

PART 4 OF 4 AND LAST OF "PREPARATION FOR DEATH"

CONSIDERATION XXXII.

Confidence in the patronage of Mary.

" He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord."—*Prov.* viii. 35.

FIRST POINT.

Power of Mary.

H! how great will be our thankfulness to the mercy of God, for having given us for our advocate, Mary, who, by her prayers, can obtain for us all the graces we stand in need of. " Truly wonderful," exclaims St. Bonaventure, " is the bounty of our God, who has given thee, O Lady, to his guilty subjects as their advocate, so that thou art able to obtain for them by thy assistance whatever thou wilt." (*Stim. Am.* p. 3, c. 19). Sinners, brethren, if we find ourselves debtors, to the divine justice, and condemned to **hell** by our sins, let us not despair; let us have recourse to this divine mother; let us put ourselves under her protection, and she will save us. But we must have a sincere purpose of amending our lives. If we have such a purpose, and place confidence in Mary, we shall be saved. And why? Because Mary is a *powerful* advocate, a *merciful* advocate, an advocate *that desires to save all*.

In the first place, let us consider that Mary is a *powerful* advocate, who can obtain from the Judge all graces for her servants. This is a singular privilege, given to her by the Judge himself, who is her Son. "It is a great privilege,

that Mary is most powerful with her Son." (St. Bonav. in Spec. lect. vi). John Gerson says that the Blessed Virgin asks nothing from God with an absolute will, which she does not obtain; and that, like a queen, she sends the angels to enlighten, to purify, and to perfect her servants. Hence, to inspire confidence in this great advocate, the Church makes us invoke her under the title of Powerful Virgin. *Powerful Virgin, pray for us.* And why is the patronage of Mary so powerful? Because she is the Mother of God. "The prayer of the divine Mother," says St. Antoninus, "partakes of the nature of a command, and therefore it is impossible for her not to be heard." (P. 4, t. 15, c. 17, # 4). The prayers of Mary are the prayers of a mother, and are therefore regarded by Jesus Christ, in a certain manner, as commands; hence it is impossible that her petitions should be rejected. St. George, Archbishop of Nicomedia, says that the Redeemer, as if to discharge the obligation which he owes to his mother for having given to him his human nature, hears all her prayers. Hence, St. Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, has written, "The Son is pleased that his Mother should pray to him, because he wishes to grant her whatsoever she asks, in order to repay her for the favor received from her in giving him flesh." (Or. De Ingr. B. V.). Hence the martyr St. Methodius exclaimed: "Rejoice, rejoice, O Mary! thou hast for a debtor thy Son. We are all debtors to him; but he is a debtor to thee alone." (Or. de Sim. et Ann).

Hence Cosmas of Jerusalem says that the intercession of Mary is omnipotent (Hymn. 6 in depr. ad Deip.). Yes, her prayers are omnipotent, because, as Richard of St. Laurence says, it is but just that the Mother should partake of the power of the Son. The Son, then, who is omnipotent, has made the Mother omnipotent. The Son is omnipotent by nature; the Mother is omnipotent by grace—that is, she obtains by her prayers whatsoever she asks, as is happily expressed in the celebrated verse:

"What God doeth by right, thou, O Virgin, dost by prayer." This was revealed to St. Bridget, who one day heard Jesus Christ addressing his mother in the following words: " Ask from me what you wish; for your petition cannot be fruitless." (Rev. 1, 6, c. 23). My mother, ask as much as you please; for I shall hear all your prayers. He then subjoins the reason. " Because you refused me nothing on earth, I will refuse nothing to you in heaven." (Rev. 1, 1, c. 24). You refused me nothing when I lived on earth; it is just that I should refuse nothing to you now that you are with me in heaven.

In fine, there is no sinner, however abandoned, whom Mary cannot save by her intercession. " You have," says St. George of Nicomedia, " insuperable strength, lest the multitude of our sins should overcome your clemency. Nothing resists your power; for the Creator regards your glory as his own."—*Orat. de Exit. B. V.* O Mother of God, nothing can resist thy power, since thy Creator regards thy glory as his own." (Or. De Ingr. B.V.). " Nothing, then," says St. Peter Damian, " is impossible to thee, who can raise even those who are in despair to a hope of salvation." (De Nat. B.V. s. 1).

Affections and Prayers.

My dear Queen and Mother, Mary, I will address thee in the words of St. Germanus : "Thou art omnipotent in saving sinners ; thy prayers are all-powerful with God, because thou art the mother of true life."—*Serm. iii. in Dorm. B. V.* Then, O my mistress, if I have recourse to thee, all my sins cannot make me despair of salvation. Thou obtainest by thy prayers whatever thou wishest. If thou prayest for me I shall certainly be saved. I will then say to thee with St. Bernard : Pray for me, who am so miserable, O great Mother of God, for thy Son hears thee, and grants whatsoever thou

askest (Depr. ad glor. V.). I am indeed a sinner; but I wish to amend my life, and I glory in being specially devoted to thee. I am, it is true, unworthy of thy protection; but I know that thou hast never abandoned any one who has placed his trust in thee. Thou art able and willing to save me, and I trust in thee. When I was in the state of perdition, and forgetful of thee, thou didst think of me, and didst obtain for me the grace to enter into myself. How much more ought I to trust in thy mercy now that I am dedicated to thy service, and that I recommend myself with confidence to thy prayers! O Mary ! pray for me, and obtain for me the grace to be a saint. Obtain for me holy perseverance ; obtain for me a great love of thy Son, and of thee, O my amiable mother! I love thee, O my Queen! and hope to love thee always. Do thou also love me, and obtain for me the grace that I may be transformed from a sinner into a saint.

SECOND POINT.

Mercy of Mary.

Let us consider, in the second place, that Mary is an advocate as merciful as she is powerful, and that she knows not how to refuse her protection to any soul that has recourse to her. The eyes of the Lord, says David, are upon the just; and this mother of mercy, says Richard of St. Laurence, keeps her eyes upon the just and upon sinners, that she may preserve them from falling into sin, or that, should they fall, she may raise them up . St. Bonaventure used to say that, in looking at Mary, he seemed to behold mercy itself. Hence St. Bernard exhorts us to recommend ourselves with great confidence in all our necessities to this powerful advocate, who is all sweetness and benignity to those who invoke her intercession. Hence Mary is called an olive-tree. *As a fair olive-tree in the plains (Ecclus. xxiv, 19).* As from the olive-

tree nothing comes forth but oil, the symbol of mercy; so from the hands of Mary nothing flows but the graces and mercies which she dispenses to all who take shelter under her protection. Hence Denis the Carthusian has justly called her the "advocate of all sinners who have recourse to her." (De Laud. B. V., 1, 2, a. 23). O God! how great will be the remorse of the damned Christian in thinking that, during life, he could have saved his soul with so much facility by invoking the intercession of this mother of mercy; that he had not done so; and that there will be no more time to do it! The Blessed Virgin said one day to St. Bridget: I am called, and I really am, the Mother of mercy; for such God has made me (Rev. 1, 2, c. 23). "I am called by all the Mother of mercy, and truly his mercy has made me merciful."— *Rev. lib. i. cap. vi.* And who, but God in his mercy, because he desires our salvation, has given us this advocate to defend us? "Therefore," adds Mary, "miserable will he be, who, while it is in his power, has not recourse to me, who am merciful." Miserable is the man, and miserable for eternity, who, though he could, during life, have recommended himself to me, who am so benign and merciful to all, has neglected to have recourse to me, and is lost.

Perhaps, says St. Bonaventure, we are afraid that in asking Mary's intercession she will refuse it to us? No, says the saint: "Mary does not refuse, and never has refused pity and aid to any sinner who has invoked her intercession." (Stim. am. p. 3, c. 13). She has not done so, and she cannot do so; because God has made her the queen and the mother of mercy; and as queen of mercy she is bound to attend to the care of the miserable. "Thou," says St. Bernard, "art the queen of mercy; and who but the miserable are the subjects of mercy?" Hence the Saint through humility adds: Since then, O Mother of God! thou art the queen of mercy, thou must have a special

care of me, who am the most miserable of sinners (Paciucch. In Salve Reg. exc. 2). As mother of mercy it is her duty to deliver from death her sick children, to whom her mercy makes her a mother. Hence, St. Basil calls her a public hospital. Public hospitals are erected for the poor; and they who are in the greatest poverty have the best claims to be admitted into them. Hence, according to St. Basil, Mary ought to receive with the greatest tenderness and care the greatest sinners who have recourse to her.

But let us not doubt of the mercy of Mary One day St. Bridget heard the Saviour saying to his mother: "Thou wouldst show compassion to the devil, should he ask it with humility." (Rev. extr. c. 50). The haughty Lucifer will never humble himself to ask her prayers; but if he humbled himself to this divine mother, and invoked her help, she, by her intercession would deliver him from **hell**. By those words, Jesus Christ wished to give us to understand what Mary herself afterward said to the same St. Bridget—that when a sinner has recourse to her, however enormous his guilt may be, she regards not the sins with which he is charged, but the intention with which he comes. If he come with a sincere desire to amend, she receives him and heals all his wounds (Rev. 1, 2, c. 23; 1, 6, c. 117). Hence St. Bonaventure says: " Poor sinners ! do not despair; raise your eyes to Mary, and trust in the mercy of this good mother." (Psalt. B.V. ps. 18). Let us then, says St. Bernard, ask the grace we have lost, and let us ask it through Mary (De Aquaed.). The grace which, we have lost, she has found, says Richard of St. Laurence; (De Laud. B.V. 1, 2, p. 5) we therefore ought to go to her in order to recover it. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Most Holy Virgin the divine maternity, he said to her: *Fear not, Mary, thou hast found grace (Luke, i, 30)*. But, since Mary was never deprived of grace, but was, on the contrary, always full of grace, how could

he say that she had found it! In answer to this question, Cardinal Hugo says, that Mary found grace, not for herself, because she had always possessed it, but for us, who have lost it. Hence the same author says, that we ought to go to her and say: O Lady, property ought to be restored to him who has lost it; the grace which thou hast found is not thine, for thou hast always possessed it; it is ours, we have lost it through our own fault; thou shouldst then restore it to us (In Luc. 1). "Let sinners, then, who have lost grace by their sins, run—let them run to the Virgin, and say with confidence: Restore to us our property, which thou hast found." (In Nat. B.V. conc. 3).

Affections and Prayers.

Behold, O great Mother of God! at thy feet a miserable sinner, who has not once, but several times, voluntarily lost the divine grace, which thy Son had purchased for him by his death. O mother of mercy! I come to thee with a soul covered with wounds and sores; be not angry with me on that account, but have the greater pity on me, and assist me. I do not ask of thee earthly goods; I ask thee to obtain for me the grace of God and the love of thy Son. My mother, pray for me, and never cease to pray for me. It is through the merits of Jesus Christ and thy intercession that I am to be saved. Thy office is to intercede for sinners: I will then say, with St. Thomas of Villanova: "O our advocate, fulfil thy office!" recommend me to God and defend me. No cause, however desperate, is lost, when defended by thee. Thou, after Jesus, art the hope of sinners : thou art my hope. O Mary! I will not cease to serve thee, to love thee, and to have recourse to thee always. Do not then ever cease to pray for me, particularly when thou seest me in danger of again losing the grace of God. O Mary, O great mother of God, have pity on me.

THIRD POINT.

Charity of Mary.

Let us consider, in the third place, that Mary is so merciful an advocate, that she not only assists all who have recourse to her, but also goes in search of the miserable, in order to defend and save them. Behold how she invites us all, and encourages us to hope for every good, if we have recourse to her. *In me is all hope of life and virtue. Come ever to me all (Ecclus. xxiv, 25)*. In explaining this passage, the devout Pelbart says: " She invites all, the just and sinners." The devil, according to St. Peter, goes about continually seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter, v. 8). But this divine mother, says Bernard da Bustis, goes about seeking whom she may save (Marial. p. 3, s. 1). Mary is called the mother of mercy; because, like a mother, she cannot see her children in danger of being lost without giving them assistance. Mary pities all our miseries, and constantly seeks our salvation. And, says St. Germanus, who, after Jesus, has greater care of our salvation, than thou, O mother of mercy? (De zona Deip.). St. Bonaventure says that Mary is so solicitous about the relief of the miserable, that she appears to desire nothing with greater ardor than to comfort them (Stim. Am. p. 3, c. 19).

She certainly assists us as often as we have recourse to her; no one has ever been rejected by her, says the Idiot (De cont. B.V. prol.). But this, adds Richard of St. Victor, is not enough for her; she anticipates our supplications, and obtains aid for us before we ask her prayers (In. Cant. c. 23). Moreover, the same author says, that Mary is so full of mercy, that, as soon as she sees misery, she instantly obtains relief, and cannot behold any one in distress without coming to his assistance. It was thus she acted when she lived on this earth, as we learn from what

happened at the marriage of Cana in Galilee; where, when the wine failed, she did not wait to be asked, but taking pity on the affliction and shame of the spouses, asked her Son to console them, saying; *They have no wine*. Thus she induced him to change (convert), by miracle, water into wine. But, says St. Bonaventure, if Mary's compassion for the afflicted was so great while she was in this world, her pity for us is certainly much greater now that she is in heaven, where she has a better knowledge of our miseries, and greater compassion for us. Novarino adds: If Mary, unasked, shows such readiness to afford relief, how much more careful will she be to console those who ask her prayers ! (Umbra virg. exc. 72).

Ah ! let us never cease to have recourse in all our necessities to the divine mother, who is always ready to obtain relief for all who pray to her. "You will find her ever ready to assist," (De Laud. B.M. 1, 2, p. 1) says Richard of St. Laurence. And Bernardine da Bustis adds, that she desires more ardently to obtain graces for us, than we do to receive them. Hence he says that, whenever we have recourse to her, we shall always find her hands full of graces and mercies. (Marial. p. 2, s. 5). According to St. Bonaventure, Mary's desire for our welfare and salvation is so great, that she feels offended not only with those who do her a positive injury, but also with those who neglect to ask favors from her. And, on the other hand, the Saint affirms that they who invoke Mary's intercession (that is, with a determination to amend their lives) are saved. Hence he calls her the salvation of those who invoke her. Let us, then, always have recourse to the divine mother, and always say to her with the holy Doctor: " In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; may I not be confounded forever." No, O Lady, O mother of God, O Mary ! I shall not be lost after having placed my hopes in thee after Jesus.

Affections and Prayers.

Mary! behold at thy feet a miserable slave of **hell**, who implores thy mercy. I, indeed, deserve no good ; but thou art the mother of mercy, and mercy is exercised in favor of those who are unworthy of it. The whole world calls thee the refuge and the hope of sinners; then thou art my refuge and my hope. I am a lost sheep; but to save the lost sheep, the Eternal Word came down from heaven, and became thy Son ; he wishes that I have recourse to thee, and that thou assist me by thy prayers. *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners.* O great Mother of God thou prayest for all; pray to thy Son also for me: tell him that I am thy client, and that thou art my protectress: tell him that in thee, after him, I have placed all my hopes; tell him to pardon me, that I repent of all the insults I have offered to him; tell him to grant me in his mercy holy perseverance: tell him to grant me the grace to love him with my whole heart. In fine, tell him to save me. He does whatsoever thou askest. O Mary, my hope! in thee I trust; have pity on me.

CONSIDERATION XXXIII.

Love of God.

" Let us therefore love God. because God hath first loved us.*— I *John*, iv. 10.

FIRST POINT.

Love and Goodness shown by God to Man.

CONSIDER, in the first place, that God deserves your love, because he has loved you before you loved him, and because he has been the first of all to love you. /

have loved thee with an everlasting love (Jer. xxxi, 3). Your parents have been the first to love you on this earth; but they have loved you only after they have known you. Before your father or your mother came into this world, God loved you: even before the world was created, he loved you. And how long before the creation of the world did God love you ? Perhaps a thousand years, or a thousand ages ? It is useless to count years or ages; God has loved you from eternity. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee.* In a word, as long as he has been God, he has loved you; as long as he has loved himself, he has loved you. Hence the holy virgin St. Agnes had reason to say: "I am prevented by another lover." When the world and creatures sought her love, she answered: No, I cannot love you. My God has been the first to love me; it is but just, then, that I should consecrate all my love to him alone.

Thus, my brother, God has loved you from eternity and through pure love has taken you from among so many men whom he could create; he has given you existence, and has placed you in the world. For the love of you, God has created so many other beautiful creatures, that they might serve you, and remind you of the love which he has borne to you, and of the love which you owe to him. "Heaven and earth," says St. Augustine, "tell me to love Thee." (Conf. 1, 10, c. 6). When the Saint looked at the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the rivers, they appeared to him to speak, and say: "Augustine, love your God; for he has created us for you, that you might love him." The Abbot de Rancé, founder of La Trappe, when he saw a hill, a fountain, or a flower, would say that all these creatures upbraided him with ingratitude to God. In holding a flower or a fruit in her hand, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi felt her heart wounded as it were by a dart of divine love, and would say within herself: " Then,

my God has from eternity thought of creating this flower or fruit, that I might love him."

Consider, moreover, the special love God has shown to you in allowing you to be born in a Christian country, and in the bosom of the true Church. How many are born among idolaters, Jews, Mohammedans, or heretics, and are lost! The number of those who have the happiness of being born in a country where the true faith prevails, is small, compared with the rest of mankind; and he has chosen you to be one of that small number. Oh, what an infinite gift is the gift of faith ! How many millions are deprived of the sacraments, of sermons, of the examples of good companions, and of all the other helps to salvation which are found in the true Church !

And God is resolved to give all these great helps to you without any merit on your part, and even with a foreknowledge of your demerits; for when he thought of creating you, and bestowing these graces upon you, he foresaw the insults which you would offer to him.

Affections and Prayers.

Th sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, infinite good, infinite majesty! who hast loved men so tenderly, how does it happen that Thou art so much despised by them ? But among these men, Thou, O my God! hast loved me in a particular manner, and hast bestowed on me special graces, which Thou hast not given to so many others. And I have despised Thee more than others. I prostrate myself at Thy feet; O Jesus, my Saviour! cast me not away from Thy face. (Ps. 1, 13). I would deserve to be cast off on account of my frequent ingratitude to Thee. But Thou hast said that Thou wilt not reject a penitent soul that returns to Thee. *Him that cometh to Me. I will not cast out (John, vi, 37).* My Jesus, I

am sorry for having offended Thee. Hitherto I have not known Thee. I now acknowledge Thee for my Lord and Redeemer, who hast died in order to save me and to be loved by me. When, O my Jesus! shall I cease to be ungrateful to Thee ? When shall I begin truly to love Thee with a true love ? Behold, I this day resolve to love Thee with my whole heart, and to love nothing but Thee. O infinite Goodness! I adore Thee for all those who do not adore Thee, and I love Thee for all who do not love Thee. I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee, and offer my whole being to Thee. Assist me by Thy grace; Thou knowest my weakness. But if Thou didst bestow so many graces upon me when I neither loved nor desired to love Thee, how much greater graces should I hope for from Thy mercy now that I love Thee and desire only to love Thee! My Lord, give me Thy love, but a fervent love which will make me forget all creatures: a strong love, which will make me conquer all difficulties in order to please Thee; a perpetual love, which will never be dissolved between me and Thee. I hope for all graces through Thy merits, O my Jesus! and I *hope* for them through thy intercession, O my mother, Mary.

SECOND POINT.

God has given Himself to us.

But God has not only given us so many beautiful creatures—he was not content until he even gave us himself. He loved us, and delivered himself up for us (Eph. v. 2). Accursed sin had robbed us of the divine grace, and made us the slaves of **hell**; but, to the astonishment of heaven and of all nature, the Son of God came on earth to become man in order to redeem us from eternal death, and to purchase for us the grace and the eternal glory which we had lost. How great would be our wonder if we saw a monarch become a worm for the love

of worms ! But our astonishment would be infinitely greater at the sight of a God made man for the love of men. *He emptied Himself , taking the form of a servant, . . . and in habit found as man (Phil. ii, 7).* A God clothed in flesh ! *And the word was made flesh (John, i, 14).* But the astonishment increases when we see all that this Son of God has done and suffered for the love of us. To redeem us it would have been sufficient for him to shed a single drop of his blood, or a single tear, or to offer a single prayer; for a prayer offered by a divine person would be of infinite value, and therefore sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, and of an infinite number of worlds. But, says St. Chrysostom, what was sufficient for redemption was not sufficient for the immense love which this God bore to us. He not only wished to save us, but, because he loved us ardently, he wished to be loved ardently by us; and therefore he resolved to lead a life full of sorrows and humiliations, and to suffer a death the most painful of all deaths, in order to make us understand the infinite love which he entertained for us. *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross (Phil. ii, 8).* O excess of divine love, which all men and all angels will never be able to comprehend ! I say, *excess*; for Moses and Elias, speaking of the Passion of Jesus Christ, called it an excess (Luke, ix, 31). St. Bonaventure called the Passion of Christ an "excess of sorrow and of love." If our Redeemer had not been God, but a friend or a relative, what greater proof of love could he have given, than to die for us ? *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends (John, xv, 13).* If Jesus Christ had to save his own Father, he could not have done more for the love of him ! If, my brother, you had been God and the creator of Jesus Christ, what more could he have done for you than sacrifice his life in the midst of a sea of torments and sorrows, for the love of you ? If the most contemptible man on earth had done for you what Jesus Christ has

done for you, could you live without loving him ?

But what do you say ? Do you believe in the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ ? You believe these mysteries; and do you not love him ? or, can you think of loving anything but Jesus Christ! He, says St. Augustine, has come on earth to suffer and to die for you in order to make known to you the immense love which he bears you (De Catech. rud. c. 4). Before the Incarnation, man might doubt whether God loved him tenderly; but how, after the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ, can he any longer doubt that God loves him with the most tender love ? And what greater tenderness of affection could he show you, than to sacrifice his divine life for the love of you ? Our ears are accustomed to hear of creation, of redemption, of a God in a manger, of a God on a cross. O holy faith, enlighten us!

Affections and Prayers.

J my Jesus! I see that Thou couldst have done nothing more in order to compel me to love Thee; and I also see that by my ingratitude I have labored to force Thee to abandon me. Blessed forever be Thy patience, which has borne with me so long. I would deserve a hell made on purpose for myself; but Thy death gives me confidence. Ah ! make me understand well the claims which Thou, O infinite Good ! hast to my love, and the obligations by which I am bound to love Thee. I knew, O my Jesus! that Thou didst die for me; how then, O God ! have I been able to live for so many years in forgetfulness of Thee ? Oh that the past years of my life commenced again! I would wish, O my Lord ! to give them all to Thee. But years do not return. Ah ! grant that I may at least spend all the remaining days of my life in loving and pleasing Thee. My dear Redeemer! I love Thee with my whole heart; but increase this love within

me. Remind me always of all that Thou hast done for me; and do not permit me to be any longer ungrateful to Thee. No; I will no longer resist the lights Thou hast given me. Thou didst wish to be loved by me, and I desire to love Thee. And whom will I love, if I do not love a God of infinite beauty and infinite goodness ? a God who has died for me ? a God who has borne with me with so much patience, and who, instead of chastising me as I deserved, has changed chastisements into graces and favors ? Yes; I love Thee, O God ! worthy of infinite love, and I sigh and seek to live wholly employed in loving Thee, and forgetful of everything but Thee. O infinite charity of my Lord! assist a soul that ardently desires to be entirely Thine O great mother of God, Mary, do thou too assist me by thy intercession ; beg of Jesus to make me belong entirely to him.

THIRD POINT.

Love that Jesus Christ has shown in His Passion.

Our astonishment increases when we consider the ardor with which Jesus Christ desired to suffer and die for the love of us. *I have a baptism, says Jesus Christ, wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished (Luke, xii, 50).* I am to be baptized with the baptism of my own blood: and I feel myself dying through a desire that my Passion and death may soon come, that thus man may soon know the love which I bear to him. It was this desire that made him say on the night before his Passion: *With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer (Luke, xxii, 15).* Then, says St. Basil of Seleucia, it appears that our God cannot be satiated with loving men.

Ah, my Jesus ! men do not love Thee because they do not think of the love which Thou hast had for them. O God !

holy is it possible for a soul to live without loving God, if it considers that he died for its sake, and that he died with so great a desire of showing his love for it? *The charity of Christ presseth us. (2 Cor. v, 15).* St. Paul says that it is not so much what Jesus Christ has done and suffered for our salvation, as the love which he has displayed in suffering for us, that obliges, and, as it were, forces us to love him. Contemplating the love which Jesus Christ exhibits in his Passion, St. Laurence Justinian exclaimed: "We behold the All wise infatuated through excess of love." (Serm. de Nativ.). We have seen a God as it were foolish, through the excess of his love for us. And who could ever believe, had not faith assured us of it, that the Creator would die for his own creatures? In an ecstasy, St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi, carrying a crucifix in her hands, exclaimed: "Yes, my Jesus, Thou art foolish through love." This the Gentiles also said when they heard the apostles preaching the death of Jesus Christ; they, as St. Paul attests, regarded it as a folly which could not be believed. *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness (1 Cor. i, 23).* And how, said they, could a God that is most happy in himself, and stands not in need of any one, descend on earth, to become man, and die for the love of men, who are his creatures? This would be the same as to believe that a God had become foolish for the sake of men. But, it is of faith that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, has delivered himself to death for the love of us. *Christ hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us (Eph. v, 2).*

And why has he done so? He has done so that we might no longer live to the world, but only to that Lord who has died for us. *Christ died for all, that they also who live may not live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them (2 Cor. v, 15).* He has done it that, by the love which he has shown us, he might win all the affections of our hearts. *For to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be*

the Lord both of the dead and of the living (Rom. xiv, 9). Hence the saints, contemplating the death of Jesus Christ, thought it very little to give their life and all things for the love of so loving a God. How many noblemen, how many princes, have left relatives, riches, country, and even kingdoms, to shut themselves up in a cloister, in order to live only to the love of Jesus Christ! How many martyrs have sacrificed their life! how many tender virgins, renouncing the nuptials of the great, have gone with joy to death, in order thus to make some return for the affection of a God who had died for their sake! And, my brother, what have you hitherto done for the sake of Jesus Christ? As he has died for the saints—for St. Laurence, for St. Lucy, for St. Agnes, so he has also died for you. What do you intend to do during the remaining days of life, which God gives you that you may love him? From this day forward, look frequently at the crucifix, and, in looking at it, call to mind the love which Jesus Christ has borne you, and say within yourself: Thou hast then, my God, died for me? Do this at least, I say, and do it often; if you do, you cannot but feel yourself sweetly constrained to love a God who has loved you so tenderly.

Affections and Prayers.

Ah, my dear Redeemer! it is true that I have not loved Thee because I have not reflected on the love which Thou hast borne me! Ah, my Jesus! I have been very ungrateful to Thee! Thou hast given Thy life for me by submitting to the most painful of all deaths; and have I been so ungrateful as not even to think of Thy sufferings? Pardon me; I promise, O my crucified Love! that from this day forward Thou shall be the only object of my thoughts and of all my affections! Ah! when the devil or the world presents me a forbidden apple, remind me, O my beloved Saviour! of the pains which Thou hast endured for my sake, that I may love Thee, and may never more offend

Thee ! Ah ! if one of my servants had done for me what Thou hast done, I could not bring myself to displease him. And I have dared to turn my back so often on Thee, who hast died for me. O beautiful flames, which have obliged a God to give his life for me, come, inflame, fill my whole heart, and destroy all affections to created things. Ah, my beloved Redeemer! how is it possible for me to contemplate Thee, either in the manger, in Bethlehem, on the cross on Calvary, or in the sacrament on our altars, and not be enamored of Thee? My Jesus! I love Thee with my whole soul. During the remaining years of my life Thou shalt be my only good, my only love. I have unhappily lived long enough forgetful of Thy Passion and of Thy love. I give Thee all things, and if I do not give myself to Thee as I ought, take me, and reign in my whole heart. *Thy kingdom come.* May my heart be the servant only of Thy love. May I speak of nothing else, may I treat of nothing else, may I think of nothing else, may I sigh and desire only to love and please Thee. Assist me always by Thy grace, that I may be faithful to Thee. In Thy merits I trust, O my Jesus! O mother of fair love ! make me ardently love thy Son. who is so amiable, and who has loved me so tenderly.

CONSIDERATION XXXIV.

Holy Communion.

"Take ye, and eat: this is my body."—*Matt. xxvi. 26.*

FIRST POINT.

The Eucharist is a Precious Gift.

LET us consider the great gift which Jesus Christ has bestowed on us in the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament; the great love he has shown to us in this gift; and his great desire that we should receive this gift. Let us, in the first place, consider the great gift which Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us in giving us himself entirely for our food in the Holy Communion. St. Augustine says that Jesus Christ, though an omnipotent God, has nothing more to give us (Lohner Bibli. Tit. 52, # 3). And what greater treasure, adds St. Bernardine of Sienna, can a soul receive or desire, than the sacred body of Jesus Christ? (T. iv, s. 12, a. 1, c. 4). The prophet Isaias exclaims: *Make His works known among the people (Isa. xii, 4)*. O men! proclaim aloud the loving inventions of our good God. And if our Redeemer had not bestowed this gift upon us, who among us could have asked it? Who could have dared to say to him: Lord, if Thou wishest to make us understand Thy love, remain under the species of bread, and permit us to make Thee our food? Even to think of it would be considered folly. "Does it not," says St. Augustine, "appear foolishness to say, eat my flesh—drink my blood?" (In Ps. xxxiii, en. 1). When Jesus Christ made known to his disciples this great gift of the Most Holy Sacrament which he wished to leave us, they could not bring themselves to believe it; and, therefore, they departed from him, saying: *How can this man give us his flesh to eat? . . . This saying is hard, and who can hear it? (John, vi, 61)*. But, what men could never imagine, the great love of Jesus Christ has invented and executed.

St. Bernardine says that the Lord has left us this sacrament as a memorial of the love he has shown us in his Passion. And this accords with what Jesus Christ himself has said: *Do this for a commemoration of Me (Luke, xxii, 19)*. The love of our Saviour, adds St. Bernardine, was not content with sacrificing his life for our salvation: before his death this love constrained him to bequeath to us the

greatest gift which he had ever bestowed upon us, by giving us himself for our food (T. II, s. 54, a. 1, c. 1). The Abbot Gueric says that, in this sacrament, Jesus made the last effort of love. (Serm. de Ascen. Dom.). This was better expressed by the Council of Trent, which declared that, in the Eucharist, Jesus poured out all the riches of his love for men (Sess 13, c. 2).

How great, says St. Francis de Sales, the tenderness of love which a prince would show to a beggar by sending him a part of what he had on his own plate! How much greater would it be if he sent him the entire of his own dinner! But what would it be, if he sent him, for his food, a part of his own arm! In Holy Communion, Jesus gives us not only a portion of his own dinner, not only a part, but the entire of his body. *Take ye, and eat: this is My body (Matt. xxvi, 26)*. And with his body he gives us his soul and his divinity. In a word, St. Chrysostom says that, in giving you himself in Holy Communion, he gives you all that he has, and reserves nothing for himself. And the angelic Doctor says that, " in the Eucharist, God has given us all that he is and has." (De Beat. C. 3). Behold ! exclaims St. Bonaventure, that God whom the world cannot contain makes himself our prisoner in the Most Holy Sacrament (Exp. Miss. c. 4). And since the Lord gives himself entirely to us in the Eucharist, how can we fear that he will refuse us any grace which we ask of him ? *How, says St. Paul, hath He not also, with Him, given us all things (Rom. viii, 32)*.

Affections and Prayers.

O my Jesus! what has induced Thee to give Thyself entirely to us for our food ? After this gift, what more remains for Thee to give us in order to oblige us to love Thee ? Ah, Lord ! give us light, make us understand the excess of Thy love in becoming food in

order to unite Thyself to poor sinners! But, if Thou givest Thyself entirely to us, it is just that we too give our whole being to Thee. O my Redeemer ! how have I been able to offend Thee, who hast loved me so tenderly, and who hast done so much to gain my love? Thou hast become man for my sake, Thou hast died for me, Thou hast become my food; tell me, what more couldst Thou have done ? I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O infinite Love! Lord, come often to my soul; inflame my whole heart with Thy holy love; grant that I may forget all things in order to think only of Thee, and to love nothing but Thee. Most Holy Mary, pray for me, and, by thy intercession, make me worthy to receive thy Son frequently in the Holy Sacrament.

SECOND POINT.

The Eucharist is a Gift of Love.

Let us consider, in the second place, the great love which Jesus Christ has shown us in giving us himself in the Holy Eucharist. The Most Holy Sacrament is a gift which has proceeded from pure love. For our salvation it was necessary, according to the decree of God, that the Redeemer should die, and, by the sacrifice of his life, satisfy the divine justice for our sins; but what necessity was there that Jesus Christ, after having died for our redemption, should leave himself to us for our food? But this his love wished to do. He, says St. Laurence Justinian, instituted the Eucharist for no other purpose than to show his great charity, for no other purpose than to make us understand the immense love which he bears us (De Tr. Chr. Ag. c.2). This is precisely what St. John has written: *Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should pass out of this world to the Father: having loved His own, He loved them to the end (John, xiii, 1)*. Knowing that the time of his departure from this earth had arrived, he

wished to give us the greatest proof of his love, by bequeathing to us this gift of the Most Holy Sacrament. This is the precise meaning of the words, *He loved them to the end*; that is, according to Theophilactus and St. Chrysostom, "he loved them with an extreme love."

And mark what the apostle has observed—that the time at which Jesus Christ wished to bequeath this gift was the time of his death. *The Lord Jesus, the same night on which He was betrayed, took bread, and, giving thanks, broke, and said, " Take ye, and eat: this is My body." (1 Cor., xi, 23).* At the very time that men prepared for him scourges, thorns, and a cross to crucify him, the loving Saviour wished to leave us this the last proof of his love. And why at death, and not before that time, did he institute this sacrament? Because, says St. Bernardine, the marks of love given by friends at death make a greater impression on the memory, and are preserved with greater affection. Jesus Christ, says the Saint, had already given himself to us in many ways: he had given himself to us for a companion, a master, a father; for our light and our victim. The last degree of love remained; and this was, to give himself to us for our food in order to unite himself entirely to us, as food is united with him who eats it. (T. II, s. 54, a. 1, c. 1; a. 4, c. 1). This he has done by giving himself to us in the Most Holy Sacrament. Thus, our Redeemer was not content with uniting himself only to our human nature: he wished by this sacrament to find a means of also uniting himself to each of us in particular.

St. Francis de Sales says " that in no other action can the Saviour be considered more tender or more loving than in the institution of the Holy Eucharist; in which he, as it were, annihilates himself, and becomes food, in order to penetrate our souls, and to unite himself to the hearts of his faithful servants." Thus, says St. Chrysostom, with that Lord on whom the angels dare not fix their eyes, we are

united, and are made one body and one flesh. What shepherd, adds the Saint, has ever fed his sheep with his own blood ? Even mothers intrust their children to the care of nurses. But Jesus, in the sacrament, nourishes us with his own blood, and unites us to himself (Ad pop. Ant. Hom. 60). And why become our food? Because, says the Saint, he loved us ardently, and by making himself our food, he wished to unite himself entirely to us, and to make himself one thing with us (Ad pop. Ant. hom. 61). Then Jesus Christ wished to perform the greatest of his miracles (*He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works; He hath given food to them that fear Him [Ps. cx, 4]*) in order to satisfy his desire of remaining with us, and of uniting in one, our heart, and his own most holy heart. "O wonderful is Thy love, O Lord Jesus !" exclaims St. Laurence Justinian, " who wished to incorporate us in such a manner with Thyself, that we should have one heart and one soul inseparably united with Thee." (De Inc. div. am. c. 5).

That great servant of God, Father St. De la Colombiere, used to say: If anything could shake my faith in the mystery of the Eucharist, I would not doubt of the power, but rather of the love, which God displays in this sacrament. If you ask me how bread becomes the body of Jesus—how Jesus is found in many places, I answer that God can do all things. But if you ask me how it is that God loves men so as to make himself their food, I can only say that I do not understand it, and that the love of Jesus cannot be comprehended. But, O Lord ! to reduce Thyself to the condition of food, appears to be an excess of love not suited to Thy majesty. But St. Bernard's answer is, that love makes lovers forget their own dignity (In Cant. s. 64). St. Chrysostom also answers that love seeks not what is convenient when there is question of making itself known to the beloved; it goes not where it ought, but where it is carried by the ardor of its desire. (Serm. 147). Justly, then,

has the angelic Doctor called this sacrament " a sacrament of love—a pledge of love." And St. Bernard calls it *love of loves*. St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to call Holy Thursday, the day on which this sacrament was instituted, *the day of love*.

Affections and Prayers,

O infinite love of Jesus, worthy of infinite love! Ah! my Jesus, when shall I love Thee as Thou hast loved me? Thou couldst do nothing more to make me love Thee; and I have forsaken Thee, O infinite Good ! for the sake of vile and miserable goods! Ah ! enlighten me, O my God ! discover to me always more and more the greatness of Thy goodness, that my whole soul may be enamoured of Thee, and that I may labor to please Thee. I love Thee. O my Jesus! my love, my all; and I wish to unite myself frequently to Thee in this sacrament, in order to detach myself from all things, and to love Thee alone, who art my life. Through the merits of Thy Passion, assist me, O my Redeemer! O Mother of Jesus, and my Mother! do thou, too, assist me; beg of him to inflame my whole heart with his holy love.

THIRD POINT.

How much Jesus Christ desires to Unite Himself to us.

Let us, in the third place, consider the great ardor with which Jesus Christ desires that we should receive him in Holy Communion. *Jesus knowing that His hour was come (John, xiii, 1)*. But how could Jesus call the night on which his bitter Passion should commence, *His hour*? He calls it *His hour*, because on that night he was to institute this divine sacrament in order to unite himself entirely to his beloved souls. This desire made him say: *With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you*

(Luke, xxii, 15). Words by which the Redeemer wished to show us the great ardor with which he desired to unite himself to each of us in this sacrament. With desire I have desired. Words which, according to St. Laurence Justinian, proceeded from his immense love for us. This is the language of the most burning love (De Tr. Chr. Ag. c. 2). The Redeemer wished to give himself to us under the appearance of bread, that all might be able to receive him. Had he given himself to us under the appearance of costly food, the poor would not be able to receive him, and had he instituted the Holy Sacrament under the appearance of any other cheap food, this perhaps would not be found in all parts of the world. Jesus wished to leave himself under the species of bread, because it costs but little, and is found in every country; so that all persons in all places may find him and receive him.

Through his great desire that we should receive him, the Redeemer not only presses us to receive him by so many invitations: *Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you (Prov. ix, 5). Eat, O friends, and drink and be inebriated, My dearly beloved (Cant. v, 1)* but he also commands us to receive him. *Take ye, and eat: this is My body (Matt. xxvi, 26)*. Moreover, he endeavors to allure us to the holy table by promises of eternal life. *He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath life everlasting. He that eateth this bread shall live forever (John, vi, 55)*. He also threatens to exclude from paradise all Who neglect to receive him in the holy sacrament. *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you (John, vi, 54)*. These invitations, promises, and threats all proceed from the ardent desire of Jesus Christ to unite himself to us in this sacrament. And this desire springs from the great love which he bears us: for, as St. Francis de Sales says, the end of love is nothing else than to be united with the object of love. And because in this

sacrament Jesus unites himself entirely to the soul—*He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him (John, vi, 57)*. Therefore he desires so ardently that we should receive him. Our Lord said one day to St. Mechtilde: "The bee does not cast itself on the flower from which it sucks the honey with as much ardor as I come to the soul that desires to receive me."

Oh! If the faithful understood the great blessing which Holy Communion brings to the soul! Jesus is the Lord of all riches; for his Father has made him master of all things. *Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands (John, xiii, 3)*. Hence, when Jesus Christ comes to a soul in Holy Communion, he brings with him immense treasures of graces. *Now all good things, says Solomon, speaking of the eternal wisdom, came to me together with her (Wis. viii, 11)*.

St. Denis says that the Most Holy Sacrament has the greatest efficacy in sanctifying the soul. And St. Vincent Ferrer asserts that the soul derives greater profit from one Communion, than from fasting for a week on bread and water. The Communion, as the Council of Trent teaches, is that great remedy which delivers us from venial, and preserves us from mortal sins (Sess. 13, cap. 2). Hence St. Ignatius, martyr, has called the Most Holy Sacrament the medicine of immortality (Ep. ad Eph. c. 20). Innocent III. has said that, by his Passion, Jesus Christ has delivered us from the punishment of sin; but, by the Eucharist, he preserves us from the commission of sin (De Alt. Myst. 1, 4, c. 44).

Moreover, this sacrament kindles the fire of divine love. *He brought me into the cellar of wine; he set in order charity in me. Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples; because I languish with love (Cant. ii, 4)*. St. Gregory of Nyssa says that Holy Communion is this cellar

of wine, in which the soul is so inebriated with divine love, that she forgets the earth and all creatures: it is thus the soul languishes with holy charity. The Venerable Father Francis Olimpio, of the Order of Theatines, used to say that there is nothing that so powerfully inflames the soul with divine love, as Holy Communion. God is love and a fire of love. *God is charity (1 John, iv, 8). My God is a consuming fire (Deut. iv, 24).* And this fire of love the Eternal Word came to light upon the earth. *I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled? (Luke, xii, 49).* Oh ! what burning flames of holy love does Jesus kindle in the souls who receive him in this sacrament with a desire of being inflamed with his love. St. Catharine of Sienna saw, one day, in the hands of a priest, Jesus, in the Holy Sacrament, like a furnace of love; and wondered that the hearts of all men were not set on fire and reduced to ashes by the flames which issued from the Holy Eucharist. St. Rose of Lima used to say that, in receiving Jesus Christ, she felt as if she received the sun. Hence she sent forth from her countenance rays which dazzled the sight, and the heat emitted from her mouth after Communion was so intense, that the person who reached her a drink felt her hand scorched as if she approached a furnace. In visiting the Most Holy Sacrament, St. Wenceslaus, king and martyr, was inflamed, even externally, with such a degree of heat that the servant who accompanied him, when obliged to walk on the snow, trod in the footsteps of the saint, and thus felt no cold. "The Eucharist," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a fire which inflames us, that, like lions breathing fire, we may retire from the altar being made terrible to the devil." (Ad pop. Ant. hom. 61). The Holy Sacrament is a fire which inflames the soul to such a degree, that we ought to depart from the altar breathing such flames of love that the devil will no longer dare to tempt us.

But some will say: I do not communicate often because I am cold in divine love. But, says Gerson, he who acts in this manner is like the man who refuses to approach the fire because he feels cold. The greater, then, our tepidity, the more frequently we ought to receive the Most Holy Sacrament, provided we have a desire to love God. " If," says St. Francis de Sales (in his *Devout Life*, chap, xxi.), "you are asked why you communicate so frequently, say that two sorts of persons ought to communicate often—the perfect and the imperfect: the perfect to preserve perfection, and the imperfect to acquire perfection." St. Bonaventure says: " Though you feel tepid, approach, trusting in the mercy of God. The more a person feels sick, the more he stands in need of a physician." (De Prof. rel. 1, 2, c. 77). And Jesus Christ says to St. Mechtilde: " When you are to communicate, desire to have all the love which any soul has ever had for me, and I will accept your love in proportion to the ardor with which you wish for it. (Spir. grat. 1, 3, c. 22).

Affections and Prayers.

Tenamoured of souls, O my Jesus ! it is not in Thy power to give us greater proofs of love in order to show us that Thou lovest us. And what more couldst Thou invent to induce us to love Thee ? Ah ! grant, O infinite Goodness! that I may love Thee tenderly and with all my strength ! And who is there that has greater claims on the affections of my heart, than Thou, my Redeemer, who. after having given Thy life for my salvation, hast given me Thyself entirely in this sacrament ? Ah ! Lord, that I always remembered Thy love in order to forget all things, and to love Thee alone without interruption and without reserve ! I love Thee, O my Jesus above all things, and I wish to love Thee alone. Banish from my heart, I entreat Thee, all affections which are not for Thee. I thank Thee for giving me time to love Thee and

to weep over the offences I have offered to Thee. My Jesus, I desire that Thou mayst be the only object of my affections. Assist me, save me, and let my salvation consist in loving Thee with my whole heart, and in loving Thee always in this life and in the next. Mary, my Mother, obtain for me the grace to love Jesus Christ; pray to him for me.

CONSIDERATION XXXV

Dwelling of Jesus on our Altars.

"Come to me all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."—*Matt. xi. 28.*

FIRST POINT.

Jesus makes Himself Accessible to Every One.

HAVING to depart from this world after he had completed the work of redemption, our loving Saviour did not wish to leave us alone in this valley of tears. "No tongue," says St. Peter of Alcantara, "can express the greatness of the love which Jesus Christ bears to our souls. Hence, that his absence from us might not be an occasion of forgetting him, this spouse, before his departure from this world, left, as a memorial of his love, this Most Holy Sacrament, in which he himself has remained. He did not wish that between him and his servants there should be any other pledge than himself, to keep alive the remembrance of him." This effort of love on the part of Jesus Christ merits great love from us; and, according to the revelation said to have been made to his servant, Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque, he wished that in these latter times a festival should be instituted in honor of his Most Sacred Heart, in order that, by our devotions and affections, we might make some return for his loving

dwelling on our altars, and thus compensate the insults which he has received in this Sacrament of Love, and which he receives every day from heretics and bad Catholics.

Jesus has left himself in the Most Holy Sacrament, first, that all may be able to find him; secondly, to give audience to all; thirdly, to give his graces to all. He, in the first place, remains on so many altars, that all who wish may be able to find him. On the night on which the Redeemer took leave of his disciples to go to his death, they shed tears of sorrow at the thought of being separated from their dear Master; but Jesus consoled them, saying (and the same he then said also to us): My children, I am going to die for you, in order to show you the love which I bear you. But at my death I will not leave you alone: as long as you are on earth, I will remain with you in the Most Holy Sacrament. I leave you my body, my soul, my divinity: I leave myself entirely to you. As long as you remain on earth, I will not depart from you. *Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world (Matt. xxviii, 20)*. The Saviour, says St. Peter of Alcantara, did not wish to leave his spouse alone at such a distance, and therefore he has left this sacrament, in which he himself, the best of all companions, has remained with her. The Gentiles have invented so many gods; but they could never imagine a god more loving than our God, who remains nigh to us, and assists us with so much love. *Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath God so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions (Deut. iv, 7)*. The holy Church applies this passage of Deuteronomy to the festival of the Most Holy Sacrament.— *Resp. ii. Noct. iii.*

Behold, then, Jesus Christ remains in our tabernacles, as if confined in so many prisons of love. His priests remove him from the tabernacle to expose him on the altar, or to

give Communion, and afterward put him back to be again shut up: and Jesus is content to remain there day and night. But why, my Redeemer, dost thou remain in so many churches, even during the night, when the faithful lock the doors, and leave Thee alone ? It would be enough for Thee to remain during the day. No; he wished to remain also during the night, though left alone, that, in the morning, all who seek may instantly find him. The sacred spouse went in search of her beloved, saying to every one she met: *Have you seen him whom my soul loveth ? (Cant. iii, 3)*. And, not finding him, she raised her voice and exclaimed: My spouse, tell me where thou art. *Show me . . . where thou feedest, where thou liest in the mid-day (Cant. I, 6)*. The spouse did not find him, because then the Most Holy Sacrament was not instituted; but, at present, if a soul wishes to find Jesus Christ, it has only to go to a church in which the Holy Eucharist is preserved, and there it will find its beloved expecting it. There is not a town nor a convent in which the Holy Sacrament is not kept; and in all these places the King of Heaven is content to remain shut up in a case of wood or of stone, often almost without a lamp burning before him, and without any one to keep him company. But, "O Lord !" says St. Bernard, " this is not suited to Thy Majesty." " No matter," Jesus replies; " if it becomes not my Majesty, it well becomes my love."

What tender devotion do pilgrims feel in visiting the holy house of Loretto—the Holy Land—the stable at Bethlehem—the hill of Calvary—or the holy sepulchre, in which Jesus Christ was born, or lived, or died, or was buried ! But how much greater tenderness should we feel in a church, in presence of Jesus himself in the Blessed Sacrament ? The Saint Father John D'Avila used to say that he knew no sanctuary capable of inspiring greater devotion or consolation than a church in which Jesus remains in the Holy Eucharist. Father Balthazar Alvarez

would weep in seeing the palaces of princes filled with courtiers, and the churches, in which Jesus Christ dwells, solitary and abandoned. O God ! if the Lord remained only in one church—for example, in St. Peter's in Rome—and only on one day in the year, oh ! how many pilgrims, how many nobles, how many princes would endeavor to have the happiness of being there on that day, to pay court and homage to the King of Heaven descended again upon the earth ! Oh, what a splendid tabernacle of gold, adorned with gems, would be prepared for the occasion ! Oh, with what an abundance of lights would the dwelling of Jesus Christ on the earth be celebrated on that day ! But, says the Redeemer, I do not wish to remain only in a single church, or but for a single day: nor require either such riches, or such a profusion of lights. I wish to remain continually every day, and in all places in which my servants are found; that all may easily find me at all times, and at any hour they wish.

Ah ! if Jesus Christ had not invented this excess of love, who could have ever thought of it ? Should a Christian, after the ascension of the Redeemer into heaven, say to him, Lord, if Thou wishest to show us Thy affection, remain with us on our altars under the appearance of bread, that we may be able to find Thee whenever we wish: would not such a demand be regarded as the extreme of temerity? But, what no man could ever even imagine, our Saviour has invented and accomplished. But, alas ! where is our gratitude for so great a favor? If a prince came from a distance to a village for the purpose of being visited by a peasant, how great would be the ingratitude of the peasant if he refused to visit his sovereign, or if he paid him only a passing visit!

Affections and Prayers.

Jesus, my Redeemer, O love of my soul! how much has it cost Thee to remain with us in the sacrament? To be able to remain on our altars, Thou hadst first to suffer death ; afterward, in order to aid us by Thy presence, Thou hadst to submit to so many grievous insults in this sacrament. And, after all this, we are so slothful and negligent in visiting Thee, though we know that Thou so ardently desirest our visits for the purpose of enriching us with Thy graces when Thou seest us in Thy presence, Lord, pardon me; for I too have been one of these ungrateful souls. From this day forward, O my Jesus ! I wish to visit Thee often, and to remain as long as I can in Thy presence, to thank Thee, to love Thee, and to ask Thy graces; for it is for this purpose that Thou remainest on earth shut up in our tabernacles, and made Our prisoner of love. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O God of love! I love Thee, O sovereign Good ! amiable above every good. Grant that I may forget myself and all things, in order to remember only Thy love and to spend the remainder of my life wholly occupied in pleasing Thee. Grant that from this day forward I may relish no pleasure more than that of remaining at Thy feet. In flame my whole soul with Thy holy love. Mary, my mother, obtain for me a great love for the Most Holy Sacrament; and whenever Thou seest that I am negligent, remind me of the promise I now make of going every day to visit the Holy Sacrament.

SECOND POINT.

Jesus Gives Audience to All at all Times.

In the second place, Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Sacrament, gives audience to all. St. Teresa used to say that all cannot speak with the sovereign. The poor can scarcely hope to address him, and make known to him their necessities, even through a third person. But

to speak to the King of Heaven, the intervention of a third person is not necessary: all, the poor as well as the nobles of the earth, may speak to him face to face in the Holy Sacrament. Hence Jesus is called the flower of the fields. *I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys (Cant. ii, 1)*. The flowers of gardens are enclosed and reserved; but the flowers of the fields are exposed to all. "I am the flower of the field," says Cardinal Hugo, in his comment on this passage, "because I exhibit myself to be found by all." With Jesus, then, in the Holy Sacrament, all may speak every hour in the day. Speaking of the birth of the Redeemer in the stable of Bethlehem, St. Peter Chrysologus says that princes do not always give audience; that when a person goes to address the king, the guards send him away, saying that the hour or day for giving audience is not yet arrived, and telling him to come at another time. But the Redeemer wished to be born in an open cave, without a door and without guards, in order to give audience to all, at all hours: there is no attendant to say, "It is not the hour." (In Ps. iv). The same happens in the Holy Sacrament. The churches are always open: all can go to converse with the King of Heaven whenever they wish. Jesus desires that we speak to him with unbounded confidence: it is for this purpose that he remains under the species of bread. If Jesus appeared on our altars, as he will on the day of judgment, on a throne of glory, who among us would dare to approach him? But, says St. Teresa, because the Lord desires that we speak to him, and ask his graces with confidence and without fear, he has therefore clothed his majesty with the appearance of bread. He desires, as Thomas à Kempis says, that we converse with him as one friend does with another. (I, 4, c. 13).

When a soul remains at the foot of the altar, Jesus appears to address it in the words of the Canticles: *Arise, make haste, my love, my beautiful one, and come (Cant.*

ii, 10). Arise, arise, O my soul, and fear not. Make haste, approach to me. My love, you are no longer my enemy; for you love me, and you repent of having offended me. My beautiful one, you are no longer deformed in my eyes: my grace has made you beautiful. And come, tell me what you want; I remain here on purpose to hear your prayers. What joy should you feel, dear reader, if a king called you into his cabinet and said to you: What do you wish for? what do you stand in need of? I love you, and I desire to promote your welfare. This, Jesus Christ, the King of Heaven, says to all who visit him: Come to me, all you that labor and are burthened, and I will refresh you (Cant. ii, 10). Come, all you that are poor, infirm, or afflicted; I am able and willing to enrich you, to heal you, to console you. For this purpose I remain on your altars. Thou shall call, and he shall say: Here I am (Isa. li, 6).

Affections and Prayers.

Since then, my beloved Jesus, Thou remainest on our altars to hear the supplications of the miserable who have recourse to Thee, hear the prayer which I, a miserable sinner, present to Thee. O Lamb of God! sacrificed and lifeless on the cross. I am a soul redeemed by Thy blood; pardon me all the offences I have offered to Thee, and assist me by Thy grace, that I may never lose Thee again. Impart to me, O my Jesus ! a portion of the sorrow which Thou didst feel in the garden of Gethsemane for my sins. O my God! that I had never offended Thee! My dear Lord, had I died in sin, I could never more love Thee; but Thou hast waited for me that I might love Thee. I thank Thee for the time which Thou givest me: and since I can now love Thee, I wish to love Thee. Give me the grace of Thy holy love, but of a love which will make me forget all things, to think only of pleasing Thy most loving heart. Ah, my Jesus! Thou hast spent Thy whole life for me: grant that I may spend at

least the remainder of my life for Thee. Draw me entirely to Thy love; make me all Thine before I die. I hope for all graces through the merits of Thy Passion. I also hope in thy intercession, O Mary ! Thou knowest that I love thee: have pity on me.

THIRD POINT.

Jesus only Wishes to bestow his Graces.

Jesus, in the Holy Sacrament, gives audience to all in order to bestow his graces on all. St. Augustine says that the Lord has a greater desire of communicating his graces to us than we have of receiving them (Serm. 105, E.B.). The reason is, that God is infinite goodness, and goodness is naturally diffusive; therefore, it desires to impart its goods to all. God complains when souls do not come to ask his graces. *Am I, he says, become a wilderness to Israel, or a lateward springing land? Why, then, have my people said, We are revolted; we will come to thee no more? (Jer. ii, 31).* Why, says the Lord, will you come to me no more ? Have you, when you asked my graces, found me like a barren or lateward springing land ? St. John saw the Lord with his breast full of milk—that is, of mercy— and girded with a band of gold—that is, with the love with which he desires to dispense his graces to us. *I saw one like the Son of man . . . girt about the paps with a golden girdle (Apoc. i, 13).* Jesus Christ is always ready to bestow his favors upon us; but the *disciple* says that, in the Holy Sacrament, he dispenses his graces in greater abundance. And, according to Blessed Henry Suso, it is in the Holy Eucharist that Jesus most willingly hears our prayers.

As a mother whose breasts are full of milk goes in search of infants to give them suck in order to be relieved of the burden, so our Lord from this sacrament of love cries out,

and says to us all: *You shall be carried at the breasts. . . . As one whom the mother caresses, so will I comfort You (Isa. lxvi, 12).* Father Balthassar saw Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament, having his hands full of graces, to dispense them to men; but found no one to ask them.

Oh! happy the soul that remains at the foot of the altar to ask graces of Jesus Christ! The Countess of Feria, afterward a religious of the Order of St. Clare, remained as long as she could before the Blessed Sacrament, and was therefore called the spouse of the sacrament. She continually received treasures of graces at the foot of the altar. Being asked one day how she was employed during so many hours before the tabernacle, she answered: "I would remain there for all eternity. I am asked what I do before the Blessed Sacrament. And what do I not do? What does a beggar do in the presence of a rich man? What does a sick man do before his physician? What do I do? I thank my Saviour, I love him, I ask his graces." Oh! how precious these last words are to make us draw fruit from our visits to the Holy Sacrament!

Jesus Christ complained to the servant of God, Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque, of the ingratitude of men to him in this sacrament of love. To make her understand the love with which he dwells on our altars, he showed her his heart in a throne of flames, surrounded with thorns and surmounted by a cross, and said to her: "Behold that heart, which has loved men so tenderly, which has reserved nothing, and which has been even consumed to show its love for them. But, in return, the greater part of them treat me with ingratitude by their irreverence and by their contempt of my love in this sacrament. And what is most painful to me is, that they are hearts consecrated to me." Christians do not visit Jesus Christ because they do not love him. They spend entire hours in the society of friends; and they feel tediousness in conversing half an

hour with Jesus Christ. Some will say: Why does not Jesus Christ give me his love ? I answer: If you do not banish the world from your heart, how can divine love enter it ? Ah! if you could say with sincerity, what St. Philip Neri said at the sight of the Holy Sacrament—*Behold my love! behold my love !*—you should not feel tediousness in spending hours and entire days before the Blessed Sacrament.

To souls enamoured of God, hours spent before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament appear moments. St. Francis Xavier labored the whole day for the salvation of souls; and what was his repose at night ? It consisted in remaining before the Holy Sacrament. St. John Francis Regis, that great missionary of France, after having spent the entire day in preaching and hearing confessions, went at night to the church. And having some times found it shut, he remained outside the door, exposed to the cold and wind, to pay homage, at least at a distance, to his beloved Lord. St. Aloysius Gonzaga wished to remain always before the Holy Sacrament; but was forbidden to do so by his Superiors. In passing by the altar, he felt himself drawn by Jesus to remain, but was compelled by obedience to depart. Hence he would lovingly say to his Saviour: " Withdraw from me, O Lord ! withdraw." Lord, do not draw me; allow me to depart; obedience obliges me to go away. If, my brother, you do not feel this love for Jesus, endeavor at least to visit him every day: he will certainly inflame your heart. Do you feel cold ? Approach the fire, says St. Catharine of Sienna. Ah! happy you, if Jesus, by his grace, inflames you with his love. Then you will certainly no longer love; on the contrary, you will despise all the goods of this world. "When," says St. Francis de Sales, " a house is on fire, all that is within is thrown out through the windows."

Affections and Prayers,

Ah, my Jesus! make Thyself known, make Thyself loved. Thou art so amiable, Thou canst do nothing more to induce men to love Thee; how then does it happen that so few among them love Thee ? Alas! I have been among these ungrateful wretches. I have been sufficiently grateful to creatures, who have bestowed no gift or favor upon me to Thee only, who hast given me Thyself, have I been ungrateful, so as often to offend Thee grievously, and insult Thee by my sins. But I see that, instead of abandoning me, Thou continuest to seek after me, and to ask my love. I feel that Thou continuest to propose to me this loving precept—" *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.*" Since, then, Thou didst wish to be loved even by me after my ingratitude, I desire to love Thee. Thou wishest for my love, and at present through Thy grace, I desire only to love Thee. I love Thee, my love, my all. Through that blood which Thou hast shed for me, help me to love Thee. My beloved Redeemer! I place all my hopes in this blood, and also in the intercession of Thy most holy Mother, whom Thou wishest to assist me by her prayers in the work of my salvation. O Mary, my Mother ! pray to Jesus for me. Thou inflamest all thy lovers with the divine love; I love thee tenderly; procure it also for me.

CONSIDERATION XXXVI.

The Conformity to the Will of God.

"And life in his good will"—*Ps. xxix. 6.*

FIRST POINT.

Excellence of this Virtue.

ALL our salvation and perfection consists in loving God. *He that loveth not, abideth in death. Charity, which is the bond of perfection (1 John, iii, 14; Col. iii, 14).* But the perfection of love consists in conformity to the divine will; for, as St. Denis the Areopagite says, the principal effect of love is, to unite the will of lovers, so that they may have but one heart and one will. Hence our actions, our works of penance our Communions and alms-deeds, please God only inasmuch as they are conformable to the divine will; for, if they are not conformable to the will of God, they are not good works, but are defective, and deserving of chastisement.

Our Saviour came down from heaven principally to teach us by example to conform ourselves to the will of God. Behold what he said, as the apostle writes, at his entrance into this world. *Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to me. . . . Then, said I, behold I come, . . . that I should do Thy will, O my God (Heb. x, 5).* Thou, O my Father! hast refused the victims offered by men; Thou wishest that, by my death, I should sacrifice this body which Thou hast given me; behold me ready to do Thy will. This he frequently declared, saying, that he came on earth only to do the will of his Father. *I came down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me (John, vi, 38).* And by going to die through obedience to the will of his Father, he wished to make known to us his great love for his Father. *That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I. Arise; let us go hence (John, xiv, 31).* Hence he has said that he acknowledges for his disciples only those who fulfil the divine will. *Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt. xii, 50).* The accomplishment of the divine will has been the only object and desire of the saints in all their works. Blessed Henry Suso used to say: " I would

rather be the vilest worm on earth in conformity to the will of God, than be a seraph with my own will." St. Teresa says: " All that he who practices prayer should seek is, to conform his will to the divine will; and let him be assured," adds, the Saint, " that in this consists the highest perfection. He who practises it best, will receive the greatest gifts from God, and will make the greatest progress in spiritual life." The blessed in heaven love God perfectly, because they are in all things conformed to the divine will. Hence Jesus Christ has taught us to do the will of God on earth as the Saints do it in heaven. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* He who does the will of God, will, as David says, become a man according to God's own heart. *I have found a man according to My own heart, who shall do all My wills (Acts, xiii, 22).* And why? Because David was always prepared to do whatever God wished. *My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready (Ps. lvi, 8).* He asked nothing else from the Lord, than to teach him to do his will.

Oh ! how great is the value of an act of perfect resignation to the will of God: it is sufficient to make a saint! While St. Paul was persecuting the Church, Jesus appeared to him, enlightened, and converted him. The Saint only offered himself to do the divine will. *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? (Acts, ix, 6).* And behold, Jesus Christ instantly declared him a vessel of election, and apostle of the Gentiles. *This man is to Me a vessel of election to carry My name before the Gentiles (Acts, ix, 15).* He who fasts, gives alms, or mortifies himself for God's sake, gives a part of himself to God; but the man who gives his will to God, gives himself entirely to him. All that God asks of us is, our heart—that is, our will. *My son, give Me thy heart.* In a word, the accomplishment of the divine will must be the object of all our desires, of our devotions, meditations, Communions, etc. The object of all our prayers must be to obtain from God the grace to do his will. And

for this purpose we must implore the intercession of our holy advocates, and particularly of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that they may procure for us light and strength to conform ourselves to the will of God in all things, but particularly in embracing what is opposed to self-love. St. John Avila used to say: " A single ' Blessed be God ' in adversity is better than six thousand acts of thanksgiving in prosperity."

Affections and Prayers.

Ah, my God ! all my past ruin has arisen from a want of conformity to Thy will. O God of my soul! I detest and curse a thousand times the days and moments in which I have, in order to do my own will, contradicted Thy holy will. I now give my whole will to Thee. Accept it, O my Lord! and bind it so firmly to Thy love, that it may never more be able to rebel against Thee. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness ! and through the love which I bear Thee, I offer myself entirely to Thee. Dispose of me and of all I possess, as Thou pleasest: I resign myself entirely to Thy holy will. Preserve me from the misfortune of doing anything against Thy holy will, and then treat me as Thou wishest. Eternal Father, hear me for the love of Jesus Christ. My Jesus, hear me through the merits of Thy Passion. Most Holy Mary, assist me; obtain for me the grace to fulfill the divine will, in the accomplishment of which my salvation entirely consists: obtain this grace for me, and I ask nothing more.

SECOND POINT.

In what we should Conform to God's Will.

It is necessary to conform ourselves to the will of God, not only in crosses and adversity which come directly from God, such as infirmities, desolation of

spirit, loss of property or relatives; but also in those which come indirectly from him,—that is, through men,—such as defamation, contempt, injuries, and all other persecutions. And let us remember that when others injure us in our property or honor, God does not will their sin, but he wills our poverty and our humiliation. It is certain that whatsoever happens takes place by the divine will. *I am the Lord: I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil (Isa. xiv, 6).* And Eclesiasticus says: *Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God (Ecclus. xi, 14).* In a word, all things, blessings as well as misfortunes, come from God.

The crosses that happen to us are called evils, because we call them so, and because we make them evils; if we accepted them as we ought, with resignation, from the hands of God, they should prove to us, not evils, but blessings. The jewels which give the greatest splendor to the crown of the saints are the tribulations which they have borne for God, as coming from his hands. What did holy Job say when he was told that the Sabeans had taken away his property? *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away (Job, i, 21).* He did not say: The Lord gave me these goods, and the Sabeans have taken them away; but the Lord has given them, and the Lord has taken them away. And therefore he blessed the Lord, knowing that all had happened by his will. *And as it hath pleased the Lord, so it is done; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job, i, 21).* When the holy martyrs Epictetus and Athone were tormented with iron hooks and burning torches, they only said: "Lord, Thy will be done in us." And their dying words were: "O eternal God, be blessed for giving us the grace to accomplish in ourselves Thy holy will." Cesarius relates (lib. x., cap. vi.) that a certain monk wrought many miracles, though his life was not more austere than that of the other monks. Being astonished at

his miracles, the abbot asked him one day what devotions he practised. In answer he said that he was more imperfect than his companions, but that he was always careful to conform himself in all things to the divine will. "And," said the Superior, "did you feel no displeasure at the injury which an enemy did to our farm some days ago?" "No," Father, "replied the monk; I, on the contrary, thanked the Lord, because I know that he does and permits all things for our welfare." From this, the abbot perceived the sanctity of this good religious.

We ought to do the same when any cross or adversity happens to us. Let us accept them all from the divine hands, not only with patience, but also with joy, in imitation of the apostles, who rejoiced when they were maltreated for the sake of Jesus Christ. *They went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus (Acts, v, 41).* And what greater happiness than to bear crosses, and to know that, in embracing them, we please God? If we wish to enjoy continual peace, let us endeavor, from this day forward, to embrace the divine will, always saying in all that happens to us: *Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight (Matt. xi, 26).* Lord, this has pleased Thee, let it be done. To this end we ought to direct all our meditations, Communions, visits, and prayers, always imploring the Lord to make us conform to his will. And let us always offer ourselves to him, saying: "Behold me, O my God! do with me what thou pleasest." St. Teresa offered herself to God at least fifty times in the day, that he might dispose of her as he wished.

Affections and Prayers.

Ah, my divine King, my beloved Redeemer! come and reign henceforth in my soul with undivided sway. Take my whole will, that it may desire and wish

nothing but what Thou wishest. My Jesus, I have hitherto offended Thee so grievously by resisting Thy holy will. This gives me greater pain than if I had suffered every other evil. I repent of it, and am sorry for it with my whole heart. I deserve chastisement; I do not refuse it; I accept it. Preserve me only from the chastisement of being deprived of Thy love, and then do with me whatever Thou pleasest. I love Thee, my dear Redeemer; I love Thee, my God and, because I love Thee, I wish to do whatever Thou wishest. O will of God! Thou art my love. O blood of my Jesus. Thou art my hope. In Thee I hope to be, from this day forward, always united to the divine will. It shall be my guide, my desire, my love, and my peace. In it I wish always to live and repose. *In peace in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest** (Ps. iv, 9). I shall always say, in whatever shall befall me: My God, thus Thou hast willed, thus I will; my God, I wish only what Thou wishest, may Thy will be always accomplished in me. *Thy will be done.* My Jesus, through Thy merits, grant me the grace always to repeat this beautiful dictate of love: *Thy will be done! Thy will be done!* O Mary, happy thou, who didst always fulfill, in all things, the divine will. Obtain for me the grace that henceforth I, too, may always fulfill it. My queen, through thy great love for Jesus Christ, obtain for me this grace. Through thy prayers I hope for it.

THIRD POINT.

Happiness Derived from Conformity to God's Will.

He who is united with the divine will, enjoys, even in this life, a perpetual peace. *Whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad (Prov. xii, 21).* Yes, for a man cannot enjoy greater happiness than that which arises from the accomplishment of all his wishes. He who wills only what God wills, possesses all that he desires; for whatever happens to him, happens by

the will of God. If, says Salvian, the soul that is resigned be humbled, it desires humiliations; if it is poor, it delights in poverty; in a word, it wishes whatever happens, and thus leads a happy life (De Gub. D. 1, 1, n. 2). Let cold, heat, wind, or rain come, and he that is united with the will of God says : I wish for this cold, this heat, this wind, and this rain, because God wills them. If loss of property, persecution, or sickness befall him, he says: I wish to be miserable, to be persecuted, to be sick, because such is the will of God. He who reposes in the divine will, and is resigned to whatever the Lord does, is like a man who stands above the clouds, and, without injury or perturbation, beholds the tempest raging below. This is the peace which, according to the Apostle, *surpasseth all understanding (Phil. iv, 7)* which exceeds all the delights of the world; a perpetual peace, subject to no vicissitudes. *A fool is changed like the moon. . . . A holy man continueth in wisdom like the sun (Ecclus. xxvii, 12)*. Fools—that is, sinners—are changed like the moon, which increases to-day, grows less on to-morrow. To-day they are seen to laugh, and to-morrow to weep; to-day all joy and meekness, to morrow, all sadness and fury, in a word, they change with prosperity and adversity. But the just man is like the sun, always the same, and uniformly tranquil in whatever happens; for his peace consists in conforming himself to the divine will. *And on earth peace to men of good will (Luke, ii, 14)*. At the bare mention of the *will of God*, "St. Mary Magdalene de Pazzi used to feel much consolation that she would fall into an ecstasy of love. When the will is united with the will of God, crosses may produce some pain in the inferior part, but in the superior part peace shall always reign. *Your joy no man shall take from you (John, xvi, 22)*. But how great the folly of those who oppose the will of God ! What God wills will certainly happen; *for who resisteth his will ? (Rom. ix, 19)*. They, therefore, must bear the cross, but without fruit and without peace. *Who hath resisted him, and hath had*

peace ? (Job, ix, 4). And what else but our welfare does God will ? This is the will of your God, your sanctification (1 Tess. iv, 3). He wishes to see us saints, that we may be content in this life, and happy in the next. Let us remember that the crosses which come to us from God work together unto good (Rom. viii, 28). Even chastisements are inflicted on us in this life, not for ruin, but that we may amend, and gain eternal beatitude. Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord . . . have happened for our amendment, and not for our destruction (Judith, viii, 27). God loves us so ardently, that he not only desires, but is solicitous for, the salvation of each of us. The Lord is careful for me (Ps. xxxix, 18). And what will he deny us after having given us his Son? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also with Him given us all things? (Rom. viii, 32). Let us then always abandon ourselves into the hands of that God who is always solicitous for our welfare as long as we remain in this world. Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you (1 Peter, v. 7). Think of me, said our Lord to St. Catharine of Sienna, and I will always think of you. Let us often say with the spouse of the Canticles: My beloved to me, and I to him (Cant. ii, 16). My beloved thinks of my welfare, and I will think only of pleasing him, and of uniting myself to his holy will. We ought, says the holy Abbot Nilus, to pray, not that God would do what we wish, but that we may do what he wills.

He who always acts in this manner will lead a happy life, and will die a happy death. He who dies with entire resignation to the divine will, gives to others a moral certainty of his salvation. But he who is not united with the divine will during life, will not be united with it at death, and will not be saved. Let us, then, endeavor to make ourselves familiar with some sayings of the Scripture, by which we shall always keep ourselves

united with the will of God. *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? (Acts, ix, 6)*. Lord, tell me what Thou wishest me to do; I am ready and willing to do it. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord (Luke, i, 38)*. Behold ! my soul is Thy servant; command, and Thou shalt be obeyed. *I am Thine; save me (Ps. cxviii, 94)*. Save me, O Lord ! and then do what Thou pleasest with me; save Thine, I am no longer mine. When any serious cross or adversity happens to us, let us say: *Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight (Matt. xi, 26)*. My God, this has pleased Thee; let it be done. Above all, let the third petition of the Lord's prayer be dear to us: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Let us say it often, with fervor, and let us repeat it several times. Happy we, if we live and die saying: *Thy will be done ! Thy will be done !*

Affections and Prayers.

 Jesus, my Redeemer! Thou hast sacrificed Thy life on the cross in order to become the cause of my salvation : have mercy on me, then, and save me; do not permit a soul that Thou hast redeemed by so many pains, and with so much love, to hate Thee for eternity in **hell**. Thou canst do nothing more to oblige me to love Thee. This Thou gavest me to understand, when, before Thou didst expire on Calvary, Thou didst utter these loving words: *It is consummated*. But how have I repaid Thy love ? For the past, I can truly say that I have done all I could to displease Thee, and to oblige Thee to hate me. I thank Thee for having borne me with so much patience, and for now giving me time to repair my ingratitude, and to love Thee before I die. Yes, I wish to love Thee, and I wish to love Thee ardently, my Saviour, my God, my love, and my all; I wish to do whatever is pleasing to Thee; I give Thee my whole will, my whole liberty, and all that I possess. From this hour I sacrifice my life to Thee, accepting the death which Thou wilt send me, along with all the pains

and circumstances that will accompany it. From this moment I unite this sacrifice of mine to the great sacrifice of Thy life, which Thou, my Jesus, didst offer for me on the cross. I wish to die in order to do Thy will. Ah ! through the merits of Thy Passion, give me grace to be, during life, resigned to the arrangements of Thy Providence. And when death comes, grant that I may embrace, with an entire conformity, Thy Holy Will. I wish to die, O my Jesus! in order to please Thee. I wish to die saying: *Thy will be done.* Mary, my mother, it was thus thou didst die; ah ! obtain for me the grace that I too may die in this manner. Live, Jesus, our love, and Mary, our hope.

END

OF PREPARATION FOR
DEATH BY ST. ALPHONSUS
LIGUORI