercise of *patience*, and by his *patience*, redeemed the world. Then all the saints and martyrs, as they had their share in drinking of his cup of sufferings, so they have all *run by patience to the fight set before them; looking on Jesus the author and finisher of faith, who, having joy set before him, endured the cross*, Heb. xii. 1, 2. They all in life *possessed their souls in their patience*, Luke xxi. 19: they all in death saved their souls by *patience*. *Patience hath a perfect work* saith St. James, (i. 4,) *that ye may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing*. *He that is patient*, saith the wise man, (Prov. xiv. 29,) *is governed with much wisdom*. And again, (Prov. xvi. 32,) *The patient man is better than the valiant, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh cities*. *Patience*, then, is the virtue of the martyrs, and of all the saints; *patience* made them martyrs and saints; *patience* made them truly wise; *patience* gave them the victory over all their enemies; in their *patience* they brought forth much fruit; *patience* made them perfect; *patience* brought them to that incorruptible crown, which none but those who by *patience* have *lawfully strove* and won it. O blessed *patience*! let me be so happy as to find thee, and embrace thee; let me live and die in thy company.

Consider, thirdly, the absolute necessity of *patience*, in order to our serving God here, and saving our souls hereafter. *Patience is necessary for you*, saith the apostle, (Heb. x. 36,) *that doing the will of God you may receive the promise*. For our *life is a warfare upon earth*; and in every part of life we must expect to meet with trials, conflicts and sufferings. Now, *patience* turns all these to our good; but where *patience* is wanting all goes wrong; we sin at every step; we cowardly give up the cause of God and our souls upon every slight occasion; we withdraw ourselves from the service which we were happily engaged in; we run from our colours, we fall a prey to the enemy; O, it is true that there is no going to heaven but *through many tribulations*, (Acts xiv. 21;) so there is no securing to ourselves that blessed kingdom, but by much *patience*.

Conclude to give ear again to the admonitions of the spirit of God, (Eccles ii,) *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart and endure—wait on God with patience; join thyself to God, and endure—take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience; for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but accept-*

able men in the furnace of humiliation. Happy they that practise these lessons.

SEPTEMBER 13.

On the Means of acquiring Patience.

CONSIDER, first, that *patience*, like all other good things, is not to be acquired by desiring, by seeking, by praying for it; but by desiring it earnestly, by seeking it diligently, by praying for it fervently. *If any one want this true wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly—and it shall be given him: but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering,* St James i. 5, 6. But how shall we heartily desire, seek, or pray, for that which we have little or no esteem for? Wherefore the first step towards acquiring patience, is to study to know its true value, and the great treasure it brings along with it to the soul which is so happy as to find it. Now, this knowledge must come by consideration, and meditation on the manifold fruits it produces, both for this world and the next; here a complete victory over all our enemies, peace of soul, true liberty, and dominion over our passions, with an abundance of other graces; and hereafter all those sublime rewards, that are promised to the conquerors. Apocal. ii. and iii. *To him that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, that is in the paradise of my God.* Apoc. ii. 7. *He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, &c.* Apoc. iii. 12. And, *To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne, &c.* verse 21.

Consider, secondly, that, in order to acquire patience, it will be of great service to us, in all our afflictions, pains, or other sufferings, to reflect on these three points:—first, upon what we have deserved by our sins, and how very little what we suffer is, in comparison with what we ought to suffer, if we had our deserts: secondly, upon the sufferings the Son of God endured for our sins, out of pure love of us, and the patience with which he endured them: thirdly, on the holy will of God, who sends us these sufferings, and sends them for our greater good, who knows what is best for us, and orders all things for the best, if we leave ourselves to him. Ah, how vain it is for us to resist his mighty hand! How foolish and sinful not to submit to the dispositions of him that is infinitely wise and infinitely good! See, my soul, what a large field for meditation is here opened to us in these three points; what motives for patience under all our sufferings. 10*

Consider, thirdly, in order to be more in earnest in seeking to acquire the virtue of patience, the manifold evils we are exposed to by impatience; in a long train of sins against God, against our neighbours, and against ourselves, which proceed from this unhappy source; murmurings and rebellions against God, uncharitable censures and rash judgments, perpetual animosities, quarrels, and desires of revenge against our neighbours; desires of our own death, though infinitely unfit for it; continual uneasiness with ourselves, desponding thoughts, and a strange sluggishness as to taking any pains for the salvation of the soul. Such are usually the wretched fruits of impatience; and what can be worse? *Faith* is lulled asleep, it is quite dead; hope is forgot; the love of God and of our neighbours is lost; prayer is neglected; the care of the soul is flung away. And, in the mean time, the evils under which we labour, instead of being redressed, become more grievous and more intolerable, by our impatient resistance of the holy will of God: we lose the benefit of our sufferings, and we forfeit all the comforts which God usually affords to patient sufferers. Ah, my soul, how does this impatience of ours make our sufferings resemble those of the damned, who suffer without merit and without comfort, resisting in vain the will of the Almighty.

Conclude to pray and to labour in earnest for acquiring the virtue of patience: it will make all thy sufferings light and easy, and entitle them to an eternal reward. Whenever thou art visited with any cross, of what kind soever, always consider it as coming from the hand of God; presently accept of it, and offer it up to Jesus Christ crucified, to be united to his sufferings, to be sanctified through him, and accepted of by his Father, for his own greater glory, and the remission of thy sins. O, how happy shalt thou be, if, under all thy sufferings, thou make this thy practice!

SEPTEMBER 14.

On the Exaltation of the Cross.

CONSIDER, first, that, on this day, upon occasion of the recovery of the cross of Christ out of the hands of infidels, and the triumphant setting it up again in its place in the church of Mount Calvary the church of God celebrates *the exaltation of him* that died for us upon the *cross*, and his glorious triumph over sin and death, and over all the powers of hell; and in consequence thereof the establishment of his kingdom, by which he reigns, by grace at present, in the souls of all his servants throughout the world, and shall reign in them for all eternity hereafter in glory; ac-

ording to that of St. John, (xii. 31, 32,) spoken with relation to his victory on the cross:—*Now is the judgment* (that is, the condemnation) *of the world, now shall the prince of this world* (the devil) *be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.* Rejoice, O my soul, in the triumphs of thy crucified King; and beg that he would establish his reign in thee, and draw up thy heart from this wretched earth, and unite it for ever to himself.

Consider, secondly, that the dispositions of a Christian, in order to celebrate, in a proper manner, the feast of *the exaltation of the cross*, ought to be suitable to the maxims of the cross, and to the dispositions of Christ crucified;—dispositions, of standing off from the pride, ambition, avarice and vanity of the world, condemned by the poverty and humility of the cross; as also from the love of sensual and worldly pleasures, condemned by the mortification of the cross;—dispositions of taking up our crosses, and following our crucified King even to the death of the cross;—dispositions, of waging a perpetual war against that triple concupiscence, which separates worldlings from the cross of Christ, viz. *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*; till, dying to the world and to ourselves, we be *lifted up with Christ from the earth*, crucified to the world, and the world to us, and thus be entitled to a share in his exaltation and triumphs. But, O my soul, how unfit are we to celebrate the victories of our crucified King over death, sin and hell, whilst we, by pride, self-love, and the love of the world, wilfully remain slaves to these same enemies, whose usurpation he sought to abolish by his death!

Consider, thirdly, the sentiments of St. Paul, with relation to the cross of Christ, (Gal. ii. 19, 20:) with *Christ I am nailed to the cross. And I live now not I but Christ liveth in me; who loved me and delivered himself for me.* Chap. vi. 14: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* He tells the Corinthians, (1 Cor. ii. 2,) that he *judged not himself to know any thing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*; and (chap. i. 23, 24,) that he preached nothing but *Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles*; but to the true believers, *the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* He proposes his own conduct as a model to the Philippians, (Philip. iii. 17, 18,) and warns them, with tears, against all sensual and earthly-minded Christians, whom he calls *enemies of the cross of Christ.* O, how high was the cross of Christ *exalted* in the heart of the apostle. It reigned there without control. And as it was *exalted* in him by love and esteem, so it *exalted* him here, to the glorious *fellowship of*

the sufferings of Christ crucified; and hereafter, to that eternal kingdom, which our Lord has purchased by his cross for all the true friends and followers of the cross. O, how happy are all they, that, like the apostle, are sincere lovers of the cross of Christ!

Conclude, for thy own practice, to honour the triumphs of thy crucified King, by planting thyself at the foot of his cross, and there constantly attending to him, and studying well the lessons he teaches thee from his cross, and entering into all his sentiments. He will teach thee to submit to thy crosses with patience, to undergo them with cheerfulness, yea, to embrace them with joy. He will undeceive thee, with regard to the false maxims of worldly pride, of the love of riches, and of sensual pleasures; and from his cross will preach to thee his truths, and discover to thee lovely charms, that are found in humility, poverty of spirit, contempt of the world, and mortification of the flesh. His cross is the school, in which he will teach thee all good, and from which he will not cease to communicate to thee all grace, till at length he draw thee up to himself, and make thee his own for ever.

SEPTEMBER 15.

On the Presence of God.

CONSIDER, first, that it is a most certain truth, an article of faith which no Christian can be allowed to doubt of, that the great God, who made us all, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite Majesty, in whose comparison the whole creation is a mere nothing, is every where present, is truly and really in every place and in every being; so that wheresoever we are, and whithersoever we go, God is there, and is there with his divine attributes; the whole Deity, the whole Blessed Trinity is there. *Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* Jeremias xxiii. 24. And, Psalm cxxxviii. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I descend into hell thou art there, &c.* And do all Christians know this truth, and yet dare to sin? Alas! they cannot here justly plead ignorance; because it is one of the first things they have been taught from their very childhood. But their misery is, they think so little of God, or his divine presence, that they quite forget it; so that we may say to them, with regard to the presence of God, what St. John Baptist said to the Jews, with regard to their Messiah, (St. John i. 26,) *there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.* O, how little indeed is

this great God known, even by too many that call themselves Christians!

Consider, secondly, that God, being every where present, is witness of all our thoughts, words and actions: he sees and hears all that passes: nothing can be concealed from him; no, not even the most secret motions and dispositions of the soul. He is the *searcher of the reins and hearts*, (Apoc. ii, 23,) *reaching to the division of the soul, and of the spirit, and is a discern-er of the thoughts, and of the intents of the heart; neither is there any creature invisible in his sight, but all things are naked, and open to his eyes*, Heb. iv. 12, 13. It is in vain, then, for the sinner to flatter himself, like the libertine mentioned by the wise man, (Ecclus. xxiii. 25, &c.) that saith, *Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me. Whom do I fear?* And in the mean time he considereth not, that darkness and light are alike to the Lord, (Ps. cxxxviii. 12,) and that *his eyes are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into their hearts, into the most secret parts.* O that men would always remember these great truths!

Consider, thirdly, that God is not only really present *with us* in every place, and sees all that passes, but is really present *with-in us*, fills our whole soul, and is more truly, perfectly, and intimately in the very centre of the soul, giving, preserving and maintaining its very life and being, than the soul is in the body, which it animates, and to which it gives life and motion. He is the life of all lives, and the being of all beings; and were he to withdraw his presence, though it were but for one moment, from any being whatsoever, in that moment it would cease to be, and would cease to its ancient nothing. *In him we live, and move, and be*, saith the Apostle, Acts xvii. 21. So that we are not only encompassed with the Deity on all sides, as the birds are with the air in which they fly, or the fishes with the waters of the ocean, but in such manner penetrated by him, that he fills every part of our being with his whole self; so that it is strictly and literally true, that we are always in him, and he in us. What an aggravation, then, must it be to the guilt of all our sins, that they not only are committed against God, and before his own eyes, but are committed in God himself, in whom we live, move, and be!

Conclude by regretting thy having thought so little hitherto of the presence of God, by which he is both in all places and in all things, and more especially in the midst of thyself. Resolve to have this truth ever before thy eyes, for the time thou hast yet to come. O, let us strive, my soul, to be always with him who is always with us.

SEPTEMBER 16.

On the Exercise of the Presence of God.

CONSIDER, first, that a lively sense of the presence of God is a sovereign means to banish sin from the world; to bring the worst of sinners back to God; to spur on the lukewarm, and make them fervent; and to advance the just in all virtue, till it bring them to perfection; according to that which God spoke to his servant Abraham, (Gen. xvii. 1.) *Walk before me, and be perfect*: as if he should have said—In all thy conversation, and in every step thou shalt take in thy mortal pilgrimage, keep thyself in my presence by the remembrance of me, and thou shalt be perfect in all virtue. This holy patriarch, and all the ancient fathers, observed this lesson, of whom it is written, that they *walked with God*, or that they *walked in the sight of God*, Gen. xlvii. 15. The Psalmist practised the same, Ps. xv. 5; *I set the Lord, saith he, always in my sight*: and he calls upon all others to do the like, Ps. civ. 4; *Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened: seek his face* (that is, his presence) *always*. This same has ever been the practice of all the saints; yea, it is this has made them saints.

Consider, secondly, that this exercise of the presence of God is to be performed partly by the understanding, and partly by the will; for as the blessed in heaven are eternally employed about God, partly by the contemplation and vision of him, which belongs to the understanding; and partly by love and fruition, which belongs to the will; and by this means they are eternally happy in the enjoyment of this sovereign and infinite Good, and eternally united, both by will and understanding, to the Source of all happiness; so the souls of God's servants here upon earth ought, in both these ways, to apply themselves to God, and to be employed about him; and this is done by the exercise of his divine presence, which employs the understanding in the thought and remembrance of him, by means of a lively faith and sense of his being always with us and within us; and entertains the will, that is, the heart and the affection, with him, by continually turning it towards him by aspirations of love, by oblations of our whole being to him, and by longing desires after the embraces of him, and an eternal union with him. O, how happy is this exercise of the presence of God, which, by a perpetual application of all the powers of the soul to God, in some measure anticipates the immortal joys of heaven.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to learn and to practise this heavenly exercise of the presence of God, we must rid our souls of three mortal enemies to this devotion; which are, a dissipation of mind, an anxious solicitude for the things of this world, and

a disorderly affection to creatures. Where these three, or any one of the three, reigns in the soul, God is usually forgot. A *dissipation* of thought carries the soul from home to run after a multitude of vain amusements, where she loses the remembrance both of herself, and of her God. *Worldly solicitude* chokes all better thoughts, and suffers them not to take root in the soul; and the *disorderly affections* of the heart, to any things out of God, turn away the heart from God. In order, then, to practise this necessary attention to the presence of God, we must banish *dissipation* by *recollection* of thought; we must overcome *worldly solicitude*, by *faith* and *confidence* in God, and by a conformity in all things with his blessed will; and we must correct the *irregularity* of our *affections* by turning them from the creature to God.

Conclude to guard against these enemies, by setting a watch both upon thy roving imagination, which is ever fond of running after butterflies, and thy unwary heart, that is so easily taken in the nets of wanton love, or other idle, vain, and worldly affections; and to accustom all the powers of thy soul to be employed about their God, who is to make them happy for eternity.

SEPTEMBER 17.

On the Advantages of this Exercise of the Presence of God.

CONSIDER, first, that as the forgetting of God is the source of all our sins, so the remembrance of his divine presence is the source of all our good; it is of infinite advantage both to sinners and saints. It is a sovereign and universal remedy for overcoming all sorts of temptations, by its placing the soul near the Source of all light and grace, and hiding her, as it were, under the divine wings; and its putting, at the same time, a most powerful and effectual restraint upon her, from daring to offend that tremendous Majesty. For who shall dare, by sin, to commit high treason against God, who sees God before him, and himself surrounded with God? Or who shall dare to affront the divine justice, who has a lively sense of its being so very near him, and that it stands always turned against wilful sinners? O, it is true, that the consideration of the eye of God being always upon us, has obliged the most abandoned sinners to put a stop at once to their wicked ways, and to betake themselves to a life of penance. It was the case of the famous Thais, who, upon this consideration, was suddenly determined to quit both her sins and the world, and to withdraw herself into the remotest parts of the desert, where, shut up in a lonesome cell, she spent the remainder of her days in weeping, and doing penance for her sins.

Consider, secondly, that a lively sense of the presence of God excites us also to perform all our works with due perfection, in

order to please him whose eye is always upon us ; as the master's eye makes the servant more diligent. It helps to purify our intention in all things, by drawing it to God. It cures our lukewarmness ; it dissipates our distractions ; it teaches us to pray ; it makes us fervent in all our addresses to the divine Majesty ; it keeps us humble on all occasions ; and perfectly annihilates the soul, seeing herself placed so near to so great a God. And as the soul, that has a due sense of the presence of God, knows that wheresoever he is, he has all his attributes with him ; his almighty power, his infinite wisdom, goodness and mercy, his perpetual providence, and loving kindness for his children, together with all the treasures of his divine graces ; such a soul as this finds, in the thought of God's presence, a source of unspeakable comfort in all her tribulations, of counsel in all her doubts, of succour in all her necessities, and a continual attraction to the love of him. O, how easy must it be to be a saint, with such helps as these ! Now, all these graces, and more, are laid up for thee, my soul, if thou wilt duly exercise thyself in the presence of God.

Consider, thirdly, the practical inferences we ought to make from our faith of the presence of God ; that is, what we are bound to do, in consequence of our believing that God is every where, with us, and in us. First, God's being every where requires of us, that we should every where take notice of his presence. For can there be an object more worthy of our attention ? And will he not, then, be justly offended, if, while we amuse ourselves about every trifle that comes in our way, we let our God, the sovereign Beauty and the sovereign Good, pass unregarded ? Secondly, God, being every where present, requires of us both a modest comportment, on all occasions, as to our exterior—*Let your modesty*, says St. Paul, (Philip. iv. 5,) *be known to all men, the Lord is nigh*—and a most profound respect, as to our interior, considering that infinite Majesty, in whose sight we stand. Thirdly, God, being every where present, every where requires our love ; for wherever we are, we have him with us, who is infinitely lovely, and infinitely loving, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us ; and therefore, wherever we are, he challenges our love. O turn thyself then, my soul, from all these earthly toys, to this thy sovereign Good, which is so near to thee ; run to his embraces, and dedicate thyself eternally to his divine love.

Conclude never to regret thy being alone, since thou hast always in thy company that great God, the sight and enjoyment of whom is the eternal felicity of the angels. No company can be more honourable, none more advantageous, since thou hast here the inexhausted Source of all good. His conversation is most delightful : the sweetest repose is to be found in him all other recreations are vain, if compared with this.

SEPTEMBER 18.

On the Virtue of Obedience.

CONSIDER, first, that *obedience* is a virtue which teaches us readily to embrace, and diligently to put in execution, whatever is commanded us, either immediately, by God himself, or by our lawful superiors, who have their authority from God, and whom he wills and commands us to submit to, as to himself, and to obey for his sake, 1 *Peter* ii. 13. This virtue, like humility, her mother, is the special favourite of heaven, as God has abundantly declared, by preferring, on many occasions, our obedience before all other sacrifices we can offer him. *Doth the Lord desire holocausts, and victims*, said Samuel to Saul, (1 *Sam.* xv. 22, 23,) *and not rather that his voice should be obeyed? For obedience is better than sacrifices, and to hearken, rather than to offer the fat of rams; because it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey; viz. inasmuch as disobedience gives away from God, and makes over to his enemy, the best offering our poor stock can afford, that is, our will: now, our will he chiefly calls for; and whatsoever else we give him, it is all nothing, as long as we refuse to give him our will by obedience. This sacrifice of our hearts he calls for, and not for that of our flocks, or of any other things we can give him, without obedience.*

Consider, secondly, how precious, in the sight of God, this virtue of *obedience* must be, since he singled it out amongst all virtues, to be the proper exercise of our first parents, immediately upon their creation, in the earthly paradise; that, by the acts of it, they might acknowledge their dependence on their Creator, show their inviolable fidelity to him, and merit, by their perseverance in *obedience*, an eternal union with him. The happiness or misery, both of them and of all their posterity, that is, of all mankind, both for time and eternity, was to be determined by their *obedience* or disobedience. But O, the dismal train of evils they have entailed upon us all, by withdrawing their necks from the sweet yoke of *obedience*!—evils, that must have been without remedy, for eternity, had not the *obedience* of the second Adam stepped in, to cancel the *disobedienc*e of the first Adam; according to that of the apostle, (*Rom.* v. 19,) *As, by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one man, many shall be made just.* The *disobedience* of the first *parents of our flesh* involved us all in sin; the *obedience* of the true Parent of our spirit has purchased all mercy, grace and salvation for our souls. But all this good, purchased for us by the *obedience* of the Son of God, is not to be ours, but upon con-

dition of our returning to our duty, by *obedience* to him, who *became the cause of eternal salvation to all that obey him.* Heb. v. 9.

Consider, thirdly, that all such as have pleased God from the beginning, have all been eminent in the virtue of *obedience*. This, joined with *faith*, made Abraham the favourite of God, and procured for him, that all generations should *be blessed in his seed*. This was the virtue of all the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the saints of God. Rather to die than not to obey, was the general maxim of all the saints. But the great Pattern of obedience was the Saint of saints, whose whole life, from the first instant of his conception till his expiring upon the cross, was one continued exercise of the most consummate obedience. All the thoughts, words and actions of his mortal life, were the fruits of obedience; they were all levelled at doing his Father's will, and obeying his commandments. *I came down from heaven, says he, (John vi. 38,) not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, that I may perfect his work, John iv. 34. I seek not my own will; but the will of him that sent me, John v. 30. I lay down my life of myself; and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father, John x. 18. I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, &c., John xii. 49. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, (Philip. ii. 8,) that we might enter into the like sentiments of perpetual obedience and humility, ver. 5. And shall not this great example of the Son of God himself inspire us with an ardent desire of living and dying in the arms of obedience?*

Conclude, if thou desirest to please God, to offer him continually the sacrifice of thy heart, will and liberty, by perfect obedience to God himself, for his own sake, *and to every human creature for God's sake, (1 Peter ii. 13,) that is, to all that have authority from God over thee, whether in church or in state. In obeying them, thou obeyest God, Luke x. 16; in resisting them, thou resistest the ordinance of God to thy own damnation, Rom. xiii. 2.*

SEPTEMBER 19.

On the Fruits of Obedience.

CONSIDER, first, that one of the deepest wounds sin has left in the soul of man, is a love of independence; a desire of being his own master, and of living and acting according to his own

inclinations, without being controlled by rule, or law, or by the will of any other. Ah, here is the seat of pride, the throne of self-love, and the source of the worst of our passions. Now, the virtue that heals this wound is holy *obedience*, which strikes at the root of all these evils, inasmuch as it casts down that pride which always affects liberty and independence; drives self-love out of all its intrenchments; keeps all the passions under, by obliging them all to submit to the will and law of God, and to the commands of every vicegerent of his; and ceases not, till it has bound up that tyrant *self-will*, and laid him as a holocaust, to burn and evaporate on the altar of God. And are not these, my soul, most admirable fruits, which this blessed obedience produces, by a resolute subjection of our own will to the will of God, and to every lawful superior, for God's sake.

Consider, secondly, what mischief is continually produced in the soul by *self-will*, wherever it reigns; to the end thou mayest set a greater value upon the virtue of *obedience*, which gets the victory over this hellish monster, the source of all our vices. Give ear to St. Bernard (Serm. 3, de Resurrect.) "Self-will (says he) is a perpetual enemy to God; it wages a most cruel war against him. What does God hate? What does he punish at any timè, but self-will? Take away self-will, and there shall be no hell; for what is there, that raging fire can take hold on but self-will?—This fury attacks the Lord of majesty: it withdraws itself from his command, making itself its own master; and, as much as lies in it, it robs him of all that is his." He adds, that it sets no bounds to its pretensions; that "the whole creation cannot satisfy its demands; that it sets itself up in opposition to the Creator himself." Yes, Christians, but this is not all: where this monster reigns, it does not only fill the soul with all kinds of evils; it even blasts and corrupts the very best of her actions; in-somuch that, where a man does not strive to overcome himself, and to subdue self-will, his virtues will be found to be false and counterfeit, and all his labours in the service of God or his neighbours useless and fruitless; as being only the productions of his own humour, his pride and self-love, and not done for God. See, then, my soul, how much it imports thee to get rid of this self-will, this mother of all mischief, and to acquire a perfect victory over it by the virtue of *obedience*.

Consider, thirdly, the other manifold blessings that attend the true children of *obedience*, as fruits of this excellent tree. A life of perpetual *obedience* is a perpetual victory over the world, the flesh and the devil; according to that of the wise man, (Prov. xxi. 28;) *an obedient man shall speak of victory*: whereas the disobedient man is a slave to all these enemies. Obedience is a perpetual sacrifice, like a whole burnt offering, by which a man offers

his will and all its offspring to God. It is a daily growing store of virtue and merit; it gives a double value to all our good actions, and consecrates the most indifferent, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c., and makes them highly acceptable in the sight of God. It leads us directly to God, and clearly points out to us, in every thing, his holy will, the unerring rule of all our good. In fine, it brings the soul to a secure and sweet peace of mind, and to a certain paradise of contentment and joy in the Lord, and in the accomplishment of his blessed will; because the more the soul seeks and loves, follows and embraces, by means of holy *obedience*, this divine will of her God; the more she relishes his sweetness, the more confidently she flings herself into his arms, and the more securely she leaves herself, and all things else, to his disposal, and commits all her pretensions and interests to him. O, how truly wise, then, are all they that embrace, with their whole souls, this sweet yoke of obedience! They are walking in the royal highway that leads to peace here and to heavenly bliss hereafter.

Conclude to set a great value upon this virtue of obedience as the eldest daughter of humility, and the nursing mother of all other virtues. In every station of life, obey them to whom God has given any authority over you, as God himself: it is his will you should do so; and he has never shown more remarkable judgments, than upon those who have refused to obey the authority established by him. The Son of God, during his whole life, was not only obedient to his Father, but also to his own creatures, to the blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to every one in authority, and even to his very executioners. O, let us learn to imitate him.

SEPTEMBER 20.

On keeping the Commandments.

CONSIDER, first, that there is no salvation for us, without keeping the ten commandments. They are a short abstract of that natural and eternal law, which was imprinted in the heart of man from the beginning, before the written law was delivered to the people of God. They were published by the Almighty, in a most solemn manner, from Mount Sina, in the Old Testament, and confirmed by the Son of God in the New Testament, declaring the observance of them to be a necessary condition to everlasting life. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, Matt. xix. 17. The keeping of these he will have to be the test and proof of our love of him: *If you love me, keep my commandments*, John xiv. 15. And his beloved disciple assures

us, (1 John ii. 4,) that *he that saith he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him*, chap. iii. 24. See then, my soul, that the most necessary of all devotions, is to dedicate thyself to the love and observance of the commandments of God: no devotion can bring thee to God without this. This is that instrument with ten strings, so often recommended by the Psalmist, which makes a most agreeable harmony in the ears of his divine Majesty.

Consider, secondly, the happiness, in every kind, that always accompanies the keeping of God's holy law and commandments; as the same royal prophet witnesses in many places, particularly in the 118th psalm, which is full of testimonies to this effect. And in the 18th psalm, *The law of the Lord, saith he, is unspotted, converting souls; the testimony of the Lord is faithful, giving wisdom to little ones; the justices of the Lord are right, rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is holy, enduring for ever and ever; the judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves; more to be desired than gold and many precious stones; and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; for thy servant keepeth them, and in keeping them there is a great reward.* What encomiums are here heaped one upon another, of the *law and commandments* of God, under different denominations, and of the excellent fruits that grow from the observance of them! First, The *law of God* is beautiful and pure, *without spot or blemish*, and it has a wonderful efficacy to *turn the soul* from sin to God. Secondly, It is *faithful* in what it proposes and promises, and imparts the truest of all *wisdom to little ones*, that is, to the humble, who willingly submit their necks to its sweet yoke. Thirdly, It is *right* in every tittle, agreeable to the sovereign reason, and carries with it *joy to the hearts* that embrace it. Fourthly, It is *full of spiritual light*, to *enlighten* the inward *eyes* of the soul with divine truths. Fifthly, It is most *holy* in itself, and comes from the fountain of all *holiness*, and makes all them *holy* that observe it; and *endures* with them *for ever and ever*. Sixthly, It is *true* and *just*, as being given by the eternal Truth and Justice, and *justifies itself* by its own evidence. Seventhly, It is more amiable and *desirable* than all the treasures of the universe, and more *sweet* and delightful than any thing this world can afford; by reason of the spiritual riches of virtue, grace and merit, and the manifold consolations and inward pleasures the observance of it brings to the soul; besides the *reward* hereafter, which is incomprehensible and eternal.

Consider, thirdly, that the observance of the commandments of God is not only essentially necessary to salvation, and every way

admirable in the fruits it produces, both for this world and the next, but is indeed very sweet and easy to men of good will. Our Lord assures us, (St. Matt. xi. 30,) that his *yoke is sweet, and his burthen light*; and that, instead of oppressing us with its weight, it brings refreshment and *rest to our soul*. And St. John (1 John v. 3,) tells us, that this is indeed the charity or love of God, that we keep his commandments, and that *his commandments are not heavy*. Love makes all things easy, that are done for the sake of the beloved; and therefore the true lover of God finds no labour in the keeping his commandments; the grace of God makes them all sweet and agreeable to him. O teach us, dear Lord, to love thee, and command what thou pleasest; thy grace will make all things easy and pleasant, that are to be done or suffered for the love of thee.

Conclude to seek thy happiness, both for time and eternity, in the observance of the law and commandments of God. Nothing else can ever make thee happy. Give ear to the apostle, (Rom. ii. 9, 10 :) *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil—but glory, and honour and peace to every one that worketh good.*

SEPTEMBER 21.

On St. Matthew.

CONSIDER, first, the wonders of divine grace, in the call and conversion of St. Matthew; changed on a sudden from a worldling, a publican, and a sinner, to be an individual companion and disciple of Christ, and not long after advanced to be an apostle, a pillar in Christ's church, a preacher powerful in word and work, a worker of wonderful miracles, a father and converter of nations, an Evangelist, or writer of the Gospel, and, in a word, a most eminent saint. O glorify God, who has wrought all these wonders, to manifest to all generations his infinite power, mercy and goodness; and learn from this example never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem to be at present from following Christ. The arm of God is not shortened; his power, mercy, and goodness is as infinite now as ever; he is equally both able and willing to call poor sinners, and to convert them to himself. But, alas! our misfortune is, we are not so ready as Matthew was, to attend to his heavenly calls, and to correspond with his inspirations and graces; we prefer the sitting still in the custom-house of the world, entangled in many vain and sinful affections to empty earthly toys, before the rising up without delay to follow Christ, who calls us to him. O, how pernicious are all those affections which keep us from Christ!

Consider, secondly, the lessons St. Matthew gives us in his conversion. First, by his immediately rising up at the first call, to correspond, with his whole heart, with the grace of God. How often have we been called to be disciples of Christ! And have we ever yet followed the call in good earnest? This *Follow thou me*, with which our Lord called Matthew, is indeed addressed by him to all Christians, inasmuch as we are called to be his followers; for the very name of *Christians* implies as much as *followers of Christ*; and yet how few are there, of those that call themselves Christians, who truly follow in their lives either the doctrine or the example of Christ! Our Lord was *passing* by, when he called Matthew; and very probably, had that call been neglected, he might not have favoured him with the like grace another time. What obligations, then, have we to his bounty and mercy for his repeated calls to us! But what have we not to apprehend, if we continue to abuse his graces, by refusing to correspond with his calls! Secondly, St. Matthew *left all* to follow Christ, quitting his worldly business, upon which his livelihood depended, and whatsoever else he seemed to possess in this world. Christ does not call us to quit the business of our lawful callings, nor to give up at once all our worldly goods; but he insists upon our taking off our hearts from all these things, and our parting with every affection that would keep us from him. He expects we should *follow him*, not so much by our bodily steps, as by giving him the chief place in our affections, which are, as it were, the feet of the soul.

Consider, thirdly, that St. Matthew, immediately upon his conversion, made *a feast* for our Saviour in his house, at which many publicans and sinners were present, who also followed our Lord, *St. Mark* ii. 15. See the force of good example, and how one perfect conversion draws many others after it. This conversion of souls was a more agreeable feast to the divine charity of our Redeemer, than any other entertainment St. Matthew could make for him. Christians, reflect that the Son of God expects also to feast himself with you, and to be entertained by you. *Behold*, says he, (*Apocalypse* iii. 20,) *I stand at the gate and knock: if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* We entertain Christ, by inviting him into our inward house, and keeping ourselves at home with him, by recollection and mental prayer; we *feast* him, by giving him our hearts, by love, by frequent and fervent oblations of all the powers of our soul, and of our whole being to him; and he feasts us in return, by giving himself to us. O happy feast indeed, which is in some measure a foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven!

Conclude to imitate St. Matthew, by a ready compliance with all the divine calls and inspirations, and by not suffering thyself to be kept from following Christ, with thy whole soul, either by the custom-house of the world, or by any of its painted toys and cobwebs. Let thy example serve to draw others to him and let the door of thy inward house be ever opened to him, to entertain him, but kept close shut to all his enemies, thy vicious and irregular affections.

SEPTEMBER 22.

On the Worship of God, enjoined by the first Commandment.

CONSIDER, first, that preface to the ten commandments, delivered Exodus xx. 2—*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*; and learn from thence, who it is that enjoins these commandments, by what authority, and what urgent motives we have to oblige us to obey his laws. It is the Lord himself who is our Lawgiver, the eternal, immense, infinite Deity; the great Creator of heaven and earth, who made us, and all things; our God, our first Beginning, and our last End; and who shall dare refuse his commandments, or question his authority, or any of the manifold titles he has to our obedience? In these words, he particularly inculcated the obligation the people of Israel had to keep his commandments, because he had delivered them out of the bondage of Egypt. How much more pressing motives have we, Christians, to oblige us to a strict observance of all his divine laws, because we have been redeemed by him from a slavery infinitely worse than that of Egypt, viz. the slavery of Satan, sin, and hell, and this by the precious blood of his only son?

Consider, secondly, that those words, *I am the Lord thy God*, though not expressed in the form of a command, insinuate nevertheless the whole duty of man with regard to his God; by which he is bound to worship him,—first, by *faith*, which bows down and adores God's truth, *brings into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ*, (2 Cor. x. 5,) and casts down every proud thought or imagination that raiseth itself up against his divine word;—secondly, by *hope*, which worships the almighty power, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, and the veracity of all his divine promises, by a firm and constant reliance upon him, by building entirely on this rock, and fastening the anchor of the soul in him;—thirdly, by *divine charity*, which offers to God the sacrifice of our heart, which he chiefly calls for, by loving him in all things, and above all things;—fourthly, by the virtue of *religion*, which, considering

God as our first Beginning, and our last End, daily worships him *in spirit and truth*, by adoration, praise and thanksgiving; by an oblation of ourselves to his holy will, and of all things else to his glory; by joining in the offering of the great sacrifice of the death and passion of his Son, and by frequent and fervent prayer. See, my soul, thou never neglect any part of this Christian worship, which thy God expects at thy hands.

Consider, thirdly, that, by this commandment, *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me*, we are not only called upon to turn away from all false gods, to the true and living God, and to renounce all that kind of ungodliness, which may any way corrupt his worship with superstition or error; but also to make it the great business of our life to be truly *godly*, by a serious application of our whole souls to the love and service of our Maker. For what will it avail us to *know God*, if we do not *glorify him as God*, nor serve him? Will not this be *detaining the truth of God in injustice*? Rom. i. 6. The great end of our creation was to *glorify God*, and to dedicate our whole lives to his service. We have, properly speaking, no other business upon earth. If we discharge ourselves well of this great duty, we are truly *godly*, and fulfil the first commandment. But, alas! how many thousands are there, that call themselves Christians, who live and die in a notorious breach of this great commandment, by neglecting and forgetting their God, and giving to every thing else the preference before him and his service!

Conclude to have always before thy eyes the worship thou owest to thy God by this first commandment; and, in consequence of it, to consecrate the days of thy pilgrimage to his divine love and service. This is the whole duty of man.

SEPTEMBER 23.

On the Prohibition of Idol-Worship.

CONSIDER, first, that the making or worshipping of any *idol*, is also forbidden by the divine commandments; by which name is understood any image or other thing, that is set up to be served or honoured as God, or with any part of divine honour; because our God is a *jealous God*, and will not allow his honour to be given to any other. As to that kind of idolatry, which consists in the serving of stocks and stones, there is no great danger of Christians incurring any such guilt as this; because, as it was long ago foretold by the prophets, (*Isai. ii. 18, &c.*) that kind of idol worship has for many ages been abolished in all nations where Christianity has been preached by the apostles, and their successors, the pastors and teachers of the Catholic church. The

idols, that are more to be apprehended in these our days, are of another kind, viz. those of wicked imaginations, errors and heresies, framed, not by the hands, but by the head, of proud, self-conceited men, deluding themselves, and seeking to delude as many others as they can, with the inventions of their own brain, or the suggestions of Satan, which they set up and worship for divine truths, and father upon the word of God, in spite of the church of God and its authority, so strongly established and recommended by that divine word. Ah, Christians, beware of ever *making to yourselves*, or *bowing down yourselves*, to any such *idols* as these. But let the truth of God, proposed to you by the church of God, be ever the object and rule of your faith and worship.

Consider, secondly, the danger of another kind of *idols*, formed not by the brain, but by the disorderly affections of the heart, which too many, who call themselves Christians, daily prefer before the living God, and set up in opposition to him, in his very sanctuary, that is, in the temple of their own souls, which at their baptism was consecrated to God. It is the case of all the proud and ambitious, who make an idol of their worldly honour; it is the case of all the worshippers of Mammon, the great god of worldlings; and of all the *lovers of pleasure more than of God*. All these, in the language of St. Paul, are *idolaters*; because they all *worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*, Rom. i. 25. And thou, my soul, hast thou no share in this kind of idolatry? Are there no idols of this sort set up in thy inward house, to confront the living God. Is there no predominant passion or affection there, which takes place of God, by drawing thee to offend him? Alas! how often have the very meanest of worldly toys and vanities been preferred by thee before him! And as to that great idol, *self*, the continual object of the worship of *self-love* and *self-will*, art thou not daily sacrificing thy God, and all things else, to this insatiable monster? It is well if thou art not.

Consider, thirdly, that not only direct *idolatry*, but also all *superstition*, is forbidden by the first commandment. Of this crime, all those, in the first place, are highly guilty, who seek any knowledge or cure, help or assistance, from the enemy of God and man, by making use of any such instruments or means, as can have no effect of their own nature, or any otherwise than by his interposition. For, in all these cases, there is a correspondence kept up, and a secret compact made with Satan or his agents, and consequently a high treason committed against the Divine Majesty. Secondly, the guilt of *superstition* is likewise incurred by the observance of lucky and unlucky days, omens, dreams, &c. For all these are the relics of paganism

and serve for nothing but to delude the soul, and lay her open to Satan; to take off her dependence from her God and his divine providence, and to transfer her faith to lying vanities and inventions of the devil. Thirdly the guilt of *superstition is also incurred*, by corrupting the truth of God's worship, by placing religion in certain empty things, that have no tendency to his divine service, or to his greater glory; or by flattering one's self or others with an assurance of obtaining miraculous favours or salvation, by the use or practise of any such things without any manner of warrant, either of the word of God or of the church of God. O beware, my soul, of any such errors!

Conclude to renounce in practice every branch of *idol worship* and *superstition*. Cast out of the house of God, which is within thee, every idol of the head and of the heart; and let the Lord Jesus reign, without any rival, in all the powers of thy soul. Have nothing to do with his enemy, nor with any of his inventions; nor suffer his worship to be vitiated with any mixture of falsehood and lies.

SEPTEMBER 24.

On honouring God's holy Name.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the divine commandment, (Exod. xx. 7,) *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take his name in vain.* This commandment obliges us to show all respect to the holy name of the Lord our God, and not to profane it by the heinous crimes of *blasphemy* (which flies in the face of God's infinite majesty) or of *perjury* (which insults his truth, and makes him witness to a lie). O, let not such dreadful evils as these be ever found in the inheritance of Christ, or amongst the professors of the Christian name. It would be wonderful if any nation were suffered to continue upon earth, that should encourage, or even tolerate, such monstrous guilt. Moreover this commandment forbids, also, all profane swearing and cursing, and all other irreverent use of the sacred name of God. Ah, how common is this guilt amongst Christians! And how dismal are the consequences of it, in the manifold judgments of God, inflicted in punishment of these sins, both in this world and in the next! O true it is, *the Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain.* Hence the wise man tells us, (Ecclus. xxiii. 12,) *A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity, and a scourge shall not depart from his house.*

Consider, secondly, the different ways by which unhappy mortals daily violate and profane God's most sacred name! how

they swear by it at every turn; often falsely, often unjustly, generally rashly; and thereby continually expose themselves to the evident danger of that most enormous sin, of calling in their God to be witness to their lies. Ah, how often do they, with equal rashness and profaneness, by their curses and imprecations, presume to cite his divine Majesty to serve them, in quality of executioner, to execute the damnation which every humour or passion of theirs pronounces against some or other of his creatures! How often, in their madness, do they pronounce the like sentence, and call for the like vengeance, even upon their own souls! How often is the sacred name of *God* brought in, even by the better sort, without rhyme or reason, to express every passion or emotion of their souls! Alas! what liberty is here taken, by these worms of the earth, with the tremendous majesty of the God of heaven! And shall all this pass unpunished? O! to what a low ebb is Christianity come, when so many thousands of those that call themselves Christians, are more guilty, by far, of profaning the holy name of God, than either Turks or pagans; and even glory in their guilt! And thou, my soul, hast thou never gone into their counsel, or hast thy glory never been in their assembly? O, see thou detest all such wickedness, and reclaim as many as thou canst from these ways of death. And if at any time thou hearest God's holy name thus profaned, lift up thy heart to heaven, and join with all the choirs of blessed Spirits there, in adoration, praise and love of his divine Majesty; to make what amends thou canst for all these outrages offered to the King of heaven.

Consider, thirdly, that the great business of a Christian is to glorify the name of God, both by his tongue and by his life. We glorify his holy name by the tongue, when we ever praise him, and extol his mercies; when our words and conversation are always directed to promote God's glory, and the edification of our neighbours. We glorify his holy name by our lives, when we live as becomes his children and his people; when our light so shines before men, that they take occasion from hence to glorify our Father who is in heaven. For as it is written concerning wicked livers, that *through them the name of God is blasphemed* amongst the nations; so the lives of God's true servants are *the sweet odour of Christ in every place*; and not only give continual glory to God themselves, by the exercise of all virtue but also bring many others to glorify him, by the efficacy of their example.

Conclude to keep a great guard upon thyself, that, for the future, thou mayest never use the holy name of God but with respect and devotion. And as for whatsoever profanations thou hast hitherto been guilty of, repair that guilt, to the best of thy power, with penitential tears, and by dedicating the whole

remainder of thy life to procure the greater glory of God's name.

SEPTEMBER 25.

On keeping holy the Lord's Day.

CONSIDER, first, that divine precept, *Remember thou keep holy the sabbath day*, (Exod. xx. 8;) and reflect how just it is, that, next to the capital duties of acknowledging one only true and living God, and paying due respect to his name, we should also set aside one day at least in the week, to be sanctified to him, and to be spent in his divine worship. The particular appointment of the seventh day as the day of God's rest, and the *figure* of our eternal rest, after the six days' labours of this transitory life, was but a part of the *ceremonial* law, which is no longer obligatory under the new covenant of Jesus Christ; and therefore the day has been changed into the first day of the week, to honour the resurrection of the Son of God, by which he put, as it were, the finishing stroke to the great work of our redemption, and the glorious promulgation of his law, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost. But the precept itself, as to its substance, and as to the obligation of dedicating, in a more particular manner, a competent portion of our days to the worship of him, who, in all reason, might justly claim them all, is unchangeable, indispensable, and eternal; and is here enforced with that word *Remember*, not found in any of the other commandments, to inculcate the utmost importance of our strict observance of it. O, it is true that the religious keeping of these days, agreeably to the ordinance of God and his church, is the sovereign means to bring Christians, after their short labours here, to their true and everlasting Sabbath.

Consider, secondly, that on these days (which we are commanded to keep holy) all *servile works*, and profane employments, are forbidden to Christians, lest their attention should be taken off from the worship of God, or their application to religious duties interrupted by their worldly occupations. But, then, if these kinds of *works*, which are otherwise commendable in themselves, and even obligatory at other times, are strictly forbid on these days, as hinderances of God's worship; how much more are all such criminal diversions as are lawful at no time, and all those *works* of darkness and sin, which are *servile* in the very worst of senses, because by them men *serve* the devil, and are far more taken off by them from their application to God, than by any other about whatsoever! But, O, how common are these sinful profanations of the Lord's day! How many seem to

have no other intention, in resting on this day from their usual employments, than to dedicate this holy time to vanity, sloth, luxury, or some other criminal passion, without giving any part of it to God! See, my soul, this be never thy practice; but, if thou givest the other days of the week to the world, to the business of thy calling, to working for thy temporal livelihood; give God *his day*, to be employed in his service, in the business of eternity, and in working for thy eternal salvation.

Consider, thirdly, that all Christians are obliged on these days to attend to the public worship of God, in his church; and in particular to assist at the divine sacrifice, in which we solemnly celebrate the death and passion of the Son of God. Here we are to join with him, and with his whole family, in paying adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to the Divine Majesty. Here we are to bewail our sins in his sight, and crave mercy for them, through Christ's precious blood, here offered to God. Here we are to present, through him, our prayers and supplications, both for ourselves and for the whole world, before *the throne of grace*. We are also on these days to dispose our souls to receive, either sacramentally, or at least spiritually, the body and blood of Christ, to attend to the word of God, to read devout books, to meditate on divine truths, and to employ a good part of our time in these spiritual exercises. Alas! how very little are these important duties thought on by too many Christians! How many will neither sanctify these days, in a proper manner, themselves, nor suffer their servants, or others that are about them, to sanctify them! And what a strict account must they give for all these abuses another day?

Conclude to make it thy business, that thou, at least, and thy house, may give to God what belongs to God, by duly serving him on his own day. This diligence will entitle thee and thine to his blessing; and thy sanctifying his day shall be a powerful means to sanctify thee.

SEPTEMBER 26.

Honour thy Father and thy Mother.

CONSIDER, first, that next to the precepts that enforce those most essential duties which we owe to God himself, follows the commandment of *honouring* our parents, as well corporal as spiritual, under God, and all such as have from God a power over us, whether in church or state. This, says the apostle, (Eph. vi. 2,) *is the first commandment with a promise: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be longlived upon earth.* Nothing could be more agreeable to nature, to reason, and to

religion, than this divine precept. And we find by many instances, how much God takes to heart our strict observance of it; and how severely he punishes, even in this life, the transgressors, as well by ordering in the law such as are notoriously guilty in this kind, to be put to death without mercy, as by the many dreadful judgments he often inflicts upon them. Christians, what is your comportment to your parents, &c.? Is it dutiful, or undutiful? O, never flatter yourselves with the expectation of God's blessing, either in this world or the next, if you are undutiful.

Consider, secondly, what this *honour* means, which the law of God requires from children to their parents. For it does not merely consist in cringing and ceremony; but it implies a sincere love, joined with respect and reverence: a ready obedience to their orders, where they no ways clash with the holy will and law of God: and a perpetual disposition to afford them, or procure for them, all proper assistances, as well in their corporal as in their spiritual necessities; insomuch, that our Lord will not allow of any *gifts*, made to himself, or to his temple, to the prejudice of that honour and support which we owe to our parents, *Matt. xv. 3, 4, 5, 6.* Christians, give ear to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost by the wise man, (*Ecclus. iii.*) and learn from him what your duty is to your parents, and what the reward of your compliance with that duty: *Honour thy father in work and word, and in all patience, that a blessing may come upon thee for him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end. The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children, but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation. Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life; and if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not, when thou art in thy strength—and in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered; and thy sins shall melt away, as the ice in the fair warm weather.* And again. *He that honoureth his father, shall have joy in his own children; and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard. He that honoureth his father shall enjoy a long life, &c. He that feareth the Lord honoureth his parents, and will serve them, as his masters, that brought him into the world.*

Consider, thirdly, what the duty is, on the other hand, of parents with regard to their children; and so in proportion of other superiors, with regard to them that are committed to their charge. For their obligation is greater than many apprehend; and their own eternal welfare, as well as that of their children or subjects, absolutely depends upon their discharge of it. It is true, they are not to neglect the care of their temporal well-being, as far as is consistent with the safety of their souls; but they must

take much more to heart their everlasting salvation; and therefore, from their very childhood, they must give them an early knowledge of their Christian duty, and instil into their tender minds the fear and love of God; they must accustom them to prayer, and must teach them how to pray; they must make them sensible of the necessity of their breaking their own will, of their curbing their passions, and denying themselves, if they would be happy, either here or hereafter. In a word, they must remove far from them all the occasions of sin, and procure them all the helps they can to establish them in Christian piety. O, how easy it would be for parents to bring up saints for heaven, if they would be diligent in putting all this in practice! But alas! how many rather train up their children for hell, by abandoning them, from their childhood, to their own corrupt inclinations, and inspiring them with the maxims of the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Conclude to discharge thyself diligently of thy respective duty, whether of a child or of a parent, of a subject or of a superior, according to the station in which God has placed thee. Pass not over this matter too slightly, in the examination of thy conscience, as too many do, who flatter themselves with a false security, whilst they live and die in the neglect of these great relative duties.

SEPTEMBER 27.

Thou shalt not kill.

CONSIDER, first, that this commandment does not only forbid all wilful murder, unjust shedding of blood, beating, or doing any thing else that may hasten one's own, or any other person's death; but also all thoughts that have any tendency that way, all wishes or desires of the death of any one, whether through malice or envy, or for some temporal conveniency or interest; as also all manner of hatred and rancour of heart to any one living. For it is written, (1 John iii. 15,) *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Christians, look well to yourselves, and carefully examine into the true state of your interior, in this respect. You have perhaps hitherto flattered yourselves, that you had nothing to reproach your conscience with, on the score of the horrible sin of murder; but have you never wilfully entertained any hatred, envy or malice, to your neighbours? If you have, know that all this is like murder in the eyes of God. O, take heed of living in any such malicious dispositions to any one person upon earth, lest you should be ex-

cluded thereby from any share in *eternal life*, to which murderers have no title.

Consider, secondly, how the Son of God himself has explained to us the extent of the obligation of this commandment, Matt. 21, &c. *You have heard, saith he, that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, (a word expressing indignation or contempt,) shall be in danger of the council, (a higher and more severe tribunal;) and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire;*—by which our Lord would have all Christians to understand, that this divine law was not only designed to restrain the hand from killing, but also the heart from wilfully entertaining the passion of anger, or the desires of revenge; and much more from suffering our wrath to break out into words of indignation or contempt; much less into downright affronts and injuries, which might either rob our neighbour of his honour, or of the peace of his mind, or, as it too commonly happens, of the grace of God, by provoking him also to passion and sin.

Consider, thirdly, how the Holy Ghost also declares himself in like manner against this murdering crime of passion and revenge, Ecclus. xxviii. *He that seeketh to revenge himself, saith he, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance.—One man keepeth anger against another; and doth he seek to be healed by God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he entreat for his own sins? He that is but flesh nourisheth anger; and with what face doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins?—Forgive thy neighbour if he have hurt thee, and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest.—Remember thy last things, and let enmity cease.—Remember the fear of God, and be not angry with thy neighbour. Remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the ignorance of thy neighbour. Refrain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins, &c.* O, let us imprint these divine lessons deep in our souls, and we shall fulfil this great commandment.

Conclude, if thou desirest to keep thyself far from the guilt of murder, to banish far from thy soul every thought that has any tendency to malice or revenge. O learn from the doctrine and practice of thy Saviour, rather to suffer in thy person, in thy honour, or in thy worldly goods, than, by seeking revenge, to endanger the loss of thy soul, by losing thy God and his grace.

SEPTEMBER 28.

On Spiritual Murder.

CONSIDER, first, that there is another kind of *murder*, besides that which destroys the body, namely, the murdering of the soul, by bringing upon it the death of sin: a crime most heinous in the eyes of God, and most pernicious to the souls of men, and yet most common amongst Christians. Of this kind of *murder* the devil was the first author, by *whose envy death came into the world*; (Wisd. ii. 24,) and *who was a murderer from the beginning*, (John viii. 44,) by drawing man into deadly sin. And all they that follow him, and are *on his side*, and even take him for *their father*, who seek to fulfil *his desires*, by involving their neighbours in the guilt of sin, which, *when completed, begetteth death*, James i. 15. Ah, how common are these kinds of murders! and how many ways are they daily committed—by alluring or enticing others to evil, by word or work, dress or carriage, or by provoking them to it, or by teaching them the evil they knew not before, or by engaging them in dangerous diversions, and conversations, or, which is the most common of all, by authorizing sin, and encouraging and inviting men to the committing of it, by bad example! And what is all this, but murdering as many souls as there are persons to whom one has voluntarily given occasion of mortal sin!

Consider, secondly, how grievous a crime this *murdering* of souls *must* be in the sight of God, since it defeats, as much as lies in man, the great business for which God sent his own Son upon earth, namely, the salvation of souls, which he takes so much to heart. It daringly promotes the interest of Satan, that arch-rebel, and sets up his standard against that of Christ; it encourages deluded mortals to follow that enemy of God and man, rather than their Creator and Redeemer; it debauches as many of God's subjects from their allegiance, as it draws souls into sin; it even treads under foot the precious blood of Christ, and makes void his passion and death, by causing those souls to perish eternally, for whom Christ died. What a complication is here of high treason against the Divine Majesty? How manifold, and how enormous a guilt! And what can such traitors and murderers as these expect from God, but the most dreadful of all judgments, if they do not prevent them by a speedy and serious conversion, and by endeavouring to make the best reparation they are able, especially by reclaiming as many souls as they can from Satan and sin, and reconciling them to God.

Consider, thirdly, the grievousness of this evil of *spiritual murder*, from another head; that is, from the mischief it does to

man, and the dismal consequences it brings after it, both for time and eternity. The *murder* of the body is certainly a most heinous sin, and one of the greatest that can be committed between man and man : it even *cries to Heaven for vengeance*. But then it only reaches the body, which is the meaner part of man, and which, by its condition, must otherwise speedily perish ; it does not touch the immortal soul ; it does not extend to eternity. But *spiritual murder* kills the soul, by robbing it of the grace of God, which is its true life ; it separates the soul from God, and condemns it to an eternal separation from him ; it brings upon it a second and everlasting death ; it plunges both soul and body into the flames of hell. O, how loudly, then, must the blood of so many unhappy souls, which are daily sent to hell by these *spiritual murders*, cry to Heaven for vengeance against their murderers !

Conclude to look well to thyself, that thou never have any share in this enormous guilt of *spiritual murder*, by giving occasion to any other's sin. For why should thou thus declare war against Heaven, thrust thy neighbours' souls into hell, and bring upon thy own head a multiplied damnation, even as many hells as thou hast drawn souls into sin ?

SEPTEMBER 29.

On Michæmas Day.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day the church of God celebrates the festival of St. Michael, and of all the heavenly hosts of angels and arch-angels, cherubims and seraphims, and the rest of the orders of blessed spirits. Wherefore the devotion of this day, is, First, to join with all these heavenly choirs, in giving glory, praise and thanksgiving to God, who created these angelic spirits to glorify him, and who has inspired them all with an unspeakable love for us, and has sent them to minister for us, in order to our *receiving the inheritance of salvation*, Heb. i. 14. Secondly, we ought on this day to congratulate with these heavenly citizens, and their great leader St. Michael, these friends of God, and of ours, and to rejoice in their eternal happiness. Thirdly we ought to associate ourselves with them, in order jointly to promote the common cause of our common Master ; that is, the greater glory of God, and the advancement of his divine service and love ; and with them to fight his battles against the devil and his rebel-angels. O, Christians, how happy, how glorious is this cause, in which both we and they are engaged ! And how advantageous 's it for us to have such auxiliaries in this great warfare !

Consider, secondly, what lessons we have to learn from the behaviour of these blessed spirits, from the first moment of their creation, and what we are to imitate in them. They no sooner received their being, but they turned to their Creator, by adoration and love, and dedicated themselves eternally to him. We were made for the same end as they were, that is, to glorify God; and like them, were strictly obliged to turn to our Creator, as soon as we were capable of knowing him, and to dedicate our whole being to his love and service. But have we done so? Have we not rather, like Lucifer and his associates, turned away from God, at our first coming to the use of reason, and preferred every empty toy before him? The good angels are perpetually attentive to God; wheresoever they are, or whatever they are about, their eye and their heart is always upon him; they are perpetually jealous of his honour, and ever labouring to procure, not their own glory, but the glory of their great King. Do we imitate them? Is the eye of our soul turned towards God in all our employments? Are we always seeking his greater glory? If so, like the angels, wheresoever we are, and whatsoever we are doing, we shall in some measure have heaven with us, even here upon earth.

Consider, thirdly, from the gospel of this day, (St. Matt. xviii,) what kind of exercises of virtue are to bring us effectually to the eternal society of the angels. We must be *converted* from the corruption of pride, which cast the devil out of heaven, and *become as little children* by innocence and humility, or we shall have no share with the good angels in *the kingdom of heaven*. There is no room for *pride* in that blessed society; the devil is the *king over all the children of pride*, Job xli. 25. There is no room there for any that wilfully associate themselves with the rebels, (that have been cast out from thence,) by corrupting others, or suffering themselves to be corrupted, and drawn away from their allegiance, by giving or taking *scandal* against their own souls. The true way to arrive at the happy company of the angels, is humility, innocence and purity. If we would come amongst them, we must *cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting sanctification in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. For *nothing that is defiled shall enter into* that blessed city, where they dwell for ever, Revel. xxi. 27.

Conclude so to honour St. Michael, and all the good angels, as to imitate their fidelity to their God, their constant attention to promote his glory, and their constant opposition to all the enterprises of his enemy. The name of *Michael* signifies, *who is like God*? Let this be your motto in all your spiritual warfare; at all times stick close to God, and he will stick close to you:

prefer his honour before all other considerations, and he will *speedily crush Satan under your feet*; yea, he will enable you to *walk upon the asp, and upon the basilisk, and to tread upon the lion, and the dragon*, Ps. xc, and nothing shall have power to hurt you.

SEPTEMBER 30.

Thou shalt not commit Adultery.

CONSIDER, first, that by this commandment is forbidden, in the first place, the heinous crime of *adultery*; as not only directly contrary to chastity, but to justice also, in the highest degree; as carrying with it one of the greatest injuries that can be done to one's neighbour, and violating an indefeasible right, confirmed to him by the law of God and of nature; and withal profaning the sanctity of the matrimonial contract, and breaking through the solemn vows of mutual fidelity annexed to it. But though *adultery* be the only crime here named, it not being necessary to reckon up in particular all the shameful sins of lust, yet it is not the only evil forbidden by this commandment, which moreover condemns and prohibits all manner of uncleannesses, whether committed by or with married persons or single; and much more all other unnatural sins of lust, committed upon one's self, or with any other; as also all abuses of the marriage bed, by any liberties contrary to the sanctity of it, or disagreeable to the end of this holy institution. O, how odious are all these impurities, in the sight of God and his holy angels, before whose eyes they are committed! What dreadful judgments have they often drawn down from heaven! What black and filthy flames are prepared for the punishment of them in hell! O my soul, let us ever fly and abhor all these abominations.

Consider, secondly, that by this commandment (as explained by our Lord himself, St. Matt. v. 27, 28, &c.) are not only forbidden all those grosser sins of uncleanness, but also all other kinds of immodesties, which have any manner of tendency towards those greater crimes, even to every wanton glance of the eye, and every impure inclination of the heart. *You have heard*, saith our Lord, *that it was said to them of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say to you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.* If, then, we would be truly chaste, as the divine law commands us, we must, with holy Job, put a restraint both upon our eyes and upon our thoughts and imaginations, lest death enter into our souls by those windows. *I made a covenant*, saith he, *with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin*

(Job xxxi. 4,) lest, as he adds, *God above should have no part in him.* How much more does this commandment forbid all loose discourse, unchaste words and songs, which not only demonstrate a corrupted heart in them that take delight in talking of such matters, which St. Paul would not have so much as once named amongst Christians, Eph. v. 3, (for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, Matt. xii. 34,) but also spread the infection amongst their neighbours, to corrupt them also, by filling their minds and hearts with foul imaginations and impure affections? O how common and how dreadful is this evil! and how many souls owe their damnation to it! Ah, it is too true, that *evil communications corrupt good manners*; and that thousands of Christians lose their innocence, and are made a sacrifice to Satan by means of such lewd discourses, and corrupt conversations.

Consider, thirdly, that, if this commandment is designed to lay a restraint upon our eyes, upon our thoughts and imaginations, upon our wishes and desires, and upon our words and conversations; how much more upon our actions, by condemning and prohibiting all carnal liberties, all wanton play, all unbecoming touches, all immodest embraces, &c., all which violently tend to defile both soul and body with lust. O, Christians, deceive not yourselves; all these liberties are criminal, and as such are loudly condemned in the word of God, (Gal. v. 19, and Eph. v. 3, 4,) as absolutely excluding all that are guilty of them from any inheritance in the kingdom of God.

Conclude, if you desire to have any share in Christ, and in his eternal inheritance, to keep your souls and bodies clear from the defilements of lust. In order thereunto, be exact in observing the rule our Lord has given you, (Matt. v. 29, 30,) namely, of retrenching all occasions, that may expose you to the danger of lust, however agreeable or dear they may be to your natural inclinations, or however necessary they may seem to you. For what can be more dear or necessary than a hand or an eye? And yet we must part with these, rather than lose our souls. Apply this rule to all such company or conversation, to all such books or entertainments, to all such plays or diversions, to all such shows or comedies, as are apt to fill your minds with impure thoughts, or otherwise to endanger your chastity; and let neither the example, nor the invitations and persuasions, nor the authority of any one living, prevail on you to transgress this divine rule, or to fling yourselves into the jaws of this infernal dragon of lust, which, in all such places and occasions, lies in wait to devour your souls.

OCTOBER 1.

Thou shalt not steal.

CONSIDER, first, that by this commandment, God forbids all manner of wrong to our neighbour, in his goods, rights, or worldly possessions, whether by open violence or by fraud, by stealing or by over-reaching, by cheating in buying or in selling, or in any other bargain, by keeping from him what is his, or not giving him his dues, or not paying just debts, or by any extortion whatever, or any usury in the loan of money or other things, or by putting him to any unjust charges, or by spoiling or damaging what belongs to him. In all these cases, there is an injustice committed, which is not only condemned by this divine precept, but by the natural and eternal law, written from the beginning in the heart of man; and by that great principle of morality, which forbids us to do by any other what we would not have done to us. And yet, how many ways are poor mortals daily guilty of breaking through this divine and eternal law for the sake of this wretched *Mammon* of worldly interest, the great *god of this world*; and that in spite both of law and gospel, honour and honesty, conscience and religion! And how often do they affect to deceive themselves herein with vain pleas and pretexts, invented on purpose to cloak their guilt, and to hide it, if possible, not only from others, but also from their own consciences, that so they may go on without disturbance in *the way that leads to death*, by persuading themselves that all is right. But God is not to be deceived, who has declared that *the unjust shall never possess his kingdom*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. O, examine yourselves, Christians, impartially, upon this head of justice in your dealings with your neighbours; for there is nothing more easy than for you to deceive yourselves herein; the consequences of which would be most dreadful to your souls.

Consider, secondly, that every breach of this commandment, by any one of these ways of wronging one's neighbour, is always followed with the strict obligation of making restitution, or of repairing, to the full, the loss or damage he has suffered; without which restitution or reparation the crime shall never be forgiven. And how few think of this! Alas! how many of these restitutions will be to be made, when *time shall be no more*; and when that which has been neglected on earth, shall be exacted in hell! Ah, sinners, what a load, then, have you charged upon your own shoulders, by your injustices? And how is it possible you should think so little of discharging it! O, do not be too easy in persuading yourselves you have it not in your power to make this restitution; you cannot deceive the all-seeing eye of him who clear

ly discerns how much you might do, if you would but retrench all superfluities in your expenses, and would truly take to heart this necessary duty of satisfying justice in the first place, and would use all possible industry and labour for that end.

Consider, thirdly, that, though all injustice in general be hateful in the sight of God, there are some branches of it in particular which more loudly cry to Heaven for vengeance; and more especially such as tend to oppress the poor, by usury or extortion, or by making a handle of their necessity, to raise to them the price of the things they want, or by defrauding them of their wages or hire, or otherwise taking, or keeping from them, that which belongs to them. O, how heinous are all these sins in the eyes of him who is *the Father of the poor!* They are as odious as murder in his sight. There is a curse entailed upon all such substance as is gathered together by oppressing his children. And so there is upon all sacrilegious rapines, by which the church or temple of God, or his ministers, are defrauded of what is their due; or by which pious foundations or donations are diverted from the uses of religion to profane uses. In all such cases, God looks upon the wrong as done to himself, and will certainly revenge it, both here and hereafter. All that gold which is brought into the coffers by robbing either the poor or the church, shall not only moulder away itself, but shall consume all the rest it shall find there, together with the master of it.

Conclude to beware of all manner of injustice, and to keep off at the greatest distance possible from it, as a mortal enemy both to thy temporal and eternal welfare. Take heed lest the love of that idol, Mammon, should at any time impose upon thee, in this regard: thou art never secure from danger, as long as that idol is not cast out of thy heart; for, as the wise man assures us, (Ecclus. x. 10.) *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

OCTOBER 2.

On our guardian Angels.

CONSIDER, first, that this day is set aside by the church, to glorify God, and to give him thanks, through Jesus Christ his Son, for that inestimable benefit of his divine goodness, by which he has appointed his heavenly spirits to attend on us, and to guard us, during this pilgrimage of our mortality, till they bring us home to himself, and to a happy eternity. Give ear to the word of God on this subject, Ps. xc. *There shall no evil come to thee; nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For he hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy*

ways: in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. St. Matt. xviii. *Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you, that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.* Hebr. i. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them, who shall receive the inheritance of salvation,* Exodus xxiii. *Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him, and hear his voice, &c.* Yes, Christians, let us attend to these our heavenly guardians, who are ever inviting us to the love and service of our God, and inspiring us with pious thoughts to this effect; and, with their assistance, we shall defeat all our enemies, and make our way safely to our eternal country, in spite of all the oppositions of hell; according to that of Exod. xxiii. 22—*If thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee; and my angel shall go before thee, and sha'l bring thee in to the promised land, the figure of the heavenly Canaan.*

Consider, secondly, with St. Bernard, (writing on those words, *he hath given his angels charge over thee,*) the wonders of God's bounty and love for us, expressed in this commission given to his angels. "For who is it that has given this charge? To whom? of whom? And what is the charge he has given? O, let us think well on this grand commission; let us lay it up diligently in our memory. Who has given this charge? Whose angels are they? Whose will do they obey? *He has given his angels a charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; nor do they stick, to bear thee up in their hands.* It is then the sovereign Majesty has given a charge to angels; yea, to his own angels he has given a charge; to those sublime spirits, so happy, so nearly adhering to himself and to his own domestics, he has given a charge of thee. And who art thou? *What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou makest any account of him!* As if *man were not rottenness, and the son of man a worm.* And what is this commission he has given his angels concerning thee? Even to be thy guardians! O wonderful condescension! O truly great affection of charity!"

Consider, thirdly, with the same saint, "What reverence, what devotion, what confidence, this saying, that *God has given his angels a charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,* ought to inspire thee with a reverence for their presence, a devotion for their benevolence, a confidence for their guardianship. Walk cautiously, as having the angels always in thy company, who, according to their commission, are with thee in all thy ways. In every place, in every corner, have respect to thy angel. Never

dare to do that in his presence, which thou wouldst not dare to do before me. In God, then, my brethren, let us affectionately love his angels, that are to be one day joint heirs with us, but in the mean time are appointed by our Father, and set over us, as tutors and governors. What have we to fear, under such guardians as these? They can neither be overcome, nor deceived, who keep us in all our ways; much less can they deceive us. They are faithful, they are wise, they are powerful: what are we afraid of? Let us only follow them, let us stick close to them, and we shall abide under the protection of the God of heaven."

Conclude to follow in practice these prescriptions of this great saint; and, as he adds in the same discourse, when at any time we perceive a temptation arising, or we are threatened with any grievous tribulation, let us call upon these our heavenly keepers, our guides, and our helpers in due time, in distress, and we shall experience a powerful assistance from them, superior to all the power of earth and hell.

OCTOBER 3.

Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.

CONSIDER, first, that by this commandment is not only forbidden all false testimony given in open court, or before a magistrate, against any one, (which is usually accompanied with another greater crime, namely, that of perjury, or false swearing, if not with that of robbery or murder also, when the false witness is the occasion of the loss of any one's goods or life,) but also all manner of private slanders and lies, and all other ways of injuring one's neighbour by words, either in his character and good name, by backbiting and detraction; or in his honour, by reproaches and affronts; or by taking away the peace of his mind, by scoffs and derision; or by robbing him of his friends, by whispering and tale bearing; or by promoting misunderstanding and quarrels between him and his neighbours;—an evil so odious in the sight of God, that the wise man assures us, (Prov. vi. 16,) that *his soul detests it*. All these crimes are condemned by this commandment, and by the eternal and natural law, written in the heart of man; all of them are directly opposite both to charity and to justice, and to that great rule of life, *not to do by others what we would not have them to do by us*. All of them bring with them a strict obligation, even under pain of damnation, (if the injury have been considerable,) of making restitution or satisfaction: and yet how seldom is this put in practice! Ah, how common are

these injustices of the tongue ; and how dreadful are the consequences of them both in time and eternity ?

Consider, secondly, more in particular, the heinousness of the sin of detraction, which is so common in the world, and which makes up so great a part of the conversation of worldlings. And yet at every blow, says St. Francis de Sales, it gives three mortal wounds ; first, to the soul of the detractor ; secondly, to the reputation of the person detracted ; and thirdly, to the consciences of the hearers, by drawing as many of them into sin as are delighted with hearing the detraction, and much more if they encourage it, and contribute to propagate it, by publishing it to others. The detractor himself is like a thief or a robber, who takes away his neighbour's character or good name ; yea, he is so much worse than a thief or a robber, as a person's character or good name is more valuable to him than his worldly substance, which also he is in danger to lose, when he loses his character. Now, as in matters of theft or robbery, it is commonly said, *the receiver is as bad as the thief* ; so in matters of detraction, he that willingly hears the detractor, whilst he is robbing his neighbour of his reputation, is like the *receiver*, and partakes in the guilt of the robbery. And are Christians aware of this ? Do they examine their conscience upon this head ? And yet their souls are here at stake. O, how few detractors or talebearers would there be, if men were once made sensible, that their unjust and uncharitable discourses were disagreeable to their hearers !

Consider, thirdly, that the sin of detraction may be committed, and consequently the obligation of repairing one's neighbour's good name may be incurred, not only by publishing down right slanders and lies against his reputation ; but also by charging him upon hearsay, or upon one's own suspicions or rash judgments, with things, if not false, at least doubtful and uncertain ; or by magnifying his guilt, and imputing to malice what might be no more than frailty or surprise ; or by censuring his intentions in his good works ; or even by publishing, without necessity, his real crimes or defects, in such circumstances, when his character is thereby grievously hurt ; because, in all these cases, one does not only sin against *charity*, which obliges us to love our neighbours as ourselves, but also against *justice*, by violating the right our neighbour has, that his good name should be preserved, as long as he has not forfeited it, by any public crime. O, Christians, do but guide yourselves by that golden rule, *of doing as you would be done by*, and you will avoid all these sins, which send so many souls to hell.

Conclude to examine yourselves well upon the subject of the sins against this commandment, that you may not be imposed

upon by the too common practice of them that live and die with little or no remorse, under the guilt of the daily breach of this divine law. O, remember that custom and example will be no excuse for you, if you walk along with the crowd in the broad road that leads to destruction.

OCTOBER 4.

On rash Judgment.

CONSIDER, first, that this commandment is also violated by the sin of *rash judgment*, which robs one's neighbour of his esteem and reputation, if not with regard to others, by publishing to them the suspicions we have conceived, or the judgment we make to his disadvantage, at least within our own breast, by despising and condemning him there. O, how much is this crime (when fully voluntary and deliberate) condemned by the word of God! O, how contrary it is to all Christian charity! *Judge not, saith our Lord, (Luke vi. 37,) and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Why dost thou judge thy brother? saith St. Paul, (Rom. xiv. 10,) or why dost thou despise thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and every one of us shall render account to God for himself. Let us not therefore judge one another any more. And again, (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5,) He that judgeth me is the Lord: therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. And again, (Rom. xiv. 4,) Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? It is to his own master he must stand or fall. He that detracteth his brother, saith St. James, (chap. iv. 11, &c.) or he that judgeth his brother, detracteth the law, and judgeth the law. There is one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy and to deliver: but who art thou that judgest thy neighbour? O, let us always attend to these divine admonitions, and fly rash judgment like death.*

Consider, secondly, the injury done by *rash judgment*, first to God himself, to whom all *judgment* belongs, by usurping his authority in judging and condemning others without his license, and even presuming to claim his prerogative of diving into the intentions and secrets of hearts; then the wrong that is done to one's neighbour, by passing sentence upon him unheard and without sufficient knowledge of his guilt, (which way of proceeding would be highly unjust in any judge or court whatsoever,) and this without any sufficient authority over him, or observing any order of justice in his regard. Moreover, rash

judgment, when fully voluntary, is also highly criminal upon account of its opposition to those two most essential virtues of a Christian, *charity* and *humility*. For the rashly censuring and condemning one's neighbour must needs destroy *charity*, since the property of charity is *to think no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And how can it be otherwise, for *charity is love*; and *love*, so far from rashly imputing imaginary crimes to the beloved, is ever willing to overlook even real defects, when duty does not oblige to correct them. And as to *humility*, nothing can be more opposite to it, than the despising and undervaluing one's neighbour, and secretly preferring one's self before him, in one's own breast: now, this is commonly one of the chief ingredients in *rash judgment*.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to overcome the vicious habit of judging rashly of one's neighbour, one must search out the root of this evil, and then lay the axe to the root, in order to cut it up. *Rash judgments*, in many persons, spring from pride, and from their having too good an opinion of themselves, which makes them ever ready to believe the worst of others, and to censure them in order to exalt themselves. In others, the root of their *rash judgments* is the ill will, hatred or envy they bear to their neighbours, which inclines them to put always the worst construction on what they say or do, and to condemn their intentions, even in their best actions. Others again, because they are evil themselves, judge ill of their neighbours by themselves. Others, in fine, from the presumption they have of their own wit, great talents and experience, arrogate to themselves a privilege of passing their judgment upon every one, and yet proudly imagine, they are out of the danger of rashness or injustice in so doing: such is the confidence they have in their own clear sightedness; though, alas! it often pretends to discover the mote in another's eye, and sees not the beam in its own. The general remedy for all rash judgments, from whatsoever source they proceed, is to have our eye always upon ourselves, and upon our own faults, and to turn it away from our neighbours; to endeavour also to be sensible how great an evil it is to judge and condemn our neighbours, and how pernicious it is to our own souls; to make frequent acts of detestation of it; and to pray continually to our Lord to be delivered from it.

Conclude to guard against all manner of rash judgments, as being hateful to God, injurious to your neighbours, and destructive of the salvation of your own souls. The study and practice of *charity* and *humility* is the sovereign means to get the victory over this pernicious evil.

OCTOBER 5.

On avoiding all Manner of Lies.

CONSIDER, first, in what manner the vice of *lying* is every where condemned in the word of God. Our Saviour tells us, (John viii. 44,) that the devil is a liar, and the father of lies; and (Apocalypse xxi, 8,) that *all liars shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* And the Holy Ghost assures us by the mouth of the wise man, (Prov. vi. 16, 17,) that *the Lord hateth a lying tongue*; and (chap. xiv. 22,) that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*; and (chap. xiii. 5,) that *the just shall hate a lying word*; and (Wisd. i. 11,) that *the mouth that lieth killeth the soul*; and (Ecclus. xx. 17,) that *even a thief is better than a man that is always lying; but that both of them shall inherit destruction*; and (v. 26,) that *a lie is a foul blot in a man*; and (v. 28,) that *the manners of lying men are without honour, and that their confusion is with them without ceasing*; besides many other texts against lies and liars. O, let us fly and detest this evil, which is thus frequently condemned by the Spirit of God, as hateful to him and pernicious to our souls.

Consider, secondly, that the reason why *lies* are so hateful to God, is because God is essentially Truth; and therefore, as all *lies* are opposite to truth, they are all opposite to God, and cannot but offend him. Every known untruth, by reason of this opposition to the God of truth, is essentially evil, and ought not to be committed for any consideration whatsoever. God himself cannot dispense with any one, or give him a license to tell a *lie*, no more than he himself can *lie*. Some *lies*, indeed, are more heinous than others, either because they more directly strike at revealed truths, or tend to degrade God and religion; or because of the injury they do to our neighbours, either in soul or body, goods or good name; and these are all mortal sins; but there is no *lie* whatsoever, not even such as are told in jest, or such as are *officious*, or for excuse, but what are essentially sinful, and therefore ought not to be committed, not even for saving the whole world; because *evil is not to be committed that good may come of it*. Besides, what good can be expected from turning one's back upon Truth, and sheltering one's self in a lie? O, let us rather die, than thus offend the God of truth.

Consider, thirdly, that it is a dangerous thing for any Christian to make slight of telling a lie, though it were only a lie of vanity, or for an excuse, and without any design to prejudice one's neighbour. But it is still more dangerous to indulge one's self in a habit or custom of telling this kind of lies. For it is no

small evil wilfully to dishonour the sovereign Truth at any time, and to lead one's neighbour into error, by obtruding falsehood upon him for truth; but it is a very great evil to make nothing of entertaining a habit of wilfully offending God by such lies, and this upon a notion that if one can but escape hell, it matters not how much one otherwise offends him. For how can such a habit as this be consistent with loving God above all things? or how can there be any security for a soul that treats her God in this slighting manner? O no; let us not deceive ourselves; God is not to be mocked. Those that make slight of a habit of lies can never be friends of the God of truth, nor reasonably expect to be eternally with him.

Conclude never to tell a known lie upon any account whatsoever, much less for avoiding a little anger, or any other slight occasion. Nothing can justify a lie, not even the saving of one's life by it, because it is an offence to God, who ought not to be offended, even to save the whole world.

OCTOBER 6.

Thou shalt not covet, &c.

CONSIDER, first, that, after forbidding the sins and injuries committed by words or actions, God forbids also, in these two last commandments, the sins of thoughts and desires, particularly with relation to *avarice* and *lust*; *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods*. These two kinds of irregular desires and inclinations, suggested by the lust of the flesh and by the love of the mammon of this world, are like a raging pestilence, which has infected the greatest part of mankind from the beginning: like another deluge, they even overflow the earth. Money and carnal pleasures are the two great idols set up by Satan, to confront the living God. To these, men sacrifice their hearts and affections; the young, by *the concupiscence of the flesh*, the old, by *the concupiscence of the eyes*; and thus both old and young are for the most part debauched from the love and service of God, and made slaves to sin, and victims to hell. Ah, Christians, never think yourselves innocent, though you keep your hands from stealing, and your eyes from fornication or adultery, if you do not, at the same time, keep your eyes and your hearts from *coveting*. Such you are in the sight of God, as your affections and desires are. If these are criminal, you cannot be innocent.

Consider, secondly, that by this precept, *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, we are commanded to set a guard upon our thoughts, upon our hearts, upon our eyes, and upon all our

other senses, that the fire of concupiscence may not make its way through any of those avenues into our souls, to burn them here with lust, and with the dark flames of hell hereafter. Ah, what have we not to apprehend, from the depraved inclinations of our corrupt nature, if we do not turn away both our senses and our imaginations from all alluring objects, and shut these gates against the first suggestions of evil! How much more are all Christians bound to fly all such occasions as expose them to a more evident and immediate danger of lewd thoughts and desires, as a great part of modern comedies, balls, masquerades, &c., are known to do, more especially with relation to the younger sort. And yet, alas! how few are there, that are not too fond of these dangerous diversions, which are so near akin to the pomps of Satan, which we renounced at our baptism!

Consider, thirdly, the necessity of restraining also the corrupt inclinations of that other branch of concupiscence, which relates to our neighbour's goods. In order to this, we must, in the first place, renounce and detest all *unjust* desires, and such as any ways tend to withhold from our neighbour, or deprive him of what, in justice, belongs to him; as also all wishes of his death, that we may come at his possessions; all desires of public or private calamities, for one's own particular advantage, &c. But then, we must not stop here; we must lay the axe to the root of all these evils, which is the love of this mammon of iniquity; this unhappy vice of covetousness, which if it be not cut up, and cast out of the heart, will not suffer either justice or grace long to reside there; according to that of the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10—*They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition; for covetousness is the root of all evils.*

Conclude to fight till death against both these branches of concupiscence, as capital enemies of the soul, which, if not guarded against, and overcome, are capable of doing us infinitely more harm than all the devils in hell.

OCTOBER 7.

On the Precepts of the Church.

CONSIDER, first, that all Christians are under a strict obligation of keeping also the *precepts*, that is, the *commandments*, of the church, because the law of God commands us so to do. *Honour thy father and thy mother*, is a commandment which not only obliges us to obey them that are our parents according to the flesh, but also our *spiritual* parents, at least in matters spir-

itual, namely, the pastors of the church of Christ. To these Christ our Lord has said, (Luke x. 16,) *He that heareth you, heareth me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth me.* To these he has given *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, with the power of *binding and loosing*, St. Matt. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18. These *he has sent, as his Father sent him*, St. John xx. 21. With these he has promised to abide till the end of the world, St. Matt. xxviii. 20. These he has made his *ministers*, the stewards and dispensers of his mysteries and sacraments, (1 Cor. iv. 1,) and his *ambassadors*, 2 Cor. v. 20. These he has given us for *pastors and teachers*, Eph. iv. 11, 12, &c. To these he has given the charge of our souls; and therefore the apostle calls upon us, (Hebr. xiii,) not only to *follow their faith*, (v. 7,) but also to *obey them, and to submit ourselves to them*, (v. 17.) O blessed obedience! It is in vain to pretend to obey our Father in heaven, if we refuse to obey our mother the church.

Consider, secondly, the excellency of these precepts of the church, and their admirable tendency to bring us to God, by obliging us to set aside so many of our days for prayer and other religious duties; to humble ourselves so often, and to do penance for our sins, by fasting and abstinence; to frequent the sacraments and sacrifice of the church, &c. O, these precepts are not mere human inventions or injunctions; they have been dictated by the Spirit of God, which always resides and presides in the church; they are enacted by divine commission and authority; they are, generally speaking, so many determinations of the divine law. The law of God and of nature requires, that we should dedicate a considerable part of our time to the divine worship; the precepts of the church point out the particular days we are to set aside for this end. The divine law calls upon us to pay to our God the homage of adoration, praise and sacrifice: the precepts of the church prescribe, for this end, the frequenting the great sacrifice of the death of Christ, offered up to God in the holy mysteries. The law of God obliges us to do penance for our sins; to restrain our passions and lusts; to offer up pure and humble prayer to God; and consequently to fast and abstain, as far as shall be necessary for us to answer these ends: the church, by her precepts, orders the times for this penitential exercise, lest, if we were left to ourselves, we should wholly neglect it. The law of Christ ordains the confession of our sins, and the worthily receiving the sacred communion: the precepts of the church require, under pain of excommunication, that this divine law should be complied with in such manner, as not to defer the confession of our sins beyond the year, nor to neglect the receiving the holy communion, at least at Easter. See then, my soul, how necessary it is for thee to

observe all these precepts of the church, in order to comply with the law and commandments of God.

Consider, thirdly, the unhappy case of all such Christians as despise these precepts of the church of Christ. Alas! they despise, in effect, both Christ and his Father, (Luke x. 16,) and will be treated accordingly at his tribunal. The wilful transgression of any one of these ordinances of God's church, is certainly criminal in the sight of God: how much more the contempt of them! And what, then, must we think of the wretched state of so many souls, that make a practice of transgressing these laws of the church, by breaking through the rules prescribed by her decrees and constitutions, with regard to festivals, fasts, and abstinences; or with regard to the frequentation of the sacraments at the times appointed? Ah, such undutiful children as these, that live in an habitual disobedience to God and his church, deserve not the name of children, or of Catholic Christians, and, without a sincere conversion from these their evil ways, must expect undoubtedly to be reckoned another day amongst *heathens* and unbelievers.

Conclude to observe, religiously, the laws and ordinances of the church of God, and to see they be religiously observed by all under your care. If there be a necessity, at any time, of your being dispensed with in any of these church laws, go to your pastors for this dispensation; but presume not to dispense with yourselves. Only the pastors of the church can dispense in the precepts of the church.

OCTOBER 8.

On the Vice of Pride.

CONSIDER, first, that pride is an inordinate love, conceit or desire of self-excellence; or a delight and complacency in one's own self, by occasion of some real or imaginary excellency, which we have, or pretend to have, either in virtue, or grace, or knowledge, or in any other goods or qualities, whether external or internal, considered merely as the means to make us excel, and as such puffing us up with self-esteem, and causing us to prefer ourselves before others, and to despise others. This pride is the mother of all vices, but more especially of ambition, presumption, and vain-glory; from which it differs only in this, that ambition aims at *excelling* in the way of honour and dignity, and in being set above others; presumption seeks to *excel*, in the way of great achievements, attempted upon confidence of one's own strength; vain-glory pretends to *excellence* in the way of glory, that is, in the way of being known, praised and esteemed by

others: but pride looks chiefly at herself, and sets up her own proper *self-excellence* for her idol, which she worships, loves, esteems and desires above all things, and to which she sacrifices all things else. O deliver us, dear Lord, from this enormous evil, the first-born of Satan, and the original parent both of death and hell.

Consider, secondly, that St. Gregory (L. 23. Mor. c. 4,) distinguishes in pride four different kinds, or four ways of being guilty of this worst of vices;—First, by attributing to one's self and not to God, the good things we have from him, either of nature or of grace; secondly, by ascribing at least to one's own merits, what we have received from God, and not giving him the whole glory; thirdly, by conceiting ourselves to have graces, talents or perfections, which indeed we have not, and being puffed up in ourselves with this *imaginary* excellence; fourthly, by highly esteeming and valuing ourselves for the graces or good qualities we *really have*, and applauding ourselves in such manner in them, as to affect to have them to ourselves alone, and to despise others, or envy them the like accomplishments. All these, in their nature, are mortal sins, when fully consented to; and are of the worst kind of mortal sins, because, of all the seven capital vices, pride is acknowledged by divines, to be the worst, by reason of its extreme opposition to God, in setting itself up, as it were, in his place, and, Satan-like, lifting up its head against him, and affecting a *self-excellence*, which belongs to God alone. Hence, as we learn from the apostle, (Rom. i,) the proud have often been delivered up, and abandoned by God to a reprobate sense, and suffered to fall even into the most shameful and unnatural lusts, in punishment of their self-conceit. O, how enormous, then, must the vice of pride be in the eyes of God, when the falling into such abominations as these is the punishment of it!

Consider, thirdly, that pride is a mortal sin, not only when one directly incurs the guilt of any of those four kinds or ways, mentioned by St. Gregory, by one's own deliberate judgment and will, (at least as often as the matter is of moment); but also when one incurs the guilt of any of them indirectly; or equivalently, by taking such complacency in one's self, or carrying one's self in such manner to others, as if one judged one's self to have or desired that others should judge one to have, any excellency or perfection of one's self, and not from God; as also when our affection or inclination to our own excellence, or the conceit we have of it, is joined with a great irreverence or injury to God, or a considerable contempt of our neighbour, or detriment to him; or, again, when, through the love or conceit we have of our own excellence, we withdraw ourselves from the sub-

iection we owe to God and his holy law, or to the authority of superiors established by him. Ah, how common are all these sins! How many ways are poor, unhappy mortals daily guilty of this highest of treasons against the Divine Majesty! And how dreadful are the consequences of this guilt, both in time and eternity!

Conclude to examine well thy conscience upon this head of pride; for it is a subtle evil, which often imposes upon poor mortals, insomuch that they who are the most guilty of it, often-times will not believe themselves to be proud. O, take care not to be deceived by this *noonday devil*; watch and pray continually against it; spare no pains to cast it out of thy soul. If thou thinkest it has no share in thee, thou deceivest thyself: there cannot be a more evident proof of thy being proud, than to imagine thyself to be out of the reach of this vice.

OCTOBER 9.

On the Malignity of Pride.

CONSIDER, first, the malignity of pride, inasmuch as it corrupts the very vitals of the soul, and leaves nothing sound in it. It is a rottenness at the heart, that spoils the fairest plants that grow on this infected soil. The fruits of the good works of the proud are like those that are said to grow on the banks of the lake of Sodom, fair to the eye, but rotten within. Their virtues are blasted, and have nothing but an outward appearance, because the root of them is corrupted. God is not with them, truth is not with them, grace is not with them; they have no foundation within them for any solid good, because they want humility; for *God resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.*

Consider, secondly, the malignity of pride from another head, namely, from its filling the soul with all other evils. For this dreadful vice, not content with shutting the gate against grace, and against all good, and even changing those that should be the most virtuous actions into crimes, opens wide the door to all manner of sin and iniquity, by setting all the other passions at work, to serve, by all kinds of extravagances, its unbridled appetite after *self-excellence*. To gratify this predominant passion, *covetousness* is employed, to procure, right or wrong, those riches that may furnish the means of *excelling*; and *prodigality*, in the expending of them. *Anger*, hatred and revenge are let loose, against all that thwart or stand in the way of its lawless pretensions. Inferiors are oppressed; they are treated with *contempt* and scorn: equals are *envied*, as rivals in honour; they are *judged, condemned and slandered*: superiors are slighted, and *disobeyed, &c.*:

not to speak of innumerable other mortal evils, quarrels, murders, rebellions, heresies, blasphemies, and what not, which are frequently the productions of pride; besides all the abominations of lust, and all its fatal offspring, to which the proud are so often delivered up, in punishment of their arrogance. Sweet Jesus, deliver us from all these evils, by teaching us to be *meek and humble of heart*.

Consider, thirdly, that the malignity of pride is chiefly owing to its opposition to the glory of God, and to his divine truth. God is the Being of all beings: all things else without him are nothing: all excellence and all glory is his: we have nothing, excepting sin, but what we have from him; we know nothing but through him; we can do nothing without him. To pretend, therefore, to any excellence, as to our own property, or to any glory as due to us, or to appropriate to ourselves the gifts and graces of God, and to be puffed up with them, and to glory in them as our own, is a sacrilegious robbery of that which belongs to God alone; it is attempting to seat ourselves in his throne; it is claiming a share in his self-excellence, which is no less essential to him, than his self-existence, independence and infinity. For as none but God can be of himself, so none but God can *excel* of himself. For this reason, *every proud man is an abomination to the Lord*, (Prov. xvi. 4,) because he pretends to rival him in his glory, and like the arch-rebel Lucifer, to dispute his prerogative, of being alone *self-excellent*. His pride is a lie, and of the very worst sort of lies, even that which was first framed by the father of lies, in pretending to be *like to the Most High*, and therefore it is most hateful to the eternal Truth.

Conclude to detest and abhor, and to fly with all thy power from this abominable vice, which is so hateful to God, and so pernicious to all that suffer their souls to be corrupted with it. Give ear to the scripture, (Tob. iv. 14,) *never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, nor in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning*.

OCTOBER 10.

Remedies against Pride.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to overcome thy pride, thou must not only be thoroughly sensible of the malignity of this evil in itself, and of the dreadful consequences of its being suffered to reign in the soul; but must also be convinced that thou thyself art continually in danger from it; that it is an evil deeply rooted in thy own corrupt nature; an obstinate and subtle enemy, that will never cease to wage war against thee all thy life long; and

that is so much the more dangerous to thee, by how much the less he is apprehended by thee; so that the first, and most necessary prescription against pride, is to study well; that we may know our corruption in this kind, by the help of a frequent review of our own interior, and of the secret springs that rule and set all our passions to work; that so, having rightly discovered the monster that affects to hide himself in the inmost recesses of the soul, we may declare an eternal war against it, by perpetual watching, praying, and fighting, and frequently repeated acts, both exterior and interior, of the virtue of humility.

Consider, secondly, that the true knowledge of God and of ourselves, acquired by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer, is the sovereign remedy against all manner of pride. For all our pretensions to *excellence*, all our groundless imaginations, by which we take ourselves for *something*, all these fumes of self-conceit, which are so apt to fly up and to turn our heads, upon occasion of any advantages real or imaginary, which we ascribe to ourselves, are all put to flight when the light of the knowledge of God comes in and takes place in the soul, and shows her that all that is not God is a mere nothing. All human greatness, all power, all height and depth, and every thing that is created, dwindles away and quite vanishes, when God appears: *heaven and earth flee away from before his face, and no place is found for them*, Apoc. xx. 11: how much less can poor man glory in his sight! O how can *earth and ashes be proud*, in the presence of the immense, eternal, and infinite Deity!

Consider, thirdly, that the light of God, which, by a diligence in the exercise of mental prayer, flows more and more into the soul, not only serves to humble us in his sight, and to quell our pride, by the sense it gives us of his infinite greatness and majesty, before whom we are but wretched worms, and less than nothing; but also helps us to that true knowledge of ourselves, which obliges us to vilify and despise ourselves. For here we are made sensible what poor creatures indeed we are; how mean is our extraction; as to the body, from dirt and corruption; as to the soul, from nothing: how early we were infected with sin; how full we are now of all kind of miseries, both corporal and spiritual: what a perpetual repugnance we have to good, and what a violent propension to evil, from our very childhood: how much we are encompassed with darkness, ignorance and errors; exposed daily to innumerable dangers; capable of all that is wicked, and incapable of ourselves of any good; certain of death, (though we know not when, where, nor how,) which will make over these bodies of ours to worms and corruption, and transmit these souls to judgment; and dreadfully uncertain as to the issue

of that great trial, and our eternal lot. And shall not all this suffice to cure our pride?

Conclude to spare no pains to acquire these two most necessary branches of Christian science, namely, the true knowledge of God, and the true knowledge of yourselves: they are the foundation of true humility, and of all good, and are to be learnt by meditation and prayer.

OCTOBER 11.

Other Prescriptions against Pride.

CONSIDER, first, that in order to overcome your pride, it will also be of good service frequently to reflect how vain and empty, fading and perishable, those things generally are, which men are apt to be proud of; such as worldly honours, riches, beauty, fine clothes, &c. which give no real intrinsic value or worth to the possessors, nor serve to make them one whit the better in the sight of God; but on the contrary, if they are proud of them, make them by much the worse; yea, odious and contemptible, both to God and man. For every one hates and despises pride in another, how much soever he cherishes it in himself; and such as proudly seek to *exalt themselves*, are generally *humbled*, both by God and man. And as to the gifts of grace, or other talents, received from God, it is still more criminal to be proud of them, because the more valuable they are in themselves, the greater is the sacrilege in robbing God of the glory of them, by taking pride in them, as if they were our own, and not his. O, it is humility alone, that is both the guardian, and the best ornament of all other virtues; they quickly degenerate and turn into vices, when we begin to be proud of them.

Consider, secondly, that we may also extract an excellent antidote against the poison of pride, from the very consideration of the deformity of our pride. For nothing, sure, can be more humbling to the soul, than to be made rightly sensible of the extravagant folly and madness, as well as the sacrilegious impiety, and diabolical presumption she stands guilty of, by lifting up her head against her God by arrogance and self-conceit; the consequence of which is, that she is given up by him, to be possessed at present by the worst of devils, and becomes herself a very devil, in his eyes, black, ugly, and odious, like the devil, and condemned to be a victim of hell with him. And can a soul, that seriously considers all this, suffer herself to be any longer possessed by pride? Can such an odious monster, when brought out of its dark lurking hole, and set before the eyes of the soul, with all the train of woes that attend and follow it, find any more any room in her?

O, it is true, with regard to mortal sin in general, and to pride in particular, that the deformity and malignity of the guilt of it in the soul, and the eternal punishment of it hereafter, are most humbling considerations. For, surely, a soul that is turned away from God by mortal sin, and a soul that is eternally banished from him, and given up to the worm that never dies, and to the fire that is never extinguished, in the dungeons of hell, can neither of them have any thing to be proud of. Mortal sin, and hell, those two most dreadful of all evils, leave no room for pride.

Consider, thirdly, who it is that is *the king over all the children of pride*. Whose standard do they all join, in opposition to the God that made heaven and earth? Alas! they all join with Satan, their mortal enemy; they follow him against their God, their Maker, their Redeemer, and their sovereign Good. And what expectations can they have from following him for their king, who is already himself condemned to hell? Ah, no other than endless confusion, perpetual discontent and uneasiness here, and everlasting damnation hereafter. O, it was this joining with the king of pride, that has entailed all kinds of miseries upon the sons of Adam. To remedy these, the Son of God came down from heaven, by the mystery of his incarnation, and humbled himself even to the death of the cross, to oppose the standard of his humility to the standard of the devil. He calls all men to join his royal standard, by *learning of him to be meek and humble of heart*; promising to rescue them that follow him, from the tyranny and slavery of the wicked one; to give peace and rest to their souls here, and eternal joys hereafter. And shall we balance, for one moment, with which of the two we shall join, the king of pride, or the King of humility, the tyrant of hell, or the God of heaven? See here, my soul, most urgent motives to renounce thy pride, and to embrace humility. The one is suggested by Satan, who is damned for it; the other is taught, by word and example, by the Son of God, who, by it, has opened heaven for us; the one is the road to hell, the other to heaven.

Conclude to renounce the king of pride, with all his pomps, and to shake off his heavy yoke, which never suffers the soul to rest; and, instead of it, to take up the sweet yoke of Jesus Christ, by meekness and humility; and thou shalt find refreshment here and heaven hereafter.

OCTOBER 12.

On Vain-glory.

CONSIDER, first, that the vice of *vain-glory* is nearly allied to that of pride, and has for its object an imaginary *excellence*, in

the way of *glory*; that is, in the way of being known and talked of, praised and esteemed by others. See here, my soul, a dangerous vice; not only with regard to the children of the world, whose thoughts, words and actions, are generally influenced by the love of praise, honour and esteem, or by the fear of what the world will say, or think of them; but even with regard to the children of God, who are daily and hourly exposed to its temptations, in the very best of their actions; with the danger of their losing all the fruit of them, and of their being quite vitiated and corrupted by this plague. This was the vice of the scribes and Pharisees, who did all their works that they might be honoured and esteemed by men; and therefore their alms, their fasting, their prayers, and other good works, availed them nothing in the sight of God; because vain-glory corrupted them all, and, at the very time that they were esteemed as saints by the world, made them like devils in the eyes of God. Christians, beware of this pernicious evil: watch and pray continually against it.

Consider, secondly, that *vain-glory*, which is always dangerous, amounts to the guilt of mortal sin, whenever the affection of the heart is so far set upon human applause, praise or esteem, as to love it as much or more than God; or, as St. Thomas of Aquin expresses it, when a person directs his intention in such manner to the glory of man, as to make it his last end, to which he refers even the works of virtue, and for the sake of which he does not stick to offend his God. In like manner, it is a mortal sin, when a person seeks vain-glory, by committing mortal sin; for example, by swearing, quarrelling, taking revenge, &c. to show his courage, or to gain the esteem of being a man of honour; or for fear of being blamed, or despised by the world;—as also when any person, for the sake of maintaining his esteem, or for fear of being thought less skilful, or less knowing, refuses to seek, or admit of the assistance or counsel of others; and thus exposes himself to the danger of occasioning some considerable detriment, corporal or spiritual, to himself or to others. In fine, vain-glory is a mortal sin whenever a man glories in the gifts and graces of God, as if they were his own, and as if he had not received them from God. See, my soul, how many ways this love of worldly honour, glory and praise, which modern worldlings, like the ancient pagans, take for a virtue, is condemned by sound Christian morality, as a capital vice, which sends innumerable souls to hell.

Consider, thirdly, the malignity of this vice of *vain-glory*, from its being the fruitful parent of a numerous offspring of other pernicious evils, oftentimes worse than itself. St. Gregory reckons up seven daughters of this unhappy mother. 1. *Diso-*

bedience, which despises the ordinances of lawful superiors, for the love of one's own worldly honour or esteem. 2. *Boasting*, that is, vaunting, or glorying of one's self, of one's own talents, or performances, and ever loving to be talking of one's self—a vice as odious and ridiculous, as it is common in the conversation of the proud and vain-glorious. 3. *Hypocrisy*, or making a show of godliness or sanctity, to gain the esteem of men. 4. *Contention*, or strife, that is, wrangling, brawling and quarrelling in words, to maintain one's own opinion, right or wrong, or to defend what one has said or done. 5. *Obstinacy*, in adhering to error, rather than to acknowledge one's self to have been deceived, or to seem to yield, or to be overcome. 6. *Discord*, or disagreement of wills and hearts, by occasion of different pretensions, and contests for honour and esteem. 7. *Invention of novelties*, in the way of new opinions, new fashions, or other innovations, brought in to make one's self a name, or to procure esteem or applause. See, Christians, what a train of evils are daily produced by vain-glory. And what are all heresies and schisms but a compound of these same evils, and consequently the productions also of vain-glory?

Conclude to keep a strict guard against this dangerous enemy of the soul, or it will rob thee of all good, and fill thee with all evil. Daily pray with the royal prophet, *Turn away my eyes, O Lord, that they look not upon vanity*; and as often as, in thy words or actions, thou findest thyself attacked with the suggestions of this vice, say with the same prophet, *not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory*.

OCTOBER 13.

Prescriptions against Vain-glory.

CONSIDER, first, in order to cure this unhappy itch of vain-glory, which is so deeply rooted in our corrupt nature, how little title we have to pretend to any honour, praise, or esteem, from any one; we, who have so often and so grievously offended the Creator of all, and who, if we were to be treated according to our deserts, ought rather to be despised and trampled under foot by all men, yea, to be detested and abhorred by all God's creatures. For there is something so black, so odious, so filthy and abominable in wilful sin, that even toads and snakes, were they capable of knowing it, would hate and fly from the unhappy wretches that are stained with it. What pretensions, then, can such wretched sinners as we have to any honour, praise, or esteem, whilst we are conscious to ourselves of mortal sin? No

other, sure, than the damned in hell. And can there be any room for vain-glory there?

Consider, secondly, how truly vain, how empty, how short, how inconstant is all human glory, and all the praise and esteem of men: it is like a puff of wind, which passes in a moment, and makes us not one jot the better in ourselves: it adds nothing to us in the sight of God, the just, and true, and eternal Judge of all merit. O give ear to the devout A Kempis, (L. iii. C. 50.) "The sentiments of men are often wrong in their judgments. What is a man the better for being reputed greater by man? One deceitful man deceives another; one vain man deceives another; the blind deceives the blind; the weak the weak, whilst he extols him, and in truth, doth rather confound him, whilst he vainly praises him; for how much each one is in thy eyes, O Lord, so much he is, and no more, saith the humble St. Francis." And again, (chap. xiv.) "What is all flesh in thy sight, O Lord? How can he be puffed up with the vain talk of men, whose heart in *truth* is subjected to God? He will never suffer himself to be moved with the tongues of them that praise him, who hath established his whole confidence in God. For, behold, all they that talk of him are all nothing; for they shall pass away with the sound of their words: but *the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever,*" Ps. cxvi.

Consider, thirdly, that this passion for glory, honour, praise and esteem, is not only highly unreasonable, foolish and vain; it is unjust too, it is impious, it is pernicious. It is unjust and impious, because it tends to rob God of his glory, and to usurp what belongs to him alone; inasmuch as it pretends to appropriate to itself the *glory* of God's gifts, which he has reserved for himself. *What hast thou, saith the apostle, that thou hast not received; and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it!* 1 Cor. iv. 7. It is also pernicious, inasmuch as it robs man of the reward of his good works, and even poisons the best of his actions, and exposes the actor to the danger of being eternally punished for those very works for which he expected an eternal crown. *O take heed, saith our Lord, that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven,* Matt. vi. 1. No—no other reward, but that of the scribes and Pharisees, against whom he pronounces his woes, because *they did all their works to be seen by men, and loved the uppermost seats, and salutations and titles, (Matt. xxiii,) and justified themselves before men:* but, said he, *God knoweth your hearts; for that which is high to men is an abomination before God,* Luke xvi. 14. Ah, it was this love of *human glory* that stood chiefly in their way, and hindered them from submitting to the faith

and simplicity of the gospel; *for how can you believe*, said our Lord to them, (John v. 44,) *who receive glory one from another, and the glory which is from God alone you do not seek.* So pernicious it is to the soul to be a slave to *vain-glory*.

Conclude, O my soul, for thy part, ever to seek the glory of God, by a purity of intention in all thy words and actions; and God will be *thy reward exceeding great*. If what thou art saying or doing, be right in his eyes; it matters not what the world thinks or says of thee, or of thy performances; but if he disapproves of thy conduct, it will be of no service to thee to be esteemed and applauded by the whole world; for, "He that has a mind to be praised by men, whilst he is dispraised by God, shall not be justified by men when he shall be judged by God, nor rescued by men when he shall be condemned by God." *St. Augustine, Confess. l. x. ch. 36.*

OCTOBER 14.

On the Vice of Covetousness.

CONSIDER, first, that the vice of *covetousness* consists in having too great a love, desire or concern for money, or other worldly goods and possessions, so as to set one's heart upon them, to be uneasy and solicitous about them, to covet them eagerly when absent, to take too great a complacency in them when present, and to make them the darling of one's affections. The malignity of this vice may easily be discovered, from its opposition to God and to his worship, and to every branch of divine charity; which is so great, that, in the language of the scripture, *covetousness* is named the *erving of idols*, and the *covetous* man is declared to be an *idolater*, (Eph. v. 5. Colos. iii. 5,) because he worships and loves his money more than God; and what is idolatry, but *worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator?* Rom. i. 25. Yes, the covetous man serves Mammon, *the god of this world*, more than the living God of heaven; for the love of Mammon he turns his back upon his Maker, neglects his love and service, and is ever ready to break through his heavenly law and commandments, rather than forego his worldly interest; to which he sacrifices his soul and all, and for the sake of which he hardens his heart against the necessities of his neighbours, and the cries of the poor. O, how evidently is here verified that of the wise man, (Ecclus. x. 10,) *There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale.*

Consider, secondly, the malignity of this vice of loving money, from its unhappy offspring, that is, from the innumerable evils

which it daily produces. It is the mother of theft and robberies, of fraud and deceit, of oppression of the poor, of usury and extortion, and of all manner of injustices; it employs innumerable lies and perjuries to support its darling idol. It is the parent of bribery and corruption, and of all the sad consequences this evil produces in the world. It even creeps into the sanctuary, and too often profanes it with manifold abuses and sacrileges. It has often brought forth heresies and schisms too, (1 Timothy vi. 10,) and with them a deluge of other crimes; it has pillaged and destroyed churches, hospitals, and monasteries, and invaded and carried off the patrimony of the poor, &c. It has even betrayed and sold the Son of God himself. O cursed love of money! how long shalt thou thus, like a second deluge, drown the whole world! When shall thy tyranny have an end? Wilt thou never cease to fill the world with all sort of crimes, and hell with souls?

Consider, thirdly, that this vice of *covetousness*, besides all this brood of evils, which it daily brings forth, produces many other sad effects in the soul of man, even than when it does not hurry him into those more scandalous excesses specified above, and when, in the eyes of the world, it appears more innocent. For where a person, though he covets not perhaps the goods of his neighbour, yet sets his affection too much upon riches or worldly possessions, and eagerly pursues after money, he quickly loses all relish for heavenly things, and all true sense of devotion; his heart is filled with the love of the world, and with many cares and anxious solitudes about the things of the world, which, like thorns, choke up the seed of the word, and of the grace of God, and hinder it from bringing forth the fruits of faith, hope and charity, in their due time. The love of riches overpowers his love of God and of his neighbour; the care of his eternal salvation is no longer his principal concern; he loses that confidence he ought to have in divine providence; he neglects religious duties; he does not give alms according to his circumstances; in a word, he is continually in danger of breaking through the law of God, by commission or omission, for the love of money; so dreadful are the consequences of covetousness, even than when it pretends to keep itself within the bounds of justice!

Conclude to beware of this vice of *covetousness*, as of one of the worst of the enemies of thy soul, so much the more dangerous to thee, as it is too apt to impose upon persons with specious pretexts of worldly prudence and of necessity; insomuch, that oftentimes they that are the most covetous, and whose heart is quite set upon this worldly mammon, are scarcely sensible of their disease, however grievous and mortal. O take care, my soul, not to deceive thyself, nor to suffer thyself to be deceived. Ex-

amine well the bent of thy thoughts, and of the affections of thy heart, and thou wilt easily discover where thy treasure is.

OCTOBER 15.

Prescriptions against Covetousness, out of Holy Writ.

CONSIDER, first, in what manner the word of God, in innumerable places, declares itself against this vice of *covetousness*. The wise man tells us, (Prov. i. 19,) that *the ways of every covetous man destroy the soul of the possessors*; and (Eccl. x. 9,) that *nothing is more wicked than the covetous man*. Isaias (chap. v. 9) pronounces a *woe* against the covetous; and (chap. xxxiii. 15) promises eternal blessings to them that *cast away covetousness*. Jeremias threatens the Jews with the worst of evils, (chap. vi. and viii,) *because, from the least to the greatest, they all were given to covetousness*. Amos also, (ix. 1,) and Habacuc (ii. 6, 9,) denounce the like judgments and woes from God against the *covetous*. Our Lord himself (Mark vii. 22) reckons *covetousness* amongst those crimes of the heart, that defile a man. And St. Paul (Rom. i. 29) gives it a place in that black list of sins, of which he pronounces, (verse 32,) that *they who do such things are worthy of death, even the second death, of a miserable eternity*. And again, (1 Cor. vi. 10,) he declares that the *covetous* shall never *possess the kingdom of God*; and (Eph. v. 5,) that they *have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ*. And shall not the thunder of so many terrible sentences, pronounced by the Spirit of God, against covetousness, deter Christians from this unhappy love of money?

Consider, secondly, from the word of God, that these riches, which men so earnestly covet, are not capable of making them happy, or of satisfying the heart. *A covetous man, saith Solomon, (Eccles. v. 9,) shall not be satisfied with money; and he that loveth riches shall reap no fruit from them*. O, daily experience confirms to us that truth, which this wisest of men had learnt by his own experience, that the wealth of this world, instead of bringing along with it true content, and peace to the soul, is generally attended with nothing but *vanity and vexation of mind*, Eccles. i. 11. Riches are *deceitful*, (St. Matt. xiii,) because they promise a happiness which they cannot give; they are *thorns* (ibidem) that wound and gore the soul; and they expose the possessors to many dreadful dangers of losing their souls for ever; because it is hard to possess them, and not to abuse them, or put confidence in them, or at least set the heart too much upon them; witness that terrible sentence, (Matt. xix. 24,) *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the*

kingdom of heaven. Hence our Lord pronounces a *woe to the rich*, (Luke vi. 24,) *because they have their consolation here*. And the apostle, (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10,) warns us against the love of *riches*, as of all things the most dangerous and pernicious to our souls. O that men would be wise, and lay up in their hearts these Scripture truths! O that they would learn to despise these *false riches*, and only seek for such as are *true*, which men can neither give nor take away! O that they would always seek to be *rich in good works*; and so to *lay up to themselves treasures in heaven*, where neither rust nor moth can consume, nor thieves break through and steal! Matt. vi. 20.

Consider, thirdly, that the word of God recommends the remembrance of death, and the shortness and uncertainty of human life, as a powerful remedy against *covetousness*. Alas! how quickly will death be with us! And where shall all our riches be then? *I will say to my soul*, said the rich man, (Luke xii. 19, 20,) *thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry*. But God said to him, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be called for; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* O, how true it is, with regard to the worldly-rich, that the satisfaction which they take or propose to themselves in their wealth, is at the best but a dream; and that when they have *slept out their short sleep*, they *find nothing in their hands*, Psalm lxxv. No: *we brought nothing with us into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out*, 1 Tim. vi. 7. Wherefore, *having food, and wherewith to be covered*, let us be content. Now, these necessities will never be wanting to such as *seek in the first place the kingdom of God, and his justice*; we have Christ's own word for it, Matt. vi. 33. Give ear again to the apostle, Hebr. xiii. 5—*Let your manners be without covetousness, contented with such things as you have, for he hath said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee*.

Conclude to oppose these divine lessons against all the temptations of covetousness and worldly solicitude. If you are poor by condition, be content with your condition: you are more like Jesus Christ and his saints. Take care not to lose, by your murmuring or impatience, the opportunity he gives you of merit. If you are rich, take occasion of humbling yourselves, to see the wide distance between your way of living and that of your Saviour. Dread the dangers you are exposed to by your riches and arm yourselves against them, by poverty of spirit and humility: you have no other security for your souls.

OCTOBER 16.

On the Vice of Impurity.

CONSIDER, first, that the *lust of the flesh*, or the inordinate love of the unclean pleasures of the flesh, is another raging plague, that has spread itself over the whole earth; and as it once brought down from heaven the waters of the deluge, which drowned all the world; and another time, fire and brimstone, which consumed whole cities, with all their inhabitants; so it daily calls down the vengeance of Heaven, executed by visible or invisible judgments, upon thousands, cut off before their time, in the midst of their sins, and cast down headlong into the bottomless pit. The Scripture has abundantly declared how detestable this vice is in the sight of God, by positively assuring us, in many places, that such as are guilty of it, in any of its kinds, shall never enter the kingdom of heaven, (Rom. i. 1 Cor. vi. Gal. v. Eph. v. Apoc. xxi. and xxii. ;) and in particular, in the account it gives of the causes of the deluge, (Gen. vi,) by informing us, that the general wickedness of men in this line was so odious in the sight of their Maker, that he was grieved with it to the *heart*, and even *repented him that he had made them*, verse 5, 6, 7. By which strong figures of speech, the Holy Spirit would have us to understand, how enormous this vice of impurity is in the eyes of God, seeing that he, who by nature is incapable of grief or repentance, or any other passion, was determined by the hatred he bears to it, to destroy all these his creatures, whom before he had so much favoured and loved.

Consider, secondly, that what makes the vice of *the lust of the flesh* so odious in the sight of God is its particular opposition to *his purity and sanctity*, by its defiling, in a most shameful and beastly manner, that *temple* which he has sanctified for himself; and this more especially with regard to Christians, whose bodies and souls have both of them been dedicated and consecrated to him, in their baptism; both of which, by their yielding to impurity, are shamefully violated and profaned, are brought down to the resemblance of brute beasts, and given up to be the hold of unclean devils. *Know you not that you are the temple of God*, saith St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17,) *and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy.* And again, (chap. vi. 15,) *Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ, &c., and (v. 19,) the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God. And you are not your own. For you are bought with a great price; glorify and carry God in your body* O Christians, attend to this heavenly doctrine, and see you never more presume to be guilty of so crying a sacrilege as to profane

and defile the temple of the living God ; to drive him out of his temple, and to set up filthy idols in his place ; see you never bring in the devil thither, and sacrifice your soul to him, for the sake of a base, filthy, carnal satisfaction, that can last but for a moment.

Consider, thirdly, the dreadful consequences of yielding to the vice of impurity, and the dismal slavery to which it reduces the soul. One act presently begets a habit, or violent inclination ; this drags the poor soul on to new crimes ; and, by indulging these, a custom is formed which turns into a second nature, infinitely hard to be overcome, and which, without ceasing, exercises a most cruel tyranny upon the soul. Hence follow all those worst of evils, which St. Gregory (l. xxxi. Moral. c. 31) calls *the daughters of luxury*, or lust, as being the usual effects of a habit of impurity ; namely, a blindness and hardness of heart ; a running headlong into the worst of dangers ; a thoughtlessness and insensibility with regard to the judgments of God and the truths of eternity ; an inconstancy with regard to every thing that is good ; an aversion to God and to his service, and a perpetual love and seeking of one's self ; a strong attachment to this world, and a horror or despair with regard to the world to come. Such is the unhappy offspring of lust ; a train of evils not to be matched on this side of hell. Sweet Jesus, deliver us both from the mother and the daughters.

Conclude to fly from all impurity more than death ; and from all the dangerous company, or other occasions, that may expose thee to temptations in this kind, more than from a house infected with the plague. The pestilence can only take away the temporal life of the body, but impurity will kill the soul for eternity.

OCTOBER 17.

Prescriptions against Impurity.

CONSIDER, first, that the most necessary of all prescriptions and precautions against impurity, is to keep at a distance from the danger, and to fly all the immediate occasions of it ; more especially the company and conversation of all such persons as are a temptation to us ; as also the reading of loose or idle books, such as romances, plays, &c. ; the frequenting of masquerades and comedies ; the indulging too much the sensual appetite in eating and drinking ; the giving too great a liberty to the eyes, (which are the *windows through which the death of lust usually enters into the soul*,) or to roving imaginations and dangerous amusements ; and the leading of an idle and dissipated life. The indulging of one's self in all, or any of these ways, opens the gates

of the soul to lust; and *he that loves the danger shall perish in it*, Eccus. iii. 27. This enemy is ever lying in wait for us, to shoot his fiery darts at our heart; we must, then, be always upon our guard, and keep ourselves, as much as possible, out of his reach; we must take the alarm at every motion of his, and dread the approach of danger; we must not play or dally with him, by taking or admitting of any freedoms or liberties, even of a lesser degree: he that will venture to play with a wild beast, must expect a mortal gripe. If our Lord has assured us, (Matt. v. 28,) that a wanton glance of the eye is capable to bring death to the soul, how much more a wanton touch or embrace?

Consider, secondly, that our corrupt nature is so prone to this evil of impurity, and the allurements and temptations to it are so common, and withal so violent, especially in youth, that the *flight* of the occasions alone will not suffice to gain the victory over this vice without frequent conflicts, (for whither shall we fly where the flesh and the devil will not follow us?) and therefore it will be also necessary for us to *fight*, and consequently to provide ourselves with proper arms for this warfare; and as we are not strong enough of ourselves to overcome such formidable enemies, we must engage Heaven on our side, in order to secure the victory. This infers the necessity, if we would get the better of lust, of a diligence in all spiritual exercises; of frequent and fervent prayer; of frequenting the sacraments; of daily reading and meditating on divine truths; of having frequent recourse to the precious blood of Christ, the source of all grace, by a constant devotion to his sacred passion and death; and of earnestly craving the prayers and intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the holy angels and saints. More especially, when we find ourselves assaulted with these temptations, we must resolutely resist the first motions of the enemy, by turning ourselves immediately to Jesus Christ crucified; calling upon him with all our power, *Lord, save me, or I perish*; hiding ourselves in his wounds, and not ceasing to implore his mercy and grace, till the temptation ceases.

Consider, thirdly, what kind of arms we must provide for this warfare; namely, a lively faith, and a strong confidence in Jesus Christ, joined with an humble diffidence in our own strength; (for if we have any dependence on the strength of our own resolutions, we shall certainly fall;) a sense also of the presence of God; and, above all things, the fear and love of God. The fear of his divine judgments, that always hang over the heads of wilful sinners; the remembrance of the approaches of death; the consideration of the worm that shall never die, and of the fire that shall never be quenched, prepared for the punishment of lust, are certainly powerful restraints to keep the soul from con-

senting to a crime, which she has reason to apprehend may be followed the next moment by death, judgment and hell. But the love of God is a still more powerful restraint; because it discovers such charms in his infinite beauty and infinite goodness, as make all the allurements of lust appear not only most wretched and contemptible, but also most odious and abominable.

Conclude to make use of all these prescriptions against this mortal enemy of thy soul. Fly, whenever thou art able; for this is a war, in which thou art not allowed to seek the occasions of meeting with the enemy, or of facing him. When thou canst not fly, fight; but with thy eye turned away from the enemy, and fixed on Christ crucified. Make a good provision for thyself, by the help of daily meditations of the fear and love of God, and he will give thee the victory.

OCTOBER 18.

On the Virtue of Chastity.

CONSIDER, first, the excellence of the virtue of *chastity*, which makes us, in this mortal flesh, resemble in some measure the angels in heaven, (Matt. xxii. 30,) and which entitles us to be the special favourites of Jesus Christ, the Lover of purity, and the Spouse of pure souls, who, when he came amongst us, would not be born but of the purest of virgins, and ever showed the most particular love to his virgin disciple St. John, (to whom also, on account of his purity, he recommended his virgin mother, when he was dying on the cross, John xix. 27,) and who, in heaven, is ever followed by virgins, whithersoever he goeth, who sing before the throne, as it were a new canticle, which none of the rest of the blessed can sing, Apoc. xiv. 3, 4. Chastity is the lily of virtues, the bright ornament of the soul; the profession and practice of which, by so many thousands, is one of the greatest evidences of the truth and of the excellency of the Christian religion, of the wonderful grace it communicates to its followers, and of the purity and sanctity of the Author of it. O my soul, let us ever esteem, love and embrace this angelical virtue, which makes its lovers the favourites of Heaven.

Consider, secondly, in what manner this virtue is recommended to all Christians, by the apostle, 1 Thess. iv. 3, 4, 7, *This is the will of God, saith he, your sanctification, (that is, that you should be pure and holy,) that you should abstain from fornication, (from all uncleanness,) that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (his body) in sanctification and honour: not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles, who know not God—for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness, that is, to*

purity and chastity. Yes, Christians, the virtue of *chastity*, by the will and law of God, and by the sanctity of the Christian calling, is for all, married as well as unmarried. The married must be *chaste*, not only by keeping their *bed undefiled* with adultery or any unnatural excess; but also by refraining from every thought, word or action, that is not confined within the sacred limits fixed by the divine law of matrimony, or that is not referred to any of these holy ends, for which God instituted marriage. O, how necessary is this conjugal chastity! O, how many thousands are lost in this state, by allowing themselves many criminal liberties, and falsely imagining every thing to be lawful for them, which their unbridled passion suggests! The unmarried, also, must keep themselves pure and *chaste*, by a constant care absolutely to resist and to renounce all carnal pleasures, and all the irregular motions or impressions of lust, either in body or mind.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to procure or maintain this precious virtue of chastity, besides the necessity of fervent prayer (*for no one can be continent, except God give it, Wisd. viii. 21.*) two other virtues are also necessary, without which chastity will not be able to stand her ground for any long time in the soul, namely, mortification and humility. By mortification, the *flesh* is brought under subjection to the *spirit*; and by humility, the *spirit* is subjected to God; and thus the whole man becomes regular and orderly, and easily resists the passions of lust. But where the flesh is unmortified, it grows headstrong and unruly; and where the spirit is proud, it is justly abandoned by God to the slavery of those shameful passions, from which it shall never be delivered but by humility.

Conclude to labour with all thy power for the acquisition of this precious jewel of purity and chastity. O, spare no cost to purchase it; it is worth all thou canst give for it, and infinitely more. But remember it will never stay long with thee, if thou give entertainment to its mortal enemies, intemperance and pride.

OCTOBER 19.

On the Vice of Anger.

CONSIDER, first, that *anger*, in the sense in which it is numbered amongst the capital sins, is *an inordinate love or desire of revenge*; and is a mortal sin, as often as the evil it wishes, or the vengeance or punishment it pretends to take, is considerably contrary, either to justice or to Christian charity, that is, to that love we owe to every neighbour by the law of Christ, even to our greatest enemies. Our anger, or desire of revenge, is contrary

to justice, whenever the person we are angry with has not deserved the punishment we desire to inflict ; or, though he has deserved it, if we do not observe the order of justice, but make ourselves both judges and executioners too, by taking revenge for ourselves, by our own private authority, which is never allowable. Our anger and desire of revenge is contrary to fraternal charity, when, let the cause be ever so just, we prosecute or punish the offender, not out of the love of justice, but out of hatred or ill will to the person, or merely to gratify a disorderly passion. In such cases as these, our anger and revenge is criminal, because it strikes at one or both of those principal virtues of justice and charity ; and where either of these is grievously wounded, there is no soundness in the soul.

Consider, secondly, that anger, passion and desire of revenge, when deliberately consented to, are also infinitely opposite to those other favourite virtues of Jesus Christ, *meekness, humility, mercy, peace, patience, long-suffering, renouncing our own will, bearing the cross*, and the like ; which are all of them strongly recommended by his Gospel, and jointly make up the amiable character of his disciples. These are the livery of his servants, by which he expects they should be known and distinguished. These we are to learn of him, Matt. xi. 29. If we do not endeavour seriously to study and practise these lessons, he will not own us for his disciples ; if we do not wear his livery, he will not acknowledge us for his servants. But O, how irreconcilable is this passion of anger, when it reigns in the soul, with every one of these Christian virtues ! It directly destroys all *meekness* and consequently *humility*, its individual companion ; for anger generally springs from pride and self-love : it is a stranger to *mercy*, according to that of Solomon, (Prov. xxvii. 4.) *anger hath no mercy* : it is even a short madness, that is capable, for the time it lasts, of inflicting the worst of evils, or desiring the worst of judgments ; it breaks *peace* both with God and our neighbour, and banishes it from our own souls : it is the mortal enemy of *patience* and *long-suffering*, for it will endure to suffer nothing ; much less will it admit of *the renouncing of our own will*, or of our submitting to *take up the cross* ; because these are virtues that strike at its very root, and destroy it wherever they meet with it ; and therefore it cannot endure them. And shalt thou, my soul, any longer indulge a passion that robs thee at once of all these lovely virtues, and, instead of a servant and a disciple, makes thee an enemy of Jesus Christ ?

Consider, thirdly, what a train of other evils and sins usually accompany or follow this passion of anger ; what oaths, curses and blasphemies ; what affronts, reproaches and injuries ; what quarrels, strife and brawls ; yea, sometimes, bloodshed and mur-

der too: what malice, hatred and revenge; besides the scandal that is given to those we are angry with; the robbing them not only of their peace, but also of the grace of God, by provoking them to sin; as one fire is apt to enkindle or nourish another. Not to speak of many other sad effects of this vice, which is frequently pernicious to the health of the body, as well as that of the soul, and makes them that are slaves to it insupportable both to themselves and to all that have any dealings with them. O, my soul, let us ever detest this infernal fury, which daily produces so much mischief in the world, to the eternal damnation of innumerable souls.

Conclude to give ear to the heavenly lessons against anger and revenge, so often inculcated in holy writ, to learn them well and to follow them in practice, Rom. xii. 17, &c. *Render to no man evil for evil—if it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved, but give place to wrath; for it is written, Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat, &c. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good, Eph. iv. 24, 26, &c. Put on the new man, &c. Let not the sun set upon your anger—let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind to one another, &c. Gal. v. 19, &c. The works of the flesh are manifest—enmities, contentions, emulations, wrath, quarrels, dissensions, &c. Of which I foretell you—that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long-suffering, mildness, &c.* O, how happy are those souls in whom the Spirit of God produces these fruits! But how miserable are they in whom the opposite spirit brings forth those other dead works of the flesh, the end of which is the second death!

OCTOBER 20.

Remedies against the Vice of Anger.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to subdue the passion of anger, and to keep it within the bounds fixed by the divine law, we must *watch*, we must *pray*, and we must *fight* against it. But, to the end we may be quite in earnest in this warfare, we must, in the first place, be thoroughly convinced how dangerous an enemy we have to deal with; that our all is here at stake; and that, if we suffer this tyrant to hold the dominion of our souls, neither the gift of tongues, nor prophecy, nor knowledge, nor faith, though strong enough to move mountains, or to raise the dead to life,

nor giving our whole substance to the poor, nor our bodies to the flames, will ever bring us to Jesus Christ. Because, as long as we refuse to take up his yoke upon us, by denying ourselves, and learning of him to be meek and humble of heart, we are none of his, for we have not his Spirit. And therefore he will declare to us, *I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity* O, ye slaves to anger and revenge, have you ever well considered this? O, how is it possible, that so many thousands, that pretend to believe the Gospel, and that expect to be saved by it, should be so indifferent about subduing this mortal enemy to the spirit of the gospel, and to the salvation of their souls!

Consider, secondly, more in particular, those three prescriptions against this passion, namely, *watching, praying, and fighting*. First, we must *watch* the motions of this enemy, whose attacks are the most dangerous when they are sudden and unforeseen; and therefore we must forecast, for example, in the morning, the occasions in which we may likely meet with provocations or temptations, that so we may either decline them, or at least prepare and arm ourselves against them. Secondly, we must *pray*, with all the fervour and earnestness of our soul, for the victory which God alone can give; and we must pray with an humble distrust in ourselves, and an entire confidence in God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the great Pattern of meekness, patience and humility. Thirdly, we must *fight*; by resisting, without delay, the first assaults of the enemy; by calling in all the powers of the soul to still the storm that begins to arise; by running to the embraces of the cross; by turning away from the temptation, and going out of the company, or at least by keeping silence till the commotion is over, or answering nothing but with sweetness and meekness. Consider, thirdly, that, in order to overcome our passion, we must also learn to despise and humble ourselves; for anger usually proceeds from an unhappy pride, which makes us ever unwilling to be thwarted or contradicted, or opposed by any one, and therefore makes us swell with indignation, and fly at them that oppose us, and seek to revenge every little slight we receive either in word or deed. Alas! if we did but know ourselves and what poor wretches indeed we are, and what we have deserved by our sins, there would be no room left for our being angry with any person, for either slighting or offending us, who, by our having so often and so grievously offended our Creator, have justly deserved that all his creatures should rise up against us, and revenge his cause upon us, and that they should both despise us and abhor us.

Conclude to make use of all these remedies against this unhappy passion, and never to make any truce with it, till thou hast

brought it under; otherwise it will fill thee with sin, and will never suffer either peace or grace to abide in thy soul.

OCTOBER 21.

On the Vice of Intemperance.

CONSIDER, first, that another capital enemy of the soul is the vice of *intemperance*, that is, of immoderation or excess in eating or drinking, which is a mortal sin as often as it exposes a person to the danger of a considerable prejudice, either in his soul or body, health or reason; or when it shortens his days, as it frequently happens, like a slow poison, though the effects of it are not immediately perceived; and in general, when, for the sake of the pleasure in eating or drinking, a person does not stick to transgress the commandments of God or the church, or otherwise sets his affection so much upon gratifying his sensual appetite, as to make this the study and business of his life, like those of whom the apostle says, (Phil. iii,) that they *make a god of their belly*, and of whom he pronounces, with tears, that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ, and that their end is destruction*. O, how true it is, that the vice of intemperance is absolutely irreconcilable with the spirit of Christianity, and with that penitential and mortified life, which is enjoined by the gospel, as the narrow way that leads to everlasting life! O, it is an enemy indeed to the cross of Christ.

Consider, secondly, the innumerable evils, in every kind, that are the daily consequences of sins of intemperance; how they change men into brutes, rob them of their reason, destroy their health, bring upon them a variety of diseases, shorten their lives, consume their substance, disturb the peace of their families, withdraw from their wives and children their necessary subsistence, give scandal and bad example to their neighbours, foment their passions and lusts, enslave them to their sensual inclinations, make them unfit for prayer and other spiritual exercises, and quite dull and insensible to the things of God, in a word, how they shut the gate against the grace of God, and all that is good, and open it to all that is evil. The consequence of which is, that these sins, when indulged, and once come to a habit, are the most difficult of all to be cured; and too often, not to say generally, follow men to their graves, and plunge their impenitent souls into those flames, where, with the rich glutton, (Luke xvi,) they shall hunger and thirst for all eternity, and never obtain the least refreshment.

Consider, thirdly, in what manner the Holy Ghost declares himself against this vice of intemperance, in the word of God

Who hath wo? saith Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. Whose father hath wo? Who hath contentions? Who falls into pits? Who hath wounds without cause, &c. Surely, they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups. Ecclus. xix. 2. Wine and women make wise men fall away, &c. Isaias v. 22. Wo to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness. St. Luke xxi. 34. Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness—and that day come upon you suddenly. Rom. xiii. 12, 13. Let us cast off the works of darkness, &c.—Walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, &c. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers—nor drunkards, &c. shall possess the kingdom of God. Gal. v. 19, &c. The works of the flesh are manifest, which are fornication, uncleanness—drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God. O, see, ye gluttons and drunkards, enemies of the cross of Christ, where your portion is like to be, since you have no share in the kingdom of God.

Conclude to meditate well upon these Scripture truths, and these dreadful woes pronounced against intemperance, and never be so foolish and mad, as to sell thy birthright in God's eternal kingdom, with all the ravishing joys of his heavenly banquet, for so mean, so unworthy, so beastly a thing, as the gratifying for a moment thy sensual appetite.

OCTOBER 22.

Prescriptions against Intemperance.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to overcome the vice of intemperance, one of the first and most necessary prescriptions is to fly the occasions of it, and to keep, as much as possible, at a distance from the danger, which is always at hand in the revellings or drinking-bouts of worldlings, and ought always to be apprehended in such places and companies where excess is promoted and encouraged by common practice and example. Let not him that has already experienced his own weakness, by falling into sin in such occasions, venture himself any more there. The burnt-child ought to dread the fire. Much less should he, that has unhappily contracted a habit of intemperance, expose himself to such places or companies, whatever the consequences of the refusal may be; he will never get the better of that pernicious habit, as long as he frequents such places and such company. Let no man here deceive himself with pretexes of civility or necessity: his soul is at stake; eternity is at stake. O, let

him not risk his all, for fear of displeasing drunken companions, the plague is amongst them: let him fly far away from the infection. The devil is amongst them: there is death in their cups; a mortal poison that reaches even to the soul. Hell is following them close at the heels; let him keep off from them, lest he also be involved in their destruction.

Consider, secondly, that the arms which are to be employed against the vice of intemperance, are particularly *prayer* and *mortification*. *Fervent prayer*, frequently repeated, draws down the powerful assistance of God's grace, without which, this evil, which is too natural to our corruption, is not to be overcome. And *mortification* disarms the enemy, by restraining the sensual appetite, and bringing it into due order and subjection. Every Christian, as such, ought to aim at leading a *mortified* life, in quality of a disciple of a crucified God; he must endeavour to walk in the *narrow way*, by a general *self-denial*, if he expects to arrive at true life, and would be acknowledged by his Lord and Master for one of his. How much more is every sinner, if he hopes to secure to himself the remission of his sins, by being a penitent indeed, obliged to expiate them by fasting, and other *mortifications* and penitential exercises. Now, the putting in practice this *mortification* and *penance*, which is so general a duty, will effectually deliver us from the tyranny of intemperance, and even cut off all the approaches of this enemy. O, let us embrace, then, this happy means of gaining a complete victory over this mortal evil and all its wretched train of sins.

Consider, thirdly, that the most sovereign means of all for subduing intemperance, and indeed all other vices, is a daily application of the soul to the study of *true wisdom*, by the exercise of recollection and mental prayer, and the contemplation of heavenly truths. This helps the soul to another kind of appetite, which will grow daily upon her, for the things of God, and gives her a loathing and disgust for all sensual and carnal satisfactions. The relish of truth, the sweet savour of the heavenly manna, found in the conversation with God in our interior; the consideration and meditation on his eternal feast, where he shall *in-briate* his guests *with the never-failing plenty of his house, and make them drink of the torrent of his pleasure*, at the very head of the *fountain of life, which is with him*, is abundantly sufficient to wean the soul that accustoms herself to this kind of diet, from all sensual affections, and to give her an effectual and eternal abhorrence for all those husks of swine, that keep earthly-minded Christians both from the table and from the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

Conclude to follow these prescriptions, if thou wouldst effectually be preserved from, or cured of, this mortal disease of in

temperance. Even in thy ordinary meals and necessary refreshments, let not sensuality hurry thee away to indulge thyself in eating and drinking merely for the pleasure of it, but take that necessary support of nature, with a pure intention, in obedience to the will of God, as a medicine for the preserving of thy health and season it with the remembrance of the gall and vinegar of thy Saviour.

OCTOBER 23.

On the Vice of Envy.

CONSIDER, first, that *envy* is a repining, or an uneasiness of mind, at another's good, which the envious man conceives to be an evil to himself, as lessening or obscuring his glory, or the esteem and excellence which he aims at. So that envy, though commonly reckoned amongst the capital sins, because of the many other crimes that spring from it, is indeed a daughter of pride, and, generally speaking, bears her company, and sticks close to this her unhappy mother. "The proud," as St. Augustin takes notice, "through the love they have to their own excelling, envy them that are their equals, because they come up to them; their inferiors, from an apprehension lest they should become their equals; and them that are superior to them, because they cannot equal them." This envy, like her mother, is a mortal sin, of the spiritual kind, which makes a dreadful havoc in the soul, and yet too often is scarce taken notice of by the unthinking children of the world. Christians, look well into yourselves, that this devouring serpent may have no lurking hole in your interior, there to prey upon the vitals of your soul. Watch and pray continually against it.

Consider, secondly, that the malignity of envy proceeds from its direct opposition to charity, the queen of all virtues. For charity is a joy in the glory of God, and in the good of our neighbours; whereas envy grieves at both the one and the other. God ought to be glorified, for all his gifts and graces, which, with a bountiful hand, he so plentifully bestows upon his creatures. Now, the envious man, instead of giving glory to God, on these occasions, is grieved at his goodness, and would willingly, if he could, stop up the channel of his divine bounties: and can there be a greater perversity? Again, the love that we owe to our neighbours, by Christian charity, requires that we should consider their good as our own, since we are to love them as ourselves; and consequently that we should rejoice at their good as at our own; and thus the good Christian meets with daily occasions of satisfaction and joy, in every good thing that befalls any

one of his neighbours, because the charity he has for them makes him consider them all as his dear friends and brethren in Christ. But envy grieves where charity rejoices, and makes its slaves every day more and more miserable, by giving them fresh sadness and pain, as often as they see or hear of any advantage of their neighbours. And is not this again a strange perversity, to prefer sadness before joy, and all the gnawings and gripings of envy before the sweets of charity? But how true it is, that sin can never escape unpunished, since every vice (but more particularly envy) carries with it, even here, its own torment, besides the judgment of hell it shall meet with hereafter! *O thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.*

Consider, thirdly, the malignity of this vice of envy, from its hideous offspring, that is, from the innumerable crimes it gives birth to. Envy is the parent of hatred and malice. The envious are always prone to judge, censure, and condemn their neighbours; to put the worst construction upon all they say or do, and daily to backbite and slander them. They are generally whisperers and tale-bearers, seeking, upon every occasion, to set all others against them whom they envy; they ever oppose, both by word and action, whatsoever tends to their good, and take a malicious satisfaction in all the evil that happens to them. And what mischief is there that such a disposition as this is not capable of? O, it is true, that even the greatest of all crimes have often proceeded from envy. It was envy that made Cain murder his brother Abel; it was envy made the brethren of Joseph sell him into Egypt; it was envy made Saul so often seek the life of David; in fine, it was through envy the Jews crucified the Son of God.

Conclude to detest this monster, with all its imps, and to resist with all thy power even the first motions of it. It is a child of the devil, *by whose envy, death, and all other evils, first came into the world*, and who is continually seeking our ruin, through pure envy, without any manner of advantage to himself. O let us hate and abhor it.

OCTOBER 24.

Remedies against Envy.

CONSIDER, first, that, in order to subdue effectually the passion of envy, we must lay the axe to the root, by a serious application of our souls to extirpate pride and vain-glory, and all that unhappy self-love which gives birth to this passion, and which continually nourishes it, and to plant in its place the true knowledge of ourselves and humility. These two blessed virtues always

bring along with them light and truth, and easily dispel the darkness and error which serve for a covert for envy. Because the true knowledge of ourselves, and humility, clearly show how little reason we have to be either conceited of ourselves or our own excellence, and how groundless and unjust all our pretensions are, either to the favour or esteem of others, or to any preference before others. Now, this conviction makes us willing to be overlooked and despised by every one, and to sit down in the lowest place, as most suitable to our deserts; and consequently leaves no room for us to repine at any one's being esteemed or preferred before us, or having any other advantage whatsoever. And thus the light of truth, which humility communicates to the soul, effectually banishes from her this vice of envy, which delights in darkness, and cannot endure the light. If then, my soul, thou wouldst be out of the reach of this hellish monster, learn to be truly humble; for an humble soul can never be envious.

Consider, secondly, that the most sovereign remedy against envy, is to labour to settle the soul in that perfect union and universal charity, which the Son of God requires of us all, as absolutely necessary to our salvation, and as the true test of our being his disciples. This charity directly attacks the monster wheresoever it finds it, and gives no quarter to any of its offspring. Wheresoever charity reigns, envy, hatred, malice, backbiting, and all the rest of that cursed train, immediately fly away. O blessed charity, which bringest along with thee all other virtues, and which drivest away all vices! Come thou, then, and take up thy eternal abode in my soul. I know that without thee I am nothing; and that whatsoever other advantages I may possess, if thou art wanting, they will avail me nothing. But all good things will come with thee. O, I will seek thee, then, without ceasing; I will prefer thee before all the treasures of the universe; I will spare no pains to find thee, nor cost to purchase thee; I will live and die in thy embraces; and thou shalt deliver me from all my vices and passions, and bring me to my God. For my *God is charity.*

Consider, thirdly, that envy, like all other vices, is to be overcome by fervent prayer for imploring the divine assistance, without which we can do nothing; and by serious considerations and meditations upon the great Christian truths, more especially such as may effectually open the eyes of the soul to see the emptiness and vanity of all these worldly toys, and of all earthly and temporal things, which so suddenly vanish away, and the greatness of things eternal; that so the soul may despise and loathe these lying follies, (the love of which nourishes both envy and pride,) and set her heart only upon the eternal honours, riches and pleas-

ures, of the kingdom of heaven, where envy has no access, and where that perfect charity reigns, which makes the blessed take an inexpressible delight in each other's happiness, to the great increase of their own. O, thus it ought to be with all Christians, since they all aspire to this same heavenly country, the place of everlasting peace and love, and have all manner of ties to oblige them to the strictest union and love; as they have all the same father and mother, God and his church; are all brethren in Christ, are all redeemed by his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit in baptism; and all partake of his body and blood, the sacrament of unity and love; and therefore ought all to have but one heart and one soul. O, what a heaven should we have upon earth, if it were so with all Christians! There would be no occasion for prescriptions against envy.

Conclude to have recourse, upon all occasions, to these three excellent antidotes, humility, charity and prayer, and the subtle poison of envy shall not have any force upon thee. O, how blind. how unhappy are they, who, through envy, become evil themselves, by occasion of another's good; and are so perverse in their choice, as to prefer the bitterness and racking pains of this vice before the pleasure and satisfaction of charity.

OCTOBER 25.

On the Vice of Spiritual Sloth.

CONSIDER, first, that *spiritual sloth* is a most pernicious evil, whether we consider it in a more general acceptation, as it is a laziness of spirit, or a backwardness, negligence and carelessness with regard to all the things of God, and all Christian virtues, with a loathing and repugnance to the taking of any pains for the acquisition of them; or as it is taken by divines, when they number it amongst the seven capital sins, as it is a particular indisposition of the soul, with regard to the love of God, opposite to the virtues of godliness, devotion and prayer, and a loathing, as it were, of divine love in the soul. The former is a more extensive evil, an enemy to all virtues in general, by opposing them all; and a mother, or nurse, of all other vices, by letting them all in, and nourishing them all in the soul. The latter is particularly opposite to the divine virtue of charity, the queen of all virtues, and to the glory of God's name, and his kingdom in our souls; and therefore, when it is considerable in its kind, it is a great mortal sin, by reason of its direct opposition to divine love, which it banishes from the soul. And no wonder; for, if it be a great crime to oppose the spiritual good of our neighbour, by envying or resisting the reign of the love of God in his soul, it must

be no less criminal to withstand and oppose the coming of the kingdom of God's grace, and his love into our own souls.

Consider, secondly, the numberless evils that flow from this vice of *spiritual sloth*, when once it possesses the soul, more especially in the way of sins of omission, such as the neglect of prayer, and of all other religious exercises, the keeping away from the sacraments, and consequently the stopping up, or turning off from the soul, all the channels of divine grace, and laying her open, unguarded and defenceless, to all her enemies. And thus the slothful soul is made a daily prey to Satan and to sin, and lives in a manner without God. Hence the daughters of this *spiritual sloth*, according to St. Gregory, are 1. *despair*, or giving up the cause of God, and of the soul, so as to have neither hope nor concern for one's eternal salvation; 2. *pusillanimity*, or cowardice, dreading or flying from the least pains or labour in the service of God; 3. *a numbness* of soul, with regard to all the divine precepts; 4. *malice*, or an aversion to all sanctity, and to the professors of it; 5. *a rancour*, or indignation, against all such as seek to bring us to God; and, lastly, *a dissipation* of mind, turned away from the things of God, and always running after creatures. From the unhappy fruits, you may judge of the naughtiness of the tree which produces them, and learn to dread so pernicious a vice.

Consider, thirdly, that this vice of sloth is the more dangerous, because, like the rest of the *spiritual sins*, it lies deeper in the soul, and is easier overlooked by such as will not take the pains to think, and to examine well the state of their interior. *Carnal sins* are more easily discovered, because their guilt carries with it a greater shame in the eyes of men, which makes it fly in the face of the sinner, and he cannot disguise it; but *spiritual sins* are more heinous in the eyes of God, though not so much considered by men, and often not regarded at all. And thus, as thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of the *spiritual vices of pride, envy, hatred, or covetousness*, unregarded and unrepented of; so, it is to be feared, thousands live and die under the mortal guilt of *spiritual sloth*, unregarded and unrepented of. For what other judgment can we make of those slothful servants, whom the gospel so loudly condemns? or what can be said in favour of them, who, being sent into this world upon no other business but to learn to love and to serve their God, through this unhappy sloth, live and die without so much as once seriously thinking upon this great business, much less putting it in execution?

Conclude to look well to thyself, and to examine thyself well, how thy heart stands affected with regard to the glory of God's name, the advancement of his kingdom within thee, and the reign

of his love. If this be what thou seekest in the first place, all is well ; but if thou admittest of a loathing or repugnance to this, and givest the preference in thy heart to every thing else, assure thyself that the demon of spiritual sloth possesses thy soul, and that God has no share in thee.

OCTOBER 26.

On the Remedies against Spiritual Sloth.

CONSIDER, first, that the sovereign remedy against spiritual sloth, is the daily practice of consideration, particularly by meditating on those moving truths, which either represent to us the infinite goodness of our God, his love for us, the passion of his Son, and those innumerable motives we have to love him, and to be fervent in his service; or else denounce to us his many judgments, both in time and eternity, upon the obstinate opposers of his grace, and the rebels to his love. O, what heart can be so far hardened by sloth, as to stand out against such meditations as these, when frequently repeated! We have a God to serve, and a soul to save. This God is infinitely good, and good to us. He is all goodness, beauty, truth, and all perfection: he is infinitely lovely; and he is our ancient and eternal Lover; his Son came down from heaven for the love of us; he employed his whole life in seeking our salvation; he even died for the love of us; we have received and daily do receive many great benefits from him; his thought is always upon us. And shall not the consideration of all this goodness and love of his for us, oblige us to be fervent in the love of him, and diligent in his service? If we love him, and serve him as we ought, he will be our *Protector* here, and our *Reward exceeding great hereafter*. If we neglect his love and service, he threatens us with eternal evils; and death, judgment and hell are always following us at our heels. And shall not the remembrance of all his promises on the one hand, and of all his threats on the other, effectually rouse us up out of our slothful indolence, and spur us on to labour in earnest for the securing our eternity?

Consider, secondly, that another remedy against sloth is often to reflect, that the short time of this life is given us by our Maker for nothing else but to labour therein, and to labour for an eternity; that we can have no other stock to live on for eternity, but what we provide and send before us, by working well, during the twelve hours of this short day of our mortal life; that every moment of this time is precious; it is even worth an eternity: because, by the good employment of every moment, we may add to our eternal stock, and consequently to our eternal glory; that

what we lose by sloth, is lost for ever, and that the loss is irreparable; that the night will be quickly with us, in which no man can work, and therefore that we must husband well this short, this precious time, and spend it to the best advantage, *labouring by good works to make our calling and election sure.* 2 Peter i. 10. O, what a strict account shall one day be demanded of us, of the employment of this whole time? And where shall the slothful hide their heads at that day?

Consider, thirdly, and set often before your eyes, in order to overcome all spiritual sloth, the life and death of the Son of God, the great Pattern of a Christian, who was never idle, but always employed in doing the will of his Father. O, how happy is the Christian, that endeavours to be always employed in this manner! Read, also, and meditate often on the lives of the saints, and excite yourselves to fervour in the service of God by their example, and by the consideration of their eternal glory. O, what pains do the children of this world daily take, what dangers do they expose themselves daily to, for the sake of a little dirt, which they must leave behind them to-morrow! And is it not a shame that Christians should not do as much for a happy eternity? Remember also, on all occasions, that the eye of your great Master is always upon you, and therefore take care to please him, not only by ever doing something, because such is his will and appointment, but also by labouring to perform all your actions with that perfection, which becomes works done for the service of so great a King.

Conclude to arm thyself by these and such like considerations, against all the mischiefs that are otherwise to be apprehended from this pernicious vice of spiritual sloth; and, that thou mayst keep thyself farther off from its approaches, beware of all tepidity or lukewarmness in the service of God. Often reflect upon the sentence that was passed upon the barren fig tree, (Luke xiii,) and fear, lest, if thou also content thyself with a show of leaves, without bearing good fruit, the Lord of the vineyard may order thee also to be cut up, and cast into the fire.

OCTOBER 27.

On the Christian's Warfare.

CONSIDER, first, that the life of a good Christian is a perpetual warfare; according to that of holy Job, *the life of man upon earth is a warfare*, Job vii. 1. His *time of* a true, settled, and solid *peace*, is not to come, till after many a conflict, and many a victory. He must fight his way to heaven, against a set of cruel, deceitful, and obstinate enemies, who will never let him

alone, either in life or death. These are they, of whom the apostle writes, (Eph. vii. 11. 12,) *Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places; that is, against all the legions of demons, who dwell in this air that surrounds us. These wicked spirits mortally hate us, because we were created to fill up the places they have forfeited by sin; and therefore they never cease to employ a thousand tricks and artifices, a thousand snares and allurements, to draw us away from God, into the pit of sin and damnation. But for our comfort, their power is greatly restrained; they can employ no force against us, nor do us any real hurt at all, except it be by our own free consent, by our unhappily yielding ourselves to them. And, on the other hand, we have a far greater strength engaged to fight on our side, not only of all the host of heaven, ever ready to guard and defend us, but even of the King of heaven himself, whose battles we are fighting, and who never forsakes his soldiers in the war, if they do not first desert from him. And what can the soldiers of Christ desire more? God is for us: what matter is it, then, who is against us? We are sure of victory, if we do not fling down our arms, and desert to the enemy.*

Consider, secondly, that the *devil* and all his wicked ones, knowing how little they can do against us of themselves, have unhappily engaged *the world* and *the flesh* to side with them, as auxiliaries in this warfare. Upon these they depend more than upon all their own troops; and these, in effect, annoy us more, and commonly do much more mischief to our souls, than all those spirits of darkness. By *the world*, we mean the whole collection of poor mortals, who have been already deluded by Satan into the broad road of sin and perdition, and who have embraced, both in principle and practice, the wicked laws, maxims and customs which he has introduced, and continually propagate them, both by word and example. This is that *world*, the slave of Satan, and the mortal enemy of the gospel of Christ, against which he so often pronounces his woes; this is that Babylon, the city of the devil, that is ever waging war against the people of God, and seeking to carry them away captives, and to subject them to its wicked laws. This wicked *world* is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, 1 John ii. 16. This wicked world, and all its pomps, we have renounced at our baptism. Against this capital enemy of our souls, we must fight till death.

Consider, thirdly, that, if *the world* be a dangerous enemy to a Christian soul, because it requires a great courage and strength to go against the current of all its maxims and practices, and to

despise both its allurements and its censures; *the flesh*, on the other hand, is still more difficult to overcome, because it is a domestic enemy that is always at hand, even within this very castle of ours, which is continually besieged by the devil and the world it is a traitor that holds a perpetual correspondence with these enemies, and is ever ready to open the gates of the soul to them For by *the flesh* we mean our own evil inclinations, passions and lusts, which never cease to wage war against the spirit, and which violently incline us to take part with the devil and the world against our God. Hence our Lord, in his gospel, not only requires that we should renounce all other things in the world, how near or dear soever they may be to us, to follow him, but more especially inculcates, that we must renounce also ourselves and hate ourselves in this life, if we desire to be his disciples, and to save our souls. This, then, is the very chief part of the Christian's warfare, to fight continually against ourselves, and to spare no pains to subdue our own flesh, that is, all our corrupt inclinations and passions.

Conclude to declare an eternal war against all these three enemies, and to fight manfully against them till death, and thou shalt not fail to receive the crown of life

OCTOBER 28.

On St. Simon and St. Jude.

CONSIDER, first, the wonders of God in these, and in all the rest of the apostles, whom he raised up, as it were, from the earth and from the dunghill, and made the princes of his people. *The foolish things of the world hath God chosen*, saith St Paul, (1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29,) *that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen, that no flesh should glory in his sight.* The apostles, when they were chosen by Christ, were poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world; they were ignorant and illiterate; they had no power, credit, or interest to recommend them, nor any one of those qualities which the world is fond of, to make them shine in the eyes of men; and yet they are preferred by the wisdom of God, before all the wise, rich, eloquent, learned, noble, or great ones of this world, as most fit to be his instruments in the great work of the conversion of the world, and best qualified by their simplicity and humility, to show forth his glory. Adore here, my soul, the wonderful ways of God, and learn to prefer with him the things that this world despises, before all its false grandeur, deceitful appearances, and ostentation of wisdom.

Consider, secondly, the eminent dignity to which the apostles were raised by our Lord : they were made his disciples, his individual companions, his familiar friends and confidants, yea, his brethren too, *John* xx. 17 : they were made, under him, the chief priests of the New Testament, the first bishops and pastors of his church, the prime ministers of his kingdom, the stewards and dispensers of all his mysteries, his ambassadors to men, his vicegerents upon earth, the doctors and teachers of the whole world, and, next after him who is the chief corner-stone, the twelve foundations of his church, (*Eph.* ii. 20,) yea, the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, *Apoc.* xxi. 14. Reflect also on the distinguishing graces, and the excellency of power, which our Lord conferred upon them, suitable to their great office and callings ; such as the power of consecrating ; and of offering in sacrifice, his sacred body and blood ; of remitting sins, and of opening or shutting heaven's gates to men ; the commission of feeding his flock, and of ruling and directing his church, with the promise of the Holy Ghost to assist them therein ; the authority of publishing through the whole world his new law, the law of grace, and the covenant of salvation through him, &c. ; besides the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and other eminent graces of the Holy Ghost, and a power of working all kind of miracles, yea, even greater than those of Christ himself, *St. John* xiv. 12. Christians, bless your Saviour on the festivals of the apostles, for all these great things he has done for them, and through them, for his church in general, and, in some degree, for every one of you in particular. For, as they were, under Christ, the fathers and founders of the Christian religion, so, from them, and through their ministry, the faith, the word, the sacraments, the graces of Christ, and all spiritual goods and treasures, are derived down to your souls by the channel of their successors in the church of Christ.

Consider, thirdly, the eminent sanctity of the apostles, on account of which they have been so highly honoured by all succeeding generations in the Christian church. They received great graces, and they faithfully co-operated with these graces. At the first call, they left all things else to follow Christ, and, as he bears them witness, (*Luke* xx. 28,) they *remained with him in his temptations*. They were indefatigable in their labours for the propagating of his kingdom, and for the salvation of souls ; their zeal and courage were invincible ; their love for him was stronger than death ; they were ready to meet with death, in every shape, for his glory ; they even rejoiced that they were esteemed worthy to suffer for his name. In a word, they were perfect, in an eminent degree, in all virtues. By their preaching and labours, by their doctrine and miracles, by their sufferings and death, they planted the faith and church of Christ throughout the world ; but

nothing contributed more to this great work than the sanctity of their lives, by the help of which, as well as by the fervour and efficacy of their prayers, they effectually established virtue, religion, and Christian perfection, in every place where they came, upon the ruins of infidelity and vice, and left behind them a succession of saints, as the fruits of their labours, which has been kept up ever since in the true church of Christ; according to that of their divine Master, (John xv. 16,) *I have appointed you that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.*

Conclude to celebrate, with a particular devotion, the festivals of the apostles, as the most eminent amongst the favourites of God, and the fathers of the other saints. Glorify God, who is wonderful in all his saints, for the extraordinary wonders he has wrought in them, and through them, and for that eternal glory to which he has raised them. But study also to learn the great lessons they perpetually taught, both by word and work, and to aim with all your power at an imitation of their virtues and sanctity.

OCTOBER 29.

On the Christian's Armour.

CONSIDER, first, that, the life of a Christian here upon earth being a perpetual warfare, he is under a necessity of providing himself with proper armour, if he hopes to come off with victory. What this armour should be, we may learn from the apostle, *Eph. vi. 13, &c.* *Take unto you, saith he, the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, (which is the word of God,) by all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance, &c.* O, how completely shall that Christian be armed against all his enemies, that makes such a provision for himself as is here recommended by the apostle, of arms, both defensive and offensive! Let us descend to each particular.

Consider, therefore, secondly, that the soldier of Christ, in order to be fit to put on his armour, and to stand in the battle, without being hindered by his earthly garments, hanging loose about him, must first *gird up his loins*; that is, he must set out, with a firm resolution of restraining his passions and lusts, and

all irregular affections to these earthly things, which very much encumber and hinder the Christian in his spiritual conflicts, and give the enemy a great hold of him. Now, the *girdle* or belt he must make use of for this end is *truth*; for he must be *girt about with truth*, says the apostle; that is, with sincerity, uprightness, Christian simplicity, and purity of intention, in his undertaking, having purely in view God and his soul, and being resolved, at all events, to fight till death, and to sacrifice, on all occasions, his dearest inclinations to the love of God and the salvation of his soul. Thus must he begin; and then proceed to *put on the breastplate*, or coat of mail, of Christian *justice*, by which is here understood not one particular virtue, but the collection of them all; which the soldier of Christ must labour to furnish himself with, against the temptations of all their opposite vices. He must also have his *feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*. But what is meant by this? The *feet* of the soul are her affections, by which she moves towards the things she loves. These, in the Christian soldier, must be properly *shod with the preparation*, that is, with the readiness and promptitude of the soul, to direct all her steps, not towards the lying vanities and fooleries of the world, in which there is *no peace*, but to walk in the ways of the *gospel*, which alone can assure to us any true *peace*, either for time or eternity.

Consider, thirdly, that, after these previous dispositions, and general preparations for the spiritual warfare, the apostle recommends, as the chief pieces of the Christian armour, *the shield of faith*, which has a particular efficacy to *extinguish all the fiery darts*, levelled at us by the wicked one; and *the helmet of salvation*, that is, divine hope, which protects the head of the soul from being wounded by any of his weapons; yes, Christians, if you would keep your souls from being pierced with the hellish darts of Satan, you must take care to carry about with you the *shield of faith*, that is, a strong and lively belief of the great truths of the gospel, with a sense of the presence of God, and a remembrance of death, judgment, heaven and hell, and you shall be out of their reach. But then you must also provide yourselves with the *helmet of hope*, by joining an absolute distrust in yourselves with an entire confidence in God; lest otherwise your head be left naked and exposed on all sides by the wounds of the enemy, and there be no soundness in it, which is the case of all those who, in this kind of warfare, build upon themselves, and not in the Lord.

Conclude to spare no pains to procure every part of this heavenly armour, that you may be able to fight the battles of your Lord, in such manner as to overcome his and your enemies, and to triumph eternally with him. Especially take care to secure

to yourselves the *shield* of a *lively faith*, by the means of daily meditations on the truths of eternity.

OCTOBER 30.

On the Christian's Conflict.

CONSIDER, first, that, in this spiritual warfare, the Christian soldier must not only be furnished with arms of defence, such as breastplate, shield and helmet, but he also must provide himself with a proper sword, with which he may be able to attack, and to beat down the enemy. Now, this *sword of the spirit*, or spiritual sword, to be employed in the Christian's conflict, is, according to the apostle, *the word of God*. The truths of *God's heavenly word*, heard from his ministers, or read in good books, and received as the seed of life, and laid up in the heart, when embraced with a lively faith, and pondered at leisure by deep meditation, serve in a double capacity, both to defend us, and to annoy the enemy: they are both a *shield* and a *sword*. They are a shield, because the continual remembrance of these great truths baffles and defeats all the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. None of them have any force against a soul that daily meditates on God's holy word, and enters into the true spirit of it. And they are a sword, too, which none of them all can withstand, when drawn against them by a lively faith. It attacks them wherever it meets them, and never fails of victory; it beats down all their fortifications, and forces them out of all their entrenchments. Such is the efficacy of daily meditation on divine truths; it roots out all vices, and establishes all virtues.

Consider, secondly, that, in the Christian's conflict, this *sword of the spirit* is to be used, according to the apostle, in such manner as to be accompanied with *all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with instance*. From which words we gather the great importance, yea, the absolute necessity, of fervent prayer in this our spiritual warfare; and that, not only in the time of more dangerous and obstinate temptations, but, as he says, *at all times* and *with instance*. O, it is the want of observing this prescription makes so many shamefully yield in the time of temptation. And, indeed, we may say with absolute truth, that no one is ever overcome, but for want of prayer, and that a neglect of prayer is the original cause of the fall of all them that fall from God by sin; for his infinite goodness never forsakes them that do not first forsake him; he never withdraws his grace from them that do not first withdraw themselves from his grace: he *is faithful; and will not suffer us to be tempted above our strength*, but will assuredly

give us the victory, if we always cast ourselves upon him, by fervent and humble prayer.

Consider, thirdly, that the apostle prescribes to the Christian soldier, in order to overcome the enemy, to join *watching* with his prayer; agreeably to the doctrine of our Redeemer, who, on many occasions, enjoins to all his followers a perpetual watchfulness; and in particular, the night before his passion, bid his disciples *watch and pray*, lest they should *enter into temptation*, (Matt. xxvi. 41,) clearly intimating by these words, that our best and only security against being overcome by temptation, is to join *watching* with *prayer*, and to oppose these two against all our spiritual enemies, ever remembering, that, though our *spirit be willing, the flesh is frail*. And what makes this *watching* still more necessary, is the nature of this warfare, in which we are engaged against these wicked spirits, who are continually laying ambushes for us, and use a thousand deceits to ensnare us, and oftener prevail by tricks and stratagems, or by coming upon us unawares, than by open assault.

Conclude to make proper use of these weapons, prescribed by the apostle, and by our Lord himself, by filling thy mind with *the word* and the truths of *God*, and by diligence in *watching* and *praying*; and all thy conflicts shall be crowned with victory.

OCTOBER 31.

On the Four Cardinal Virtues.

CONSIDER, first, that there are four moral virtues, which are called *cardinal* because they are, as it were, *hinges*, upon which the whole life of a Christian must constantly move, if he would be good for any thing. These are *prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance*; which, the wise man tells us, (*Wis. viii. 7.*) are all taught by divine wisdom, and *are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life*. All other moral virtues have a necessary dependence on these four: they all fall to the ground without them. Every virtue must be *prudent* and discreet in all it takes in hand, otherwise it degenerates into vice; every virtue must be *just*, by rendering, on all occasions, what is due to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbours. Every virtue must be *stout* and *valiant*, firm and constant, in adhering to what is right, and opposing what is wrong. And every virtue must be sober and *temperate*, lest it exceed the bounds of due moderation, prescribed by right reason and religion. But O what treasures of virtues do they possess, that have acquired these

four principal ones! These will effectually arm them against all vices.

Consider, secondly, that Christian *prudence* is a virtue which teaches us, in all things, what is good and what is evil; what is right and what is wrong; and what ought to be done, and what ought to be left undone, in all the occurrences of life. It is a virtue that directs all our words and actions in such a manner, as that we neither decline out of the way or offend ourselves, nor give occasion to others to offend; but, ever setting before our eyes our great business and last end, make always a proper choice of the means that are to bring us to this great end, and apply them accordingly. It is a virtue that directs all other virtues, conducting them all by the royal middle way of our great King, that they may not go aside by excess or defect, either to the right hand or to the left. The offices of this great virtue are to design and *consult well*, to *judge right*, and to *direct well the execution* of what has been rightly concerted and judged to be proper. In all which it is helped, indeed, by the *remembrance* of things past, by the *understanding* of things present, by the *forecasting* of things to come, by reasoning, attention, caution, and circumspection; but all this with dependance on divine grace, and not on one's own industry; and with a continual application to our Lord, by frequent and fervent prayer, for his light and assistance, without which our prudence will avail us nothing.

Consider, thirdly, the offices of the other three cardinal virtues and the excellence of them. *Justice* renders to every one his due, and wrongs no one. It teaches to restrain every thought, every desire, every act of the will, every judgment, every word, every action, and every omission too, that any ways tends to injure one's neighbour, or that does not rightly square with that great principle of morality, *Do as thou wouldst be done by*. And with regard to God, (who has the most undoubted right, by all manner of titles, to our whole being, and to all our service,) it obliges us, before all things, to dedicate our whole hearts and souls to him by worship and love. Then *fortitude* arms the soul with invincible courage in her warfare against her spiritual enemies, and gives her strength and constancy to enable her to overcome all fear or dread of any of those evils which she may be exposed to in her mortal pilgrimage, for doing her duty; and resolution to suffer every thing rather than to sin. Lastly, *temperance* restrains all immoderation in eating or drinking, with all other excesses of our passions or lusts, and all that any ways carries us out of the due bounds prescribed either by right reason and the law of nature, or by the precepts of God, or of them that have their authority from him, in the employments or functions of any of our senses, whether exterior or interior. See, my

soul, how admirable are all these virtues. O, there is not a day, there is scarce an hour of thy mortal life, in which thou dost not stand in need of them all.

Conclude to esteem and desire, love and seek, all these blessed virtues. O, spare no pains to acquire them; they are richly worth all thy labour. But ever remember whose gifts they are, and that they must come to thee by fervent prayer. All thy labour, without this, will be labour in vain.

NOVEMBER 1.

On the Feast of all the Saints.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day the church of God honours with a solemn festival the virtues, the triumphs, and the eternal glory of all the saints and citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. First, in order to give glory, praise and thanksgiving, on their occasion, to the God of all the saints, and to his Son Jesus Christ, the Author of all their virtues, of all their triumphs, and of all their glory, and to honour the Lord in his saints. Secondly, to encourage all her children to follow the glorious examples of the saints, and to walk in their blessed footsteps, in hopes of arriving one day at their happy company. Thirdly, to teach them to associate themselves, in the mean time, to the saints, by a holy *communion* with them, and to procure the assistance of their prayers and intercession. O how just, how pious, how wholesome it is, to glorify God in his saints, who are the most excellent of all his works; to honour in them the bright trophies of the blood of Christ; to learn of them the practice of all Christian virtues, and especially of divine love and to be admitted to a share in their powerful prayers, and to a happy communion with them in all that is good! *You are come*, says the apostle, (Heb. xii. 22, &c.) speaking to the children of the church, *to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, &c.* O happy communion indeed! O joyful festivity, in which the church militant solemnly associates herself with the whole church triumphant, in the worship, praise, and love, of their common Lord, through him that is the Mediator of them both, and through the great sacrifice of his blood! See then, my soul, what ought to be thy devotion on this day.

Consider, secondly, on occasion of this festival, what encouragements we here meet with, to dedicate ourselves, in good earnest, to the holy service of our God, when we reflect on that eter-

nal weight of glory in heaven, with which he rewards the light and momentary labours and sufferings of his servants here upon earth. All these holy ones, whose feast we celebrate this day, are entered into the never-ending joys of their Lord, at a very cheap and easy rate. The yoke of his divine servitude which they bore for the short time of their pilgrimage, was very *sweet* to them, and their *burthen* was ever *light*. Grace and love made all things easy, that they either did or suffered for their Beloved. He himself supported them in such manner, as to carry, as it were, both them, and their crosses too, upon his own shoulders. He never left them, in life or death, till he took them to himself in his heavenly kingdom, where they shall live and reign for ever with him. My soul, hast not thou the same God as they had? Hast not thou the same Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has purchased the same kingdom for thee also, with his own most precious blood? Hast thou not the same sacraments and sacrifice, and all the same helps, and means of grace, as they had? Is the arm of God shortened? or is the source of his infinite goodness and mercy dried up or diminished? Why, then, mayst not thou also aspire to the same glory and happiness? The saints carried about with them heretofore the like flesh and blood as thou now dost; but their correspondence with the mercy and grace of God raised them up from the dunghill of their corrupt nature, and made them saints: the like correspondence with the divine mercy and grace, can do as much for thee also. O, why, then, shouldst not thou also endeavour to be a saint?

Consider, thirdly, that, as it is the love of God which makes saints, so it is this divine love which we particularly honour in all the saints. It is this heavenly love which ought to be the great object of our attention, of our devotion, and of our imitation, on all the festivals of these generous lovers and beloved of God; and more especially on this day, when we celebrate the virtues of them all under one solemnity. O, what strong invitations, what great encouragements have we here! what pressing calls to labour to sanctify our souls with divine love, when we have here set before our eyes all these millions of heavenly lovers whom we honour in this festivity!—this blessed Virgin, *the Queen and Mother of beautiful Love*: these innumerable legions of angelic spirits; these cherubims and seraphims, all on fire with love; these patriarchs and prophets, constant and faithful lovers of their God; these apostles of the Lamb, sent by him, to spread through all the earth the bright flames of love which he sent down upon them from heaven; those armies of martyrs, all victims of love, who all laid down their lives for love; those millions of holy confessors, and all these *spirits of the just made perfect* by love, who, both in life and death, have been always true friends and servants

of divine love, and now, for all eternity, shine and burn in its beautiful flames; all these virgins, in fine, the spouses of love, whose love for the Lamb was stronger than death, and who now follow him singing hymns of eternal love, wheresoever he goes. O, let us draw near to this great fire, to this heavenly company of seraphic lovers, that our frozen hearts may receive some small heat at least from all their flames.

Conclude ever to love, honour and imitate the saints of God, but more especially to love in them what God loves in them; that is, the gifts of his divine grace, amongst which the most excellent is love. Thus shalt thou be best entitled both to the intercession of the saints at present, and to their happy society hereafter.

NOVEMBER 2.

On the Commemoration of All Souls.

CONSIDER, first, that on this day the church of God, attending to the necessities of great numbers of her children, who are departed out of this life, in her faith and communion, but not without some blemish of sin in their souls; some lesser stains, at least, of *idle words* or other venial offences; some *wood, hay* or *stubble* in their building, which cannot stand the fire; or some debt to divine justice, on account of former sins not sufficiently expiated by penance,—turns all her prayers and sacrifices towards the procuring for them, from the mercy of God, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ her Spouse, the remission of all their sins, and their speedy admittance into the happy regions of eternal rest, light and peace, in the company of the saints. O, my soul, how *holy and wholesome* is the institution of this day of expiation! O, how full of piety and charity is this apostolical tradition, this religious practice of the church of God in all ages, *to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins!* 2 Mac. xii. 46. Alas, how few depart this life *so pure*, as to be immediately admitted to that blessed city above, where *nothing defiled can enter in!* Revel. xxi. 2. How few are fit to fly up to the embraces of the God of all purity, without some purgation after death! It is, then, a duty of Christian charity, incumbent on all the children of the church of Christ, to assist by their prayers their brethren that are gone before them, that they may be discharged from their sins, and may rest in peace.

Consider, secondly, that this kind of charity is highly pleasing to God; is very beneficial to the souls of the faithful departed; and is very wholesome to our own souls. The spiritual works of

mercy are of all the most acceptable to God, the **LOVER** of souls. Now, this is one of the spiritual works of mercy: it far exceeds all the corporal works of mercy. It tends to *feed* these souls, that are hungry, with *the plenty of God's house*; to bring them to quench their *thirst at the fountain of life*; to *clothe* them with immortal glory; to comfort and refresh them under their pains and sufferings; to loose their bands; to deliver them out of their *prison*; and to help them forward to their eternal *home*, which they so ardently long for. Now, all this is most agreeable to the Father of mercies, who has a most tender love for these his children. It is doing these souls of our brethren the greatest charity imaginable, by contributing all that is in our power, to deliver them from all their evils, and to bring them to their sovereign good. And it is, at the same time, a most excellent means of obtaining mercy for ourselves also, whilst we show this mercy to them; *for the merciful shall obtain mercy*, Matt. xi. 7. It is *making to ourselves friends,—who, when we fail, may receive us into everlasting habitations*, Luke xvi. 9.

Consider, thirdly, that this charity, which we owe to the souls of the faithful departed, is not only exercised by praying for them; but also by fasting, or other penitential austerities, offered up to God in their behalf, for the remission of their sins; as likewise by alms deeds performed with the like intention, according to the religious custom of former ages, and the practice of our pious ancestors, in their doles at the funerals of the dead. But the most effectual means of all to purge them from their sins, and to bring them to their God, is the offering up for them the great sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ; and presenting to God, in their favour, that most sacred victim, by which was cancelled *the hand writing which was against us*, and a general atonement was made for all our sins. In the old law, the high priest, once a year, viz. on the solemn feast of expiation, (*Lev. xvi.*) carried the blood of victims into the sanctuary, to make atonement for the sins of the people; but this was but a figure of what is done by our High Priest, who is gone, once for all, into the sanctuary of heaven, not with the blood of goats, or calves, but with his own most sacred blood, shed here upon earth, for our sins; and now ceases not to exhibit the same to his Father, both by himself, in heaven, where he makes continual intercession for us, and here by his ministers, in the sacred mysteries. This blood pleads strongly for the remission of sins; this is the source of all mercy and grace; this is plentifully applied to the souls, both of the living and the dead, by the great sacrifice of the altar.

Conclude to assist, to the best of thy powers, the souls of the faithful departed, both by prayers, alms, and this holy oblation of

the blood of Christ. Thy charity for them may stand thee in great stead, when their case shall come to be thy own. But remember withal, that the best thing thou canst do, is to work now all thou canst for thyself, whilst thou hast time, and to do full penance for thy sins in this life, that thy soul may not stand in need of these helps hereafter.

NOVEMBER 3.

On the Obligation of all Christians to be Saints.

CONSIDER, first, how often God has declared in his word, that all his people ought to be saints. *Be you holy, because I the Lord your God am holy*, was what he perpetually inculcated in the Old Testament; and in the New, the Son of God calls upon us all, (Matt. v. 48,) *Be you perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*. All Christians are called to be saints, (Rom. i. 7;) *to be holy, and without blemish, in the sight of God in charity*, (Eph. i. 4;) *a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people*, (1 Pet. ii. 9.) Hence the name of saints is appropriated by St. Paul to all Christians, as if it were the same thing to be a Christian, and to be a saint; which shows that, according to the doctrine of the apostle, all Christians, as such, are at least obliged to endeavour to be saints. This obligation is grounded upon the sanctity of the God whom we serve, of the gospel law under which we live, of the holy institute which we profess, of the great Master whom we follow, of the divine sacraments and sacrifice which we frequent, and of that sacred dedication and consecration, by which God has sanctified our souls for himself. O, let us never forget the many motives we have to be saints.

Consider, secondly, that our being saints is not merely a matter of counsel, or of greater perfection; it is a strict commandment; it is implied in the very first and chiefest of all God's commandments. For though all are not commanded to work miracles, nor to exercise extraordinary austerities, nor to retire into deserts, to spend their whole time there in prayer, nor to sell all they have and give it to the poor, &c. (for there have been many very great saints that have done none of these things) yet all are commanded *to love God with their whole heart, and with their whole soul, and with their whole mind, and with their whole strength*. Now, this it is that makes saints; and this is of strict obligation for all. Do this, my soul: keep this commandment, and thou also shalt be a saint; but without this, none of those other things, nor all of them together, can make any one a saint. Christians, reflect on the perfection and sanctity which is required of you all by this great commandment of divine love. T

love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and all its affections; with our whole soul, and all its powers; with our whole mind, by directing all our thoughts to him; and with our whole strength, by dedicating to him all our actions. O, this is to be saints indeed. Now, this our God calls for; and nothing less will satisfy him: it is the very first of his commandments.

Consider, thirdly, upon how many titles this great God challenges our whole hearts and souls, by love and service; and, consequently, that we should be truly saints; that is, a people sanctified and consecrated to him. First, we are his *children*; and therefore ought to bear some resemblance with our Father, by an imitation of his sanctity. Secondly, our souls are *espoused* to him, and aspire to an eternal union with him: now, whatsoever is disagreeable to true sanctity defiles the soul, and disqualifies her for that happy union. Thirdly, we are his *temples*: the temples of God must be *ever holy*. Fourthly, we are the *members* of Jesus Christ; we are engrafted in him; we are to live by his spirit, which is the spirit of sanctity. Fifthly, we absolutely belong to God, by our creation; he gave us our being, and gave it us for no other end, but that we should be saints. Sixthly, the Son of God delivered himself up for us, by his passion and death, that he might *wash us from all our sins in his own blood, and make us a kingdom and priests (that is saints) to God and his Father*, Apoc. i. 5, 6. In fine, by our baptismal vows; by our dedication to God at that time; by our frequent participation of the body and blood of Christ in the divine sacrament, in consequence of which we ought *to abide in Christ, the God of all sanctity, and live by him*; and by innumerable other titles, we belong to God, and are strictly obliged to give our whole selves up without reserve to him; to *serve him in holiness and justice all the days of our life*. And shall not all this convince us of the necessity of our labouring in earnest to be saints; and that this is both the will and the commandment of God?

Conclude to begin, from this very hour, a new and saintly life, by yielding thyself up a perpetual servant to divine love, and striving henceforward to make a daily progress in this heavenly virtue: this is the shortest and surest way to all sanctity and perfection.

NOVEMBER 4.

On the Means we all have to become Saints.

CONSIDER, first, that if our Lord calls upon us all to be saints, and even commands us all to be saints, he that never commands impossibilities, furnishes us also with the means, which, if we

make good use of, will make us saints. Witness those manifold graces and spiritual helps, which he continually favours us with, which, if we duly corresponded with, we should all be saints. Witness that early knowledge he has given us of his heavenly truths, and those repeated invitations with which he sweetly presses us, to turn from our sins, and to come to him. O, if we did but welcome these first divine calls, how quickly would they produce in our souls strong desires of dedicating ourselves in good earnest to divine love! Now, such strong desires as these are the beginning of true wisdom, and the very foundation of all sanctity. For, since God desires we should be saints, if we also sincerely desire it, the work will be done. Strong desires will make us earnest in prayer; they will make us diligent and fervent in all spiritual exercises. Strong desires will make us labour in earnest; we shall spare no pains in the acquisition of virtues, if our desires are strong indeed. Such desires as these are that *hunger and thirst after justice*, recommended by our Lord, which never fails of being *filled*. Matt. v. 6. O, who can complain of wanting the means to become a saint, when strong desires may do the work!

Consider, secondly, the many particular helps for sanctity, which we meet with every where, in the church of God; which, as they have already made many great saints, in every state and condition of life, are capable of doing as much for us; and will not fail of doing it, if we are not wanting to God, and to ourselves, by the abuse or neglect of them. Such are the sacraments, those conduits of divine grace, instituted by Jesus Christ, on purpose to make us saints. Such, in particular, is that most holy sacrament and divine sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, in which we have always amongst us, and may daily approach to, the very Fountain of all sanctity. O, my soul, one good and perfect communion might suffice to make thee a saint. Such, again, is the word of God, which is so often preached to us, or read by us; the truths of eternity, so often set before us; the gospel of Jesus Christ; the lives of the saints; the great examples of the living servants of God; the mysteries relating to our redemption, which we so often celebrate in the public worship of the church, in such manner, as to make them, as it were, present to the eyes of our souls; with abundance of other spiritual advantages, which are continually found in the communion of the true church of Christ. O Christians, let us never complain of our wanting the means to become saints, when we have so many powerful graces and helps always at hand. If we are not saints, it must be entirely our own fault. And what an account shall we have one day to give for all these graces and helps, if we do not make good use of them.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to be saints, nothing is required on our parts but what God on his part will make sweet and easy to us; *for his yoke is sweet, and his burden is light.* We may apply to his commandment of our being saints, what is written, Deut. xxx. 11, &c.: *This commandment that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee; nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, which of us can go up to heaven, to bring it to us? nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say, Which of us can cross the sea, and bring it?—but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.* Yes, Christians, our God is very near us; he is in the very centre of our souls. With him are all the treasures of grace and sanctity; with him is the law of love; he is all love; he is a consuming fire, the property of which is to destroy all our vices, and to transform our souls into himself. He is the inexhaustible Source of all our good. We have no need, then, to go far to find divine love, which makes saints, since we have the very Source of it within us; it is but turning into our own interior, by the diligent practice of recollection and mental prayer, and there we shall quickly meet with our God and with his love, which will make all duties and all labours sweet and easy to us! This is the shortest way to all good, and the most effectual means to make us saints.

Conclude to embrace and put in practice all these means of sanctity, which divine providence continually presents thee with. Open the door of thy heart to every grace, with which God visits thee, and co-operate with it to the full extent of thy power. Nourish in thy soul a great desire, a perfect hunger and thirst, after the love of God, and all Christian perfection. Meditate often; read good books; be fervent in prayer, and in frequenting the sacraments. But particularly aim at a spirit of recollection, and a continual attention to God in thy own interior, and frequent aspirations of love, and thou shalt quickly become a saint.

NOVEMBER 5.

On the Perfection of our ordinary Actions.

CONSIDER, first, the error of a great many Christians, in placing sanctity in such things as indeed are no part of it. Thus some suppose, that, in order to be a saint, one must work miracles. Now, St. John the Baptist was one of the greatest of saints, and yet wrought no miracle. *St. John x. 41.* And, indeed, one single act of humility or self-denial, or of the love of God, goes farther towards the making of a saint, than even the raising of the dead to life. Others, again, vainly imagine, that sanctity consists in having

visions, revelations and ecstasies, or in the gifts of prophecy, or tongues, or of an eminent knowledge of the most sublime and divine truths; because they often meet with such things as these in the lives of saints; but none of these things made them saints, and they have been even found in such as were no saints; whilst, on the other hand, many eminent saints have had none of them; neither ought any humble Christian to desire or to seek for such things as these; though every Christian ought to desire, and to endeavour to be a saint. Nor does sanctity consist in much fasting, or in wearing hair shirts, or in taking disciplines, or in giving large alms, or in reciting long prayers, or in any other extraordinary practices or observances; all which, however good in themselves, have been found in hypocrites, or in such as have been, all the while, slaves to pride, self-love, and passion. But true sanctity consists in unfeigned charity, in both its branches: it is, both as it regards the love of God, and of our neighbours: it consists in a conformity with the will of God in all things, and adhering close to him: it consists in being humble of heart, and sincerely despising ourselves: it consists in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, and following Christ. Such as do these things are saints; where any of these is wanting, there is no sanctity.

Consider, secondly, that sanctity does not so much depend upon doing *extraordinary* actions, as upon doing our *ordinary* actions *extraordinarily* well. Our life passes away in the daily *ordinary* actions, which take up our time from morning till night; such as our rising, our morning exercise, our daily labours, or the business of our calling, our regular devotions, and spiritual lectures, our meals, our conversation, the employment of our thoughts, when our hands are at work, our examination of conscience at night, and our evening exercise, &c. Now, if all these daily performances are done *extraordinarily* well, our whole time will be spent *extraordinarily* well; and nothing more will be required to make us saints. Neither will it cost us more to do them well, than to do them ill: on the contrary, the better we perform them, and the more diligent and fervent we are in them, the more easy and delightful they will be to us; and the grace of God and his blessing will go along with all we do. O, how inexcusable, then, are we, O my soul, if we do not strive to be saints, when we may attain to this happiness, even by our daily ordinary actions, provided we perform them with due perfection!

Consider, thirdly, that the perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity of intention with which we perform them; on our attention to God in all that we do, and our seasoning all our labours and employments with frequent aspirations and ejaculations of divine love, and frequent oblations of ourselves and of all that we do to God. *By the ordinance the day goeth on, saith*

he royal prophet, (Psalm cxviii. 91,) *for all things serve thee* Yes, my soul, all things continually serve the Lord, but the rebellious angels, and the rebellious will of man. Now, this rebellious will of ours we bring to serve him, by beginning the day with an oblation of our whole selves to him; by directing all our thoughts, words and actions, by a pure intention, to his glory; by making his holy will the rule of all we do; by beginning every work with an offering of what we are going to do, together with an offering of our hearts to him; and by often renewing this offering in the midst of our works; by doing all our actions, as much as we can, in his presence; and by intermingling acts of divine love with all we do. Thus shall all our days be *found* to be *full days*; thus shall they all *go on by God's ordinance*; thus shall they *all serve him*.

Conclude to take great care to give to all thy ordinary actions their due perfection, by following these rules. And as to thy daily employments, and all the business and labours of thy lawful calling, ever consider them as appointed thee by the holy will of God, and ever perform them in compliance with, and in obedience to, his heavenly will; thus thou mayst make them all acts of virtue, and even acts of divine love. And if these thy daily employments be laborious, or otherwise mortifying or disagreeable to thy self-love, thou mayst also make them acts of penance, by accepting of them as imposed upon thee by God for thy sins, and offering them up to God, in union with the labours and sufferings of Jesus Christ, for thy sins.

NOVEMBER 6.

On the Sanctity of the Christian's Institute.

CONSIDER, first, that the Christian religion is in the nature of a religious order, or institute, founded by Jesus Christ our Lord, and taking its name from him. The Son of God himself came down from *heaven*, to be the founder of the Christian order. Its origin is *heavenly*. Its rule is *heavenly*; being God's own Word, and the gospel of his Son. Its tendency is *heavenly*: it tends to deliver us from all those evils, both with regard to time and eternity, in which we were unhappily involved by our first parents' transgression; particularly from the death of sin, and from the second death of hell; and to bring us to our sovereign Good, to all perfection of sanctity here, and to our true and eternal life hereafter. The means it furnishes us with for this end, are also *heavenly*; such as the communications of divine grace, the sacred mysteries and sacraments of divine institution, the daily conversation with God by prayer, and the *communion of the saints*, or a

happy association with all holy persons, in all holy things. The Christian makes his solemn religious profession at the foot of the altar, at his baptism: there he engages himself by vows to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and to lead an innocent and saintly life: there he receives for his habit the white robe, denoting cleanness of heart and innocence, with a charge to keep it all his life time without spot or stain: there he puts on Jesus Christ, by a new birth, in order to a new and spiritual life, that may know no death. O, can any thing, then, be more holy than this sacred institute of the Christian order; where the founder, the rule, the exercises, the vows, the habit, and the whole manner of life, that it requires, are all most heavenly and divine!

Consider, secondly, the blindness and misery of the greatest part of Christians who live in a strange insensibility of the excellence of the Christian religion, of the obligation of it, and the sanctity it requires of them, in consequence of the alliance it gives them with the whole blessed Trinity. The dignity of a Christian is indeed very great. He has the honour to be enrolled in the service of the great King. He is made his domestic, his friend, and his favorite. But this is not all; he is even adopted, through Jesus Christ, to be a child of God, and an heir of his eternal kingdom; he is engrafted, and incorporated in Christ and made a member of that mystical body, of which the Son of God is the head; he is made partaker of his Spirit, of his kingly and priestly unction, and in some measure of his divine nature. The grace of Christianity is so great, that the apostle, writing to the Ephesians, seems to want words to express it. He calls it *the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the mystery hidden from eternity in God*, (Eph. iv. 8, 9;) with a great deal more to the like purpose, as well with relation to the exceeding great goodness of God, manifested in his calling us, without any desert of ours, to so great a grace as this of the Christian religion; as also with regard to the incomprehensible advantages which this grace entitles us to. But, oh! may we not too justly apply to the greatest part of those, who are called to all these advantages, that of the royal prophet, (Psalm xlviii. 21;) *Man, when he was in honour did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them.* Alas! this seems to be the case of millions of Christians.

Consider, thirdly, that our eternal welfare absolutely depends upon our living up to the character of a Christian, and to the duties and obligations of the Christian religion; in particular those we have taken upon us by our baptismal vows, and which are insisted upon as essential by our holy Rule and Founder. These are all reduced into a small compass, in those words of the Psalmist: *Turn away from evil and do good.* This is a

short abstract of the whole duty of a Christian. The first part requires a settled determination of the soul never to commit a wilful sin, for any consideration whatsoever; no, not even if life itself were at stake. The second part requires a constant attention to do the will of God, in all things, and to advance every day in the love of God. Do this, my soul, and thou shalt be a Christian indeed: persevere in this until death, and thou shalt receive the crown of eternal life.

Conclude henceforward to have always before thy eyes both the dignity and the sanctity of the character of a Christian, and to show it forth in thy life; lest otherwise it rise in judgment against thee, and prove thy greater condemnation at that day, when thou shalt be called upon to give up an account of thy stewardship.

NOVEMBER 7.

On following the Light of Christ.

CONSIDER, first, those words of the Son of God, (John viii. 12,) *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* Poor man, by sin, had forfeited the *true light*; he was fallen from the *light of truth, and life*, when he fell from his God; he was fallen into the darkness of ignorance, error and vice; and was sitting in the shadow of death. God sent the *true light* from heaven, *which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, when he sent his Son from heaven, *in the bowels of his mercy, as the Orient (or dayspring) from on high, to visit us; to enlighten them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to direct our feet into the way of peace.* Luke i. 78, 79. Jesus Christ, then, came from heaven, to be our *light*; to enlighten our souls with the *light* of his heavenly truth; to bring us forth from the *darkness* of our errors and vices; to impart to us the *light of faith*, as a *lamp to shine* unto us, *in this dark place* of this wretched world, *until the true day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts*, (2 Pet. i. 19;) to give us here the *light* of his divine grace, for the time of our mortal pilgrimage; and to bring us hereafter to the *light* of glory, where, *in the light of God, we shall see God the light*, for all eternity. Embrace, my soul, this light, that comes down from heaven to visit thee, and see thou follow it in the whole conduct of thy life. O, take care lest thou incur the *judgment* of condemnation, by *the light coming into the world, and thy loving darkness rather than the light*, John iii. 19.

Consider, secondly, that Jesus Christ came down from heaven to enlighten the world both with his heavenly doctrine and with

his heavenly life. He came from God to be our teacher, and to open in our favour his school of heavenly truths :—truths to which the world was quite a stranger at that time, and which the children of this world, who, being blinded with their passions, *love darkness more than light*, will not understand even to this day ; because they will not *come to this great light, lest their works should be reprov'd* by it ; *for their works are evil*, John iii. 19, 20. This *light* of Christ reprov's our self-love, and all its unhappy offspring, with all our darling inclinations and affections. It confutes all the maxims of flesh and blood, and all the errors we are so apt to entertain, with relation to worldly honour, interest and pleasure. It discovers to us the emptiness and vanity, the mere nothing of all that passes away with time, and shows us that nothing is truly great, or deserves our esteem or affection, but what is eternal. This *light* of Christ teaches us to know both God and ourselves : it teaches us all virtues ; poverty of spirit, humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, penance, conformity to the will of God, and divine charity : it shows us the way to all perfection, and to a happy eternity : it conducts us to God himself, and *to the light of life*, that is with him.

Consider, thirdly, that, in order to come *at the light of life*, we must *follow Christ*, not only by believing his doctrine, but by walking in his footsteps, and by an imitation of his virtues. " We must imitate his life and manners," says a holy man, " if we would be truly *enlightened*, and delivered from all blindness of heart : let it, then, be our chiefest study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ." *A Kempis*, l. i. c. 1. Yes, Christians, by often meditating on the life of Christ, we shall learn how we ought to behave on all occasions : the bright *light* of his virtues will show us the way in which we are to walk : it will show us what we are to avoid, and from what we are to fly, as well as what we are to embrace, and what we are to follow, on every occasion. *He is the way, the truth, and the life*, St. John xiv. 6. The *light* of his *life* shining on us, by the means of daily meditation, will conduct us into this *way*, will guide us to this *truth*, and will bring us safe to this *life*, even to the very fountain's head of eternal *life*.

Conclude to follow henceforward, in the practice of thy life, the heavenly *light*, both of the doctrine and of the example of Jesus Christ. Walk after him and his *light*, and thou shalt neither walk in darkness here, nor go into darkness hereafter. This following the *light* of Christ will bring thee to the happy society of the *children of light*, in the region of *light* everlasting.

NOVEMBER 8.

One Thing is necessary. Luke. x. 42.

CONSIDER, first, O my soul, and open thy eyes to the great light of this divine sentence of thy Saviour—*One thing is necessary.* It will be of infinite service to thee, to dispel the darkness and mists that encompass thee on all sides, and to direct all thy steps to the sovereign truth, thy sovereign good. Alas! what a multiplicity of cares and concerns, about empty vanities and worldly toys, is apt to take up our whole mind and heart! How busy are we, all the day long, in catching flies! What a variety of amusements distract our thoughts! In what a dissipation do we generally live! How little is there of God in our daily conversation! How few of our words, or actions, are referred to him! O, it is too true, that we let every thing else take place of that *only business*, for which we came into this world. And yet all this other variety and multiplicity, which employs all our thoughts, words and actions, is just nothing at all to our purpose: whereas upon that *one business*, our *all* depends for all eternity.

Consider, secondly, what this *one thing necessary* is, that is here recommended by our Lord. Doubtless it is nothing else but the dedicating ourselves to the love and service of our God in order to the securing the eternal salvation of our souls. O, *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, but the loving of God, and the serving him alone.* Kempis. Yes, my soul, this is our *only business*; this is the *business* for which alone we came into this world; nothing else deserves to be called *our business*; whatever our employment or calling be in the world, it must ever be subordinate to this great *business*; all our thoughts, words and deeds should ever tend to God, and to our eternal salvation. Whatever takes us off from attending to this great business, is hurtful, it is pernicious to us; whatever has no tendency to this *one thing necessary*, is all quite idle and vain. O, *what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* Matthew xvi. 26.

Consider, thirdly, those words of our Saviour, (Matt. vi. 33,) *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* This *kingdom of God*, which we are here commanded to seek, in the first place, is the *kingdom of grace* in our souls; it is the *kingdom of divine love.* *This kingdom of God is within us,* Luke xvii. 21. It must be established in our own interior. This *justice of God* is that by which he makes us *just indeed*, through the merits of the blood of his Son Jesus Christ the just; it is *the charity of God*, which is

poured abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us, Rom. v. 5. This *kingdom* of divine love, this *justice and charity* of God in our souls, we must continually aspire to; this must be the first and greatest object of our longing desires; this we must seek with all our power; for this we must always pray, with all the fervour of our heart. And as to all things else, as far as they are proper or necessary for us, our heavenly Father will not fail to furnish us with them. We have his divine word engaged for it.

Coplude to follow, in the practice of thy life, these divine lessons of light and truth, by considering henceforward the love and service of thy God, and the salvation of thy soul, as thy *only business*; and all other concerns, comparatively with this, as nothing to thee. O, take care of this *one thing necessary*, and all shall be well with thee, both for time and eternity.

NOVEMBER 9.

Strive to enter by the narrow Gate. Luke xiii. 24.

CONSIDER, first, how the light of Christ in the gospel represents to us the *broad road* of the world as infinitely dangerous to our souls, and as directly leading to the *wide gate* of eternal damnation. *Enter ye in at the narrow gate*, saith he, (Matt. vii. 13, 14;) *for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who go in thereat. O, how narrow is the gate, and how strait is the way, that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it!* Here we see, there are two ways, in which men walk, in this life; and two gates out of this life into eternity. One of these ways is *broad* and spacious, agreeable to the world and to the flesh, and crowded with great multitudes of slaves to the world and to the flesh, whom it conducts down the hill to a *wide gate*, by which they no sooner enter but they suddenly slip down a precipice, into the bottomless pit of a miserable eternity. The other way is *strait* and *narrow*, rough and craggy, by reason of the restraint it puts upon the liberties and passions of worldlings, and its disagreeableness to the corrupt inclinations of flesh and blood; and therefore few, in comparison, care to walk in it; but these few, by the favour of Heaven, walk on cheerfully towards the *gate of life*, assisted and comforted by Jesus Christ, whom they follow, and, with him, and through him, are happily introduced, by this *narrow gate*, into the most spacious and most beautiful regions of never-ending bliss. See, my soul, which of these two ways thou art disposed to choose; and make that choice now, which thou shalt be glad to have made for all eternity.

Consider, secondly, what it is that engages such numbers of Christians to walk on, with so little concern, in the broad road that leads to destruction, in spite of this solemn declaration of the gospel and of the light of their faith. O, it is their want of thinking; it is their wilfully shutting their eyes against the light, and so running blindfold to the precipice; it is in the language of the wise man, (Wisd. 12,) their being quite bewitched with worldly toys and cheating vanities; it is a downright folly and madness, which they shall loudly condemn in hell, for all eternity. Alas, how unhappy are they! How wretchedly blind indeed, to profess themselves Christians, that is, followers of Christ, and yet to believe and follow the maxims of the world, rather than the maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ; to obey the laws of the world, of the flesh, and of the devil, their mortal enemies, rather than the ordinances of their Saviour; to prefer lies, deceit, and empty vanity, before truth; darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, hell before heaven, and Satan before God! My soul, see thou never make so wretched a choice. Let not the world, the flesh, and the devil, drag thee along with them in the broad road of perdition: it would be a sad thing to go to hell, for company sake. O, choose the narrow way of self-denial and true devotion, in the company of Christ and his saints, and thou shalt live with them for ever.

Consider, thirdly, that frightful sentence, repeated more than once by our Lord in the gospel, *many are called, but few are chosen*; for it has a very close connexion with what he has said above, of the *broad road* that leads to eternal wo, and the *narrow way* that leads to everlasting life. Yes, Christians, *many are called, but few are chosen*; because the far greater part of mortals are fond of the broad road, which gratifies their passions and corrupt inclinations; and prefer the *highway* of the world, the way of self-love, the way of *the lust of the flesh, of the lust of the eyes, and of the pride of life*, before the *narrow way* of self-denial, and of the love of God, which is less agreeable to flesh and blood. God, on his part, is infinitely good and merciful; he desires that *all should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth*, and his Son *Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all*, 1 Tim. ii. 4. 6. If, then, but few are chosen, it cannot be for want of good will in God, but for want of a correspondence on the part of man. It is for want of a compliance with the necessary conditions of salvation, the chiefest of which is the keeping of the divine commandments. In a word, it is because men choose rather to walk in the *broad road*, than in the *narrow*; which, in fact, is choosing hell before heaven. So that the reason why they are not chosen, is because they have no real mind to be chosen.

Conclude to keep off, in the practice of thy life, from the broad road of the children of this world, and to walk in the narrow way of the children of light, by living always in the fear of God, and keeping his commandments; and thou shalt not fail of being of the number of *the chosen*.

NOVEMBER 10.

No Man can serve two Masters. Matt. vi. 24.

CONSIDER, first, this great principle of Christian morality, laid down by our Lord in the gospel—*no man can serve two masters*; by which he gives us to understand, that there is no such thing as serving him, and saving our souls, and at the same time serving the world, the flesh, or the devil. For these are enemies to God, and claim a service of us, which our great Master absolutely disallows; so that we cannot please them, without displeasing him, nor be friends to them, without being enemies to him. Christians, we have all manner of obligations to serve our God; he is our only true *Master*; he is our first Beginning and our last End; he is our Creator and our Redeemer; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us: he is the Source of our very being, and of all our good: we came into the world for nothing else but to serve him: to his service we were solemnly dedicated, when we were first made Christians: the serving him is to make us happy, both in time and eternity. But what pretensions can the world, the flesh, or the devil, have to our service? Or what obligations have we to them? They are all of them mortal enemies to our true welfare, and to the eternal salvation of our souls; if we serve them, they will make us miserable for ever. O, let us, then, never be so wretched, so mad, so wicked, as to put them in competition with God, or to withdraw any part of our service from our God, (to whom it is all due,) to bestow it upon these traitors and rebels, who are enemies to all that is good.

Consider, secondly, the particular application which our Lord makes of this principle, to warn us against the love and service of mammon, that is, of worldly riches, of filthy lucre; of money, and of all the other perishable goods, as we call them, of this deluded and deluding world: *you cannot serve*, saith he, both *God and mammon*. No man has any inclination to serve the devil for his own sake, or out of any love that he can have for this filthy monster; but this wicked enemy makes use of the mammon of the world, and of the allurements of the flesh, as baits, to draw poor unthinking souls to him, and to engage them in his slavery, for the sake of these perishable toys, which he paints out to them,

as if they were solid goods, so as to fix their affections upon them, to the prejudice of the love and service of their Maker. Therefore, both here and in many other places of holy writ, we are warned against these baits of Satan, and especially against the love and service of this *mammon of iniquity*, as inconsistent with the love and service of God, and destructive of the salvation of our souls; because it is setting up an idol in opposition to the living God, and loving and serving the creature instead of the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. Dear Lord, preserve us from ever being guilty of any such treason.

Consider, thirdly, that, as we cannot serve both God and mammon, so we cannot serve both God and pleasure; we cannot serve both God and pride; we cannot serve both God and our impure affections, or our unhappy self-love, which is the source of all our evils. And so, in general, with regard to every thing else, the love of which takes us off from the love and service of the living God, it always holds good, that we cannot serve both the Creator and the creature. Our God is a *jealous* Lover: he will allow of no love, but what is quite regular and orderly, and kept in subjection to the love of him. He declares against a *divided heart*; Osea x. 2. *Their heart is divided*, saith he; *now they shall perish*. He claims the whole heart as his own due. He will allow of no rival there. He expects to reign there without a partner. See, my soul, upon what conditions God will accept of thee. Thou must be wholly his, without reserve, or he will not receive thee. In the offering thou makest of thyself to his divine service, thou must take care not to keep back, by fraud, any part, like Ananias and Saphira, (Acts v.) lest thou fall under the like judgment as they did.

Conclude to admit of no other master of thy heart and affection, but the God that made thy heart for himself, and all things else for thee. None but he can fill thy heart; all other things are just nothing at all, when compared with him. Fear him alone: love him alone: give thy whole self to him alone: thus shalt thou be wholly his, and he wholly thine, for all eternity.

NOVEMBER 11.

He that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my Disciple. Luke xiv. 33.

CONSIDER, first, that every Christian, as such, ought to be a *disciple* of Jesus Christ; the very name of Christian implies as much; and the first Christians were originally known and distinguished by no other name than that of *disciples*, that is, of scholars and followers of this heavenly Master. See then, my

soul, what a character of a Christian obliges thee to, by the declaration of the Son of God himself. If thou wilt be a *disciple* of Christ, if thou wilt be a *Christian* indeed, and to the purpose of securing to thyself that happy eternity with the living God, that is prepared for Christ's *true disciples*, thou must renounce all things else, how near or dear soever they may be to thee, to follow him. Thou must renounce them, if not in effect, at least in affection, by taking off thy heart from them, and transferring it to thy only sovereign Good; and thou must renounce them in effect too, as often, and as far, as they stand in thy way; so not as to hinder thee from following Christ. This is the great and fundamental lesson of practical Christianity; this is the abridgment of the gospel; to give up all, that thou mayst find all; to be disengaged from the creature, that thou mayst be united to the Creator.

Consider, secondly, that our Lord explains this obligation of our renouncing all things else, in order to be his disciples, by two comparisons; the one of a man, who purposes to build a tower, but first sits down to reckon up the charges, to see if he has wherewithal to finish the work; the other of a king, who is going to wage war against another king, but first considers whether he has sufficient forces to encounter his adversary. Every Christian is highly concerned in these two comparisons; inasmuch as every Christian, if he desires to be happy for ever, must raise a spiritual building here, upon the foundation which is Christ; a building that may be proof against all storms and inundations; a *tower* that may stand for ever: and every Christian is engaged in a warfare against the prince of darkness and all his allies; wherein, if he does not come off with victory, he must be miserable for all eternity. Therefore the Christian must sit down, and must reckon up the necessary charges of this building, to see that he may be able to finish it; and he must take care to secure to himself sufficient forces to enable him to carry on this war, and to subdue the enemy. Now, it is by renouncing all things else to follow Christ, that we are associated to him, and made partakers of all his treasures, and we exchange our weakness for his strength; and thus we are enabled both to elevate our building even to heaven, and to overthrow all the powers of hell.

Consider, thirdly, how true it is, that our affections to the things of this world are indeed the chiefest hinderance to us, as well in carrying on our spiritual building, as in our conflicts with our spiritual enemies. The builder will make no progress in his building, if, instead of applying himself seriously to the work he has undertaken, he loses his time in amusing himself about other things, nothing to his purpose; or if he takes little

or no care to procure the necessary materials, or even suffers his hands and feet to be shackled, when he should be at work. It is the case of all such Christians as have not yet mortified their affections to the things of the world. These, alas! take up their thoughts; these employ their time; what should be expended in carrying on the great building, is all wasted upon these; and the builder lies groveling upon the earth, tied down with the chains of his misplaced affections. And as for the wrestling in which we are engaged with the spirits of wickedness, it is no less certain that nothing gives them a greater hold on us than our unmortified affections to these worldly toys. It is like carrying a load of clothes about us, when we are to wrestle with one that is stripped, who will be sure, by that occasion, to have the advantage of us. Therefore we, who are to wrestle with the devil, who is naked, must fling off our garments, saith St Gregory, (*Homli.* 32,) by renouncing our worldly affections, or we shall be sure to be brought down by him.

Conclude to make it thy perpetual study, to take off thy affections from all things of the earth, and to disregard the creature, that thou mayst find the Creator. And, seeing that a great grace is required to this, which may untie the soul from all that is not God, and carry her up, upon the wings of the dove, to rest eternally in him, continually pray for this grace.

NOVEMBER 12.

If any Man will come after me let him deny himself. Matt. xvi. 24.

CONSIDER, first, that the disciple of Jesus Christ, by the rule of the gospel, is not only obliged to renounce (at least in affection) all things else for the sake of his Master; but, what is the hardest of all, he must also *renounce and deny himself*. And this, his renouncing of himself, is absolutely insisted upon, by our Lord, as the first, the most essential, and the most indispensable condition for every one, that would *come after him*, and belong to him. Yes, Christians, there is that irreconcilable opposition between this *self*, strangely corrupted by sin, surrounded with darkness, and bent upon evil, and the purity and sanctity of Jesus Christ, and the bright light of his truth, that there is no coming in a proper manner at the one, without renouncing the other: there is no coming at divine charity, which teaches us to love our God with our whole heart, (the principal of all Christian duties,) without declaring an eternal war with *self-love*, the capital enemy to the love of God, and the parent of all vices. And therefore we are not only commanded in the gospel to *renounce*, and to *deny ourselves*, in order to follow Christ, but also to *hate ourselves*, or,

as it is expressed in the original, (Luke xiv. 26, and John xii. 25,) *to hate our souls* in this world, in order to save them in the next. See, my soul, upon what conditions thou art to be a disciple of the Son of God; thou must not only renounce all things else; thou must also renounce and hate thyself too.

Consider, secondly, the grounds upon which is founded this strict obligation of *denying* and of renouncing ourselves in this world; namely, that we may be in a proper condition to give ourselves up entirely to God; and, thus leaving ourselves, may find him, and be eternally his. So that, in effect, this denying and renouncing ourselves, is the best way we can have of *loving* ourselves, because it procures us the greatest goods, and brings us to our sovereign Good. As, on the other hand, that unhappy self-seeking, and loving to gratify ourselves in this world, is indeed *hating* ourselves, because of the mischiefs it brings upon us, both for time and eternity. If, then, we are to renounce the affections to all things else, in order to follow Christ, lest the love of them should divide our heart, and take it off from him, how much more are we to renounce *self-love*, for the love of him, as being much stronger than all our other affections, and far more apt to captivate our heart, and to shut out the love of God. Yes, my soul, thy self-love is indeed the greatest enemy both of thy God and of thy own true and everlasting welfare, and therefore thou must not only renounce it, but abhor it too, with a most perfect hatred; and turn all thy forces against it, in order to abolish it and destroy it.

Consider, thirdly, and attend to the sentiments of a great servant of God, upon this subject. My son, thou must give all for all, and be nothing of thy own. Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than any thing in the world.—Thou canst not possess perfect liberty, unless thou wholly deny thyself. All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, full of cares, unsettled, and seeking always their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which shall not stand; for all shall come to nothing, that proceeds not from God. Take this short and perfect word: *Forsake all, and thou shalt find all: leave thy desires, and thou shalt find rest.*

Consider this well, and when thou shalt have put it in practice, thou shalt understand all things. *Following of Christ*, l. iii. c. 27 and 32. And again, "Son, as much as thou canst go out of thyself, so much shalt thou be able to enter into me. As the desiring of nothing abroad, brings peace at home; so the relinquishing thyself interiorly, joins thee to God. I will have thee learn the perfect renouncing of thyself, in my will, without contradiction or complaint. Follow me; *I am the way, the truth, and the life.*—If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself." c. 56.

My soul, let these be thy sentiments also, and strive to conform thy practice to them.

Conclude to give up both thyself and all things else to follow Christ, and by following him to come at thy sovereign good, and to enjoy him for all eternity. If thou wert to give ten thousand worlds to purchase such a treasure, all that thou shouldst give would fall infinitely short of the value of it.

NOVEMBER 13.

Except your Justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Matt. v. 20.

CONSIDER, first, how much it concerns us all, to know what we must do to save our souls; and what kind of justice, that is, what degree of virtue, is necessary to bring us to heaven; lest we deceive ourselves, or let ourselves be imposed upon by the enemy, with false appearances and outward show, and, catching at the shadow of virtue, lose the substance of it, and our souls into the bargain. The scribes and Pharisees were the most precise amongst the Jews, and professed the greatest zeal for the law of God and the true religion; they prayed much; they gave large alms; and they fasted frequently; so that they passed for saints amongst the people; and yet we are here assured, by the mouth of Truth itself, that except our virtue exceed theirs, we shall have no share in his heavenly kingdom. See then, my soul, and examine well, in what their justice was defective, that so thou mayst avoid their defects, lest thou perish with them; for why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be deluded, to the loss both of thy God and of thyself, for all eternity?

Consider, secondly, that the *justice* of the scribes and of the Pharisees was many ways deficient, but more especially in this, that it contented itself with reforming and regulating the outside, whilst it neglected the interior, which is the true seat of Christian justice. *They made clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, whilst their inside was full of iniquity, Luke xi. 39.* Their good works were not done with a pure intention; they sought not God, but themselves, in all they did, their prayers, their alms, their fastings, were directed to the gaining of the applause of the world, to the end they might *be honoured and esteemed by men.* And, whilst they avoided the more scandalous excesses, of the grosser carnal sins of drunkenness and impurity, which might have rendered them infamous in the eyes of the world, they made no scruple of the spiritual sins (much more odious to God) of envy, hatred, detraction, covetousness, and an extravagant pride and conceit of themselves, joined with a con-

tempt of all others. Thus, all the good they seemed to do was quite vitiated and corrupted; all their virtues were but in appearance, and before the eyes of men; but their vices were real, and abominable in the sight of God. Christians, *take heed of this leaven of the Pharisees*, as your Lord admonishes you; take heed of *hypocrisy*, of ostentation, and an outward show of devotion, destitute of the real substance of it. *All the glory of the true spouse, the daughter of the king is within*: it lies hidden in the interior of the soul. Take heed lest pride or vain glory vitiate your good actions, by vitiating your intention. Keep yourselves *clean*, not only from *all the defilements of the flesh*, but of *the spirit* also; for these are the more heinous sins of the two. O, see that nothing of the Pharisee corrupt the Christian in you.

Consider, thirdly, what that *justice* is, which Jesus Christ insists upon, as necessary to the eternal salvation of our souls. It consists not in mere outward professions; for *not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven*, Matt. vii. 12. Nor will *faith alone* suffice to Christian *justice*, James ii. 17, 24. Nor will alms, prayers, or fastings alone, make any one *just*, (as we see in the very case of the Pharisees,) nor any outward form of worship, without the inward spirit; nor any thing else, that can be separated from obedience to the commandments, from true Christian humility and divine charity. No, my soul, the justice that is to bring thee to heaven is to *keep the commandments*, Matt. xix. 17. It is *to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven*, Matt. vii. 21. It is to be *poor in spirit*, Matt. v. 3. It is to be *humble like a little child*, Matt. xviii. 3, 4. It is to *love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength, and to love thy neighbours as thyself*. This is Christian justice indeed. *Do this, and thou shalt live*. But where any part of this is wanting, nothing else can make any man *just*.

Conclude to be quite in earnest, in seeking and following after this Christian *justice* in all its branches; by purity of intention in all thy works; by sincerity and simplicity, or uprightness of soul; by attending to thy interior, to keep that regular and orderly, by true humility of heart; and above all things, by flying sin and loving God; and thou shalt be just indeed before the Lord, and entitled to his heavenly kingdom.

NOVEMBER 14.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Treasure, &c.

Matt. xiii. 44.

CONSIDER, first, that, by *the kingdom of heaven*, in this and many other places in the Gospel, we are to understand that *heavenly kingdom*, by which God reigns, by his grace, in our souls; a *heavenly kingdom* indeed, which we are commanded to *seek in the first place*, (Matt. vi. 33,) and which we are taught daily to pray for, in the second petition of the Lord's prayer. Now, this *kingdom of grace* in our souls is here likened to a *treasure*, because of its inestimable value; it is worth more than all the kingdoms of the earth; it brings God himself into our souls, to live and reign for ever there. But then it is a *hidden treasure*, because the children of this world are strangers to the true value of it; and though they have heard of the field (of virtue and devotion) where it is to be found, by seeking and by digging for it, they are far more fond of the childish toys, which amuse them at present, than of a treasure unseen; and therefore they are unwilling to be either at the charges of purchasing this field, or at the pains of digging for this treasure. Not so the man in the Gospel, who, having discovered this treasure, sets his whole heart upon it, *hides it* diligently, and, *for the joy thereof, goes and sells all he has, and buys that field*. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition. Dost thou consider this kingdom of divine grace as a *treasure* indeed, and the richest of all treasures? Is thy heart set upon it? *for where thy treasure is there thy heart will be*. Art thou willing to purchase, at any rate, that blessed field, where this treasure lies?

Consider, secondly, the lessons we are taught, by our Lord, in this parable; particularly with regard to the value we ought to set upon divine grace, and the great esteem and affection we ought to have for our spiritual advancement, and for all such things as may help our souls forward, and bring them nearer to our God. We are here also taught, that the Christian, who desires to secure to himself this heavenly *treasure*, which he has begun to discover, must not make a show of it, by ostentation or vain-glory, which would be the direct way to lose it, but must *hide* it, by humility; like a traveller, who, carrying a treasure about him, endeavours to conceal it, for fear of robbers. Moreover we are taught, that, to make this *treasure* our own, we must purchase *the field* where it lies; and that this purchase will stand us in all we are worth. This *field*, in which this spiritual treasure is concealed, is true wisdom; it is a devout and virtuous life; it is the following of Christ in good earnest, and being his

true disciples. Now, to purchase a field of so great a value as this is, we must part with all things else; that is, we must give up all other affections, to embrace and follow Christ; but then, in exchange, he, on his part, will make over to us all his treasures, and himself into the bargain.

Consider, thirdly, Christian souls, if you desire to have a share in so great a happiness, by what steps you are to advance towards it, and to come to the possession of it. And, first, you must be convinced, by the word of God, and by the light of faith, that there is a *treasure* of inestimable value, designed by your heavenly Father for you, to enrich you, both for time and eternity, if you will but make use of the proper means to find it out, and to make it your own. The next step must be, to conceive a great esteem for this heavenly treasure, an ardent desire to acquire it, and a strong resolution to spare neither pains nor costs in the acquisition of it. This desire and resolution must be followed by a diligent inquiry after the field of wisdom and virtue, where this treasure is hidden, and then digging there till it is found. Now, all this is to be effected by the exercise of consideration and mental prayer. Yes, my soul, it is by daily opening thy eyes to the light of God, and to his divine truths, in meditation, that thou shalt both learn what a treasure there is in virtue, and how thou art to be put in possession of it. Here thou shalt discover the beauty of holiness, how sweet it is to love God, and how happy to serve him in good earnest; here thou shalt be inflamed with a fervent desire of procuring for thyself so great a happiness, and with a holy *hunger and thirst* after it. The pondering well, by deep consideration, eternal truths, is like digging for the treasure of the kingdom of heaven; and the affections and resolutions of the soul, by which she is determined, at all events, to consecrate the remainder of her life to divine love, is like selling all to purchase the field, where this treasure is deposited.

Conclude to use thy best endeavours to seek without ceasing for this treasure of the kingdom of heaven, in the field of virtue and devotion, and to dig daily for it, by the daily exercise of meditation and mental prayer; and thou shalt not fail to find it

NOVEMBER 15.

On the Parable of the Marriage Feast. Matt. xxii.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord here likens *the kingdom of heaven* (that is, his spiritual kingdom, which he came from *heaven* to establish, and which is to bring our souls to *heaven*) to a marriage feast, which a great king makes for the wedding of his son. To this feast many are invited, who refuse to come; many take

no notice of the invitation, but go their ways, one to his farm, another to his traffic; many afflict, and persecute even to death, the messengers that are sent to call them to the wedding. All these, then, are rejected and condemned; and in their place the poor, the blind, and the lame, are gathered together, from the highways and from the hedges, and are brought in to be guests at this royal feast. But the man that presumed to come in without having on a wedding garment, is ordered to be bound hand and foot, and to be cast out into the exterior darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. So far the parable: now let us see how it is to be applied, and what sacred truths we are to learn from it. The Son of God came down from heaven to wed to himself our human nature, by the mystery of his incarnation; and every one of our souls in particular, by a happy union of grace and love. This is that wedding, which the great King of heaven and earth makes for his only Son. The marriage feast, with which this wedding is celebrated, is begun here upon earth by grace, in the souls of as many as sincerely come to Christ, with faith and love; and shall be perpetual hereafter, by the eternal enjoyment of him in his heavenly paradise. To this marriage feast both Jews and Gentiles were long ago invited by the apostles, and other messengers of God; and all nations are still invited to the same, as well by apostolic preachers, sent amongst them for their conversion, as by many other ways by which God daily calls souls to his love and service, in order to their salvation. Happy they that duly correspond with these heavenly calls, and readily come to this feast, to which they are so lovingly invited by so great a King. But, then, they must take care to come with the proper dispositions, signified by the wedding garment; without which they must not expect any part with the bridegroom in his everlasting banquet.

Consider, secondly, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us in this parable, by his inviting us all to this heavenly feast; considering what this feast is, what kind of entertainment he has here prepared for us, and how very wretched and undeserving we are of any such favour. But O, the strange stupidity of so many poor, thoughtless mortals, who daily slight and neglect this divine invitation! O how blind, how miserable, how wicked are they, to prefer these worldly toys, this farm, this traffic, these empty airy bubbles, before this divine banquet, where God desires to feast their souls with himself, by the sweet blessings and communications of his grace here, and by *inebriating* them hereafter, for all eternity, *with the plenty of his house, and making them drink of the torrent of his pleasure, at the very head of the fountain of life.*

Consider, thirdly, the dreadful consequences of neglecting or rejecting these heavenly invitations, by which we are called to the *marriage feast of the Lamb*. Alas! our all is here at stake; our whole happiness, for time and eternity, absolutely depends upon our coming to this feast. We shall be perpetually miserable, if we are excluded from it. And shall we be so wretched, as wilfully to exclude ourselves, by refusing to come, when we are so pressingly invited by the King of heaven? Will he not highly resent this contemptuous treatment; this slighting of his gracious calls; this preferring the vanities and lying fooleries of the world, before him and his banquet? O, there is nothing moves him more to indignation. It is this crying sin is the principal cause of the reprobation of all that are lost. And therefore our Lord concludes this parable with that terrible sentence, that *many are called, but few are chosen*, to excite us to a diligence and fervour in corresponding with grace; and to convince us, that, if we are not of the number of the elect, the fault is entirely ours, in not answering the calls of heaven; but preferring mere baubles, even the idols of our passions, before that marriage feast, to which he so graciously invites us.

Conclude, O my soul, to secure at least thy own eternal welfare, by a ready compliance with all the gracious calls of Heaven, and by being quite serious and in earnest, in hastening to this feast of grace, to which thou art invited. But remember to take along with thee the *wedding garment* of divine love, with a happy and holy resolution and determination of dedicating and consecrating what remains of thy life to thy God; of flying all known and wilful sin, more than any other evil whatsoever; of being faithful until death; and of labouring to advance, every day more than other, in the way of God and of true life. With this wedding garment, thou shalt be both a welcome and an eternal guest; without it, thou shalt be sentenced to be cast out into the exterior darkness.

NOVEMBER 16.

On the Parable of the barren Fig-tree. Luke xiii.

CONSIDER, first, that all Christians are like trees planted in the vineyard of Christ; and that he expects of them all, that they should bring forth fruit, each one in his kind. He will not be content with their making a fair show with beautiful leaves; nor yet with their bringing forth a meanner sort of fruit, unworthy of his vineyard; but he requires that they should bring forth *good fruit*, and declares (Matt. vii. 19,) *that every tree that bringeth*

not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. This sentence, then, stands against all such trees as are barren in our Lord's vineyard: yes, the axe is already laid at the root of them all, (Matt. iii. 10.) However, as we see in the parable of the fig-tree, God, in his great patience and mercy, bears with them for a while, and suspends the execution of the sentence in hopes of their coming in time to bring forth good fruit; till, after repeated disappointments, he lets the sentence take place, and suddenly cuts them down, to be the fuel of a fire that shall never be extinguished. See here, my soul, and dread the sad consequences of continuing to be a barren tree, in the vineyard of our Lord, and of *despising the riches of his goodness, and his patience and long-suffering*, with which he waits so long, in hopes of *good fruit*.

Consider, secondly, as to thy own particular, how much thou owest to God, for having planted thee in his vineyard; and for all that he has done for thee, that thou mightst be fruitful. O, how often has he visited thee, during all these past years, with the dew of heaven, and with the wholesome showers of his divine graces! What dressing and manuring has he not daily bestowed upon thee! How early a knowledge has he given thee of himself! How often hast thou been favoured with his heavenly word, by which his divine will has been notified to thee. How often hast thou been admitted to his sacraments, the fountains of grace and life! These are great advantages indeed; these have made many trees very fruitful; these have made many great saints. But what fruits have they produced in thee? How hast thou corresponded with all these visits and favours of heaven? Hast thou hitherto brought forth *good fruit* or *bad fruit*? Hast thou not, at the best, contented thyself with the leaves of some outward performances, like those of the scribes and Pharisees, that might please the eyes of the world, without bearing any real fruits of solid Christian virtue? If so, remember what a sentence stands at present against thee, and prevent the execution of it by a speedy and hearty repentance and conversion to God, and by beginning at least to bring forth the good fruit of a new life, before the time of thy reprieve expire, the term of which is unknown to thee, and may be very near at hand.

Consider, thirdly, that the fruit which God expects from thee, is not merely that thou shouldst refrain from scandalous excesses; or that thou shouldst lead a moral, honest life, as many Pagans have done; or that thou shouldst frequent the public worship of the church, or any other external duties, which may be liable to be ill performed, for want of a pure intention, or corrupted with pride and self-love; but the fruits which God calls for, and insists upon, are such as are solid, and sound at heart,

such as are never to be found in hypocrites, or impostors, or any others but truly good Christians. Such are an unfeigned humility and contempt of ourselves; the mortification of our own will, of our passions and corrupt inclinations, by the virtues of obedience and self-denial; a conformity in all things with the holy will of God; sincere piety and devotion, and, above all things, true and perfect charity; by loving God with our whole hearts, and every neighbour, whether friend or enemy, in him, and for him. These are *good fruits* indeed; and the trees that bring forth such fruits as these, are *good trees*. But where these fruits are wanting, and either pride, or passion, or self-love still prevails, neither alms, nor fastings, nor long prayers, nor daily frequenting the sacraments, nor speaking with the tongues of men and angels, nor prophesying, nor working of miracles, nor even raising the dead to life, will secure any tree from the dreadful judgment of being cut down, and cast into the fire.

Conclude to look well to thyself, and examine what kind of fruits thine are: whether good and sound, and fit to be presented to the Lord of the vineyard, or at the best but wild and sour, or rotten at heart, by the corruption of thy pride and self-conceit; and take care to purge away, whilst thou hast time, whatever either hinders the fruit from ripening, or rots and corrupts it. Thy eternal welfare absolutely depends upon thy bringing forth a store of *good fruit*, upon which thou mayest live for ever.

NOVEMBER 17.

On the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Luke xv.

CONSIDER, first, in the *prodigal son*, a lively image of the misery of every poor sinner, who, by wilful sin, goes away from his Father's house, into a *far country*, even the region of death, and there wastes all his substance, by living riotously, that is, loses and squanders away all the graces he had received from God, and abuses all his gifts and talents, by making them all subservient to his criminal passions and lusts. Alas! how soon does he experience the *famine*, that reigns in that country! A *mighty famine* indeed! a dismal want of the bread of life, and of all true nourishment; a perpetual emptiness of the soul; a hunger and thirst, that is never to be satisfied. For all that is brought to market there, though sold at a very dear rate, is but mere wind, froth, and bubbles, that can never fill the belly. In vain does the poor wretch, under this famine, sell himself for a slave to one of the citizens of that region, even to Satan, the ruler of that land of darkness, who sets him to feed his swine, namely, his own brutish passions and carnal inclinations; for

he finds himself still perishing for hunger and want; he is not allowed to fill himself, even with the husks which the swine eat; they leave him still empty. Ah, sinners, see the dismal state you reduce yourselves to, when you turn your backs upon your Father, and choose rather to be slaves of the devil than children of God. O, never expect any solid satisfaction or so much as one happy hour, till you return home again to your Father's house.

Consider, secondly, the steps by which the *prodigal child* was reclaimed, and brought home to his father; and thou shalt find that the beginning of his conversion was his *returning to himself*, and being made sensible of his great misery. Alas! the poor deluded soul, at the same time that she leaves her Father's house, by forgetting her God; leaves also, and forgets herself; and is so strangely blinded and bewitched by the world, the flesh, and the devil, as to imagine herself free under the worst of slaveries, rich under the extremity of want, and honourable and happy in the very midst of disgrace, confusion, and perpetual uneasiness. But when she begins to open her inward eyes to the light of God by serious consideration, and to *return into herself*, she is greatly alarmed at the sight of her present wretched condition, and the dreadful dangers that surround her on all sides, and threaten her continually with nothing less than a miserable eternity. Now it is a ready correspondence with this heavenly light and grace, by a desire to return to the best of Fathers is the first step to the prodigal's conversion. But then see my soul, how he rises up immediately, without the least delay, to follow this call. See with what dispositions of a most profound humility, with what a sense of his own unworthiness, with what a deep sorrow and contrition for his sins, he makes the best of his way home. O give ear to his sentiments on this occasion. *I will arise, saith he, and I will go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.* O that all sinners, who have imitated the *prodigal* in his extravagances, would imitate him also by *returning to themselves* as he did, and by *rising without delay*, to go and to seek the true Father of their souls, with the like dispositions of a *contrite and humble heart!*

Consider, thirdly, the infinite goodness and mercy of God, expressed to us in the manner in which this heavenly Father received the prodigal child returning to him. He did not stay till he came to his house; but, *when he was yet a great way off, he saw him, and was moved with compassion; and running to him, he fell upon his neck, and kissed him:* he scarce gave him time to confess his guilt, before he ordered *his servants to bring forth quickly the first robe, and to put it on him, and to put a ring on*

his hand, and shoes on his feet, and to bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, said he, and make merry; because this my son was dead, and is come to life; he was lost, and is found. O blessed be this infinite goodness and mercy for ever, which daily exerts itself in this manner, and works the like wonders in favour of penitent sinners. He first excites them to desire to come home to him; he has pity on them, when as yet, they are *a great way off*; he runs out to meet them; he lovingly receives them into his embraces; he clothes them again with the sacred robe of his divine grace; he restores them to the honour and dignity of his children, and to all the ornaments of virtue and grace, which they had forfeited by sin; he admits them to the divine banquet of the body and blood of his only Son; and causes all his heavenly court to celebrate a feast of joy upon their conversion. And shall not all this loving kindness, this tender mercy, these extraordinary favours showed to penitent sinners, encourage thee, my soul, and effectually determine thee to quit, for good and all, the husks of the swine, and to run to the embraces of this Father of mercies?

Conclude, if thy case be like that of the prodigal, in being in a far country, away from thy father's house, that is, at a great distance from thy God, by mortal sin, perishing for hunger and want, among the husks of swine, to determine to imitate the prodigal in his ready correspondence with grace, in the resolution with which he presently rises, and returns to his father, and in the dispositions of humility and contrition, with which he returns; and this great Father will undoubtedly receive thee, as he did him, and all his heavenly family shall feast and rejoice at thy conversion.

NOVEMBER 18.

On the Parable of the unjust Steward. Luke xvi.

CONSIDER, first, that this steward, being accused to his Lord of having wasted his substance, was called upon by him *to give up an account of his stewardship, for that he could now be steward no longer*; and therefore he sought to provide for himself, by making friends amongst his master's debtors, by discounting a considerable part of what they stood charged in their bills to his master, that so they might be willing to receive him into their houses, and to entertain him, in which, though he acted iniquitously with regard to his master, he did wisely, according to what the world calls wisdom, with regard to the providing for himself against the evil day; *for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.* And I

say to you, saith our Lord, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings. See here, Christians, the great lesson designed for you in this parable. You having so often wasted the goods of your great Master, ought to give you a just apprehension of your being quickly called by him to an account, and deprived of your stewardship. What then must you do, in order to your future support and everlasting livelihood? O, you must make yourselves friends, by the good use of the mammon of this world, that is, by liberal alms to God's poor servants; you must diligently exercise charity in all its branches; you must use your best endeavours to reclaim sinners from the error of their way, and by that means procure for them a discharge from their debts; and your Lord will commend you for having *done wisely* for yourselves; and these friends you have thus made for yourselves will, through his mercy, be qualified to receive you hereafter into his eternal mansion.

Consider, secondly, in how many respects we are all stewards of this great Lord. All that we have is his; our very being is his; our whole soul and body, all our powers, faculties and senses, all our gifts and talents, all that we possess corporally or spiritually, our whole time, and all our worldly substance. In regard to all these things, we are stewards of God, and accountable to him. All these are goods that belong to this great Master, which he has intrusted us with. We are unjust stewards, if we waste any part of these goods; and the employing of any of them otherwise than according to his holy will and his divine ordinances, will be accounted wasting of them, in the eyes of him, before whom we shall one day most certainly appear, to give an account of our whole stewardship, and of all the years we have had his goods in our hands. O, who shall be able to stand this examination of accounts, upon the issue of which an eternity depends! O, who shall be able to answer for one article in a thousand!

Consider, thirdly, O my soul, those words in the parable as addressed to thee this day; *Give an account of thy stewardship*, and see what thou couldst say for thyself, if this day were to be thy last, and thy accounts were to be immediately inspected. Thou knowest not the day nor the hour. See, then, what account thou couldst give, if this should be the day. For why shouldst thou expose thyself any longer to the dreadful danger of being called upon, when unprepared to thy eternal condemnation. Alas! has there been hitherto any part of thy life, in which thou hast acted the part of an honest and faithful steward, with relation to the goods of thy Master? How little share has he had in thy thoughts, words and actions? How little of

thy time has been employed in his service? How often have all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses, both exterior and interior, been alienated from him, and made instruments of offence? How often have his choicest gifts and talents been abused and perverted? What is become of all the graces purchased for thee by the blood of Christ? Where are all the inspirations, calls, and reproaches of conscience, with which he has visited thee? where the sacraments thou hast received? the word of God, and so many other spiritual advantages, or temporal blessings, thou hast been favoured with? How few are there of all these goods of thy Master, which thou hast not wasted or perverted? He has even made over, in a manner, to thee, the passion and death of his only Son, and deposited all his merits with thee in the sacred mysteries; and what little use or advantage hast thou hitherto made of them? Ah, my poor soul, in how wretched a state indeed are all our accounts? And what have we not to apprehend from the justice of our Lord, for having been such wicked stewards all our life time?

Conclude now at least to set thy accounts in order, to rectify all that has hitherto been amiss, and henceforward to begin upon a new bottom, by dedicating thy whole self, and all thou hast, to the love and service of him to whom all belongs, upon all manner of titles. It is a most crying injustice to waste his goods; how much more to employ them against himself, by wilful sin!

NOVEMBER 19.

On the rich Man, and the poor Beggar. Luke xvi.

CONSIDER, first, the words of our Lord in the Gospel—"There was a certain rich man," saith he, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; and no one did give him: moreover the dogs came, and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him, Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life time, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there

is fixed a great chaos; so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither, &c. See here, my soul, a great difference in life—between the rich man, abounding in all that this world could give, and living in pleasures and delights—and the poor beggar, wanting even the necessaries of life, and languishing under a multitude of sores and ulcers; but look, and observe how quickly the scene is changed, and what a greater and eternal difference immediately succeeds after death, when the one is comforted with everlasting joy and happiness and the other plunged into the extremity of endless misery where he cannot even be allowed one drop of water to cool his tongue.

Consider, secondly, what it was that brought the rich man to this place of eternal wo; since here is no mention in the Gospel of any scandalous excesses that he was guilty of; no blasphemies, or perjuries, or profane swearing; no murders, no adulteries, or other impurities; no thefts, or rapines, or extortions; no slanders, or detractions, or lies; it is only said that *he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day*; things in which, considering his state and condition, the world apprehends no sin. What, then, can we suppose to have been the occasion of his damnation? O, Christians, his sins were chiefly sins of omission of the service of God; he led an idle life; he loved his pleasures more than God; he made a god of his belly; he had no concern for the poor; so that he lived in a continual breach of the two great commandments, of loving God with his whole heart, and of loving his neighbour as himself; and certainly there needs no other sins to send any man to hell. See then, my soul, thou never flatter thyself with the imagination of thy being innocent; nor promise thyself any security, because thou art not guilty perhaps of the grosser sort of sins; whilst thou leadest an idle, unprofitable life, following the ways and maxims of worldlings, and loving the honours, riches, or pleasures of the world better than God; for such a life as this can never bring any one to heaven; it is too remote from the narrow way that leads to life.

Consider, thirdly, in the case of the poor beggar, the happy fruits of patient suffering; of a true conformity, in all things, to the will of God; and of always keeping one's self close to him, by recollection and divine love, in every place, occupation, or condition of life. For it was thus the poverty and the pains of Lazarus were sanctified, and made the seeds of his eternal happiness. O that all such Christians as share in any part of his sufferings, were so wise and happy in their deportment under them, as to reap the like fruits for eternity, from their temporal evils! But O, it is the want of a lively faith of the great truths of God,

delivered to us in the Scriptures; it is the want of a true sense of the goods and evils of eternity; it is the want of seriously thinking and considering; is too often the bane both of the rich and of the poor; for otherwise, as our Lord here informs us, these Scripture truths ought to influence us more powerfully towards the total change of our lives, than even if any person were to come from the dead to preach unto us.

Conclude to labour and pray for heavenly wisdom, to conduct thee in such manner, in the midst of the goods and evils of this transitory life, that both the one and the other may be made subservient to thy eternal happiness.

NOVEMBER 20.

On the Charitable Samaritan. Luke x.

CONSIDER, first, that our Lord, to teach us that general charity which we owe to the whole world, without exception or distinction of nation or opinion, proposes himself to us in this parable, as the perfect Pattern of this charity, in the person of a Samaritan, a people differing both in nation and religion from the Jews. A certain man, saith he, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers; who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead. And it chanced that a certain priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place, and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan, being on his journey, came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two-pence, and gave to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I at my return will repay thee." See here, my soul, in this charitable Samaritan, an image of what thy Lord has done for thee; *and go thou*, as he tells thee, in the application of the parable, and *do in like manner*; that is, show thou the like mercy and charity to thy neighbours as Christ has shown to thee. This will be indeed a charity, both to them and to thyself; since it will bring thee to *possess eternal life*, ver. 25. Yes, my soul, *this do, and thou shalt live*, ver. 28.

Consider, secondly, in this parable, the wretched condition into which man was fallen by sin. Going down from *Jerusalem*, which is interpreted *the vision of peace*, to *Jericho*, which signifies *the moon*, (that is, turning his back to his God, and to all true *peace*, to seek a false happiness in the forbidden fruit of worldly

enjoyments, which are continually changing like *the moon*,) he fell among robbers, that is, he fell into the hands of wicked spirits, and became their prey. He was stripped by them of all the gifts of grace, with which he had been adorned by his Creator, and was grievously wounded in all his powers and faculties; his understanding was darkened with ignorance and error, in his notions of good and evil; and his will perverted with malice, in the preferring evil before good: all his passions were let loose upon him, having lost their bridle of original justice, and his whole soul was in a strange disorder, weak, beyond expression, to every thing that is good, and violently bent upon evil. Thus he lay *half dead*; his better part, namely, the soul, being dead indeed, by the loss of its true life, the grace of God; and both the soul and the body being condemned by divine justice to a second and eternal death; and in this state he was like to remain, being utterly incapable, of himself, of making one step towards his deliverance; and so must have inevitably perished to eternity, had not this charitable Samaritan come down from heaven to his relief. O the dismal consequences of sin! O the infinite goodness of God! And shalt not thou, my soul, who hast had the experience both of the one and of the other, from henceforth, at least, dread, detest, and fly, with all thy power, from that worst of evils, sin; and embrace henceforward, with all thy affections, this sovereign goodness of thy God?

Consider, thirdly, by descending to particulars, what this infinite Goodness has done for lost man, in sending down his only Son to be our pious Samaritan, to deliver us from all our evils, and to impart all good to our souls. Alas! the priest and the Levite passed us by, and left us languishing under all our wounds and miseries. For the law and its ministers were not able to heal or relieve us. But our good Samaritan had compassion on us; his tender mercies brought him down from his throne of glory, to our assistance. He has bound up our wounds, by suffering himself to be *wounded for our iniquities*, that *by his stripes we might be healed*. He has applied to our wounded souls the heavenly medicines of his sacraments, signified by the *wine* and *oil*. He has set us upon his own beast, by *bearing our sins himself in his own body, upon the tree* of the cross. He has brought us to the blessed inn of his holy church, where all graces and means of salvation are abundantly furnished to all that ask and seek for them. He has given the charge of our souls to the keeper of this inn, that is, to his apostles and their successors, the pastors of this his holy church, divinely commissioned and assisted by him; and he has promised them a most ample reward, for all eternity, to repay them for the care they shall take of us. O, what return shall we make to our Lord, for all this mercy, and all this love

he has thus shown to us? O, he desires no other return, but that we should love him, and show mercy to one another.

Conclude to make him this return of love; but see it be with thy whole heart; for he will not accept of a love that allows of any creature to stand in competition with him. See also thou never forget that there is no loving him, without a sincere disposition of showing mercy to thy neighbours, for his sake, and by his great example.

NOVEMBER 21.

On the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, that the church celebrates, on this day, the early dedication which the Blessed Virgin made of herself to God, and to his eternal love and service, when, as we learn by a pious tradition, she was presented by her holy parents, St. Joachim and St. Ann, in the temple of the Lord, and remained there in the company of other virgins, in an apartment allotted for that purpose, in one of the courts of the temple. Learn, my soul, from this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, the great advantages of early piety, and the happiness of dedicating one's self, from one's childhood, to divine love; as also the duty incumbent on all parents to present their children to God; to keep them at a distance from the contagion of bad company, and from all the false maxims and corrupt ways of a wicked world; and to train them up in the fear and love of God. The Blessed Virgin was brought by divine inspiration to the house of God, where she lived remote from the noise and distractions of the world; because she was to be the house, where the Son of God himself would be incarnate, and the living temple in which he would live. Christians, do you desire that your souls should be also the house of God and the living temples of his glory? It is by withdrawing yourselves, as much as possible, from the tumult and confusion of the world; it is by continually presenting yourselves to God, in his inward temple, by a spirit of recollection and mental prayer, that you are to attain to this happiness.

Consider, secondly, in this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, on the one hand, the voice of God, calling her to his house, (in order to the disposing of her soul for the great things he was to work in her,) in the words of the Psalm (xliv,) *Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear; and forget thy people, and thy father's house; and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty; for he is the Lord thy God; and him they shall adore:* and on the other hand, the devotion and fervour with which she corresponds with this call; the resolution with which she ascends the

fifteen degrees or steps, that led to the temple; resolving to ascend, in like manner, by all the degrees of virtue, to the very top of perfection; the profound adoration with which, prostrating herself upon the ground, she adored his divine Majesty, at her first coming into his house; and the oblation she there makes of her whole self to his perpetual service. Learn, Christian souls, the like correspondence with divine grace, when it calls you to God; the like devotion, fervour, and resolution, in his service; the like adoration and oblation of yourselves to him. In this sacred retreat, the Blessed Virgin gave the first example of a consecration of herself to God, by a vow of perpetual virginity, (as she was inspired to do by the spirit of God,) desiring in all things to choose the better part; and to render the sacrifice she made of her soul and body more perfect, more firm, and secure, by the means of her vow. Learn of her a love for purity and chastity; and a resolution of preserving it with all the perfection that thy condition of life shall allow of; and for this end daily beg the assistance of her prayers.

Consider, thirdly, the exercises which the Blessed Virgin followed in the temple; for she certainly was not idle there. As the Holy Ghost continually visited and solicited her with his heavenly inspirations and graces, so she, who never received the grace of God in vain, continually opened the door of her heart to these visits, and co-operated with these graces, with all her strength; and by this means, every day of her life, as she increased in age, so she grew in virtue, grace, charity, and sanctity. And as to the employment of her time, whilst she was in the temple, her whole life there was spent in ascending, or descending, by the mystical ladder of Jacob; (Gen. xxviii. 12,) which reacheth from the earth to heaven, and has God at the top of it. She ascended this ladder by employing a great part of her days in spiritual *reading, meditation, prayer* and *contemplation*, which are named by St. Bernard for the steps or degrees of this heavenly ladder. And she descended again by the humble exercises of working with her hands, for the service of the temple, for the use of her companions, or for the benefit of the poor; yet so that, even whilst her hands were employed at work, her heart was still with God by prayer and love. O, how holy! O, how happy is this kind of ascending and descending, by Jacob's ladder! Lord, give us grace to follow this great example, and to be always upon this ladder, which conducts to heaven.

Conclude, O my soul, to imitate this presentation of the Blessed Virgin, by frequent oblations, at least, of thyself to God, every day of thy life. Be cautious, indeed, how thou engage thyself by vow, without taking good counsel and mature deliberation, because of thy frailty; but as to making an offering of thy

whole heart and soul to thy God, with all thy thoughts, words, and actions, it is what thou canst not do too often.

NOVEMBER 22.

On the Pharisee and the Publican. Luke xviii.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others:—"Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also, is this publican. I fast twice in the week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, a sinner. I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This parable was spoken to some, *who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others.* O my soul, beware of this unhappy disposition; dread these two most pernicious evils, of trusting in thyself as just, and of despising others. Those that are truly just are far from thinking themselves so; they are far from glorying in themselves; far from attributing any thing of good to themselves; or preferring themselves before any one living. In the judgment they make of themselves, they always *sit down*, according to the rule of their great Master, *in the lowest place* of all. Their eyes are ever open to their own defects, and shut to those of others; at least where their duty does not require their inspection or correction of them. They are convinced that they have nothing in themselves that they can trust to; and that it is only owing to God's great mercy, that they have not been guilty of the most enormous crimes that any poor wretch has ever committed; and therefore they never presume to despise any one, not even the most scandalous sinner, lest they should be found worse than him in the sight of God, through their pride and self-conceit, crimes which they know to be always an *abomination to the Lord.* See, my soul, if these be thy sentiments.

Consider, secondly, that it was this pride and self-conceit that is here condemned in the Pharisee, and which was the cause of his condemnation. He was of the number of those that *trusted in themselves as just, and despised all others.* He was full of himself. In his prayer, he neither craved mercy nor grace of God; he asked for nothing, because he took himself to be *rich and*

wealthy, and not to stand in need of any thing; whereas, indeed, through his pride, he was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Apoc. iii. 17. His whole prayer was only an enumeration of his own good works, with a curse upon the rest of men, and a condemnation of the poor publican. And as he asked for nothing, so he obtained nothing; but only carried home with him his own condemnation. See, my soul, the sad consequences of pride, and its particular opposition to the spirit of prayer; and learn to detest with all thy power, and to drive far from thee, an evil that is so detestable in the sight of God, whom it sacrilegiously robs of his glory; and so pernicious to the souls of men, whom it transforms into devils, and condemns to hell.

Consider, thirdly, the lessons we are to learn from the example of the publican, set before us by our Lord, in this parable, for our imitation. He had a true sense of his sins, and of what he had deserved for his sins; and therefore he condemned himself, as unworthy to lift up his eyes to heaven, or to come near to the altar of God; but, standing afar off, with his countenance humbly cast down upon the ground, he struck his breast, saying, *O God, be merciful to me a sinner.* Now, this profound humility, this great sense of sorrow and contrition for his sins, which accompanied his prayer, was that which procured him a favourable audience, and a ready discharge from all his sins. His prayer was heard, because it was presented and recommended by *a contrite and humble heart*; and by the efficacy of it, he went home justified; whilst the proud Pharisee, who was so full of the conceit of his own good works, met with nothing but his condemnation. O, let us learn these great lessons of humility, and of a perfect contrition for our sins; let us, as often as we go up to the temple of God to pray, carry with us this sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and we shall not fail of meeting with the like mercy as the publican did.

Conclude to study well these lessons, so much recommended, and so frequently inculcated, by our Lord in the Gospel. O, ever remember that humility and contrition of heart bring us to God, but pride and self-conceit carry us far away from him. *For he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.* St. James iv. 6.

NOVEMBER 23.

On the Parable of the Grain of Mustard Seed Matt. xiii. 31.

CONSIDER, first, that, under this humble similitude, of so small a thing as a grain of mustard seed, great and divine truths are

delivered to us by Truth itself, when he tells us that *the kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed*. *The kingdom of heaven*, in the Gospel, is taken in three different ways; sometimes for God's eternal *kingdom*, to which the just are invited, (Matt. xxv. 34,) *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, &c.*; of which also it is said, (Matt. xiii. 43,) *The just shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*. At other times, *the kingdom of heaven* is taken for the church of Christ, in which he reigns for ever, as in his *kingdom*, and the institution and intention of which is to bring men to *heaven*; and thus the kingdom of heaven is likened to *a net cast into the sea, and gathering together of all kind of fishes, &c.* (Matt. xiii. 47,) and to *ten virgins, who went out with their lamps to meet the bridegroom*, (Matt. xxv. &c.); and of this *kingdom* it is said, that our Lord *shall send his angels, (at the end of the world,) and they shall gather out of his kingdom all scandals, and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, &c.* At other times, again, *the kingdom of heaven* is taken for the *kingdom*, by which God reigns by faith, grace, and love in the souls of good Christians; and thus *the kingdom of heaven* is likened to *a treasure hidden in a field*; and to *a pearl of great price*, (Matt. xiii. 44, 46;) and of this *kingdom* it is said, (Luke xvii. 21,) *Lo, the kingdom of God is within you*. Now *the kingdom of heaven*, according to all these three acceptations, is likened to *a little grain of mustard seed*; because all our good, faith itself, grace, and all our happiness, both for time and eternity, is grounded on humility: we must be *little* and humble upon earth; we must become as *little children, or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. xviii. 3.

Consider, secondly, how well this similitude agrees to the spiritual kingdom of Christ in his church. Take a view of the beginnings of this *kingdom of heaven*; in a few poor fishermen, utterly destitute of any one of those advantages, that might recommend them according to the world: see its very Founder himself, a poor man, rejected, condemned, and put to a most disgraceful death, by public authority, at the unanimous desire of both the senate and the people of his own nation: then observe the most fundamental principles and practices, upon which this kingdom was first founded and established; its doctrines, most shocking to human pride; its maxims and precepts, most insupportable to the natural inclinations of flesh and blood; and you shall find in all this the resemblance of the *mustard seed*; small, mean, inconsiderable, and contemptible in the eyes of the world. But then observe, how quickly this little grain, after it had been buried, as it were, in the earth, sprung up, and even grew into a large tree, which spread its branches far and near; by the won-

derful progress the church and kingdom of Christ made in a short time over all the earth : see the many thousands of martyrs, and other saints, of all states and conditions, it quickly produced ; with innumerable examples of the most heroic virtues, such as none of the schools or sects of the philosophers, or any of the ancient or modern sages of the world, with all their learning and eloquence, and all their pretensions to wisdom, could ever come up to. And in all this admire and adore the wonderful ways of God, who ever delights in showing forth his greatness in things that are little, and in choosing the foolish things of the world, and such as are weak, mean, and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to be the instruments of his greatest works.

Consider, thirdly, that this grain of mustard seed is also very expressive of *the kingdom of God*, by which he reigns by grace in our souls. The beginnings of this kingdom are small, like the mustard seed ; the very first foundations of it must be laid by humility, of which the mustard seed is the emblem ; for *a contrite and humble heart* is the most essential ingredient of the conversion of the soul to God, without which the kingdom of divine grace can never be established in the soul. Then this divine grace, like the grain of mustard seed, before it can spring up, and produce the tree of Christian perfection, must first be sown, and, as it were, buried, in the earth ; by letting it sink deep into the soul, and by harbouring it there, by the means of serious and frequent meditations, and the practice of mental prayer. For it is thus only that the soul can be qualified to grow up in all Christian virtues, till she become herself the kingdom of God, and a kind of a heaven upon earth, the very temple in which God chooses to dwell, the house of God, and the house of prayer. And thus the little grain of seed will grow into a great tree.

Conclude with a serious resolution to seek henceforward, in good earnest, this kingdom of heaven, represented by the mustard seed ; which, as thou here seest, is not out of thy reach ; since it may be found here upon earth, and that, too, without going any farther to seek it than into thy own interior, where, if thou properly seek it by recollection and mental prayer, thou shalt quickly come at it, and be put in the possession of it, and all good things shall come to thee together with it.

NOVEMBER 24.

On the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Matt. xxv.

CONSIDER, first, that these ten virgins, in this parable, represents to us the state of Christians, in this mortal pilgrimage We are all, by our vocation or calling to the Christian faith, ap-

pointed to go forth, with our lamps, to meet the bridegroom; because the business of a Christian, in this life, is to make the best of his way, by the help of the light of faith, towards his God and a happy eternity; and to be always in a readiness for the coming of Christ, the great Bridegroom of our souls. The *lamps*, with which we are to go forth to meet Christ, are *the light of faith*, of all the divine truths of the Christian religion; the *oil*, with which these *lamps* are to be kept burning, are the *works of faith*, that is, the good works prescribed by the Gospel, and particularly the works of mercy, and charity, and the love of God above all things. Where this *oil* is wanting, the *lamps* are extinguished, because *faith without good works is dead*. And thrice unhappy they, who, at the approaches of that uncertain hour of their departure hence, when they shall be suddenly called upon, as in the middle of the night, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, shall find no *oil* in their *lamps*! Alas! where shall they then go to buy it? In all appearance, before *they shall be in a condition to procure any, the Bridegroom will come*, and take along with him those whom he finds *ready*, to his wedding feast, and shut the door against the rest, never, never to be opened, to all eternity.

Consider, secondly, that all Christians belong to one or other of these two companies, represented in this parable under the denomination of *wise* and *foolish virgins*. The good are *truly wise*, because they are *wise* according to God; and they are *wise* in order to eternity, inasmuch as they wisely provide for eternity. But O, how truly foolish are the wicked and all the children of Babylon, who continually forget both God and eternity! For what greater folly, or what greater madness can there be, than to believe as Christians, and to live as infidels; to expect to go to heaven by the road that leads to hell; to be daily preferring darkness before light, slavery before liberty, misery before happiness, Satan before God, by preferring the state of sin before the state of grace! In a word, what can be more foolish than blindly to exchange all that is really good, both in time and eternity, for the very worst of evils, and such as shall never have an end! And yet, alas! as we daily see, *the number of such fools as these is infinite*. But the folly that is here particularly censured in this parable, is that of Christians that make no provision of the oil of good works for the nourishment of their lamps; but go out to meet their Lord with expectation of being admitted by him to his eternal feast, with Christian faith, without Christian charity; with believing in God, without loving God, and keeping of his commandments. Ah, my soul, take good care thou never be so *foolish*.

Consider, thirdly, that the great lesson designed for us in this parable, is expressed in those words, with which our Lord concludes, *Watch ye therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour.* The bridegroom in the parable came *in the middle of the night*; that is, at a time when he was least expected; according to what he has often signified, that he shall come *like a thief in the night*, and that we shall not know the hour of his coming. Not that he desires to surprise us; for if he did, he would not so often warn us; but that he desires we should *always watch*, and be always ready, that so we may never be surprised. *Wha! I say to you*, said he to his disciples, *I say to all: watch.* And again: *Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: Amen I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and passing he will minister unto them,* Luke xii. 37. O, who can express or conceive the greatness of these heavenly rewards, of these highest honours, of these never-ending joys, signified here by our Lord's ministering, in this manner, himself to the servants, whom he shall *find watching!* But O, the dismal case, on the other hand, of all them that, instead of watching, and being always ready, are quite *asleep* as to all that relates to God and their souls; and are not awakened, either with the love or fear of God, until death opens their eyes, when it is too late; and then, like the foolish virgins, they find the door shut against them, and are sent away, with *I know you not*, into the exterior darkness.

Conclude to bear always in mind this indispensable duty of watching, so frequently inculcated by the Son of God, that so thou mayst never be surprised, and *sleep in death.* Carry always with thee the lamp of faith to enlighten thee, but never forget that this light must be kept in with the oil of good works.

NOVEMBER 25.

On the Parable of the Talents. Matt. xxv.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, in this parable, likens himself to a man going into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods; and to one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one; to every one according to his proper ability: and immediately he took his journey. Our Lord, by his ascension, is gone into heaven, a far country indeed, from this wretched earth on which we dwell. But *ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men,* Eph. iv. 8. He has plentifully distributed his goods and talents amongst his servants, to the end that they might trade with them, and ma-

prove the stock during the time of his absence, until he shall come again, and take an account of their good or evil management of their trust. He is the universal Lord of all; he distributes his talents amongst us all, according to his good pleasure. All, whatsoever we have, as to soul or body, nature or grace, all belongs to him. We have nothing but what we have received from him; nor any thing but what we are accountable for to him. And those that have received more than their neighbours, have nothing to be proud of; for *what hast thou,* says the Apostle, (1 Cor. iv. 7,) *that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory?* On the contrary, those that have received more, ought to be so much the more humble, and to fear so much the more, because they are accountable for so much the more; for where more is given, more will be required. Christians, have you been rightly sensible of these truths? Have you considered your wit, your advantages of soul or body, your fortune, as you call it, your very time, and all other gifts, either of nature or of grace, as talents deposited in your hands? Have you ever seriously thought of the strict account you must one day give of them all?

Consider, secondly, the different use that these servants made of their master's money. *For he that had received the five talents went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five: and in like manner he that had received the two gained other two. But he that had received the one, going his way, digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.* The two former are proposed for our imitation, that, by the like industry, in corresponding with divine grace, and employing in a proper manner all the gifts of God, and laying hold on every opportunity of good, we may continually advance in virtue, and, like those good and faithful servants, may improve and double our stock. O, how happy shall we be, if we shall trade in this manner with the talents committed to our charge! And though one of these servants gained five talents, and the other but two; yet as the latter, who had received but two, was no less industrious than the former, gaining as much in proportion as he, so as to double his stock as well as he, we find him rewarded in like manner, and the same eulogium given to him by his master: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,* Matt. xxv. 23. O, what encouragement is here, for those who have received fewer talents; since we see, if they make proper use of what they have received, they shall be rewarded equally with them that have received more! But O the sublime reward, that is here set before us, in these words; *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* O, nothing less than

the everlasting possession of himself; an universal, incomprehensible, eternal Good!

Consider, thirdly, how he, that buried his master's money, is here condemned, both as a *slothful* and a *wicked* servant; as a warning to all such Christians as, having received talents, that is, gifts, graces or advantages, of any kind, from God, do not employ them to his greater honour and glory, or to their own, or their neighbours' improvement, or advancement in good; but, through sloth and indolence, let them lie unregarded, and, as it were, hidden and buried in the earth, even in this unhappy earth of the world and the flesh, which engages all their thoughts and affections, more than the honour and glory of their Lord, or the eternal welfare of their own dear souls. But see where all this is like soon to end, by the sentence pronounced against this naughty servant: *Take ye away the talent from him, and give it to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have, shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* But if the unprofitable servant come off so ill, who only buried his master's money, what will become of so many thousands, who do not content themselves with making no good use of the talents they are entrusted with, but squander them away, and even pervert and turn them all against their master, by making them the instruments of sin! O, my soul, hast thou never been so unhappy?

Conclude to look well to thyself, by taking an account of all the talents deposited in thy hands, and examining well what use thou hast made of them to this day; to the end that, if they have been hitherto, either buried or abused, thou mayst now at least begin to employ them in such manner as may entitle thee to the approbation of thy great Master, rather than to be condemned, as a wicked or slothful servant, to the eternal loss both of thy talents and of thy soul.

NOVEMBER 26.

On the Parable of the Vineyard let out to Husbandmen.
Matt. xxi. 33.

CONSIDER, first, what our Lord here tells us; that *there was a certain householder, who planted a vineyard, and made a hedge round about it, and dug in it a wine-press, and built a tower; and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a strange country.* This householder represents to us God himself; and this vineyard, which he has planted, is his universal church. But

see, my soul, what care he has bestowed upon this vineyard; fencing it in with his excellent laws and his perpetual protection as with a *hedge*; digging in it a *wine-press* by the institution of his divine sacraments, the sources of his heavenly grace, pressed out for us from the sacred wounds of our crucified Saviour; and building in its favour a *tower*, in which he might watch over it, by his extraordinary providence, as well to keep evils away from it, as to provide it with all good. This vineyard he lets out to husbandmen, that is, to all men, inasmuch as he has given to all men a part, or a share, in which each one is to labour, to wit, his own soul at least, and the souls of as many others, as he has committed to his charge. And having done this he withdraws himself, as it were, into a far country by keeping himself, out of our sight, during the time of our mortal life, and patiently waiting for the fruit of this his vineyard, which we are to furnish in due season. O, what lessons have we here, as well with regard to the goodness of our God, on the one hand, in all that he has done for this vineyard, and for every part of it and consequently for every Christian soul; as with regard to our indispensable duty, on the other hand, of corresponding with this his goodness, by our labours, in producing and furnishing the fruit he expects.

Consider, secondly, with regard to thyself, what this great Lord has done for the vineyard of thy soul in particular; by innumerable favours and graces of every kind, which he has bestowed upon thee all thy life long, until this very hour; and by many happy opportunities of doing good, which he has afforded thee, (which, if duly embraced by thee, might have made thee a saint,) beyond what he has granted to thousands of others. Then see if he may not say of thee, what he said heretofore of his vineyard of Jerusalem, (Isai. v. 4,) *What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it?* But, after all this care on his part, what fruit hast thou hitherto produced for him? Alas! may he not justly complain of thee, as he did of that Jewish vineyard, that instead of the good grapes, which he looked for from thee, thou hast only brought forth wild grapes? O dread, then, what he threatens in the same place, in consequence of his being thus disappointed, in the words that immediately follow:—*I will shew you, said he, what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted: I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will make it desolate. It shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged; but briars and thorns shall come up: and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it.* Can any thing be more terrible than these threats of the soul's being thus abandoned, and given up to a reprobate sense, in

punishment of her still bringing forth no good fruit, after so many repeated favours and graces?

Consider, thirdly, in this parable, how the Lord of the vineyard sent, at different times, his servants to the husbandmen to receive the fruits of it; but they persecuted them, and put them to death; till at length he sent his only Son, whom they used in like manner. In punishment of which, *he brought those evil men to an evil end, and let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, that should render him the fruit in due season.* This was literally verified in the Jews, to whom this parable was addressed by our Lord, a few days before his passion. God sent to them, at divers times, his servants the prophets, to call for the fruits of his vineyard; but they returned him no fruits; they even persecuted his messengers, and put several of them to death. At length he sent them his only Son; and him they cast off, condemned to death, and crucified. And therefore, as our Lord here foretells, *the kingdom of God* (that is, the vineyard of his church) *has been long ago taken away from them to be given to a nation* (that is, to the Gentiles) *that should bring forth the fruits thereof.* But all this is applicable, more or less, to the particular vineyard of the soul of each Christian. Wherefore, as to thy own part, O my soul, reflect how far thou hast imitated those unhappy husbandmen, in refusing to render to the Lord of thy vineyard, in due season, the fruits which he has so often called for, at thy hands, by his messengers; that is, by his preachers, by his word, by his inspirations, by reproaches of conscience, &c. : and in persecuting those whom he sent to thee, by wilfully resisting his graces, stifling his inspirations, and setting at naught all them who sought to bring thee to good. Alas! hast thou not by thy obstinacy in sin, as much as lay in thee, even crucified again the Son of God? O, take heed, lest, if thou go on in this perversity, thou fall under the like sentence as the Jews did, of being brought to an evil end; and the kingdom of God be taken away from thee, and given to another.

Conclude to look well to the vineyard of thy soul, that it may, by due correspondence with divine grace, bring forth its fruit in due season; even such good grapes as may be acceptable to the great Lord, who has let out this vineyard to thee, and who ceases not to furnish thee with all proper helps to make it fruitful.

NOVEMBER 27.

On the merciful Dealings of Christ our Lord with Sinners.

CONSIDER, first, how Christ our Lord, whilst he was here visible upon earth, was pleased, in a particular manner, to show fa-

your and mercy to poor sinners, and to express, on all occasions, his loving kindness to them; insomuch that the scribes and Pharisees, who, being full of a conceit of their own justice, despised sinners, and kept them at a distance, saying, *Depart from me; come not near me, because thou art unclean*, (Isai. lxxv. 5,) were ever objecting to this merciful Lord, that he suffered *sinners to draw near unto him; that he received sinners, and did eat with them; that he was a friend of publicans and sinners, &c.* Unhappy men, who did not understand, that his infinite mercy and charity had brought him down from heaven, on purpose to seek and to save sinners! And still more unhappy, in proudly taking themselves to be just, and not sinners; and therefore rejecting him, *who came not to call the just, but sinners*, (Matt. ix. 13,) vainly imagining they had no need of him. Christians, see here, and admire, embrace and love, the great mercy of your Redeemer, and his tender bowels of compassion for poor sinners; and, how much soever you may be involved in sin, assure yourselves that he is ever ready to receive you, if you will repent in a proper manner, and return to him. But O, beware of the blindness of the Pharisees, and of a vain conceit of your own justice. For the first step towards your obtaining mercy must be an humble sense of your sins, and of the great need you have of mercy.

Consider, secondly, the many instances recorded in the Gospel, of this merciful disposition of Christ our Lord in favour of sinners; as in his calling them to him, (Matt. xi. 28,) and even making them his disciples, as in the case of Matthew, &c., and his frequently conversing most familiarly with them. To which add those remarkable examples of Magdalene, (Luke vii,) of the Samaritan woman, (John iv,) of the woman taken in adultery, (John viii,) of the woman of Canaan, (Matt. xv,) of Zacheus, (Luke xix,) and of the thief upon the cross, (Luke xxiii.) And as, both in his life and at his death, so after his resurrection also, he gave the like proofs of his loving kindness, and his tender mercies to sinners, in the favour he showed both to Magdalene, and to Peter, (who had so lately denied him,) by making them his first visits after his rising from the dead. O, what encouragements are here, O my soul, for us to look for the like mercy from this same Lord, who is still as rich in mercy as ever! But, then, we must remember to go to him with the like dispositions of faith and repentance, love and humility, as these happy penitents did; and to take care, like them, to return no more to our sins.

Consider, thirdly, the parables, by which our Lord has showed forth to us, in a most lively manner, his infinite goodness and mercy to poor sinners; as, for instance, that of the *good shepherd*, (Luke xv,) who, having lost one of his sheep, leaves the rest of his flock, and goes in quest of that which was lost, and

ceases not to seek it till he has found it; and when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders with joy; and, coming home, calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost. In like manner that of the charitable Samaritan, who showed such tender mercy to the man that had fallen among thieves; and that of the father of the prodigal child, who received so kindly and lovingly his ungracious son, returning home to him. In all which, my soul, thou mayst see a lively and a lovely image of that tender mercy, compassion, and goodness, which thy Redeemer has so often exercised, and continues daily to exercise, in favour of sinners. But what can he think too much, of all that he does for them, for whom he has even shed the last drop of his blood! O, blessed be his mercy for ever, which is continually working such wonders for poor sinners! Ah, my soul, were it not for these wonders of his mercy, we should long since have dwelt in hell.

Conclude to lay hold of this mercy of thy Saviour, whilst thou hast time, by turning thyself away from all thy sins, from this very hour, and running to this Father of mercies, and dedicating thyself eternally to his service. For why shouldst thou any longer abuse his goodness and love, by obstinacy in sin; or run the risk of provoking his justice, to revenge upon thee the contempt of his mercy?

NOVEMBER 28.

On the Conversion of Zacheus. Luke xix.

CONSIDER, first, how, when our Lord was walking through the city of Jericho, *there was a man there named Zacheus, who was he chief of the publicans, and he was rich; and he sought to see Jesus, who he was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was low of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him; for he was to pass that way.* See here, Christians, the first steps towards this wonderful conversion of a rich worldlying; that is, of one of that sort of men, which is usually the most remote from the kingdom of God. First, he desired to see Jesus, who he was. Good desires are the first beginning of all our good; these incline us to seek to see Jesus, and to come at him by true wisdom, which consists in truly knowing him, what he is in himself, and what he is in regard to us. Now, the beginning of this true wisdom, as we learn from the Spirit of God in the Scriptures, is an earnest desire after it; and this is seeking, like Zacheus, to see who Jesus is. Secondly, he was low of stature, and could not see Jesus for the

crowd; and therefore *he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him; for he was to pass that way.* Alas! poor sinners, we are also *low of stature*, through our unhappy weakness and manifold miseries; we are hindered from seeing Jesus, by *the crowd*, that is, by the distractions, worldly solitudes, disorderly affections of our hearts, and dissipation of thought, in which we live, and by the tumult of our passions; and therefore, in order to see and know him, we must get out of the crowd, by retirement and recollection of thought; we must run before, by a disengagement of our heart from worldly affections; we must climb up *the sycamore*, (the name of which implies a *silly fig tree*,) by treading under our feet the false maxims of worldly wisdom and human respects, and embracing the maxims of the gospel, which the world calls foolishness. We must get above the heads of the worldly crowd, by climbing up the tree of the cross, which the world despises and abhors; and then we shall be able to know Jesus, and to contemplate him; for that is the way by which he passes.

Consider, secondly, that *when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said to him; Zacheus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received him with joy. And when they all saw it, they murmured, saying, that he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.* See here, Christians, how true that is of the wise man, (Wisdom vi. 13, &c.) that *wisdom is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her, and preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them.* Our Lord does not only suffer himself to be seen by this publican, but he looks up at him, he calls to him, to make haste and to come down to him; he even invites himself into his house to be his guest, and brings along with him salvation into that house. O, the happy consequences of seeking to see and to know Jesus, and of getting out of the crowd, into the sycamore tree, to contemplate him! But then we must also learn from the example of Zacheus, a ready correspondence with the grace of our Lord when he looks up and calls; we must not let him go away on this occasion; we must make haste and come down to him without delay; we must accept of the favour of the visit he offers us with thankfulness; we must conduct him with joy into our inward house; we must make him welcome there, by a proper entertainment of devotion and love; thus he will bring *salvation with him to our house.*

Consider, thirdly, what entertainment Zacheus offered to our Lord, when he had received him into his house; *Behold, Lord, said he, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man of any thing, I restore him fourfold.* He made

sacrifice to him upon the spot of his predominant passion, even of that love of the mammon of iniquity, which before had been his idol. He gave up at once all his worldly riches, which were so near his heart, to be employed either in alms, or in making restitution fourfold for all ill-gotten goods. He laid down all his sins at the feet of his Saviour, with a sincere detestation and repentance for them all, and a firm resolution to return to them no more, but to make the best satisfaction he could for them. Now, this was the most agreeable feast he could make for our Lord, who was pleased immediately to declare, *This day is salvation come to this house; because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.* O, what comfort was here for Zacheus! O, what encouragement for us poor sinners to imitate the readiness and sincerity of his conversion, that we may also with him be acknowledged for true sons of Abraham, by following the example of his faith, obedience, and sacrifice; and that the like salvation may come also to our house, from him who ever delights in seeking and saving that which was lost!

Conclude to consider the conversion of Zacheus as a model of perfect conversion, and to strive to imitate it in every part. Often invite Christ into thy house, and entertain him there in spirit; but see that thou make him a proper feast, even as Zacheus did, by sacrificing to him the dearest affections of thy heart: and never let him go, without giving his blessing to thy house.

NOVEMBER 29.

On Christ's weeping over Jerusalem. Luke xix.

CONSIDER, first, how our Lord, coming for the last time to visit Jerusalem, a few days before his passion; *when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.* Our Lord, in this his last coming to Jerusalem, is accompanied with crowds of people, bearing branches of palms in their hands, and welcoming him with hosannas of joy; but his attention is engaged by the melancholy object he has before his eyes of that unhappy city, and of all the evils that were coming upon it, which he bewails in this pathetic manner. Not that the beating down of stone walls, or the destroying of

houses, was a matter worthy of the tears of the Son of God ; nor yet that men, who are all doomed to die, should die a little before their time ; but the miseries which he lamented were of another kind, namely, the blindness, and the hardness of heart, of the inhabitants of this city, so highly favoured by his visits ; their extreme ingratitude, and their obstinacy in sin ; and that final reprobation, and eternal damnation, which they were quickly drawing down upon their own heads, by their repeated abuses, and wilful resistance of those extraordinary graces, which he offered them at this time of their visitation. Christians, beware lest the like abuses of divine grace should draw down the like judgments upon you also.

Consider, secondly, that you have at present *your day*, as Jerusalem had then. This is *your day*, a time of mercy and grace, in which the Son of God daily visits you, by many gracious calls and inspirations : his sacraments and sacrifice, the fountains of your Saviour, are now continually open for you, together with all manner of helps for your salvation. But what use do you make of this *your day* ? For it is short, and will quickly be at an end ; and then *the day of the Lord* must take place. Have you a right sense and knowledge, *in this your day, of the things that are for your peace, and for your true welfare* ? Do the things of God and eternity make a due impression on our souls ? Is the conduct of your life regulated by them ? Or are not these great truths, through your own fault, *hidden at present from your eyes* ? O, take care, lest, if you pass by unregarded this *time of your visitation*, as Jerusalem did, the days should suddenly come upon you also, when your spiritual enemies *shall cast a trench about you, and straiten you on every side, and beat you flat to the ground, &c.* Namely, when *the sorrows of death shall compass you, and the perils of hell shall find you* ; and the grace of God, which you have so long abused, shall leave you in the hands of your enemies.

Consider, thirdly, how our Saviour, after weeping over Jerusalem, and denouncing to it its final desolation, *entering into the temple, began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought ; saying to them, It is written, My house is a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thievers,* (Luke xix. 45.) giving us to understand, by this his proceeding on this occasion, that the profanation of the house of God, and of sacred things, the love of gain more than of godliness, and a gross neglect of prayer and other religious duties, is the high road to blindness, and hardness of heart, and consequently to a dreadful and eternal reprobation. Christians, take care, lest, imitating in these particulars the guilt of the Jews, you draw upon your heads the like punishments. The soul of every Christian ought

to be the temple of the living God, (2 Cor. vi. 16,) and, in that quality, the house of prayer. O, take care you never be so unhappy as to turn this house of prayer into a den of thieves, by shutting out from hence the fear and love of God, and letting in sin and Satan.

Conclude to attend, *in this your day, to the things that appertain to your peace*, and not to neglect the time of your visitation; lest, by a want of corresponding with grace, you be so unhappy as to fill up the measure of your sin, and suddenly to fall, when you least expect it, *into the hands of the living God.*

NOVEMBER 30.

On St. Andrew.

CONSIDER, first, the lessons we are to learn from the example of this great saint. St. Andrew, before he came to Christ, was a disciple of St. John the Baptist, (John i. 35, 40,) trained up to devotion and penance, in that excellent school of the great forerunner of our Lord. See, my soul, the great advantages of early piety, and of a saint-like education. *It is good for a man, saith the prophet, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth,* (Lament. iii. 27;) and *It is a proverb, saith Solomon, (Prov. xxii. 6,) a young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* St. John, the true friend of the Bridegroom, who sought not his own honour and glory, but the spiritual advantage of his disciples, directed them to Jesus. St. Andrew and another heard him saying of our Lord, *Behold the Lamb of God!* and they presently followed him, and accompanied him to the place of his abode, and there they staid with him that day. O what entertainment did he give them! O, what heavenly conversation did they there enjoy? Christians, see you take care to fit up a lodging for Christ in your own interior; and invite him in thither, and entertain him there, by the exercise of recollection and of mental prayer; and you may also be so happy as to relish the admirable sweetness of his divine conversation.

Consider, secondly, that St. Andrew had no sooner found Christ himself, but he immediately endeavored to impart the same happiness to his brother Simon, and forthwith brought him to our Lord. Happy they, that, having found Jesus, and relished his sweetness, endeavour, like St. Andrew, to bring their brethren also to him; according to that of the Scripture, (Apoc. xxii. 17,) *Let him that heareth, say, Come;* that is, let him that heareth the sweet voice and invitation of the Spirit of God, in his

own soul, calling him to Christ, invite as many others as he can, and bring them along with him. But though these two brothers began now to be acquainted with our Lord, and to believe in him, they had not as yet left all to follow him. This grace was reserved for another time, when, as we read, (Matt. iv. 18,) *Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, (for they were fishermen;) and he saith to them, Come after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men; and they, immediately leaving their nets, followed him.* Learn, Christians, from this example, a ready correspondence with the calls and graces of God, even though he should call upon you to leave all you possess, and to follow him; how much more when he calls for a much easier sacrifice, such as the giving up, for the love of him, some petty toy or worldly bauble, which has taken possession of your heart! Alas! the affections to these fooleries are like nets, from which you must be disengaged before you can truly follow Christ.

Consider, thirdly, that, from this time, St. Andrew stuck close to our Lord, as his individual companion and disciple; and, after his ascension into heaven, employed his whole life in propagating, by his labours, by his preaching, and by his miracles, the glory of his Master's name, and his blessed kingdom, and in procuring salvation to innumerable souls. Neither did he cease, till, after many sufferings and tribulations, (the usual portion of the disciples of Christ,) he laid down his life for the love of his Lord, following him faithfully and constantly unto death, even to the death of the cross. But O, with what affection did he salute the cross, prepared for him! when, according to the acts of his martyrdom, coming within sight of that happy instrument, which was to send him to his God, he cried out, *O good cross, which hast received beauty and glory from bearing the body of my Lord! O cross which I have long desired, tenderly loved, and continually sought after, and which now at length art here prepared, to satisfy my longing soul; receive me now in thy embraces; take me away from amongst mortals, and conduct me to my Master; that, through thee, he may receive me, who redeemed me, by dying on thee.* Christians, what are your dispositions with regard to the cross prepared for you? There is no going to heaven for you by any other way than that of the cross. Are you sensible of this? Do you, like St. Andrew, lovingly embrace this blessed instrument, which is to bring you to your God and to a happy eternity? Two considerations, in particular, recommended the cross to St. Andrew, for the object of his affection and love; namely, the example of his Master, who had sanctified the cross by his own sufferings and death, and the cross' being the sovereign means of divine

appointment to bring him to his Master, and to unite him eternally to him. O, let the like considerations recommend the cross also to your love and affection.

Conclude to labour to imitate the virtues of St. Andrew, more especially his early piety, his attention to all the divine calls, his early correspondence with the grace of God, his constant adhesion to Christ, and his dedicating his whole life to his love and service; and the pious dispositions of his soul with relation to the cross. There is no better way of honouring the saints, than by endeavouring to be saints, by an imitation of their lives

DECEMBER 1.

On the Time of Advent.

CONSIDER, first, that the time of *Advent*, (so called from being set aside by the church, for worthily celebrating the *advent*, that is, the *coming* of Christ,) is a penitential time, and a time of devotion; in which we are every day called upon by the church of God, to *prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths*; to enter into the like dispositions to those which St. John the Baptist required of the people, when he was sent to preach to them conversion and penance, in order to prepare them for their Messiah; that so we also, by turning away now from our sins, by sorrow and repentance, and turning ourselves to the Lord our God with our whole heart, by love and affection, may dispose our souls to welcome our Saviour, whose birth we are about to celebrate, and to embrace in such manner the mercy and grace, which he brings with him at his first coming, as to escape hereafter those dreadful judgments, which his justice shall execute upon impenitent sinners, at his second coming. See then, my soul, that thou dedicate this holy time to suitable exercises of devotion and penance, that thou mayst answer the end of this sacred institution.

Consider, secondly, in what manner we are all summoned by the church, at the beginning of this holy time, in the words of St. Paul, (Rom. xiii. 11, read in the Epistle of the first Sunday in Advent,) to dispose ourselves now for Christ, *Knowing the time*, says the apostle, *that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is passed, (or far spent,) the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light: let us walk decently, as in the day, &c.* O, my soul, let us consider these words as particularly addressed to us, in order to awaken us, and to stir us up to begin now a new life. Alas! have we not hitherto been quite asleep, as to the greatest

of all our concerns? Are not far the greatest part of Christians quite asleep, by their unaccountable indolence in the great business of the salvation of their souls, and of a happy eternity? Are they not sleeping too, which is worse, in the very midst of dangers, and of mortal enemies, who are continually plotting their destruction; and even upon the very brink of a precipice, which, if they fall down, will let them in a moment into hell? O, let us, then, hearken seriously to this summons; and rouse ourselves now, whilst we have time, out of this unhappy lethargy; and, from this hour, begin to apply ourselves, in good earnest, to that only business for which we came into this world. O, let us *cast off now, and for ever, the works of darkness, and put on Jesus Christ!*

Consider, thirdly, that, on the first Sunday of Advent, the terrors also of God's justice are set before our eyes in the description given in the Gospel of the great accounting day; to the end that they, that will not correspond with the sweet invitations of God's mercy, and awake from sleep, at the summons addressed to them in the Epistle, may be roused at least by the thunder of his justice, denounced in the Gospel; and be induced by the wholesome fear of the dreadful judgments, that are continually hanging over the heads of impenitent sinners, to make good use of this present time of mercy, lest hereafter there should be neither time nor mercy for them. Ah, sinners, *if this day you hear the voice of the Lord*, either sweetly inviting you with the allurements of his mercy, or terrifying you with the threats of his judgments, see you *harden not your hearts*. For now is your time. Sleep on no longer, lest you come to sleep in death; as it happened to them of old, who, by refusing to hearken to God's voice, provoked him so far, that *he swore to them in his wrath that they should never enter into his rest*. O remember, that the day of the Lord and his judgments shall come as a snare upon all them that will not watch, *Luke xxi. 35*.

Conclude to enter now into the true spirit of this holy time, which is a penitential spirit; and to *prepare the way of the Lord*, by putting away all thy sins, and purifying thy soul for him: thus shalt thou welcome him at his coming, and shalt be welcome to him.

DECEMBER 2.

On what we must do to prepare the Way of the Lord

CONSIDER, first, that the church, in the office appointed for this holy time, frequently puts us in mind of the mission and preaching of St John the Baptist, and of the manner in which

he endeavoured to prepare the people for Christ; to the end that we may learn, from the doctrine of this great forerunner of our Lord, in what dispositions we ought also to be, if we would duly prepare the way for him. Now, what the Baptist continually preached to the people was, That they should turn from their evil ways, and do *penance, because the kingdom of heaven was at hand*: that they should *bring forth fruits worthy of penance*, if they would escape *the wrath to come*; and this without delay; for that *now the axe was laid at the root of the tree, and that every tree that did not bring forth good fruit should be cut up, and cast into the fire*: that they should not flatter themselves with expectation of impunity, or security, because they had Abraham for their father; for that *God was able to raise up from the very stones children to Abraham*; and therefore, without a thorough conversion from their sins, they were to expect that the kingdom of God, and the grace and dignity of being children of Abraham, (the father of all the faithful,) should be taken away from them, and given to the Gentiles. He added, that *he baptized them, indeed, with water unto penance*, but that another should come after him, that should *baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire*; that *his fan was in his hand, and that he should thoroughly cleanse his floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he would burn with unquenchable fire*, Matt. iii. This was the way St. John prepared the people for Christ; and it is by our conforming ourselves in practice to these his lessons at this holy time, we must also *prepare the way of the Lord*, and be prepared for him.

Consider, secondly, that the great theme of the preaching of St. John, in order to prepare the way of the Lord, was the virtue of *penance*; inasmuch as this was the only means by which sinners could ever effectually be reconciled to God, after actual mortal sin; and, therefore, this same was at all times perpetually inculcated, by all that were ever sent with commission from God to reclaim unhappy souls that had gone astray from him. It is, then, by this virtue of *penance*, we also are to prepare the way of the Lord at this holy time; this is the proper devotion for the time of advent. Now, this virtue of *penance* (which always was, always is, and always will be, absolutely and indispensably necessary for the bringing back sinners to God) implies three things; first, the renouncing and detesting of all our sins, by which we have offended so good a God; secondly, a turning of ourselves to God, with our whole heart, and dedicating ourselves henceforward to him, both for time and eternity; and thirdly, an offering of ourselves to him, to make him what satisfaction we can for our past offences, by a penitential life. Christians, this is our great business at this holy time: if we hope to prepare

ourselves for Christ, this is the proper exercise for it; to pass over in our mind, in the bitterness of our soul, all our years that have been spent in sin; to bewail and lament, every day of this holy season, all our past treasons against the divine Majesty; to turn now to God with our whole heart; to offer our whole souls to him, to exercise ourselves in his love; and to enter into new articles with him of an eternal allegiance, with a full determination of rather dying, than being any more disloyal to him; and letting not one day pass without offering him some penitential satisfaction for our past guilt, to be united to, and sanctified by, the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. O, how happy are they that employ the time of Advent in this manner! O, how willingly will our Lord, at the approaching Christmas, communicate himself to such souls as these!

Consider, thirdly, that, at the approaching solemnity of Christmas, the church, by thrice celebrating the sacred mysteries, in the same day commemorates three different births of Christ; his *eternal* birth from his Father; his *temporal* birth from his mother; and his *spiritual* birth, by which he is born by grace, in our souls. Hence the best devotion for the time of Christmas, is that which conduces the most to bring Christ into our souls by this *spiritual* birth; and consequently the best devotion for the time of Advent, is to cleanse and to purify our souls, that he may find nothing in them that may disqualify them for his visits, or hinder him from coming to be spiritually born in us; for he will never come into an unclean soul, nor be born in a mansion where Satan resides. See then, my soul, what measures thou art to take at this holy time, to prepare thy inward house for the spiritual birth of this king of glory. First, thou must cleanse it and purify it from sin and Satan; secondly, thou must adorn it with virtue and piety; and, thirdly, thou must daily invite thy Lord thither by fervent prayer. Thus shalt thou *prepare the way of the Lord*, in the manner that is best pleasing to him.

Conclude to put in practice all these lessons, to the best of thy power, at this holy time. An Advent spent in this manner, in devotion and penance, cannot fail of bringing thee a happy Christmas.

DECEMBER 3.

On the Miracles of Christ our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, that Christ our Lord did not only teach us his heavenly truths by his preaching, by his parables, and by his maxims laid down in the Gospel; but his whole life, and all his actions, were designed to be an instruction to us; and that his

miracles, in particular, were not only wrought to confirm our faith and our hope in him, and to be so many evidences of his goodness and charity to poor mortals; but to give us also great lessons for our practice, if we would take care to look well into them, and to learn the mysterious meaning of them. Especially, we must ever remember, that, as the diseases and corporal infirmities we are liable to in this life, mystically represent the spiritual maladies of our vices and passions; so we are to learn, from the miracles wrought by our Redeemer, in healing all manner of diseases of the body, to apply continually to him for the cure of the like diseases in the soul, which are indeed the far more grievous evils of the two, and, if not healed, are attended with far more dreadful consequences. But, alas! how seldom do the children of this world take to heart the seeking a cure of these spiritual diseases! or apply, in a proper manner, to this great Physician for his aid, who, when he was here upon earth, never cast off any that applied to him! So much more are worldlings concerned for the body than for the soul, for time than for eternity. O my soul, let us at least learn to be more wise.

Consider, secondly, what were the miracles which our Saviour more frequently wrought from the time of his first beginning to preach his gospel. *He went about all Galilee, says St. Matthew, healing all manner of sickness, and every infirmity among the people: and his fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all sick people, &c., and such as were possessed by devils, and lunatics, and paralytics, and he healed them, Matt. iv. 23. And there came to him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others; and they cast them down at his feet, and he healed them, Matt. xv. 30. And whithersoever he entered into towns, or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch but the hem of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole, Mark vi. 56. And all the multitude sought to touch him, for virtue went out from him and healed all, Luke vi. 19.* See, Christians, how ready your Lord was, during his mortal life, to cure all kind of bodily diseases, and how wholesome it was to come near him, or to touch either him or his garments, by reason of the virtue that went out from him, to heal all. O, assure yourselves he is no less ready or willing, now, to heal your souls, for his power, his mercy, his goodness, his charity, and love for you, knows no bounds. It is no ways diminished, since he shed his blood for the love of you, and carried it in with him into the sanctuary of heaven, there to present it to his Father in your behalf. Examine, then, and see what your diseases are; and run with confidence

to him, for your cure. You need not go far to seek him; for though he is gone to heaven, he will still be *with you even to the end of the world*. You may find him in the eucharist, where a virtue continually goes out from him, for the healing of all: you may find him at any time, and in any place, in his divine person, especially in his temple in the centre of your souls; for there is no place, in which he either more willingly resides, or more frequently works his wonders, than in the interior of such Christians as duly seek him, by a spirit of recollection, and an internal life.

Consider, thirdly, that Christ our Lord continually *went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil*, Acts x. 38. As he came to deliver men from the tyranny and slavery of the devil, so his miracles were most frequently wrought in casting out devils, in destroying the works of the devil, and in forcing Satan out of his usurped dominions. See, Christians, what occasion your souls may have for this sort of miracles. Are they not spiritually possessed, or obsessed, by this wicked spirit, by the means of some or other of the capital sins; for where any of these are predominant, there Satan reigns. Does not this wicked one render you spiritually deaf and dumb, with regard to the voice of God, and the confession of your sins? Does he not bend you down to the earth by worldly affections, like the crooked woman, in the Gospel? *Luke xiii. 16*. Does he not make you blind, by obstructing your interior sight, with regard to the light of truth, &c.? In all these cases, you must run to Christ our Lord, to be dispossessed, or to be delivered from this mortal enemy of your souls. Christ's hand is not shortened; he will cast out this wicked one, at your humble request; but O, take care not to be of the number of those, who, by wholly giving themselves up to their carnal passions, are rather *swine* than Christians; for of such as these the devil has so great a hold, that he will not easily be cast out. Our Lord himself gave a license to a whole legion of devils to enter into swine; and whither did they hurry them, but down a precipice, into the deep, where they all perished! Take care this never be your case.

Conclude to consider, henceforward, the miracles of our Lord, not only as confirmations of the truth of the Christian faith, and evidences of the power, mercy, and goodness of the Author of it, and consequently as strong inducements to believe in him, hope in him, and love him above all things; but also to study well the practical lessons which are to be learnt from these miracles; inasmuch as they point out to us the sovereign means of ridding ourselves of all our evils, by having recourse, with a lively faith and humble prayer, to the great Source of all our good.

DECEMBER 4.

On our Lord's cleansing the Lepers.

CONSIDER, first, that the cleansing the *leprosy* is one of those miracles of our Lord, which is more particularly instructive because the *leprosy* was an emblem or figure of sin. Hence we find so many prescriptions in the Levitical law, (Levit. xiii. and xiv,) with regard to such as had contracted the leprosy; and the judgment that was to be made of them by the priests, to whose inspection they were committed by the law, and the rites and sacrifices by which they were to be cleansed; which were all figurative, and expressive of what was to be done by, or for them, who had contracted the spiritual leprosy of sin. The first mentioned to have been cleansed by our Lord of his leprosy, was he that *came* (after our Saviour's coming down from the mountain, Matt. viii. 2, 3,) *and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou made clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* See, Christians, by this example, in what manner you are to apply to your Lord, if you desire to be cleansed of your spiritual leprosy. See with what a strong and lively faith, accompanied with a profound humility, this leper presents himself before our Saviour; and learn to imitate him. Faith and humility are very efficacious with your heavenly Physician. It was appointed, (Levit. xiii. 44, &c.) that whosoever was defiled with the leprosy, and separated by the judgment of the priest, should keep a respectful distance, with regard to the rest of the faithful; and should, both by his outward habit, and by the cry of his voice, declare aloud, that he was defiled and unclean; to signify the humble dispositions which are necessary in the case of a spiritual leprosy, before we can expect to meet with a cure.

Consider, secondly, how our Lord, having cleansed the leper, to teach us to avoid all ostentation and vain glory in doing good, said to him, *See thou tell no man; but go show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift, which Moses commanded for a testimony to them.* Our Lord sent those whom he cleansed from the leprosy to the priests, to conform to the prescription of the law of Moses; and, at the same time, to give us to understand, that even when, by the grace of a perfect contrition, he cleanses souls from the leprosy of sin, he still expects that they should show themselves to his priests by a sincere confession of their sins; in consequence of his divine law, by which he has given to his priests the inspection and judgment of the leprosy of the soul, with the power of *binding and loosing, forgiving and retaining sins*, and

the *dispensation of all his mysteries* and sacraments. 'The person that was cleansed from the leprosy, and sent to the priest, was ordered to *offer the gift which Moses commanded*, and consequently to observe the other prescriptions of the law, (*Levit. xii.*) He was, in order to his purification, to be sprinkled seven times with the blood of a bird, immolated over living waters; he was to wash all his clothes; he was to shave all his hair, and to be washed himself all over with water; and then, after seven days he was to offer a burnt-offering, and a sin-offering, and so to be fully cleanse' and expiated, by the blood of the lamb offered for sin, and by the oil of the sacrifice, that had been sprinkled seven times before the Lord; to signify to us, by these mysterious ceremonies, that such as desire to be thoroughly cleansed from the spiritual leprosy of sin, must, by repeated washings of their consciences with the waters of compunction, by frequently sprinkling their souls with the blood of the Lamb of God, and by the applying to them the unction of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost, attain to this perfect purification.

Consider, thirdly, what we read, (*Luke xvii.*) of ten other lepers, who applied to our Lord for their cure: *They stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, O Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.* See, my soul, how quickly thy Lord is moved to show mercy to them, that, with a loud cry, call for mercy; that is, with the loud cry of fervent prayer, joined with a profound humility, and a true sense of their own misery and unworthiness; expressed, in the case of these men, by their standing afar off, as not daring to come nearer to our Lord, by reason of their uncleanness. O, let us learn to apply to our Saviour, for the cure of our spiritual leprosy, with the like fervour and humility! But then mark also what follows: *And one of them, when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God; and he fell on his face before his feet, giving thanks; and this man was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten made clean? and where are the nine? There is no one found to return, and to give glory to God, but this stranger.* O Christians, let us learn, by this example, the sentiments of love and gratitude, devotion and humility, with which we ought to praise and glorify God, after being cleansed by his mercy from the unhappy leprosy of sin; the great value, also, we ought to set upon the grace of our purification and reconciliation to his divine Majesty; and the care we ought to take never more to incur this worst of all uncleanness and of all evils. Alas! where these sentiments are wanting in penitents, it is much to be apprehended, that they

are not far off from relapsing again into their former leprosy, and that in a worse degree than before.

Conclude to dread, and to fly from the spiritual leprosy of sin, more than from any other evil; but if, at any time, you have reason to apprehend that you have incurred this dreadful uncleanness, learn from the foregoing considerations to whom and in what manner you are to apply for your cure, and how you are to behave, after having found this mercy.

DECEMBER 5.

On our Lord's stilling the Storm at Sea; and feeding the Multitudes.

CONSIDER, first, the lessons we are to learn from the miracle of Christ's stilling the storm at sea, by his word, *Matt. viii. 23, &c. He entered into a ship, and his disciples followed him: And behold a great storm arose at sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awaked him, saying, Lord save us; we are perishing. And Jesus saith to them, Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then, rising up, he commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm.* Christians, we are all embarked, as it were, in a ship, during our mortal life, in order to sail towards the heaven of a blessed eternity. And for our comfort, we have on board with us, not only the disciples of Christ, that is, the pastors of the church, the successors of the apostles, but also our Lord himself, according to his promise, (*Matt. xxviii. 20.*) *Lo, I am with you all days, even till the end of the world.* In this voyage, we are often exposed to storms, which threaten sometimes the whole church; as in cases of grievous persecutions, heresies, or other more general evils; at other times endanger particulars, as in cases of temptations and tribulations; from which, more or less, no one can expect to be exempted, in the midst of the winds and waves of the boisterous ocean of this world. But we have Christ on board with us; and therefore we have nothing to fear, if we will but have proper recourse to him, with a lively faith and confidence in him. And though he oftentimes seems to sleep, and defers his aid, for a trial of our faith, and to make us more sensible of the necessity we have of him, and more earnest in praying to him, he will not fail, in his good time, (if we continue, like the disciples, calling out to him, *Lord save us, we are perishing,*) to rise up, and to command the winds and the sea, and restore a calm.

Consider, secondly, the lessons we are also to learn from the miracles of our Saviour's feeding, at one time, five thousand men

with five loaves, and at another time, four thousand, with seven loaves. Our Lord himself has taught us, upon occasion of the former of these miracles, (John vi. 26, 27,) that we are not to seek, or to follow him, for the sake of *the loaves*, that is, for procuring a corporal livelihood, or any temporal advantage; for this would be but catching at the shadow, and losing the substance; that *we are not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that*, saith he, *which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you*. So that the great lesson he would have us to learn from his feeding the multitudes, is, that we should have recourse to him for the food and nourishment of our souls, unto everlasting life; for that he himself is the living and life-giving Bread, which, without any consumption or diminution, *he distributes* to all those that come to him, seeking from him the refreshment of their souls; either by communicating himself to them really, in the holy sacrament, or spiritually, by a communion of faith and love.

Consider, thirdly, in these miracles of our Lord's feeding the multitudes, what other lessons may be learnt from the circumstances in which he wrought these wonders. *I have compassion*, said he, *on the multitude; for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off*, Mark viii. 2, 3. The people whom he favoured with these miracles, had followed him into the desert; they had preferred the attending upon him, and the hearing of his divine word, before all other occupations or recreations; they had continued with him for three whole days, without taking any thought for their bodily nourishment; and therefore our Lord, after feeding their souls with the word of life, and healing all that stood in need of cure, was pleased to provide also for their corporal sustenance, according to what he promised, Matt. vi. 33: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things* (that is, meat, drink, and clothes,) *shall be added unto you*. Learn from hence, Christians, what wonders your Saviour is disposed to work in favour of those that follow him into the wilderness, by a spiritual retreat, that is, by retiring from the noise and hurry of the world, to attend upon him; that are not quickly wearied with his company, but continue diligently with him, (notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions they meet with from the world, the flesh and the devil,) and that gladly hearken to his divine word. O, such as these will not fail of being refreshed by him.

Conclude to follow Christ into the wilderness, by making at least a little wilderness for him in thy own soul, and there frequently attending upon him by recollection and mental prayer;

and assure thyself that he will never send thee away fasting, but will have compassion on thee, and frequently feed thee with his hidden manna, lest thou faint in the way ; for thou hast yet a great way to go, before thou canst reach thy eternal home.

DECEMBER 6.

On the Lessons that are to be learned from other Miracles of our Lord.

CONSIDER, first, that the miracles of our Lord were generally wrought in favour of such as applied to him with a lively faith and profound humility, or by the means of earnest prayer ; to teach us the great efficacy of faith, of humility, and of fervent prayer, and to encourage us to seek the cure of our souls with the like dispositions. Thus the woman, that had laboured for twelve years under the issue of blood, humbly coming behind our Lord in the crowd, and touching the hem of his garment, was instantly healed, in reward of her faith, as our Lord himself assured her, *Luke* viii. 48. Thus the centurion, by his faith and humility, obtained of our Lord the immediate cure of his servant, by those words : *Lord, I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof : speak only the word, and my servant shall be healed*, *Matt.* viii. 8. Thus the woman of Chanaan, by her pious importunity, accompanied with the like faith and humility, obtained the cure of her daughter, *Matt.* xv. 28. And so in many other cases. Whilst, at other times, those that have only presented themselves before our Saviour, without presuming either to touch him or his garments, or even so much as to speak to him, by the silent eloquence of their humility, have obtained their cure ; as in the case of the man that had the dropsy, *Luke* xiv. O, let us learn this kind of eloquence.

Consider, secondly, the particular lessons we may learn from the miraculous cure of the paralytic, *Matt.* ix. and *Luke* v. Our Lord was teaching in a house, surrounded with a great crowd of people, so that there was no coming in through the door ; when behold men brought in a bed a man that had the palsy, desiring to present him before him ; but not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof of the house, which was flat ; and uncovering it, let him down through the tiles with his bed, by ropes, into the midst before Jesus. See here what pains were taken by these men, to come at the heavenly Physician, from whom they expected the cure of their friend. Who would have thought of men's going up to the roof of another person's house, and uncovering it, and letting down a sick man in a bed, over

the heads of a crowd? Nothing but a strong faith on the one hand, and an earnest desire of a cure on the other, could ever have suggested such an extraordinary proceeding; which loudly condemns the indolence or indifference of so many Christians now-a-days, who, lying ill of a spiritual palsy, which disables them in all their limbs, and threatens them with the approaches of an everlasting death, suffer themselves to be kept off from Christ by every trifling obstacle or apprehension of difficulty. O Christians, where is your faith? Where is your concern for eternity? Why will you not be much more solicitous about the health and welfare of your immortal souls, than about these worldly toys, or these carcasses of yours, that must quickly be the food of worms?

Consider, thirdly, how our Lord, upon this occasion, was pleased to begin the cure of the sick man, by first healing his soul from sin. Son, said he, *thy sins are forgiven thee*; to give us to understand, that our corporal maladies are oftentimes sent in punishment of our sins; and that the first thing we have to do, when visited with sickness, is to apply for the remission of our sins, by repentance and confession; and then we may expect that the scourge may be removed, when the cause is removed. The scribes and Pharisees took occasion, from those words of our Saviour, to charge him with blasphemy, in their minds; but he, that knew their secret thoughts, publicly confuted them, by working so great and evident a miracle, in proof of his power of forgiving sins, as to restore, upon the spot, both health and strength to the man sick of the palsy, with those only words; *Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house*: upon which the paralytic, *immediately rising up before them, took up the bed on which he lay, and went away to his own house, glorifying God*. See here, my soul, that thou hast a Physician, in the person of thy Redeemer, who is both able and willing to heal all thy infirmities; but see, also, that he expects of all such as apply to him for their cure, that they should lie no longer in their beds, by continuing on in the habits or immediate occasions of their sins; but that they should arise without delay, and take up their beds, by bearing with courage the labours and conflicts of a penitential life; and should make the best of their way, by the exercises of solid virtue, to their true home; glorifying, all the way they go, both by their words and by their lives, their great Deliverer.

Conclude to spare no pains to come at Christ, in order to be healed by him of all thy spiritual diseases; but remember to carry along with thee a lively faith and a profound humility; these will not fail of introducing thee to him, and obtaining of him all thou desirest.

DECEMBER 7.

On our Lord's giving Sight to the Blind, and raising the Dead to Life.

CONSIDER, first, that our Lord, during his mortal life, often restored the sight of the light of this world, to them that were corporally blind; but oftener by far, both then, and ever since, has, by his great mercy, opened the eyes of them that were spiritually blind, to see the light of God, and his eternal truths. He gave sight to him that was *born blind*, (John ix,) by spreading clay upon his eyes, and ordering him to wash in the pool of *Siloe*, (which is interpreted *sent*,) to instruct us, that we, who, according to the soul, are all born blind, by original sin, must have our eyes opened to the light of truth, by the application of this mystical clay of self-knowledge to our inward eyes, and by being washed in him, who was sent from God to be the *true Light of the world*. In the supplication we make to him for the obtaining the sight of this divine light, we must, like the blind men of Jericho, show ourselves quite in earnest, by the fervour and importunity of our prayer; and not be discouraged by the opposition we meet with from the crowd of distractions, &c. that rebukes us, as it were, and seeks to stop our mouths; but cry out so much the more for mercy, even as they did, (Matt. xx. 31,) and our Lord will not fail to show us the mercy we call for, and to enlighten the eyes of our souls.

Consider, secondly, that in the Gospel we read of three, whom our Saviour raised from death to life: one was the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, a girl of twelve years old; another was a young man, the son of a widow of the city of Naim; the third was Lazarus of Bethania, the brother of Martha and Mary. The first was but just then dead, and was raised to life by our Lord with two words, *Talitha cumi*; that is, *girl, arise*. The second was carried out in order to be buried; and for the raising of him to life, something more was done; for our Lord came near, and touched the bier, and stopped them that carried it; and then said to the deceased, *Young man, I say to thee arise; and he that was dead sat up and began to speak*, &c. But Lazarus had been dead and buried four days; and before our Lord restored him to life, we read, (John xi,) that *he groaned in the spirit, and troubled himself*, (ver. 33;) that he went to the sepulchre and *wept*, (ver. 34, 35;) that he *groaned again in himself*, and ordered the stone to be taken away, (ver. 38, 39;) that he *lifted up his eyes to heaven*, and prayed to his Father; and then *cried, with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth*, (ver. 41, 42, 43.) The first of these represents such souls as

have but just now fallen into sin, who, by a timely and fervent application to our Lord, who alone can raise the dead to life may more easily be recovered out of the jaws of death and hell and brought back to the life of grace. The second represents such souls as are not only fallen into the death of sin, but are already laid upon the bier, and carried towards the sepulchre of a sinful habit, by repeated acts of sin. For the raising of these to life, stronger graces are required; signified by our Lord's touching the bier, and causing the bearers of it, that is, the criminal passions which are hurrying the poor sinner to his grave, to stop and stand still. But Lazarus represents the more dismal condition of such as are already buried in inveterate habits of mortal sin, whose case requires still more extraordinary graces; signified by the tears, groans, prayers, and the loud cry of the Son of God. O Christians, let us dread the death of sin above all other evils; but much more the being buried in the grave of sinful habits; from which we shall not be raised again, without a greater miracle than even that by which Lazarus was called out of his monument. And who shall dare to be so presumptuous as to go on in his sins, flattering himself with the expectation of such a miracle being wrought in his favour?

Consider, thirdly, that, in these miracles wrought by our Lord, in raising the dead to life, we find he was pleased to let himself be moved by the tears of the living, as in the case of the widow's son, and of Lazarus; to encourage us to present to him our prayers and tears, for poor sinners dead and buried in sin, with an humble confidence, that, in his great mercy, he will have pity on them, (who, alas! have no pity on themselves,) and restore them to life. O, what a happiness will it be for a Christian, to be instrumental, in this manner, in bringing back any one from death to life! How agreeable will such prayers and tears be to our good Lord, which deliver a soul from sin and hell; and how beneficial to ourselves, in covering a multitude of our sins! But mark well the care our Lord took, for the future well being of those whom he raised to life. He ordered that *they should give to eat* to the daughter of Jairus, as soon as her soul was returned into her body, (Luke iii. 55;) to signify, that the sovereign means to keep the soul in life, and to recover her strength and health, is a frequent and worthy participation of the blessed sacrament. He had no sooner given life to the widow's son, in consideration of her tears, but he *delivered him to his mother*, (Luke vii. 15;) to signify the special care he expects from the church, the common mother of all the faithful, of all those her children, whom by his grace he brings back from the death of sin, at the intercession of her prayers and tears. And with regard to Lazarus, whom he called out of his monument *bound feet and hands with*

winding bands, &c., he immediately ordered that they should *loose him, and let him go*, (John xi. 44;) to signify the necessity of discharging the bands of the affections and occasions of sin, in order to maintain in a new life such as were buried a little while before in bad habits; and to the end they may be qualified henceforward *to go*, that is, to begin, and to continue, the great journey they are to make to the mountain of eternity.

Conclude, from the consideration of these miracles of our Saviour, to have recourse to him, on all occasions, with an humble confidence in his mercy and goodness, for obtaining of light, life, and all other good, both for thyself and for thy neighbours. Thou canst not do him a greater pleasure, nor thyself a greater service.

DECEMBER 8.

On the Conception of the Blessed Virgin.

CONSIDER, first, how man, who was originally created in justice and sanctity, to be happy here in grace and innocence, and eternally happy hereafter in the enjoyment of his Creator, having wretchedly fallen from God by sin, and forfeited his original justice, with all the advantages annexed to it, and incurred, at the same time, all kind of miseries, both for time and eternity, out of which it was not in his power to extricate himself, by any thing that he could do of himself; the infinite goodness of God, out of pure pity and compassion, was pleased to decree that his own eternal Son should come down from heaven, to be our Saviour; to redeem us from all our sins, with his most precious blood; to bring along with him mercy, grace and salvation to us; and by his death to open to us the gates of everlasting life. O Christians, it is this infinite goodness of our God that we must never forget. It calls aloud for all the return we are able to make, of love and gratitude, of adoration, praise and glory; and of a total dedication of our whole being to the service of our great Deliverer, for all our time, and for all eternity. O, may all heaven and earth, with all the angels and saints, bless and glorify his name for endless ages, for all these wonders of his mercy, bounty, and love for us?

Consider, secondly, that God, having thus decreed to give us his only Son for our Saviour, was pleased to reveal this great mystery, from the very beginning, to our first parents, and afterwards, from time to time, to the patriarchs and prophets, and others his servants; to the end that this might be in all ages the capital object of the faith of all true believers; and that, as none could ever attain to eternal salvation, but through the merits of the Son of God made man for us, so all might approach to God

for mercy and grace, through faith in him. In the mean time, the divine Wisdom, which had created the world in six days, was pleased to employ full four thousand years in preparing the world for this great Redeemer. All the most remarkable passages of sacred history, recorded in holy writ, have all some relation to him or his church : all the most eminent servants of God, and deliverers of his people, were so many figures and forerunners of him : the whole law, with all its sacrifices and ceremonies, alluded to him, and to the great sacrifice he was to offer : the writings of the prophets, and of the psalms, are all full of him. Now, when the time of his coming drew near, God, who had done great things, long before, for the whole people of the Hebrews in general, and for that family in particular, of which he would have his Son to be born into this world, was pleased to do still greater things in favour of her, of whom he had chosen, in his eternal decrees, to bring forth this Lord of glory, and Saviour of the world. These great things wrought for her, even in her very conception, we celebrate in the festival of this day ; to glorify him that wrought them, and to honour her for whom they were wrought. Our Lord, in taking her for his mother, and us for his brethren, has authorized us to consider her as our mother also, to have recourse to her as such, and to rejoice in all her advantages. We cannot love the Son of God, and be indifferent in what relates to the honour of his mother.

Consider, thirdly, that the Son of God, making choice of this Blessed Virgin to be his mother, was pleased to prepare her for this near alliance with him, by that extraordinary grace of keeping her ever *pure* from sin, either original or actual, mortal or venial ; for so it was becoming, that she, who was to bear in her womb, and to bring forth to the world, *purity* itself, should never be defiled with any spot or stain of sin. Learn from hence, Christian souls, the care you ought to take, to keep yourselves *pure*, if you hope to be agreeable to the eyes of this same Lord. Learn to *purify* yourselves from all sin, as often as you approach to him, to receive him in the sacred mysteries. And as the particular devotion of this holy time of Advent should be, to prepare yourselves in such manner, for worthily celebrating the birth of Christ, as that you may also be partakers in this great mystery, by his coming to you, and being spiritually born in you ; see you make it your business now to dispose yourselves for so great a happiness, by purifying yourselves from *all defilement, either of the flesh or of the spirit*, and thus preparing a proper place within you, for the Lord of glory to be born in.

Conclude to honour the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, by a perpetual love of purity, in all its branches, and an imitation of her purity, as far as thy frailty and corruption wil'

admit of. Thus mayst thou hope that the Fountain of all purity will come also to thee, and be spiritually born in thee.

DECEMBER 9.

On the Purity with which we are to prepare our Souls for Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that he who prepared the Blessed Virgin to be the mother of his Son, by this early care to keep her pure in her very conception, would thereby give us to understand what dispositions he expects in us, in order to our being also qualified for the spiritual conception and birth of the same Lord in our souls. For as we could never have been happy, if the Son of God had not been born into this world for us; so we never can be happy, if he be not also spiritually conceived and born in us. No, my soul, we must put off the old man, and put on the new, which is Jesus Christ, before we can come to God; and this putting on the new man must be effected by his being spiritually conceived in our souls. Now, he can never come to any soul, to be spiritually conceived or born there, if that soul be not clean; for though he humbled himself so far as to be born in a poor stable, yet he will not be born in an unclean soul; because such a soul is the habitation of unclean spirits, and therefore cannot be a proper place for his spiritual birth. It is, then, by cleanness of conscience and purity, we must *prepare the way of the Lord*, if we hope to have a share in the happiness he offers us, by his incarnation and birth: without this, his coming will be to our condemnation.

Consider, secondly, that this cleanness and purity, which is indispensably necessary for the spiritual conception and birth of Christ in our souls, must be, at least, from all wilful and deadly sin. For wherever wilful and deadly sin resides, there is the seat of Satan; there he resides and reigns; and consequently there can be no room for the birth of Christ in such a soul. So that the first and most essential branch of Christian purity, without which *God has no part in us*, (Job xxxi. 2,) and we have no part in him, is a purity of conscience, at least from mortal sin; joined with a fixed determination of the soul, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, interest, or pleasure; for no fear, or love, or human respect; for no promises, or allurements, on the one hand, or terrors and threats on the other; in fine, for nothing that the world can either give or take away, ever to consent, so much as in thought, to any such sin. Christians, what are your dispositions in this regard? Are your consciences either pure from all deadly sin by innocence, or cleansed by penitence? Are your souls in a proper condition to welcome Christ?

Are you in a settled resolution to give up the dominion of your souls to this great King, who desires to be born there, and to live there? Are you willing to sacrifice to his will and pleasure, all other loves that offer to oppose his reign, so as to be ready to part even with life itself, rather than with your allegiance to him? This is the *purity* of conscience he absolutely insists upon; and nothing less will satisfy him. If you are not in this disposition, you are none of his; and he will not be born in you.

Consider, thirdly, that, to welcome Christ in a suitable manner, you must not content yourselves with having your consciences only cleansed from all mortal sin; or your souls only settled in a resolution of never more being guilty, upon any consideration, of such sins as may eternally separate you from your God, and cast you into hell. This is but a low degree of Christian purity; and those that aim no higher are in great danger of not even arriving so far. To make light of smaller sins; to be indifferent about Christian perfection; to pretend to no more than the avoiding hell; to indulge one's self in a negligent, lukewarm way of living, and in a variety of evil habits and known sins, which one is willing to suppose are only venial, with little or no concern about the offence we commit against God, or any serious thought of amendment; so far from being a proper disposition, to prepare the soul for the spiritual birth of Christ, is indeed the broad road to mortal sin, and too, too often ends in hell. A generous Christian, and one that is a true lover of his God, does not stand to inquire, whether the doing this or that will send his soul to hell, or no. It is enough to determine him to avoid it with all his power, to know that it offends his God, whom he loves with his whole heart; and therefore he dreads more the doing any thing that is displeasing in his eyes, than either death, or hell itself. My soul, are these thy dispositions?

Conclude to make it thy business, now at least, to labour for this perfect purity of conscience, not only from all deadly sin, but also from all known deliberate venial sins, and much more from indulging thyself in the habit of any such sin. For how canst thou expect that infinite Purity should be willing to take up his abode in thy soul, if thou art not careful to keep it clean, at least from all wilful and affected stains?

DECEMBER 10.

On purifying the interior Powers of the Soul.

CONSIDER, first, that as this spiritual conception and birth of Christ is to be perfected in our interior; so, in order to dispose ourselves effectually for so great a happiness, and that it may

continue with us unto life everlasting, by our abiding always in Christ, and Christ abiding always in us, we must be ever jealous of the purity of the interior powers of the soul. *All the glory of the King's daughter* (the Christian soul) *is within*, (Ps. xlv. ;) there is to be the residence of the Lord of glory: the beauty of the interior is to attract him thither; and this beauty depends upon keeping these inward powers of the soul in a proper state of purity. See then, Christians, if you desire to have Christ with you, that you take proper care, first, to purify your *understanding* from all its errors, false opinions, and affected ignorances, by obliging it to open its eyes to the light of divine truths, in the exercise of meditation and mental prayer; secondly, to purify your *memory* from all its impertinent amusements, distractions and evagations, by accustoming it to the remembrance of God, and a recollection of thought; thirdly, to purify your *will* from all its disorderly affections, by fixing your heart upon solid and eternal goods, but especially upon your sovereign Good, which is God himself. Thus shall your whole souls be agreeable to him.

Consider, secondly, that one of the greatest enemies to this interior purity, (which is so necessary to bring Christ into our souls, and to fix him there,) is that unhappy dissipation of mind, in which many Christians pass their days; always thinking, but very seldom thinking on any thing to the purpose. Alas! it is too true, that the minds of the generality of men are a constant thoroughfare of vain amusements, of empty, idle, impertinent thoughts, succeeding one another all the day long, and leaving little or no room for God, or the things of God and the soul, to come in, or to make any lasting impression. Thus the inward castle is left quite unguarded; and the enemy has free access to come and rifle, and even murder the soul at pleasure, by suggesting a variety of criminal thoughts, which are admitted without resistance, through the supine carelessness and licentiousness of the mind; whilst, on the other hand, the divine grace is shut out from such souls, by their whole attention being engaged by these toys and trifles; so that, when God would come, and would visit them, they are not at home for him, but are gone gadding abroad after other impertinences. See, my soul, if this be not thy case; and if it be, seek a remedy without delay, or there will be no room for Christ in thee. Now, the only remedy is a recollection of spirit, and an attention to God in all thy ordinary actions and employments.

Consider, thirdly, that, if it be so necessary, in order to conceive, and to bring forth Christ in thy interior, to maintain the *purity of thy mind*, by recollection of thought, it must be no less necessary to maintain also the *purity of thy heart*, by banishing from thence all disorderly affections; for these are no

less apt to disqualify the soul for this spiritual conception and birth of Christ in her; they are no less unclean and disagreeable in his eyes, and no less opposite to his reign. Neither can the *purity* of the mind, and of the thought be maintained, without the *purity* of the affection and of the heart; for the mind and the thought are generally bent upon such objects as the heart affects: we think most upon what we love most; and therefore, if the affections of our heart are *impure*, our thoughts will also be *impure*; for where our *treasure* is, there both our hearts and our thoughts will be. Now, that love alone is *pure*, which makes God its *treasure*; and all such affections are *impure*, as take off the heart from God, and make it seek its *treasure* in something that is not God, or which at least divide the heart between God and the creature. And these are the disorderly affections that must be banished, in order to dispose the soul for Christ.

Conclude to examine well, and to set thy interior in order, particularly with regard to these two branches of purity, namely, the purity of the mind, and the purity of the heart. For Christ will not come to be spiritually born in any soul, or to make his abode in any soul, where he is not allowed to be sole Master, both of the mind and of the heart. Therefore the mind must be set free from the servitude of useless thoughts and impertinent amusements; and the heart from the servitude of misplaced affections, and every fond, sensual, worldly, or distracting love; to make place for the birth of Christ, and his reign in the soul. The soul that desires to have Christ with her, must endeavour to be like the spouse in the Canticles—a *garden enclosed, a fountain scaled up*. Dissipation of thought, and all disorderly affections, bring such company into the soul, as the Son of God will not endure.

DECEMBER 11.

On the Purity of our Actions.

CONSIDER, first, that this Christian purity, which is to prepare the way for Christ in us, and to dispose us to give him a proper entertainment, must not be confined to the interior powers of the soul, but ought to extend itself also to the whole body of our actions. As the tree ought to be pure, so ought the fruits also; for the tree is known by its fruits. Now our fruits are our actions; so that these must be pure, or else we shall not be pure, nor duly qualified for that happy union with Christ, which we are to aspire to, at this approaching solemnity; for that which is impure cannot be in a proper condition to be united with the sovereign purity. Now, for our actions to be *pure*,

it is not enough that what we do be good in itself; it must also be good in all its circumstances; for any one vicious circumstance is enough to corrupt the whole. But that on which the *purity of our actions* principally depends, is the *purity of our intention*; according to that of the Gospel, Matt. vi. 22, 23, *If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome; but if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome.* For the eye of the soul is the intention; which is then single when the view of the soul is carried towards God, in all that she does; but when the intention is turned off from God, and looks at something else, the eye is *evil*, and the work is *darksome*.

Consider, secondly, that all Christian virtue depends upon this purity of intention: the meanest of our actions are ennobled by it: and the highest, and the most esteemed by men, are good for nothing in the sight of God without it. Now the perfection of this purity of intention, is to act in all things from the motive of the love of God, for the greater glory of God, and in conformity to the will of God. This carries the soul up to God, and brings down God to the soul; this produces a happy union of the soul with her God. Christians, see here the shortest way to all good, and the sovereign means of arriving at the height of perfection. The practice of this requires, first, that you should begin all your days, and all your works with God, by offering them all up to him, and to his service. Secondly, that you should consult his divine will in all things, and make it the rule of all you do. Thirdly, that you should watch over yourselves, both in the beginning, and in the progress of every work you take in hand, that you may exclude all bye-motives, suggested by your self-love, human respects, interest, pleasure, or passion. Fourthly, that you should often renew the directing of your intention to God; and should endeavour to season all your ordinary actions, and employments, with frequent aspirations, or breathings of the soul, towards him.

Consider, thirdly, that the two capital enemies of purity of intention, and which spiritual persons in particular have most occasion to guard against, are vain-glory and pride. The difference between the two is, that *vain-glory* consists in loving, and desiring to be esteemed by others; whereas *pride* consists in a vain esteem of one's self: *vain-glory* makes persons ever turn their eye upon what others shall say or think of their words or actions; it makes them perfect idolaters of the point of honour, of the esteem, reputation, and approbation of the world; but *pride* makes them full of themselves; measuring, as it were, themselves on every occasion, and their performances, with those of others, and still giving themselves the preference before others; ever turning their eye upon their own excellence; build-

ing on their own lights, resolutions, strength, or capacity ; and taking a secret complacency in themselves, in all the good they do. Both the one and the other are infinitely pernicious to the soul, by turning off her eye from God ; and consequently robbing her of all the fruit of her good works, and making them all rotten at heart and good for nothing in the sight of God : they even pervert the best of her performances, to her eternal condemnation, by shutting out God from them, and giving the preference to these devils of pride and vain-glory before him. As long as these have possession of the soul, there will be nothing but corruption there, and no room for the spiritual birth of Christ.

Conclude to aim, at all times, at a purity in all thy actions ; by purifying thy intention from all pride and vain-glory, and from every other thing that may turn off thy eye from God. Let God be the beginning and end of all thou dost : and take care to give to every action its full perfection, by doing all for God's greater glory, and out of the pure motive of his divine love ; and the very meanest of thy daily actions will suffice to make thee a saint. Whereas neither long prayers, nor large alms, nor converting millions of souls, nor working of miracles, nor giving thy body to the flames, will avail thee any thing, if thy intention be vitiated with pride or vain-glory.

DECEMBER 12.

On the Angelical Salutation.

CONSIDER, first, that after the Blessed Virgin had been prepared, by the purity of her conception, and by the purity of her life ; by the purity of her soul, and of her body ; of her heart, and of her mind ; and of all her actions, and intentions, to conceive in her sacred womb the Son of God, whom she had long before conceived in her soul ; the time appointed by our Lord being now come, the archangel Gabriel was sent to her from heaven, upon the most solemn embassy that ever was ; namely, to treat with this most humble maid, concerning the great work of the incarnation of the eternal Word, by his taking flesh of her, in order to the redemption of mankind from Satan, sin, and hell, and reconciliation with God ; and in order to the establishment of a new law, a new and everlasting covenant ; a kingdom of heaven upon earth, by grace, in favour of all that should embrace this grace ; and an eternal kingdom for them hereafter in glory. But give ear now, my soul, to the angel's address, and mark every word of it. *The angel, being come in, said to her : Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women.*

Luke i. 28. He greeted her with the word *Ave*, or *Hail*; a word of salutation, and congratulation with her, for all that God had done, and was about to do in her favour, and for his choosing her to be the happy instrument, that should give birth to the source of all our good. O let all heaven and earth join in this *Ave* of salutation and congratulation! as all heaven and earth are highly interested in the issue of this most sacred negotiation, which is to bring us innumerable benefits, both for time and eternity, by the incarnation of the Son of God. And see, my soul, thou never forget to testify thy grateful sense of the share designed for thee in these graces and benedictions, by daily joining, with suitable devotion, in this holy salutation and congratulation, as often as thou repeatest the *Ave Maria*.

Consider, secondly, how the angel, in his salutation, styles the Blessed Virgin *full of grace*; to signify the supereminent degree of divine grace, to which God elevated her soul, to prepare her to be the mother of his Son. For she was *full* of all that habitual *grace*, which justifies and sanctifies the soul; *full* of faith and hope; *full* of divine charity, in both its branches; ever loving God, with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with all her mind, and with all her strength, and loving her neighbour as herself: she was *full* of humility, meekness, patience, obedience, and all other moral virtues: she was *full* of wisdom, godliness, the fear of the Lord, and all other gifts, and fruits of the Holy Spirit: her memory was *full* of holy thoughts; her understanding with the lights of God, and divine truths; and her will with most fervent acts and affections of love, zeal, desire of the glory of God, of the coming of the Messias, and of the redemption of the world. She was *full of grace* in all her thoughts, words, and works: her *works* were all *full*, by the purity of intention, the fervour and love, with which she performed them all. Many saints have been *full of grace*; but none like this queen, and mother of all the saints; whose grace was proportioned to the great designs that God had upon her, and to the supereminent dignity to which she was chosen, of being Mother of God. O congratulate, my soul, with the Blessed Virgin, for this her *fulness of grace*; which went on continually increasing for the whole time of her life, by the good use she continually made of all God's gifts; and beg, through her intercession, thou mayst, like her, faithfully correspond, and diligently co-operate with every divine grace.

Consider, thirdly, how the angel adds, in his salutation, *the Lord is with thee*; to signify the source from which all her fulness of grace flowed; and the extraordinary manner of God's communicating himself, and all his graces, to this most highly favoured of all his creatures. For our Lord was not only with the Blessed Virgin, by his essence, his presence, and his power, as he is

with all men ; nor only by his sanctifying grace, as he is with all the just ; but in a most extraordinary manner, by a far more eminent grace, a closer union, and a higher sanctification. And therefore the angel adds, *blessed art thou amongst women ;* to express the supereminence of those graces and *benedictions*, with which she was *blessed*, from heaven, and should still be *blessed*, more and more ; as well as the innumerable *blessings* that should be communicated to all mankind, through the fruit of her womb ; and the *blessings* and praise that should on that account be given her by all generations. For as one woman, by disobedience, in hearkening to the suggestions of the infernal serpent, was the beginning of all the maledictions that fell upon all mankind ; so one woman, by her humble obedience to the proposals brought her by an angel from heaven, was the beginning of all the benedictions that were to come upon all mankind, from the blessed fruit of her womb ; by whom also she crushed the serpent's head, who first brought sin and death amongst us. O ! see, my soul, with what sentiments of devotion thou oughtest to join with the angel, and with the blessed St. Elizabeth, and with the whole church of God, in this solemn address to thy Virgin Lady : *Blessed art thou amongst women ; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*, Luke i. 42.

Conclude ever to keep up in thy soul a grateful remembrance of all the great things that God has done for the Blessed Virgin, and for us all, in the incarnation of his Son, by a frequent and devout repetition of the angelical salutation ; always concluding it with that pious address of the church—*Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*. Amen. O how just it is, that we should particularly crave the assistance of her prayers, at that critical time, when we can do the least for ourselves, and when our all is at stake for eternity !

DECEMBER 13.

On the Wonders of God, in the Incarnation of his Son.

CONSIDER, first, how, upon the Blessed Virgin's consent, and offering herself, with a profound humility, with an entire obedience, and a perfect conformity to the sacred will of God, by those words, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word*, (Luke i. 38,) the greatest of all the wonders of God, and of all his works, was immediately effected ; even a Man-God, the miracle of miracles. For a human body, perfect in all its parts, was formed in an instant by the Holy Ghost, out of the purest blood of the Blessed Virgin ; and a most excellent rational soul was at the same time created ; and this body and soul were joined with, and assumed by the eternal Word, the

second person of the most adorable Trinity. Thus God was made man, and man was made God; and the Blessed Virgin was made mother of God. Thus in her womb was celebrated that sacred wedding of our human nature, with the divine person of the Son of God; to the feast of which we are all invited, (Matt. xxii.) Thus was our humanity exalted to the very highest elevation, by being united with, and subsisting by, the person of the eternal Word; and we all, in consequence of this elevation of our human nature, have also been wonderfully dignified and exalted, by being raised up to a kindred with the most high God; who, by taking to himself our nature, has made us all his brothers and sisters; and by assuming our humanity has made us, in some measure, partakers of his divinity. O my soul, stand thou astonished at these wonders; which will be a subject of the greatest astonishment, both to men and angels, for all eternity! O admire and adore, praise and love, with all thy power, and with all thy affections, that infinite goodness, that has wrought all these wonders, out of love to thee.

Consider, secondly, the wonders of God, in all those graces and excellences which he conferred on the soul of Christ, and on his sacred humanity, in the first instant of his conception, in consequence of its being united with the divine person; graces and excellences which are all immense and incomprehensible, and which exceed, without any comparison, all the rest of the wondrous works of God, and all whatsoever he has done at any time in favour of any of his saints, or of all of them put together. For God did *not give to this his Son, his Spirit by measure*, (John iii. 34,) as to the rest of his saints; *but gave all things into his hands*; and *of his fulness we all receive*, (John i. 16,) even all grace and truth, *according to the measure of his giving* it to us, *Eph. iv. 7.* Now, these graces and excellences we may reduce under the following heads. First, an immense *purity* from all manner of sin, or imperfection whatsoever; not as by privilege, but in his own right, as being *the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world*. Secondly, the grace of *sanctity*, incomparably exceeding that of all the angels and saints put together, from whence he is called the Holy of holies, (*Daniel ix.*) that is, the Saint of saints; the Spirit of God resting on him, with all his gifts, with an incomprehensible plenitude. *Isai. xi. 2.* Thirdly, the grace of the *beatific vision* of the divine essence, and that in the most consummate degree; with proportionable love of the deity, and joy in God. Fourthly, all the *treasures* of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Fifthly, the *power of working all kind of miracles*, and of raising the dead to life, by his own will; with a general command over all the elements, and over all nature. Sixthly, the *power of excelling in forgiving sins*, convert-

ing sinners, changing their hearts, ordaining sacraments and sacrifices, and distributing amongst men graces, and supernatural gifts. Seventhly, the grace of being the perpetual *Head of all the church*, both of heaven and earth; and the source of all blessings, gifts, and graces, that either have been, are at present, or shall at any time be bestowed, upon this his mystical body, or any of its members. O what subject have we here, my soul, to bless and praise the eternal Father for all these excellent gifts and graces, with which he has enriched his Son, the man Christ Jesus! How ought we also to rejoice and congratulate with the sacred humanity of our Saviour on this occasion; and to give thanks, without ceasing, for all that share or portion of divine grace, which from this overflowing fountain is continually derived on us!

Consider, thirdly, in all these graces and excellences, conferred on the humanity of Christ in his incarnation, how that of the prophet was verified. Isai. ix. 6. *A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace.* Yes, Christians, these great titles, here bestowed upon your Saviour, by the Spirit of God, abundantly declare both the wonders that God wrought for him, and those which, through his incarnation, he has wrought also for you, in giving him to you; that he might be not only your Saviour, your Redeemer, and your Deliverer; but also your King, your Lawgiver, your Teacher, your Model, your Advocate, your Physician, your Friend, your High-priest and your Victim, your Father and your Head; in a word, the Source of all your good; the Way, the Truth, and the Life, in your regard; by whom alone you can go to God. And do not all these great things, effected by the incarnation of the Son of God, show forth the power, the wisdom, the mercy, and goodness of God, with all the other divine attributes, infinitely more than any of the rest of the works of the Almighty?

Conclude to honour, by a lively faith, by a serious and frequent meditation, and a sincere devotion, all these wonders of God, wrought in the incarnation of his Son, both in favour of him, and of us; and to lead henceforward such lives as become those, who, by this mystery, have been so highly exalted, and brought so near to the very source of all grace and sanctity.

DECEMBER 14.

On the Glory of God, in the Incarnation of his Son.

CONSIDER, first, how the angels, upon occasion of the birth of Christ, sung forth that blessed hymn, recorded Luke ii. 14, *Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will*: to give us to understand, that the incarnation and birth of the Son of God was designed to produce those two principal fruits, the greater *glory* of God, and the *peace*, and reconciliation of man with God. The glory of God shines forth most brightly in the incarnation of his Son, by the manifestation of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his justice, and of his mercy: and by setting all these his divine attributes in their most beautiful light. The almighty power of God is here manifested, in all those wonders he wrought in this mystery, and especially in that greatest and most glorious of all his wonderful productions, *namely*, a *God-man*; a greater work, without comparison, than the creation of ten thousand worlds. The infinite wisdom of God is here manifested, in the contrivance of this wonderful way of uniting God and man, the Creator and the creature, which were at an infinite distance from each other, so closely together, as to be but one and the same person; and of reconciling, by this means, man, who was fallen from God by sin, in such manner, as that without his divine Majesty's departing, in the least tittle, from what was due to the reparation of his glory, he should continually receive from this one man, for every moment of time and eternity, a homage of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and love, infinitely more glorious to the Deity, than all the homages of ten thousand worlds could be, though they were all full of angels and men, eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God.

Consider, secondly, with relation to the other attributes of God; *namely*, his goodness, his mercy, and his justice; how brightly they also shine forth in the incarnation of his Son: in which, according to the Psalmist, (Ps. lxxxiv.) *Mercy and truth met each other: justice and peace have kissed*. The infinite goodness of God never manifested itself so clearly, as in giving his only Son to us, by the mystery of his incarnation, to deliver us from all our evils, and to bring with him all good to us, in order to make us happy for eternity. The infinite mercy of God is set in no less clear a light by this mystery; in his here furnishing us, out of pure compassion, without any regard at all to our merits, with such and so great a Redeemer, to be both our Priest and our Sacrifice, for a propitiation for all our sins. And as to the infinite justice of God, so far from its being set aside in

this mystery, or forgetting its right, it never exerted, nor manifested itself more, than when it insisted upon such a satisfaction for sin, as could not be paid by any lesser or meaner person than a God made man. So that the justice of God has been in effect more evidently demonstrated by the incarnation of the Son of God, coming down here amongst us, to be made a bleeding victim for our sins, than by any other judgments or punishments whatsoever, that either have, or ever could be inflicted by the divine Majesty, either in time or eternity, for the sins of men.

Consider, thirdly, that the infinite dignity of the person of this God-man, as it gives an infinite dignity and worth to all his performances, even to every thought, word or action, and every suffering of his; so it is an inexhaustible source, from which continually and eternally flows an infinite glory to God, from every thought, word, action, or suffering of his Son; even from the moment of his conception till his expiring upon the cross; as well as to all that adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c., which, as man, he shall present to his Father for all eternity. See then, my soul, how very much the incarnation of the Son of God has advanced the glory of his Father; since every motion of the heart of this God made man, gives, in effect, infinitely more glory to the Father, both in time and eternity, than all the adorations and praises of millions of angels, and millions of worlds could ever have done, though eternally employed in nothing else but in glorifying God; besides all that glory, which the Son of God incarnate has procured for his Father, by his gospel, by his worship, which he has established here upon earth; by that great sacrifice of his body and blood, offered up daily on a million of altars, &c.; and that kingdom of souls, which he has here purchased, to be delivered up hereafter to his Father, to glorify him for all eternity.

Conclude to rejoice in this great glory, which the Son of God has procured, both for his Father and for himself, by his incarnation; and sing to him, with the angels, hymns of perpetual praise, for his having so well associated together, in this mystery, his own glory with thy peace and salvation.

DECEMBER 15.

On the Glory the Son of God gave to his Father, in his Mother's Womb.

CONSIDER, first, that, as the soul of Christ, from the first instant of his conception, by being assumed to the divine person of the Word, was full of all light and knowledge, and consequently enjoyed, from the beginning, the perfect use of reason and

understanding; so the inward powers and faculties of his soul, from the first instant of his conception, were always employed; they were never idle. Now, as the great design of God, in the incarnation of his Son, was his own glory, and the redemption of man, so the continual occupation of the Son of God made man, was the procuring of his Father's glory, and man's salvation. from the very first moment that his soul received a being, by creation, this was his perpetual employment. It was, from the beginning, the indispensable duty, both of angels and men, in their first creation, to turn themselves immediately to God, by adoration, oblation, and love, and to dedicate themselves eternally to him and to his glory. The omission of this, at first, was the cause of the condemnation of Lucifer and his companions; and the like omission is to this day the cause of the condemnation of millions of men, who unhappily turn themselves away from God, for the sake of the creature. But the soul of Christ, our great Deliverer, and our most perfect Model and Pattern, has taught us better things, by his nine months' occupation in the Virgin's womb; where, silent as he is, he preaches to us admirable lessons, with regard to the glory we ought at all times to give to God.

Consider, secondly, that these lessons, which the Son of God teaches us, by his great example, in his mother's womb, are contained in the different acts of virtue, in which he there spent his time. He began, as we learn from the Psalmist, (*Ps.* xxxix. 7, 8, 9,) by offering himself to his Father, without reserve, to *do all his will*; he embraced this will in the midst of his heart; he substituted himself in the place of all the ancient sacrifices, to be the great *burnt-offering* and *sin-offering* that should be immolated for God's glory, and for the expiation of the sins of the world; he presented his *body*, just then formed by the Holy Ghost, with his *ears pierced* (as it was prescribed in the law, with relation to such as yielded themselves up to be servants for ever, (*Deuter.* xv. 17,) to be entirely at the disposal of his Father, a perpetual servant, obedient *unto death, even unto the death of the cross*. O, let us hear from himself these his dispositions—*Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire; but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then, saith I, Behold, I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart*. O, my soul, how happy shall we be, if we labour in good earnest to imitate these dispositions of our dear Jesus, by embracing like him the will of God, and his holy law in the midst of our hearts, and offering ourselves, without reserve, to be at all times his devoted servants!

Consider, thirdly, that infinite glory which our Lord gave to his Father all the time he was in his mother's womb; first, by the acts of *adoration and homage*, which, as man, he continually paid to God, perfectly annihilating himself in his sight, and continually bowing down all the powers of his soul, to offer him a most acceptable worship, worthy of his divine Majesty; secondly, by acts of *praise and thanksgiving*, which he offered up both for himself, and for the whole creation; thirdly, by acts of *oblation*, and eternal *dedication* of himself to his Father, to be ever his, both in life and death, both in time and eternity, with a total consecration of his whole soul and body, of his whole will, memory and understanding, of all his senses and faculties, and of all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to his divine service; fourthly, by acts of a most pure and most perfect love, zeal, and desire, of ever promoting in all things, and above all things, the *sanctification of the name of God*, the *propagation of his kingdom*, and the *doing his will upon earth, as it is in heaven*. Such acts as these, joined with acts of charity and prayer for us poor sinners, were the perpetual occupation of Christ, our Lord, in his mother's womb—a happy employment indeed, and most worthy of our imitation at all times.

Conclude to embrace, and to follow in the practice of thy life, these heavenly lessons which the Son of God teaches thee, by his divine example from his mother's womb: no other exercises can be either more agreeable to him or to his Father, or more advantageous to thyself.

DECEMBER 16.

On the Charity of the Son of God for us, in his Mother's Womb.

CONSIDER, first, that, as the soul of the Son of God, from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, was ever employed in the love of his heavenly Father, and in a perpetual adoration, and oblation of himself to his most holy will; so, for the love of his Father, and in consequence of his holy will, he was also employed from the beginning in the love of us, and in the perpetual exercises of an unbounded charity in our regard. His soul, in the instant it received a being, was assumed to the divine person of the Word, and in the light of this eternal Word, clearly saw, readily submitted to, lovingly embraced, with an *Ecce, venio, Behold, I come*, that most sacred and adorable decree of the whole blessed Trinity, by which it was ordained that the Son of God should become man, for the reparation of the honour and glory of God, infinitely injured, and outraged by

man; and that he should be the Saviour and Redcemer of all mankind; that he should take upon him all their sins, to be cancelled with his blood; that, by his death, he should rescue them from the tyranny of Satan and sin, and a second and everlasting death, and should open in their favour the gates of mercy, grace, and salvation: in a word, that he should be the great Mediator of God and men; their High-Priest and Victim. In consequence of, and in obedience to, this heavenly decree, he immediately began, from the first instant of his conception, to exercise himself in all such acts of charity for us, as were agreeable to this his office of our Saviour and Mediator, which he ever joined with a perpetual attention to his Father's glory. This was his continual employment in his mother's womb; this was his continual employment all the time of his life. O, let all heaven and earth eternally acknowledge, praise, and bless this his infinite charity.

Consider, secondly, what these acts of charity were; which the Son of God continually exercised in our regard, from the first instant of his conception. First, he had us always before his eyes, and in the midst of his heart: he was not one moment without thinking of us. Secondly, he was perpetually praying for us, that we might be delivered from all our evils, and brought, through him, to all good. Thirdly, he had a most tender compassion for all our miseries, considering us all as his brethren; and he continually bewailed our sins. Fourthly, he offered himself, without ceasing, to the justice of his Father, to suffer all that he pleased, for the expiation of our sins: he had even a longing desire (such was the excess of his love) for the accomplishment of that baptism, with which he was to be one day baptized in his blood; because thereby he was to redeem us from our sins. See, my soul, how very early our dear Jesus began to show himself a Jesus, that is, a *Saviour*, to us. See how affectionately, and effectually too, he has loved us, even from his first conception in his mother's womb. And have we hitherto been sensible of these wonders of his love for us? Have we ever yet given to him a proper place in our heart, who has been so much beforehand with us, as to admit us, from the beginning, into the centre of his? O, let us detest our past ingratitude in this regard, and henceforward, at least, yield ourselves up, without reserve, captives to his love.

Consider, thirdly, in particular, the sentiments which the soul of our blessed Saviour had, with regard to our sins, and in what manner he was affected by them, even from his first conception. He had even then a clear sight, and a most lively sense of all the sins of the whole world, from the first to the last. He saw them all, in the light of God, with all their aggravations, and all

their deformity, and infinite malice, from their opposition to the infinite goodness of God. He saw the outrages they all offered to the divine Majesty, and how odious they were all in his eyes. And he saw, at the same time, all the havock they made in the souls of men, made after God's own image and likeness. and all their dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity. But O, what tongue can express, or heart conceive, how strangely his soul was affected with this sight! His love for his heavenly Father, on the one hand, and his zeal for his glory, gave him an inexpressible hatred and horror for all these enemies of God, these high treasons against the divine Majesty. And again, his love for us, and concern for our salvation, on the other hand, filled him with more than mortal grief and anguish for the general corruption with which he saw the whole world infected, and the loss of so many millions of souls. His horror and hatred for our sins was equal to the love he bore to his Father; and his grief and anguish, which he continually endured for them, was equal to his love for us; even that love which made him give himself up to the worst of deaths, to cancel our sins with his own blood. Thus, between the love of his Father and the love of us, the Son of God lived in a state of continual suffering, even in his mother's womb; and of such bitter sufferings, as nothing but his love could have endured. O Christians, learn here, from your dear Redeemer, in what manner you ought to be affected with the thought of your sins. Learn to hate and detest them above all things, as enemies of your God; learn to hate and to detest them as your mortal enemies, and to bewail them all your life-time.

Conclude to embrace the divine charity of the Son of God, with all the affection of your soul, which has thus exerted itself, even from his mother's womb, in favour of you. But remember that he expects of you a continual return of love, and this with your whole heart; and that nothing less will content him.

DECEMBER 17.

On the Benefits which the Son of God brings to us by his Incarnation.

CONSIDER, first, that man, in his first creation, was highly favoured by his Maker, and elevated by him to a supernatural end; he was enriched with the treasures of original grace, and justice, and sanctity; and destined to an eternal life with the living God: in the mean time, he was placed in the earthly paradise, as in a shadow of that happy life, where, if he had kept the law of his great Creator, he might have fed upon the tree of life, and so

nave passed to a better paradise of a true and everlasting life, without going through the gate of death. But, alas! by falling from his God by sin, he forfeited all these treasures, and all these advantages; he was stripped at once of all the goods of grace; he was strangely wounded in all the powers and faculties of his soul; his understanding was overclouded with ignorance, and deluded with a variety of errors; his memory and imagination was distracted with empty toys and vanities, and hurried away from the remembrance of his God; his will was perverted with malice; his inferior appetite disordered with rebellious passions; and his whole soul became weak, beyond expression, to every thing of good, and strongly bent upon all evil. Thus had unhappy man, by his apostasy from God, lost both his God, and all his good, and had incurred all kinds of evils, both of soul and body, for time and eternity: thus, in losing his God, he had fallen into the hands of four merciless enemies—sin and Satan, death and hell. Now, the Son of God, by his incarnation, came down amongst us, in order to deliver us from all these evils, which we had incurred by sin; to reconcile us to our God, and to restore us, with infinite advantage, to all that good for which we were first created. What reason, then, have we, my soul, to rejoice in this incarnation of the Son of God, the sovereign means of all our good, and the source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us! O, what praise and thanksgiving, what perpetual love and service, do we owe to this our great Deliverer!

Consider, secondly, how the Son of God, coming amongst us by his incarnation, has brought us from heaven most sovereign and effectual remedies for all our evils. He brought *light* to us, who *were sitting* before *in darkness, and in the shadow of death*; coming in quality of our *Teacher*, (both by word and example;) of the great *Prophet* sent to us from God; of our *Lawgiver*, and our *Apostle*; and declaring to us the whole will of God. He brought with him also our *ransom*, to redeem us from our *slavery* to Satan and sin, and to make us free indeed: he was *sent to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of our Lord, even the great jubilee*, of a general remission of all our debts, and a general loosing of all our bands, (Luke iv. 19.) He came as our *Physician*, to heal all our maladies, with medicines made up with his own most sacred blood. *We were wandering in a wilderness, in a place without water*, (Ps. cvi.) *We could find no way to a city for our habitation*, (our true and everlasting home;) *we were hungry and thirsty*, (destitute of all proper food for our souls,) and were *bound in want, and in irons: we were brought low with labours, and weakened; and there was none to help us*. And he came to *deliver us out of all*

these our distresses ; to lead us into the right way ; to conduct us to our true country ; to feed our hungry souls with good things ; to break our bonds in sunder ; to bring us refreshment, comfort, and rest from our labours ; to satisfy all our wants ; to redress all our miseries ; to cure our weakness with his strength ; and to raise us up from death to life. All this, and much more, has the Son of God effected in our favour, by coming down from heaven, to be our Emmanuel ; that is, to be God with us. And shall we not, then, my soul, join with the Psalmist in frequently repeating, in admiration at all these wonders of the divine goodness, that sacred hymn?—Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him ; and his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt him in the church of the people, and praise him in the chair of the ancients. Let them sacrifice to him a sacrifice of praise, and declare his works with joy. O give glory to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. Let them say so, that have been redeemed by the Lord ; whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of all countries. (Ps. cvi.) Yea, let them say so, and sing forth the mercies of the Lord, for all eternity. Amen, Amen.

Consider, thirdly, that, however great and inexpressible all these graces and benefits are, which the Son of God has brought with him by his incarnation, in order to deliver us from all our evils, and to communicate to us all his good ; yet none of them a^{ll}, nor all of them together, will effectually save us, without our consent and concurrence, and a due correspondence on our part with his mercy and grace, by our yielding ourselves up entirely to him, by faith and obedience. For what will it avail us to have the light come down from heaven to shine upon us, if we shut our eyes against it, and love the darkness more than light ? Or what shall we be the better for the *ransom*, which our Redeemer brings with him, and lays down for us, if we prefer our slavery and our chains before the liberty of the children of God, and rather choose to stay with our old masters, Satan and sin, amongst the husks of swine, than to go along with our Deliverer, who desires to carry us home with him to his Father's house ? Alas ! so far from being the better for all these graces and benefits brought us by our Redeemer, we should indeed be much the worse, if we should receive them all in vain, and, by our ingratitude, and obstinacy in sin, pervert them to our greater condemnation. For what greater perversity can there be, than that we should know that *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, is come down from heaven in our favour, and should still choose to go astray from *the Way*, and to follow the father of lies into the regions of death ?

Conclude to embrace in such manner our great Deliverer, who comes, by his incarnation, to be your Emmanuel (*God with us*),

by a faithful and diligent correspondence with all his mercies and graces, as that he *may be always with you*, and *you may be always with him*; and that nothing in life or death may ever separate you from him any more.

DECEMBER 18.

On other Benefits of our Saviour to Mankind, by his Incarnation.

CONSIDER, first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came amongst us to be *the Father*, and *the Head* of all mankind, according to the spirit, and according to grace, as Adam was according to the flesh, and according to nature. He came as the *second Adam*, to undo all that *evil* which the *first Adam* had done, and brought upon us all; and to impart to us all that *good* which the father of our flesh had deprived us of; that, *as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death*, and so both sin and death passed upon all men, justice and grace should in like manner enter into this world, by *one man*, in order to our eternal life. Hence, in quality of our *Father*, he imparts to us a new generation, a second birth; by which we, who, by our natural birth, (by which we descend from the first Adam,) are children of wrath, corrupted by sin, and condemned to hell, are born again by grace, cleansed from sin by his blood, incorporated in him, made children of God, and heirs of everlasting life. In quality of our *Head*, he communicates to us all manner of graces which, in virtue of his merits, are derived from him upon all the members of his mystical body, who by faith and obedience adhere to him. *St. John xv. 4, 5.*

Consider, secondly, the other near relations, marked down in the word of God, which our Lord has been pleased we should have with him, by means of his incarnation; such as that of our being now his *brethren*, (as he has been pleased to call us, *Ps. xxi I will declare thy name to my brethren*,) by his taking our flesh and blood—a relation which gives us an honour not granted to the angels, of being near akin, even by consanguinity, to the Son of God himself; for he never took upon him the nature of the angels, but took our nature, that he might be like to us in all things, excepting sin. For so it behoved him, that was to be our High-Priest, to make a reconciliation for our sins. *Heb. ii. 16, 17.* He is our elder Brother, in the order of God's election, *the First-born amongst many brethren*, (*Rom. viii. 29*,) in whom, and for whose sake, we also are elected; to be conformable to his image here by grace, and hereafter in glory, through him. In this quality of our eldest Brother, he is also our Priest, (as

under the law of nature, before the written law, the first-born were priests,) to officiate for us *in all things that appertain to God*, (Heb. v. 1;) as also our Prince, our Leader, and Captain in our warfare, our Tutor and Governor, our truest Friend, to promote all our interest, to manage all our causes, to defend us from all our enemies, and to bring us on in our pilgrimage, till he presents us to his Father, and our Father, in his eternal kingdom. O, how happy are we in such a Brother!

Consider, thirdly, that, by means of the incarnation of the Son of God, we are related to him, not only as children to our Father, as members to our Head, and as brothers to our eldest Brother, but also as a holy *building* to our *foundation*, in which he is the *Corner-stone*; *in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord—a habitation of God in the spirit*, (Eph. ii. 20, 21, 22,) and as branches to the stock, into which we are ingrafted, and planted by baptism. Hence our Lord tells us (*John xv. 4, 5*), *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can you, except you abide in me. I am the Vine, you are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.* But of all the relations we have to the Son of God, in consequence of his incarnation, there is none more endearing than that of our being made his *spouse*; the church being *the bride, the wife of the Lamb*, brought out of his side, as Eve was from the side of Adam, cast into the deep sleep of death upon the cross, and espoused to him by an everlasting and inviolable contract, of which Christian matrimony is the sacred and mysterious sign; and every particular soul, that is in the state of grace, partaking in the dignity and happiness of this near and dear relation of spouses to the Lamb of God. Christians, are you sensible how great this dignity and happiness is, for your souls to be espoused to the Son of God—in consequence of which you shall be *one spirit* with Christ, as Adam and Eve were *one flesh*? O, take care to be ever faithful and true to this divine Spouse; who has loved you, and delivered himself up for you, that he might sanctify you, and cleanse you for himself, with his own most precious blood.

Conclude to behave, in your whole life and conversation, agreeably, in all respects, to these sacred relations, which you now have with the Son of God; and never to degenerate from such a Father, such a Head, such a Brother, and such a Spouse, by any actions unworthy of either the dignity or sanctity of a Christian.

DECEMBER 19.

On our Saviour as our King and our Priest.

CONSIDER, first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation, came also amongst us, to be both our *King* and our *Priest*; and in these qualities, to impart all blessings to us; and even to make us also kings and priests to his Father, *Apoc.* i. 6. He is our true *Melchisedech*, sovereign King and High-Priest for ever: he is the true *King of justice, and King of peace*; of whose reign there shall be no end. He came, by his incarnation, to dethrone the usurper Satan, and to establish amongst us the kingdom of grace, by which he reigns in all the souls of his true subjects. For *his kingdom is not of this world*, nor like to any of these petty kingdoms of this world; but is of a far more excellent constitution, a more noble foundation, and a more extensive dominion, reaching to all nations, and to all ages: it is never to be conquered; it shall be glorious for evermore. Of this great King, and his reign, the royal prophet sings, (*Ps.* lxxi.) "Give to the King thy judgment, O God—to judge thy people with justice, and thy poor with judgment. Let the mountains receive peace for the people, and the hills justice. He shall judge the poor of the people, and he shall save the children of the poor, and he shall bring down the oppressor (the devil). And he shall continue with the sun, and beyond the moon, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the fleece; and as showers falling gently upon the earth. In his days shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away. And he shall rule from sea to sea, &c; all kings of the earth shall adore him, all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the poor from the mighty—and he shall save the souls of the poor. He shall redeem their souls from usuries and iniquities, and their name shall be honourable in his sight." Such, Christians, is our great King, who shall rule us for evermore; and such are the blessings he brings us by his reign; according to what is written in the same psalm; *In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed.* O, let his name, then, be blessed for evermore; and blessed be his heavenly Father, who worketh these wonderful things in our favour. Yea, blessed be the name of his Majesty for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. So be it. So be it.

Consider, secondly, that the Son of God, incarnate for us, is not only our King; he is our Priest too; the High-Priest of God and man. *Now every high-priest*, says the apostle, (*Heb.* v. 1,) *taker from among men, is appointed for men, in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin*

And thus the Son of God, becoming man by his incarnation, was called by his Father, and anointed to this high-priestly office by his Holy Spirit, to execute every branch of it, to the glory of his Father, and in behalf of us men. This he did *in the days of his flesh*, that is, of his mortal life, *by offering up prayers and supplications, with a strong cry and tears*, (Heb. v. 7;) this he did in death, by the great sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world, which he then offered upon the altar of the cross. This he still continues to do, in the sanctuary of heaven, into which he has carried the blood of his sacrifice, to be there presented before the throne of his Father; where also with this blood, he continually makes intercession, for the obtaining of mercy, grace, and salvation for us. Such are the benefits which are derived upon us from the everlasting priesthood of our Lord. *Seeing, then, says the apostle, that we have this great High-Priest, that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high-priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we, yet without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.* (Heb. vi 14, 15, 16.)

Consider, thirdly, that Christ our Lord, not content with executing the priestly office, in our behalf, whilst he was here upon earth, in his own person; and continuing to execute it himself, after his ascension, in the sanctuary of heaven; was pleased, moreover, before his departure hence, to ordain others, not as his successors, (for his priesthood is eternal,) but as his ministers, to exercise in his name, and for the benefit of his people, all the offices and functions of the priesthood here amongst us; he assisting and co-operating with them from heaven; and, as he has promised, being always with them, and keeping up a perpetual succession of them, all days, even unto the consummation of the world, (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19, 20;) so that we do not only owe to our great High-Priest, and to his priesthood, all those blessings which he himself in person has at any time bestowed upon mankind, but also those many graces and spiritual benefits which he daily confers upon us by the ministry of men, whom he has empowered and commissioned to preach his gospel, administer his sacraments, remit sins in his name, bless in his name, impart the grace of the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, and to consecrate, and offer up daily, in his name, his body and blood, for all the great ends of sacrifice. In all these offices, our Lord assists as our High-Priest; and whatsoever grace is here given to the faithful, it is all derived from his priesthood; who has imparted, indeed, to those whom he has made his vicegerents, the doctrine, the authority, the Spirit, the anointing, and the keys

of the kingdom of heaven, which he has received of his Father; yet so that in all their performances, he himself is still the principal Actor. See, then, Christians, how happy we are in having such a High-priest.

Conclude to keep up in your souls a grateful sense of the innumerable benefits which have been conferred upon all mankind by the incarnation of the Son of God; by which he is become our King and our Priest. Adhere to him in both these his qualities: daily beg that he would establish his *reign* in you; and, by his *priesthood*, deliver you from your sins, and bring you to his Father, to be eternally his.

DECEMBER 20.

On our Saviour, as our Sacrifice.

CONSIDER, first, that the SON of God, by his incarnation, did not only come amongst us to be our King and our Priest, but to be our Sacrifice too; and in that quality to be an inexhaustible source of all good to our souls. Man, from the beginning, always owed to his God the homage of adoration, praise and glory; he was ever bound to make him the best offerings he was able; he owed his God perpetual thanksgiving, for his perpetual goodness and bounty to him; and he was ever bound to acknowledge, by prayer, his total dependence upon this Giver of all good gifts, without whom he could do nothing. But after sin, he contracted a new debt, by which he was bound to make satisfaction also to the divine justice, for the offence he had committed. Hence we find, from the beginning of the world, frequent mention in the scriptures of sacrifices offered to God: hence, in the law, were so many ordinances, relating to burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; as so many different kinds of sacrifices, to answer the different branches of man's duty to his Maker. Eat, alas! how little proportion was there in all, or any of these ancient sacrifices, with those great ends for which they were offered! How insignificant in itself (abstracting from that sacrifice to come, of which they were all types) was all that homage, adoration, glory, and thanksgiving, which was paid to the infinite majesty of God, by these oblations of oxen, goats, or sheep. How much less *could the blood of oxen, or the blood of goats, take away sins*; or be a proper atonement for the great sin of the world, by which man had fallen from his God. Therefore the Son of God came, by his incarnation, to make himself the Victim and Sacrifice of all mankind; to substitute himself instead of all those ancient burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings; to answer, in a most perfect manner, all the ends of

sacrifice; and to wash away all our sins with his own most precious blood. O blessed be his name, through all generations, for this his infinite goodness to us.

Consider, secondly, what great things the Son of God has done for us all, in making himself our sacrifice; and what great things he has enabled us to do, by virtue of his sacrifice. In dying for us upon the cross, he has made himself a *holocaust* or *whole burnt-offering* for us, of most sweet savour to his heavenly Father; a sacrifice of *homage, adoration, praise, and glory*, worthy of the infinite majesty of God; because of the infinite dignity both of the offerer and of the offering. In bowing down his head, and yielding up his spirit for us, by his death, he has also made an oblation of himself, infinitely agreeable to his Father, for all the other ends of sacrifice; here he offered a *thanksgiving*, truly worthy of God, both for himself, and for us; a *peace-offering*, of infinite value, for purchasing *peace*, and all happiness for us, and for opening in our favour all the fountains of grace and life; and, particularly, he here made himself a *sin-offering* for us all; a *victim of propitiation* of infinite virtue, for taking away all the sins of the world, and reconciling and bringing back lost man to an eternal union with his God. And this great sacrifice of his, with all its fruits, he has in such manner made over to us, as to authorize and enable us to offer up the same sacrifice with him, and, in his name, to his Father, for all the same ends as he did; and to give thereby infinite glory to God, and to procure infinite blessings to ourselves and to all the world.

Consider, thirdly, that this sacrifice, which Christ our Lord offered up to his Father, on the altar of the cross, (as a homage and adoration, which, as man, he paid to him by his death; as a thanks-offering of infinite value; as an atonement for sin, more than sufficient to cancel the sins of ten thousand worlds, though infinite in malice, and as an oblation of infinite merit, in the way of prayer, and impeachment of all graces and blessings from God, for all mankind, both for time and eternity,) did not expire by his death, no more than his priesthood did. The whole victim of his sacrifice was restored to him again, at his resurrection, and he has carried it with him, at his ascension, into the sanctuary of heaven; where, with it, he continually gives adoration and thanks to his Father, both in his own and our name; and continually pleads for mercy and grace for us. But this is not all: he has also appointed this same sacrifice to be kept up for ever in his church, in the sacred mysteries, and to be offered up daily, for the like intentions, on thousands of altars, in all nations, as long as the world shall endure. himself in person, though invisible, officiating therein, both as Priest and Victim, both as Offerer and Offering. See, then, my soul, if any thing

more can be desired to make us completely happy ; who have continually amongst us such a Sacrifice, in which we have the source of all happiness, and the sovereign means of all good.

Conclude never to be wanting, on thy part, in a due correspondence with all these graces and blessings of heaven, which the Son of God has purchased for thee by his sacrifice, and which he daily seeks to enrich thee with, by the application of the fruits of his sacrifice, in the daily oblation of his own body and blood. O learn, then, my soul, to unite all thy performances with those of the Son of God, incarnate for the love of thee ; and daily offer thyself with him, who daily offers himself in sacrifice for the love of thee. Unite all thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, with that which thy Saviour, as man, continually presents to his Father in heaven, and with all that which he daily offers him, on a million of altars, here upon earth : and thy adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, shall not fail of being accepted of. In like manner unite all thy prayers, and supplications for mercy, with those of Jesus Christ, and with his sacrifice ; and thou shalt always find through him both mercy and grace.

DECEMBER 21.

On St. Thomas, the Apostle.

CONSIDER, first, that, in celebrating the festivals of the saints, we must principally have in view the glorifying the God of the saints, and the giving him thanks for all the wonders of his grace in them, and all that glory to which he has exalted them, and with which he has crowned them to all eternity. Now God is wonderful indeed in all his saints ; but in none more than in the apostles ; whom he raised from the lowest and meanest condition in life, as it were from the earth, and from the dunghill, to make them the princes of his people ; the pillars and foundations of his church ; prodigies of his grace ; full of his divine spirit ; dispensers of all his treasures, and workers of all kind of wonders here upon earth ; and now has exalted to sit with him on his throne in heaven, to come one day with him to be the judges both of men and angels. See then, Christians, what subjects we have to meditate upon, on the festivals of the apostles ; what motives we have to praise and glorify God for all he has done for them ; and through them for us all ; what encouragement we here have, however mean and poor we may be in all that is good, to rely on the power, goodness, and mercy of our God, who loves to work his greatest wonders in favour of such as are little and humble ; and what lessons we have for our instruction, and our

imitation, in the ready correspondence of the apostles with divine grace, and their diligent co-operation with it unto the end.

Consider, secondly, from the epistle read on this day, (*Eph. ii. 19.*) the great advantages we have received through the ministry of the apostles, in our being called to the Christian religion, of which they were the first preachers and teachers. For *now*, says St. Paul, speaking to all Christians, *you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God; built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone; in whom all the building framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord, &c.* Yes, Christians, it was by the ministry of the apostles, we were originally brought to all this good; and as the same apostle adds, (*Heb. xii. 21.*) by our admission into the church of God, we are now *come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new testament, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than that of Abel;* namely, by crying to heaven for mercy, and not for justice. O happy *communion of saints!* A communion in all that is good, with all that are good; to which we have been introduced by the apostles of Christ. O glory for evermore be to their Lord, the Author of all their good, and of all our good!

Consider, thirdly, the particular lessons which St. Thomas teaches us by his example. When the other disciples opposed our Saviour's going back to Jerusalem, where the Jews had lately sought his death, St. Thomas alone generously said: *Let us also go, that we may die with him.* (*John xi. 16.*) Such was his love for his Master, and such his courage in his cause. Are we in the like dispositions? Are we willing to die with Christ, or for Christ, when we are frightened with every little difficulty, or danger, and ever ready to turn our backs upon him, rather than to risk any thing for him, or part with our own humour, or satisfaction, for the love of him? St. Thomas was slow of belief, with regard to the resurrection of our Lord, till he was favoured both with the sight of him, and the handling of his wounds. but then he yielded himself up immediately, and cried out with a most lively faith, and ardent love, *My Lord and my God!* This lively faith, and ardent love, continued with him, ever growing and increasing, and carried him through all his apostolic labours amongst so many barbarous nations, (to which he is said to have preached the gospel,) and through all his sufferings, till, by a glorious martyrdom, it brought him to his Lord, and eter-

nally united him to him. O that we had but some little share in this lively faith, and ardent love! It would make all our labours and sufferings easy to us, and bring us also to our Lord.

Conclude so to glorify God in this saint, as to encourage thyself also to walk in his footsteps, by an imitation of his virtues, in hopes of sharing in his happiness. And, for this end, ever beg his prayers and intercession.

DECEMBER 22.

On the Ember Week in Advent.

CONSIDER, first, that the ember weeks, at the four seasons of the year, are times set aside by the church, from the earliest ages, for fasting and prayer. The primitive church had that zealous regard for the glory of God, and the sanctification of the souls of her children, by training them up to these religious exercises, so much recommended by the word of God, that she would not suffer any of the four parts of the year to pass, without calling upon them all, to sanctify one week, at least, by more than ordinary devotion; and by an offering up to God therein the tribute of a penitential fast. In which also she had, moreover, in view, that, by their diligence in this practice, her children might draw down a blessing from God, on all their labours, and on the fruits of the earth; that they might give thanks for the blessings already received, and implore the divine mercy for the forgiveness of the sins they were continually committing. Christians, let us, at these holy times, enter into these views of our holy mother the church; and, by joining, as it were, in a body, with all the people of God upon earth, in fasting, in alms deeds, and in humble prayer, make the best return we are able to the Giver of all good gifts, for all his benefits, beg a continuance of his graces and blessings, and the pardon of all our sins, through the merits of the passion and death of his only Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Consider, secondly, that these penitential fasts, of the ember weeks, are also instituted in order to turn away the judgments of God; which we have too great reason to apprehend may be hanging over our heads on account of our sins. For, if we duly consider the multitude and enormity of the crimes that are daily and hourly committed amongst Christians, of all degrees and conditions; crimes that continually cry to heaven for vengeance; (and how few there are in comparison, that are not frequently falling into mortal sin, in one shape or another!) we cannot but fear lest the very worst of God's judgments may be speedily falling upon Christendom, if not averted by prayer and pen-

ance. It is then not only a duty of obedience to our mother the church, but a charity also that we owe both to ourselves and to our neighbours, to join, at these times, in prayer and penance, in order to prevent these dismal visitations of the divine justice; and to turn now to the Lord with our whole heart, in fasting, and weeping, and mourning, as the prophet admonishes, (*Joel ii.*) that so, by entering into dispositions of true penitents, and seriously turning away from the evil of our sins, we may prevail with our merciful God to turn away also his scourges from us, which we have deserved by our sins. O that Christians would remember this, on all their days of fasting, and would always enter into the true spirit of these institutions, chiefly designed for the abolishing sin, and appeasing the divine justice. Thus would they offer up to God such a fast as he has chosen. Thus would their fastings draw down a blessing from him.

Consider, thirdly, that the ember weeks are also set aside, by the church of Christ, for the times of giving holy orders; which, by apostolical tradition, and by the example of the apostles, ought to be accompanied with prayer and fasting. (*Acts xiii. 2, 3, & xiv. 22.*) Yes, Christians, as there is not any one thing, on which both the general good of the whole church, and the welfare of every soul in particular, so much depends, as upon having saints for our pastors, and such as may be men according to God's own heart, who, both by word and work, may continually promote the glory of God, and the salvation of souls; so there is not any one thing, which more pressingly calls for our prayers and fasting, than the obtaining of such pastors from God. This should indeed have a great part in our devotions at all times; but more especially at these times of their ordination. Bad priests are sometimes permitted by God, as one of his most dreadful judgments upon the sins of the people. It is the business, then, of all Christians, by praying well, and living well, to avert this judgment, and to obtain better guides.

Conclude to labour, by more than ordinary devotion and penance, at these holy times, to answer all the ends of these ancient institutions. This ember week in particular, and all the latter part of advent, (that is, twelve whole days before Christmas,) by an ancient custom of the primitive English church, was dedicated by our Catholic ancestors to fastings, watchings, prayer and alms: and all the faithful, at this time, betook themselves to confession and penance, in order to prepare themselves for a worthy participation of the body of the Lord, on Christmas day; as we from B. Egbert, who was archbishop of York above a thousand years ago; (*in Dialogo de ecclesiastica Institutione.*) O how much have we degenerated from this ancient piety!

DECEMBER 23.

On the Preparation for the Birth of Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that, when the time drew near, in which the world was to be blessed with the birth of our Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, who bore him in her womb, and her chaste spouse, St. Joseph, in obedience to the edict of the emperor Augustus, took a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to be enrolled in the city of David, as they were both of them of the royal stock of David. The emperor, in giving out these orders, had no other view than the gratifying his vanity, or his avarice, by the tax imposed on that occasion. But God, who had ordained, and foretold long before, by his prophet Micheas, that his Son should be born in Bethlehem, was pleased to bring about his eternal decrees in this manner; and to prepare, by this occasion, a place for his birth, suitable to the great designs for which he sent him into this world. For, behold, after a long and wearisome winter's journey, when the blessed Mother, with the Son of God in her womb, was arrived at Bethlehem, the town was full; and none of the inhabitants, not even of their own kindred and family, would receive them into their houses, or give them any entertainment: the very inns would not lodge them; *there was no room for them.* O ye heavens, stand astonished to see the Son of God, the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, thus debase himself, from the very beginning, as not to allow himself, even in his very birth, any of the common conveniences of life; no, not so much as a house to cover his head! O let him be so much the more dear to us, by how much he has made himself more mean and contemptible for the love of us.

Consider, secondly, what kind of a palace the King of heaven prepared on this occasion for the birth of his Son. St. Joseph, after seeking in vain for a lodging in the town, found out at last an open stable, or stall for beasts, exposed on all sides to the inclemency of the weather; which, for want of better accommodations, their poverty and humility were contented to take up with. And this was the palace the divine wisdom made choice of for the birth of our great King; the manger here, which had served for the ox and the ass, was the royal bed of state, in which he was first laid, upon his coming down amongst us. O how has the Word incarnate here annihilated himself for us; O how loudly has he condemned, from his very birth, our corrupt self-love in all its branches; with all the maxims of worldly pride, and the favourite inclinations of flesh and blood! Man fell originally from God, by proudly affecting a superior excellence,

which might make him like to God; by coveting to have what God did not allow him; and by seeking to gratify his sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit: therefore the Son of God begins his mortal life by the exercise of a most profound humility, to cure our pride; by embracing a voluntary poverty, even to the want of all things, in opposition to our covetousness, and love of the mammon of the world; and by choosing for himself hardships and sufferings, in opposition to our love of sensual and worldly pleasures. O let us study well these lessons, which this heavenly Master begins to teach us, by his great example, even from his first appearance amongst us.

Consider, thirdly, Christian souls, that the Son of God, who heretofore came down from heaven, to be born into this world *for you*, earnestly desires at present to be spiritually born *in you*. See, then, that you correspond, on your part, with this his earnest desire, by preparing your souls for him, and giving them up to him. O be not like those unhappy Bethlehemites, who refused him a place in their houses, and would not find any room for him. But, then, if you are willing to admit him, take care to discharge from your inward house all such company as is disagreeable to him. For how great soever his desire is, of coming and being spiritually born in your souls, he will not come thither as long as you wilfully entertain there his and your mortal enemies, *the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life*; those very enemies, whom he came from heaven to fight against; and against whom he has declared an eternal war, by the austerity, poverty, and humility of his birth, of his education, and of his whole life and death. Moreover, if you desire to have him to abide in you, by virtue of a spiritual birth, you must allow him the chiefest place in your heart and soul, by driving far away from you all irregular affections to the world, or to any creature whatsoever. For, though he did not disdain the stable nor the crib, the ox nor the ass, he will not endure a heart divided, or occupied by unclean affections, which will not allow him the whole bed, without a partner in love.

Conclude to let nothing be wanting, on your part, to ensure to yourselves the happiness of having the Son of God spiritually born in your soul. O invite him thither with all possible affection; ready to give up all things else, that he may abide with you; and beg of him, who knows your poverty and misery, that he would prepare himself a place in you, and furnish your souls with all those ornaments of virtue and grace, which are suitable to this his spiritual birth.

DECEMBER 24.

On the Birth of Christ.

CONSIDER, first, that the time being now come, in which the Son of God was to be born into this world; in the silence of the night, and in the obscurity of a stable, the eternal Word of God, by whom all things were made, issued out from his nine months' close confinement in his mother's womb, without any detriment of her virginal integrity; and so came to dwell amongst us. See, my soul, and contemplate with thy inward eyes this lovely babe, (O how lovely indeed, and loving to us!) already beginning to suffer for thee, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. See how his blessed mother takes him up from the ground, shivering with cold: see with what profound reverence, on the one hand, and with what ardent love and affection on the other, she embraces him; and carefully wraps him up in swaddling clothes, and lays him in the manger. But see, also, in the midst of all this poverty and humility of this new born King, all the heavenly quires of angels and archangels, and all the cherubims, and seraphims, descending from heaven, to adore their Lord, and to sing their hymns of praise and glory to him; according to that of the apostle, (*Heb. i. 6.*) that when God brought his First-born into the world, he said: *Let all the angels of God adore him.* Christians, let us join with all these heavenly spirits: let us join with the Blessed Virgin, the mother of God, in our homage of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, to the Son of God, born into this world to be our *Emmanuel*, (*God with us*), and to save us: let us welcome him at his birth, and embrace him with all the affection of our souls.

Consider, secondly, what we read, (*Luke ii.*) that at the time of the birth of our Lord, 'there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.' See, Christians, you study well the lessons designed for you in this whole passage. Behold, a heavenly messenger is here sent, to carry the first news, the happy tidings, of the birth of the Son of

God, born into this world to be the Saviour of the world. But to whom, do you think, does God send this joyful message, this heavenly embassy? Not to any of the great ones of this world nor to any of the worldly wise, nor to the learned, nor to the rich, nor to any of them that lived at their ease, and wallowed in sensual pleasures. No: their pride and self-conceit, their love of the world, and of the things of this world, their love of sensual and carnal pleasures, fastened them down to the earth, and disqualified them for the visits of heaven. What manner of men, then, were they, who were favoured with this glorious vision, and this heavenly message, and, in consequence of it, were the first, after the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, that had the happiness to see and to worship the Saviour of the world, to believe in him themselves, and to preach and publish his coming to their neighbours? O they were poor, humble, harmless shepherds, *keeping the night watches over their flock*; attentive to the business of their humble calling, and, likely, employing that silent time of the night in joining the praises of God and prayer with the care of their sheep. Now such as these are commonly the favourites of the Most High, who *resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble*. See, my soul, these be also thy dispositions, if thou wouldst be favoured by our Lord with his divine graces.

Consider, thirdly, the words of the angel to the shepherds: *I bring you tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for this day is born to you a Saviour*. See, Christians, what ought to be the subject of your joy at this holy time: a Saviour is born this day to you, who comes to *save his people from their sins*; who comes to deliver you from the power and slavery of the devil, and from hell and damnation; and to bring to you mercy, grace, and salvation. O here is a just subject of true joy indeed! Not like the joys of worldlings, which are either vain and foolish, or base and filthy; but a joy in the Lord, and in his goodness, which opens to us, by this mystery, the gate of joys that shall never end. O let us join, then, with all the heavenly quires, in the sacred hymn they sung on this occasion: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will*. Let us ever glorify him, who has wrought these wonders for us; and who has sent us, by the birth of his Son, *justice and abundance of peace till the moon be taken away*. O how lovely and desirable is this peace! But it is only bestowed on *men of good will*: *For there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord*. Isai. xlvi. 22.

Conclude to imitate the shepherds, by going over with them in spirit to Bethlehem, this night, and there paying your homage, and making your offerings to your new-born King. The offering he calls for, is that of your heart. O give it him without re-

serve! But let it be a loving heart, to answer that love, which has brought him down from heaven to you : let it be a *contrite and humble heart*, in consideration of your ingratitude, and manifold sins against him.

DECEMBER 25.

On Christmas-Day.

CONSIDER, first, that the devotion of this holy time, and of this day in particular, calls us to the crib of Bethlehem, there to contemplate our infant Saviour, and to entertain our souls with him. O what a large field have we here opened to us for our meditations! Christians, place yourselves, in spirit, near the manger of your Lord, and fix the eyes of your soul upon him. Reflect *who* this is, whom you see here lying before you, as a helpless infant, in this open stall; suffering and weeping, poor and humble, wrapt up in these mean swaddling clothes, and laid in this crib, between an ox and ass? O! your faith will inform you, that under all these mean appearances here lies concealed the Lord of glory! This infant, not yet one day old, is the eternal Son of the eternal God: this weak, helpless babe is he who, by his almighty power, made both heaven and earth: he who is here wrapt up so straitly, and confined to this narrow crib, fills heaven and earth with his incomprehensible immensity: this speechless child is God's own Word, who called all things out of nothing, and whom all things obey. O wonderful mystery, which has thus joined together the highest and the lowest; all that is great in heaven, with all that is little and contemptible upon earth, in the person of this infant God! But what is the meaning of all this? What has brought this great God down to this stable, to this crib? Why has he thus debased, and perfectly annihilated himself? O my soul, it is for thy sake: it is for the love of thee: it is to redeem thee, and deliver thee from sin and hell: it is to give thee an example of all virtues; it is to draw thy heart to himself, and to engage thee to love him.

Consider, secondly, and study well the great lessons which the Son of God desires to teach thee from the crib. Learn to be humble, by the contemplation of his unparalleled humiliations, which he here so joyfully embraces for thy sake: learn to be poor in spirit, by the consideration of his voluntary poverty: learn mortification and self-denial, by the view of his sufferings, which are all of his own choice. Learn of him here to despise this cheating world, and all its empty shows, its painted toys, its childish amusements, and all the allurements of its sensual pleasures, which he, who is the wisdom of God, despises and con-

demns in his birth. But especially apply thyself to study well, and to learn from the contemplation of the Son of God in the crib, the infinite charity of God, his infinite love for thee, and the infinite enormity of sin, by which we continually rebel against this infinite charity. O my soul, if thou couldst but penetrate, with thy inward eyes, into the heart of this thy infant God, what heavenly flames wouldst thou there discover, of a more than seraphic love for thee! Thou wouldst there meet thyself, in the midst of the heart of thy Saviour, where he has so long ago given thee a place. O there thou wouldst effectually learn both to hate thy sins, and to love thy God.

Consider, thirdly, the affections with which thou oughtest to accompany thy meditations in the stable of Bethlehem, if thou desirest to entertain there, in a proper manner, thy new-born King and Saviour. Here thou must exercise thyself in acts of all the three divine or theological virtues: of a lively *faith* in this thy infant God, and all his sacred truths, which lie here concealed in this mystery of his incarnation and birth; of all the wonders of his almighty power, wisdom, and goodness, which he has here wrought for the love of us; and of all the treasures of heaven, which he here brings with him, to communicate to our souls; of a most firm hope and confidence in his infinite power, mercy, and goodness, which he discovers to thee in this mystery; of a most ardent love for him, in return for all that love which he here shows thee. Then pour forth thy soul in his presence, in acts of adoration, praise, and glory; in acts of thanksgiving for all he has done for thee, and for the whole world; in acts of oblation of thy whole being, and of all the powers of thy soul, to his love and service, and make at his feet (who is come to be the great High-priest of God and men) a humble confession of all thy sins, with a most hearty sorrow and contrition for having ever offended so good a God; craving mercy, pardon, and absolution, of him and through him, and firmly resolving upon a new life for the future.

Conclude to let this be thy daily exercise, during this holy time of Christmas, and not to suffer any worldly entertainments or diversions to keep thee out of the company of thy Saviour; at least so far as to hinder thee from waiting often on him and spending a competent part of thy time with him, in proper meditations and affections. If thou art at a loss to know how thou oughtest to entertain thyself with him, beg of him to teach thee, for he comes to be thy Teacher. And if thou art sensible of the meanness of thy own performances, in point of adoration, praise, glory, thanksgiving, &c., offer up to the eternal Father, the adoration, praise, glory, and thanksgiving, of this thy newborn Saviour, to supply thy defects.

DECEMBER 26.

On St. Stephen.

CONSIDER, first, that St. Stephen was the first martyr; that is, the first who bore witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ by laying down his life for him; the first who, after the death and passion of the Son of God, returned him blood for blood, life for life; the first that was so happy as to be made a victim of divine love a holocaust of sweet savour in the sight of God; in fine, the first that washed his robes by martyrdom in the blood of the Lamb, and is now at the head of his heavenly train, who stand *before the throne of God, and serve him day and night, in his temple; where he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them: and they shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the living fountains of waters, &c.*, Apoc. vii. 15, &c. O my soul, what a glory, what a happiness it is to lay down life itself for divine love! But, alas! how far are the generality of Christians from this perfection of charity, who are so unwilling to suffer even the least incommodities for the sake of their heavenly Lover! And is not this our case too? O let us love, at least, these generous lovers of our God: let us conceive a holy envy for their happiness: let us aspire to some degree of this happiness, by sighing and praying for a share in their charity and love.

Consider, secondly, the character that is given to St. Stephen by the Spirit of God. He was *a man full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost*, Acts vi. 5. He was *full of grace and fortitude, and did great wonders and miracles among the people*, v. 8. By his zeal, *the word of the Lord increased, and the number of the disciples was multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly*, v. 7. And though many adversaries rose up, who disputed against him, they were none of them *able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke*, v. 10. And when he was hurried by them before the council, all that were there *saw his face, as if it had been the face of an angel*, v. 15. His zeal for the faith of Christ, and the courage and constancy with which he maintained it before the council, was rewarded with a heavenly vision, in which he saw the glory of God, and the Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Acts vii. 55. And his bearing testimony to this truth drew on his martyrdom: for presently, *casting him forth out of the city, they stoned him; invoking the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice, saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep in the Lord.* Acts viii.

57, 58, 59. Christians, what admirable lessons and examples have we here of all virtues, in an heroic degree, in the life and death of this glorious saint! He was *full of faith*: he was *full of the Holy Ghost*, and his gifts: he was *full of grace*: he was *full of fortitude*: he was full of zeal: he was full of heavenly wisdom: he was full of divine charity: in a word, he was full of God, and of all good. O how happy shall we be, if we seriously endeavour to walk in the footsteps of this great saint, by an imitation of these his virtues!

Consider, thirdly, that, as, amongst the virtues of St. Stephen, none was more remarkable than his charity, so none more pressingly calls for our imitation. Charity has two branches, the love of God, and the love of our neighbours: the love of God with our whole heart, and with our whole soul; and the love of our neighbours as ourselves. This love of God is exercised by seeking, and by promoting, in all things, the glory of God, by sanctifying his name, both by word and work; by labouring to propagate his kingdom; by a perpetual conformity of our will to his will, and a perpetual dedication of our whole selves to his divine service. Thus did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of God; not by the bare profession of the tongue, but by work, and in truth. In like manner the love of our neighbours is exercised, by seeking and promoting their true and everlasting welfare upon all occasions; by withdrawing them from the error of their way, and from the broad road that leads to perdition; and bringing them to God, and to his grace: thus also did St. Stephen continually exercise himself in the most perfect acts of the love of his neighbours, by his preaching and by his prayers; by his zeal for the salvation of their souls; and by his sparing no pains to bring them to Christ; though this his charity cost him his life. Now, *greater love than this no man hath, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.* (John xv. 13.) But the most difficult point of all in the line of charity, as it regards our neighbours, is the love of our enemies; of which St. Stephen has given us a most glorious example in his last dying prayer for them that were actually stoning him. *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.*

Conclude to honour this great saint, by diligently imitating his love for his God, his zeal for his glory, and for the salvation of souls, his fortitude and constancy in his sufferings, and his charity for his enemies. And to this end beg the assistance of his prayers.

DECEMBER 27.

On St. John the Apostle and Evangelist.

CONSIDER, first, upon how many accounts we ought to honour St. John, the beloved disciple of the Son of God; and to glorify God in him, for his extraordinary gifts and graces bestowed upon him. He was called in his youth, whilst he was as yet innocent and pure, to follow our Lord Jesus; and he readily obeyed the call, and left both his parents, and all things else, for the sake of Christ. His zeal and fortitude in the cause of his Master procured him the name of *Boanerges*, or *a son of thund'r*. The purity of his soul and body made him a special favourite of his Lord, who therefore admitted him to lean upon his bosom, at his last supper, and to draw from that sacred fountain of life the heavenly waters of grace and truth; and on the following day, when he was dying upon the cross, he recommended his Virgin Mother to his care, that she might be his mother, and he might be her son. O blessed saint, great favourite both of Jesus and Mary, introduce us also, by the interest thou hast now in heaven, into some share in their favour, by procuring for us, by thy prayers, the grace to imitate thy purity.

Consider, secondly, to what a height St. John was raised by divine grace. He was made an *apostle*; and one of the chiefest of the *apostles*; even one of the three that were chosen by our Lord, to be witnesses both of his glory on mount Thabor, and of his anguish and agony on mount Olivet. He was also an *evangelist*, or writer of the gospel, (which none of the other apostles were, except St. Matthew,) and, amongst the four evangelists, is compared to the *eagle*, (which flies high, and looks upon the sun with a steadfast eye,) because of his sublime beginning, by taking his first flight up to the eternal Word, by whom all things were made; and his following, throughout his whole gospel, the same sublime course, with his eye still fixed on this great sun of justice, and the immense light of his divinity. St. John was also a *martyr* by drinking of the chalice of his Lord, (as he had foretold him,) by a long course of sufferings, and by being at length sentenced to death, by the tyrant Domitian, and cast into a vessel of boiling oil; from whence he was delivered by an evident miracle. In fine, he was a *prophet*, to whom our Lord revealed an infinity of heavenly secrets and mysteries relating to latter times; which we find recorded in his Apocalypse, written during his banishment in the isle of Patmos. See then, my soul, how many titles this great saint has to our veneration. But remember, at the same time, that the veneration which will please him best, will be a love and imitation of his virtues.

Consider, thirdly, that the writings of St. John recommend nothing so much as charity and verity, love and truth. These they continually inculcate; charity, *because God is charity*: he is all love: he has died for love: *let us therefore love God*, saith he, *because God first hath loved us*. But then this, saith he, is the love of God, this is the charity we owe him, to keep his commandments. And this commandment we have from God, (the favourite commandment indeed of the Son of God,) that we should love one another. This love for one another all his epistles are full of; this sweet odour they all breathe; with this they join *verity or truth, loving in truth, walking in truth, for the sake of the truth, which abideth in us, and shall be with us for ever*. And what is this truth, but the Son of God himself, *the way, the truth, and the life*? Such was always the doctrine of St. John: this he perpetually preached, both by word and writing: such was the spirit of this disciple of love.

Conclude to embrace, with all thy soul, this *charity and verity*, this *love and truth*, so much recommended by St. John; or rather by the Spirit of God, through him. Stick close by this charity and verity here, and it will abide with thee for ever hereafter, and will make thee happy for endless ages.

DECEMBER 28.

On the Holy Innocents.

CONSIDER, first, that the Son of God, who was born into this world to be the Saviour of the world, was no sooner born but he began to be persecuted by the children of this world. The wicked king Herod, to secure to himself and his family the temporal kingdom of Judea, seeks the life of this new-born King, of whose birth he had been informed by the sages of the east; and, in order to compass his impious design, employs both craft and (when this was eluded) open violence, by the barbarous massacre of the innocents. But all to no other purpose than to show how vain are the designs and efforts of men against the decrees of God; according to that of the wise man, Prov. xxi. 30. *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord*. Our new-born Saviour, by divine admonition, was carried away to Egypt, out of the reach of the tyrant; and all his barbarity only served to render the birth of the Messiah more illustrious, by spreading the fame of it through all the world, and to crown, at the same time, so many innocent martyrs; whilst, for his own part, it brought a perpetual odium upon his infamous memory, which no length of time can ever efface, and drew down most terrible judgments (within the compass of a

year) upon his head : and as to his numerous family, for which he was so solicitous, they quickly lost the kingdom, and were in a short time totally extirpated. O see, Christians, how sad a thing it is wilfully to fight against our Saviour, by known sin, and how dismal the consequences are of all such undertakings.

Consider, secondly, what we read, (Matt. ii. 16, &c.,) *Then Herod, perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry ; and sending, killed all the men-children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under.* These, my soul, are the *holy innocents*, whose feast we celebrate this day ; as happy martyrs, bearing testimony, not by their words, but by their blood, to the birth of the Son of God. These are his first victims, immolated as so many lambs, to illustrate the coming of the Lamb of God, born into this world, to take away the sins of the world. These are the first flowers of the martyrs, cropped in the very bud, by the impious persecutor of Christ ; these the first fruits, produced by the coming of our Lord, and presented by him to his Father, to be followed afterwards by that abundant harvest, out of all nations, of innumerable glorious champions of Christ, who should maintain his cause, by the testimony of their blood. To these the church applies, in the lesson of this day, that of Apoc. xiv. 4, 5. *These are they, who were not defiled with women ; for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb ; and in their mouth there was found no lie : for they are without spot before the throne of God.* O let us honour these first martyrs of the Son of God !

Consider, thirdly, that purity, innocence, and temporal sufferings, are by divine appointment the way to eternal happiness. By this road the *holy innocents* arrived thither. O how happy are all they that are walking in this road ! See then, Christians, how greatly you are deceived, in flying so much from sufferings, since these are to bring you to your God. There was lamentation and great mourning in Bethlehem, of the mothers of the *holy innocents* ; they were not to be comforted, because they had lost their children. In the mean time, there was great joy in heaven, for their happy transmigration to a better region of endless bliss. Thus where the world is sorrowful, heaven rejoices ; because the sufferings of this short time produce for the sufferers an eternal weight of glory in that blessed kingdom ; whereas they that are without sufferings are in danger of never coming thither.

Conclude to embrace whatsoever share may be appointed for thee in the sufferings of this life, as designed by divine Provi-

dence to help thee to heaven. Assure thyself that thy God knows what is best for thee; and that he sends thee what he knows to be the best. Had not the innocents been brought to God by the means of their sufferings, they might have lived to have crucified their Lord, and, instead of being eternally happy, might have been eternally miserable.

DECEMBER 29.

On the Gospel of the good Shepherd, (John x,) read on the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

CONSIDER, first, that the Son of God, by his incarnation and birth, did not only come amongst us to be our Father, and to be our Head, our King, our Priest and our Sacrifice, our Brother and our Friend, our Physician and our Advocate, &c., but also recommends himself to us in this gospel, under the amiable quality of the *good Shepherd*, and Pastor of our souls. *I am the good Shepherd*, saith he, v. 11: *the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and runneth away; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep; but the hireling runneth away, because he is a hireling; and he hath no concern for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd; and I know mine, and mine know me. As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for my sheep, &c.* O Christians, how happy are we in such a Shepherd; so great, so good, so loving, so careful of our true welfare! O, he is the good Shepherd indeed that came down from heaven, to seek the poor sheep that was lost; and when he had found it, he took it upon his own shoulders, to carry it home, with joy, to his heavenly fold, *Luke xv.* O how dearly have his sheep cost him! O how truly has he made good in himself that sentence, that *the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep!* O let us ever embrace and love, follow and obey, this true Shepherd of our souls.

Consider, secondly, how many ways this heavenly *Shepherd* is daily providing for all the necessities of his sheep, and the tender affection he perpetually shows them. *The Lord ruleth me*, (or, as it is in the original, *is my Shepherd*,) saith the Psalmist, (Ps. xxii,) *and I shall want nothing: He hath set me in a place of pasture.* Yes, Christians, he has placed our souls here in the midst of the rich pastures of his divine word and sacraments, in the communion of his church. He hath brought us up by the streams of the living *waters* of his grace, which are ever flowing to refresh and nourish us. He conducts us to the paths of justice; he converts our souls; he is with us, even when we are walking in

the midst of the shadow of death: his rod and his staff still comfort and support us. But, O, give ear, my soul, to what follows in the same psalm. Thou hast prepared a table before me, against them that afflict me. Thou hast anointed my head with oil; and my chalice, which inebriateth me, how goodly is it! Here are benefits indeed of this divine Pastor of our souls: he has prepared a table for us, in which he feeds his sheep with his own most sacred body and blood: he anoints our heads with the divine oil of his holy Spirit; and he inebriates us with the goodly chalice of his passion, continually offered up on our altars, to be a plentiful source to us of all heavenly grace. And in consequence of all these favours, already bestowed on us, he encourages us to conclude with the royal prophet, that his mercy will follow us all the days of our life; and that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord, unto length of days, even to a happy eternity.

Consider, thirdly, what we owe, in quality of the sheep of Christ, to this divine Shepherd. He tells us, (John x. 3, 4, 5,) that his sheep *hear the voice* of their Shepherd; that *he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; that he goeth before them, and that the sheep follow him, because they know his voice: but a stranger they follow not, but fly from him, because they know not the voice of strangers.* And again, (v. 27, 28,) *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them eternal life; and they shall not perish for ever; and no man shall snatch them out of my hand.* Christians, do we stick close to this heavenly Shepherd? Do we follow him both by our faith and by our life? Do we know him, and hear his voice? Do we fly from strangers, the world, the flesh, and the devil? If so, we are his sheep indeed: if we persevere, he will bring us, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the pastures of eternal life. But if we run away from our Shepherd, to follow these strangers, we must expect to fall a prey to the wolves.

Conclude to embrace your divine Saviour, under this amiable character of the Pastor and Shepherd of your souls; and as nothing has been wanting on his side to fulfil, in the utmost perfection, even beyond all expression and imagination, every part of the character of the *good Shepherd*, see nothing be wanting on your side, to fulfil, by a perpetual correspondence with his grace, every part of the character of *good sheep*.

DECEMBER 30.

On the Conclusion of the Year.

CONSIDER, first, that the year is now come to a conclusion, it is just upon the point of expiring: all these twelve months

that are now past, have flowed away into the gulf of eternity, they are now no more; they shall return to us no more. All our years pass in this manner; they all hasten away one after another, and hurry us along with them, till they bring us also into an endless, unchangeable eternity. Our years will all be soon over; we shall find ourselves at the end of our lives much sooner than we imagine. O let us not then set our hearts upon any of these transitory things; let us despise all that passes away with this short life, and learn to adhere to God alone, who never passes away, because he is eternal. Let us be always prepared for our departure hence.

Consider, secondly, that as the year is now past and gone, so are all the pleasures of it; all our diversions, all our amusements, in which we have spent our time this year, are now no more; the remembrance of them is but like that of a dream. O such is the condition of all things that pass with time! Why, then, do we set our esteem or affection upon any of them? Why are we not practically and feelingly convinced of the emptiness and vanity of them all, and that nothing deserves our love or attention but God and eternity? And as the pleasures of the year are all past, so are all the displeasures and uneasinesses, pains and mortifications of it; they are also now no more than like a dream; and so will all temporal evils appear to us, a little while hence, when we shall see ourselves upon the brink of eternity. Let us learn, then, only to fear those evils which will have no end, and the evil of sin, which leads to those never ending evils.

Consider, thirdly, how you have spent your time this year. It was all given you by your Creator, in order to bring you forward to him, and to a happy eternity. O how many favours and blessings have you received from him every day of the year! how many graces and invitations to good! And what use have you made of all these favours? What virtue have you acquired this year? What vice have you rooted out? What passions have you overcome? Have you made any improvement at all in virtue since the beginning of the year? Instead of going forwards to God, have you not rather gone backward? Alas! what an account shall you have to give one day, for all this precious time; and for all these graces and blessings, spiritual or corporal, which you have so ungratefully abused and perverted during the course of this year! Then as to your sins, whether of omission or commission, against God, your neighbours, or yourselves, which you have been guilty of this year, either by thought, word, or deed, what a dreadful scene will open itself to your eyes, upon a little examination! And how little have you done, during the course of this year, to cancel them by penance! O how melancholy would your case be, if your eternal lot were to be determined by your performances of this past year!

Conclude by giving thanks to God, for all his blessings of this year, and especially for his patience and forbearance with you in your sins. Return now at least to him with your whole heart, begging mercy and pardon for all the sins of the year, and for all the sins of your life. And resolve, with God's grace, if he is pleased to give you another year, to spend it in such a manner as to secure to your souls the never-ending year of a happy eternity.

DECEMBER 31.

On the Gospel of girding the Loins, &c., (Luke xii. 35, &c., read for St. Silvester.

CONSIDER, first, those words of our Lord to his disciples, and in them to all Christians: *Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands; and be you like to men who wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.* This *girding of our loins*, and *having lamps burning in our hands*, are to be taken in a spiritual sense, and contain great and necessary lessons for every part of our lives. As we know not the hour, when our Lord will come to us, and knock at our door by death, we must keep ourselves always awake, and in a proper posture, and readiness to open to him without delay, and to welcome him. Now this proper posture, and readiness to welcome our Lord, whensoever he shall come and knock, chiefly consists in those two things, in having *our loins always girt*, by a constant restraint of our irregular inclinations and lusts; and having *lamps always burning in our hands*, by the constant exercise of Christian virtues; which may shine forth to the glory of God and the edification of our neighbours. And those servants are happy indeed, who are always waiting for the coming of their Lord, with their *loins girt* in this manner, and holding such lamps as these, always burning, in their hands.

Consider, secondly, what follows in the same gospel, with regard to the immense reward of these same faithful servants. *Amen, I say to you, that their Lord will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and, passing, will minister to them.* Christians, what an honour, what a happiness is here promised us, if our Lord, at his coming, shall find us watching! *He will gird himself* to be ready to wait upon us; *he will make us sit down to table*, and *he will pass and minister to us!* O what incomprehensible joys are here signified by our Lord's *ministering to us!* by his making himself, as it were, over to us, to be perpetually

enjoyed by us! O what a table is this, at which we shall be invited to sit down, to be eternally entertained by him with all the delights of heaven, with the sweet fruit of the tree of life, and the delicious waters of the fountain of life! And lest we should be discouraged with the apprehension of our being excluded from this eternal banquet, because we have already passed a good part of our lives without being in that readiness which our Lord expects of us at the time of his coming, he adds for our comfort, that, *if he shall come in the second watch, or if he shall come in the third watch*, and shall then find us watching, we shall still be happy. *Blessed*, saith he, *are those servants*. So that, if we have hitherto been careless, if we have let the first, or even the second watch pass, without being upon our guard, and he has been so good as not to come and surprise us, let us now at least *awake*, let us *gird our loins* now, and *have our lamps*, for the future, *burning in our hands*: and we may still be *blessed*.

Consider, thirdly, the remaining words of this gospel. *But this know ye*, saith our Lord, *that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of man will come*. This is that great lesson, of *always watching*, which our Saviour perpetually inculcates, as our only security against the dreadful evil of an unprovided death, and all those endless evils which are the unhappy consequences of an unprovided death. O let us lay up this lesson in our hearts; let us meditate daily upon it; let us conform ourselves to it in the practice of our lives. O let us always watch! Our Lord, who has borne with us all this year, has, in the mean time, knocked at the door of thousands of others, who, this day twelve-month, were as likely to live as ourselves. Their bodies are now corrupting in their graves; but, O! where are their souls? And where shall our bodies be, where shall our souls be, a twelve-month hence? Let us, then, be always ready; because we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord shall come.

Conclude to observe well these evangelical prescriptions, of *girding your loins*, of having *your lamps ever burning in your hands*, and of being always *waiting for your Lord*, and always ready to open the door to him; and you shall not fail of being of the number of those happy servants, that shall enter into the eternal joy of their Lord

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