

On Consideration and Prayer

Fray Luis de Granada

An Excellent Treatise of Consideration and Prayer

Written by the same Author, F. Luis de Granada,

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To the worshipful and his ever approved fatherly good friend, Master John Banister Chirurgion, and licentiate physician, health and happiness.

Father receive at your sons hand this excellent treatise, the true testimony of my affections: and dutiful remembrance for so many favors I have received from you.

To your learned judgment I commend the goodness of the work: which so far has been among the best, so it cannot endure any reproach now that may come from the worst. So, praying for the long life of my loving good father, humbly I take my leave.

The Physician Art
for sick and sore does teach.
A sovereign salve,
to ease your gripping grief.
But only they
who sacred Scriptures preach,
have wherewithal
to work your souls relieve.

Ply therefore them
that physician professes,
the way to ease
your bodies sore and smart.
But the defaults
of soul for the redress,
lay up this little
volume in your heart.

CHAPTER I: Of the great profit and necessity of Consideration

For so much as in the exercise of consideration, it cannot be, but that some labor and pain must be taken as well by reason of the employing and occupying of the time, which it required of us every day; as also in regard of the quieting, and close recollecting of the heart, (which is very much required for it,) I think it therefore very necessary before all other things, to declare here, what great fruits and commodities ensue of this exercise, to the intent that the heart of man, which without great promises and allurements is not moved to take great pains, may by this means this be the more moved and provoked, to the love of these holy exercises, and to bestow greater pains and labor in it.

Now the greatest commendation we can give to this virtue, is this, that it is a greater helper and furtherer of all other virtues. I mean not in supplying the proper office of them, but in helping in their exercise. In so much, that as devotion is a general stirrer and provoker to all virtues (as one of the Fathers affirmed,) and as the hearing of a sermon, (if it be heard with such attention and devotion as it ought to be,) is also an exercise that moves us, not to any one virtue alone, but to all virtues, (for so much as each good instruction is directed to this end.) even so likewise consideration is a great help and furtherance, not only to any one virtue alone, but to all kind of virtues. For there is no more difference between a sermon and consideration, than is between the reading of a lesson, and the repetition of the same reading, or between the meat that is set before us in a dish, and the same meat when it is digested and concocted in the stomach.

Now this is one of the greatest and the proper most assured praises we can give to this virtue. For by this means it does not put away the labors of other virtues, but rather makes provision how to help and further them in their labors, and stirs and provokes them to it. This is the thing which by the grace of God we intend now to prove very manifestly in this place.

I. Of those virtues common to a Christian and a non-Christian

For the its better understanding, it is to be known, that among virtues some are common both to the Christian and to the pagan philosopher (as those four that are called cardinal virtues,) to wit, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The philosophers understood and wrote very much about these virtues. There are other virtues that are proper and peculiar to a Christian only, in that he is a Christian, the pagan philosophers neither knew nor wrote anything about them at all, or if they did, it was surely very little. These are principally those three most noble virtues, called theological virtues, namely, faith, hope and charity. Their object is God himself, and their proper office is to dispose and direct man towards him. These theological virtues have the empire and sovereignty over all other inferior virtues, and therefore they move and incline them to do their operations, when it is expedient for their service.

After these there follow other very principal and excellent virtues, which are very near of affinity to them. As the virtue, called religion; whose object is the service and honor of God. The virtue called devotion, which is the act and exercise of the same religion, and its office is to make us very prompt and ready, to do all opportune things to his service. The fear of God, which refrains and bridles us from sin. Humility, which is also in a certain manner (as a learned Father affirms) the root and foundation of all virtues. And repentance, which is the gate of our salvation; sorrow and grief for our past life appertain to it, and with them, a firm purpose and determination to amend our life in time to come.

Of all these virtues the pagan philosophers understood very little, or nothing at all; notwithstanding that these are the virtues, that have the sovereignty and principality over all others, they are the roots and fountains of all our wealth. First, because (for the most part) they are spiritual virtues, that have the accomplishment of their perfection in the inward part of our soul, (where all the beauty of the daughter of the King stands) and secondly, because all these virtues (faith excepted) are affective virtues, and consequently, they are to us great motions and encouragements to do good works. The providence of the grace of God wonderfully appears in them. For like as nature has provided for us natural affections and desires, that should be (as it were) certain spurs, to provoke us to do all such things as are required for our natural life; likewise, the

grace of God has provided for us other supernatural affections that might be also spurs and encouragement to us, to do all things that are profitable for our spiritual life. And such are these virtues before mentioned: namely, love, sorrow, fear, and hope, with the rest, without which virtues, the spiritual life is like a barge without oars, or like a ship without sails. For without these virtues, we should not have anything to move and incite us to do good works.

For (considering that the way of virtue is so sharp and full of difficulty) what should become of us, if we had not these spurs and encouragements of love, of fear, and of hope, to spur and prick us forwards to labor and travel in it? Therefore, these virtues are so much commended. For besides that they are such principal virtues, (as we have already declared,) they are also very great encouragements and motions, to move us to do good works.

This foundation being now laid, I say, that the greatest praise we give to the virtue of consideration is, that it is a great minister and helper to all these virtues, as well of the one sort as of the other, as we will now declare. Where also it shall appear that the commendation we give to this virtue, is not so much in respect of the virtue itself, as for the service and ease it brings to other virtues.

II. How consideration helps faith

Now therefore to take our first beginning of faith: it is manifest, that faith is the first beginning and foundation of all virtues. For faith makes us to believe, that God is our Creator, our Governor, and Redeemer, our Sanctifier, our Justifier, our Glorifier, in short, our beginning and our last end.

Faith teaches us, that there is another life after this, and that there shall be a general judgment of all our works, and that we shall receive either everlasting glory for the good, or else everlasting pain for the evil. And it is clear, that the faith and belief men have in these things, bridle their hearts, and cause them to stand in awe, and to live in the fear of God. For if faith were not among us, as a means to bridle and direct us in life, what would become of the life of man? And therefore, the Prophet said (Rom. 1:17, Heb 10:38, Gal 3:11, Abac. 2:4): that the just man lives by faith: because faith (by means of the representation and consideration of those things

that it teaches us) incites us to refrain from sin and wickedness, and to follow virtue and goodness. And this is the cause why the Apostle wills us to take faith as a shield, against all the fiery darts of the enemy. For certainly there is no better shield against the darts of sin, than to call those things to mind that faith has revealed to us against it.

Therefore, that this faith may work this effect in us, it is very much required that sometimes we ponder and consider in our minds the things our faith teaches us, with good attention and devotion. For if we do not do so, it seems that our faith shall be to us, as it were a letter closed up and sealed, in which although there come notable important news of very great sorrow and or joy; yet it moves us not at all, neither to the one nor to the other, no more than if we had received no letter at all. And the reason is, because we have not opened the letter, nor considered what things are contained in it.

Now, what thing could be said more aptly, or more to the purpose, touching the faith of the wicked and dissolute Christians? For surely there cannot be things of greater terror and joy, than those, which our faith declares to us. But the wicked Christians, because they never open this letter, to see what things are contained in it, (I mean hereby because they never think and meditate on these mysteries of our Christian faith, or if they think on them, they pass them over very lightly and in great haste,) they cause not in them this manner of motion and alteration, to wit, of joy or of fear.

Therefore it benefits us sometimes to open this letter of our faith, I mean its mysteries, and to read it very leisurely; and to consider with good attention, what things are taught us in it; which is done by means of the exercise of consideration. For it is consideration that opens that which is locked, and unfolds that which is folded together, and makes that clear to us, which is otherwise dark and obscure. And so, by illuminating our understanding with the greatness of the mysteries of our faith, it inclines our will, (so far as appertains to the office of consideration) to conform our life to it.

This office of consideration, God figured very notably in the Law, when among the conditions that were required in the clean beast, he assigned this for one, that the beast should chew the cud, to wit, the meat that it

had eaten before. Now it is certain, that it was little to the purpose, whether the beast were clean or unclean (Levit. 11:5, Deut. 14:4), and surely God made little account of that; but his meaning was; to represent to us in that clean beast, the condition, office, and exercise of those beasts, that be spiritually clean, (to wit, of the just and righteous persons) that are not content only to eat such things as appertain to God, in believing them by faith, but after they have eaten them, they do also chew them by means of consideration, in searching and pondering the mysteries which they believe.

And after they have understood the meaning and excellency of them, they distribute and divide this meat to all the spiritual members of the soul, for their sustentation and repairing.

In so much, that if we mark this matter well, we shall find, that it fares in this case as in the seed of a tree, which although it virtually contains within the substance of the tree, yet it needs the virtue and influence of heaven, and the benefit and moisture of the earth, to cause the virtue, that is enclosed in the seed, to come forth to light, and to grow up little by little, and become a tree.

Even though in like manner we say, that although faith is the first seed, and original of all our weal, yet it must be helped with this benefit of consideration, that by it, and by means of charity, the green and fruitful tree of life (which is virtually contained in it,) may grow and come to light.

III. How consideration helps hope

Consideration helps also no less the virtue of hope. This hope is an affection of our will, that has its motive and root in the understanding. As the Apostle S. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans signifies plainly to us, saying; *All things that are written are written for our learning: that we through patience and consolation, which the Scriptures teaches to us, might have hope and trust in God.* (Rom 15:4). For undoubtedly the holy Scripture is the fountain, from where the just man gathers the water of comfort, with which he strengthens himself to put his hope and trust in God. For first of all, he sees in the Holy Scriptures, the greatest of the works and merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, which are the principal foundation of our hope. There he sees likewise in a thousand places, the greatness of the goodness, sweetness, and majesty of God, lively

expressed and set out to the eye; and within the merciful loving providence he has over them; the gentleness and benignity with which he receives them that come to him, and the faithful promises and pledges he has given to them, by which they are very well assured that he will never forsake them that repose their hope and trust in him. There he sees, that there is no one thing more often repeated in the Psalms, more commonly promised in the Prophets, more evidently declared in the histories from the beginning of the world, than the loving favors, graces and benefits, that the Lord continually bestows on his servants, and how he has more merciful helped and defended them in all their calamities and distresses. How he helped Abraham in all his journeys; Jacob in his dangers, Joseph in his banishments; David in his persecutions; Job in his adversities; Tobias in his blindness; Judith in her enterprise; Esther in her petition; the noble Machabees in their battles and triumphs; and to be short, as many as with humble and religious hearts committed themselves to him.

These and other similar examples strengthen and encourage our hearts in labors and adversities, and cause it to hope and trust assuredly in God. Now what does consideration work in all this? Indeed it takes this medicine into her hands, and applies it to the weak and diseased member that has need of it; I mean hereby, that consideration brings all these things into our remembrance, and represents them to our heart; it searches and weighs the greatness of these loving pledges and mercies of God, and with them, animates and encourages the afflicted person, that he be not dismayed, but rather fortified with a strong hope, and induces him also to put his trust in that most merciful and loving Lord, who never failed anyone, that had recourse to him with all his heart.

By this therefore you see dear Christian reader, how consideration is the minister and servant of hope, and how it serves her, and represents to her all such things as may strengthen and encourage her. But that man that does not consider any of these things, and has no eyes to see any part of them, how can he possibly strengthen, and fortify this venue of hope in himself, that it may be profitable to him in labors and adversities?

IV. How consideration helps charity

After hope, follows charity, whose praises cannot be uttered in few words. For charity is the most excellent virtue of all virtues, both

theological and cardinal. Charity is the life and soul of them all; and charity is also the accomplishment of all the Law. For as the Apostle said: *he that loves* (that is, he that is in perfect charity) *has fulfilled the Law.* (1 Cor 1:3, 2:13, Rom 13:10, Mat 11:30). This is the virtue that makes the yoke of God sweet, and his burden light. This is the measure, by which the portion of glory that shall be given to us in the life to come must be measured. This is that virtue that is liking and acceptable to God, and for whose sake, all such things are very acceptable to him. For truly without charity, neither faith, nor prophecy, nor martyrdom, are of any value in the sight of God. To conclude, charity is the fountain and origin of all other virtues, by reason of the preeminence and sovereignty it has to command them, and to make them to do their offices; as the same Apostle confirms, saying: *charity is patient and benign; charity is not envious, it does not hurt any man, it is not proud or ambitious, neither it seeks its own personal advantage. Charity is not angry, it thinks no evil, it rejoices not at wicked deeds, and it is very glad of the truth. Charity suffers all things, believes all things, trusts all things and bears all things.* (1 Cor 13:4)

Now although it is true, that all virtues and good works help us toward obtaining this most excellent and precious jewel; yet of all others, consideration helps us most specially. For it is certain, that our will is a blind power, that cannot step one foot, unless the understanding goes before and illuminates and teaches it, what ought to desire, and how much it ought to will and desire it.

It is also certain, (as Aristotle affirmed) that each good thing is amiable in itself and that everything naturally loves its own proper benefit.

How we are encouraged to love God, in his perfections and in his love for us.

To the intent therefore that our will may be inclined to love God, it is required, that the understanding goes before it, to examine and try, and so consequently, to declare to the will, how amiable God is, both in respect to himself, (in his divine perfections,) as also in respect of us, (in his wonderful love and mercies showed towards us;) that is the understanding must weigh the greatness and excellence of his bounty and goodness, of his benignity, of his mercy, of his beauty, of his sweetness, of his meekness,

of his liberality, of his nobleness, and of all his other perfections, which are innumerable.

Besides this, the understanding has to consider, how loving and merciful God has been towards us; how much he has loved us; how much he has done and suffered for our sakes, even from the manger, until his very death on the Cross; how many great blessings and benefits he has prepared for us for the time to come; how many he presently bestows on us; from how many great evils and miseries he has delivered us; with great patient he has suffered us; and how gently and loving he has dealt with us; with all his other benefits, which are also innumerable.

And thus, by considering and pondering very much in the consideration of these things, our heart shall little by little be enkindled and inflamed in the love of such a merciful and bountiful Lord. For if the very wild and savage beasts, love their benefactors, and if gifts (as it is commonly said) breaks the hard and stony rocks; and if that man that finds benefits, finds with them (as the philosopher said) *chains whereby to take and bind men's hearts*, what heart is there then to stony and savage, that considering the bountiful goodness and greatness of these inestimable benefits, is not enkindled and inflamed in the love of our most merciful and loving Lord?

How God will help him, that helps himself

Add also unto this, that when man considers these things attentively with himself, and endeavors with the grace of God to do so much as he is able to do for his part, God will then also do that, that appertains to him that is, God will move him, that moves himself, and help him that helps himself: by helping his consideration with the light of the Holy Spirit, and with the gift of understanding; which the more it penetrates and understands all these reasons that induce us to the love of God, the more it enkindles and inflames us in the love of him.

For like as that everlasting light and word of the Father, is not a barren word, but a fruitful word, which together with the Father, produces the Holy Spirit; which is a love consubstantial; in a similar way, this light and word of God works in our hearts, by enkindling and inspiring this love of God in them.

How Vehement Acts of Charity Are a Means to Increase Charity

This may be still confirmed and declared more plainly by another reason. For it is manifest, that although this virtue of charity grows and increases (as we have said) with the acts of all other virtues, being done in the state of grace; yet it chiefly increases with her own proper acts, when such acts are vehement.

For like as by writing well, and with an earnest care and diligence, a man attains to be a good writer; by painting, a painter; and by the exercise of singing, a musician; similarly, by loving, he may become a lover, I mean that, like as the use of writing well, causes a man to be a good writer; and of painting well, a good painter, likewise the use, exercise, and continuance of loving much God, makes a man at length to become a great lover of God. For even though, this heavenly ability and virtue, is a gift of God, a thing which he infuses, pours and works in our souls, yet nevertheless he works this by this means. I mean hereby, that the virtues infused into our souls by God, as well as the virtues acquired, (namely, the virtues that are obtained by our own effort) both of them grow and increase with the exercise of their own acts, although in a different manner.

From which we may infer, that the more a man shall multiply the acts of the love of God, and the more he shall exercise himself in this virtue of charity, and the longer he shall endure and persevere in this works of love, the more this heavenly gift of charity shall be rooted and fortified in him. But now, how can this be done without the exercise of consideration? How can the will be occupied in loving of God, without the understanding being exercised in blowing, enkindling, and discovering the causes of the love of God?

For as when two horses draw in a chariot, the one cannot go forward without the other; these two powers, to wit, the will and understanding, are linked together in such a way, that ordinarily one cannot go forward without the other; (at the least, the will cannot move without the understanding.) You see now good Christian reader, how inwardly and entirely the exercise of consideration is annexed to the love of God. For a man can never (or very hardly) lead himself to love unless he also considers, or have before considered, things that may move him to this love.

Charity is as it were a stranger in this transitory life

Besides, it is very needed for us, to use some exercise of consideration, not only for the increasing of the virtue of charity, but also for its preservation, that is to say, consideration is necessary, not only that charity may increase, but also that it may not fail and decrease, among so many contradictions and stumbling blocks, as there are in this frail and miserable life. We see that a fish being out of the water dies; and a drop of water, being out of the sea, is quickly dried up; and the fire being out of its natural region, is consumed, unless there is same care and diligence used to feed and maintain it, by putting often wood to it, with which to preserve it. Now the fire of charity also has the very same need to be preserved in this life, where it is a stranger and pilgrim. And the wood with which it must be preserved, is the consideration of the benefits of God, and of his perfections. For each one of these things being well considered, is a fagot, or a firebrand, that enkindles and inflames this fire of the love of God in our hearts.

Therefore, it profits us to nourish and maintain this fire of charity, often with the wood of consideration, that this divine flame may never fail in us. According to what God signified in the Law, when he said, *Upon my Altar* (which is the heart of the just man) *there shall always be fire* (Levit. 6:12). And therefore, let good diligence and care be taken every day in the morning, to maintain this fire of charity with wood, (to wit, with the consideration of all these things) that by this means it may be always preserved. And so it is said in the Psalm: *Through my meditation, there is enkindled a fire*, to wit, the fire of eternity.

That all virtues may be lost by discontinuance, and want of use and exercise of them.

This necessity of consideration may be proved by another reason also. For we see by experience in all abilities and graces, both natural, and are acquired (I mean, gotten by our own effort,) that they increase by use and exercise; however, they are also forgotten, if we stop exercising them.

And this we see plainly verified even in things very naturally, and currently used. For what is more usual than the tongue and language, with which a man is inured and acquainted, even from his mother's breasts, and yet may it be forgotten in time, if it is not used and exercised? But what speak I of the tongue; seeing it happens sometimes, that when a man has

lied sick in his bed, but only four or five months, he can scarcely afterwards stand to walk again when he rises, notwithstanding that walking is a thing so natural and so ordinarily used. Now, if the abilities which are so natural and so much exercised decay so much when they are not used, what will the supernatural abilities do, which are certain props and stays adjoined to us, to supply the defects of nature? And if charity with all other virtues infused, is similarly to be reckoned in this account, in what case then shall we be, if we exercise our souls in them very seldom or never? For if that thing that is even natural, will be lost for want of exercise, how much more will that be lost, that is supernatural? And if that thing may be lost that is made rotten even in our very bowels, what shall that do, that is, as it were, only fastened to us with little pins?

Again, if it were true that all amity and friendship is both preferred and increased, by means of familiarity and communication: and by the want thereof is utterly quenched and lost, (as Aristotle affirmed,) what shall then become of those persons, that have no manner of communication with God and his saints? And what can we hope of them than never speak with him, nor he with them, nor so much as think, consider, or create of any heavenly matter?

You see then (dear Christian brother) of how great importance the exercise of consideration, and communication with God is to us, for the preservation of this virtue of charity.

V. How consideration helps devotion

The help of consideration is no less beneficial for the virtues called affective: that is, appertaining to the affection, which we have mentioned before. Among them, one of the most principal is devotion: which is a certain heavenly ability and gift, that inclines our will to desire all things that appertain to the service God with great affection and earnestness; which is one of the things that man needs the most, in this state of nature corrupted. For we see by experience, that men sin, not so much for lack of understanding, as for lack of will; I mean, that they sin not so much for lack of knowledge of what is good, as for being unwilling to do what they know to be good.

Our own will is the principal impediment that hinders us from virtue

And this unwillingness does not proceed from the nature of virtue, (which of itself is most sweet, delectable, and very agreeable to man's nature,) but from the corruption of man.

Now, considering that this defect of our will, is the main and principal impediment we have to hinder us from virtue and goodness, our principal care must be, to seek a remedy for the curing of this defect; for which purpose, one of the things that helps most, is devotion.

The wonderful effect that devotion works on a man

For devotion is nothing else than a heavenly refreshing, and a blast of inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that breaks and makes his way through all these difficulties, shakes off this heaviness, cures this loathsomeness of our will, and causes us to have a taste and favor in that thing, that was otherwise unsavory, and by which makes us very prompt, agile, and quick to all goodness. And this wonderful effect of devotion, the servants of God try daily, and perceive by experience in themselves, at what time they have some great and singular devotion. For then they find themselves more willing and enthusiastic to all labor and pains, than they are at other times. And then it seems, that the youth of their souls rejoices, and is renewed; and then they try by experience in themselves, the truth of those words of the Prophet, where he said: *They that trust in the Lord, shall renew their strength: they shall take wings, as if were of an eagle, they shall run and not be weary: they shall go and not faint.* (Psalm 103:5, Is. 40:31)

That Devotion Is a continual spring of Good and holy desires

Devotion has also another property which is, as a certain fountain, and perpetual spring of good and holy desires. For which cause in the Holy Scriptures, it is commonly called an ointment, which is compounded of many sorts of fragrant spices, which yield out many sweet odors (Cant. 1 & 4). Now devotion also has a very similar operation, for when it endures in our hearts, it wholly spreads itself out into a thousand various kinds of holy purposes and desires, which the more they increase and are dilated, the more the stench of our appetite decrease and diminish, which are the evil desires that proceed from it. For as the evil odor in a sick man's

chamber, is not so much perceived when there is a little frankincense, or some other fragrant substance burnt in it; similarly, the odor of our evil desires is not so much perceived, as long as the sweetest odor of this precious ointment continues within us.

And as it is certain, that all the corruption of our life, comes from the corruption and stench of our appetite, and from the evil desires that proceed from it, it shall be our part therefore, to use great diligence in procuring this heavenly ointment of devotion, which has very great force and efficacy, to diminish and consume this pestilent corruption.

And in the same way, as consideration serves in all circumstances, it also serves and furthers all the other virtues mentioned above, which are, the fear of God, the sorrow of our sins, the contempt of ourselves; in which consists the virtue of humility and thanksgiving to God for his benefits.

For (as we have said before) there can be no good affection in the will, unless it proceeds from some consideration of the understanding. For how can a man have sorry and contrition for his sins, but by considering the filthiness and multitude of them? The loss we receive by them? The hatred God conceives against them? And besides, how polluted the soul of man remains by reason of them.

Again, how can a man stir up his heart, to the fear of God, but by considering the highness of God, his majesty, the greatness of his justice, the profoundness of his judgments, and also the multitude of his own sins, with other similar things? How can a man humble and despise himself with all his heart, unless he considers the great number of his own frailties, infirmities, falls and miseries? For if humility is (as S. Bernard affirms) the contempt of self which proceeds from the knowledge of ourselves, it is manifest that the deeper a man shall wade by means of consideration into this knowledge of himself, and the more he shall dig into this dunghill, the better and more truly he shall understand what he is of himself, and the more he shall contempt and humble himself.

Now to speak of thanksgiving to God for his manifold inestimable benefits, out of which proceed those songs and praises to God (which is a principal part of true religion) from where (I say) do this rendering of thanks proceed, but the profound consideration of the same benefits? For the more by means of consideration, a man penetrates, and understands

the greatness and excellence of God's benefits, the more is he incited to praise, and give thanks to God, with all his heart for them.

I also pass here over the contempt of the world, and the hatred of sin, with other similar virtuous affections, which proceed from this exercise of consideration, which is the spur and provoker of them all, and the oil with which the lamp of all these virtues and good affections, and of other similar graces, are still nourished and maintained.

VI. How prayer and consideration help all virtuous affections

Likewise, prayer when it is joined with consideration (as ordinarily it is wont to be) helps no less than consideration itself: sometimes it helps much more. For consideration commonly is only about enkindling some of the virtuous affections; but prayer when it is attentive and devout, and if besides accompanied with spirit and fervor of mind, is apt to stir up all these virtues aforesaid. For when the soul presents herself before God, with an earnest great desire to appease his wrath, and to desire mercy from him, then there is no stone so hard, that it is removed.

I mean, that there is no holy affection, but that it is the whole exercised and employed to this purpose. And it fares in this case as it does with a mother, that is desirous to feed her child, or as it does with a good and loving wife, that has a desire to pacify her husband when she perceives him to be angry, in which cases, they are inclined to omit no means they can devise, that may any way further their purpose.

The offices and effects of prayer

In the exercise of prayer, the religious soul accuses herself before God; there with the publican she is confounded; and ashamed for her sins and offences: there she purposes an amendment of life; there she humbles herself and trembles before the supreme divine Majesty. There she believes; there she hopes; there she loves; there she adores, there she prays; there she gives thanks for all benefits; and there she offers sacrifice to God, both for herself, and for all her neighbors. All these things are performed in devout prayer.

And because the habits of virtue increase with the exercise of their acts. By means of this exercise of prayer, the soul remains very much beautified, and perfected in these virtues, as Laurentius Justinianus affirms in the

words: In true and earnest prayer, the soul is cleansed from sin. Charity is nourished; faith is illuminated, hope is strengthened, the spirit is comforted, the bowels are mollified, the heart is quieted; truth is discovered, temptation is overcome, heaviness is put to flight, the senses are revived, the strength that was weakened is repaired, lukewarmness is abandoned, the rustiness of vices is consumed, and in this exercise lively sparkles of heavenly desires rise and show themselves, among which the flame of the love of God burns.

By this we understand, that prayer is a most convenient exercise, for that man that minds to reform his manner of life, and to change himself into another man; as our Savior has plainly signified to us, in the mysteries of his glorious transfiguration, of which S. Luke wrote: *As he was praying in the mount, he suddenly transfigured himself in such manner, that his face shined very bright, like the sun, and his garments became white, like snow.* (Lk 9:28)

Why our Savior would transfigure himself at that time of prayer, rather than at any other time

Our Savior could have transfigured at other times than at prayer, if it had pleased him; but he was transfigured while he was at prayer, to signify to us in the transfiguration of his body, what the virtue of prayer has to transfigure our souls: that is, to make them lose the customs of the old man, and to clothe them with the new man, which is created after the image of God. There it is, where the understanding is illuminated with the beams of the true sun of justice, and where garments and ornaments of the soul are renewed, and become whiter than snow. This is the very thing that God signified to holy Job, when he said: *Is it by your wisdom that the hawk prunes and changes her feathers, when she spreads his wings toward the south?* (Job 39:26) Certainly it is a great thing to be wondered at this bird knowing how to cast off her old feathers, and how to feather herself with new. And that for this purpose, she seeks the hot air of the south, that pores may be opened with its heat, and, the old feathers fall off with her moving, and so give place to the new that are begging to spring out. But how much more wonderful is it, to see a soul unclthe herself of Adam and to put on Christ? To change the conditions of the old man, and to adorn herself with the conditions of the new man? Now this change that is so

wonderful, is then wrought, when the devout soul turns himself to the south, and there beats her wings in the air. And what is it to turn herself to the south, but to lift up her spirit to the consideration of the eternal light, and the beams of the true sun of justice?

And what is to beat the wings in the air, but sighing and panting with heavenly affections and desires, calling upon God with great anguish of mind, and desiring most humbly his favor and grace? For then blows the air of the south, that is, the heavenly refreshing of the Holy Spirit, who his temperate heat and sweet moving, strengthens and helps us, to cast off all the old feathers of the old Adam, that they may give place to the new feathers of virtues and holy desires, which begin to grow and bud out. And this is that thing that Ecclesiasticus signified by other words, when he said: *They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and sanctify their souls before him.* (Eccl. 2:18)

Which is principally done in the exercise of devout prayer; for it is there, where the soul presents herself most familiarly before God (as S. Bernard said). And there it is, by approaching the everlasting light, she sees more clearly her own defects and so grieves and accuses them and seeks remedy for them, desiring the Lord's grace, and full looking for an amendment on her part; and thus, little by little, she sanctifies and amends her life. You see now, good Christian reader, what a great help this exercise of consideration is, towards the obtaining of those most high and excellent virtues, which are (as we have said) peculiar to a Christian man.

VII. How consideration helps the four cardinal virtues

Besides, consideration helps obtain the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, as Saint Bernard affirms in this book of consideration, by these words: *First of all, consideration purifies and cleanses its very fountain, which is the soul. Besides that, it governs our natural passions, it directs our works, it corrects our faults, it frames our manners, it beautifies and directs our life; in short, it gives knowledge to a man, of things both divine and human.*

It is consideration that distinguishes things confounded, it recollects those that are scattered abroad, it searches secrets, it seeks for truths, and tries and examines such things as are indeed but apparent and counterfeit. It is consideration that disposes for the time to come and thinks of the time

past, providing the one and bewailing the others, that nothing may remain without correct and due chastisement. It is consideration that in the midst of prosperity foresees adversity, and therefore is not dismayed when it comes; for that it has prevented the same beforehand with consideration. Of which two things, the one appertains to prudence, the other to fortitude.

It is consideration that sits down as a judge, to give sentence between pleasure and necessity, and appoints to even their bounds and limits; giving to necessity that which is sufficient, and taking from pleasure that which is superfluous, and in so doing, it makes and forms the virtue of temperance unto which this office appertains.

Thus far the words of Saint Bernard, by which you may perceive how great and general a help consideration is, towards the obtaining of these virtues.

VIII. How consideration helps to resist vices

Consideration does not only help to obtain virtues, but also to resist the vices contrary to them. For what kind of temptation is there, against which a man does not fight, with the weapons of prayer and consideration? For although it is most necessary to use other weapons for this purpose, as fasting, alms deeds, affliction of the body, and keeping it under, and avoid the occasions of evils, with other similar things; yet what other weapons can be devised more ready, and as it were, ever at hand, than prayer and consideration? With what other weapons does the just man fight, and overcome in these battles, than with them?

If he is assaulted with cogitation of carnal pleasure and delight, he hides himself wholly in the holes of the rock, that is in the precious wounds of our Savior Jesus Christ crucified. If he is assaulted with anger and desire of revenge, he thinks on the wonderful patience and meekness of our Savior Jesus Christ, and on those sweet words he spoke, when he desired pardon on the cross for those very persons that crucified him.

If he is enticed with gluttony and delicious fare; if he is allured with the desire to lay in soft bed, and lead a delicate and wanton life, he lifts up his eyes, and considers the bitter gall and vinegar, which that fountain of life, our sweet Savior Jesus Christ, drank on the cross on which he died; and the painful and austere troublesome life that he led for our sakes. When he

begins to be puffed up with pride, he considers the great humility of our Savior Jesus Christ. When he is moved with covetousness, he considers the extremity of the poverty of our Savior Jesus Christ. When sleep and slothfulness makes him to become heavy and dull, he considers the painful watchings and travails, that our Savior endured for us in his prayers.

When he is wearied with troublesome labors and pains of this present life, he considers the greatness of the heavenly treasures, and glorious delights which he shall receive in the life to come. When he is tempted with the fickle pleasures and delights of this miserable world, he considers the everlastingness and bitterness of the horrible pains and torments of hell fire.

When he is molested and wearied with the cross, he thinks upon the virtuous examples of the martyrs, of the apostles, and of the prophets, and with the consideration of that which is past, he causes all that he does presently to seem little to him. And when it so happens that with all these defenses, he cannot sustain the weight of his burden well, he adds the voice of prayer to the diligence of consideration, calling and crying with great anguish of mind upon God who (be you well assured) will never forsake them that call upon him, but promises that he will give care to them; and has given us very manifest and abundant examples, that he never forsakes them that called on him with all their hearts.

This is that, which the holy Prophet King David affirmed in many places, when he saw himself encompassed by the snares of his enemies, and with tribulations and afflictions, saying: *I cry with my voice to the Lord, with my voice I make supplication to the Lord, I pour out my complaint before him, I tell my trouble before him. (Ps. 142:1-2).*

IX. How consideration does not exclude other particular helps to virtues

Although, let no man for all this imagine that the particular labor and study, that is to be used for every one of the other virtues, is not needed, because consideration is so great a help to obtain them. For general helps do not exclude the particular helps that are required in everything. And the general helps required to obtain all virtues, are not only consideration, but also fasting, prayer, hearing of the Word, receiving the sacrament of the

body and blood of Christ, with other similar virtues, which are general helps and encouragements to all virtues. But besides these general helps that give light to the understanding, and move the will to goodness, it is very much required also to use the proper exercises of the same virtues, by which to root, and make their habits more perfect by use, and to facilitate the exercise of good works. For otherwise, like the sword that never comes out of the scabbard, is commonly very hard to be drawn out, at the time that a man has need of it; whoever never exercises himself in the virtues, shall never be prompt or quick in doing them, when he needs them.

And although charity is the greatest, and most general help we have to all virtues, yet consideration is, as it were, the general instrument of charity, by which to attain all goodness, as we have here declared. And therefore, like the soul is the first beginning of all the works of man, and yet it uses natural heat, as a general instrument, so charity is the beginning of all our good works, and yet charity uses consideration and devotion, as general instruments to bring them about.

So that it is no derogation to charity to give its preeminence to these virtues; for so much as its preeminence belongs to charity, as to the mistress and principal agent; but also, to consideration and devotion as to its instruments and helpers.

X. How prayer appertains not only to the clergy but also to the laity

But per adventure you will say, that these exercises of prayer, consideration, and meditation appertain only to clergy persons, and not to the laity. True it is, I grant, that these exercises principally appertain to clergy persons, by reason of their state and professions of life; but nevertheless, the laity are not excluded of using the exercise of prayer, if they mind continually to preserve themselves, and to live in the fear of God without committing any deadly sin. For the laity are bound to have faith, hope and charity, humility, the fear of God, contrition, devotion, and a hatred against sin.

Now seeing all these virtues are for the most part affective virtues, (as we have already declared) which affections most necessarily proceed of some consideration of the understanding, if this consideration is not

exercised, how shall these virtues be preserved? How shall a man help himself by faith, if he does not sometimes consider such things as his faith tells him? How shall he be enkindled in charity, and strengthened in hope? How shall he bridle himself with the fear of God? How shall he be moved to devotion, to sorrow for his sins, and to the contempt of himself (wherein consists the virtue of humility, which appertains to all kinds of persons), if he does not consider those things, with which these affections are to be enkindled, as we have declared above?

Neither ought a man to pass over these things in the exercise of consideration, with too much speed and in haste. For among the miseries of man's heart one of the greatest is, that it is so sensible to understand the things of the world, and so unsensible to understand the things appertaining to God. One is like a very dry reed; and the other like a green wood, that cannot be set on fire and enkindled, but with very great effort.

Therefore, we must not in our exercise of consideration, pass over these things in such haste, but stay and pause for a time in them, more or less as the Holy Spirit instructs us; and also, as the business and occupations of every man in his state and vocation of life give him leave. And it is not a matter of mere necessity, to have certain times reserved every day for consideration.

Unto these things you may add furthermore, with all the great difficulties men have, to preserve themselves without deadly sins, in a body so evil disposed, and in a world so dangerous, and among so many enemies, as we have continually assaulting us on every side. And therefore, if you are no clergyman, your state of life does not bind you to the exercise of prayer and meditation; yet the greatness of the danger, in which you live in the world, must bind you to use some of that exercise.

Note that the laity live in more danger of falling into deadly sin than the clergy

The state of a clergyman, I confess, is greater than yours, but your danger of falling into deadly sin, is also greater than his. For the clergyman is protected and guarded by his study, by obedience, by prayers, by fastings, by saying the daily divine office, by the authority of his ministry, by good company and holy conversation, and by other spiritual exercises;

but the layman living, practicing, and dealing daily and hourly in the throng and pressure of the world (besides that he is destitute, and unprovided of all these great helps and safeguards) he is surrounded on all sides, with dragons and scorpions, and threads always upon serpents and basilisks. I mean the dangerous conversation with wicked persons, and the continual occasions and temptations of falling into deadly sin, both at home and abroad, within himself, and without himself, both at doors and at windows, and has a thousand devilish engines and snares, laid to entrap him at all times both day and night.

Among all those dangers and temptations, for him to keep his heart pure, and his eyes chaste, and his body clean, in the midst of the raging fires of youth, of naughty company, of lewd conversation, and among so many evil examples of this wicked world, where there is scarcely one word of God heard; but rather jesting and scoffing at all those given to virtue and goodness, it is one of the greatest wonders that God works in the world. Therefore, if the clergyman ought to be always armed, because he is by his profession a man of war; similarly, the layman must be armed also, by reason of the great peril and danger in which he lives. As those that have enemies, soldiers, and men of war go armed.

The soldiers go armed by reason of the bond and duty of their profession, and the others go armed by necessity. Among those spiritual weapons, we do not only place prayer, consideration, and meditation; but also fasting, diligent hearing of the preached word, reading of devout books, often receiving the holy sacraments, avoiding evil company, resisting the occasions of sins, with all other virtues bringing under control our rebellious bodies.

All these things are, as it were a certain brine and pickle, to keep and preserve this corruptible and evil inclined flesh of ours, that it may not breed worms and stench in it. For undoubtedly, since the corruption of original sin, it is the greatest and hardest matter of the world, for us to keep ourselves without deadly sin, living in this corrupt and dissolute wicked world. For if those very persons, that use all the spiritual helps and exercises, are, nevertheless, much molested with the fear, and danger of falling into deadly sin; what shall become of those, that never use any of all these spiritual exercises scarcely in their life?

And if the holy King David, and many other saints (that lived so warily and virtuously, and went armed with so many kinds of spiritual weapons) nevertheless took such great falls, at what time the occasions of sin were ministered to them, what shall become of them that make no use of any of these spiritual exercises?

XI. Prayer also encouraged for laity

But you will say, I am not bound to keep any more than the commandments of God and of his Church. True it is, I grant. But yet to keep well this wall, we have need of a fore-wall or bulwark; and to keep this vessel, we have need of a cupboard to keep it in; and to raise up this building, we need a scaffold, and other engines with which to raise it up. I mean thereby, that to keep the Law of God, we need many things, to strengthen and encourage our hearts, for keeping an observing the Law.

For if the nature of man in so good a plight was as it was before sin, then it would be a very easy matter to fulfil our duty; but now (alas) having so many contradictions, we need to have ever two cares, one how to keep the Law of God; and the other how to strengthen our heart, that may overcome the impediments and contradictions that hinder us from fulfilling the laws and commandments of God.

When the children of Israel returned from captivity in Babylon, they went to build Jerusalem again, and they intended to do nothing else but only to build; but because of the borderers surrounding them, fought to hinder them in their building, their labor and travail was therefore doubled. So that they were constrained to appoint one part of the people to attend to the building, and the other to fight and drive away their enemies from the wall. (Neh. 4:7)

Now in our case, whereas there are so many enemies that daily and hourly seek to hinder us in this spiritual building of virtues; the devils on one side, with a thousand subtle snares and deceits; the world on the other side, with a thousand kinds of scandalous offences and evil examples; and the flesh in the midst, with various and sundry kinds of appetites, which are so fiery and so contrary to the law of God (for God requires charity, and the flesh longs after sensuality; God requires humility, and the flesh seeks after vanity; God would have austerity of life, and the flesh hunts after delights and pleasures;) if now there are no spiritual

weapons exercised to drive away these enemies; if there are no medicines used to cure this corrupted flesh, how shall a man keep charity among so many dangers, charity among so many malicious deceits; cleanness of life, in a body of filth; and humility, in a world so much given to pompous pride and vain glory?

Now to cure this flesh, and to make resistance against these enemies, that hinder us in this building of virtues, we need other virtues. Some to carry the burden, and others to help carry it. For the virtue of charity fulfills the burden of the commandment, which says: *You shall not commit adultery*: but fasting, prayer, avoiding occasions of sin, and other similar holy exercises, help mortify the flesh, that it may be better able to bear this burden. All those virtues, although they are not always of precept and binding duty, yet they are often very necessary, whenever the danger in which we are is so great, that it requires their exercise, for the keeping and fulfilling of the commandments.

But among these virtues, and defenses (that help us to observe the commandments,) one of the most important is prayer. For prayer is a principal means to obtain grace, which is the thing that is of chiefest force, to sustain the burden of the Law of God. And therefore, Ecclesiasticus says, *he that keeps the Law, multiplies prayer*. (Eccl. 35:1). For as he sees by experience, that none can keep the Law of God (by the observation of which everlasting glory is obtained) without the grace of God (Matt. 19:17), he helps himself by prayer to obtain grace, by means of which he may be able to keep the Law of God.

The Law commands us to be chaste. But besides this, the Holy Spirit adds, and said by the wise man: *Understanding that none could be chaste unless you (Lord) gave him the grace for it, and it was a great grace to know whose gift it was. I went to the Lord, and I begged of him this grace with all my heart*. (Wis. 8:21, 1 Cor 15:10, Phil. 2:13, 4:13)

Whereby you may see (according as we declared in the beginning) that the wall needs a fore-wall or bulwark, and the vessel needs a cupboard to keep it in; and some virtues need other virtues to defend and guard one another.

Now if this is true, that you are bound to keep the Law of God, and not to commit any deadly sin, it is good reason, that you seek out all such

means, as may help you to keep the same Law, and to preserve you without deadly sin.

The which means, although generally they are but of counsel, yet sometimes they are of precept, when the necessity of exercising them (as we have said) is so great, that without the use of those means, the very commandments themselves cannot be kept and fulfilled, as all the learned divines affirms.

Nonetheless every Christian, has an earnest desire of his salvation, ought not to expect, and delay the seeking for these remedies, until the very last and extreme danger, when the knife is already at this throat; but he ought to make good provision, and to furnish himself beforehand, by means of these foresaid spiritual exercises, that he may live safer and more secure, from the peril of breaking God's commandments.

XII. Of the matter of consideration

Having now spoken both of the profit and necessity of consideration, and our hearts being now well affected towards this virtue, let us begin to treat of the matter of consideration, which consists of certain godly and devote considerations, which are of greatest force to induce us to love and fear God, to the abhorring of sin and contempt of the world. For which purpose there is not consideration better, nor of greater force and efficacy, than those that are taken out of the principal articles and mysteries of the faith; as the bitter passion and death of our Savior; the remembrance of the terrible day of judgment; of the horrible torments of hell; of the glory of heaven; of the benefits of God; of our sins, and our life and death; for every one of these points being well weighed and considered, is able to encourage our hearts very much to all the effects above mentioned.

These very points Bonaventure has treated, in a book that he entitled *Patercularius*, and divided it into the seven days of the week. And thus, he did, that a man might have everyday a new food for the soul, and new encouragement to virtue; and to avoid the tediousness, that he should otherwise have, in thinking always about one same matter.

And for this cause, it seems good to me, to follow the same division, and if there is anyone that shall not like this division, but will follow some other, he is at liberty to do so, and has also examples to follow therein; for it does

not matter much, what order and division he follows in it. And surely the best order to be used in these matters is that that each man finds to be the best for himself, and in which he takes most profit and personal advantage. That the word of God, and the consideration of heavenly matters, is the food of our souls

Moreover, I thought it expedient, considering that the food and sustenance of our soul is the word of God, and consideration of heavenly matters, (for our soul is sustained with it in the spiritual life, which consists in the love and fear of God,) that as ordinarily we give to our bodies, nourishment twice a day, to preserve it from fainting in this life; similarly, we should also give to our soul her ordinary refectio twice every day, that she may not fail in her life. Nonetheless this is not a thing of binding duty, nor of precept; but only of wholesome counsel especially considering that the holy saints, prophets, and apostles, have used this exercise often.

We read, that the Prophet Daniel withdrew himself to this exercise three times a day; and the Prophet David also used to praise God few times in the day. And for this cause, we have assigned here two kinds of meditations: the one for the morning, which treats of those points and matters mentioned here; the others for the evening or night, which treat of the most bitter passion of our Redeemer.

But if any man shall have such want of time, or of devotion, that he cannot withdraw himself to this exercise twice a day let him find the means to withdraw himself unto it at the least once in the day. And that he may not lose its fruit, he may exercise himself one week in the one sort, and another week in the other sort. And in so doing, he may taste and take profit of all these godly instructions, which we have here set forth to him.

CHAPTER II: Of the five parts that may be exercised in prayer

I. Preparation

Before we enter into prayer, it is very requisite that we first prepare our hearts to this holy exercise; following the manner and custom of musicians, who use to temper and tune their lute, vial or instrument, before they play it. And therefore, Ecclesiasticus says: *Before you pray, prepare yourself, lest you are as one that tempts God.* (Eccl. 18:23)

To tempt God, is to desire that he should work a miracle in things that may be done by other ordinary means. Seeing therefore that the preparation of the heart is such principal means to obtain devotion; that person who tries to obtain it without this means, shows a desire that God should work a miracle, which is tempting God, according to Ecclesiasticus.

II. Reading

After preparation, it follows that a man reads that matter which he has to meditate on that day, according to the division of the days of the week, which we have made here. And this manner of reading is undoubtedly very necessary for novices and young beginners in this exercise, until a man knows on what he ought to meditate.

III. Meditations

Afterwards, when he is well instructed by the use and practice of certain days, then this reading shall not be so needed, thus he may proceed to meditation.

IV. Thanksgiving

After meditation, there may follow out of hand a devout thanksgiving to God, for all benefits we have received; which ought always to accompany our prayers, as the Apostle exhort us, saying: *Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* (Col. 4:2)

For as S. Augustine said: What thing is there that we can better conceive in our hearts, better pronounce with our mouths, and better write with our pens, than this short sentence *Deo gratias*, thanks be to God? Nothing is

said more briefly, nothing can be heard more sweetly, not understood more joyfully, or done more fruitfully.

V. Petition

The last part is petition, which is properly called prayer, in which we desire of God all profitable things, and salvation for ourselves, our neighbors, and the whole Church of God.

These five parts may be exercised in prayer; and among other benefits, that are to come by it, this is one, that points being duly exercised, to provide to a man great plenty of matter to meditate setting before him all these diversities of meats, that in case he desires not to eat of one, he may yet eat of another, and that when he has finished his meditation in one matter, he may enter into another, and so find a variety of matters in which to continue his meditation.

I know right well, that neither these parts nor this order are always necessary for all persons. Nonetheless, this manner may serve very well for novices and young beginners in this exercise, that they may have some order and direction, to direct themselves at the beginning. For it is certain, that some things are necessary in the beginning to reach an art, which afterwards when they are known, are superfluous. And therefore, of anything that shall be treated here, no one should think, that I intend to make it perpetual law or general rule. For my intent in these instructions is not to make any law, but only to show an introduction, for the directions for novices and beginners. Once they have started by following this introduction, then the use and experience they shall have in this exercise, and much more the Holy Spirit will teach them everything they have to do in it. This having being said in this place, I desire it may be understood in all the rest of this book.

CHAPTER III: Preparation before prayer and meditation

Now it is required for us, to treat particularly of every one of these five parts aforesaid, and first of preparation, which ought to go before the other.

We said even now, that some preparations on our mind before we enter into prayer is very much needed. This preparation may be made in various manners. For a man may dispose himself to prayer, by calling to mind his sins and offences, and namely, the sins he has committed that present day, and he may accuse himself of them, and desire of the Lord pardon for them, according to the saying of the wiseman, *The just man at the beginning is an accuser of himself.* (Prov. 18:17)

This manner of preparation, seems to be as the pulling of our stockings and shoes to enter into the Holy Land, and (as it were) the washing of our garments to go to receive God, when he comes to treat men, and teach them his Holy Law. We are taught to use this manner of preparation even by nature itself. For we see it as a common manner, that we go to request any benefit of any friend of ours whom we have offended, we first desire of him pardon and forgiveness, before we demand any other thing of him. This may be done sometimes with the heart only, and sometimes by saying the general confession, of the fifty-one Psalm; or some other penitent prayers. Good heed must be taken in it, and these prayers should not said in haste, but with as much great quietness, attention, feeling and repentance of heart as we can.

Nonetheless, a man ought not to stay too long in this consideration of this sins (as some persons do, that both begin and end with it, and pass all their whole life in it). For even though this consideration of our sins is always good (and at the beginning very necessary), yet it is appropriate that it is taken with such moderation, so that it does not occupy that time which should be bestowed about other better matters. Neither it is needed in the exercise, for a man to consider very particularly his sins, and namely such, as the remembrance of them may move him to some evil cogitations; but it is sufficient to make (as it were) a bundle of them all, and to drown

them in the bottomless sea of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, with good hope to receive pardon and remedy of him for them.

We may also prepare ourselves to prayer, by considering the majesty and greatness of that Lord, to whom we go to speak in prayer. For this consideration will teach us, with what great reverence and humility, and with how great attention, it behoves such a miserable creature as man, to speak to a Lord of so great majesty as God, concerning a matter of so great importance as his own salutation. But that you may understand the majesty of God to some extent, you must consider, that the heavens, the earth, and all that is created, is no more before the majesty of God, than a little ant, or (as the wiseman says) a grain of weight in the balance. (Wis. 11:119). Now if all creatures are no more than an ant before him, then what shall you seem to be before him, that are such a small a part of the world?

This consideration of the majesty and greatness of God, it is as a profound reverence, that the soul makes within itself, before the throne of that Supreme Majesty, when she enters into his palace to speak with him.

With this manner of humility and reverence the Son of God taught us to pray, when making his prayer, he cast himself prostrate on the ground; giving us to understand, how humble and lowly a man ought to be, and how much he ought to consider his own baseness and vileness, whenever he goes to speak to God. With this spirit and humble reverence, a man may repeat those words of the Holy Patriarch, where he said: *I will speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes.* (Gen 18:27)

But above all this, in this preparation it shall greatly help us to consider well what we are about to do, when we set ourselves to prayer. For if we consider it well, we go to pray for no other purpose, than to receive the spirit of God, and the influences of his grace, and the joy of charity and devotion, with which we see how the souls of just persons are replenished at the end of their long and devout prayers.

Now this being so, you may perceive, with how great humility and reverence, and with how great attention and devotion, you ought to come when you open the mouth of your soul to receive God. Consider with what great and fervent devotion the Holy Apostles were inflamed (Acts 1:14), when they expected and looked for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and by

that may you understand, how you ought to prepare yourself, when you go about to look for and receive the same Holy Spirit, even though it may not be as plentifully and abundantly as the apostles.

By this you see, how closed from all the cares and thoughts of the world you ought to have the gates of your understanding and will, at the time of prayer; and how open they ought to be to God alone, that in case he comes to enter in it, he does not return back again, finding the gates shut against him, or the lodging chambers occupied with other guests.

Now with this preparation and spirit, may you present yourself in prayer before the face of the Lord, as that sick man with dropsy, who stood before him, expecting from his merciful hand to be restored to his health (Lk 14:4); or as the leprous person, who kneeled down at his feet, and said to him humbly: *O Lord if you will you can make me clean.* (Mt 8:2, Mk 1:40)

Consider, that as a little hungry dog stands before his master's table, fawning very earnestly on him with his eyes, and all his body, looking for some little piece of bread to come from his table, similarly you to present yourself before the rich table of the Lord of heaven, confessing yourself to be unworthy of the abundance of his mercies, and most humbly desiring him, to bestow some little portion of it on you for your relief. With this lowly spirit may you say the Psalm: *Ad te levavi oculos meos qui habitas in coelis.* Even though this prayer is very short, yet it is very fit and convenient, to stir up and enkindle affection in preparing yourself to prayer.

This manner of preparation or another that you may use at liberty; but the first seems to be more convenient for the night, when a man ought to examine his conscience, and desire pardon and forgiveness of God, of all such defects and offenses, as he has offended him in that day.

And the second manner of preparation is most fit for the morning, when he rises, before the break of day, to desire then of God, the assistance and help of his grace, by which he may better serve him that day.

That to know how to pray as a man ought is a special gift of God

Because to know how to pray as a man ought, is a very special gift of God, and a work of the Holy Spirit, therefore most humbly you ought to desire of the Lord, both in one preparation and in the other, to instruct you

how to do your duty in it, and to give you grace, that you may speak to him in your prayer, with such attention and devotion, with such recollection and closeness of mind, and with such fear and reverence, as it is convenient to be used before the great Majesty, and a desire for him, that you may persevere in such an endeavor, and spend that little time in this exercise of prayer, that you may in the end arise from it with new force and strength to do all things as appertain to his service.

It is thought also to be a good manner of preparation to say some intercessions or vocal prayers before meditation, of which sort there are many in various books of devotion, and namely in the meditations of S. Augustine and in the Psalter of David, where there are various devout psalms, that will help very much to enkindle and stir up devotion. For it is the property of devout sentences (being said with an earnest mind and attention) to wound the heart, and to lift it up to God; those devout sentences are so much the more convenient, and necessary for us, by how much we find our spirit to be colder, and more distracted.

With what intention man ought to come to prayer

Here I think it necessary to declare with what intention a man ought to come to prayer. For he must not go to it mainly for his own consolation and delight (as some that are great lovers of themselves use to do), but only to fulfill in it the will of God, and to desire of him his grace, and to dispose himself for obtaining it.

And he must submit himself into the hands of God in such a way, that he must be as ready and content to be without consolations in his prayer, as to have them, remitting himself humbly into God's hands to dispose of him, and of all things belonging to him, as his Divine Majesty thinks good; acknowledging on the one side that he does not deserve anything of him, and believing on the other, that although it is very much the case, yet the Lord of infinite goodness and mercy, will do whatever is most convenient and beneficial for his salvation. And therefore, a man ought to content himself, whether the consolation is great or little, and to take in good part whatever usage the Lord shows to him, accounting himself utterly unworthy of all that God bestows on him, and being ready to fulfill all he commands him, not because of the benefits he hopes to receive, but because of those he has already received, and in consideration of his duty

to God. However, we see that many persons do quite the contrary to this rule, and is like young shrewd boys, who unless they are dandled and cockered, will not do what they are commanded.

I think it also required to note here, that when a man intends to pray in the morning, he goes to bed with that care overnight, and like those that intend to bake the next day, use to lay the leaven overnight, similarly a man must present and recommend overnight to the Lord, with a godly carefulness, what he intends to meditate the next day. And in the morning as soon as he awakes, he ought without delay to occupy his heart with this holy thought, before any other enters in his mind. For when the disposition of our heart is such, that whatever thought enters to us first, it seizes and takes possession of our heart in such way for that day, that we shall very hardly afterwards put it away from us. Since the prayer of many persons is very acceptable to the Lord, therefore you shall do well to consider in your prayer both in the morning and evening, what number of God's servants, both men and women in the world, are at that time watching and persevering before the presence of God, humbly confessing their sins before him; and craving pardon for them; and entreating at his hands, such graces and blessings as they need; humbly you ought to join all those persons, so that their presence and sweet remembrance may be to you an encouragement of devotion, and an example of perseverance in your prayer; and also, that whenever you find yourself cold and negligent in prayer, and that some thoughts come into your mind, moving you to end it, you may be ashamed, and reprehend yourself, by the example of so many good and virtuous persons, which with so good attention and carefulness persevere so long time in this exercise of prayer without ceasing, offering their bodies and souls to God in sacrifice.

CHAPTER IV: Of Reading

After preparation follows reading, which ought to be done, not lightly, as passed over in haste, but with very great deliberation and attention, applying to it not only your understanding, to conceive such things as you read, but also your will, to taste those things that you understand. And when you come to any devout place, you shall do well to stay and pause somewhat longer on it, and to make there (as it were) a station, in thinking on that matter which you have read, and in making some short prayer on it, as to S. Bernard counsels us, saying: *It is required often, to gather and procure a little spirit and devotion out of the matters that we read, and to break off the course of our reading with some kind of prayer by means of which, we may lift our hearts to God, and talk with him, as it is required by the sense and matter of those things that we read.*

Here I must note, that the reading should not be too long, least it occupy the greatest part of the time, that ought to be dedicated to other principal and necessary exercises. For as St. Augustine says: *It is very good both to read and to pray, if we can do both; but if we cannot perform both, then prayer is better than reading.* But because often effort is required in prayer, and reading may be easier, therefore our miserable heart often refuses the effort of prayer, and runs to the delight of reading, as the same holy father complaining of himself, said that sometimes he had done so.

I grant it is truth, that as when there is a lack of wheaten-bread, men eat bread of rye, of or oats, because they would not be fasting, so when your heart is distracted in such way, that it cannot enter into prayer, then you may read longer, or join meditation and reading; by reading and meditating on it, and then another, and another, after prayer arises. For by this mean, when the understanding is bound to the reading, it cannot so easily wander into various imaginations and thoughts, as when it goes freely. And yet it is better to wrestle all that time with God as the Patriarch Jacob did, that in when the wrestling is done, he may give us his blessing, or grant us the devotion which we seek, or some other greater grace, which he never denies to those that faithfully strive for his love.

CHAPTER V: Of Meditation

After reading we meditate on what we have read. Concerning this point it is to be known, that this meditation is sometimes upon things that may be figured with the imagination, as are all the points of the life and passion of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, this meditation is upon things that appertain to the understanding, rather than to the imagination; as when we think on the benefits of God, or on his goodness and mercy, or on any other of his perfections.

This manner of meditation is called *intellectual*, and the other *imaginary*; and in these exercises we use both, as the matter requires.

How to use imaginary meditation

Therefore, when the mystery upon which we intend to meditate, is on the life and passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, or of any other thing that may be figured by imagination, as of the last day of judgment, or of hell, or of heaven, we must then figure and represent every one of these matters in our imagination, in such a way as it is, or in such a manner as it took place, and make account, that even there in the very same place where we are, the same takes place in our presence. And this manner of meditating serves to this end, that by means of such a representation, their consideration and feelings may be livelier in us.

There are some that imagine, that every one of these things upon which they meditate, takes place within their own hearts; for since our heart is able to contain within it forms of cities and kingdoms, it is no great matter for it to contain also within itself, the representation and form of these mysteries. And this manner of meditating, is commonly a great help to also keep the mind more closely recollected, by causing it to work, as bees working their honeycombs in their own hives. We may use either of these two ways in this kind of imaginary meditation. For in case, we go with our cogitation of Jerusalem, to meditate what took place there, each thing in its own proper place, it is a thing that commonly weakens and hurts the head. Therefore, a man must not fix his imagination too much on what he meditates. For besides that it wearies the head, a man may also fall into

some deceit because of vehement apprehension, persuading himself that he really sees what he imagines which such vehemency and force.

CHAPTER VI: Of Thanksgiving

Once these three parts are ended, a thanksgiving to God for the benefits we have received may immediately follow. And that we may not interrupt the course of our devotion with various affections and matters, a man may continue this part with the former, taking occasion of such things on which he has meditated, to give thanks to the Lord for the benefits he has done to him in that meditation; and with this benefit to join all other benefits, and to give him most humble and hearty thanks for them all.

In what order we must exercise thanksgiving

As for example, when we have ended our meditation upon any point of the passion, we may immediately give most humble and hearty thanks to the Lord for the benefit of our Redemption, and especially, that it pleased him, to redeem us with so great pains and torments. And even then, also let us give him most humble thanks for all his other benefits.

In such manner, when we have meditated on our sins, we may give him thanks that he has waited for us for such a long time, and called us to repentance. And when we have meditated on the miseries of this life, we may give him thanks that he has delivered us from a great number of them. And when we have meditated on departing this world; we may give him thanks, for he has given us life, and granted us such a long a time to repent.

And when we have meditated upon the joys of heaven, we may give him thanks, for he has created us to be partakers of so great a felicity. And we may likewise proceed in all the rest. And afterwards (according as we have declared), a man must join this benefit with all the other benefits; as the benefits of creation, consideration, redemption, vocation, and glorification; of which benefits we have treated so far in the former meditation. And then for these and other infinite benefits, both public and secret, we must give him as many humble and hearty thanks as we can, and call upon all creatures both of heaven and earth to help us in it. And with this spirit we may sometimes say that song of the three children: *All ye works of the Lord, or else the Psalm: My soul praises you the Lord.*

CHAPTER VII: Of Petition

Here it remains that we treat of the last part of all: petition; which contains two parts; in one part we make petition to God for our neighbors; and in the other for ourselves.

The first part may be continued with thanksgiving, desiring that all creatures may serve and praise the Lord, who is so worthy to be praised and served, because he is so merciful and bountiful to all his creatures. And with this affection and desire of the glory of God, let him pray first and principally for all the world that all nations and people may know and serve so mighty a Lord. Then for all the Catholic Church, and all the governors in it. For example, we must pray for kings, princes, magistrates that bear rule, either in the Church, or commonwealth; and for all other inferior officers and ministers in them; that they may be careful of their duty, in directing all faithful in the knowledge and service of their Creator.

Likewise, let him pray for all the members of the Catholic Church; for the just persons, that it may please God to keep them in their virtuous life; for sinners, that it may please him to pardon them; let him pray also for his parents and relatives, friends, and benefactors, and for all that are in tribulation and captivity, and for all prisoners and sick persons, to whom he may (without any distractions or intermission of this prayer) do the works of mercy, in recommending them to God who created them, and referring the necessities of all persons, into those hands which were stretched upon the cross for them all.

What things we must demand for ourselves

After this, he may desire such things for himself, as he perceives himself to need, according to the particular necessities and miseries that he feels in his soul, and especially, when he desires help and remedy of God, against those vices and passions, that most trouble and molest him and to grant him those virtues which he needs the most. This kind of petition (among other benefits) has everything with it, that it renews daily in the soul some good purpose and desires and virtues, and moves it to be more earnest in doing what he has so often and heartily desired, and it makes him to be the more ashamed of himself, when he does not do it by calling to mind with how great desire and instancy, he has desired the Lord to

grant him grace to do it. And of this mind is Saint Chrysostom, where he says thus: *Those who pray earnestly indeed, will not suffer their hearts to commit anything that is unseemly for such an exercise, but have always their eyes on God, with whom a little before they talked and were conversant. And so, by that cogitation, they put away from them all the suggestions of the devil, when they think and consider what a heinous matter they were, that he that had a little before talked with God, and desired of him chastity and holiness, with all other virtues, should immediately run to his enemies' side, and open the gate of his soul to receive in filthy and dishonest delights, and suffer the devil to place himself in that heart, where a little before the Holy Spirit made his abode.*

But it is very much to be lamented, there are some persons that excuse themselves, by saying, that they don't know what to desire of God. Surely this is not sufficient excuse. For what beast is so insensible, that it does not know how to express its needs? What sick man is there, that cannot say, here it grieves me? Consider, therefore your sense. Consider what vices and passions trouble and molest you the most; is it covetousness, anger, detraction, vainglory, stubbornness of your own will, looseness of tongue, lightness of heart, love of honor, estimation and delights, inconstancy in such good purposes as you intend, self-love or any other similar passions or pestilences of the mind? Show all these wounds plainly one by one to that heavenly Physician, that he may heal and cure you with the ointment of his grace.

After you have asked for remedy against your vices, desire him to grant you all those virtues that are most beneficial for your salvation. And because this is a main part of this exercise of prayer, in which often all the time is spent, with very great taste and profit, I think it would be good to note here to the devout reader, those principal virtues which are the pillars of the spiritual life, that you may always desire them very insistentlly of the Lord in prayer.

Of the most necessary virtues that are to be asked for

First you must desire of the Lord these four virtues, which are the foundation of all spiritual life; virtues which we must always have before our eyes, because they are always necessary in all the steps of our life.

These virtues are a suitable composition of the inward and outward man; discretion and attention in all such things as we shall either do or say. That everything may be directed according to the judgment and order of reason; to bridle our tongue, and to take a due account of it. And to use rigor and austerity in the government of our person.

Now among these virtues, we have put the suitable composition on the inward and the outward man in the first place; because it is the beginning that disposes to all the others. The composition of the inward man, consists of having God present in his heart, and the composition of the outward man consists in doing all things as someone that is always in the presence of God, and has him always before his eyes, as the Judge and witness of his whole life.

After these follow other four virtues, in which consists the sum of perfection. These virtues are in so annexed and linked to one another, that one cannot be practiced without the others. These virtues are: perfect obedience, mortification of our own proper will, fortitude to overcome all difficulties and labors, and hatred and contempt of ourselves. For it is manifest that the sum of all Christian doctrine is a perfect obedience and conformity to the will of God, in all things he commands, counsels, and inspires, and in all that he ordains and disposes concerning us. The obedience cannot be kept unless we have a knife in our hand, to cut away all the inordinate appetites of our sensuality and will, which resist the will of God.

But this stroke no man is able to give, unless he has great fortitude of mind to fight himself and to make mortal war against his own inclinations and appetite. And this kind of war no one shall ever make, but he that has attained a true and holy abhorring and contempt for himself for the love of God. For where abhorring is, evil entreating, and contempt of the thing, that is abhorred, easily follows; but where there is nothing but love, a man very unwillingly takes the whip in his hand, to deal roughly with that thing which he loves. Therefore, none of these virtues is able to move one step, without the help and succor of the others. After these, other four very high and noble virtues follow immediately, which are: humility both inward and outward; poverty both of spirit and of body; patience in all adversities and tribulations; purity of intention in good works, doing all things only for the

love of God, without mixture of any personal advantage, or respect either spiritual or temporal.

After these, other four virtues follow, which are the beginning and end of all perfection, namely: a most firm faith of what God says and promises; an assured hope in him, as our true and loving Father in all our necessities and tribulations; a love of God, which must always burn in our hearts; and jointly with this love, to have a fear and reverence of his great majesty and justice, which must always accompany all our works.

And with all the mentioned above, we must add perseverance in the exercise of all these virtues, which cause a man to quickly attain perfection. The summit of all perfection consists in these virtues; and therefore, all our study and diligence must be employed in seeking them by all means possible, and especially by prayer, which is the principal means to obtain all goodness.

Here I think appropriate to give this advice, that when a man asks God for any of these virtues, he should meditate on them for a time; and pause in every one of them, considering briefly the main motives that may encourage us to love and exercise that particular virtue.

How to desire of God the virtue of charity

As for example, when we desire of God the virtue of charity, which is the love of God, we may say: *grant me grace O Lord, I beseech you, that I may love you with all my heart, and will all my soul, because you are infinite goodness and excellency, that deserves to be loved with infinite love, and besides this, because you are my only benefactor, my Father, my Creator, my last end, and the spouse of my soul, to whom all love is due.*

How to desire the virtue of hope

Likewise, when you desire the virtue of hope, you may say: *Give me grace also O Lord, I beseech you, that in all my necessities and tribulations, I may trust in you, seeing that your mercy is infinite and your promises true, and the merits of your only Begotten Son, which speaks and makes intercession for me, are of infinite value.* After this, may you desire the fear of God, and humility, with other virtues. I think the such petitions do not need to be written here. Because as it is said, that eaten and chewed meat benefits the sick man more than that given to him in drink; similarly, the

prayer framed by him that prays with such words as the Holy Spirit teaches him, is more profitable than that prayer made with someone else's words, which often is said and passed over very lightly, without much attention or affection.

This last part which is petition; besides being very profitable, it is also very easy to be done. For as we said before, it is not only an exercise of prayer, but also of all virtues, and as it was a compendium of them all; in which a man renews all his good purposes and desires, and records to his memory, the principal points and articles of the Law of God, which is the continual exercise of the just man; of whom it is said, that day and night he meditates upon the Law of the Lord. (Ps. 1:2)

These five parts aforesaid, may be used in the exercise of prayer; however (as we have said) they are not all necessary to be used at all times. For sometimes all the time of prayer is spent in meditation alone, or in petition. Nevertheless, I thought good to specify here all these parts of prayer, that no man might leave off this holy exercise for lack of matter, and also that when devotion fails (which is not a reason to relent and withdraw ourselves from good exercises) a man might have matter upon which to occupy himself during that time, doing on his part as much as he can, which is what God requires mainly of us.

Here is appropriate to be noted, that among all these five parts of prayer, the best is when the soul talks with God, as it does in petition. For in reading and meditation, the understanding discourses with little labor wherever it thinks good. But when we talk to God, the understanding moves up on high, and the will also follows after it, and a man has usually greater devotion and attention, and greater fear and reverence of the majesty of God, with whom he speaks, and with that, a humble and fervent desire of what he demands of him.

And this moving and lifting up the spirit, with all these acts of virtues accompanying it, leaves the soul in a more noble state, and better edified, than any other discourse whatever it may be, as every man may perceive by experience. For it is evident, that in the discourse of meditation, there is no other thing but only a godly inquiry and consideration of spiritual things, which is an act of the understanding, so it is of little profit, or value; but in devout prayer, there is a concurrence and general assembly of all

virtues, and with their wings, the soul lifts itself upon high, and attains beyond and unites with the Almighty and Eternal God

And although this spiritual communication with God is the best point of all the exercises of prayer; yet among all the communications with him, the best and most profitable, is the communication of love, when we are actually loving God, and praying to him, and desiring him with great insistence and most earnest desires, to grant us that we may love him. Since charity is the greatest of all virtues, there is nothing more acceptable to God, nor more pleasant and profitable to man, than the use, practice, and exercise of this so excellent virtue.

The Holy Fathers refer to this as the exercise of aspiring to the love of God. And meditation, prayer, and all other godly exercises are ordained to such an end. And therefore, it is given for a general rule to all who pray, that they may labor and endeavor as much they can, to lift up their spirit to this divine communication, which is to speak and deal with God himself, and especially concerning his love, and the exercises of aspiring unto him.

And for that reason, we shall do well to leave this petition of the love God, until the end of all exercises of prayer, and so to reserve the best wine for the end of this banquet, to the intent that when a man comes to the end of his journey, he may stay himself herein so long as he bears. Although, it shall not be amiss to begin and to end with this petition of love of God, whenever the Holy Spirit directs him to it.

Moreover, I think it fits here to note, that in all such things as we petition, we allege on our behalf, the merits of Christ, our only and true Savior; who (as the Apostle says) *is our justice, wisdom, sanctification and redemption.* (1 Cor 1:30) Upon his merits we ought patiently to place our confidence. And we ought to present his merits before the Divine Majesty, reckoning them, and offering them one by one to the heavenly Father, and taking out of that treasure all things necessary for us (as S. Bernard says). For this is that Lord that has sanctified and offered himself in sacrifice, so that we might be holy indeed.

Wherefore, *If God is for us, who shall be against us? If God justify us, who shall condemn us?* (Rom 8:31) Saint Peter says, *This is he of whom all the prophets bear witness: that by him pardon and remission of sins are obtained.* (Acts 10:43) So that in the virtue and name of this Lord, we

ought to take a good heart and courage with us, when we go to make our prayers to God, and have this confidence, that whatever we shall duly ask for, by him shall be granted to us.

For the principal condition that our petition must have, that it may be effectual before God, is (as Saint James says) to make it with faith and confidence. (Jam. 1:6).

Whereupon our confidence must be grounded, when make petition to God

This confidence must not be grounded principally on our ourselves, nor on our own works and merits, but on the works and merits of his only begotten and best beloved Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, and on the infinite mercy and goodness of God, which can never be overcome with any kind of sin or iniquity.

And besides this, our confidence must be also grounded on the truth of the words and promises of God, who has promised in the Holy Scriptures, never to fail that man, that converts to him with all his heart, and call upon him, and repose his whole trust and confidence in him. And although he that prays, has been until that time so great and heinous a sinner; yet let him not therefore be dismayed, for (as S. Jerome says) our past sins do not condemn us, if we do not take delight in them. Therefore, those who, considering their own defects and weaknesses, mistrust that God will hear them, are deceived. They do not consider that the principal foundations of this confidence are the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the mercy of God, and the truth of his holy word, *which* (as the Prophet says) *is a shield for those that put their trust in him.* (Ps. 90:5)

CHAPTER VIII: Advice for prayer and especially in meditation

Having now spoken of the principal parts of prayer, I think it is convenient to give certain advice and instructions, which ought to be observed in them all, and especially in meditation, of which we treat principally in this place.

I. The first advice. Do not reject any consideration leading to devotion

The first piece of advice (concerning the matter of meditation) that although it is well done for a man to observe these special points of meditation, as they were presented here earlier and to exercise himself in them; yet if in the midst of his way there is offered to him any other consideration, where he finds more sweetness and profit, he ought not to put it away from him to fulfill his ordinary task. For it stands not with reason, that we should extinguish the light with the Holy Spirit has begun to give him in any good thought, for to occupy ourselves in another thought, wherein (perhaps) the same light shall not be given to him. And besides this, the principal end of these meditations, is to obtain some devotion and feeling of divine things, it is against reason, when we have already obtained it with some good consideration, that we should go about to seek for it by another way.

Although this is very true (speaking ordinarily) yet may not a man take in this so much liberty, as on every occasion that is offered to him, to be moved immediately very lightly to forgo what he has in possession, for something else which he is desirous to have; unless when he perceives certain profit more in the one, than in the other.

II. The second advice. Avoid superfluous speculation

The second advice is, that in this exercise he may labor to avoid the superfluous speculation of the understanding, and endeavors to use this matter rather with affections, and feelings of the will, than with discourses and speculations of the understanding.

It is therefore to be noted, that on the one side the understanding helps, and on the other side it may hinder the operation of the will, namely, the

love and feeling of divine things. For as it is necessary, that the understanding goes before the will to guide it, and give it knowledge what it ought to love; so, when the speculation of the understanding is too much then it hinders this operation of the will.

And therefore, like as it is said of the poison which is put into an antidote, that if it is little it is wholesome and necessary, but if it is too much, it is hurtful; likewise, we may say, that seeking to know God with simplicity, helps the will to love him more; but seeking to know him with too much speculation hinders the will, and causes its operation for that time to be feebler and weaker.

And its reason is, since the virtue and power of our soul are finite and restricted within certain bounds and limits, the more it employs her virtue and force on one part, the less remains to be employed on the other, even like the fountain that runs through two pipes, the more water is discharged by one pipe, the less it has to yield through the other. Similarly, if the soul is occupied principally by the operation of understanding, by which (for that is such noble and excellent a power) the soul employs and pours out all her whole force, that she works nothing at all by her other powers. That is the case when the understanding is very attentive and earnestly occupied in the vehement speculation of any matter.

And therefore, we find by experience, that a man may with more facility preserve the affection of devotion in any exercise of the body, in which he labors with his hands, than when he has his understanding busily occupied and focused on the speculation of any matter. For the understanding and the will, are like two balances of our soul which are disposed in such a way, that the ascending of one, is the descending of the other, and contrariwise.

So that if speculation increases too much, then its affection decreases; and the opposite, if the affections increases, then the speculation immediately decreases; and this is the cause why the Patriarch Jacob was made lame of one of his feet, when he receive the blessing; for as our soul has two feet with which to go to God, which are the understanding and the will, it is required that one foot is weakened, namely, the understanding in its speculations, if the will (which is the other foot) is to enjoy God in the rest and quietness of contemplation.

And so, it is seen by experience, that when the soul is enjoying of God, but it turns aside, to seek to understand or search some point or matter appertaining to God, it loses immediately, the devotion which it had, and the sovereign good thing, which he had previously enjoyed, vanishes away from him. Therefore, not without good cause the bridegroom advises the spouse in the Canticles, saying: *Turn away your eyes from me, for they have made me fly.* (Cant. 6:5)

Therefore, in this exercise of meditation I counsel and man to occupy his understanding in curiosity as is little as possible, and to content himself with a simple sight and knowledge of diving things, so that his soul joining all the forces together, may employ herself by this affective part (I mean by the affections of the will) in loving and reverencing the greatest goodness; namely, God.

Thus, it appears that those who do not take the right course in this, that in prayer meditate in such a manner on divine mysteries, as if they should study to preach them; that disorderly manner, is rather to cause the spirit to dissipate, than to recollect itself; and rather to go out of itself, than to keep within itself. And as a result, when they finish their exercise of prayer, they remain as dry, and without any devotion, and as easily moved to follow every kind of lightness, and vanity of the world, as they were before their exercise.

For, to speak the very truth, they have not prayed, but rather talked and studied, which is a thing far different from prayer.

Such persons ought to consider that in this exercise of prayer and meditation, we rather come to hear than to speak. For as the Prophet says: *Those who come to the Lord's feet, shall receive his doctrine* (Deut 33:3) as he received it and said: *I will hearken what the Lord speaks with me.* (Ps. 85:8) Therefore I conclude, that all this business of meditation, consists in speaking little, and in loving much, and in giving place to the will, that it may join itself with all its strength to God. And we must not spur forward these two powers of the soul alike, nor walk in this way with equal paces, but a special dexterity is required to be used to stir up the will, and to quiet the understanding, that it may not hinder with its curious discourses the operation of love.

You must make account also, that in this exercise you go in a chariot drawn with two horses, one is very forward and quick, and the other very slow and dull; and that you must bear the bridles in your hand with such dexterity, that one you must hasten forward, and hold the other back, that so they may go together one by the other.

And if you desire to have another lively example, consider that the understanding must behave itself towards the will, as the nurse does towards the child which she nurses, who after she had chewed the meat, she then puts it into the child's mouth, that the child may taste and feed from it. For otherwise, if the nurse should but chew the meat and also eat it up herself, leaving the child without any meat, it is certain that she should do great injury to the child, in suffering it to die for hunger, by eating up that meat, which was given to her for the child.

That the understanding is as a nurse feeding the will in the exercise of prayer

Now the understanding must behave in this manner towards the will in the exercise of prayer; for it appertains to the understanding to chew the spiritual matters, as the nurse chews meat for the child; but the understanding must not retain those spiritual matters for itself alone, but once it has chewed them, it must offer them to the will, so that it may taste and feed on it, and be enkindled and confirmed in virtue and goodness, with the taste and feeling of those spiritual matters.

The supplies that enter in by the gates of a city, ought to pay a tribute and import; but if the gatekeeper retains the supplies for himself alone, and lets nothing come into the market, it is certain that the inhabitants of the city would die of hunger. Now in a similar manner, if the understanding, which is the first gate of our soul (by which the spiritual sustenance enters) keeps all that should pass by it for itself alone, shall the will not be very hungry and dry, and in great necessity of all virtue and goodness?

The hunting hound if he is good, will not eat the hare that he has taken, but keep it faithfully until his master's coming; in a similar manner our understanding ought to do, when it has found out any high and secrets truths; as it must not retain all for itself alone, but it should assign them

over to the will, that she as the mistress in his behalf may serve herself with them.

And for this respect various devout and simple persons are truly very happy, who as they know little, when they come to God, they are little hindered with the discourses of their understanding, and therefore in their prayers and meditations, they find their wills more tender and more pliant, and better prepared to every good affection.

Now if you desire to know how you should behave yourself in this, among many other ways that may serve in this case, you may use this: in every good thing that you shall think upon, either in prayer or out of prayer, be careful to go immediately in this to God, as the young child does, who with everything that he finds, goes immediately to his mother, and talks to her of it. And so in like manner, when in your prayer, or at any other times, you find any spiritual jewel, you must lift up your heart to God, either to love him or to pray him for it, as the matter requires, and also to take occasion to humble yourself before him, and to desire his grace of him. It shall be a great help also in this, to have the spirit of true humility, which causes man to appear before God very poor and naked, and to prostrate himself before that most High Sovereign Majesty, to be more careful to desire his mercy, for the curing of his great miseries, then to search the profoundness of his high mysteries to understand them. And by doing so, he comes to be in the presence of God, as a malefactor that is condemned to death would be when he should enter into the King's palace, to ask him pardon; who would go with such a great and deep conviction of his misery, that he would scarcely have either eyes to see, or heart to think upon any other thing, but only upon his own present need and danger.

III. The third advice: limits to the will

The former advice taught us how we ought to quiet our understanding, and commit all this matter to our will; but this advice prescribes also bounds and limits to the will, that it may be neither too excessive, nor too vehement.

Therefore, you must understand, that the devotion which we seek, is not something to be obtained with force of arms, as some persons think, who attribute great importance on enforced fighting and sobbings,

imagining to produce tears and compassion when they think upon the Passion of our Savior. For such force commonly causes the heart to become drier, and more unable to receive the Lord's visitation, as a holy father affirmed.

Moreover, commonly it hurts the health of the body; and sometimes leaves the soul so confused and aghast, (because of the little taste it has received there) that it is reluctant to return again to such an exercise, as to something which it has experienced to be very painful and irksome. And therefore, if the Lord shall send us tears, or other similar feelings in our prayer, we ought humbly to accept them, and to give him thanks for them. But for a man to obtain them (as it were) by force of arms, it is no point of wisdom.

He must content himself with doing sincerely what he is able, that is, he must suppose himself to be present at the grievous torments our Savior suffered; with a sincere and quiet eye, contemplate the pains he suffered, along with the love and charity that moved him to suffer them. And when he has thus done, let him not trouble himself any further, if the Lord does not send him tears and compunction of heart.

And he that cannot do so, but perceives himself to be troubled too much in this exercise, let him not strive to pass forward, but let him humble himself before God, with inward quietness and simplicity, and desire of his grace, that he may be able to proceed in his prayer and meditation, without such trouble and danger to him. And if it pleases the Lord to grant him this quietness of mind, he shall feel a more inward hearty devotion in it, than he was inclined to feel with the disquietness of his mind, and it shall endure much longer. After this, may a man continue in prayer and meditation a long time together, without feeling any heaviness or grief; but that man, that shall meditate after the other enforced manner specified before, cannot do so.

And for this cause we must take diligent heed, that if at any time there arises in the soul very fervent motions of sensible devotion, or excessive sobbings and sighings, we suffer not ourselves to be carried away with them, but we must temper them with great moderation, and dissemble them as much as we can, and endeavor to keep and continue that consideration and thought within us, which caused those fervent motions;

I mean that we must remove away from us those storms and alterations of the flesh; namely, those vehement sobbings and sighings, and enjoy in our soul with quietness, the light and devotion which God has then sent to us.

And after this, we shall continue in our exercise a longer time, and our consolation shall take deeper root inwardly in our souls, and shall not give any outward show with weeping, sobbing, and other external signs, which can hardly be avoided without pain, in case a man once accustoms himself very much to such sensible motions and fervors, which the stronger and mightier they show outwardly, the more they quench the light inwardly, and are an impediment to us, that we cannot proceed forward in our prayer and meditation.

True it is, that at the beginning of novices in spiritual exercises, such fervors can be hardly be avoided. For then the great wonder that a man has of the newness and profoundness of divine things, makes him enter into so great an admiration and astonishment, that he cannot refrain from this fervency. But after that with use of daily meditation of divine things, the newness of them ceases, then his heart is quieted, and although he loves God with greater vehemency, yet he does not have such sensible fervor and disquietness in his love.

And so, we see that the new wine, and pot of water, when it is first to receive the unusual heat of the fire, it boils so forcefully that it bubbles up, and runs over the brim; but after it has boiled a certain space, it sees much better, and is much hotter, and yet with less noise and vehemency.

That man which was lame from his mother's womb, whom S. Peter healed, (as it is declared in the Acts of the Apostles, Act 3:8), so soon as he perceived himself to be whole and perfectly cured of his former lameness, the Holy Scripture says, that he walked and leaped, and praised God.

This man was not content only to go, but as one that had been so long time as it were bound hands and feet, and finding by experience his new liberty, he then stretched forth his limbs as much as he could, and leaped and skipped with great joy and admiration. Even though it is to be thought, that afterwards he would walk more quietly, and not leap and skip all his lifetime; but as then, the great joy he had of his new and unaccustomed health, would not suffer him to be quiet.

IV. The fourth advice: the attention we ought to have

Of all these advices aforesaid, we may gather what manner of attention we ought to have in prayer. For in this exercise, it is greatly expedient for us to have our heart not heavy or dull, but lively, attentive, and lifted up on high. We read about it in the passage where the angel said to the Prophet Ezechiel, that he should arise, and stand on his feet (Ezech. 2:1), when the angel would talk to him, and declare to him the divine mysteries.

In like manner we read, that those two cherubins which Solomon placed at the two sides of the Ark of the Testament, stood with their wings lifted up on high, and stretched open as if they would fly, to signify what a great attention and lifting up of the spirit, a man ought to have when he presents himself before God, to speak and stand before him.

But as it is necessary on one side, to be in prayer with such attention and close recollection of the mind, even so on the other side, it behooves that this attention be qualified with temperance and moderation, that it be neither prejudicial to our health, nor an impediment to devotion.

For there are some that weary their heads with too much violence, while they labor to attend to those things that they meditate on. There are others that in their meditation are very slack and negligent, and very easy to be carried away with every wind, to avoid such an inconvenience. Now to avoid these two extremes, we should use such a middle that we neither weary our head with too much attention, nor with carelessness or negligence, allow our thoughts to go wandering where they will. So that as we commonly say to him that rides on a kicking flinging horse, that he must take good heed how he holds the reins of his bridle, and keep a mean there. He must hold them neither too hard nor too slack, that the horse neither turn backward, nor run too headlong forward. Similarly, we must endeavor that our attention may proceed in our prayers with moderation, and not with violence, and with a temperate carefulness and diligence, and not with excessive effort.

Of both these points we may refer to Holy Scripture. For of one Solomon says: *Who squeezes the breast too much to get out milk, shall wring out blood.* (Prov. 30:33) And of the other point, the Prophet Elijah says: *Rejoice with her all you that mourn for her, that you may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of consolation.* (Is. 66:10).

Although, in case we fail to find such a middle, and lean to any of these two extremities, it is less hurtful to lean too much to attention, than to carelessness and neglecting of our attention. For a man is led to carelessness and negligence by his own corrupt and evil inclined nature, but he is not inclined to attention. Therefore, like a house built on the side of a hill, should not lose much in the building, if when it cannot be built by line and level just upright, the building is more bend upwards rather than downward; similarly, our attention does not take any prejudice, if when it cannot continue in our prayers in such a mediocrity, we desire to fall into too much attention, rather than into carelessness and negligence.

This advice is of such importance, that because of its neglect we have seen that certain persons have spent many years profiting very little from their prayers, because they have been careless, dull and neither hot nor cold in it. And others, on the contrary, have fallen into great sickness, and have hurt their heads with too much heat and vehemency, which they have used in their meditations. But especially we must be very careful, that at the beginning of the meditation, we do not trouble and weary our heads with too much attention. For by so doing, we shall lack force and strength to continue in its exercise; as it commonly happens to the traveler, when he hurries too much in this going at the beginning of his journey.

V. The fifth advice: We must not give up prayer

But all these pieces of advice, the principal is that he that prays may not be dismayed, nor give over his exercise, when he does not feel such sweetness of devotion in it as he desires; as some persons do, who are very much deceived in it.

Therefore, it is to be noted, that the heart of man is very much like troubled water, which cannot suddenly be cleared again, but it must have time and space, to be cleared and settled little by little. Undoubtedly our heart is in such a case, which it is inclined to be troubled, with the daily intermeddling and dealing of worldly affairs. And when it is troubled, it cannot be settled and quieted immediately in a short space, but it must have convenient space and time for it. Therefore, Ecclesiastes says very well: *That the end of prayer is better than the beginning;* (Eccl. 7:10) because at the beginning of prayer, the heart is troubled and disquieted,

but in the end, it is more settled and quieted, and better disposed to this holy exercise.

Therefore, like he that enkindles a fire in green wood, must have patience, and wait until the wood is dried little by little, and besides all this, it is required that he continues for a time blowing and enkindling it, and shows some tears with the smoke, if he is to enjoy the fire according to his desire. Similarly, it profits us often to labor and persevere in the beginning of prayer, if in the end we are to enjoy the sweet and clear fire of devotion, and of the love of God.

Now for this cause, it is required for him that prays to expect the coming of the Lord with longanimity and perseverance. For it is very convenient, also regarding the glory of his High Divine Majesty, and baseness of our condition, as also for the greatness and importance of the affairs that we have in hand, that we often attend and watch at the gates of our sacred palace. *Blessed is the man, said the everlasting Wisdom, that hears my words, and watches daily at my gates and abides and the porch of my house; for who so shall find me, shall find life, and he shall receive salvation of the Lord.* (Prov. 8:33) And the Prophet Jeremiah says, *It is good to expect the salvation of the Lord God with silence.* (Jer 3:26)

The proud man, and he that mistrusts the providence of God, has neither patience nor humility to expect the Lord's coming but the humble man says with the Prophet: *I expect again and again for the Lord, and he heard my prayer.* (Ps. 40:1)

If the fisher or hunter does not have patience to wait for the game that he seeks, what profit shall he get by his effort? Now in this our fishing and hunting in prayer, being of so great importance as it is, we may account a long time well bestowed, that is employed in watching and expecting for so rich and so happy a treasure as is the Almighty and ever living God.

Of that courageous and constant woman which Solomon describes in his Proverbs, (among other notable things) he says this: *That she did as the merchant's ship, which brought her bread from far countries* (Prov 31:14). With it, he gives us to understand, that when we shall not find this bread of life immediately according to our desire, we must work and sail as long time as necessary, until we find it.

If you persevere in calling (says our Savior Jesus Christ) assure yourself that in the end you should have an answer. For it happened often, that that thing which is denied in the beginning of prayer, is granted at its end with great increase.

Happy therefore are those souls, that persevere in prayer; for undoubtedly the greater the perseverance, the greater abundance they shall have of his grace. One of the main things, that those persons, that dispose themselves to receive great gifts and favors of God, must have is longanimity and patience of heart to expect for them faithfully as long as God would like them to persevere; and in the meantime, to comfort themselves with the hope of the Prophet, who says: *If he shall delay his coming, I will not fail to wait for him, for he will surely come, and will not delay.* (Hab. 2:3).

Now when you have waited a certain time for the Lord coming, in case the Lord comes to you, give him most hearty thanks for his coming. If it seems to you that he does not come, humble yourself before him, and acknowledge you are not worthy to receive what he does not give to you; and let this content you for that time, that you have sacrificed yourself, denied your own will, crucified your appetite, striven with the devil and yourself, and done at the least what you could for your own part.

And in case you have not adored the Lord with sensible adoration according to your desire, it is sufficient that you have adored him in spirit and truth; as his will is to be adored. (John 4:24). And trust me in this point, that this is the most dangerous passage of all this navigation, and the place where true devout persons are proved and tried; and that if you escape well out of this danger, you shall have prosperous success in all the rest.

To conclude, if (all this notwithstanding) it seems to you, that persevering in prayer, and to trouble and weary your head without any profit, was a waste of time, in such a case I account it not any inconvenience, if when you have done all you can, you take some devout book and change your prayer into reading for that time. However, with this condition, that your reading is not done with too great haste or speed, but leisurely, and with great attention and consideration to what you read, and intermingle now and then in convenient places, prayer with reading, which

is very profitable, and very easy to be performed by all kinds of persons, even by those who have just entered into the exercise of prayer.

CHAPTER IX: Of Points to be meditated on the holy Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ

As much as the most Holy Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ is the principal matter of meditation, it is appropriate that since we have hitherto treated of meditation in general, we know treat particularly how we ought to meditate on the Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ, so that we may know how to lead our souls in this matter.

But here we must first presuppose, that among all the devotions in the world, there is none more secure, none more profitable, or more universal for all kinds of persons than the remembrance of the Holy Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ. For considering that our Savior Jesus Christ is (as he himself said) *the way, the truth, and life*, there is none other exercise more fit and convenient to direct us to go to God, to know God, and to enjoy God, than to fix always our eyes on our Savior Jesus Christ. For though Christ be to us the way, the truth, and the life, in all things wherever we consider him, yet he is most specially so, when we behold him on the cross. And therefore, Saint Bernard said very devoutly: *Well may I (O Lord) travel around heaven, and earth, yet shall I not find you but on the cross. There you lie, there you slept at noon today.* (S. Bernard)

But leaving now this matter for another place, I will only treat at present how we ought to behave ourselves, when we meditate on the Holy Passion of our Savior Jesus Christ; for there is some simple persons, that seek nothing else in this holy exercise, but only to shed a few tears, in taking compassion on the bitter pains and sorrows of our Savior, and so stay in this point alone, without going any further. And even though this taking compassion of our Savior's pains, is very good and necessary, (for it is the foundation of all the rest, as shall be declared thereafter) yet this is not the only fruit that may be gathered of this holy tree, but there is other far greater than this; for all the profit of the spiritual life proceeds of the meditation of the Holy Passion.

Therefore, we must understand that there are fix things (among many others) that may be considered in the Holy Passion of our Savior; to wit: the greatness of his pains; the grievousness of our sins; the excellence of

the benefits; the magnificence of the goodness of God; the multitude of the virtues of our Savior Jesus Christ; which shine very brightly in his Holy Passion; and the convenience of this means, by which God granted to work our Redemption.

There are six points we ought to consider, in which all the profit of the spiritual life consists. For we must consider the greatness of the pains of our Savior Jesus Christ, that we may take compassion of them. We must consider the greatness of our own sins, that we may abhor them. We must consider the greatness of the benefit of his Passion, that we may give him thanks for it. We must consider the excellence of the goodness of God, which in this Holy Passion of our Savior is discovered to us, that we may very heartily love his great goodness. We must consider the multitude of the virtues of our Savior Jesus Christ, which likewise shine very brightly in his Passion, that we may be encouraged to imitate them. And we must consider the convenience of the mystery of his Holy Passion, that we may be brought by it in admiration of the wisdom of God, and be more confirmed in faith of this holy mystery. Of each of these points, we intend now to treat in its due place and order.

I. Of the great pains and torments, which our Savior suffered in his Passion

First, we must consider the great pains of our Savior Jesus Christ, to prompt our souls by that consideration to take compassion of them, since the members should take compassion of their head. Therefore, it is to be noted, that the pains which our Savior suffered in his bitter Passion were (as the Holy Fathers say) the greatest that were ever suffered in the world. This shall appear manifestly true, if we consider five principal causes, from which the greatness of these pains proceeded.

The first cause was, the greatness of his charity, which made him desirous to redeem mankind most abundantly, and to satisfy most perfectly for the injuries, and offenses committed against the Divine Majesty. And because the greater pains he should suffer, the more perfectly he should accomplish both of them, (and he did not want the forces of grace to bear a burden as great as he would,) therefore he wanted his pains to be great, that both the satisfaction which he should make for our debt, and the work of Redemption, might be great.

The second cause (which follows from it) was, that he suffered his pains without any ease or consolation. For (according to the reasons before mentioned) he shut up from himself all the gates, by which any consolation might come to him, either from heaven or from earth; insomuch that he was content to be forsaken not only of his disciples and friends, but also of his own Father, and of himself also; so that being destitute of all company, he might be burning in the furnace of his most grievous pains and torments, without any refreshing of any ease, of consolation whatsoever, that by any means might come to him. And therefore, he said in the Psalm; I have become as a man destitute of all help, I am left among the dead, notwithstanding that by right I am the only one among the dead that is free from sin and death. (Ps. 88:4) And in another psalm he says: I am plunged in the bottom of waters and of mire, and I find no place where to stay my feet. (Ps. 69.2) This is that forsaking which our Savior signified on the cross, when he said: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mt 27:46, Ps. 22:1) For at that time his holy humanity was forsaken in the midst of the furious stream of his pains and torments, and was left destitute of all things that might either withstand or mitigate the force and vehemency of them. This was figured in the Law, by those two beasts that were offered for the sins of people: one was killed, and offered up in sacrifice, and the other departed away, and was sent into the wilderness, leaving her companion alone in the torments.

The same was done in this heavenly sacrifice, where God and man was offered for the sins of the world, and one of the two natures, to wit, the humanity was sacrificed, and suffer, but the other nature, to wit, the divinity departed away, leaving her sister and companion all alone to suffer the torments. For although that (as concerning the bond of union) the divine nature never forsook the human nature, which it has once taken; yet as touching the consolation, and ease of the pains and torments, it whole forsook it. Therefore, we see that the martyrs when they went to suffer death, showed themselves very courageous, merry and joyful; but our Savior, being the very fountain of grace and strength (through whose virtue the martyrs had such force and courage, to be able to do what they did) trembled, and sweat even very drops of blood, when he went to further pains and torments for us. For in the martyrs the virtue of charity, which

redounded into their inferior forces of the soul, caused them to have very great courage and joy, but in our Savior Jesus Christ, both these and other influences, were by special miracle suspended, that so he might drink the cup of his most bitter pains, pure and without mixture of any manner or ease or consolation.

The third cause of his grievous pains, was the tenderness of his complexion. For whereas his holy body was formed miraculously by the Holy Spirit, and things that are done by miracle, are more perfect than those done by nature (as St. Chrysostom declared, speaking of the water, which was turned into wine at the marriage) it follows that our Savior's body was the best complexioned, and most tender of all bodies that ever were or shall be; insomuch as a Holy Father said: *That if there had been no external violence done to our Savior's body, it would have endured a very great number of years, by reason of the perfection, and tenderness of the its composition.*

The fourth cause of his grievous pains, was the very kind of death he suffered, with all the circumstances that happened in his Passion; for each of them (if they are well considered) was a kind of martyrdom by itself. And that you may more clearly perceive the time, begin even from the first entry of his Passion until the end of it, and you shall find (among others) twelve most grievous pains, which our Savior suffered, which I will rehearse here very briefly, despite that in every one of them there is very much to be said and considered.

The first was, the agony in the Garden, and that astounding bloody sweat, which trickled down throughout all the parts of his body to the earth, which was the newest and strangest thing of all, that ever has happened in the world.

The second was, to be sold for so base a price of his own apostle and disciple, to so cruel enemies.

The third was, to be so often carried through the common streets bound and manacled, as if he had been a very thief.

The fourth was, the punishment with whipping and scourging, which besides that the lashes were very cruelly laid on him, and very many in number, it is not a punishment for a man of any credit, or honesty, but for bondslaves, vagabonds, and men of most vile and base condition.

The fifth was, the cruelest invention of the crown of thorns, where the most grievous shame and dishonor was joined with the most grievous pain and torment.

The sixth was, those so manifold blasphemies, and sundry kinds of most villainous mockeries, injuries, and reproaches, which were joined with the torments; as to spit so often in his face, as though he had been a blasphemer; to give him buffets and blows, as if he had been a vagabond; to apparel him sometimes in white garments, and sometimes in red, as if he had been a fool; to hood-wink his eyes and to jeer at him saying; *A reed who has smitten you*; as if he had been a very idiot; to clothe him with a purple garment, and set a reed in his hand, to kneel on one knee before him, to smite him on the head with a reed, as if he had been a counterfeit king; and besides all this, to proclaim him through the common streets as a malefactor. Who ever saw so many kinds of reproachful injuries heaped together upon one man?

The seventh was, that awful contempt and despise, which was done unto him (being the form of God) when they compared him with Barabbas, and made less account of him than of Barabbas. Insomuch as that Lord, by whom all things were created, and in whom all things live and are preserved, was accounted more unprofitable, and more unworthy to live, than Barabbas and infamous malefactor.

The eighth was, in that they forced him to carry upon his shoulders, (which were all rent and bruised) the very instrument of the cross, on which he should suffer death. The tormentors themselves (which are commonly the minister of cruelty) use to hide the eyes of those that are to be beheaded, that they not see the instrument that shall bereave them of their life; but here they do not only not use this kind of humanity toward our Savior, but they lay the instrument of his death, even on his shoulders, to the intent that his heart might first suffer the torments of the cross inwardly, before that his body should prove it outwardly.

The ninth was, the very martyrdom of the cross, which is a most cruel kind of torment; for it is not a speedy kind of death (as to be hanged or beheaded) but very long and lingering; and the wounds are in the most sensible parts of the body; to wit, in the feet and hands, which are the most full of veins and sinews, which are the instruments of feeling.

Moreover, his pains were increased with the poise and weight of his own body, which always tended and swayed downward; and so, it ever rent and enlarged his wounds, and augmented the grief of his torments; and this caused his martyrdom to become so extreme grievous, that although he had no deadly wound, yet by reason of the greatness of his pains, his most holy soul departed out of his most precious body.

The tenth was, that whereas our Savior was thus tormented upon the cross, and there became a very sea of pains and torments, yea, whereas he was in such a doleful case, that if we should see a very dog in the streets so pitifully tormented, it would break our hearts; yet all this notwithstanding, his cruel enemies were so far from taking any pity or compulsion upon him, that they mocked and scoffed at him, and wagged their heads, saying, *You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.* (Mat. 17:40)

The eleventh was, to have his most innocent mother present before his eyes at these martyrdoms, knowing so well as he did, what a great grief it was to her most innocent heart.

The twelfth was a cruelty that was never seen, to wit, that when his most holy body was all void of blood, and all the fountains of his veins emptied, and his bowels dried up, by reason of the great abundance of blood which he had shed, when he requested a little water, they did not only not grant it to him, but instead they gave him to drink vinegar and gall.

Now what thing could be more cruelly done than this? True it is, that the rich covetous man which was tormented in hell, had a drop of water denied him when he required it, but yet he had not gall given to him. But here they do not only deny the Son of God what he desired, but besides that, they increase his most grievous pains with another new kind of torment.

Every one of these points being considered by itself, will provide sufficient matter of very great grief and sorrow to any good Christian heart. And therefore, whoever desires to have an earnest and inward, compassion of the pains of our Savior, let him go through every one of them, and consider each of them; and (may he never be so hard hearted) it is not almost possible, but that in some one or other of them, he shall find very vehement motions, to move him to grief and compassion.

Although, the pains of our Savior Jesus Christ are not thus ended, there are still others without all comparison, far greater than these: to wit, the pains of his blessed soul. For all these pains above named, for the most part appertain to the pains of the cross, in which his body suffered outwardly; but besides this visible cross, there was yet another invisible cross, in which his most holy soul was crucified within his body, having also four limbs and four nails, (which were four dolorous considerations,) and these were a far greater torment to him than the outward cross. For first of all, there was represented to him, all the sins of the world, present, past, and future, (for all which he suffered) and that so distinctly, as if they had been the sins of one man alone. Now to him that bare such a great love and zeal unto the honor of his Father, what an unspeakable grief was it, to behold such an infinite number of abominations and offences, committed against so high a Majesty? For it is certain, that the sins of one man alone, were able to torment him more than all the torments of the cross. What a great grief would the sins of all men, and of all the world cause to him? Surely there is no understanding able to comprehend the greatness of this grief.

Secondly, there was also represented to him the ingratitude and damnation of many men, and especially of many wicked Christians, which would never acknowledge this singular benefice, nor endeavor to profit and help themselves with this great and costly remedy. This was also a far greater torment to him than the torment of the cross. For it is a greater pain to a laborer to be denied his day wages, and the fruit of his labor than the very labor itself, even though it is very great. For this reason, our Savior complained by his Prophet Isaiah, of this injury to his Father, saying; *I said, in vain have I travailed, in vain and without cause have I wasted my strength.* (Is. 49:4) And he complained of this ingratitude not only to his Father, but even to men themselves, by Saint Bernard, saying: *O man, consider what cruel torments I suffered for your sake. There is no pain that torments me so extremely as your ingratitude does. I call to you that I suffer for you. Behold the pains that torment me; behold the nails that pierce through my hands and feet; behold the shameful reproaches and despise with which they dishonor me. And although the pain which I suffer*

outwardly is so great, yet the pain I suffer inwardly is far greater, when I see you so ungrateful and unkind towards me for it.

There was moreover represented unto him the griefs, and doleful sword of sorrow, which pierced the heart of his Blessed Mother, when she saw him suffer between two thieves upon the cross, which undoubtedly was so great a grief and pain to him, as the love which he bared to her was great and inestimable.

Now these four considerations and griefs, were as it were four arms of another inward cross wherewith his blessed soul was likewise crucified within his body. So that our Savior suffered that day the pains and torments of two crosses, the one visible, and the other invisible. Upon one cross his body suffered outwardly, and on the other, his soul suffered much more inwardly. Now how great the grief was, which proceeded of these four considerations, there is no understanding able to comprehend it; and yet we may conjecture from what was shown outwardly in his bloody sweat in the Garden.

Therefore, whoever considers attentively all these causes, shall clearly see how great the pains and torments of our Savior were, which is the goal of this first manner of meditating on his most bitter passion. Nonetheless, this must not be the final end of this exercise, but rather it must be used to come to other ends, to wit, to understand what a great love he bared to you, that would suffer so much for you; and what a great benefit he did to you, in buying you with so dear a price, and how much you are bound to do for him, who has done and suffered so much for you; and above all this, how greatly you ought to abhor your sins, and to be grieved with them, since they were the cause of such a long and painful martyrdom. Now this manner of contemplation is useful for these four ends, of which we will treat in the following sections. Moreover, it appears that this first manner of meditating (taking compassion of the bitter pains of our Savior) is as a ladder to all the other. And for this very reason, S. Bonaventure made great account of this manner of meditation on the Passion because it is sensibly seen, that this manner of meditation opens the way to all the other manners of meditating on it.

II. The Passion shows how grievous sin is in the sight of God

The second point that we have to consider in the Passion of our Savior, is the grievousness of our sins, by which to move our hearts to be sorrowful for them, and to abhor them. Therefore, we must understand, that (as all holy learned Fathers affirm) our sins were the very cause, why the Son of God suffered such grievous pains, torments, and cruel death, as he suffered in this world. For it is certain, that if there had been no sin, it would not have been need for him to have suffered as he did.

It is not agreed among the learned divines, whether the Son of God would have been incarnate, if man had not sinned. However, this is held for a most certain truth, that in case man had not sinned, the Son of God should not have died. Thus, it appears, that our sins were the very cause that, moved him to suffer all these miseries, and that our sins were what threw him into this prison, and that our sins were what nailed him upon the cross.

And do not think, because they were not your sins alone which were its cause, therefore, that you are worthy of the less punishment, for according to the laws of justice, he that kills an innocent being accompanied with many in committing the fact, deserves no less punishment than if he had killed him alone.

So that by this rule you see what great reason you have to move yourself to abhor your sins, and to be earnestly sorry for them, by calling to mind, that they were the tormentors, which indeed crucified the Son of God, and caused him to suffer so great pain, and torments. This being thoroughly considered as it ought, is a far greater cause to move a man to abhor sin, and to be sorry for it, than all other losses and miseries that ensue of sin, although we should reckon among our losses, the deprivation of the everlasting glory and felicity which is lost by sin, and the everlasting horrible pains which he purchased by it. Now according to this doctrine, when you are occupied in meditating on the Holy Passion, and see how the enemies apprehend Savior, and how they accuse him and buffet him, and how they spit on him and whip him, and think for certain that you are indeed in company with them, and that you have joined with them in this conspiracy against our Savior. So that you may truly say, that your sins accuse him, that your dissolute behavior binds him, that your anger and malice whipped him, that your presumption and roughness buffeted him,

that your pride crowned him with thorns, that your fond braveries and vanities, clothed him with purple, that your pleasures and delights, give him to drink gall and vinegar, and to be short, that your disobedience, nailed his hands and feet on the cross. For so much as the pains, which you deserve by these your sins, he granted of his infinite charity to suffer for you. For it is certain, that the tormentors should never have had power to torment him, as they did, in case your sins had not given them force and strength to do it.

III. Of the Great Benefits of our Redemption

Thirdly, we ought to consider in the holy Passion, the greatness of the benefit which our Savior has done to us, in redeeming us by this means. And although there are infinite things to be said in this matter, yet at present we will do no more, but only note briefly three principal points, which are to be considered in this most excellent benefit of our Redemption. First, what our Savior has bestowed on us by the redemption. Secondly, what means he used in giving it to us. And thirdly, with what great love gave it to us.

There is no tongue able to express how great the benefit of the Redemption is, which our Savior has bestowed on us. Nevertheless, we may conceive somewhat of it by two ways. The first way, is by considering all the evils and miseries into which mankind incurred through the sin of the first man Adam; for all these miseries were sufficiently remedied by our Savior Jesus Christ, who bestowed on us all such benefits as were contrary to these miseries; for as it is evident, that he was given to us to be a universal repairer of all the evils and miseries of the world. Now he that was able to reckon how many the miseries are, into which this world has fallen by the sin of the first man Adam, might also understand, how many the benefits are, that came to us by the second Adam, (to wit, by our Savior Jesus Christ). Those benefits are undoubtedly innumerable.

The second way is by considering not all the miseries which our first Father Adam brought to us, but all the benefits which came to us by our Savior Jesus Christ, for we are made partakers of all those benefits, by means of communicating his spirit to us. For all that are made partakers of the Spirit of Christ, are also made partakers of the virtues and merits of Christ. Therefore, the Apostle said, *That all such as have received the*

Sacrament of Baptism, have put on Christ. (Gal. 3:27) Giving us to understand by it, that they all are made partakers of Christ, that are adorned with his virtues and merits, and that so being clothed with this livery, they seem in the light of the heavenly Father to be such in their degree, as his own very Son seemed before him. And therefore, for good cause Ecclesiasticus states this wonderful title of the Son of God in his prayer, saying: *Have mercy (O Lord) on your people Israel, whom you have made equal and like your first begotten son.* (Eccl.36:14)

What dignity, what glory can be greater than this? Now according to this, he that could reckon how many the virtues and merits of our Savior Jesus Christ have been, might likewise understand, how many the benefits have been that have come to us by him; since, we are made partakers of them all by the means of his Passion. To conclude, by him is given to us remission of our sins, grace, glory, liberty, peace, salvation, redemption, sanctification, sacraments, justice, satisfaction, merits, doctrine, and all other things which he had, and were beneficial for our salvation. And by reason of this, his so bountiful communicating, he is called in the holy Scriptures, the father, the bridegroom, and the universal head of the Catholic Church; because whatever the Father has, appertains to his children, and whatever the bridegroom has, he imparts to his spouse, and whatever the head has, the members are made its partakers.

These are the benefits which our Savior Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us. But by what means has he given them to us? It is evident; that by the means of this holy incarnation and Passion, by which he made himself partaker of all our debts and miseries and so by taking upon him all our miseries, he made us partakers of all his benefits. This taking upon him all our miseries, is (undoubtedly) a far greater thing, than to make us partakers of all his benefits.

For certainly it is a more wonderful thing in God to suffer miseries, than to bestow benefits, because as there is nothing more proper and convenient to his infinite goodness, than to bestow benefits, so is there nothing stranger and further off from that infinite felicity, than to suffer miseries. By which it appears, that we are much more bound to him for the pains and torments which he has suffered for us, than for the great benefits which he has given to us. I mean by it, that we are much more

bound to him for the manner by which he has remedied our miseries, than for the very remedy itself.

But how great was the love with which our Savior bestowed all this upon us? This is without comparison far greater than the very pain which we suffered; and much more pains would he have suffered; in case it had been needed for us. Three hours he continued suffering pains and torments on the cross for our sins. But what is this in comparison of that, which the greatness of his love could have vouchsafed to do for us? Truly, if it had been needful for us that he should have suffered pains and torments until the day of Judgment, his love was so great, that he would undoubtedly have done it. So that although he suffered much for us, yet the love which he bore to us was far greater, than the pains which he suffered for us, much more are we bound to him for that which he desired to suffer for us. This consideration is very profitable to move us to give most humble and hearty thanks to him, who has bestowed so great benefits on us and to love him, who has loved us much more than by his benefits he has showed to us.

IV. Of the goodness of God showed in the Holy Passion of our Savior

Fourthly, we ought to consider the great goodness and mercy of God, which shines more evidently and brightly in the holy Passion of our Savior, than in any other of his works.

Therefore, you have to consider the four things deeply; which are to be considered in the whole history of the holy Passion, and in every part of it. The first is, who suffered. The second is, what pains he suffered. The third is, for whom he suffered. The fourth is, why he suffered. Now if you will pause for a while in every one of these points, and consider first the highness and excellency of him that suffered, which is God; and stay in this consideration in such a manner, that you are astounded at so high, and so wonderful a thing; and from there come to the consideration of the baseness, and vileness of the most grievous pains, and reproachful injuries, which he was content to suffer; that not for angels or archangels, but even for men, which are most vile and abominable creatures, and like devils themselves in their works; if (as I say) in each one of these points you pause, and compare one point with the other, undoubtedly you shall be

greatly amazed and astonished, to consider how much so great and excellent a majesty would abase himself, to redeem so vile and so base a creature, and then may you cry out with the Prophet, and say, *O Lord I have heard your words, and was afraid, I have considered your works, and was astonished.* (Hab 3:2)

But if after all this, you consider the cause of his so great abasing, and come to understand that it was not for any personal advantage, nor yet moved by any merit of ours, but was only moved to it, with his tender mercy, and love towards us, by which he granted to visit us from on high. (Lk 1:78) This point being well and duly considered, will lift up your mind into such a great admiration and love of him, that you will be astonished as Moses was in the mount, when he saw the figure of this mystery, and began to proclaim with a loud voice, the unspeakable great mercy of God, which was revealed to him there. (Ex 3:3) This was the great languishing and sanctity of spirit, which the spouse felt in the Canticles, when she said; *Stay me up with flowers, and comfort me with apples, for I languish with love.*

S. Bernard says about those words thus: *The amorous soul seeks here King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him. She sees the only son of God carrying a cross on his shoulders. She sees the Lord of majesty whipped and spitted upon; she sees the author of life and of glory, thrust through with nails, pierced with a spear, and many despiteful reproaches done unto him; finally, she sees him bestow his most holy life for his friends; she sees all this, and in seeing it, she is pierced through with a knife of love, and therefore she says: Stay me up with flowers, and comfort me with apples, for I languish with love.*

V. Of the virtues that shine in the holy Passion of our Savior.

The fifth point that we have to consider in the holy Passion of our Savior, is the great number of virtues that shine so very clearly in it; their consideration serves to move our souls to imitate some part of what is represented to us there. This is one of the highest manners of meditating on the holy Passion. For it is manifest, that all the perfection of a Christian life, consists in the imitation of the virtues of our Savior Jesus Christ. The Apostle S. Peter exhorts us to such an imitation, saying; *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example,*

that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. (1 Pet 2:21-23)

And although all virtues shined so brightly, and in such excellent way, in all the life of our Savior Jesus Christ, yet they shone much more perfectly in his holy Passion. And therefore, manly in his Passion it is appropriate for us to behold the beauty and excellence of his virtues; which shine much more evidently there among his pains and torments, than do the flowers among the thorns.

Consider therefore first of all, so profound a humility, with which the most high and only begotten Son of God, accepted to be condemned, and less esteemed than Barabbas, and to be crucified on a cross between two thieves, as though he had been a captain and ringleader of malefactors.

Consider such a wonderful patience, in the midst of so many injuries and torments, and with it, his great magnanimity, in that he offered himself so willingly into the hands of his enemies, to suffer the greatest pains and conflicts, that ever were suffered in this world.

Consider such a constant perseverance, which he had from the beginning to the end, even to suffer death on the cross, and to descend into hell, and to finish the work of our salvation.

Consider his most fervent charity, which surpasses all understanding, by which not only he offered himself in sacrifice for the sins of the world, and suffered death, that he might give life not only to his friends, but also to his enemies, even to those very persons that shed his most precious blood.

Consider his most abundant mercy, which reached so far, as to take on himself all the miseries and debts of the world, and to make satisfaction for them, as if they had been his own debts.

Consider such a perfect obedience towards his Father whom he obeyed to death, even to death on the cross; where finally bowing down his head, he offered up his most holy soul to him, giving us to understand, that then the work of his obedience was perfectly fulfilled.

Consider such a great meekness which he showed in all the process of his Passion, accepting to be carried like a sheep to the butchery, and like a

most meek lamb that holds his peace, when he is sheared.

Consider such a wonderful silence among so many false accusations and lying witnesses, which was so great, that it was able to bring the very judge himself that condemned him, into a great admiration of him.

Now , if you desire to see a most perfect pattern of *the contempt of the world*, and of all its honors, riches, pleasures, and delights, behold our Savior on the cross, so dishonored, tormented, and naked, that he had no other bed to lie on, but only a cross; no other pillow on which to rest his head, but only a crown of thorns; no other nourishment to feed on, but only gall and vinegar; no other persons to comfort him, but only those cruel scoffing ministers, which wagged their heads at him and said, *You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days.* (Mt 27:40) I conclude therefore, that the evangelical poverty, abstinence and austerity of life, with all other virtues, nowhere shine more evidently, than in the cross.

But among all these virtues, humility and patience show themselves, humility most notably, in the bitter Passion of our Savior. For patience (as the holy Fathers affirm,) was the wedding garment with which the Son of God clothed himself, when he came to be betrothed with the Catholic Church, and to be married with her. By such a metaphor they give us to understand, that even though our Savior Jesus Christ shined most brightly with the garment of all virtues, when he came to celebrate matrimony with his Church upon the bed of the cross, yet he did most principally shine with the robe of patience. For by means of the act of this virtue, which is to suffer, he drank the bitter cup of his Passion; by its value and merits, the Catholic Church was redeemed, beautified, and espoused by our Savior Jesus Christ. Now on these and other similar virtues, we ought to fix our eyes, when we meditate on the holy Passion of our Savior, so that we may be moved to imitate what was done there, not only for our redemption, but also for our example. For the greatest glory that a Christian can attain in this world, is to have a semblance and likeness to our Savior Jesus Christ. Even though, not the likeness that proud Lucifer desired to have (Is 14:14), but the likeness of life that our Savior himself commanded us, when he said, *For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.* (Jn. 13:15)

VI. Of the convenience of the mystery of our Redemption

The sixth point that we have to contemplate on the holy Passion, is the convenience of the mystery of our Redemption; to wit, how convenient a means this was, which God chose, by which to work the salvation of man, and to heal and cure him of his miseries. This manner of contemplation, serves to illuminate the understanding, to confirm it more firmly in the faith of this mystery, and to lift up the heart of man into a great admiration of the goodness and wisdom of God, who chose so wonderful and convenient a means to heal our miseries, and to relieve our necessities.

This is so copious and so plentiful a matter to meditate upon, that certainly if a man should continue thinking upon it until the end of the world, he should always find new reasons of the convenience of this holy mystery, and new causes to move him to lift up his spirit more and more, in admiration of the high wisdom and providence of God. But because this volume would be too great, if I should treat of this matter at large; I will therefore at present only show the order and foundation of this consideration, to the intent that the devout and religious soul may have here a way opened to her, to continue to all the rest. Therefore, it is to be noted, that if we want to see what proportion and convenience a means has with its end, it is necessary to compare the means and the end, and the greater help the means has to attaining the end, the more proper and convenient the means is. For example, if we examine whether a medicine is convenient for a disease, we must consider the accidents of the disease, and the properties and virtues of the medicine; and when we have seen what proportion there is between the one and the other, we may judge whether the medicine is convenient for the disease. It is similar in this case; as it is evident to us, that the Passion and blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, is a general medicine for all the miseries and necessities of man. If we try the convenience of this medicine, we must make a careful comparison between the medicine and the disease; and in case we are able (thoroughly as we ought) to search and examine both the one and the other, we shall certainly find, that this medicine is so fit and convenient for the curing of this disease, and of all its branches and variants, as if the medicine had been only instituted for the curing of each symptom in the disease, and undoubtedly that is a matter able to bring a man that

considers it attentively, into a great astonishment and admiration. If you are not fully persuaded of this, tell me then, what satisfaction could be offered more sufficient for payment of the common debts of mankind, than the most precious blood which the Son of God shed for us on the cross?

To cure also the wounds of our pride, covetousness, ingratitude, pleasures, delights, and the love of ourselves, with all other evils which proceed from them, what thing could be more convenient, than God on the cross? Likewise, to give us knowledge of the goodness and mercy of God, to enkindle us more in the love of him, to strengthen more our confidence, and to awake more our self-forgetfulness, and thankfulness what thing could be more convenient, than God on a cross?

Moreover, to enrich a man with merits, to exalt him to greater honor, to enkindle his spirit in devotion, to comfort him in his tribulations, to succor him in his temptations, to help him in his labors, to encourage him to great enterprises, and finally, to give a perfect example of all virtues, what thing could be more convenient, than Jesus Christ on the cross? And to comprehend all in one word, if the evangelical life is well considered, it is nothing else, but only a continual cross; and so consequently, what thing could be more convenient to direct a kind of which is altogether a cross, than another cross?

And if you are yet desirous to understand this conveniency more evidently, consider attentively what a Christian life is (for the leading of a Christian life, is the end of all the travails and pains of our Savior Jesus Christ) and the same consideration will declare very plainly to you, what convenience there is between this means, and this end. A Christian life (taken in its full perfection) is not such a kind of life as the Christians usually live at this day in the world; but such a life as our Savior Jesus Christ lived, and such a life as his disciples lived, whose pains, labors, and miseries were so great, that one of them wrote thus of them: *We are become a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men. For truly great are our pains and miseries, and we are reviled and persecuted of the world, that (as we were wild beasts baited at stake) we are specially looked upon, not only of men and angels, but also of God himself.* (1 Cor 4:9) And afterwards he says thus, *Until this present hour we suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness,*

and sorrows, and have not so much as a den where to hide ourselves. We go from place to place, and we gain the bread that we eat with our own hands. They curse us, and we bless them; they persecute us, and we suffer them; they blaspheme us, and we pray for them. To conclude, in such a way we are turmoiled and condemned of the world, as if we were the very dust and dirt that they tread under their feet; and as though we were most wicked and abominable men; the world is fully persuaded, that nothing, can be more acceptable to God, than to procure our death and condemnation.

This is (my dear brother) a Christian life. This very Christian life the Prophets live, and so did also the martyrs, that lived in the primitive Church in the wilderness. To be short, this Christian life all the saints live. And the Apostle described this Christian life very plainly in his epistle to the Hebrews, in these words: *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, of whom the world was not worthy -- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.* (Heb 11:37). This is indeed the perfection of the Christian life, which the Gospel teaches us, and with our Savior Jesus Christ came to bring into the world. This Christian life, if it is well considered, is a continual cross, and death of the whole man, to the intent that, after he is thus mortified and annihilated, he may be able and dispose to be transformed into God. For like as there cannot be generation without corruption, (as much as that thing which is, must perish, to the end that it may be made which is not,) even so this spiritual regeneration and transformation of man into God, cannot be made, unless the old man first dies, so by death and corruption of the old man, he may be transformed into God. From which it plainly ensues, that all evangelical life, is nothing else (as we have said) but death, and a cross. And therefore, what thing can be more convenient to direct such a kind of life as is altogether a continual cross, than another cross? And if there is nothing more apt and convenient to engender fire, than another fire, and if everything is most apt to engender a thing like itself, what thing can be more proportionate and convenient to engender a cross, than another cross?

Undoubtedly so it is; and therefore, there is nothing of greater force to encourage and strengthen all men and women, to suffer pains, injustice, wrongs, poverty, subjection, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness, and to be short, all the troubles, calamities, afflictions, persecutions, imprisonment, torments and miseries of this world, and all the austerities of the evangelical life, than to fix their eyes on the cross. Out of this school of the cross came the martyrs. In this school the apostles also learned, and this school has also taught and strengthened all the saints, to live a holy austere life. And it was the cross that has accompanied and comforted them in all their labors, troubles, pains, afflictions, and persecutions.

Now, when the devout soul finds so many kinds of fruits in this tree of life, for all times, and for all necessities, she cannot but wonder at the high wisdom of that sovereign Majesty, that has found out such an excellent means for our remedy; and she is also moved to acknowledge the unspeakable goodness of so merciful a Father, who being able to have helped and remedied man with his only will, chose rather to put himself to so great pains and dishonors, so that man might be more honored, and more helped by this means, than by any other. These are fix principal ways to meditate on the Holy Passion; and the order that may commonly be used in meditating on them, is to begin at the first, to wit, to consider the most grievous pains which our Savior suffered for us, (the consideration of which is the very foundation of the others,) and from that consideration we may go forward immediately to all the rest, as the course of meditation opens us the way, and especially the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is the principal teacher of these exercises.

For as we have declared before, when we have considered the great pains which our Savior suffered for us, we may then immediately proceed forward, and consider the greatness of our sins and offences, which caused him to suffer so many grievous pains and torments; and with it the greatness of this benefit of our Redemption, in that God, would vouchsafe for our love to suffer such pains and torments and we may likewise consider the highness of the goodness of mercy of Almighty God, who for the great love he bared to us abased himself so far, as to suffer so much reproachful contempt, villainies, and miseries; and above all this, we may consider how great examples of virtues our Savior Jesus Christ has given to

us in it; to wit, of patience, obedience, charity, humility, meekness, constancy, and of all other virtues, of which we have treated in this book. Although, it is a very convenient order of meditating on the holy mystery, to pass orderly by degrees through all the considerations mentioned before, taking our beginning at the first consideration, and so proceed in order from one consideration to another, even to the last; yet it is not necessary to go in the precise manner through them all, (for many times he may not have sufficient time) but let him content himself in his meditation with that consideration, in which he finds most spiritual taste and liking; for as in these exercises, we must not be concerned about the great quantity of the matter that is meditated on, but about the devotion with which it is done.

The end of this book.

DEO GRATIAS