

**Everyday Sanctity**  
**A Treatise on the Sanctification**  
**of Everyday Life**

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## Introduction

1. Everyday sanctity is not Sunday sanctity, the sanctity of the one day out of seven when the church bells ring and we wear our Sunday best. No, it is the sanctity of the other six other days, when humdrum occupations are upon us and we are engrossed in our usual daily work. An everyday saint gives everyday life the character of holiness. One lives the whole week in a saintly manner, impressing holiness on all one does. Our joys and sorrows, our work and recreation, our prayer and speech, our comings and goings—all things are done extraordinarily well out of love, i.e. in a saintly manner.

He considers the natural and supernatural life not as two separate worlds but sees both as one organic whole. For him nature is the foundation and basis of supernature; he uses all creation to lead him heavenwards, for nature is a bridge and pointer to God. Whenever he sees the will of God expressed in his life, he puts it into practice, and in every observation and experience of life he raises his eyes to heaven in order to learn the will of God. His thoughts, desires and deeds are in harmony. Therefore he is a true artist and master of life, a rare gift of God to the present age. "One teacher of life," said Master Eckehardt, "is better than a thousand lecturers."

A jester of the Middle ages once taught some learned professors a lesson. They had been arguing for a long time to no advantage when the jester interrupted them with a question, "Which is better—to learn something which you did not know, or to first practice what you do?" At once the professors began to dispute all over again. At last they came to a conclusion and answered, "It is better to first practice what one knows and then it will be easier to learn when one does not know." The jester bowed and said, "Then, my Lords, you know what to do."

The everyday saint tries to follow this advice. He knows and loves those words of Holy Scripture, "But he who acts in truth comes into the light" (Jn 3, 21); and "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7, 21); and finally, "I always do what pleases Him" (Jn 8, 29). Therefore he takes care that his knowledge and talents do not remain barren, that his intellect is not disproportionately developed with the faculties of his heart and will thus remain stunted. A healthy organism develops in all parts. This is a law of nature. A garden is not satisfied with a fruit tree which has a fine trunk and branches and abundance of blossoms but which never yields fruit.

All in all, we may define everyday sanctity as a divinely willed harmony between a wholehearted attachment to God, to work and to our fellowmen in every circumstance of life.

2. It is too obvious that there is room for such a type of sanctity in the world of today. The present trends within the Church and without demand it. Everyday sanctity is the guiding beacon shining over the troubled waters of the modern age.

And modern Catholic life—what does it call for?

Catholics today want to see Christianity lived. Such examples are far more striking than the work of God which they can read in the Bible. There is also a growing interest in well-written lives of the Saints. Catholics yearn to find God not only in heaven and in the tabernacle but, above all, in man.

A group of Parisian "intellectuals" decided to put an end to the nonsense talked about Ars. One of them was to join the pilgrims journeying to the Curate and come back with the facts. Then

together they would enlighten their gullible compatriots. Eagerly they met their returning ambassador. He was strangely quiet and thoughtful. He sharply silenced their volley of questions and ridicule with, "Stop your talk, friends, I have seen God in a man."

The modern Christian desires to see the supernatural in the mode of the natural, God 'embodied' in man. Everyday sanctity is the answer because it reestablishes the vital communication between God and man—that harmony which has been largely destroyed in our time of universal crisis.

Tanqueray, a great spiritual teacher, calls holiness "a share in the divine life given us by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us because of the merits of Jesus Christ—a life which we must protect against all destructive tendencies." God makes us

holy with our cooperation. The activity of God and human cooperation must go hand in hand.

The divine life is given us by Jesus Christ. He won for us the grace of Redemption which we share with Him by means of a vital communication—as the branch shares the life of the vine. He also sets before us, in an attractive and appealing manner, an example of true holiness. Therefore God does the main part—a fact which we should never forget.

Our own efforts are secondary, yet indispensable, for without them there is no true holiness. On our part, we have to protect and increase this divine life within us. Protection is necessary, for it is attacked by many powerful enemies. The enemies around us are the devil and the spirit of the world. Those within are greed and the quest for power and pleasure. We protect ourselves against all these enemies by mortification—inspired and made effective by faith. This divine life within us also needs to be increased by good works and the reception of the sacraments. It becomes fruitful when we cooperate with grace by apostolic work so that others may share in and be filled with this Divine life. God expects our cooperation. He is delighted with it in much the same way as a mother is when her little child tries to help her mother carry a heavy basket.

Genuine everyday sanctity, practiced in all circumstances of daily life, places more emphasis at one time on divine activity and another time on human cooperation.

The liturgy of the Church, therefore, plays an important part in the life of the everyday saint. It penetrates his whole life and helps him to go to the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

Everyday sanctity, being based on mystical union with Christ, tends to create firm convictions and form one's entire life. Union with Christ is a continual incentive for the everyday saint to become Christ-like. Incorporation in Him means not only a share in the glory but, also in the passion and death of Our Redeemer. At Holy Mass the everyday saint is mystically lifted up with Christ on the Cross and strives incessantly to reach the ideal of a perfect Christian personality throughout the day. Thus today's Catholic is predisposed for everyday sanctity. But what of the others who have fallen victims to naturalism or collectivism, two errors which have caused the present world crisis?

Naturalism is a philosophical system which explains all things and happenings from purely natural causes, denying the supernatural. It puts nature in the place of grace. Therefore, man must be his own redeemer. But, once he falls away from God, his human nature falls apart, becomes chaos—for the grace of God is the remedy for and perfection of human nature.

Therefore man without God becomes a robot. But he cannot exist long without God. Nietzsche says that modern man, drifting away from God, howls in hunger for Him like a wolf at midnight, slinking about God's grave whom he murdered.

Quite often we find otherwise good Christians infected with naturalism. They do not deny the Triune God and His supernatural workings with man, but they do not give Him full scope in their

lives. Their daily life is no longer sanctified. It is cold and dreary because it is devoid of a warm and intimate attachment to God.

Everyday sanctity places God in the center of everyday life and pays Him homage whenever He is present in our brothers and sisters and in the whole creation.

Collectivism is an anthropological heresy, a false doctrine which is directed against the human personality. It not only separates man from God (as does naturalism) but also destroys man's personality, uprooting it from its natural soil of family and home life, thus producing the mass-man—the atheistic, dehumanized and de-personalized man, entirely absorbed by some collective system.

The everyday saint can and will break up collectivism from within because he opposes its errors—consisting mainly of an unnatural separation from God, work and persons—for he is no mass-man but a distinct, supernaturally-minded member of human society anchored in God.

One who has ears to hear and eyes to see cannot but observe that the needs of our atheistic modern age call for everyday sanctity as a mighty power—saving it from present day chaos.

3. In practice, everyday sanctity will always be held and lived in its totality. In explaining it, however, we must deal with each part separately; hence we will treat it under three main headings:

- Attachment to God,
- Attachment to Work and,
- Attachment to Fellowmen.

## Book One

### ATTACHMENT TO GOD

Our modern times are forever restless and agitated, there is ferment and strife, confusion and bustle everywhere. Consequently, we have more need than ever to seek quiet in God, to bind all the chords of our heart to Him.

This does not mean that we should go off to some island and leave the world to itself or to the enemies of our religion. No, our times need men who are at peace with themselves— interiorly and exteriorly approved and raised above every uncertainty and doubt—men who draw their strength from an intimate attachment to God enabling them to impress the image of Christ on the world in spite of all opposition.

These are the great artists of life who are needed today more than ever before and whom we call everyday saints. The more turbulent our days and the more pressing the needs, the more earnestly and thoroughly do they strive for a strong, reliable foundation for their lives and their activities, namely, a deep attachment to God.

#### I. The Qualities of Attachment to God

The relationship between God and man which we usually term "love of God" is, in this work, expressed as attachment to God. Its necessary qualities are easily gathered from our definition of everyday sanctity. We have seen it as "a divinely willed harmony between a loving attachment to God, to work and to our fellowmen in every circumstance of life."

1. First of all, this attachment to God must be pleasing to God in a special way. It must be intense, surpassing the obedience to the Commandments of God which bind under pain of sin. God is far more pleased with a man who does something because He expresses a wish, rather than a command, and who complies with the counseling will of God.

The story of the Rich Young Man in the Gospel is familiar to us. "What must I do to share in everlasting life?" asked the young man. Our Lord told him that he must keep the commandments—but he had known and kept them from his childhood and he wished to go a step further. St. Mark continues, "Then Jesus looked at him with love and told him, 'There is one thing more you must do. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me' " (Mk 10, 21). Jesus first revealed His commands to the young man and then His counsel.

God often appeals to our generosity in a similar way. He hints, "Here is a wish. I will not command it, but if you do it, it will please Me very much and I will reward you with an abundance of graces." Did not Our Lord always do what was pleasing to His Father? The whole program of His life was to do His Father's will. The Savior could say of Himself, "I always do what pleases Him" (Jn 8, 29).

We please God first and foremost when we obey His commandments but they may be kept in a heroic manner. This attitude flows from the motive of an ardent love, a love that knows no limits. Attachment to God, according to the attitude of the everyday saint, is pleasing to Him when it is so lofty that it obeys even the hints of the counseling will of God. The Saints have



been shining examples in this regard.

2. Further, our attachment to God must be harmonious. An example may make this idea clear. Striking a chord on a piano produces harmony which pleases the ear. But, if musical notes are struck at random, then the disharmony annoys us. Or perhaps we have a trio—three different instruments playing together. Suppose all play correctly. Complete harmony then results when the instruments are tuned to each other. If one instrument is pitched too sharply, then no harmony is possible.

In a similar way our attachment to God, to work and to our fellowmen must be tuned to one another. If this harmony exists, then our attachment to God does not take away from our responsibilities towards work and our fellowmen but, on the contrary, acts as an energizing source of vitality.

We see this harmony realized in the life of St. Elizabeth. She certainly loved God, for she was a saint. But how she loved her husband, the poor and the sick! She loved them all ardently in God and for His sake. She was not ashamed— though a princess and lady—to enter the humblest hut and do housework. She swept the floor, made the beds, washed sores and, with her own hands, made bread and prepared meals for those in need.

The opposite of harmony is discord. It is easy to find examples in daily life to illustrate what we mean by harmony in our attachment to God and to our work.

A mother likes to go to Mass on weekdays but at that very hour her husband must get ready for work and the children for school. Naturally everything is upside down in the household. One child will not get up, two others are quarreling, a fourth scalds himself while pouring coffee, the youngest is screaming in its bed, while the father is irritable and finally rushes off to work without breakfast. Meanwhile, the mother is at her prayers in church.

Here is a mock attachment to God, because the attachment to men and duty is neglected. Such a life is in complete disharmony.

Another example.

A woman is in the habit of neglecting Sunday Mass—this time because she fears that her non-Catholic visitor might think her rude to go off to Mass rather than stay home to entertain.

Another time—because she can't get every room spic and span and dusted before dinner and that would be enough to spoil her whole Sunday.

Thus, she can always find an excuse for staying at home and neglecting Sunday Mass.

What is faulty in this case? Undoubtedly her attachment to God in relation to her attachment to work and fellowman is hardly developed. The result is disharmony.

3. Above all our attachment to God must be effective. It must not remain a mere idea but must become part of our will and emotional life and develop into God-consciousness and intimacy with Him.

Think of a mother once again, this time, rocking the cradle. When the infant cries for his mother will she pick him up from the cradle in a mechanical way merely because he has to be fed lest he starve? Or does she assist him since he cannot help himself? Is she bound to love him because this is the will of God expressed in Holy Scripture? How foolish. That would be only a cold, intellectual, philosophical idea and a mechanical love unworthy of a true mother. How much truer it is that the tiny, helpless child stirs the depth of her mother-love and fills her heart with joy. There is no time for calculating; she just takes him into her arms, presses him closely to her

heart and out of her mother-love, gives him whatever he needs.

In the same way our attachment to God is effective when He is the center of our will and emotions.

If holiness were solely intellectual attachment to God, then the wisest and most learned would be the holiest, which is not always the case. The saint is one who is attached to God with his understanding, will and emotions, whose whole nature is entwined with God. His human nature is really permeated with the supernatural—even his subconscious, to some extent. Since it is true that everything that comes into contact with the divine is divinized, then mental inhibition and complexes—which usually have their hiding places in the subconscious region—must gradually disappear.

In attaining our ideal we have to be on guard against two possible dangers. We should not try to force affection and feeling. We have to beware of self-delusion, of fostering unreal affections which have been adopted purposely and which so easily lead to a false valuation of self. These are not genuine, but artificial, and do not stand up to the test of life.

A healthy and vigorous dedication to God is attained and grows only according to the degree of striving of the soul in prayer ever to improve and deepen it and to disentangle itself from inordinate affections. There is no place for unenlightened, fanatical, sentimental love. Quiet, deep meditation inspires and nourishes it, and detachment is the best proof of its genuineness.

4. Our attachment to God must have a fourth quality. It must permeate every avenue of our lives, i.e. it must be comprehensive. The man who constantly remains attached to God in his ordinary daily tasks and duties is a saint. He is *Vinctus Christi*, the prisoner of Christ, who is never separated from Him.

This was well understood by our parents and grandparents and by simple souls. If something pleasant happened they would say, "Thanks be to God." If they began some important business or if some misfortune befell them, their lips would form the words, "In God's name," or "God's Holy Will be done."

Herein even children can be our teachers. One day a father was sitting at a window with his little three-year-old daughter when the following conversation took place:

"Father, is Heaven up there?"

"Yes, dear."

"Where the Christ-child lives?"

"Yes, dear."

"Can He see us sitting at this window?"

"Yes, He can see us."

"Father, then wave, wave to the Christ-child! If you do, I will. Let's both wave to the Christ-child."

And so the father, perhaps for the first time in his life, waved to God.

How often could we take this little child's lesson to heart. Greet God when we see a steeple in the distance or when we admire the starry sky. There are many such ways of making our attachment to God effective, vivid and comprehensive, as the everyday saint practices it.

II. Sources of Our Attachment to God

## A. The Attachment of the Triune God to Man

### 1. The Love of God in General

Don Bosco, the great Italian educator of the last century, once wrote in a letter to his spiritual sons, "My pedagogy is born of love." Then he gave the advice, "If you wish to be obeyed make yourself loved. If you wish to be loved, you must first love. And this is still not enough. You must go a step further—you must not only love your charges, but they must feel that you love them. And how is this to be achieved? You must question your own heart, for it will give you the answer." By applying these principles, Don Bosco succeeded in making urchins and neglected children fit for life.

St. Don Bosco had learned in his quiet hours of prayer, his method of education from God the great teacher of all men and times and, he had discovered that the first principle of the divine educational wisdom was, "The greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13, 13).

Why should we love God? St. John tells us, "We, for our part, love because He first loved us" (1 Jn 4, 19). Why should we be bound to God? Because He is bound to us, i.e. He loves us—out of His own infinite goodness.

The source, therefore, of our love for God is His love for us. What a mystery of Love! Would that it were possible to proclaim it to all men, engraving it on their hearts. Consider that the great Triune God, Creator and Judge of the world—loves you. And what a vast abyss lies between God and you. What are you? A speck of dust, a drop in the ocean, a blade of grass which lives today and dies tomorrow. And what is God? Who dares to give an answer. Philosophers tell us that man is a rational being with understanding and will. Above man stands the whole world of spirits and angels, a world which must be amazingly mighty and glorious. St. Augustine was of the opinion that the end of the world would come when enough just men had been found to fill the places of the fallen angels. And we can suppose that more angels remained in heaven than were condemned. Now try to imagine this mighty band of angels. Theologians group them into nine choirs, each with its particular place before the throne of God. What a multitude there must be, from the lowliest angel to the mightiest seraph. Their power and greatness is beyond our comprehension and still finite. But God is infinite. Greater, even mightier and more beautiful than the angels is the Mother of God. The Angel Gabriel greeted her as "full of grace."

Theologians tell us that this fullness of grace was greater than that of all angels and saints together. Yet, Mary is still infinitely distant from the uncreated Godhead. And it is this infinite, uncreated God who loves us insignificant men. Were we to ponder this truth to the end of our days we would never, even though we had the keen intellect of the greatest philosopher, fathom its depths.

How does God's love for us manifest itself in particular? Holy Scripture tells us, "With age-old love I have loved you; so I have kept my mercy toward you;" "I found delight in the sons of men" (Jer 31, 3; Prov 8, 31).

He loves with everlasting love. From all eternity, when no one else knew me or thought of me, when no one took any interest in me, He already loved me, for I was present in His mind in much the same way as the idea of a picture is present in the mind of the artist even before he paints it. He loved me, a mere possibility, even before I had any actuality.

Michelangelo, the great painter and sculptor, while once walking with some friends, came to a block of marble. Their master became "rooted" to the spot, staring at the stone like one in

ecstasy. His friends thought he had vision and at last asked him what he had seen. He said thoughtfully, "I see an angel." His artist's mind had already seen the angel which he would hew out of that block of stone and he had fallen in love with it even before he had made it.

In a similar way God, the divine artist, had loved me even before I existed. And I shall remain the object of His love for all eternity. That was the reason He created me—to pour out on me, a creature, His divine love.

God's eternal love is tremendous and tender. When Holy Scripture says that He has drawn us to Himself out of mercy, or that it is His delight to be with the children of men, it is thereby made clear that God's laying hold of man came before man's love of God and that God's intimacy with men preceded man's intimacy with God—that God loves us most tenderly.

It has been said that gifted artists can become so enamored of their works that they have no room for other loves. They pour out on art all their powers of love. Were the riches of God's love not infinite—then one should indeed be afraid lest they soon be exhausted, so much does He "waste" His love on us. It has been said that God truly looks with more love on a single human being than on the whole visible creation.

If we would really grasp the greatness and intimacy of His love then we must measure it by the greatness of His gifts. He gave us the greatest possible gift in His only begotten Son that He might redeem us out of His boundless love.

St. Francis Regis was once trying to reconcile a dying sinner with God. All his efforts seemed in vain, until he began to speak of the great love of God for us. He showed the dying man a crucifix and said, "He loved you too." He had struck the right note. The heart of the sinner was touched and he cried out, "Is that really true? Does He love me too?" And he surrendered himself to his loving God.

God loves me with a boundless, unselfish love. I cannot enrich Him—He wishes to enrich me. I cannot make Him happier—He wishes to make me happy. He is only seeking empty vessels to fill them with the riches of His love. If only we had a little of this tremendous, tender, unselfish love.

## 2. The Love of God in the Creation, Conservation and Governing of the World

"If you wish to be loved, you must not only love your charges, but they must feel that you love them." This is the advice of Don Bosco. How can we become conscious of God's love for us? By considering the natural and supernatural gifts which He has showered on us.

Let us first consider the love of God for man in the natural sphere, i.e., the gifts which He has bestowed on all creation in the natural order. He reveals to us His love daily and hourly in His three-fold activity of creating from love, conserving in love, and ruling and governing with love. If we could only see how much life God creates unceasingly! Think of human life alone!

Countless human beings are being born every minute the world over. Each and every soul is created by God immediately. The love of a Michelangelo can be no comparison with the eternal love which God pours forth when He creates the human soul.

At the moment of creation, an eternal idea finds its realization and what countless forms of life He creates! Countless seeds! And why? Out of love. With what loving reverence and reverent love should every being inspire us, as should all the different talents and gifts of our fellowmen. St. Francis of Assisi bore this reverence toward all created things. The sun, fire, cold and

rain—all were his dear brothers and sisters. He even spoke of his dear "brother robber" and his "brother death." He treated even a withered leaf and a stick of wood with reverence for they had been made by God.

Once created, God does not leave the works of His hands to themselves. He also conserves them. Our Lord once said, "My Father is at work until now, and I am at work as well" (Jn 5, 17). This should make us understand His Divine activity. He creates out of love and maintains out of love.

If God withdrew His conserving activity, in that moment the whole universe would dissolve, not merely into dust but into nothingness. For even a speck of dust needs for its existence the supporting hand of God. All who boast of their power and learning are supported every moment by the hand of God. How humble such knowledge should make us!

Our Catechism clearly says that God created the world, conserves and governs it. He governs it with love. He looks after everything—the mighty affairs which rock the world and the bird of the day as it flies through the air. He orders and guides everything. Nothing is insignificant in His eyes. We call this activity, which directs in love, Divine Providence, and many examples of it are to be found in Holy Scripture.

Divine Providence arranged that the infant Moses be placed among the reeds of the Nile River so he might be found by the daughter of Pharaoh. A perfect education and training at the king's court prepared him to be the great leader of his people. But why did he have to flee to the desert to be a shepherd for Jethro for so many years? Because that was the best way of learning the desert tracks and the life of the desert so that he would be able to lead the Israelites during their 40 years of wandering there. Divine Providence worked wonderfully.

Let us look into our own lives. How often has something insignificant turned out for the best! God rules the world with love! We have only to love Him and then all things work out for the best. "*Diligentibus Deum omni cooperantur in bonum*" —"Everything helps to procure the good of those who love God" (Rom 8, 28).

A missionary worked hard for the salvation of souls. Christian life was flourishing—then the pagans attacked the mission station and destroyed his whole life's work. A native found him weeping—for after all, he had a human nature—and laid a hand on his shoulder in an attempt to comfort him. "Father," he said, "remember how often you told us that to those who love God, all things work together unto good? Be of good heart! He loves you still."

The loving hand of divine providence guides our whole life. When joyful events occur in our lives, we accept them as gifts from our Heavenly Father and respond with childlike gratitude. If He sends us a cross or suffering, we accept it as an admonition to change our ways. It is as though He were saying "Stop, you must change your outlook about the cross; otherwise your life will not be pleasing to me."

It is because of their trust in God's loving providence that saintly people remain unruffled, brave and active in all situations of life. All goes well with them, for they know nothing happens contrary to the will of God.

St. Francis Borgia used to say when he had done his part, "I always preach well"—even though he had not done too well, for he had preached in conformity with the plan of Divine Providence. God loves me, and He daily and hourly manifests His love. He created, conserves and governs out of love. Love is the source of workday holiness. God is always close to men and creatures through His love. God is nearer to us than the air to the bird or the sea to the fish. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 28).

The workday saint is constantly aware of the presence of God. He has a keen supernatural sense of God's attributes, particularly of His omnipresence. This God-consciousness formed an attitude of reverence in the lives of the saints.

Vincent Pallotti, out of this sense of reverence, would genuflect on entering his room and carry his hat when walking through Rome, even though it happened to be raining. "It does not matter" he used to say if someone drew his attention to the rain—"The loving God is near us." He liked to cut his bread into very small pieces, so that each little piece might remind him of the love and presence of God. St. Francis of Assisi showed the same reverence for he would never stir up water or scare an animal since he thought of them as the handiwork of the Creator, Conserver and Sovereign.

### 3. The Love of God Toward His Children

Let us probe a little further into the foundation of our union with God. We consider God's supernatural love for men or the supernatural gifts which He has bestowed on us through love. In the natural order God is the Creator, Conserver and Sovereign of the universe. All is His domain. In the supernatural order He has made it possible through His love and by grace to "dwell" in the souls of men in quite a special manner. What does this indwelling mean? Does He dwell in us as we dwell in a room which always remains something quite distinct and separate from us? The indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in my soul means not only is He present, but also He has given me a share in His own Divine Life.

Is the great God really bound to me? Does He love me? Could His love be greater? And what is my response? How little do I love Him! St. Augustine once exclaimed, "My God, you were within me, but I was far away—entangled in the affairs of this world and I did not notice You." The early Christians were well grounded in this great truth of the divine indwelling.

"If you have seen your brother you have seen the Lord" was a common expression. The father of Origen would lean over his sleeping child and kiss him with great reverence, adoring the Triune God in the soul of his sleeping boy.

The everyday saint is animated by this truth. The brightness of a man's eye reminds him of the sanctuary lamp. Wherever a sanctuary lamp is burning, there is the All-Holy. By grace God is present and acts in the soul as father, friend, cooperator and sanctifier.

#### a. God is Our Father

The Triune God has set up His throne in the soul which is in the state of grace. There He acts like a father. He is our Father; we are His children. St. Paul emphasized this frequently. "You did not receive a spirit of slavery leading you back into fear, but a spirit of adoption through which we cry out 'Abba!' (that is, 'Father' " (Rom 8,15). Also, St. John says, "See what love the Father has bestowed on us in letting us be called children of God! Yet that is what we are" (1 Jn 3,1).

What does the term father imply? We have to distinguish a three-fold fatherhood. In the strict sense, "father" is that person through whom I received life. We received our human nature from our parents by generation. The Son of God received His divine nature by generation from His Father in heaven, the Father who begot Him before all ages and begets Him unto all ages. In the strict sense, the only-begotten Son alone can call God Father.

In the widest sense, "father" can be applied to anyone who is as good to me as a father, who looks

after me like a father. In this sense, God is the loving father of everyone—sinners and pagans as well—and also of all creatures. He clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of heaven. There is yet a third meaning of the term "father"—the adoptive father. He is the one who adopts a child, bestows on him his name, gives him a share in his goods and privileges, and makes him the heir to his property. In this sense, am I an adopted child of God? Yes. He has adopted me by grace, I bear His name, I have a share in His goods, and He has made me an heir to heaven. But I am and have even more than this!

Here we meet a great mystery which we are unable to fathom with our human intellect. Our great heavenly Father gives us something that no human can give his adopted child—namely, a share in His own life. God makes us conform to His supernatural image by giving us grace. An adopted child will never truly resemble his father, for he has different blood and different ancestry. But when we are adopted as children of God, we are made in a wonderful manner similar to God and united to Him, capable of seeing Him face to face for all eternity. St. Peter says in his second epistle, "That divine power of His has freely bestowed on us everything necessary for a life of genuine piety, through knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. By virtue of them He has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature." (2 Pet 1, 3f). In the natural order there is no exact counterpart of this kind of fatherhood.

I am really a child of God and can, in all truth, place myself by the side of our Divine Savior and address the great Lord of heaven and earth as "Dear Father." However, I am not His child by generation, as Christ is but, by an unmerited participation of His divine life, through grace. My heavenly Father, moreover, loves me in a fatherly way. When I say, "Abba, dear Father," he replies with His divine, "Fili, Filia, my dear child." By the lips of the prophet Isaiah, He tells us that He loves us with warm father-love and tender mother-love—"Does a woman forget her baby at the breast or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you. See, I have branded you on the palm of my hand."

How little does modern man, even the Christian, know of this consoling truth! How can we ever feel forsaken and lonely and go from door to door seeking consolation—and forget our Heavenly Father! Does the child not go to its father when in need? And does not a child, even the smallest and most helpless, awaken in the heart of its father an eagerness to help and a joy in giving?

Our Heavenly Father is generous. He gives Himself lovingly and loves to give—for He is Love. He breathes forth the Holy Spirit out of His great desire for love.

His ardent desire to give never lets Him rest. He even united His Son with our human nature.

The Father, dare I say it, cannot be without a child; indeed, He wants the greatest number of children possible—He is Love and therefore, must give Himself. *Deus quaerit condiligentes se.*

God is seeking rational beings whom He can love and who can love the things that He loves in the same way that He loves them. Therefore He allowed His only-begotten Son to become man.

By Baptism we became His children. God the Father has a "weak spot." He cannot resist the child who realizes and admits its helplessness. Childlikeness realizes this "weakness" of

Almighty God and "omnipotence" of man. Herein lies the reason for the blessing of humility in the Kingdom of God. In her Magnificat, the Blessed Virgin sang joyfully of it, "He has raised the lowly to high places" (Lk 1, 52). Our Lord Himself ratified these words of His Mother when He said, "He who humbles himself shall be exalted" (Lk 14, 11) and, "Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve

the needs of all" (Mt 20, 26f).

b. God is Our Friend

The great Triune God is not merely content with our love as His children. He would also have us love Him as a friend. He is dwelling in us as our divine friend—"I do not speak of you anymore as my servants but I have called you my friends" (Jn 15, 15). This is the word of God and is to be taken literally. Friendship supposes a kindred nature—there can never be complete friendship between man and animal and God

therefore has given us a share in His divine life. We are not speaking here of an identity—for that would imply that we were gods—but of a certain similarity which is sufficient to make possible a mutual relationship with Almighty God.

In the true spirit of friendship, God overwhelms us with His gifts—He gives to us His Son, His Holy Spirit. He allows us to share in the task and mission of His Son, and under the cross He entrusted all of us to His Mother in a most solemn manner.

In return, this Divine Friend would like to receive all we have to offer. What do I have to offer? Now there is only one thing which really belongs to me—it is my will, my love. This is what I should willingly give to Him in return as a token of my friendship. Our Lord says, "Here I stand, knocking at the door. If anyone hears me calling and opens the door, I will enter his house and have supper with him, and he with me" (Rev 3, 20). Oh, amazing intimacy which we never dared desire had not our Divine Friend taken the initiative! He invites us to His table and, as a good friend, instructs and counsels us.

So it was with St. Clare, the great saint of the thirteenth century; when she awoke from an ecstasy, she was asked by her sisters, "What have you learned today from the loving God?" for they knew that He had been speaking to her.

He who cultivates friendship with the Triune God dwelling within him will perceive many truths which are hidden from others. He will receive new inspirations and courage to persevere—that is the fruit of this friendship with God. The sound of our Friend's voice and His knocking on our door is very often drowned by the noise of the world, but the workday saint has acute hearing and is "tuned in" to God. The voice of man and the din of work can never dim the voice of his Divine Friend. He hears it in the background as a trusting child hears the sound of its mother's voice in the noise of the busy street.

c. God is Our Co-Worker

Our Friend does not remain idle within us but is active as our strong ally and co-worker. He knows that, without His assistance, we are unable to look after our supernatural life, that we cannot live like true children of God and, therefore, by His powerful assistance, He supports our weakness.

He gives light to our understanding—that we might see our aim clearly, and He gives strength to our wills—that we might reach it. When guilt and suffering lash our frail barge of life and threaten to swamp it, when courage and trust begin to fail us, then we hold on to the words of St. Paul, "I am sure of this much: that He who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1,6). In a word, we are never alone. His grace is ever at hand—we have only to reach out and grasp it.

We are "flooded with graces" given us by our divine co-worker and yet we often thirst because we will not draw on them. Remember the words of St. Paul, "In Him who is the source of my



strength I have strength for everything" (Phil 4,13).

The everyday saint is convinced that his divine ally actually does the main part of the work, that he is only a weak instrument which the Master uses with great interest to bring the work to perfection. *Pater habebit curam*—God will see to it! The everyday saint is humble, grateful and always remains tranquil and capable of bearing his burden because he realizes that objectively God, who does the main part of the work, is his ally and cooperator. Humility is the recognition of one's own nothingness and the realization of God's omnipotence. Can the brush used by the artist boast of the finished picture? Yet how often do we act like conceited paint brushes!

d. God is Our Sanctifier

God, our co-worker and ally, is also our sanctifier. Our bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit through the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in the souls of the baptized, hence they are sacred places. "For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor 3, 17). How noble-minded should this thought make us! We are living tabernacles of the Most High<sup>1</sup>.

When King Pyrrhus sent his first ambassador to Rome, he received the report that in Rome every citizen had the appearance of royalty. Everybody should be able to say this of us Christians—not only because of our deportment in public and in business, but also in the privacy of our homes where the same nobility should be apparent. *Noblesse oblige!* Bishop Camus relates of St. Francis de Sales that, though he had lived constantly with him for two years, he had never seen in him the slightest unbecoming or coarse behavior.

If the thrice-holy God dwells within us, it is obvious that His presence sanctifies us. He is our Sanctifier—He makes us holy.

St. Therese of Lisieux was convinced of this truth.

She expresses this truth by striking parables. In one place she speaks of our inability to reach holiness without God's help and strength.

She stands at the foot of the mountain of perfection like a small child trusting that she would be carried aloft, for alone she can go no further. What does she do? She stretches out her hands in prayer to the Father above, that He should come and fetch her. The Heavenly Father takes her in His powerful arms, as in a lift, not merely to the foot of His throne, but even close to His Divine Heart.

She speaks in another place of the stairway of holiness. It is a steep climb and she stands at the foot, a small child. She tries again and again to place her foot on the first step, but she stumbles and falls back. How can she ever reach the top? By continuous efforts and trustful prayer she will finally win the Heart of God. He will reach down and draw her aloft—she has only to hold fast and cooperate. Does not God's activity, then, play the main role? Is not one's own energy also employed? St. Therese will have no part with passive quietism. One's own share of work is also necessary, but she recognizes it and values it for what it is worth. She is thus quite empty of self.

Holy Scripture gives us many similar examples to inspire our trust in the truth that God is our Sanctifier. It likens the soul to the apple of God's eye, and to a bird which is borne aloft on the wings of an eagle. "He found them in a wilderness, a wasteland of howling desert. He shielded them and cared for them, guarding them as the apple of His eye. As an eagle incites its nestlings

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<sup>1</sup> German: *Wir sind wandelnde Dreifaltigkeitskirchen!* (We are moving/traveling churches of the Blessed Trinity!). JN.

forth by hovering over its brood, so He spread His wings to receive them and bore them up on His pinions" (Deut 32, 10, 11).

The life of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, bears all the same features. She trusted her Father, Friend and Ally, abandoning herself entirely to her Sanctifier. In her Magnificat she sings, "God who is mighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1, 49). Everything is credited to the activity of God, not to her own efforts. Who are the 'hungry,' but those who are empty of self and expect everything from the 'activity of God'—those who are full of themselves—these "He has sent empty away" (Lk 1, 53).

If we ask ourselves what holiness really is, then we should reply in the words of the everyday saint. It is the simple response of a child to the love of his father, the answer to the continuous calling of his friend. Holiness is not merely understanding, but life—life in the Triune God. The everyday saint stimulates this pulsating life again and again by making acts of adoration, of sorrow, of interior and affective love, and through the imitation of Our Lord. Love unites us with the beloved, assimilates and identifies us with Him.

#### 4. Our Share in the Divine Life

There is something quite overwhelming about the conviction—God dwells within us. This short sentence contains a whole world of mysteries which we bear within us. Everything that we can and should say about being children of God is only a feeble attempt to throw light on this great mystery. It awakens a great longing in us to lift the veil still more.

God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Ex 3, 5). We also are standing on holy ground and can take only a few hesitating steps in great fear and reverence. Even when enlightened by the great gift of faith, our human understanding is too feeble to grasp the mystery of the divine dwelling within us.

The Triune God dwelling in me means that He is within me and, in a mysterious manner, draws me into the stream of His own inner divine life. "God lifts up man to Himself and allows him to share in His own inner life. Through His revelation he affords man's intellect a glimpse into His all-holy being. Man, with his human nature, is also allowed to enter into the Holy of holies, for there—according to the words of Our Lord to the Apostles—there are many dwellings of the Father. In a new way, God draws men to Himself and unfolds in their souls His triune, divine life. The spiritual self-generation—the fruit of which lives in the bosom of God as the Divine Son, equal in nature with the Father—has its living expression in the supernatural man who, in a special sense, is the image of the Divine Logos and adopted Son of God and brother of the Logos—not by nature but by grace. The divine splendor shining in the Son overflows to men and reproduces a similar reflection of eternal light. He who believes in the mutual inspiration of love, in which the Father and Son embrace each other and whose fruit is the third person of the Blessed Trinity, finds again its expression in the soul of the supernatural man, in as much as the flashing flame of divine love reaches the intelligent creature and there enkindles a similar flame. Therefore the essential soul-form of the supernatural man consists in the revelation and expression of the inner life of the three Divine Persons." (Bichlmair)

The Triune God has, by grace, given me a created, real representation of the inner life of the Blessed Trinity.

This began with baptism which was a rebirth of the soul. When I was first born I received my

natural life, my body and soul. In the second birth my soul received once again what had been given in paradise and intended for everyone—that which had been lost by original sin. Our Lord spoke of this to Nicodemus when He said, "I solemnly assure you, no one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above" (Jn 3, 3). It was as though He said—If you wish to enter Heaven something must happen to you; you must be born again. This birth is not a birth according to the flesh—but of water and the Holy Spirit. It is, however, a genuine, real, spiritual birth. The soul is purified and enriched, it receives a new kind of being—the divine life, or sanctifying grace. One who does not have this kind of being cannot enter Heaven.

We have such limited minds that, when it comes to a question of fathoming the mysteries of faith, we are glad to make use of examples and parables to make the meaning clear. There is one image common to the Fathers of the Church which can make us better understand the working of sanctifying grace. Think of a piece of iron. It is rough, colorless, cold and completely shapeless. But, plunge it into fire for a while and watch the change! The iron begins to glow and becomes like fire. It is saturated with fire, it looks like fire, it is hot and shines like fire, but it remains a piece of iron.

It is somewhat the same with our soul. It was warmed in the glow of divine love by baptism. It was saturated and began to pulse with divine life. Just as the iron began to take on the properties of fire, so the soul shares in the divine activity of knowledge and love. It knows, it loves like God. It receives a new feeling for God and for divine things—as an artistic nature sees beauty and harmony in everything.

This fire of divine life enters the soul in baptism. Then we should always value our baptismal day very highly and as a birthday, striving during our whole life to have a keen appreciation for it. Our natural birthday gave us natural life, but our baptism day gave us a share in divine life! Should we not value this divine life more and more from day to day? It is a pity that so often we value honor, beauty, riches, common sense and well-being higher than our state of grace.

Pope St. Leo the Great warns us, "Know, O Christian, your dignity, and being made partaker of the divine nature, take care lest through degenerate behavior you return to your former nothingness. Consider whose head and body of whom you are a member. Consider how you have been rescued from the powers of darkness and born into the light and Kingdom of God. You became a temple of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Baptism. Take care lest, by evil works, you grieve such a noble guest and He throws you back again to the slavery of the devil—for your ransom is the Blood of Christ and He who saved you in mercy will judge you in justice."

Father Alvarez, an enlightened guide of souls, helped his novices to realize the practical value of appreciating this divine life within them by crystallizing the main theme of all his instructions in the sentence—"O, do not degenerate or abandon your lofty sentiments as a Child of God." These words kindled the hearts of his young men, a number of whom were sent to preach the Gospel to the pagans. On the way they fell into the hands of enemies and had to endure terrible tortures for their faith. While they were suffering, one of them called out the motto of their master—"O do not degenerate or abandon your lofty sentiments as a Child of God"—and all of them received the glorious crown of martyrdom.

The everyday saint has the true scale of values. His greatest care is to protect and increase the divine life within him—all other values have less importance. Among the early Christians the divine life was the center of thought and striving. The ideal was to die in baptismal innocence. We often find the following inscription in the Catacombs—In albis decessit. He died with his

baptismal garment unspoiled.

Alban Stolz tells us the worth of such a soul—"Sanctifying grace is for the soul what the sun is for the earth. All beauty, all prosperity, all life on earth depend on the sun. Take away the sun and the earth would become a comfortless sod—frozen and doomed to horrible darkness. It is the same with the soul—without sanctifying grace it becomes, in God's eyes, cold, dark and as hateful as a rainy night of hail in late autumn. On the other hand, with sanctifying grace, the soul is glorious because God's Spirit of Love is shining through it and mirrors Him like the sun on a tranquil lake. Therefore, such a soul loves whatever God loves, just because it is the Spirit of God which lives in him and helps him to love."

The new being which the soul is given at this rebirth makes it so much like God that saints who have been granted the grace of seeing a soul in the state of grace say that, after God, it is the most beautiful thing that ever existed.

Through sanctifying grace the soul is enabled to know and love God here on earth in an imperfect way, and later in a perfect way in Heaven when it reaches its supernatural aim. "Without this new divine life the soul would never be able to attain its final end."

A plant is unable to see and an animal is unable to speak—in other words, they cannot perform an act which is above their own nature. If the plant is to see, it must first be raised to a higher order of being—to that of the animal. If an animal is to speak, it must be raised to the order of being of a man.

It is the same with man. To know and love God in a supernatural way is above man's order of being. It belongs to a higher divine order of being. Man is raised to this order by sanctifying grace and, with the new life, new faculties are implanted. There are two spiritual faculties which belong to our human nature—understanding and will. In the new supernatural divine life of love, new faculties or virtues spring up—faith, hope and charity, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the cardinal virtues. These supernatural abilities and faculties, which are sown like seeds in our souls, spring up by the help of grace and produce blossoms and fruit. These are supernatural actions.

As with our natural life, there is a development in our supernatural life. Its perfection is reached only in eternity. Hence St. Paul says, "Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Cor 13, 12). The more divine life there is in us, the more, already in this life, we will resemble God. The divine life, likewise, streams through the veil of the flesh and makes it radiant. That is so often why old people who have lived pure, God-fearing lives seem so supernatural and radiant and why holy people sometimes appear so pure that they seem as beings from another world.

In the last analysis, the supernatural life is given to us so we might thereby be united to the Triune God. This is the crowning of the mystery of the supernatural life and the perfect proof that God is bound to men, that he loves us. The created thing, sanctifying grace, which is similar in being to God, comes to us in baptism; it makes us God-like—but more, it unites us to God, for where there is sanctifying grace there God dwells. It is like a bridge which God uses to reach us. It is the means He uses to bind Himself to the soul in a most secret manner.

In order to explain the intercommunication between the indwelling God and this divine life, St. Bonaventure makes use of a charming, though somewhat commonplace, example:

"A man holds a horse by the bridle. He is really only holding the bridle, but thereby, he is also holding the horse. It is the same with the soul of the just which, first of all, possesses sanctifying grace—but as the bridle is bound to the horse, so is sanctifying grace bound to

God. The soul possesses God at the same time through sanctifying grace. We should not press this example too far—it is only meant to make clear the binding of the soul to uncreated grace by means of created grace and, if not pressed too literally, it does this well. It well expresses the idea of having and possessing, but not so well the indwelling, the special presence of God in the soul in a state of grace. Sanctifying grace is not something quite absolute, something complete in itself, but is only something relative. It implies a relationship to God who is uncreated grace."

How close can we consider this binding? Let us use an example. The human nature of the God-man is united with the Divine Person of the Eternal Word in the unity of the person. Our union with the Triune God is not so intimate; otherwise we would all be gods. Nor does it go as deep as the union of the soul and body. Theologians call this an essential or substantial union. Body and soul make one being, one person. But, when we are motivated by grace, we always remain essentially different persons from God.

Think of two persons who are very fond of each other. Spiritually they are very intimate, even though separated by a great distance. Their union of hearts might well be called a moral union. Does the Triune God dwell within us in this manner? Undoubtedly, since He is united to us in the most intimate bonds of love! But does this kind of union exhaust the whole matter? Theologians tell us that the union of the soul with God is not merely moral nor, on the other hand, substantial in the strict sense of the term, but is so real that it may justly be called a physico-moral union. However, it remains veiled and obscure; its growth is gradual. Its effects are perceived more and more clearly in proportion to the efforts we make to cultivate faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Fervent souls who long for this divine union are ever possessed with an urgent desire each day to advance further in the practice of virtue and the use of these gifts. All this is so profound and so full of mystery that, even with the eyes of faith, we can see it only dimly. Our natural vision is too weak and limited; it can best appreciate the truth of the divine indwelling by observing souls who are constantly united to God in interior recollection. It is most important for us to cleanse and sharpen the eyes of our faith so that we might become children of faith. Above all, we should strive to live according to this great divine mystery. *Vivas ut intelligas*—Live your faith that you might understand it—is a favorite saying of Christian wisdom. In other words, if you wish to grasp and perceive a mystery of faith deeply, first of all live according to it, and afterwards your understanding will be enlightened and enriched.

But, how are we to live accordingly? It is quite simple. Consider the saints. How did they do it? In a spirit of faith they often pondered the mystery of the indwelling of the Triune God in their souls. Also, they held childlike contact by their affections of thanksgiving, adoration, love and reverence expressed in short forms (especially by spontaneous ejaculatory prayers), and they offered countless sacrifices to Him. While they lived thus in the light of the great truth of the divine indwelling, they appreciated more and more the truth itself—indeed, many received the grace of peering into the deepest recesses by means of a most secret, infused light. All the truths which we considered have been expressed in a simple prayer to God dwelling within our souls.

"O dearest Jesus, Lover of Souls, make me worthy of the indwelling of the Father and the Holy Spirit in my soul. I give you my innermost heart for your own. It is your bridal chamber, your Sion, your Bethany. Grant me the gift of your indwelling presence and your friendship. I offer you all that happens in my soul, pleasant and otherwise. I offer it in union with the works and secrets of your divine humanity, in union with the labors of

your glorious mother and of your beloved saints as a prayer to be heard in my times of need. Amen."

## B. Our Lord's Love for Man

The Triune God attaches Himself to man. He loves us as creatures and children and bestows His love in a natural and, above all, a supernatural manner inasmuch as He dwells within us and allows us to share His divine life.

But His love goes even further. St. John, the beloved disciple, tells us, "God's love was revealed in our midst in this way: He sent His only Son to the world that we might have life through Him. Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an offering for our sins. Beloved, if God has loved us so, we must have the same love for one another" (1 Jn 4, 9-11).

The second person of the Blessed Trinity assumed a human nature. He became man. From the moment when the Mother of God uttered her Fiat and the great mystery of the Incarnation took place (of which the Angelus reminds Catholics three times daily), the most convincing proof of the fatherly love of God for us is the life, works, sufferings and death of the God-Man.

Day by day the everyday saint enkindles his love in the thought of this great love. He never tires of contemplating and carrying out the great deeds of love which Our Lord so abundantly performed, both during His life and after His death.

### 1. Our Lord's Love During His Earthly Life

"Such as my love has been for you," says Our Lord, "So must your love be for each other" (Jn 13, 34). We only have to open Holy Scripture—the letters of God to His children—to discover how Our Lord loved us. We shall gladly acknowledge that Our Lord first loved us with a provident, compassionate and heroic life which the Savior proved by word and deed.

#### a. His Love is Provident

So kindly and lovingly, therefore, does He invite us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you," (Mt 11, 28). He calls Himself the Good Shepherd who goes seeking the lost lamb, undismayed by the sunburnt desert and thorny brambles and, when He finds it, brings it home on His shoulders and is ready, if need be, to lay down His life for it.

#### b. His Love is compassionate

His sympathy shows itself in His perfect understanding of every physical and spiritual suffering which He meets. One day He restores a child to the weeping mother; another time He heals a withered hand. Here He casts out a devil; there He feeds a multitude which had been following Him for three days. And when they brought a woman before Him, taken in adultery and covered with shame, He could still see, deep down under the filth and misery of sin, a spark of longing for purity and goodness—He did not condemn her. Our Lord always went about doing good.

#### c. His Love is Heroic

Heroic love goes even further. ". . . God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2, 20).

"There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15, 13). If we wish to realize Our Lord's love, we must pause here.

Because of the immensity of his own suffering, modern man no longer feels the gigantic weight of the tragedy of the passing of Our Lord. But let us remember that during His life Our Lord enjoyed the beatific vision, that He always saw God face to face and, in seeing Him, saw the sins committed at all times in all places. On entering this world, He uttered His joyful "Yes" to all the torments which awaited Him when the divine nature would "withdraw" from His humanity so that He might taste, to the very limit, the dregs of suffering. He knew that in His direst hour on Golgotha, the Father would deny Him His consolation and that, in the most frightful torment, He would bleed to death after three hours of agony.

It is said of souls endowed with mystical graces that, during their hours of suffering, they have the feeling that all the sins of the world have been laid upon them. Could we but imagine how Our Lord, the purest and most holy, felt when divinity "abandoned" Him—burdened as He was with the most frightful and shameful sins, from the time when Cain murdered his brother to the last evil deed at the end of the world—we should then understand how it was possible for the drops of blood to force their way through the pores of His skin and we should not be so easily inclined to compare our suffering to Our Lord's.

With St. Vincent Pallotti, the great saint of Rome and founder of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, we confess, "The Son of Man offered Himself and all that He had when He became man for the love of us. He entered the world with a perfect attitude of sacrifice and He exemplified it during the whole course of His life until His death on the cross. He who looks into the eyes of the Crucified, be he poor or rich, great or humble, learned or unlearned, powerful or weak, cannot possibly refuse to follow Jesus Christ. In comparison with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us sinners on the cross, every other sacrifice is quite insignificant no matter who is called upon to make it and no matter how great it may be; It is a mere nothing." All that Our Divine Savior suffered He accepted out of love. He suffered for love of us in soul and body. Consider how His honor was lost! Judas sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, the usual ransom of a slave. What an outrage! At the trial before Pilate, Barabbas was preferred to Him. Herod clothed Him in the garments of a fool! He was finally loaded with the ignominious cross which was to be His harsh deathbed and which He carried on His shoulder to Calvary like the worst malefactor!

All this He bore out of His great love for man in order to atone for sins of pride and to restore the favor of the Father. But, in spite of all this, even today we have not freed ourselves from inordinate attachments and desires. We look far too much to our own honor and reputation—and far too little to bearing contempt from others. If our love was true we would return His love. Instead of attaching ourselves in complete conformity with Him, we can hardly say our prayers or even sleep when people humiliate and pass us over. Yet, he who is consumed with love for Christ will utter his strong "Yes" with his will, even while his feelings shudder at suspicion or slander, he will not allow himself to be disturbed in his daily tasks and duties—for it is quite obvious to him that, as they once treated Our Lord, so they will also treat him. Therefore there are few who succeed in not only accepting, but also in loving and seeking contempt, who can willingly attribute the less good to themselves and point out the achievements of others, who are pleased when they are considered contemptible and full of faults and treated as such. The everyday saint continually strives after this high degree of love.

Immeasurably great was the grief of Our Lord when, clearly seeing the malice of sin and the

horrible ingratitude of men, He knew that for many His sufferings would be in vain. He saw many, whom He called to the delights of His love, rejecting his advances. He saw others treading the way of the condemned and being thrown headlong into the abyss of hell. He bore all this suffering out of his great love for us as the ransom for our sins. The everyday saint knows all this and strives, by an ardent and active loving response, and by his apostolic work, to make the sufferings of Our Lord bear fruit among men.

No less excruciating were the physical sufferings of Our Lord. He was stripped and scourged at the pillar to atone for our sensuality and indolence, for the stirrings of our concupiscence, for our disordered self-love. He, the purest of the pure, the lily sprung from the virginal womb of the Immaculate Mother, allowed Himself to be scourged, tortured with thongs and biting whips as the price of atonement for our misdeeds, exposed to the leering eyes of women, children and at the mercy of bloodthirsty soldiers. Who could doubt the heroic love of the Savior for men? Still more insulting and painful was the crowning with thorns! Indeed, the saints tell us that it was a miracle that the Savior could bear it while remaining self-possessed and calm—for the skin of His head was pierced with thorns which penetrated deep into His temples.

The everyday saint is deeply moved by all these manifestations of Our Lord's love and repeats with St. Paul, "God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2, 20).

## 2. Our Lord's Love After His Death

The great love of the God-man was by no means exhausted on the cross. When Our Savior died on the cross He, as the new Adam, destroyed the "Handwriting of Guilt" which had held mankind in sorrowful thrall for thousands of years and once more made us children of God and heirs to the Kingdom of God.

### a. Membership in the Mystical Body of Christ

We enter this Kingdom through the mystical incorporation in Christ by which we are received into His own relationship of son-ship with the Father. We can come to the Father only through Christ. Since this intimate incorporation is such a great mystery, we speak of the Corpus Christi Mysticum, the Mystical Body of Christ.

The attachment of a child of God to Christ is more intimate than that between brother and sister. In Holy Scripture it is called bridal. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God Himself, since I have given you in marriage to one husband, presenting you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11, 2). We can also say that every soul in the state of sanctifying grace, every child of God, is a bride of Christ and continually lives with Christ in an intimate attachment. Those who have embraced the state of virginity have made this bridal relationship exclusive. The everyday saint knows this truth and strives so his life with Christ may ripen and develop into an inner companionship of love.

### b. Sources of Membership: The Sacraments

In order to place his efforts on a firm foundation, he ponders upon the significance in Holy Scripture of the parables of the vine and the branches and of the head and members of the body. These mysteries are so deep they cannot be fully expressed in clear-cut terms. That is why Our Lord and St. Paul speak in parables which best explain the obscure character of the mystery. It was a solemn moment that the Savior chose for His parable. The Apostles had made their First



Holy Communion and were listening, enthralled, to the farewell discourses of their Master immediately before His death. Perhaps they had not been ready before to hear the great message. Now were they sufficiently prepared and in the right state of mind? Our Lord explained, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower. He prunes away every barren branch but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield. You are clean already, thanks to the word I have spoken to you. Live on in Me as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from me. I am the vine, you are the branches,. He who lives in Me and I in him, will produce abundantly, for apart from Me you can do nothing. A man who does not live in Me is like a withered, rejected branch, picked up to be thrown in the fire and burnt. If you live in Me, and My words stay part of you—you may ask what you will—it will be done for you. My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples" (Jn 15, 1-8).

The quintessence of the parable of Our Lord is the principle of the mystical organic life common to both Him and the apostles which is similar to the life principle of the vine and the branch.

This intimate attachment to their Master remains even after His departure.

The parts of the simile are Our Lord and us. He, true God, Eternal Son of the Eternal Father who became Man for us in time—we, the baptized, His redeemed. We live a common life with Him. How significant this common life is in the eyes of Our Lord can be seen from the effects which He pointed out to us. One not attached to Him is unfruitful: "Live on in Me, as I do in you. No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine, can you bear fruit apart from Me" (Jn 15, 4f). More than that, the soul will die and be cast into the fire of hell. "A man who does not live in Me is like a withered, rejected branch, picked up to be thrown in the fire and burnt" (Jn 15, 6). But he who remains attached to the Savior 'yields abundant fruit.' The Father sends him crosses and suffering —He "prunes away every barren branch but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield" (Jn 15, 2).

Theologians ponder this parable deeply, striving to discover what is meant by this common life with Christ. Is it only a moral bond like that between two friends who love one another? Many say this is too little. On the other hand, the common life cannot be physical in the sense of a real blending of being—that would be going too far. We would then not be Christlike but the God-man Himself. We can only arrive at the conclusion that this is a mystery which we cannot fathom. The mystery is still more impenetrable when we hear from Our Lord: "My flesh is real food and My blood real drink. The man who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent Me and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on Me will have life because of Me. . . .the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever" (Jn 6, 55f). With full confidence, St. Paul says of himself, "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me" (Gal 2, 20). In the same spirit St. Vincent Pallotti could pray, "My own life must be destroyed and the life of Jesus must become my life. The life of Jesus be my meditation, my study; Christ's prayer be my prayer; Christ's teaching, my teaching; Christ's love my love; Christ's love for Mary, my love for her."

Familiar passages of Holy Scripture will now become more meaningful to us. When Our Lord said to Saul outside Damascus, "Why do you persecute Me?" (Acts 9, 4)—or on another occasion when he declared, "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me" (Mt 25, 40), he implied that it was not done for His sake alone but was actually done to Himself. That is why the phrase was current among the early Christians, "If you have seen your brother, you have seen the Lord."

St. Paul deepens our understanding through his favorite parable of the body and the members, "The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ. It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit. Now the body is not one member, it is many" (1 Cor 12, 12-14).

The head of the Mystical Body of Christ is the God-man Himself. As the head has an eminent place in the human body and is a special center of activity and a living source of energy for the entire man so must the place of Christ be considered in His Church. He is the First-born of every creature and the perfect exemplar of every virtue. In Him, in Christ Jesus, we stand as a perfect unity before the Father. To each member of His Mystical Body He continually imparts new nourishment, especially through the Sacraments.

Every living body must have a soul. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Mystical Body of Christ. At the Last Supper Our Lord prayed: "I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that all may be one as you, Father, are in Me and I in You; I pray that they may be [one] in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (Jn 17, 20-21). The uniting bond between Father and Son is the Holy Spirit; He must, therefore, have the same function in the Church—He must be the soul of the Church. What the soul is to the natural body, the Holy Spirit is to the Mystical Body of Christ. Hence, in the Credo of the Mass we pray: "Et in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et Vivificantem—I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life."

We, the baptized, are the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. St. Paul makes this quite clear: "It was in one Spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12, 13). All members form a whole, all have everything common to all. "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy" (1 Cor 12, 26). The whole body gains by the well-being of the single organ, whereas a sick or injured organ impairs the whole body. Such thoughts open our eyes to the tremendous responsibility we have toward one another.

#### c. Connection with the Sacraments

Membership with Christ is closely connected with the holy sacraments. By Baptism we become members of Christ; the other sacraments perfect this great gift, each in its own special way.

The everyday saint recalls the sacrament of Baptism which he received when a child; he is constantly aware of the grace of Baptism and strives to make it effective in his life.

Confirmation, a solemn declaration of maturity, made him a soldier of Christ. He was charged with the obligation of fighting for the establishment of the Kingdom of God both in his soul and among others. It is an obligation which he tries to fulfill, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifice. Confession is a means of grace, penance and direction, and he must know how to make frequent use of it.

Christian Matrimony is considered as an image of the mystical attachment between Christ and His Church. He regards the Christian family as the living cell of Christian society. That is why his entire love and activity is concentrated on its renewal.

Above all other things, the everyday saint is a great lover of the Holy Eucharist. There Christ reveals His incessant love for man in a tangible form. The Holy Eucharist was the "Revenge of the dying Savior." When men set out to kill Him, He instituted the sacrament of love to be with them as sacrifice, food and friend. The Holy Mass is the center, the focal point of daily life. It is

the greatest event of the day, and his greatest longing is to make daily Mass his life. He is anxious to make his day a continuation and perfection of the morning Mass by a constant Offertory, Consecration and Communion. Especially strong ring the words of St. Paul: *Mortem Domini accunciabit*—As often as you celebrate or communicate, you announce the death of the Lord. It is true that at morning Mass he is lifted up with Christ on the cross in a mystical manner. Then, during the day, he uses every opportunity to show himself worthy of Christ Crucified. He applies to himself the motto of the early Christians: "From the altar to the arena." His arena is his usual daily work, which he strives to do with utmost perfection. He does not fret about the past or the future. His past is buried in the bosom of divine mercy. The future lies in the hands of a loving, fatherly providence. The twenty-four hours which are framed by the Holy Mass are the ones into which he puts his whole energy and care. *De sacrificio in sacrificium*—from one Mass to the next—that is his motto. He thinks and lives from one Mass to the next.

Each day has its own troubles but also its own graces which flow from the morning Mass. He has only to carry the cross from day to day to fulfill his duties for one day at a time in order to remain strong, courageous and cheerful. The morning brings new graces which gush forth from the altar. Cramping egoism does not bother him, for his thoughts and will are concentrated on the Father in union with Our Lord. Nor is he troubled by his limitations. The Father is obliged to look upon him with good will on account of his close attachment to the God-man. Moods of pessimism do not unduly disturb him. Every morning he is not only incorporated into the suffering and dying Lord, but also into the Risen Lord who rises in triumph over every need of earth in company with His angels and saints and jubilantly praises and honors the Father. From this point of view he learns to evaluate and measure time and earthly things with the eyes of the Savior.

As well as the Offertory and the Consecration, there is a most important part—the Communion. He follows the principle: "No Mass without Holy Communion."

During the day he makes visits to his Divine Friend in the tabernacle whenever he can—there he feels best understood and led to the Father and His interests.

The holy Cure of Ars once remarked that people should make more "noise" in front of the tabernacle than in public—particularly in the press. Clement M. Hofbauer used to advise: Not only speak to men of God, but also speak to God of men. Both of these saints were great lovers of the Blessed Sacrament and appeared very often before the tabernacle.

St. Francis Borgia had such a burning love for the sacrament of the altar, he would go into the church seven times a day, in order to let his soul breathe in the presence of God. He moved his lodgings near to the church because it attracted him as a father's house attracts a son.

St. Vincent Pallotti used to carry a picture of a monstrance with him—since he could not always be in church because of his apostolic work—and he would often take the picture out and kiss it. He once wrote, "Jesus in the most holy sacrament of the altar must do everything, everything in our houses! Now and forever!"

Cardinal Faulhaber remarked, "The early apostles came from the supper-room; those of today, from the communion-rails."

Pius XI untiringly called all Christendom to a Eucharistic liturgical education, "Everyone knows how much the

welfare of individuals and society demands that all the faithful learn to know the Blessed Eucharist more deeply and live Eucharistically. (For, indeed, it is a source and center of life. The study of the divine mystery and of the eucharistic liturgy must so penetrate the understanding and

heart of the faithful that they no longer humbly and coldly take part in the holy rites but, with a loving understanding and burning love—so that they might be nourished and strengthened by the Holy Table—become ever more perfect, shine with the brightness of virtue and burn with apostolic zeal" (August 15, 1927).

"When we see the Catholic boys and girls, Catholic men and women, Christian fathers and mothers, and gradually all Catholic youth groups—even to the youngest Boy Scout turning towards the Eucharist and becoming Eucharistically-minded—then we can say that every good, every blessing is prepared for them" (February 12, 1925).

"Come, beloved sons, and dip the lily of your purity into the Blood of the Divine Lamb, into that Eucharistic wine, which buds forth and expresses the whole blossoming purity of virgins, by which the Holy Church of God, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, is so happily suffused. Come, let your young, warm, noble hearts approach the unending love of the burning heart of the Divine Master who is calling you to Himself" (February 7, 1926).

### III. Our Response to the Love of God for Men

#### A. A Heartfelt Return of Love

1. The Triune God wishes to be loved by men. Our Lord made this quite clear, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mk 12, 30). "This is the first and the greatest of the commandments" was added to emphasize the greatest commandment.

Love of God is therefore the most essential duty of our lives. St. Paul the Apostle understood this truth well and sang his inspired Canticle of Love:

"If I speak with human tongues and angelic as well, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and with full knowledge comprehend all mysteries, if I have faith great enough to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

"Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, it is not self-seeking; it is not prone to anger, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure.

"Love never fails. Prophecies will cease, tongues will be silent, knowledge will pass away. Our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect. When the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child I used to talk like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child. When I became a man I put childish ways aside. Now we see indistinctly, as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. My knowledge is imperfect now; then I shall know even as I am known.

"There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13, 1-13).

2. However if we had nothing but the commandment of God and the Canticle of Love of the Apostle of the Gentiles, we would still be helpless in putting the Commandment of Love into

practice.

But God knows the human heart. It is set ablaze with love, swiftly and deeply, when it sees itself to be the object of love. The ancient Romans realized this and said, "If you wish to be loved, then begin to love!" Every outpouring of love, then, is an effective soliciting of love. Has anyone given more obvious proof of love than the Triune God and the God-man, Jesus Christ? All the degrees of the love of God and Our Lord for men mentioned so far are strong appeals to love Him in return.

3. These great proofs of love, however, will become effective in our souls only if we ponder them and acknowledge the deeds of divine love in our own lives until, most deeply convinced, we confess with the Mother of God—"God who is mighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1, 49). If we close our eyes to God's great benefits out of false humility, our love of God will never reach a high degree. The everyday saint does not suffer such one-sidedness, his daily nourishment is mediation on and cooperation with the great benefits of God.

## B. Various Degrees of Love

The love which man returns has several degrees. Ascetical writers have coined the terms: love of desire, love of delight, love of benevolence, love of conformity, and love of friendship.

1. They class the lowest degree as love of desire. In this stage I love God out of mere self-interest. I desire to be happy, to become strong, mature and pure. Primarily, I am seeking my own good.

2. The love of delight is more perfect. It means that I am delighted with God. I am occupied with Him and take delight in Him and in His perfections. This kind of love unshackles bonds of self-love; it gradually weans us from love for other creatures. How great is the danger today of revolving around our own petty selves and offering incense to the idol of our own person! God will only become my God and my All when He occupies the first place in my meditation and thoughts and desires. Therefore I am anxious to please Him, to always do what pleases God the Father and thus carry out the program of Our Lord's own life.

3. Love of benevolence ranks still higher. I love God for His own sake, I wish Him well. If (assuming the impossible) God did not already possess every perfection in abundance, I would ardently desire to procure it for Him. In any case, I am anxious to increase His external honor and glory by every means possible.

Everyday saints feel quite at home in this atmosphere. They work constantly, unselfishly and courageously for the recognition of God in their environment. If only God were better known and loved! This is the desire of their whole life. The well known prayer of many Christians finds full meaning on their lips:

"All for the glory of God,  
my work, my leisure,  
all for God's honor and glory.  
To God alone I give  
my body and my soul, my life!

O Jesus, give me all the grace I need!"

All their work bears the stamp of the Gloria Patri, even though it may be dissatisfying. The everyday saint is not solicitous to have his way or to be in the limelight, to be supported and to be loved. He seeks only the glory of God and the increase of His external honor. This precludes all self-seeking love and makes him a "Fool of Love Divine." No matter what he does, the aim and criterion is the honor and glory of God. He gratefully accepts success so long as it gives glory to God. When God lets him fail or be humiliated, he submits with a smile. If he should have to labor for the glory of God in some forgotten unknown corner of the world, he perseveres willingly. If he is uplifted to the heights of Tabor in prayer, he follows gratefully. If he tastes the abandonment and bitterness of Gethsemani, he remains faithful. He lets no opportunity pass to work by word or deed, for God. He prays often, studies and meditates deeply in order to better understand the majesty of God and to be able to impart his knowledge to others. *Omnia ad majorem Dei gloriam!*—All for the greater glory of God—is his motto.

4. Love is a uniting and assimilating power—therefore, true love of God must become a love of conformity, i.e. our will must adapt itself to the will of God. The everyday saint sees in all things the will of God, whether it be expressed in a commandment: Thou shalt, thou shalt not; or in a counsel: When He met the rich young man Our Lord looked with love saying, "If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor. You will then have treasure in heaven. Afterward, come back and follow me" (Mt 19, 21).

God's will be done. That is his unchanging canon, even when it is a question of the permissive and ordaining will of God. God allows many things to happen which seem to be quite unbearable for the ordinary man: the death of a close friend, a heavy blow which destroys all life's promises. God sometimes allows things to happen which are still harder to bear: bitter differences or misunderstandings, slander, a personal defect, or the sins of the past life. The everyday saint also tastes the bitterness of these things, but his will and heart remain resigned in the conviction of faith—nothing happens by chance, all comes from the goodness of God.

5. Love of friendship is the summit of man's intimate and loving association with God. Friends live in one another. The heart of one is the repose of the other. Noble friendship says, *Totum pro toto!*—"All for all!" In the same way the God-man bestows upon the soul most abundantly, according to its disposition, His own life, love, will, spirit, mission, Father and Mother. In return the everyday saint gives Him all he has: love, strength, talents, time, hopes and expectations. Since the Eternal God is his friend, his confidence remains unshaken even in times of suffering and need. Since the selfless God is his friend, he always seeks the God of consolation, not the consolation of God. Because he calls Him friend, who gave everything on the cross, no sacrifice costs too much. He, whose love for men is boundless, awakens in the everyday saint a growing restlessness and desire to reach the summit of love when he can say of himself: I wish to have nothing in heaven and I seek nothing on earth except You, great, beloved, loving God!

#### IV. Signs of Man's Love for God

##### A. Attitude Toward Sin

Love is something primarily spiritual, a power which is deep in the heart. It tends toward action, striving to make the beloved happy and to avoid displeasing him.

Take for instance a child who loves his mother deeply and tenderly. Does he not anxiously avoid doing anything contrary to the will of his mother? He carries out every order promptly and even anticipates her wishes. And this is how the everyday saint tries to act toward God.

1. He has an instinctive horror of sin. He detests it not only with his whole will but also with all his heart. Because of his love he avoids even the slightest semi-deliberate infidelities. The more spiritual the everyday saint, the more intense is his detestation of sin. In this he resembles an animal who senses the approach of an earthquake long beforehand. So does he react to anything sinful and flee sin as the greatest evil.

When, however, he has the misfortune of falling, his confusion and sorrow is so great that his love is rejuvenated and strengthened by contrition and the firm will of amendment. Saints are not saints because they have never committed sins—but because after every sin they rise quickly with confidence and humility. Each time they repent their love increases, moving them to total surrender to God, even to the point of martyrdom, they would rather die at the stake than commit one single venial sin. Saints measure their actions by the yardstick of God and not by the maxims of the world. And in the sight of God, sin is the greatest evil.

2. In order to grasp the nature of sin we have to recall all that we said about the love of God for man. Only then can we realize the ingratitude, the immensity of the insult, and the infidelity of man who offends his Creator and Benefactor, his loving and faithful Father who dwells in his soul and imparts His own life to it!

Mortal sin drives out the Triune God from His dwelling in the soul, depriving it of sanctifying grace. It is a revolt against Him who has the power of annihilating man in an instant, against Him who sent His only-begotten Son as the ransom for sinful mankind. It is the dethroning of God and the enthroning of man in the place of God; it is the crossing of swords between child and father. A frail and base creature dares to oppose with his will the will of the good, all-powerful and all-wise Creator. Daily we witness the sad results of this outrageous conduct. In the Garden of Eden man put more faith in the words of the serpent than in those of God. God said: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die" (Gen. 2, 17). The devil came and sowed doubt of the fatherly love of God in Eve's heart. He said, "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad" (Gen 3, 5). Thus spoke the serpent, and our first parents ate; their eyes were opened, but not as the devil had promised. They fell because they did not believe in God's love, and they felt the first and immediate effect, "They realized that they were naked" (Gen 3, 7). At once they had to leave the Garden of Eden; helpless and without experience, they were thrown into a strange world. Only too soon did they realize that there was the curse of God hanging over it; the earth yielded its fruit, but at the price of sweat and hard labor. Thorns and thistles grew everywhere. Since the spirit had rebelled against God, the flesh now rebelled against the spirit. Ever since, man knows evil concupiscence. It was not long before Adam and Eve saw the first dead man, murdered by his brother's hand. Plagues, war, suffering and affliction of every kind pursued man. The world was turned into a vast graveyard and a vale of tears. All this was the punishment and the

consequence of sin.

"Behold a maneless weeping,  
'Neath the soft star's shining light,  
In every vein of nature."

We see the malice of sin more clearly, when we accompany Our Lord on His way to Calvary. Under each Station of the Cross, we may write, "Sin has done this!" O, tremendous mystery of iniquity!

Though mortal sin is the greatest evil, we should not think lightly of venial sin. Venial sin dulls our consciences, weighs the soul down like lead and lessens its resistance, thus paving the way for mortal sin.

3. How can sin be rectified? The only-begotten Son of God came on earth to redeem man. Since our first parents did not believe in the love of God and disobeyed Him, the Savior Himself, out of love, obeyed the will of the Heavenly Father. "Abba, dear Father" was the predominant feeling in the heart of the God-man. Although His human nature loathed the cup of suffering, and though He cried out on the cross in anguish of His abandonment by God, His trust in God did not waver and His love did not falter. He acted to please His Father until His last breath. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, humbly bows her head and willingly accepts the message from on high. She utters her fiat, her "Yes" to whatever the Father wishes. So in many works of art she is depicted as the Madonna with a bowed head. To do what was pleasing to the Father was the food of the Savior. It was also the personal ideal of His Mother and Spouse, "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk 1,38). Not the slightest doubt of God's love ever entered her soul, which was attached to Him alone.

We too can atone for our sins and help toward our own personal redemption by an effective abandonment, in the spirit of faith in Jesus Christ, to the love of the Heavenly Father.

The sacrifice of the cross is renewed at Holy Mass. We grasp it in simple faith and offer it to the Heavenly Father, not only as a sacrifice of love, petition, thanksgiving and worship, but also as a sacrifice for sin. At the same time we enter into the attitude of the God-man and learn how to pray and live with Him according to the principle, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

We also learn how to appreciate and make use of the sacrament of Penance, and the words of St. Paul, "In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body, the church" (Col 1, 24) are made more real by a life of penance and sacrifice, moved by love.

## B. Striving After Conformity to the Will of God

We have already spoken of this conformity but, since the everyday saint is so much in need of it in his daily life, we shall study it more deeply.

True love of God implies joyful readiness to do and to suffer whatsoever God wills and in the way He wills it. The foundation of this readiness lies in the very nature of love. For those in love, the smallest desire of the beloved, his slightest hint, is of great moment. Nothing is unimportant when there is a question of love because everything is done in and for love. The everyday saint is thoroughly bound to the will of God—out of love. The more he advances in his striving, the more this characteristic appears.



1. Christ is the ideal of the everyday saint. The Savior's task was to restore the honor of the Father in the most perfect manner. It was therefore fitting that He chose the most perfect way, "I have come to do your will, O God" (Heb 10, 7). This was the morning prayer at the beginning of His life. On the eve of His bitter passion He brought His life to a close with the confession, "I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do" (Jn 17, 4).

The Savior is passionately attached to the will of His Father. He applied Himself with all His talents to knowing, loving and serving Him. What wonders could He not have worked on earth with His genius! How He could have enriched science and enlightened people since He knew every need and had every ability! But He did not. He began His life at the moment appointed by the Father. He spoke the words which the Father wished—He performed the works which the Father wished—His "Father's business." In the midst of His triumph, He ended His life seemingly in a complete failure, for that was the Father's will. In death, He abandoned Himself to the 'Folly of the Cross' for such was the will of the Father. Had we been in His place, how surely we would have stirred up the small Israel during the thirty years which He passed hidden with His Mother! But in accord with the wish of His Father, Our Lord remained in the background and let His infinite powers remain fallow. He never asked Himself, "What does my heart desire?" His ultimate motive was always, "Father, may your will be done." His greatness lies in the perfect orientation of His own desires and activities on the will of God. His most ardent desire and the sole object of His actions was to conform His life to the will of His Father. Could we, like Christ, say at the end of every day, at the close of a month, or in the evening of life, "The work which the Father has given me to do—I have completed! I have served Him with all the abilities of nature and grace which He has given me; I have tried, both interiorly and exteriorly, to do it most perfectly without regard to the caprices of my frail nature, its external honor, praise and approval." If we can truthfully say this, then we are well on the way to everyday sanctity.

2. God does not leave us in the dark concerning His will. He manifests Himself to us as a law giver, demanding obedience to His Commandments—as a Father. He expresses His wishes in the counsels, and especially in His inspirations and the duties of our state of life. Here He does not command, but appeals to our generosity and love. In every disposition and suffering there is the finger of the wise, Divine Educator. "He prunes away every barren branch, but the fruitful ones he trims clean to increase their yield" (Jn 15, 2).

At the end of his life the everyday saint need not face God with empty hands and shattered nerves. There has been order in his life and work, because he has lived according to the will of God. This order, grounded in God, has calmed, relaxed and strengthened his nerves. So many men hurry and hustle, hither and thither, wasting their energies, now on one thing, now on another. They upset everything because they attempt everything—and achieve nothing. They strain their own nerves and the nerves of others because they do not bring their work into harmony with the will of God. Again and again I must pause in admiration at the beginning of the Gospel where St. Matthew gives a simple account of the way St. Joseph lived according to the will of God. After relating how an angel appeared to St. Joseph and commanded him to take unto himself his espoused wife Mary, we read, "When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord had directed him and received her into his home as his wife" (Mt 1, 24).

We are told in the following verses, "After they had left, the angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command: 'Get up, take the Child and His mother and flee to

Egypt' " (Mt 2, 13). But as soon as Herod died an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the Child are dead. He got up, took the Child and His mother, and returned to the land of Israel" (Mt 2, 20,21).

The Evangelist could not have described in simpler language the greatness of St. Joseph, the everyday saint.

### C. The Urge Toward Heroism

Love has a final characteristic: the urge toward heroism. It is nourished in an everyday life by heroic desires and heroic deeds.

1. Heroism is especially evident in the life of the beloved Mother of God. Although she passed her life in obscurity, she entertained the greatest desire for God and for His Kingdom. We may safely say that, through her yearning and supplication, she greatly influenced the coming of the Savior, the descent of the Holy Spirit, and thus contributed to the salvation of the world. All saints were men and women with great ideals. The Holy Spirit enkindled in their hearts great desires for God and for His interests.

Vincent Pallotti shows how effective such desires can become in one's daily life.

Pallotti "would like to love God for all eternity, with the love of every creature and every saint—all who have ever existed and will ever exist to the end of all time; he desired all love to be infinitely multiplied; he begged to serve the Eternal, Immeasurable, Incomprehensible with all the strength of every creature, infinitely multiplied and with infinite sacrifice." This purpose he expressed in the following words:

"O my God, God my All, God Alone! May the love of God inflame my heart! O my Lord, increase my longing for You at every moment, and for the things that are pleasing to You."

Regardless of creatures, he abandoned himself with Augustinian familiarity, wholly into the hands of God:

"My God,  
Not the intellect, but God;  
Not the will, but God;  
Not the soul, but God;  
Not hearing, but God;  
Not smell, but God;  
Not taste and speech, but God;  
Not breath, but God;  
Not feeling, but God;  
Not the heart, but God;  
Not the body, but God;  
Not the air, but God;  
Not food and drink, but God;  
Not clothing, but God;  
Not repose, but God;  
Not earthly goods, but God;  
Not riches, but God;

Not honors, but God;  
Not distinctions, but God;  
Not dignities, but God;  
Not promotions, but God;  
God in all and always."

The wishes of Our Lady's heart became the actions of her life. She gave her Fiat at the moment of the Annunciation and never retracted it throughout the course of her life. It was not shaken by the prophecy of Simeon: "This Child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed and you yourself shall be pierced with a sword" (Lk 2, 34). Nor was it shaken by its fulfillment when they fled to Egypt, nor yet by the suffering and death of Our Lord. Holy Scripture says expressly, "Near the Cross of Jesus there stood His mother" (Jn 19, 25). She stood there as the Mother of Sorrows and the Queen of Martyrs, and it was not a mere outward show for her soul was firmly anchored in her original Fiat. Her trembling mother-heart uttered it again when her friends placed the blood-covered dead body of her Son into her lap.

In a similar manner the lives of all the saints are filled with great deeds which manifest their particular mission.

2. There are many noble-minded, generous Catholics, who entertain great desires but fail to make the necessary effort to realize them when the opportunity offers itself. Their longings remain fruitless dreams. They build castles in the air, shutting themselves up in them when life becomes too trying. They rarely do a job well, nor do they have their heart in it because they are too self-centered.

Imagine a housemaid, for instance, who never receives much praise because she never does her work with enough care. She repeats mistakes and is so careless that all she receives is reproof and sharp correction. God wishes her to pause for a while and seriously consider where she could really begin to do worthwhile work in her sphere of activity—instead of building up countless shallow dreams and fantasies in which her tiny ego is glorified. She is always complaining to herself and to others that when she leaves her employers will see how valuable she was—that they will wish to recall her when they realize how unjustly they have treated her. They will be sorry, but it will be too late! This maid is not of much use in everyday life—that is why she builds, in her dreams, a temple for the idol of unacknowledged self. We often run from God who forms us through failure, making us humble and needy in order to draw us to Himself. He wishes to make us holy by faithfulness in little things— however, we run into the arms of the idol of ourselves. We imagine ourselves in extraordinary circumstances of life—we dream of grand sensational deeds, or perhaps even of martyrdom, while all the time we fail in the tasks of everyday life, confusing heroic desires pleasing to God with the self-deceit of dangerous day-dreaming. Thus our selfishness is perfectly satisfied and we live in an attitude of gross laziness.

The everyday saint escapes these dangers for he has purified his desires, raised them to a lofty ideal and proved them in his practical life.

Yes, his great desires are always linked with heroic actions because he deals with great things in the small events of ordinary, everyday life. He is not one of those people of whom St. Francis de Sales says, "They wish to perform brilliant deeds of love and yet they fearfully flee from the lightest cross sent to them from moment to moment." On the contrary, the everyday saint knows

and loves the agere contra—fighting against his own wishes and inclinations out of a spirit of love in order to be ready and prepared to obey all the wishes of God.

He loves to do what he dislikes,

He readily gives up what is enjoyable,

He suffers what is distasteful.

He is thus immune against self-deceit; he empties himself of self and becomes rich in God. He advances step by step. It is only a great love for God which can inspire much heroic striving in everyday life.

We can learn what this agere contra means from the life of Joseph Engling, one of the young heroic Sodalists of the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt. Without wishing in any way to anticipate the judgment of the Church, it must be confessed that all who knew him considered him a modern everyday saint. He had a strong desire for heroic actions. His constant, firm agere contra—his deliberate handling of all inordinate inclinations in everyday life and in the midst of battle in World War I—is truly admirable.

Let us take two examples. Joseph once wrote:

I have held the reins very tight this week. I was often troubled when I pondered the life of sacrifice which I would have to lead in order to become a saint. It was only on Friday that I felt a real satisfaction when I could offer to my darling Mother some acts of self-denial as a penance for the faults committed on Thursday. I failed a few times on Thursday and Saturday because I kept my Special Resolution badly. I only recalled the presence of God by fits and starts. On Thursday we had honey again. At first I wished to renounce it; I wavered and then became weak. For penance I will firstly take sugar only with my coffee, next time I will give up honey and, in order to be ready, I will remind myself every day. I take one chapter of the Imitation for my daily spiritual reading, and as far as possible in the morning, so that I can recall it later and ponder it during the day.

In the same letter he writes:

"So far I have performed the penance given me in the last letter. Only once did I carry out my devotions, morning prayers, etc., carelessly and that after I had been up for a couple of hours. Unfavorable circumstances are to be blamed to some extent. But now I am used to my new surroundings and will not give in to them again. Such negligence must not occur again. There is nothing special to note in my spiritual life for these two weeks. I have given in no more to those disgraceful remarks about the military life and try to speak well of it where possible and strive against the fatigue of war. But naturally only as far as truth allows. What I mentioned were criticisms against sergeants behind their backs. During these last three days of negligence, I deeply felt my own weakness and dependence on my loving Mother and I tried to come ever closer to her. Till now there were two people under me. Now there are three. I have come to understand what it means to be a good superior. If it is so hard to satisfy these few, what must it be like to have a whole company?"

We know from another saintly priest of the First World War, Fr. W. Doyle, S.J., that his love for self-control went even to self-chastisement. If we cannot do what he did under the influence of grace and inspired by a noble-minded, ardent love for God (since our love and grace may not be so abundant), we should, nevertheless, be determined to go with courage, loyalty and perseverance to the very end of the path destined us by God.

Father Doyle laid the following principles down for himself:

"Never do what you enjoy doing; deny yourself every worldly enjoyment; deny yourself every pleasure; carry out the task because it is difficult; in everything Agere contra."

Therefore, he decided "to crucify himself in every conceivable way, in order to never be without some pain or uneasiness; never to seek to avoid suffering, e.g., heat, cold, unpleasant people; when choosing, to choose the more inconvenient; never to let slip an opportunity for self-denial; constantly to inquire: "What else can I offer in sacrifice?" Finally he declared:

"I shall inflict as much suffering as possible on myself and, therefore, I shall multiply corporal penances. When I am tired and worn out, I shall not seek rest and refreshment as I have been doing. Since unremitting work is so difficult, I must endeavor to never be idle for a moment. In a word, since every moment of Jesus' life was full of pain and suffering I must, continually and without let-up, strive to make my life similar to His."

There are many saints who thought and acted in the same way. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque promised:

"To seek or procure no consolation, joy or pleasure save that of having none in my life. I will seek for no relief, save what necessity makes me believe is indispensable."

We should not be deterred when we hear such words from the saints, words which may sound hard and almost inhuman. He who realizes that self-denial is impossible without love and love is impossible without self-denial, understands that the expression agere contra cannot be used without the connotation that all is inspired by love and borne by grace.

We would not wish to ascend such lofty heights unless we are called and given the necessary grace. But there is plenty of opportunity for practicing the agere contra now: this or that kind of work is hard for me. Deo gratias! Right now I show my love for God by doing this work well—living and working with people I dislike who have more talents and success than I, who receive more recognition and honor. Or when I am "nervous" and upset, when I am calumniated or despised—who can count all the opportunities which come every moment and challenge our heroism day by day!

The weekday saint is aware of these opportunities and tries to make the grace of morning Mass operative, so that even the most insignificant of daily duties bear the imprint of perfection. That is the meaning of his maxim: that morning Mass should permeate our whole life.

## V. Attainment of Attachment to God

1. A plant needs light and air—lacking these it loses color and freshness and gradually dies. It is the same with animals and birds. An eagle must have wings to lift it to heights; if its wings are clipped, it stays in the valleys and lowlands. It is unable to lift itself up toward the sun. Our love of God also needs light, air and wings. It fades and dies if it lacks nourishment, and if its wings are clipped it is incapable of lofty flight. Prayer and self-denial are the wings and nourishment which our love of God needs if it is to live and increase. When these are absent love grows cold and finally dies. Realizing this truth, the everyday saint is ever eager to become a master of prayer and self-denial.

2. He receives a new impulse in this noble striving from the knowledge of the importance of prayer and self-denial in overcoming the errors of modern times. Pope Pius XI speaks of this in his Encyclical *Caritate Christi* of May 3, 1932:

"In the face of this satanic hatred of religion, which reminds us of the 'mystery of iniquity'

referred to by St. Paul (2 Thes 2,7), mere human means and expedients are not enough, and we should consider ourselves wanting in our Apostolic ministry if we did not point out to mankind the wonderful mysteries of light that alone contain the hidden strength to subjugate the unchained powers of darkness. When Our Lord, coming down from the splendors of Tabor, had healed the boy tormented by the devil, whom the disciples had not been able to cure, to their humble question "Why could we not expel it?" He replied: "This kind does not leave but by prayer and fasting" (Mt 17, 19,21). It appears to us, Venerable Brethren, that these Divine words find a particular application in the evils of our times, which can be averted only by means of prayer and penance."

Further on he writes:

"Prayer and penance are the two potent inspirations sent to us at this time by God so we may lead back to Him mankind who has gone astray and wanders about without a guide. They are the inspirations that will dispel and remedy the first and principle cause of every form of disturbance and rebellion, the revolt of man against God. But people are called upon to make up their minds to a definite choice—either they entrust themselves to these benevolent and beneficent inspirations and are repentant, humble and converted to the Lord and the Father of Mercies, or they hand themselves and what little remains of happiness on earth over to the enemy of God, to the spirit of vengeance and destruction. "Nothing remains for us, therefore, but to invite this poor world that shed so much blood, dug so many graves, destroyed so many works, deprived so many men of bread and labor, that nothing else remains for us but to say, 'Be thou converted to the Lord thy God.'"

## A. Prayer

Hidden in a forest was an old deserted chapel dedicated to St. Roche. Each year when the Feast of St. Roche drew near, the sacristan of a neighboring church came, swept out the chapel and decorated it. On the eve of the Feast he rang the bell inviting everyone in the countryside to come to the chapel. The bell hung silent for a whole year and the tower became the hiding place for all kinds of animals which shun the light, but, at the first sound of the bell they scuttled forth and crept or fluttered away.

So too with the soul—when the bell of prayer has hung silent for a long time, all kinds of things enter in and settle without hindrance. Very soon these hidden idols celebrate their victory in the dark corners of the soul—idols of greediness, tyranny and sensuality. But as soon as the bell of prayer rings out in the soul, and as long as it keeps ringing, all ungodliness is kept far away.

### 1. Nature of Prayer

In a true sense we can call every act of religious life prayer. When we live from religious motives, when we show our dependence on God in practical action and express our devotion to Him, then we pray:

"Never cease praying" St. Paul exhorts us (Thes 5, 17).

St. Augustine explains this exhortation. He believes that if, during the day, we do our duty faithfully from devotion to God and dependence upon Him, showing this by frequent short ejaculatory prayers or acts of offering, then we are praying all day long. This is a great

consolation for those of us who have so much to do daily.

When we return home at night, tired out after a hard day's work, when we have borne the heat and the burdens of the day for the sake of God and have not forgotten to make ejaculations, then we may think that we are returning from the church, for our day's work has been one long prayer. Theologians' understanding of prayer, in the strict sense of the word, is lifting up our hearts and minds to God—a conversation with God. They also tell us that prayer is a penetration into the ideas and values of God. When I strive to make the petitions of the Our Father my own, when I try, not only with my lips but also with my heart and will, to say—"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6, 10)—then I am working to reach the scale of the divine values. My feelings may find no pleasure in this exercise—but that does not matter. The important thing is that my will fully embraces the standard of values which God considers to be the most important.

## 2. Value of Prayer

Prayer frees the heart from all inordinate attachment to earthly things; it unites it with God and opens up the riches of divine power and mercy.

When we say prayer is an elevation of our heart to God we mean two things. First, freeing the soul from the things of earth and, second, anchoring it in God. Each is necessary and one helps the other. Shaking off the bonds of earth furthers the attachment to God. Association with God accelerates the process of detachment. In his encyclical *Caritate Christi*, Pope Pius XI writes:

"In addition, prayer will remove the fundamental cause of present day difficulties which we have mentioned, that is, the insatiable greed for earthly goods. The man who prays looks above to the goods of heaven, wherein he meditates and which he desires: his whole being is plunged into the contemplation of the marvelous order established by God, which knows not the frenzy of earthly successes nor the futile competitions of ever-increasing speed; thus automatically that equilibrium between work and rest will, as it were, be reestablished. The entire absence of this equilibrium from society today is responsible for grave dangers to physical, economic and moral life. If, therefore, those who, through the excessive production of manufactured goods, have fallen into unemployment and poverty, made up their minds to give the proper time to prayer, there is no doubt that work and production would soon be brought within reasonable limits and that the conflict which now divides humanity into two great camps struggling for transient interests, would be changed into a noble and peaceful contest for goods which are heavenly and eternal.

"In like manner, will the way be opened to the peace we long for, as St. Paul beautifully remarks in the passage where he joins the precept of prayer to holy desires for the peace and salvation of all men: 'First of all, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be offered for all men, especially for kings and those in authority, that we may be able to lead undisturbed and tranquil lives in perfect piety and dignity. Prayer of this kind is good and God Our Savior is pleased with it, for He wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth' (1 Tim 2, 1-4).

"Let peace be implored for all men, but especially for those in human society who have the grave responsibilities of government, for how could they give peace to their people if they do not have it themselves? And it is prayer that, according to the apostle, will bring the gift of peace—prayer that is addressed to the Heavenly Father, Who is the Father of

all men; prayer that is the common expression of family feeling, of that great family which extends beyond the boundaries of any country and continent.

"Men, who in every nation pray to the same God for peace on earth, will not kindle flames of discord among people; men, who turn in prayer to the Divine Majesty, will not set up in their own country a craving for domination nor foster that inordinate love for their country which makes its own nation god. Men looking to the 'God of love and peace' (2 Cor 13,11) and turning to Him through the mediation of Christ, who is 'our peace' (Eph 2, 14), will never rest until that peace which the world cannot give finally comes down from the giver of every good gift to 'men of good will' (Lk 2, 14).

" 'Peace be with you' (Jn 20, 26), was the Easter greeting of Our Lord to His apostles and first disciples, and this blessed greeting from the first times until our day has found a place in the sacred liturgy of the Church and today, more than ever, should comfort and refresh aching and oppressed human hearts."

A genuine life of prayer also deepens our attachment to God. A child of God never wearies of praying, especially of making acts of the three theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—which bring the soul into direct contact with God. "Show me your companions and I will tell you who you are." One who is often in contact with God must eventually become God-like. All the treasures of God are made available to the one who prays, a truth which is clearly expressed in Holy Scripture and known from the lives of the saints and holy Christians. In the encyclical previously quoted, Pope Pius XI also writes:

"Mindful then of our condition, that we are essentially limited and absolutely dependent on the Supreme Being before everything else, let us have recourse to prayer. We know, through faith, of the great power of humble, trusting, persevering prayer. No such ample, universal and solemn promises have ever been attached to any other good work as to prayer: 'Ask, and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. The one who knocks, enters'(Mt 7, 7,8). 'I give you my assurance, whatever you ask the Father, He will give you in my name' (Jn 16, 23).

"And what object could be more worthy of our prayer, and more in keeping with the adorable person of Him who is the only 'mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ' (1 Tim 2, 5), than to beseech Him to preserve on earth faith in the one living and true God. Such prayer already bears in itself a part of its answer, for in the very act of prayer man attaches himself to God and keeps alive the idea of God on earth. The man who prays, merely by his humble posture, professes before the world his faith in the Creator and Lord of all things. Joined with others in prayer, he recognizes that not only the individual, but human society as a whole, has over it a supreme and absolute Lord. "The Church in prayer—what a spectacle for heaven and earth! For centuries without intermission, from midnight to midnight, the divine psalmody of the inspired canticles is repeated on earth; there is no hour of the day that is not hallowed by its special liturgy; there is no stage of life that has not its part in the thanksgiving, praise, supplication and reparation in common use by the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. Thus, prayer of itself assures the presence of God among men according to the promise of the Divine Redeemer: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst' " (Mt 18, 20).

Our Lord was obviously the greatest man of prayer. He prayed from the beginning to the end of



His life. All His work and striving was prayer. And, now and then as the gospels tell us, He retired alone to some mountain after a period of work in order to give Himself entirely to prayer. Likewise, the Mother of God was devoted to prayer. It could not be otherwise since she is the perfect image of Our Lord. She spent her youth in prayer and work in the temple. By her constant supplications she drew down the Savior from heaven. Christian art loves to picture her at prayer when the angel visited her. When the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, the young Church was in prayer around the Mother of Jesus. Catholics like to think of Mary kneeling with hands joined in prayer, an omnipotent advocate.

So the everyday saint who tries to walk in the footsteps of Our Lord and Our Lady must also be a lover of prayer. Prayer is the normal expression of his love for God and the ordinary means of making his work fruitful for the Kingdom of

God. He lives in the perfect spirit of Holy Scripture which again and again exhorts him to pray, "So be on the watch. Pray constantly" (Lk 21, 36); "Pray perseveringly" (Col 4, 2); and, "Never cease praying" (1 Thess 5, 17).

He never falls into the fatal error of so many Christians who think that apostolic activity can take the place of intimate devotion to God. Many consider prayer a waste of time. They may labor day and night, may even give generously, but they forget to draw from the font of prayer for themselves. Then suddenly they discover a vast void in their souls. The pendulum of a clock moves back and forth, day and night—yet, if we look closely we will see that it is not moving all the time. Before beginning a new stroke the pendulum pauses, if only for a fraction of a second. The longer the pendulum, the more clearly you can observe it making this creative pause. In the same way our soul needs creative pauses during the day. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with our prayer, not even the increased duties of our calling.

A great Catholic statesman once said, "God wills that order, quiet and peace among men should depend on the proper balance between the working and the praying of men. The fact that the world today seems to be completely unhinged is due to the lack of the spirit of prayer among modern men." Cardinal Ximenes must have been of the same opinion for it is to him that we owe the words, "When Ximenes prays, he rules the country."

St. Philip Neri was convinced that a Christian without prayer was the same as a man without a brain.

On March 4, 1928 Pope Pius XI said to university students:

"The secret of all, the key to all treasures, the irreplaceable golden key is prayer; it consists in raising one's heart again and again to God and in keeping near to God and in harmony with him."

In a private audience he spoke of himself:

"The Holy Father is a great capitalist of prayer."

Freiherr von Cramer-Klett, to whom the Pope made this observation, added:

"What a glorious word. Does it not remind us of the treasures of holy Church to which St. Lawrence drew the attention of her enemies! Must it not inspire us with firm confidence, in spite of every danger, and move us in this month of October to a campaign of prayer to call down upon the earth the special assistance of Our Lady in the great dangers which threaten us. In all truth, the armory of the Church is greater and richer and filled with better weapons than the armory of her enemies."

### 3. Practice of Prayer

When we speak of prayer today we usually distinguish between the attitude of prayer and the practice of prayer.

It is true that a prayerful attitude, the spirit of prayer, is most important. But, at the same time, we should not forget that it cannot endure without the practice of prayer. The attitude urges us to put it into practice, and this in turn deepens and fosters the attitude. Therefore the everyday saint considers the practice of prayer to be an important thing. He begins his day with morning prayer. An integral part may be his morning offering and the renewal of his personal ideal or special resolution—and this, the moment he awakens—to be followed by a short meditation, Mass and Holy Communion. His day comes to a close with his private devotions, i.e., examination of conscience, preparation for his morning meditation and night prayers. He intersperses short periods of recollection and prayer through the day's work. Every now and then he glances toward God, has a heart-to-heart talk with Him, and offers some little sacrifice so that, in spite of absorbing work, he walks continually in His presence. It is here that so many saintly men find the secret of their fruitfulness, which is derived from this nearness to God—they easily lead others to find God through their own God-filled attitude of mind. In their regular devout confessions they give an account of their striving and receive new inspiration and grace for their spiritual lives.

The everyday saint does not forget that man is an unstable being. Today we resolve to do something, tomorrow we forget all about it. But by means of a strict daily spiritual order he strives to protect himself against forgetfulness, instability and inconstancy. He imposes a suitable penance on himself for his faults and shortcomings in order to deepen his sense of guilt, to increase his love, and to assist with the right disposition at the sacrifice of the Mass—the sacrifice of expiation, praise and adoration. He knows from his own experience that the person who has order in his spiritual life will likely sin less and achieve more. Communication with God gradually dries up the source of sin—it refreshes, rejuvenates and prepares us for earnest and persevering labor.

We can learn from Joseph Engling how to value, secure and vivify our spiritual exercises in the sense of healthy, everyday sanctity. The focal point and guiding star of all his striving—and, therefore, the soul and strength of all his striving in his spiritual exercises—was his personal ideal, or his "little secret." His ideal had slowly evolved until he formulated it as follows: To be all things to all men, to belong entirely and completely to Mary. This simple motto was the expression and the clarion call to all the noble energies of this youthful hero. He often recited his motto as a prayer during the day and made it real in his practical life. With unrelenting constancy he made use of the two great means to achieve his aim, namely the special resolution and the spiritual daily order. His special resolution helped to purify and ennoble his predominant passion in the service of his personal ideal. He once wrote: "I will become a saint through my special resolution. It shall ennoble my predominant passion which is the realization of my motto—"To be all things to all men in the service of my Mother." His predominant passion was a great capacity for self-dedication. Hence he felt compelled to become all things to all men.

While still in high school he discovered his aim in life and the implications of his striving. He fixed the points he would deal with in his special resolution in order to cooperate in an enlightened way with the grace of God. His biographer wrote of this period:

"In his searching into his own personality, he had two questions in view which, although not exactly formulated, were the underlying themes of his quest. One question was: 'What makes me happy and what would I like to be?' The other was: 'What do I really

dislike and what am I really?' Without actually knowing, he had already answered and decided upon the first question in his early years. He had expressed it by his great admiration for two special saints who deeply impressed him with their special characteristics. One was St. Francis Xavier who filled him with enthusiasm by his unremitting labors for the Kingdom of God. Following one of the mission feasts in the Marian Sodality he wrote: 'Would that I could bring the light of our faith to Asia! Yes, to the whole of Asia! For the second time, I offer this wish out of zeal for Christ and out of compassion. I will become a second Francis Xavier.' This desire implies his natural unremitting inclination toward activity—which drove him to great deeds.

"The other saint who attracted him strongly was St. Francis de Sales. He admired him as the perfect Christian gentleman for his education, his amiability and kindness. This explains why he chose the following points for the daily special resolution: (1) Cheerfulness. (2) Kindness and amiability. (3) Refined and noble behavior. (4) To be interested in entertaining my neighbor. (5) To be helpful and obliging. (6) Disinterested and unselfish devotion to my neighbor. (7) Gratitude. (8) To be watchful for the spiritual sufferings of others; compassion and sympathy. (9) Work for the salvation of others; apostolic activity, etc.

"The examination of his innermost self, which he shows in his notes of that time, reached a conclusion during his private retreat of 1916 that his main faults were self-seeking and sensuality. He also mentions that he liked to study things which stimulated his curiosity; that he omitted fraternal correction where really needed for fear of giving offense—particularly in regard to those whom he liked on account of their cultured external behavior; that up to this time, in his inordinate attachment to his relatives, he had not yet made the Act of Perfect Love according to Grignon de Montfort. This examination of his interior life convinced Engling that the strongest inclination which moved him most and which was, incidentally, the root of so many faults, was the desire to love. He, therefore, saw his highest striving and his greatest perfection in the unremitting sacrifice of self for his neighbor (From Menningen, Schoenstatt Studien II. p. 25).

"His offering of self began on rising in the morning. At once he made the clear-cut resolution: 'Today, in order to become all things to all men in the service of my Mother, I will read something about the Mother of God for about five minutes and discuss it with someone else.' Or again: 'Every day I will offer myself four times to Our lady as a holocaust' or 'I will remember each hour that the Blessed Trinity is quite close to me, while awake, while asleep, in every thought and in every deed.' His prayer for help from above was taken to Mass and placed, as it were, on the paten with all his desires and weaknesses. He made a careful examination of conscience at midday and again in the evening—the result was noted briefly and later constituted the matter of his confession. We can gather how seriously he took his special resolution by reading through the questions which he noted down for regular examination: 'Was my special resolution practical? Did I consider every paltry thing as something which I ought to do? (A warning against hairsplitting and constraint!) Do I shrink from sacrifice in practicing these points? Did I impose a penance on myself for every negligence in my special resolution—a penance which would really cost something? How do I practice the points which I took previously for my special resolution? What will I take next week for my special resolution? Is it the most necessary and practical? Is it defined clearly enough?

Will its practice cost me some effort?' "

Generous souls in the world act in much the same way. They renew and carry out their special resolution from one confession to the next in the same way as Joseph Engling did. They too have a spiritual order of the day, i.e., a special order in their daily practice of devotion. Our youthful hero's biographer continued:

"Of itself, his special resolution was insufficient to fill out a day and, indeed, it would have been too restricted and unbalanced had it been the very essence of his inner life. It was, however, the core and the guiding star of his daily striving after holiness. His special resolution was essentially supported and filled with special strength from his spiritual order of the day. In this order he included all those spiritual exercises which seemed necessary to him in order to make certain of his interior religious life and to give him the strength to carry on courageously with his special resolution. In Schoenstatt he had already practiced it and made it a habit. Later at the front, exposed to so many distractions and concerns that the spiritual life of many soldiers must have been in danger of withering altogether, he drew on the fruits of this labor through his spiritual order of the day. He cut himself off from all external things and succeeded in leading, in this spiritual seclusion, an interior life of unusual richness and depth. At the beginning of his military service his spiritual order of the day comprised the following exercises: Morning prayer, prayers of the Sodality of Our Lady, spiritual participation in Mass, spiritual Communion, renewal of good intentions, spiritual reading, two hour's watch, a decade of the Rosary, asking the priest's blessing, night prayer, and an act of perfect contrition. He was faithful to this order during his entire military service and, in the course of time, added several more practices—the decade of the Rosary becoming a full Rosary and a daily prayer being added for the Union of St. Boniface. Until the end of his life he checked this order in writing each night, and toward the end it comprised from 16 to 19 different practices of devotion. However the point of value is not the number of the practices but the vitality of his interior life and the strength which they presuppose in order to keep faithful to them with spiritual recollection and singleness of purpose throughout the unusual life at the front. Although the practice of the special resolution changed according to need, the spiritual order of the day remained constant and fixed."

Saints and holy men are to be admired but not copied in everything. Not everyone is required to intersperse so many practices with his daily work—but one thing is certain! Prayer is the breathing of a religious-minded soul. Modern man tends to forget this truth, whereas we should all strive to give more scope to prayer in our lives and keep faithful to a certain amount of daily prayer. Otherwise we shall fall victims to a worldly attitude to life and will never find the way to true everyday sanctity.

#### 4. Types of Prayer

##### a. Vocal Prayer, especially the prayer of petition

To the everyday saint every type of prayer is familiar. He adores God in humility and reverence, he loves and praises His goodness and is untiring in giving thanks for all His benefits and wonders. Besides this, he practices the prayer of petition—nothing can shake his conviction that the Heavenly Father will give him everything that is for his good, provided that his prayer has the

necessary qualities.

It must, above all, be offered in true humility. We should always appear before God as poor beggars. We have no absolute right to actual graces, but we depend entirely on the mercy of God. The spirit of the beggar is the spirit of childlikeness. The child is certain of being heard by its Father when its request promotes the glory of God and its own advantage. Time and again Holy Scripture shows us how necessary and how efficacious is this childlike spirit of humility. In comparison with God, Abraham considers himself but dust and ashes. David invokes the mercy of God on the helplessness of his people. Our Lord gives us the example of the Publican and the Pharisee—the first humbly beat his breast and went home justified. But, not the other—he thought himself justified already. Our Lady spoke this same truth in her simple statement, "The hungry he has given every good thing while the rich he has sent empty away" (Lk 1, 53).

Our humility must always be joined to trust in God—that trust which always goes hand in hand with humility. Humility without this trust in God leads only to gloomy despair. On the other hand, confidence without humility is presumptuous and thoughtless. If only we knew how to assess ourselves quietly then, where there is so much misery, weakness, failure and sin we would lift up our eyes to the all-powerful, merciful Father who is waiting for our childlike, trusting request in order to come to our aid because of the merits of Christ. It is an honor and immense joy for Him when, inert in the bonds of our own helplessness we, His children, stretch out our hands for help with unbounded trust and confidence. It is a glorification of His power and mercy. Again and again Our Lord exhorts us to practice this confidence as perfectly as possible.

"Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.

For everyone who asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; whoever knocks, is admitted.

What father among you will give his son a snake if he asks for a fish, or hand him a scorpion if he asks for an egg?" (Lk 11, 9ff).

On another occasion Our Lord said, "You will receive all that you pray for, provided you have faith" (Mt 21, 22). It is He who is praying within us. Is it not mistrust in God if we do not have complete confidence, since we are members of Christ? As true children of God we should be characterized by humility and confidence. The simpler and more unreserved this confidence is, the more pleasing it is to Almighty God and the more readily it will be accepted.

A priest once related how thoroughly ashamed he was when he witnessed the childlike confidence of a simple miner. According to the diagnosis of doctors, this poor man had no hope whatsoever of having children. But he had unshaken, childlike trust in the mercy of God and vowed if only God would give him a child he would consecrate it to Our Lady in a very special way. His confidence was rewarded. Soon he was a happy father.

## b. Mental Prayer

We all learned in our early years how to pray, many of us no doubt on our mother's knee. She folded our tiny hands and taught us how to speak to Our Father in Heaven, to speak to Our Lord and to His beloved Mother, and to make known our requests in our childlike way. Here, for the most part, we were using an exterior oral prayer which may still be familiar to us. But there is another type of prayer. In this we not only pray to God with our lips but mainly with our interior faculties. This kind of prayer is called interior, or mental, prayer.

1. Some people think that mental prayer is reserved for priests and religious. People living in the world may think that they are not capable of this kind of prayer and not called upon to practice it. This is a great mistake. Everyday saints are not found only within cloistered walls, or among those in religious habits, but far more often among those in workday attire amid the bustle and strife of everyday life. They are found in every calling and walk of life and are all skilled in interior prayer. Their intimate association with God is their cloister in the whirl of life—a strong wall surrounding them and protecting them from danger and distraction. Many of them have their own method, not learned from any book. In the early morning one will sometimes see people in church silently making the Stations of the Cross. Perhaps, without realizing it, they are making their "meditation" before Holy Mass (in much the same way as religious apply their hearts and minds to the mysteries of our redemption and endeavor with their understanding, will and hearts to plunge ever more deeply into God's set of values and into His divine love). Again, others slowly and thoughtfully repeat the Angelus, wending their way to Church while the Angelus bell is ringing.

"The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary;  
Behold the handmaid of the Lord;  
And the Word was made flesh."

After the last echo of the bell has died away, the thoughts of the Angelus continue to echo in the heart of the one who has said it, and thus he has made his morning meditation.

2. Since mental prayer brings into play all of the interior faculties—understanding, will and heart—directing them to God, it has special importance for the sanctification of our daily life. Then it is quite understandable that long ago spiritual writers worked out methods for mental prayer. The first thing they all demand is careful preparation.

The remote preparation continues throughout the entire day. It consists of remaining as recollected as possible, while occasionally during the day denying oneself things which are enjoyable and quite lawful. The proximate preparation deals with the subject for morning meditation. Perhaps it is chosen from the Missal, arranged in an orderly manner, and a general resolution decided upon the previous evening. The immediate preparation comes with the actual time of mental prayer and consists in choosing a suitable place according to preference, placing oneself in the presence of God and praying for the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Mental prayer then begins. From the matter prepared, one particular thought is selected then quietly and thoroughly reflected on. If the soul is enlightened and the heart inflamed with this thought, then one begins to make short fervent ejaculations—acts of love, gratitude, sorrow or desire. As long as a thought yields matter for reflection, we should relish it. "It is not the knowledge of many things that nourishes the soul," says St. Ignatius—the experienced teacher of spiritual life—"But relishing and tasting of divine things."

The will attaches itself to God and ensures that the heart speaks to God by the affections which spring up spontaneously and that the understanding and imagination do not become a thoroughfare for distractions. It too is the will which works toward a clear and firm resolution which is in harmony with its striving at the time, connected with its personal ideal and special resolution and carried out during the day.

It is not always necessary or even useful to clothe the affections of the heart in words. We can imagine people sitting together without speaking words and yet their mutual love increases and is deepened permanently. Why should our love for God not be similar?

To conclude our meditation, we should not forget to make a brief review in order to atone for any negligence or any faults committed during meditation so that we might avoid them in the future or, on the other hand, to give God sincere thanks for an increase of knowledge or love of Him. For when all is said and done, it was the Holy Spirit who prayed within us "with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech" (Rom 8, 26). Our own activity, awakened by grace, has opened the way for subsequent activity of God Himself.

In everyone's life there are periods of prolonged fatigue and paralyzing weariness, and at such times we can do no better than follow the example of beginners in the spiritual life. We can take some text—the Our Father, the Apostles' Creed, the Angelus, the Stations of the Cross, or some similar prayer—and think it through sentence by sentence, word by word. In order to wake our sentiments, we could ask the following questions:

- (1) What does God wish to teach me from this truth?
- (2) What have I to say as regards myself?  
Have I considered this truth in the past?  
Have I lived according to it?
- (3) What have I to say to God?

In this way the soul may arouse suitable affections in a quiet, natural manner.

3. In spiritual books and lives of the saints we often find expressions like Affective Prayer and Prayer of Simplicity. When our wills and affections are easily moved by some religious thought without long considerations, then we speak of affective prayer. When love is very rapidly enkindled and the affections are profound and last for a long time, we speak of the prayer of simplicity.

Thus St. Francis of Assisi could find in the simple words "My Lord and my God" sufficient food for an entire night's prayer. St. Francis Xavier never tired of repeating, "O Beata Trinitas, O Blessed Trinity," while the soul of St. Ignatius could dwell on the one affection, "In everything, only God."

We too should endeavor to attain such simplicity in our spiritual life. Provided we ask with childlike simplicity, surely God will send us these interior inspirations and by His grace free us more and more from our disordered desires and self-centeredness, finally bringing us to that happy state where we become conscious of the nearness of God. And, without a multitude of words, feel safe and contented in the simple truth "Abba—Father."

## 5. States of Prayer

### a. Spiritual Dryness

The spiritual life is full of rugged paths—one of the most dangerous being spiritual dryness. The everyday saint often suffers severely under this condition. His soul is as empty as a dry well in the hot desert, his understanding is dull, he no longer has any stimulating thoughts.

Everything is drained away, leaving the heart dried up and disinclined for prayer.

If the everyday saint knows that he is responsible for this state, he removes the cause by being more conscientious in doing his duty or more attentive to interior inspirations than in the past.

If he knows that he is not responsible, he then sees in this state a special grace from his Heavenly Father who wishes to foster the growth of the virtues of humility, confidence and love in his soul.

In his whole being he experiences his helplessness and weakness, deplorable emptiness and misery within and without. This makes him realize his absolute need of help, makes him humble as a child, and forces him trustingly into the arms of his Heavenly Father. In doing this he pleases God, since he allows God to manifest His power and love.

Finally, this reliance on God is a sure way of making a religious-minded soul great and strong in the love of God, for it detaches it from self-satisfaction and gives it many opportunities to prove that it really loves God alone. The degree of our real detachment from things, purely out of love, is also the real degree of our holiness. Even when surrounded by darkness the everyday saint never forgets that he is cared for by the fatherly love of God, even though this may not be apparent. He lives in the conviction that for those who love God all things work together unto good.

Above all, his love is shown by the fact that he is faithful to his prayers and to the full time allotted to them in spite of his interior repugnance. His intellect is not idle; sometimes a book is helpful. As his heart is dried up, his will can produce very few affections, and these with great labor. Even if he cannot say, "My Lord, I want to love you." Or, perhaps, "Lord, I want the desire to love You." It is like the lover of the Canticle who stands behind the lattices and watches his bride. He is there all the time, but the desolation of his soul makes it impossible to feel His presence. Every effort made in this state is of double worth in His eyes. Is it not harder to sing a solemn *Ite Missa Est* without the organ or, when the organ is playing incorrectly, than when a sure accompaniment is there to aid the voice of the priest? It is the same with the accompaniment of our feelings. It is a sign of great strength when the soul remains firm and externally calm, resigned and cheerful in such circumstances. Here we find real greatness.

#### b. Spiritual Consolation

God is no tyrant nor does He let the souls of His children languish unnecessarily in the dark night of spiritual abandonment and dryness. He is a true father and wants to send His children rich spiritual consolation.

1. He does not purify every saint as He did St. Teresa of Avila, who passed through 18 long years of spiritual dryness. At the same time, He does not give every soul the same high degree of prayer which He gave to St. Teresa after she had been faithful in prayer for nearly two decades in spite of dryness and desolation. Beginners in the spiritual life are very often given consolation. God wants to give them a taste for spiritual things. As one gives little children soft foods, and now and then sweets, and only later solid and substantial foods, so the Heavenly Father does the same with His children. But even when they are grown up, He does not withdraw Himself from them.

How does this state of spiritual consolation manifest itself? The light of the intellect shines forth bright and clear; the heart is at rest and experiences an interior satisfaction. Both the intellect and the will lovingly embrace the truth. The soul seems to be in a quiet, peaceful hermitage—no noise, no disturbance enters there. The passions are silent. The holy peace of God settles over all.

2. We may seek and strive after this state but always in conformity with the holy will of the Father. If He gives it to us, then a bright light is enkindled within us and the intellect no longer



needs to toil as hard as before. We remain in the glow in this light—to do otherwise would be to disturb the activity of the Holy Spirit by our own untimely activity. Our heart can rejoice in and relish the nearness of God which it is experiencing. Our soul should awaken sighs of love—interior upliftings of the mind—as often and for as long as it is able. It must be watchful and at the same time, ready for the "barren years" ahead. Meanwhile, as long as the organ of the feelings plays its accompaniment, it is a delight to sing.

## B. Self-denial

### 1. The Necessity for Self-denial

Just as a bird with only one wing cannot fly, or at best very poorly, so too the soul with only the one wing of prayer is unable to come to a true and disinterested love of God. If it wishes to enter deeply into the heart of God, it must strengthen the second wing of self-denial. The spirit of prayer and mortification, or the spirit of love, cannot be separated from each other. Mortification without love produces complications and self-destruction; love without mortification produces day-dreamers and visionaries.

The whole life of Our Lord is a living example of mortification. It could be summarized thus: the minimum of earthly goods, the least pleasure and honor for myself; on the other hand, the very highest degree of love for the Heavenly Father and for immortal souls! In his review of Our Lord's life, St. Paul comes to the conclusion, *Exinanivit semetipsum*—"He emptied Himself." For that was the will of the Heavenly Father—Our Lord's way of the Cross was His way to heaven. "And I—once I am lifted up from earth—will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12, 32). And to His disciples He said, "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps" (Lk 9, 23).

The apostles understood this command and passed it on to us. They say with St. Peter that the Lord suffered in order to inspire us to follow Him. "It was for this you were called, since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to have you follow in his footsteps" (1 Pet 2, 21). Over and over again they stress the axiom of St. Paul, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5, 24). With St. John they are convinced, "If anyone loves the world, the Father's love has no place in him" (1 Jn 2, 15). Like their Master, all those who have remained faithful to Him have lived according to this teaching. St. Paul brings his own body under obedience, "What I do is discipline my own body and master it, for fear that after having preached to others I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor 9, 27). All suffered the most bitter persecutions and, with the exception of St. John, all were martyred. They realized the ideal of Our Lord, "No slave is greater than his master. They will harry you as they harried me. A time will come when anyone who puts you to death will claim to be serving God. All this they will do [to you] because they knew neither the Father nor Me" (Jn 15, 20; 16, 2f).

From all this we can see that mortification is an essential element of the spiritual life—there is no perfection without self-denial. St. Francis de Sales is considered the gentlest master of the spiritual life. Yet an author who well understands his spirit and his life writes: "There was never a piety as mild as his—everyone knew this; yet, at the same time, there was never a soul so hard on itself and so unswerving in the principle of never allowing itself anything which was purely a natural and human thing; this is a truth that is not grasped by everyone, perhaps because they will

not admit it."

When we reflect that mortification must stem from love and nourish love, then we can surely make our own the words of *The Imitation of Christ*: "For a man makes greater progress and merits grace where he overcomes himself and mortifies himself in the spirit" (I. 25, 3). The lives of the saints are the irrefutable proof of this truth.

It is related of St. Rose of Lima:

One day Our Lord led her, in vision, to an artist's workshop. There she saw men who, earnestly striving after holiness, were sitting before blocks of marble, each one at work, busily chipping and chiseling. Here, one had nearly finished a work of art from the brittle stone, and there another was just beginning work on a piece of shapeless material. In their midst St. Rose saw herself sitting before a block of stone and, with hammer and chisel, working out line by line—with many tears—the picture which God had destined in His mind for her from all eternity. Those who wish to become holy, as their Father in heaven, can only reach their lofty ideal at the price of serious mortification. No one ever became a saint who did not bridle his impulses by continuous hard work or who did not allow them to be curbed by God's steady fatherly hands. The blooms and fruits of holiness grow only on the tree of love and self-denial. One who thinks and feels organically will never make the mistake of separating these two virtues. Mortification is the expression of love and is directed only to the increase of love. They belong together in the same way as the inhaling of fresh air and the exhaling of what is stale.

Modern man has little liking for mortification.

Pope Pius XI complained bitterly of this fact in a well-known encyclical. First he remarked:

"But to prayer we must also join penance, the spirit of penance, and the practice of Christian penance. Thus our Divine Master, whose first preaching was precisely penance, teaches us: 'Jesus began to proclaim this theme: Reform your lives!' (Mt 4, 17). The teaching of all Christian tradition and of the history of the Church is the same. In great calamities, in great tribulations of Christianity when the need of God's help was most pressing, the faithful either spontaneously or, more often following the lead and exhortation of their holy pastors, always took in hand the two most mighty weapons of spiritual life—prayer and penance. By that sacred instinct by which unconsciously the Christian people are guided, when not led astray by the sowers of the weed, that 'Spirit of Christ' (1 Cor 2, 16) of which the Apostle speaks. In such cases the faithful have always felt the immediate need for purifying their souls from sin with contrition of heart, the sacrament of reconciliation, and of appeasing divine justice with external works of penance."

Then he explains what he means:

"Certainly we know and, with you venerable brethren, deplore the fact that in our day the idea and name of expiation and penance have, with many, lost in great part the power of rousing enthusiasm of heart and heroics of sacrifice. In other times they were able to inspire such feelings for, in the eyes of men of faith, they appeared as sealed with a divine mark in likeness of Christ and His saints. Now there are some who would put aside, as things of the past, external mortifications. Without mentioning the modern exponent of liberty, the 'autonomous man,' as he is called, despises penance as bearing the mark of servitude. As a matter of fact, the notion of the need for penance and expiation is lost in proportion as belief in God is weakened, and the idea of original sin and a first rebellion against God becomes confused and disappears."

Then what is to be done? The Pope continues:

"On the other hand, venerable brethren, in virtue of our pastoral office we must bear aloft these names and ideas, preserving them in their true meaning—in their genuine dignity and in their practical, necessary application to Christian life."

The Holy Father wants to stir up a spirit of mortification in the whole Church as an effective means for the renovation of the moral order and world peace:

"To this we are urged by the very defense of God and religion, which we sustain, since penance is, of its nature, a recognition and reestablishment of the moral order in the world which is founded on the eternal law, on the living God. He who makes satisfaction to God for sin thereby recognizes the sanctity of the highest principles of morality, their internal binding power, the need of a sanction against their violation. Certainly one of the most dangerous errors of our age is the claim to separate morality from religion, thus removing all solid basis for any legislation. This intellectual error might have passed unnoticed and appeared less dangerous when it was confined to a few and belief in God was still the common heritage of mankind, tacitly presumed even in the case of those who no longer professed it openly. But today, when atheism is spreading through the masses of people, the practical consequences of such error becomes dreadfully tangible and realities of the saddest kind make their appearance in the world. In place of moral laws, which disappear together with the loss of faith in God, brute force is imposed, trampling on every right. Old time fidelity and honesty of conduct and mutual associations extolled so much even by the orators and poets of paganism, now give place to speculation in one's own affairs as, in those of others, with reference to conscience. In fact, how can any contract be maintained and what value can any treaty have in which every guarantee of conscience is lacking? And how can there be talk of guarantees of conscience when all faith and fear of God has vanished? Take away this basis and all moral law fails. Then there is no remedy left to stop the gradual but inevitable destruction of people, families, the state and civilization itself.

"Penance then is a salutary weapon placed in the hands of the valiant soldiers of Christ who wish to fight for the defense and restoration of the moral order in the world. It is a weapon which strikes at the root of all evil, at the lust of material wealth and the wanton pleasures of life. By means of voluntary sacrifices, practical and even painful acts of self-denial, and by various works of penance, the noble-hearted Christian subdues the base passions which tend to make him violate the moral order. But if zeal for the divine law and brotherly love are as great in him as they should be, then not only does he practice penance for himself and his own sins, but he takes upon himself the expiation of the sins of others, imitating the saints who often made themselves heroic victims of reparation for the sins of whole generations, imitating the Divine Redeemer who became 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1, 29).

"Is there not a sweet mystery of peace in this spirit of penance? 'There is no peace for the wicked' (Is 48, 22), says the Holy Spirit, because they live in continuous struggle and conflict with the order established by nature and its Creator. Only when this order is restored, when all people faithfully and spontaneously recognize and profess it, when internal conditions of people and their outward relationship with other nations are founded on this basis, then only will stable peace be possible on earth. But to create this atmosphere of lasting peace, neither peace treaties nor the noblest and most disinterested

efforts of any statesman will be enough unless, in the first place, the sacred rights of natural and divine law are recognized. No leader in public economy, no power of organization will ever be able to bring social conditions to a peaceful solution unless in the very field of economics there first triumphs moral law based on God and conscience. This is the underlying reason for every value in the political life as well as in the economic life of nations; this is the soundest 'rate of exchange.' If it is kept steady all the rest becomes stable, being guaranteed by the immutable and eternal law of God.

"And, for men, penance is the foundation and bearer of true peace, detaching them from earthly and perishable goods, lifting them up to goods that are eternal, giving them, even in the midst of privations and adversity, a peace which the world with all its wealth and pleasures cannot give. One of the most pleasing and joyous songs ever heard in the vale of tears is without doubt the famous Canticle of the Sun of St. Francis. Now the man who composed, wrote and sang it was one of the greatest penitents, the poor man of Assisi who possessed absolutely nothing on earth and bore in his emaciated body the painful stigmata of his Crucified Lord.

"The renewal of the individual and of society as well is unthinkable without a radical movement of renunciation. As it has been in all epochs of Christianity, so must it be today when we are standing at the extraordinary and unique turning point of time. Otherwise we will be like the man who set out to build a tower without giving it any thought whatsoever.

"Thus we can understand the meaning of the holy Grignon de Montfort: 'Rejoice, poor woman, without talent or knowledge, for if you know how to endure suffering and to have trouble with joy, you know more than the most learned doctor of the Sorbonne who does not understand suffering as well as you. You are a member of Christ—what an honor! But what need to suffer as such! No, my faithful companions of the Cross, do not be deceived; those Christians whom you see everywhere dressed in modern fashions, admirably adorned, over-educated and conceited, they are not the true disciples or the true members of Jesus Christ crucified. O my God! How like the phantoms of Christ are they who think they are members of the Redeemer but who, in all reality, are only His betrayers. For while they make the Sign of the Cross with their hand, in their hearts they are His betrayers'" (C.T.S. London THR/MTS).

## 2. Forms of Self-denial

Self-denial can be considered under two aspects. When it is atonement for sin we call it penance; when it is used as a means of mastering our passions and emotions both for the present and the future, we call it mortification.

### a. Self-denial as Penance

By penance we mean the withdrawal of the will from things that are actually sinful or less good for the sake of God and the desire to make amends for the faults of the past and to avoid them in the future.

Penance then, entails three things: a turning away from sin and imperfections; the restoring of God's honor, especially by undertaking extra works to which one is not strictly obliged; and a

firm resolution of avoiding sin in the future. Christian penance is done for the sake of God. It is God who has been offended by sin. It is to Him, therefore, that satisfaction through penance is to be made. Of course we should not forget the comforting truth of faith—that we have been redeemed by Our Lord Jesus Christ—nor the truth that it is only through Him that we become partakers of the fruits of redemption. Christian penance, therefore, will be valued and desired as a participation in the works of penance of Jesus Christ. It draws its power from the graces of Redemption won on the Cross and must never be considered as an attempt at exclusive self-redemption.

We need not add any more motives for doing penance. Pope Pius XI effectively brought them to mind. We may practice penance for the deepening of our own spiritual life; we may consider penance as demanded by justice and equity, as an expression of sound Christian self-love and love toward our neighbor.

Penance is an act of justice. God is a God of order; each fault implies a violation of order—a disorder which has to be made good. In this sense, penance is nothing other than restoration of order. How much there is to be restored in the eyes of God!

Penance is also an act of equity. Our Lord, the Immaculate Sinless One, did penance for our guilt. He is our Head and we are His members. Would it be right for us to commit sins, to see others commit them, or even be partners in their sin and not be urged, as members of Christ, to do penance?

Sin leaves a certain tendency toward evil. For instance, if we have repeatedly yielded to our appetite for food in an inordinate way, then there will remain an inclination to give in to such a tendency as we know from experience. Only by penance, and penance directly opposed to our particular weakness, can we repair the damage. In this particular case we could deny ourselves something at table for the love of God without hereby injuring our health.

By reason of our mystical union with Christ, our penance is also an act of charity toward our neighbor. If we throw a stone into a still pond, we see the ripples covering the surface of the pond until they reach the bank. Again, if one member of the body is sick, do not all the members suffer as well? It is the same with all our actions, be they good or evil. Our actions are a blessing or a curse to all our brethren, known or unknown. For we are all members of the one Mystical Body whose Head is Christ.

We can further distinguish two kinds of penance—interior and exterior. The most essential factor is the spirit of penance, which entails three features: First a sorrowful acknowledgment of one's faults and failings. Then a profound feeling of shame and guilt. Finally a distrust of self. Experience teaches us that we are capable of committing sin if grace does not assist and support us. In the name of all, St. Paul confesses, "What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend" (Rom 7, 19). "I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members" (Rom 7, 23). In our age the real feeling of guilt and shame has, to a large extent, disappeared. Where there is no such feeling and consciousness of guilt there can be no desire for redemption, and where there is no such desire no need is felt for a Redeemer.

More than we realize, this fact is responsible for the rejection or belittling of Christianity as a religion of redemption and the Christian God as a God of redemption. One who sees the connection must, in his own self-education and training of others, lay great stress on the cultivation of a sound and deep consciousness of guilt. For it is also true that where there is a deep consciousness of guilt, there is also present a deep desire for redemption and, where this

desire is present, there is also a great longing for the Redeemer. Hence, the importance of examination of conscience and confession for our time.

In order to find the golden mean between scrupulosity and laxity, it is useful to distinguish two kinds of feelings of guilt—moral-theological and ascetical. The first is concerned with sin, the second with imperfections.

It often happens that the everyday saint is more troubled by his failings and imperfections than are others by their actual sins. His conscience is very tender and, since he is mentally healthy, he is in no way scrupulous. He recognizes sin as sin and imperfection as imperfection. In each case he knows that, with apostle Paul, he should glory in his infirmities for, on their account, the power of Christ is more clearly manifested and that the grace of Christ is enough for him. For this reason the finale of his Miserere and De Profundis is always the Magnificat and Te Deum. At daily Mass Our Lord makes reparation for man's countless sins, offenses and negligences. Many devout people, taught by their Catholic parents, offer day by day the most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ to the Father after the Consecration in atonement for their own sins and the sins of the world and as a sacrifice of praise and petition.

Since we possess both body and soul, our interior disposition toward penance must manifest itself in exterior acts of penance. These can be ordinary acts or extraordinary acts of penance. We call them ordinary when they are inseparable, bound up with our daily life. Here we can enumerate such things as weariness, inconvenience due to weather, failure, anxiety, daily living with unpleasant people, small acts of self-denial in ordinary things and, finally, the penance we receive in Confession. Extraordinary acts of penance would be fasting, vigils and the discipline. The everyday saint is well acquainted with these aids to holiness, but he never forgets that they are not the penance. Before doing extraordinary acts of penance he asks the advice of his confessor. He also gets sufficient sleep as a way to take reasonable care of his health. His common sense tells him that if he does not have sufficient sleep he will not be able to be a living Gloria Patri and will be of little use to his fellowmen.

If he does undertake some extraordinary penance, it is to give him the strength to accept the ordinary ones faithfully and to become heroic in the common affairs of everyday living.

## b. Self-denial as Mortification

1. Because man is endowed with sensitive and spiritual faculties and also possesses divine life by grace, we may say that in a way he comprises in himself an animal, an angel and a child of God. The animal has instinctive powers of perception and appetite—it needs nourishment, it can develop and procreate itself. The angel has the power of intellect and will. The child of God partakes of the knowledge and will of God. Before the fall in paradise there existed the most marvelous harmony between the animal, angel and child of God. The angel dominated the animal, and both were readily subject to the child of God. Then sin entered the world and the angel revolted against the child of God, refusing to obey. As a punishment, God permitted the animal to revolt against the angel. He who knows the depth of the human heart experiences the fact that God often allows the animal in us to rebel, following in disobedience of the angel to the child of God. On the other hand, submission of the appetites to the spirit and to God is best insured where the spirit readily and sincerely utters its *Ecce ancilla Domini*.

To restore order and harmony to our weakened disordered nature—to bridle the beast and let the angel in us dominate—both the grace of God and our own determined efforts are required. This

work or ours is called mortification or self-mastery; man denies himself by saying a resolute "no" to all his disordered passions and appetites. The Imitation of Christ sums up the common experience of men when it says: "You cannot possess perfect freedom unless you deny yourself (III 32, 1). "If a man wants to be truly spiritual, he must renounce those who are near as well as those who are far off and beware of none more than of himself" (III 53, 2).

2. Self denial produces in the everyday saint a twofold attitude toward creatures. First of all, he never uses them against the will of God—that would be misusing them. His imagination, memory, will, understanding, body and fellowmen are never used for sinful purposes. He knows how to overcome sinful inclinations by a method which has a twofold aspect—a negative and a positive.

The negative method tries to remove a situation which could lead to sin, while the positive floods it with light. For example, the stars fade from sight either because a cloud passes over them or because they fade in the more brilliant light of the sun. Thus we can overcome the desire for passing joys by despising them, by recalling again and again that they are fleeting, or by arousing our desire for the pure joys of the love of God. So too can we deal with the idle desire for human favor. In such cases one may recall the words of St. Francis de Sales: "O foolish man, on what foundation are you placing your hopes? Can't you see that this great man in whom you put your trust is just as near death as yourself? Don't you realize the fickleness, weakness and frailty of the human heart? Today this heart belongs to you—tomorrow it will belong to another. Then on what do you place your hope?" We can also overcome vain hope by comparing it with the theological virtue of hope and then, with the same saint, exclaim, "Hope in God, O my soul, no one has ever hoped in Him and been confounded."

Our Lord, knowing the human heart so well, applies both methods. He teaches us to overcome false joy by the thought of sorrow, "Woe to you who laugh now; you shall weep in your grief" (Lk 6, 25). On another occasion He replaces one joy with joy of a higher order, "Rejoice not in this, that the evil spirits are subject to you, but rejoice, rather, that your names are written in heaven."

The everyday saint acts in the same way. He uses one method, a combination of methods, or both. In many cases he prefers the positive method as a result of his self-training which has inspired him to love virtue rather than to fear sin and vice. This is especially true when strong temptations assail him which can at times react on the bodily organism, on account of the impact of passion such as sensual impulses and emotions, thus preparing the way for other more severe temptations.

The everyday saint is not content with merely not using creatures against the will of God, nor does he use or love or hate them solely for His own sake, but he tries to acquire the attitude of holy indifference toward creatures. The medieval mystics understood by holy indifference the state of being lost in God, who is the sole cause of our being. Henry Suso, with this in mind, once gave the advice:

"The very first thing to do in the morning is to open your eyes and say, 'O Most Beloved and Supreme God, behold I begin at once to renounce myself and everything for Your sake.' And a thousand times during the day, as often as you become conscious of yourself, you should renounce yourself. Everything depends on this. You may say what you shall say, there will never be any good without this continual renouncing of self. Many make the mistake of thinking that they no longer have any need of

self-renouncement, but remember that, as one becomes more noble, the more thoroughly and perfectly one must renounce oneself."

'Indifference' is taken by some to mean conformity to the will of God, in other words, surrender or abandonment to the will of God. In actual fact, it comprises both ideas and must not be confused with carelessness and lack of determination. St. Ignatius describes holy indifference in his famous Spiritual Exercises:

"It is necessary that we make ourselves indifferent to all created things—in so far as the freedom of our will allows and is not forbidden—so that on our part we do not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short one, etc."

Holy indifference alone, according to the mind of St. Francis de Sales, guarantees "that spirit of the beloved children of God" which, in every circumstance, is always ready to follow the manifest will of God. Hence, his far-reaching demand:

"This holy equanimity must extend to everything in the natural life—health, sickness, beauty, deformity, strength and weakness. Also to everything in social life—honor, position, wealth. And to the different states of the spiritual life—dryness, consolation, joy and aridity. In short, to all works and sufferings, to everything that may happen."

He faithfully practiced what he demanded of others and it was not difficult for him to pray sincerely:

"No, O Lord, I no longer desire consolation from my faith, my hope and my love. Ah, Lord, should it please You that I should have no joy in the practice of virtue—then I embrace it with all the strength of my will even though it might happen to be against my inclination."

When St. Frances of Chantal, the co-foundress of the Order of the Visitation was dying, she confessed:

"Your severe illness has made me, for the past ten or twelve days, center my prayer on the third petition of Our Father; 'Your will be done!' I conform myself to the divine will. If He wishes to take this mother from me, I offer her to Him. If He chooses to leave her with us, may His name be blessed."

In everything he made himself dependent on the holy will of God.

"This Lent I would like, for instance, to preach in a small place in my diocese. But should I become sick or break my leg, that would be no reason for sorrow or anxiety—for it would certainly be the will of God that I should serve Him by suffering rather than by preaching."

The everyday saint strives successfully, with the help of God's grace, to practice this holy indifference. He endeavors to value and weigh the events of life in the light of faith—that is, according to the will of God. He also trains himself to abstain now and then from the use of things and to dominate them by an enlightened *Agere Contra* which flows from his love. That is why he is so independent of the world and world events, at peace with himself, and a ray of sunshine for those who are around him—like St. Elizabeth, who joyfully intoned a *Te Deum* when, on a cold winter night, she and her children found themselves homeless. Or like St. Francis of Assisi, the little friar who possessed nothing and was always cheerful and who, when sick and miserable, wrote his *Song of the Sun* in a poverty-stricken garden-house in San Damiano.



## Book Two

### ATTACHMENT TO WORK

A man who has climbed a long way sometimes pauses and looks back in order to be more impressed by what he has achieved and to draw strength to courageously continue on his journey. Each one of us is like such a traveler. We have already come a long way. The world of everyday sanctity is no longer a strange land to us. Page after page has taught us to love and better understand this way of life.

If we go back to the first pages and reread the qualities which the love of God must have—intense, whole-hearted and comprehensive—the words make a deep impression and awaken a strong echo in our hearts.

Perhaps the characteristic harmonious rings less clear and familiar. Theoretically we know that our attachment to God must be organically and harmoniously linked with attachment to work and attachment to our fellowmen; that a true love of God must inspire us with love for our work and our fellowmen; and that, moreover, our love for our work and fellowmen must be an impetus and expression of our love of God. Otherwise there can be no question of everyday sanctity which, we have seen, is the God-willed harmony between a whole-hearted attachment to God, work and our fellowmen in every situation of daily life. It shapes the whole of a man's life into a work of art and appeals strongly to others. That is why we are disappointed in Christians who pray a good deal but never take the trouble to be perfect in their work or sociable with their fellowmen. Nietzsche's challenge may be justified:

"If the redeemed would only live more in conformity with their redemption, then I would more readily believe in their Redeemer."

He could have said:

"If only Christians would master practical life in the spirit of a genuine everyday sanctity, they would be convincing proof of the sincerity of their religion."

The previous considerations of our relationship with God have not shown us the full picture of everyday sanctity nor have their ideas impelled us to live up to its ideal as a whole. To complete the God-willed picture we must consider two essential features: our attachment to work and our attachment to our fellowmen. First of all we shall deal with our attachment to work.

## I. Characteristics of Attachment to Work

These characteristics, or qualities, are already well known to us.

### 1. Harmonious

Our attachment to work must, above all, be in perfect harmony with our practice of religion and our obligation to our fellowmen. We can see how this is best done by two examples:

There was a woman who provided a scholarship for a boy who was studying for the priesthood. About the time the lad began to study Greek, the good lady became very ill. As often as she had an attack of severe pain, she prayed with patience and resignation, "Ah, my dear God, accept this sacrifice so the lad may find his Greek a bit easier and may one day be a good priest."

A sacristan, performing her duties with scrupulous care, said she was thinking not only of looking after the house of God and His holy altar in a proper manner, but was also thinking of all those whom he would make happy by the beauty of the church and leading them to God.

It is quite easy to see in these two cases the harmony between a close attachment to God, attachment to work and to one's fellowman. On the other hand, quite often we find regrettable discrepancies in practical life.

There are wives who drive all peace and comfort away from a home and send husband and children outside because they want to sweep and clean. There are others who upset the peace and rest of Sunday because of a little dust and untidiness. In such cases, the right attitude toward things and one's fellowman is lacking. Cleanliness and tidiness are for the benefit of man—not the other way round.

If we can imagine these trifles multiplied indefinitely, we can understand the impression gained by the renowned Indian, Rabindranath Tagore. After an extended tour through Europe he wrote: "In Europe I found a Sunday Christianity and a week-day paganism. Is there no longer any connection between religion and life? All too often religion was more or less a beautiful frame for life. Venerable, perhaps, like an ancient, inherited heirloom but no central force to permeate and sustain life. For such people the paradox 'Serve God and Mammon' is quite feasible."

The separation of religion from life is the main calamity of modern culture. Pope Pius XI calls it the curse of laicism<sup>2</sup>. Pope Leo XIII used the term naturalism. In an address to the cardinals on December 8, 1879 he said:

"The main error of our time which embraces all others is the cold naturalism which has crept

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<sup>2</sup> See J. Kentenich, *Hochschulkurs*, Study for Fr. Turowski, Dec. 1952, manuscript p. 22 (168), where he describes laicism as the violent separation of all areas of life from the God of revelation [JN 2002].

into every sphere of public life and pervaded conditions of private life; naturalism substitutes human reason for divine authority, putting nature in the place of grace in order to ban Jesus Christ everywhere and frustrate the fruits of His Redemption."

A spirit of laxity has endangered the unity of religion, life, faith, reason, nature and grace. We can hardly imagine its extent, even in good Catholic communities.

The saintly Jesuit, Fr. Eberschweiler said:

"It would be necessary to rearrange public and private life if we would have the higher light which comes to us from Christ pervade every circumstance of life. But this is precisely what is distasteful to modern man. He prefers to be guided by the observations of his deluded reason and the promptings of his spoiled human nature, and as a result, he closes his eyes to the higher light and to the rays of the sun of righteousness. Even though this light shines high in the heavens and has risen—according to the words of St. John—in order to enlighten every man who comes into this world and to brighten his path from the very first awakening of human reason until his last breath, nevertheless, they surrender only that section of their lives which belongs to the worship of God—how begrudgingly do they surrender even this! What narrow limits they set to the supernatural! *Diminutae sunt veritates a filiis hominum!* (Ps 11, 2). There you have the real error of our times. It settles over the present generation like a possessed atmosphere.

"How many have been entirely engulfed by it? How many are infected with it? How many Catholics are there who, while free from grave sin and considered exemplary people, are leading completely worldly-minded lives without the spirit of faith—lives that are cold and without much value for eternal life? How many who have been treading the way of perfection for many years, could be rebuked by Our Lord, 'Are you, too, still incapable of understanding?' (Mt 15, 16). Do you, even you, consider and judge things from a purely natural viewpoint without the understanding which faith should afford you? Indeed, a great deal of suffering and trouble which affects even religious—and who behave then in much the same way as laymen—comes from the error of our age, i.e., lack of the spirit of faith. And if many do not reach the heights of virtue, which might be expected from the abundance of means at their disposal, it is again due to this lack of faith. Their supernatural convictions barely reach beyond the sphere of their religious practices. The spirit of living faith does not enter into the remainder of their lives. The higher light does not so much as filter through to light their paths. That is why a host of golden opportunities for practicing virtue pass unnoticed and are, therefore, not put to profit. 'Pity is dead; in a base world, true hearts have grown rare' " (Ps 11, 2).

These words were written many years ago. What would Fr. Eberschweiler say about the situation today? Against this background we can see why atheistic collectivism preaches divorce from and fanatical hatred of religion.

The everyday saint draws from such knowledge new incentives for thinking more about God in his everyday life. He seeks God not only in religious literature but, above all, in practical life. In this way he grasps the meaning of an integration of religion and work.

## 2. Intensive, Constant, Affective

His love for work will be like his love for God—intensive, constant and affective. He will be attached to his work with his entire heart. God gave the work in order to draw him to Himself and make him a saint. So his work must not be done from caprice or fancy nor performed poorly or left undone. Because it is the will of God, and for that very reason, his work demands and stimulates all his energies so that it may be performed in a perfect manner exteriorly—as regards the work itself—and interiorly as regards the motive, i.e. out of intense love for and in union with God in order to praise and glorify Him.

The everyday saint often asks, "How can I please God most in my work?" Like Our Lord he wishes to do what pleases the Father. As a result, he is reliable and liked by all. If the work is unpleasant he does not abandon it or become upset, putting off doing it till the last moment. Sanctus est qui sancte vivit—he is holy who lives in a holy manner—striving to impress the stamp of interior and exterior perfection on all his works. This is distinct from the person who is merely enthusiastic and full of fancies. Quite a few enjoy praying, but when work is pressing they promptly excuse themselves saying, "This or that does not satisfy me; it is not to my liking."

## II. Nature of Our Attachment to Work

The everyday saint is attached to God with his whole heart and, since it is the will of God, he is attached to his work as well. By work he understands labor, the use of things and suffering. So, from his viewpoint, attachment to work means: attachment to labor, attachment to things and attachment to suffering.

### A. Attachment to Work

#### 1. Work is a Source of Happiness.

Human nature craves happiness. Whatever we do or omit is influenced by this desire. We seek money and fortune, honor, esteem and pleasure, all because we wish to be happy. Whether we realize it or not, we love God and remain faithful to Him for the very same reasons! The sources of human happiness are numerous—from the pure and innocent to the tarnished and depraved. Labor is one of the pure sources of happiness.

How often have we experienced this in our own case and seen it in others? When have we been happiest? Was it when we had no work to do or very little? When we were left entirely to our own thoughts and dreams? No! Doubtlessly at such a time our surroundings suffered much—we were a nuisance to everybody, dissatisfied with ourselves and bored in the company of others.

It is the same with communities of religious, with nations. Times of ease and unemployment have always been the breeding grounds of revolution. According to the proverb, "Idleness is the beginning of all evil." If this is true in the case of individuals, and we know it is, how much more disastrous must unemployment be when it strikes the masses! Human society is happier and develops better when there is too much work rather than too little. Of course, the happy medium is a sound balance of work and recreation. Work is a source of real happiness and one that has no substitute.

#### a. Work is a True Source of Happiness.

I am not afraid of strong opposition when I say that labor was part of the happiness of paradise and will be part of the happiness of heaven.

There are many who will reply: Was not the life of our first parents in paradise a life of pure luxury? They had no need to labor, else today we could not speak of labor as being one of the consequences of original sin.

Sacred Scripture, the very work of God, is quite clear on this point:

"Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you. . . . By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat. . . . In pain shall you bring forth children . . ." (Gen 3, 16f).

We see there is no doubt that the labor which we now perform in the state of our fallen nature does come as a punishment for original sin. Our human strength is no longer as vigorous; both body and soul have been weakened and creation greatly opposes the creative will of man. God's curse has fallen on both man and nature. It is only by hard labor and sweat that man can reap the harvest. Hail and storm, frost and drought often destroy the fruit of strenuous toil and striving, but labor as such

is not cursed; it is only man and the earth which have been placed under a curse.

It is not difficult to see that work is a part of the happiness of Paradise rather than its curse. Previously Adam and Eve both worked before the fall. It is true that this was no pressing obligation but a holy joy—a part of their happiness in heaven.

In spiritual books written on this subject, the consequences of original sin have often been painted too darkly. That is the case regarding labor. Yet in the very first pages of Holy Scripture, we find a hymn clearly in praise of work in paradise. We have no idea how long Adam and Eve persevered in the state of original justice; however, Holy Scripture tells us that work was part of God's plan for them and points out the kind of work, "The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it" (Gen 2, 15).

Here we have the fact that work was part of God's plan and the particular kind of work intended. Obviously agriculture is meant. Tools, needing to be manufactured by craftsmen, are necessary where there is agriculture. Mining, too, was planned by God. Scripture says:

"A river rises in Eden to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches. The name of the first is the Pishon; it is the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is excellent; bdellium and lapis lazuli are also there" (Gen 2, 10f).

God put those minerals in the earth so man might dig them out. Manual labor, therefore, was a part of the happiness of paradise.

Adam and Eve also had to do intellectual work. In the story of the creation we are told that God brought all the animals to Adam so that he might name them. A name is the expression of the essence or nature of a thing. Therefore Adam observed the animals in order to understand their nature and be able to give a name which suited them. This was highly intellectual work.

There was God's great command besides:

"Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth" (Gen 1, 28).

What modern culture and physical science are doing today is simply carrying out the immense program which God allotted to man in paradise. No Minister of Labor could have conceived such a great and all-embracing program. Our esteem of labor greatly increases when we compare it with the happiness of heaven. Of what does this happiness consist? Popular conceptions vary.

That which man considers best in his present situation in time he expects in heaven—to a higher and more perfect degree. For those who are worried and anxious, it will be rest from the troubles of this life. For the starving, a loaded table with friends to share the banquet.

When we were children we pictured heaven as a place at a rich, sumptuous banquet table or, a gingerbread house as in fairy tales or, a playground with all sorts of wonderful toys. Once, when I asked some young girls what they thought heaven was like, they said, "It is rest from all our earthly cares and troubles; it is a community where love rules." And a dear, little old grandmother who was so plagued by her numerous grandchildren that she rarely found time to drink her tea in peace confided in all simplicity that, "Soon she hoped to be in heaven where at least she might enjoy her cup of tea in peace."

All this is to be regarded as a symbol of the essence of the joy in heaven which is the beatific vision of God. We will be permitted to share in a special manner in the very life of God. This life of God is knowledge and love—it is pure activity.

When we desire eternal rest for our beloved, we mean freedom from the cares of life and the hardships of work here on earth. We pray *Requiescant in pace*—may they rest in peace! According to St. Augustine *pax est tranquillitas ordinis* — peace is the tranquillity of order. When applied to the blessed in heaven this means: Rest in view of the possession of God and a share in the knowledge and love of God.

The happiness of heaven, therefore, consists of a special share in the creative and self-giving activity of Almighty God.

What nobility work receives from this! It is activity similar to the knowledge and love of the blessed in heaven. But more! It is a share in the creative and self-giving activity of Almighty God—though in a more imperfect and, sometimes, quite different way.

God, as Creator, is active everywhere through His creative, conserving, ruling activity. He also works and conserves the divine life in a soul adorned with sanctifying grace. Whatever He does, He does out of love. Love is the underlying principle of creation. God does everything out of love, through love and for love. Out of love, by giving us many proofs of His love, He leads man to a deep union of love with Himself.

Truly then, the most profound meaning of all human activity and labor is (an imitation of and sharing in the manifold activities of God). Hence, there is much happiness and joy to be had from work—a happiness unknown to those who make it primarily an affair of earning their living. The more our work gives us opportunities of being creative, active and giving of ourselves, the happier we become even though we receive no extra pay for our labor. Work makes body and soul healthy and vigorous; it preserves us from many temptations and sins, making contact with God very easy. It also develops our personality, awaking and deepening a sound self-confidence.

For example when one teaches a class or takes responsibility of a household, many latent talents and creative powers are awakened and many opportunities arise for giving and receiving love. We know from experience the great blessings and achievements which come from such labor! It is quite different when a man is no longer creator but mere producer, forced to do mechanical, unskilled work for the sole purpose of earning his daily bread. Such work, as much as lack of employment, makes a man dissatisfied, awakening his lowest passions and paving the way for revolution in family and state.

Unfortunately, today too many are forced to do purely mechanical labor in factories and offices. Few are able to freely choose their occupation and sphere of activity. It is only a saint who can overcome the dangers connected with the mechanization of labor. A well known writer says, "Saints are more important than steam engines. There must be machines, but it is souls who must govern them" (*Der Rembrandt Deutsche*).

This is a most pressing problem—not only for generous souls striving after holiness but a problem for educating a whole nation.

If we do not succeed in again giving work its true meaning and through it awakening and developing man's powers of creation and self-expression—even where the work does not of itself seem suitable—then all other reforms will hardly reach their goal. We cannot go back to the social conditions of the Middle Ages. We have to accept our modern conditions as they are and in small things try to strike the clear, refreshing water of life, love and joy from the "hard rock" of dissatisfying labor. There are enough ways and means of doing this. They are quite easy to

understand theoretically, but their constant performance demands a serious desire and appreciation for a life of sacrifice.

By this we may be able to fit the idea and fact of mechanical work into the framework of common good. The working man should become conscious of the fact that without his detailed work neither the state nor human society could develop fruitfully. Or that the money he is earning will enable him to better provide for his family, giving his children a better education and chance in life. In both cases work is creative in regard to the common good and awakens in the worker creative powers which make him realize he is not a mere number or a nonentity without any individual value. On the contrary, he is of great value to others. Where there is the opportunity and ability, one can offset labor, which stifles the spirit, by some hobby.

A domestic servant once said, "When I have to peel a lot of potatoes then I sing while I work. I am very fond of singing and could sing all day long and make music. It's the same when I am scrubbing and polishing. I don't really like this kind of work, but with a joyful song and the work going to the rhythm of the music, the polishing is soon finished and I am cheerful, happy and satisfied. I do this all the time. I stir the soup and wash the clothes to the rhythm of my music and I go my way singing and humming one song after another."

Not everyone is in the happy position of being able to do the same—many do not have the talent and opportunity—but they can seek their happiness in some other way in their spare time. It may be by charitable or apostolic work, further studies or sports. In any case, a person must be creative and express himself in some way or other or else he will certainly go astray. His very nature craves for some other compensation.

Take for instance an employee who does nothing else but sew on hundreds of buttonholes for eight hours every day in exactly the same way without ever seeing the finished product. At home after work she busies herself in the garden or looks after her younger brothers and sisters. She makes herself useful in the parish, in her sodality or in social welfare work. She is very wise for she is making up for the lack of creative and expressive activity in her ordinary day's work.

It would be a great help in keeping women workers healthy if they would seek regular, inspiring activities at home, in the garden or among small children. There they would learn how to infuse spirit into their work and come to realize they have a special, personal dignity that can be of great value to others.

Those engaged in the educational or spiritual care of unfortunate people, whose desires—especially sensuality—have been the cause of their downfall, should always ask them about their occupation. It often happens if creative and self-expressive faculties are not put to good use they will be employed for destructive purposes. In such cases they should try to obtain satisfying and engrossing work or at least try to infuse spirit and meaning into their daily tasks.

For example, I know of an unemployed young married man who was troubled by sexual difficulties. In spite of his good will he was unable to overcome them by natural or supernatural means. An experienced priest advised him to spend his time making inexpensive toys for his children. He followed this advice and soon was free from his difficulties. This new activity gave him an opportunity for creative, expressive work and was a great blessing for his whole life.

Such considerations and observations lead missionaries in foreign countries to educate natives to work as a sound natural means of raising their morality and preserving the grace of baptism.

In addition to these natural helps, religion provides a supernatural means which can become very effective. It requires a high degree of love of God—as is expected from an everyday saint. He is deeply convinced of the truth that we are children of God and members of Christ's Mystical Body.



He endeavors to fashion his life accordingly. Hence, his creative and self-giving powers are elevated to a higher level and constantly enhanced. The everyday saint may be engaged in some very dull type of work—perhaps on an assembly line—yet in renouncing the enjoyment his nature likes, he uses and even seeks the opportunities "of making up in his own body what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ" and of spreading abroad the Kingdom of God, defending and deepening it. "I—once I am lifted up from earth—will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12, 32). In these words Our Lord prophesied the fruitfulness of His sufferings. For the everyday saint, as well as for others, unemployment and uncongenial work are a cross, a very heavy cross. When lifted up on this cross, his life then receives a higher value for, together with Our Lord, he brings the world to the Father. There is really no lack of opportunity of giving oneself and being creative. St. Therese of Lisieux said, "More souls are saved through suffering than by means of the most brilliant sermons." The Venerable Father Olivaint said, "From the time that the Cross was raised on Calvary, no supernatural blessing is possible unless it comes from the foot of the Cross."

The everyday saint lives out of this supernatural attitude. He regrets that so few people, even Catholics, are really aware of the opportunities for creating and self-giving to be found in spite of unemployment and uncongenial work and of the efficacy of sacrifice and self-denial. Therefore, he strives to the best of his endeavors to bring as many of his friends as possible to the altar, there, in the spirit of Christ, to receive light and strength to aid them in solving the vital problems of work and social justice.

b. Work is an Indispensable Source of Happiness.

Anyone who knows the times will realize from his own experiences and observations the vital problem of work. The ultimate causes are obvious from our previous reflections. We saw that, even in Paradise, life was not without work. We know that the eternal happiness of man in the supernatural state consists in the knowledge and love of God. A glance into the state of fallen nature convinces us that the urge for activity—whose normal and natural outlet is work—is inherent in human nature.

From this it follows that the desire for work is a natural desire, that suitable work is a general and inalienable human right and, consequently, that work itself is to be considered as an indispensable source of happiness.

We have now gained a vantage point which offers new vistas into our modern way of life. First of all, we see that modern mass unemployment is a terrible scourge of God—to be compared with the famines and plagues of past centuries. We are not concerned here with the economics of the situation—they have no place in the framework of these considerations—but the fact must not be overlooked that modern man has isolated work, tearing it out of its lawful place in relation to Almighty God, thus emptying it of its deepest meaning. Some have treated it as a cheap article to be purchased with money; others have idolized it. But Almighty God is always true to Himself. The things that man sinfully misuses will be the things used to punish him. Almighty God, the just and merciful, is now striking with His flail.

The person who fails to understand this inner connection is out of touch with modern man and does not listen to the voice of God which is making itself heard in the storms of our times. Moreover, he can never understand that unemployment can be a school of heroism in which saints are formed who, although victims of the industrial crisis, overcome it by faith in God.

The everyday saint, reading the signs of the times, reaches out successfully toward this kind of

heroism.

The leader of the Catholic Workers Movement in France makes this heroism the general aim of the education of young Catholic Workers:

"There must be mature Christians everywhere, in workshops, in factories, on the streets, in homes, just as if they were in church. They need to learn that, even though they cannot be daily communicants, they can still be saints on trains, on their way to work, during the day, in the workshop, in the factory, at night in the mineshaft, or in the glow of the furnace. They must realize that work can be an expressive prayer, the most fruitful kind of sacrifice when it is united with the daily offering and sacrifice of Our Lord on the altar. Then all their actions during work, their straining and striving, will become forms of prayer and means of sanctification. Instead of being places of temptation, the factories will become sanctuaries where souls unite themselves with the mission of the Savior while their hands collaborate in the enrichment and glorification of the work of the Creator. If we could bring these convictions to our young men and women who work in factories, how religion would greatly ennoble and transform their work. It would bring unity into their lives."

May God give many everyday saints to His Church from every walk of life. Pope Pius XI wrote in his Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* that "the social and economic conditions at present are such that it has become increasingly difficult for an enormously large number of people to attain the one thing necessary, 'their eternal salvation.'"

Without everyday saints living in the midst of today's difficult circumstances and striving after this goal of perfection, thereby inspiring their fellowmen, no change for the better can be expected.

## 2. Working With God.

The everyday saint has an extraordinarily keen sense of reality. In his striving and struggling he orients himself on the totality of the natural and supernatural order. The objective moral order is the norm of his daily life. In the objective order, labor is a share in the creative and self-giving activity of God. Therefore he endeavors to make work what it should be—a continuous work with God and for God.

Both parts are essential in his striving after holiness. The practice of loving God during his ordinary work day is his "cloister of the heart" which, amid the bustle and noise of the city, keeps him recollected and concentrated and is greater protection than the stoutest enclosing walls of a monastery.

Let us now inquire into the basis, way and effects of his working with God.

### a. The Basis of Working With God.

The everyday saint regards the different modes of God's presence and action in creation as the basis for his working with God.

He is deeply impressed and touched by the truth of the omnipresence of God. According to our catechism: God is everywhere, in heaven, on earth and in every place. The Psalmist tells us:

"Where can I go from your Spirit? From your presence where can I flee? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I sink to the nether world, you are present there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall guide me, and your right hand hold

me fast" (Ps 138, 7-10).

God is everywhere by His essence, His knowledge and His power. In every atom of the universe He is entirely present with all His being. He knows everything since "Nothing is concealed from him; all lies bare and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account" (Heb 4, 13). He peers into the hearts of men, "He does not understand that the eyes of the Lord, ten thousand times brighter than the sun, observe every step a man takes and peer into hidden corners. He who knows all things before they exist still knows them all after they are made" (Sir 23, 19-20). He upholds and guides everything by His sustaining and beneficent activity. God conserves and rules the world. We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, without His cooperation and assistance. He is active in us and with us—whether we eat, sleep, pray, work or do nothing whatsoever. We cannot conceive how near God is to us. St. Paul teaches us, "He is not really far from any one of us. In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17, 27-28). God asks through the prophet Jeremiah, "Can a man hide in secret without my seeing him? Do I not fill both heaven and earth?" (Jer 23, 24). Therefore God is not only around us but also within us.

Indeed, he loves us so much and so tenderly as to exhaust His omnipotence in seeking all ways of being with us. He sets His dwelling in the soul of one in the state of sanctifying grace. While living in the soul He bestows on it and increases the gifts of divine grace, the theological virtues—faith, hope and charity—the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the cardinal virtues. By means of actual grace He inspires the soul to do good works, strengthens and protects it from danger, and leads it safely to eternal happiness. St. Paul expressed this thought, "Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? . . . For the temple of God is holy, and you are that temple" (1 Cor 3, 16ff). "If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will bring your mortal bodies to life also, through his Spirit dwelling in you" (Rom 8, 11).

In view of these and similar passages from Holy Scripture, the indwelling of God in the soul is attributed in a special manner to the Holy Spirit. Of course, we know that all activity of God, in regard to creatures, is common to all three Divine Persons. For example, John tells us, "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him" (Jn 14, 23).

St. Augustine frequently emphasized the mystery of the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity within our souls. He writes, "You say to me: 'Show us your God' and I reply: 'Look into your own soul.' " Elsewhere he writes, "God is to be sought out in the secret places of man's soul. He is to be sought and petitioned in the interior of man, for that is where He wishes to have His temple." Again, "Look into your own heart and see that there is where you are to find God. It is in the depths of a man that Christ dwells, it is in the depths of your soul that you are to be renewed unto the image of God; look at the image and recognize its Author."

There is yet another way in which God is present, a presence which we may call "sacramental." The God-Man is present in the tabernacle with His body and soul, with His flesh and blood, with His divinity and humanity. He invites us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me . . . for my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Mt 11, 28-30).

b. Ways of Working With God.

The work of the everyday saint—with God—rests on this solid foundation: God works continually with him, so what can he do but strive earnestly to work with God. God lives with him and in him; he lives in and with God. Following the advice of St. Francis de Sales:

"As often during the day as you can, recall your soul to the presence of God. Pay attention to what God and you are doing. Then you will see that His eyes are directed to you and rest upon you with unspeakable love. You should say, 'O my God, why do I not continually look up, to You who are continually looking at me. Why do You think of me so often and continually and why do I so seldom think of You?' Where are we, O my soul? God is our true abode, but where are we really? The birds have their nests where they can return as often as they choose. Deer have their thickets and bushes where they can retire and hide, where they can enjoy the cool shade in the heat of summer. Even so should your heart, O beloved Philothea, choose a place every day, be it on the hill of Calvary or in the wounds of Our Savior—some place near Our Lord—so that from time to time you can retire there to recollect yourself from exterior business and be safe from temptation as though within a strong castle. Happy the soul who in all truth can say, 'You are my refuge, my defense, my shelter against rain and storm and the heat of summer' " (Devout Life II, 12).

To look at God frequently during work comes naturally to the everyday saint. He regards this simply as a matter of courtesy. How could he, for any length of time, ignore God, Who out of love, dwells within him and works with him. What could be worse than turning his back on a dear friend with whom he is living and working—from whom he has received untold favors. Yes, the light of faith is as bright as all that and his love for God is warm and tender. That is why he so easily feels the presence of God. Whenever his work permits, he joyfully recalls God's presence and love. As the sunflower turns toward the sun, so does his soul turn toward God. He feels at home with God, with the Omnipotent Creator, with the Triune God of revelation, and with the God-Man in the tabernacle. As a result, he does not find it difficult to keep the command which God gave to Abraham, "I am God the Almighty. Walk in my presence and be blameless" (Gen 17, 1). The words, "Whenever and whatever I am, God my Father is watching me;" or, "Remember that, wherever you are, God your Father sees you," are full of meaning for him. The same words, used by people who are not aware of the presence of God, are "a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal," i.e., meaningless because they repeat these words in parrot fashion. Those who enter the school of everyday sanctity must break with this kind of superficiality. Words like—God, the presence of God, and Love—must not remain empty formulae. There is sufficient grace at hand and, if they conscientiously cooperate with it, then a new world will gradually open up and, with the patriarch Jacob, they will admit, "Truly the Lord is in this spot, although I did not know it" (Gen 28, 16).

Gradually the everyday saint will be able to discover proof of divine fatherly love in his own small life and in the great events of history. "God is Father, God is good, all He does is always good." Thus the everyday saint lives, loves and thinks as a simple child of divine providence—as a lover of eternal wisdom. In every event, even in disappointment and the blows of life, he sees a message, a greeting from God, Who is waiting for his answer and Who, unfailingly, receives a reply. The response consists in simple ejaculations to God of the Holy Eucharist or to the Heavenly Father dwelling within us. These find their culmination in a hearty and fearless "yes" to all that God demands from us in the way of sacrifice in order to make our souls the perfect image of Him.

In everyday life let us see God by faith, speak to Him; from our heart, make little sacrifices for Him in our work. This is how we express our love for God and bring soul and meaning into our daily work.

c. Effects of Working With God.

One might object, saying, "Does such a mode of life and work with God tend to split the personality and cause injury to health—above all nervous tension?" Such dangers need not be feared where work not demanding intense concentration and strain of every power of the mind is concerned. No matter how ardent his love, the everyday saint is never carried away by imprudence since the love of God is also a wise guide in the spiritual life. When the degree of love is not so high, the soul does well to move slowly. First he must be faithful to fixed times of prayer, as though attending a school of love. At the same time he should choose, carefully and according to his duties, those moments which best suit recollection and dialog with God. These may be in the morning or evening, at the beginning or at the end of a particular work. It is important to use such opportunities fully in order to recollect oneself in God. If alone, one may kneel down out of devotion and reverence for God. God draws some persons to Himself by sending them suffering; others He inspires to make heroic sacrifices. For this reason, the everyday saint accepts pain and crosses, including faults and temptations, as special tokens of God's love.

"When a blow falls, try to be still.  
See it now, a sign of God's will.  
Eternal love lays no burden,  
Merely to watch you weep and suffer."

Others feel lifted to God when they experience great joy and happiness. We should make good use of such occasions to contemplate God lovingly, converse with Him and make sacrifices for His sake. Such instances are multiplied during the day—especially in the unsettled and hazardous conditions of our times. As our love grows stronger, the intervals between such elevations of the heart to God will automatically shorten. If we plan prudently, there will be no need to fear that our work will suffer because of short glances to Almighty God.

"Remember then, Philothea, always to make many withdrawals into the solitude of your heart while you are outwardly in the midst of your occupation or business; this mental solitude cannot be hindered by the multitude around you for they are not about your heart but only about your physical self—so that your heart may remain alone in the presence of God. This is the exercise which David was wont to practice amid his many occupations as he testifies in a thousand places in the Psalms, as when he says, 'O Lord, I am always with You. I see my God always before me. To you, O my God, have I lifted up my eyes, who dwells in heaven. My eyes are ever turned toward the Lord.' Are occupations so serious that we may not, from time to time, withdraw our heart in order to place it in this divine solitude?" (Devout Life II, 12).

"This exercise is not difficult, for it can be interwoven with all our affairs and occupations without any detriment to them whatsoever; inasmuch as, both in spiritual retirement and in

these interior movements, we make only little and short digressions which do not hinder us in any way but greatly help us to carry out whatever we are doing. The pilgrim who takes a little wine to rejoice his heart and refresh his mouth, though he makes a short halt for this purpose, does not break off his journey, but gains strength to finish it more speedily and easily for he halts only in order to go better" (Devout Life II, 13).

A person who makes God the center of his life and activity need never feel lonely. Awareness of the presence of God helps him to avoid sin and inspires him to heroic deeds.

There was a great penitent known as Thais who, after a life of sin, spent her days doing penance in a hermitage. When the devil came to trouble her by vividly painting all the attractions of the world in her mind, she succumbed to his wiles and returned to the world, once again becoming a notorious sinner. This often happens—*Corruptio optimi pessima*—the worst fall is the fall of the best! Another hermit, hearing of her fall and feeling inspired by grace, decided to do everything in his power to bring Thais back to God and urged her to return to the hermitage. He left his hermitage, found the house where she was living, knocked on the door and asked her for an interview where nobody could hear them. At once she assured him that there were rooms in the house which were secret and where no one could observe them. The disguised hermit asked, "No one? Can it be that you have a room where the Almighty, merciful and just God is not permitted to enter?" Then he spoke of the presence and the love of God. The sinner was so deeply impressed that she gave up her life of sin, returned to the desert and, in the literature of the saints, became known as the great penitent Thais.

Many Christians have been preserved from sin by the thought that God is watching, that His love is always there!

I know a fine young man whose job is delivering milk. Purity shines out of his eyes and brings a ray of sunshine to all who see him. Everyone looks forward to his early morning call. He is happy and content. I was once permitted to learn the secret of his ever-cheerful disposition. Although poor, he finds complete happiness in the thought: "God is within me. He watches all that I do. He gives me strength to do it, and that is why I am always so happy. In God there is no restlessness and no ill-humor." Whoever meets me—thought the young milkman—should meet God.

Whenever I see this cheerful young man I am reminded of the words of Father Lippert, "After all, it does not matter what name we bear or what clothes we wear, whether religious or layman, if only we are a light in our surroundings, shedding a tiny beam of holiness in the darkness of the world around us."

### 3. Working for God.

As far as possible the everyday saint exhausts the whole of reality. He believes that work is participation in the creative and self-giving activity of God. But, of necessity, everything that God creates and loves has, for its highest aim and final purpose, His own glory and honor. That is why the everyday saint wishes to do everything for God—that is, for His honor and glory.

#### a. The Basis of Working for God.

A firm foundation for his work is afforded to the everyday saint by the idea of Christian Exemplarism. According to this, every created thing is a divine idea actualized. The more perfectly a thing is developed, the more it is likely to give glory to God and lead man to Him. There is an urge for self-perfection in every creature, especially man. A poet expressed this desire in the following lines:

"Everyone an image bears  
Of what he ought to be.  
And should we not conform to this,  
Full joy will never be!"

In the industrial and educational field the everyday saint tries to work according to the divine blueprint; he is anxious that the divine idea and human work are in perfect conformity with each other. Otherwise, according to his view, God Who is Truth, cannot be pleased with his work. God has the blueprint of a sermon, a scientific work, a piece of art. He would like to see that blueprint expressed by the activity and work of man. His eye will rest on the work with pleasure only when it expresses the divine idea—for part of the glory of God lies within it. Some examples from practical life will clarify this idea:

A woman cleaning windows can, through her work, demonstrate the purity of God.

A nurse works untiringly by day, often by night, to assist the sick and dying—sometimes dressing wounds, sometimes easing a fever, always consoling people and relieving their suffering. She demonstrates in her activity a beautiful idea of God. The mercy of God is waiting to be demonstrated to the world by the efforts of this nurse.

In similar manner His justice can be manifested through a judge, and His wisdom and gentleness combined with firmness reflected by the teacher and the priest.

I know a doctor so conscientiousness it often provoked a smile! Nothing was unimportant—a small cut was as carefully treated as the most serious sickness. His patients had unbounded confidence in him. He tirelessly carried out his vocation, was never ruffled—calm and thoughtful. He also gave the townspeople an example of a deeply religious and Christian man. When he celebrated his sixtieth birthday—with young and old, rich and poor—he made an open confession of his devotion to God and the inner reason for his care and meticulous attention. He said, "I have always felt myself to be in the presence of God. When someone came to me in distress, I would ask myself, 'How would Almighty God act in this particular case' and I would try to act accordingly. Nothing was insignificant or unimportant, for I always acted according to the plan of God!"

Lucy Christine, a housewife and woman of high social standing, one day wrote in her spiritual diary,

"I have to entertain my grownup children at home. I am dressmaker, stage-manager, tutor, have to send out invitations, etc.—but high above everything else there remains in my soul a sphere which is unruffled and bathed in light where love keeps up uninterrupted prayer."

b. Ways of Working For God.

1) The everyday saint tries to see the identity between ideal and reality because sanctity consists first of love. He also loves to bring reality into conformity with the divine ideal. For example, he strives earnestly to demonstrate the purity of God through a perfectly tidy room, while, at the same time, he adheres with heart and soul to the purity of God.

This way of working with God constitutes a life of continual prayer. It has a great double advantage: it avoids a splitting of personality and concentrates man's whole capacity of love on one particular work so it may be done as perfectly as possible and become a work of art.

According to Pope Pius XI:

"This must be the holy pride, even the holy vocation of Catholic men: To be always the most outstanding, the best in every walk of human life. And, actually in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith, one has the secret of perfection in every situation, for every class in life. We have often told Catholic students that they should be the best students; told Catholic railwaymen that they should be the best, told Catholic tramwaymen that they should be the best conductors, and so on. Manzoni expressed this when he wrote: 'Give me a man who has fully realized what it is to be a Christian and a Catholic, who knows what he owes to God according to the law and the example of Jesus; who understands what he owes himself, his family and society—and then tell me how such a man cannot be numbered among the best family men and citizens' " (April 15, 1928).

In every situation, the everyday saint has but one thing in mind: *Age quod agis*—Whatever you do, do well; whatever you are—be that perfectly, whether as citizen or soldier. He is ambitious to be the best citizen or soldier according to his talents and abilities. That is why he understands the words of St. Augustine:

"Let him who maintains that the teaching of Christ is inimical to the state provide a host of soldiers such as those who follow the teachings of Christ; let him show us such servants, kings, judges and, finally, taxpayers as those who follow the teachings of Christ—then, let him dare to say that the Church is inimical to the state. No! There can be no doubt that where people follow the teaching of the Church, there the state has its best safeguard."

2) Acts of love which accompany work and which inspire it, are known by the term 'good intentions.' The good intention is, first and foremost, not an act of the intellect but an act of the will. We must emphasize this because we can easily make the mistake of confusing religious knowledge with religious life and love. "The greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13, 13). Just as we determine a plant by its leaves, blossoms and stamen, so we can measure everyday sanctity by the purity of intention. It must have a high value, for all the great things told us by the saints and Holy Scripture about love apply equally to it.

The mystics of old say:



"Purity of intention is the beginning, the end and the ornament of every virtue. It transcends everything, including itself, and rising above the heavens and everything on earth, coming to rest and finding God in its own innate simplicity.

"An intention is called pure or simple when it does not intend anything except God and relates everything to God—so that in everything one does, one seeks nothing but God and never one's self, whether in speaking, eating, drinking, sleeping or waking. Purity or simplicity of intention preserves one from all falsehood or ambiguity—that is why it should be valued and practiced in all works and in all things. It keeps man in the presence of God, enlightens his understanding, makes him alive to opportunities for practicing virtue, freeing him from vain fear here on earth and the day of judgment.

"The eye is the body's lamp. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light" (Mt 6, 22), which enlightens and preserves the whole body from sin—all man's works and his entire life. It is also the interior disposition of the spirit, the foundation of all spiritual life and comprises in itself faith, hope and love—for it trusts in God and is true to Him.

"A pure intention makes nature subject to the spirit; it brings joy, casts out grumbling and keeps all the virtues alive. It gives peace, hope and courage in God both here on earth and on the day of judgment.

"Since it is an act of the love of God, all other good works are also made more perfect—just as the gold ring gains in value when set with a precious diamond—and they resound more to the honor and glory of God. The good actions which we like doing are thereby purified from all inferior selfish motives."

The old mystics also tell us:

"If you wish to know whom you are serving and who is repaying you, then ponder whom you are working for. Consider what your intentions are and the reason for your work, whom you serve and to whom you are subject. No one but you can tell this. Your works may seem good and have face value—but for whom are they done? To whom do they belong? These are questions to which no one but you can reply since only you know the answer."

Imagine a beautiful orchard filled with trees, laden with fruit, but before the apples ripen they fall from the trees—they are all infected with grubs. The cabbages in the same garden look very promising. They too are attacked by grubs. Apples on the ground look good until someone picks them up—only to find that one after another is full of holes, eaten out by the grubs. So it is with many words and deeds which look good; in looking deeper, one often finds they are worthless because of lack of pure intention, or are in danger of becoming so with every state of life liable to become infected. No phase of life is safe—be it active or contemplative; even though one may be lifted up to the third heaven, one has to be on guard to see that every intention is pure, for all actions which seek a man's own convenience and repose are worm-eaten.

If, for example, people give alms, perform great works of charity or bestow gifts upon others but are not content and satisfied that all this is known to God alone and not to the general public, then they have a hidden desire for honor and glory. Their giving is like an apple with a grub inside. These people substitute their alms for themselves and wish to bask in public favor.

Therefore they donate windows, altars and vestments for the church and, so that everyone may know the donor, engrave their coat of arms or monograms on their gifts. Thus they have already received

their reward (Mt 6, 2). Of course they have the ready excuse that this is done in order that others pray for them; but alms given with a pure intention would be of far greater value to them if known only to God. He will make up for the loss of prayers by large congregations in the church—by the whole human race if need be—if givers leave their good works to Him and have trust in Him.

Then there are many men who spoil all their good works so they have few useful and worthwhile things to show for a lifetime. No matter what they do, be it serving their neighbors, serving God, praying, resting or almsgiving, they are always self-seeking and demanding recognition. Such people receive more satisfaction and honor than does Divine Love, for they look more to their own satisfaction and pleasure than to that of God. They value their works and the credit attached to them more than the One for Whom they are performed. They are always looking to the circumstances rather than to the aim, to the way more than to the end, to the exterior more than to the interior.

No matter how numerous these works are, they are all worm-eaten. In them people seek only outward interests: honor, worldly advantage, esteem, popularity or desire. God has no interest in such works. He does not reward them no matter how great they may outwardly appear. All our works are worthy of praise and honor only inasmuch as God has regard for them. That which He does not acknowledge will be forgotten for all eternity—not in regard to the work itself, but in regard to the reward. What God cannot reward in His goodness He will punish in His justice. What wonder, then, that the devil robs those people of their reward because all their good deeds are worm eaten.

Ah! What wonders we shall see on the last day! Then we shall find that many who seemed to have done great works, who appeared great and had a famous name will, when their works have lost all their glamor, be grateful to take their place at the feet of those whom they considered unlearned and incompetent—those poor, simple, insignificant men whose lives were without notable achievement but whose humble affliction has now raised them to heights to which others hardly dare raise their eyes!

All this can be attained by the power of a pure intention only to the extent that it is accompanied by detachment, is supernatural, pure and universal. Without detachment there can be no pure love. Love and detachment belong together on earth. Love is a bond with what is above, and this cannot exist if one is bound to what is below.

If we desire a true guide for the purity of our love or of our good intentions we have only to examine ourselves. How do we react when our work is not crowned with success, when we receive only ridicule for our efforts, or when we are suddenly transferred elsewhere from work that is very dear to us. If at such times we have been disappointed, embittered or cast down by the realization of our insufficiency, it is surely a sign that we have not been seeking solely the honor of God but something for ourselves—our own honor and satisfaction. Of course it is quite natural to feel upset and this would not be a sign of our entire lack of everyday sanctity. It was similar with Our Lord in the garden during His agony. He was forced to sweat blood out of sheer inner distress. As was the case with Him, our will has to be rooted in the will of God and become more and more one with divine will. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—this is and always will be the guiding motive in every situation in the life of the everyday saint.

The person who seeks to be detached from his own honor and the thirst for pleasure, who is simple in his desires, thoughts and deeds, is someone who considers only the honor and love of God. He will be free from many interior upsets and need never fear a nervous breakdown. Doctors are right when they say that the best cure for nervous troubles, where there is nothing organically wrong, is a deep humility and love of God.

The everyday saint experiences this often during his life. He is not free from hard work and suffering but, where others break down under the load, he remains steadfast. His nerves may not be strong but he is able to bear up, not because he runs from one doctor to another, but because he is an everyday saint who—with his sound striving for sanctity, deep love for God and humility—is able to master life. Others stronger than he break down under the extraordinary burdens of life. We are told that the great genius and theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, suffered from continuous migraine, yet he still wrote great volumes of deep theology.

## B. Attachment to Created Things.

It is part of the everyday saint's vocation to sanctify his whole life, bring it into contact with God's love, ennoble and perfect it. His whole day, from morning till night, should bear the imprint of love and perfection. Only then can he believe that he has achieved his ideal.

This is what Cardinal Newman meant when he wrote: "A man who is religious is so morning, noon and night. His religion is the character and form which inspires all his thoughts, words and actions. He sees everything in its full setting, seeing God in everything and measuring everything by the will of God."

His day not only consists of prayer and work but also depends on many objects such as food, clothing and others, which we include here under the general term "created things."

The everyday saint always endeavors to make the things of daily life a source of inspiration, a means of expressing great love for God and opportunities of energetic self-control, to attain full self-possession in all situations of life. His entire day becomes a continuous Gloria Patri, a living embodiment of his favorite prayer: "All for love of the Eternal Love and for His glory." He consequently strives successfully for an attachment to created things which is prophetic, priestly and heroic.

### 1. Prophetic Attachment to Created Things.

The everyday saint is clear and definite in his religious convictions, being practical and responsible in applying them to life.

a. He knows that the things of this world not only have an intrinsic value in themselves but also a symbolic significance. They are all small prophets of God bringing us joyful messages about Him, His perfections and His plans in order to enkindle in us a greater love of God. Hence, St. Augustine called them the *Nutus Dei*—that is, greetings or hints from God. St. Bonaventure speaks of *Manutergium Dei*, saying in effect that through these things God lovingly takes us by the hand, shows us His footprints and thus leads us to His fatherly heart. Were we to try, we could never enumerate all the little prophets we meet during the day! In order to make us keen of sight and hearing in regard to such messengers of God in our lives, let us look at a few examples:

I see a rose bush covered with beautiful blossoms. It is a symbol of the beauty of God and the perfume of sanctity. There is a bird singing its heart out on the branch of a tree. Is it not caroling greetings from the Heavenly Father, who so carefully nourishes and clothes it? There is a pool of clear water. It reminds me of Baptism and the cleansing of the soul.

A housekeeper cleaning shoes in the evening ponders how, day after day, God cleanses us from all "dust and imperfections of soul" if only we beg His pardon with a sense of sorrow. A tree laden with

fruit reminds her of the petition: "Help me that on the day of the great harvest I may not appear before You with empty hands."

Spring reminds the everyday saint of the Resurrection, while the decline of nature in Autumn suggests mortality. An acacia in bloom tells him of the beauty of a soul in the state of sanctifying grace; the biting wintry wind, piercing his bones, brings to mind the coldness in all souls devoid of the love of Christ.

Everywhere, no matter where he may go, the everyday saint finds himself surrounded by these little prophets who continually testify to the power and wonders of God.

A farmer used to think of his grave, which someone else would dig for him, whenever he turned the soil. When he saw a worm wriggling on the side of the road, he would remember that they said of Our Lord: "A worm and no man." When he weeded the garden, he would ask that he might never be separated from Our Lord and cast into the fires of hell. A cobweb hanging from a shrub would remind him of the snares of the devil to catch souls and make them unhappy forever. This farmer, who established contact with God in every circumstance of life on his farm, was once plowing and pondered about the manure which was being mixed with the soil by the plow. He thought, "Manure is decomposition, yet where would a farm be without it!"

In the same way God uses my failings and all my imperfections to foster true humility so that I may become a saint. Was this not great wisdom on the part of the ordinary working man?

There was once a saintly brother who said his daily prayers but had little time at his disposal since he was busy in the kitchen cooking for the community day after day. Asked how he could cultivate union with God when he had so little time for spiritual reading he replied, "Look, here I have a very good teacher to whom I listen all day long! This glowing fire always speaks to me of the love of God—telling me never to let my love grow cold. In the morning when I light the fire, I ask God to allow me to remain always in the first fervor of my love for Him. When the heat begins to die down I put some more wood on, saying an ejaculation for the thousand graces of which I stand in need, thinking of the fires of purgatory or hell. When the fire burns steadily I am aglow with the love of God. When the fire burns out at night I am then reminded of my own death." When he had given them this explanation, his companions understood why he was considered such a saintly man. They realized that, in spite of the continual hard work in the kitchen, he remained constantly in the presence of God—listening to His voice.

b. The everyday saint not only hears and understands these numerous prophets of God, but he replies to their messages by an intense response of love and by a more perfect life. His main concern becomes to unite, as far as possible, all the actions of his ordinary daily life into one great act of love and service of God.

The Introduction to the Devout Life by St. Francis de Sales is a practical handbook for everyday sanctity in the world. He begins with a thought expressed as follows:

"In the creation God commanded the plants to bring forth their fruit, each one after its kind. Even so, He commands Christians, who are the living plants of His Church, to bring forth fruits of devotion—each one according to his kind and vocation. Devotion should be practiced differently, then, by the gentleman, servant, prince, widow, daughter, wife, and the practice of devotion must be accommodated to the strength, work and duties of each individual. I ask you, Philothea, would it be proper for a bishop to wish to be solitary like the Carthusians? If the married wished to save no more than the poor Capuchins, the artisan in church all day like the religious, and the religious exposed to all sorts of interruptions for the service of neighbor like the bishop—would not such

devotion be ridiculous, disorderly and intolerable? Nevertheless this fault is very common, and the world—which cannot or will not distinguish between true devotion and the indiscretion of those who imagine themselves to be devout—murmurs and blames devotion, which is not reasonable as devotion is not responsible for these disorders.

No, Philothea, devotion when it is true never spoils anything but rather perfects all things, and when it becomes inconsistent with anyone's lawful vocation it is, without doubt, false. The care of a family is rendered peaceable thereby, the love of husband and wife more sincere, the service of the prince more faithful, and every kind of occupation more pleasant and agreeable.

It is an error, no, rather a heresy, to wish to banish the devout life from the army, workshop, courts of princes and households of married folk" (Devout Life I, 3).

A person who lives in the world cannot help but notice created things—he meets them everywhere. He is exposed to them even more than the religious and is obliged to influence and form them. Therefore, prophetic attachment to things is one of the most essential features of everyday sanctity and, knowing this, St. Francis de Sales considers it a very high art. He distinguishes between our thinking of God and our lovingly turning toward Him. The numerous examples which St. Francis de Sales gives, taken from Scripture and the lives of the saints, all go to show how thinking of God—His attributes and His intentions—enkindle love and admiration in the soul (Devout Life II, 13).

It is therefore only a part of the prophetic attachment to things—and perhaps only a lesser part—if we are reminded of God and the divine through them; rather, they must and should at the same time win our hearts and wills for Him.

## 2. Priestly Attachment to Created Things.

a. A priest's vocation is to praise God in the name of the Church and of all creation. Even inanimate creation must have a share in the praise of God. Holy Scripture tells us, "Let all that has life and breath praise the Lord." But creation can play its part in the praise of God only in so far as man enables it to do so. The man who enters into these silent—yet so eloquent—pleas of creation to praise God and truly sings his priestly *Benedicite* while going through the world has a truly priestly attachment to things.

Have you ever stood at a window on a stormy night and admired the spectacle of nature? How the treetops toss and bow down to earth, how clouds scurry about and the dark sky is rent by flashes of lightning! Everything is in an uproar. The wind howls to the accompaniment of distant rumbles of thunder! Or at the beach, have you ever given your eyes, ears and whole heart to enjoying the magnificent panorama? Did your mind dwell on the boundless ocean, the splashing and frothing of waves and the shining, glittering light broken up into all the colors of the rainbow? Have you perhaps admired the overwhelming beauty of tall timber wrapped in majestic silence, overhead a roof of leaves with the wind playing its melodies, a timid rabbit scared by your footsteps? Did you not feel then that you should lend your voice to nature by singing a joyful *Te Deum*, or a grateful "Glory be to God on High"—forced as if by something indefinable.

Yes, a stormy night, the might ocean, the murmuring forest are meant to be—and most definitely are—a song of praise to their good, wise and Almighty Creator. They call us to take up the role of mediation so they may fulfill the purpose of their existence.

Are we not lifted heavenwards on a feast day when the altars of churches are gloriously arranged in praise of God? The Creator is looking for men to give voice to the *Benedicite* of creation. Then will

God be pleased with us and all creation.

Not only stars, forest and flowers praise God, and not only storms and sea find their ultimate purpose in human language, but things of culture and industry likewise are destined for the same end. The blast-furnace, automobile, telephone and radio can all sing the praise of God the almighty and wise Creator. Living in the age of technological achievements, we should join our voices to the typing of typewriters and howling sirens of factories—since we are priestly mediators between even these and God. They can find the fulfillment of their existence in no other way.

Heaven, earth and ocean are full of the glory of God. Hence, we must not pass through nature with our eyes closed. Rather, let us, with frank and open eyes seek the traces of God in nature so we may thank and praise Him for His mighty works.

b. St. Francis of Assisi was a master of priestly attachment to creation. His *Canticle of the Sun* written in summer or autumn, 1225, shows how perfectly he interpreted nature.

Most High, omnipotent, merciful Lord,  
Yours is all praise and honor and glory and every benediction.  
To you alone are they confined  
And no man is worthy to speak Your name.

Praise to You, O Lord, with all Your creatures,  
Especially for our Brother Sun.  
Through him, You give us the light of day,  
And he is fair and radiant with great splendor,  
Of You, most High, giving signification.

Praise to You, my Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars,  
Formed in the sky, clear, beautiful and fair.

Praise to You, my Lord, for Brother Wind,  
For air, for weather cloudy and serene and every weather  
By which You to Your creatures give sustenance.  
Praise to You, my Lord, for Sister Water  
Who is very useful and humble, precious and chaste.

Praise to You, my Lord, for Brother Fire  
By whom You illumine the night.  
Beauteous is he and jocund, robust and strong.

Praise to You, my Lord, for our Mother Earth  
Who sustains and rules us  
And brings forth diverse fruits and colored flowers and herbs.

Praise to You, my Lord, for those who grant forgiveness through Your love  
And suffer infirmities and tribulations.  
Blessed are they who bear them with resignation,  
Because by You, Most High, they will be crowned.

Praise to You, my Lord, for our brother bodily Death  
From whom no living man can ever escape.  
Woe unto those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those who are found in Your most holy will.  
To them the second death will bring no ill.

Praise and bless my Lord, render thanks to Him and serve Him with great humility.

What St. Francis sang with such poetic fervor is a splendid paraphrase of some of the verses which we say in the *Benedicite*.

All you works of the Lord, bless the Lord!  
Praise and exalt Him above all forever.

All you Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord!  
O ye heavens, bless the Lord.  
All you waters that are above the heavens, bless the Lord.  
O all you powers of the Lord, bless the Lord!

Sun and moon, bless the Lord!  
O you stars of heaven, bless the Lord!  
Every shower and dew, bless the Lord!  
O all you spirits of God, bless the Lord!

Fire and heat, bless the Lord;  
O you cold and heat, bless the Lord!  
O you dews and hoarfrosts, bless the Lord!  
O you frosts and cold, bless the Lord!  
O you ice and snow, bless the Lord!

Nights and days, bless the Lord!  
O you light and darkness, bless the Lord!  
O you lightnings and clouds, bless the Lord!

O let the earth, bless the Lord!  
Let it praise and exalt Him above all forever!

Mountains and hills, bless the Lord!  
O all you things that spring up in the earth, bless the Lord!  
O you fountains, bless the Lord!  
O you seas and rivers, bless the Lord!

O you whales and all that move in the waters, bless the Lord!  
O all you fowls of the air, bless the Lord!  
O all you beasts and cattle, bless the Lord!

O you sons of men, bless the Lord!

O let Israel, bless the Lord!  
Let them praise and exalt Him above all forever.  
O you priests of the Lord, bless the Lord!  
O you servants of the Lord, bless the Lord!

O you spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord!  
O you holy and humble of heart, bless the Lord!  
O Ananias, Azarias and Misael, bless the Lord!  
Praise and exalt Him above all forever!

Let us bless the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit!  
Let us praise and exalt Him above all forever!  
Blessed are you, O Lord, in the firmament of heaven!  
And worthy of praise, and glorious, and exalted above all forever!

### 3. Heroic Attachment to Created Things.

The everyday saint uses all things in nature and all works of culture as an aid toward helping every creature to praise and extol Almighty God. He also realizes that without heroic attachment to things he will not be able to practice the prophetic and priestly binding to them. Heroic attachment to creatures means having the same independence from them and enjoying the things of this world which are pleasing to God— without the spirit of renunciation.

We often speak of a divine indifference to things. By this we mean a certain likeness to God, who is completely detached from creation, particularly in the sense of having no needs.

Our Lord showed us this divine detachment during His life and thus showed how we can be inwardly independent of things and, if need be, externally independent of them. By heroic attachment to creatures, therefore, we mean a renunciation of creatures which is pleasing to God in imitation of the example of Christ who was poor, humble and finally crucified. Or the spirit of the religious vows, i.e., freedom from all inordinate attachment to temporal goods and comfort, to honor, esteem and the pleasures of the senses. This inner detachment is genuine if it is at times proved by external deeds.

#### a. Our Lord and Heroic Attachment to Created Things.

During His earthly life Our Lord gave us an example of this inner and outer freedom and frequently encouraged us to follow His example. He was not understood by Israel. The Chosen People longed ardently for their Redeemer but when he finally came they did not recognize Him, rejecting and killing Him. They had a false idea of the Savior, a political Messiah, one who would free them from the Roman yoke. They were yearning for a political hero—and that is just what the God-Man did not want to be. His mission was to free all men from sin and guilt, and give them a share in His own divine life.

To accomplish this task He lived a life of poverty, humility and purity. He said of Himself, "The foxes have lairs, the birds in the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8, 20).



In regard to possessions, He was poor; pleasure, He was crucified; honor, He was humble and despised. His was a true divine detachment from things. This was seen at the crib where the mother placed the Child in the cold stable in Bethlehem. We also see it at the cross: the bare beams were the death-bed of the Savior, a small loincloth His winding sheet; sneers and mockery took the place of prayers for the dying.

It is not difficult to see the motives for Our Lord's choice of a life of poverty, humility and the cross while He was on earth. It was the will of His Father. Who wanted His Son to atone through perfect detachment from things—for our inordinate attachment to earthly things. He intended to prove, in a more convincing manner, the divinity of His person and mission as well as the heroism of His love. The more Our Lord stands before us, destitute of all earthly things, the greater He appears in His divinity—without need of any object to accomplish His aim. He had no need whatsoever of human means in order to carry out His mission and accomplish His task. *Opera Dei ex nihilo*—God prefers to work with insignificant instruments—so that the divine origin may be more clearly recognized. According to earthly standards, the things which would have made His Church great did not enter His considerations at all when He founded it. He did not choose His apostles and disciples from the great ones of this earth or from the leading scientists, politicians and leaders of society. Nor were the first Christians won by the apostles from the ranks of the well-to-do.

"Brothers, you are among those called. Consider your situation. Not many of you are wise, as men account wisdom; not many are influential; and surely not many are well-born. God chose those whom the world considers absurd to shame the wise; he singled out the weak of this world to shame the strong. He chose the world's lowborn and despised, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who were something; so that mankind can do no boasting before God." (1 Cor 1, 26-29).

Then he gives us the reasons for this choice, "God it is who has given you life in Christ Jesus. He has made Him our wisdom and also our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption. This is just as you find it written, 'Let him who would boast, boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor 1, 30-31).

There was yet another reason why God the Father sent us His Son and delivered Him to a life of privation and suffering. He wanted Him to win the love of man and that could only be done by showing him tokens of heroic love. The poor, humble and crucified Savior was to be the greatest and most tangible proof of His love for mankind according to the intention of the Heavenly Father. True love is proved by sacrifice—therefore, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the love. "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15, 13).

Our Divine Lord practiced what He preached and taught. In Matthew, Chapter 5, we are given a summary of the principles of Christianity. It is the spirit of Christ that is expressed in the fundamental laws of Christianity—the Eight Beatitudes. Without the spirit of detachment, self-denial and mortification, inspired by love, it is nearly impossible to acquire the spirit of poverty, penance and meekness. Hunger and thirst for holiness, purity of heart, mercy and peace all require a continual process of detaching oneself. Joyful acceptance of persecution and calumny, submission to unjust treatment—all these virtues call for a complete detachment from the things of this world. Our Divine Lord is even more outspoken when it comes to the application of the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount:

"If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5, 23-24).

"But what I say to you is: offer no resistance to injury. When a person strikes you on the right cheek,

turn and offer him the other. If anyone wants to go to law over your shirt, hand him your coat as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the man who begs from you. Do not turn your back on the borrower. You have heard the commandment, 'You shall love your countryman but hate your enemy,' My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father, for His sun rises on the bad and the good, He rains on the just and the unjust. If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Do not tax collectors do as much? And if you greet your brothers only, what is so praiseworthy about that? Do not pagans do as much? In a word, you must be made perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5, 39-48).

It is quite clear from Our Lord's comparison with the justice of the pharisees just how seriously He takes this demand for spiritual detachment:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true. That is why whoever breaks the least significant of these commands and teaches others to do so shall be called least in the kingdom of God. Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands shall be great in the kingdom of God. I tell you, unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of God" (Mt 5, 17-20).

The pharisees and the scribes performed everything necessary for the external observance of the law, but Our Lord substituted for this the spirit of Christianity, the spirit of love and sacrifice and it is this spirit which He demands of His followers.

He emphasized especially the value of the spirit of poverty:

"Do not lay up for yourselves earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal; lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven where there is no moth or rust to consume it, no thieves to break in and steal. Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also. The eye is the body's lamp. If your eyes are good, your body will be filled with light; if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness. And if your light is darkness, how deep will the darkness be? No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be attentive to one and despise the other. You cannot give yourself to God and money. I warn you, then: do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Is not life more than food? Is not the body more valuable than clothes?"

"Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Which of you, by worrying can add a moment to his life-span? As for clothes, why be concerned? Learn a lesson from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work; they do not spin. Yet I assure you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. If God can clothe in such splendor the grass of the field, which blooms today and is thrown on the fire tomorrow, will He not provide much for you, O weak in faith? Stop worrying, then, over questions like, 'What are we to eat, or what are we to drink, or what are we to wear?' The unbelievers are always running after these things. Your heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides. Enough, then, of worrying about tomorrow. Let tomorrow take care of itself. Today has troubles enough of its own" (Mt 6, 19-34).

It is not difficult for us to realize from these warnings that earthly things pass away—they will be destroyed by moths and rust—and that they are dangerous inasmuch as they might lead us to deny

something essential to God something of our devotion to Him. We cannot serve God and at the same time be a slave to man. Our attitude, therefore, must be to take reasonable care of our temporal security together with a spiritual detachment and have great confidence in the Fatherly goodness of God. If such confidence is present, God would work a miracle rather than see His children wanting any of the necessities of life.

On one occasion when Our Lord was out on the sea with His disciples, they found there were no provisions. St. Mark tells us, "They had forgotten to take bread with them and had no more than one loaf in the boat—He warned them, 'Look well, and avoid the leaven of the pharisees and the leaven of Herod!' Then they said anxiously to one another, 'We have brought no bread!' Jesus knew it and said, 'What is this anxiety that you have brought no bread with you? Do you not yet understand; have you no perception? Are your minds still closed? Have you eyes that cannot see? And ears that cannot hear? Do you remember nothing? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you take up?' They told Him, 'Twelve.' 'And when I broke the seven loaves among the four thousand, how many hampers full of broken pieces did you take up then?' And they told him, 'Seven.' Then He said to them, 'How is it that you still do not understand?'"

An outstanding proof of our confidence in God is our own generosity, and at the same time it is an excellent means of setting His fatherly providence and care to work. For this reason Our Lord exhorts us, "Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you" (Lk 6, 38).

Thus, we understand that whenever Our Lord demanded perfect imitation He also demanded poverty. He tells the rich young man, without lowering the standard of perfection in any way:

"If you seek perfection, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor. . . . Afterward, come back and follow Me" (Mt 19, 21).

When He commanded His apostles to set out and convert the whole world, He did not give any instructions on how to procure temporal assistance, to acquire riches for the Church, to influence the rich and great ones of the world. Instead, He asked of them perfect renunciation:

"Provide yourselves with neither gold nor silver nor copper in your belts; no traveling bag, no change of shirt, no sandals, no walking staff" (Mt 10, 9-10).

He told them:

"Take nothing for the journey, neither walking staff nor traveling bag; no bread, no money. No one is to have two coats" (Lk 9,3).

In place of such natural things, He gave them all the riches of the supernatural world. The words which St. Peter spoke to the lame man who begged alms at the gate of the temple are very striking:

"I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you! In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, walk!" (Act 3, 6).

#### b. The Everyday Saint and Heroic Attachment to Created Things.

Inspired by the intensity and the power of his love, the everyday saint strives to have the same attitude as Our Lord had toward material goods, according to the circumstances of his state.

Love is the thing which counts most of all; the practice of moral virtues is only the expression of love. "Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect" (Col 3, 14). It is the bond which most perfectly binds God to man, man to men and, the individual virtues

in man. It is the queen of virtues. Hence, St. Paul says, "If I give everything I have to feed the poor and hand over my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13, 3).

When the scribe asked Our Lord what the chief and greatest commandment was, He replied, "Love." And the scribe said to Him: "Excellent, Teacher! You are right in saying, 'He is the One, there is no other than He.' Yes, to love Him with all our heart, with all our thoughts and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves is worth more than any burnt offering or sacrifice.' Jesus approved the insight of this answer and told him, 'You are not far from the reign of God.' And no one had the courage to ask Him any more questions" (Mk 12, 32-34).

The true sign of genuine piety and friendship with Jesus is not mortification, not even martyrdom, nor again poverty, but love, which inspires and awakens every other virtue.

St. Jerome once paused at the words of Holy Scripture, "See, we have left all things and followed You." He wondered what the intrinsic connection between these words was. Were there not many others in history who had left all things and led simple lives? What was the difference between them and the Christian? The difference is that the Christian renounces things for the love of God; he leaves all in order to follow Christ.

Such love helps the everyday saint overcome the root of all misuse of temporal goods, namely, greed. It fills him with ardent zeal so he is able to exert a vital influence on his immediate and remote surroundings, on family and society. Because of his freedom from inordinate attachment to possessions, this love preserves him from harshness and brutality of mind.

St. Paul describes avarice, the desire to possess things as "the root of all evil" (1 Tim 6, 10). In the book of Ecclesiastes we find the warning: "The lover of gold will not be free from sin, for he who pursues wealth is led astray by it" (Sir 31, 5).

Avarice is like the spirit of capitalism—the unrestrained drive to acquire things—which, as the mother of modern materialism, causes many of our modern crises and troubles. Only a radical and all-embracing spirit of love can really bring a change for the better.

In his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pope Pius XI refers to the words of Pope Leo XIII, which are in line with this thought:

"If society is to be healed now (we use the words of our predecessor), in no way can it be healed save by a return to Christian life and Christian institutions. For Christianity alone can apply an efficacious remedy for the excessive solicitude for transitory things, which is the origin of all vices. When men are fascinated and completely absorbed in the things of the world, it alone can draw away their attention and raise it to heaven. And who will deny that this remedy is now urgently needed by society? What will it help to teach them sound principles in economics if they permit themselves to be so swept away by selfishness, by unbridled and sordid greed, that 'They were quick to stray from the way their fathers had taken, and did not follow their example of obedience to the commandments of the Lord' (Judg 2, 17).

"The fundamental cause of this defection from the Christian law in social and economic matters, and of the apostasy of many working men from the Catholic faith which has resulted from it, is the disordered affection of the soul, a sad consequence of original sin and the source of these and of all other evils. By original sin the marvelous harmony of men's faculties has been so deranged that now he is easily led astray by base desires and is strongly tempted to prefer the transient goods of this world to the lasting goods of heaven. Hence comes that unquenchable thirst for riches and temporal possessions which at all times has impelled men to break the law of God and trample on the rights of their neighbor; but the condition of the economic world of today lays more snares than ever for human frailty. The uncertainty of economic conditions today and of the whole economic field

constantly places the highest strain on the energy of those engaged therein. Because of this some have become so insensitive in their conscience as to seize all means which enable them to increase their profits or to safeguard against sudden changes of fortune.

"Easy returns, which an open market offers to everyone, lead many to interest themselves in trade and exchange, their one aim being to make large profits with the least labor. By their great unchecked speculation prices are raised and lowered out of mere greed for gain, making void the most prudent calculations of manufacturers. The regulations legally enacted by corporations, with their divided responsibilities and limited liability, have given rise to abominable abuses. As is evident, the greatly weakened responsibility makes little impression upon the conscience. The worst injustices and frauds take place beneath the obscurity of the common name of a corporation. Boards of directors proceed, in their unprincipled methods, even to the violation of their trust in regard to those whose savings they administer. Lastly, we must mention the unscrupulous, but well-calculated speculation of men who appeal to the lowest human passions without seeking to answer real needs. Passions are aroused in order to turn their satisfaction into gain.

"A stern insistence on moral laws, enforced with vigor by civil authority, could dispel—or perhaps avert—these enormous evils. However, this was too often lamentably wanting. For, at the time when the new social order was beginning, the doctrines of rationalism had already taken firm hold of large numbers, and an economic science alien to true moral law soon arose, whence it followed that free reign was given to human avarice.

"As a result, much greater numbers than ever before, solely concerned with adding to their wealth by any means whatsoever, sought their own selfish interest above all things; they had no scruple in committing grave injustices against others. Those first entering upon this broad way 'that leads to damnation' (Mt 7, 13) easily found many imitators of their iniquity because of their manifest success, their extravagant display of wealth, their derision of the scruples of more delicate consciences, and the crushing of more cautious competitors.

"Thus, with the leaders of business abandoning the true path, it is not surprising that in every country multitudes of working men, too, sank into the same morass—all the more so, because many employers treated their workmen as mere tools, without any concern for the welfare of their souls; indeed, without the slightest thought of higher interests. The mind shudders if we consider the frightful perils to which the morals of workers—boys and young men, particularly—and the virtue of girls and women are exposed in modern factories; if we recall how the present economic regime and, above all, the disgraceful housing conditions prove obstacles to the family tie and to family life; if we remember the insuperable difficulties placed now in the way of proper observance of holy days. How universally has the true Christian spirit become impaired! And that which once produced such lofty sentiments even in uncultured and illiterate men!

"In its stead, man's one solicitude is to obtain his daily bread in any way he can. And so, bodily labor which was decreed by providence for the good of man's body and soul, even after original sin, has everywhere been changed into an instrument of strange perversion. While lifeless material leaves the factory ennobled and transformed, the men there are corrupted in body and soul."

The everyday saint who belongs to the group of the well-to-do never falls victim to unlimited desire for possessions because he strives successfully after the love of God.

St. Francis de Sales points out:

"He is rich in spirit who has his riches in his heart or his heart in his riches. The man who is poor in spirit has no riches in his heart nor his heart in his riches. The kingfishers make their nests like a round bell, and leave only a small opening on top. They place them on the seashore and make

them so strong and impenetrable that, if surprised by waves, the water can never claim them—for floating ever in the right position, they remain in the midst of the sea, upon the sea, and masters of the sea. Your heart, dear Philothea, should be like that, open only to heaven and impenetrable to riches and transitory things. If you have them, keep your heart free from affection for them; let it always stay uppermost, and in the midst of riches let it be always without riches and master of riches. No, do not place this heavenly spirit within earthly goods—let it always be superior to them, upon them, not in them! If you are much attached to the goods you have, wrapped up in them and fearing with a lively and anxious fear that you will lose them, believe me, you still have some sort of fever. They who have that fever, drink the water that is given them with a certain eagerness, a kind of attraction and satisfaction which the healthy are not wont to have. It is not possible to take great pleasure in a thing without having much affection for it. If perchance you suffer loss of goods and feel that your heart is much disturbed and afflicted by this, believe me, Philothea, that you have much affection for them—for there is no clearer proof of affection for a thing than distress at the loss thereof" (Devout Life III, 14).

Real love consists in the mutual gift of one's goods. Hence, the everyday saint, considering himself only a steward, gives back to God the dominion over his goods—from whom, after all, he received them. Thus, he never loses sight of the fact that he depends entirely on God—the giver of all gifts. Realizing the privilege of being a steward of God's property, he is anxious to increase and keep it in good condition, as one should, who has to give an account of his stewardship to someone who is mightier than himself. To guard against the guiles of nature he not only pays just wages to his employees but also generously shares the profits, giving his workers an incentive to work. He is never avid for recognition and is glad if he is sometimes overlooked by a servant or when he does not receive any attention when traveling or in his office.

It is when he is alone that he is glad to be without things that are necessary. St. Francis de Sales had his reception room well furnished while his own study was simply—and even poorly—furnished. He called this room his own, he felt especially at home in its simplicity and poverty.

These and similar occasions are used by the everyday saint to deepen a child-like, dependent attitude toward Almighty God.

He is a special friend to the poor since he possesses the spirit of poverty. In them he sees and loves Christ who said, "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me" (Mt 25, 40). A person who is poor in spirit feels at home among those who possess no material goods. He considers himself even more honored when he can render his personal services to the poor—particularly in cases of accident or sickness. When doing this he knows he is near Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. Our Savior washed the feet of His apostles and told them that they should also wash one another's feet (Jn 13, 14). And His Blessed Mother Mary hastened into the hill country to assist her aged cousin Elizabeth.

History—especially the Middle Ages—is full of examples of how literally these words of Our Lord were taken.

St. Francis de Sales quotes the great example of St. Louis, King of France:

"He often waited at table on the poor whom he supported and almost every day invited three of them to his own table. He would often, with incomparable love, eat the remains of their meal. When he visited the hospitals—which he did often—he served those who had the most loathsome diseases—the leprous and cancerous—performing all his services for them bareheaded and on his knees while reverencing the Savior of the world in their persons and cherishing them with a love as tender as that of a mother for her child.

"St. Elizabeth, daughter of the King of Hungary, mingled freely with the poor and for recreation used to sometimes dress as a poor woman among her ladies saying to them, 'If I were poor I should be dressed in this manner.' Dear Philothea, truly this prince and princess were poor in the midst of their riches and were rich in their poverty."

Blessed are they who are poor in this manner for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was cold and you covered me; take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Thus will the king of the poor and of kings speak at His great judgment.

The everyday saint does not allow himself to be diverted

by his weak nature from such a course of action and attitude of mind. Nature may say that his health could be endangered or his honor jeopardized, that he may not have enough to provide for his own children, that no one knows what the future may have in store and that he be prudent and take

steps to insure himself against unexpected evil events, but

the everyday saint knows that even in prosperity God has

and wants to look after our affairs. Consequently, he is free from over anxiety from earthly things and uses them profitably for the accomplishment of the task of his life—to love and glorify God.

He escapes the dangers inherent in riches by becoming rich and great before God—not because of his wealth but despite his wealth. On one occasion Our Lord spoke these hard words, "It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than

for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mt 19, 24).

The saints are of the same opinion. St. John of the Cross said, "Pen and ink would be unable and time too short to enumerate all the disadvantages that come from the desire for temporal things."

St. Augustine is convinced that, "Love is poisoned by the desire of acquiring and possessing earthly goods." St. Francis de Sales in his *Devout Life* shows that it is possible to have poison without being poisoned.

This is the attitude of the everyday saint who has many possessions. In his hands the dangerous poison of wealth becomes a means of alleviating the needs of his neighbor, of sanctifying his own soul and of glorifying the Triune God. By his life he preaches forcefully that which Pope Pius XI emphasized in his *Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno*:

"All those working for true social reform demand a rationalization of economic life which introduces sound and true order. This order which we desire and promote will be faulty and imperfect unless all man's activities harmoniously unite to imitate and, as far as is humanly possible, attain the marvelous unity of the divine plan. This is the perfect order of which the Church preaches with intense earnestness and of which right reason demands, placing God as the first and supreme end of all activity, regarding all created goods as mere instruments under God to be used only as they help toward the attainment of our supreme end. Nor is it to be imagined that remunerative occupations are thereby belittled or deemed less consonant with human dignity. On the contrary, we are taught to recognize and reverence in them the will of God Who placed man upon earth to develop it in order to supply his various needs. Those who are engaged in production are not forbidden to increase their fortunes in a lawful and just manner. Indeed, it is he who renders services to society and develops its wealth who should have his proportionate share of the increased public riches, provided he always respects the laws of God, the rights of his neighbor and uses his property in accordance with faith and right reason. If these principles are observed by all everywhere and at all times, not merely the production and acquisition of goods, but also the use of wealth—which is so often uncontrolled—will within a short time be brought back to the standards of equity and just

distribution. Flagrant selfishness, which is a scandal and great sin of the present age, will be overcome by the gentle force of the law of Christian moderation whereby man is commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, confident that God—in His generosity and loyalty to His word—will provide goods as man needs them."

If the everyday saint happens to be one of the disinherited, unemployed or destitute, it is again the warmth and glow of his love of God which sets his mind on higher goods and confirms him in his boundless confidence in God. It is not only wealth which has its dangers, but poverty as well. Hence Holy Scripture teaches us to pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; [provide me only with the food I need;] Lest, being full, I deny you, saying, 'Who is the Lord?' " (Prov 30, 8f).

The everyday saint solves all these problems by the fervor of his love for God. Envy is unknown to him. What are earthly goods compared to God? None can rob him of the supreme good. Since his exterior poverty is the expression of the spirit of detachment, his heart is free for the love of divine riches. In order to increase his love, he continuously practices the virtues of gratitude, contentment and confidence. He is grateful for every small gift—no matter if it is only a trifling, ordinary thing or a necessity of life. He endeavors to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi:

One day, in company with Friar Masio, St. Francis entered a town feeling very hungry. They begged for bread and later met outside the town where they placed what they had gotten on a large flat stone. Suddenly St. Francis cried, "O Friar Masio, we are not worthy of such treasure!"

He repeated these words again. The surprised friar shook his head saying, "Father how can you speak of treasure when the most necessary things are lacking—we have no tablecloth, knife, breadboard or even a spoon!" Then the saint rejoiced, "But this is just what I mean by treasure—we have nothing here made by the hand of man. Whatever we have was prepared by the providence of God. He knew from all eternity that today we would be hungry and come to this place wearied. That is why He allowed this tree to grow here so it might give us shade. He put this beautiful flat stone here to be our table and provided this fresh spring that we might quench our thirst. O Friar Masio, how good our God is!" While speaking, tears of gratitude fell from his eyes onto the bread which he ate with gratitude.

Elizabeth Steidle-Driessen put the same thoughts into poetry:

Dear Holy God,  
my soul was seeking joy  
since, without joy, it simply could not live.  
No one could impart this joy to it  
until You came, O holy God, and granted it.  
I thank You for this joy,  
for the sweet and radiant sunlight,  
for every newborn dawning of my life  
and every day with duties that go with it.  
All my dark and bitter sorrow  
has now been turned to light and pleasing joy.  
All suffering is pure joy!

I raise my arms in gladness, like a child  
I dance, as little children when made happy.  
Beloved stars, beloved silent moon, beloved night,



I greet you with a thousand joys!  
When solitary, I wandered over mountains;  
I was constrained to weep for joy.  
Dear God, I rejoice in my daily bread,  
in living waters, in cunning beasts,  
and in the puzzling mystery of death,  
in the parting from all joys which still await me.  
With tear-filled eyes I often kneel:  
Dear God, my love is now so great  
that there is no one I need fear.

Dear God, I want to bring You flowers,  
to sing You songs of joy  
while standing beneath Your cross  
gazing at Your saddened eyes.  
Listen, all who hear me,  
since no one can live without joy  
my soul has gone to God.  
There it receives the fullness of joy.  
All sufferings have become pure joy.  
Unceasingly I offer them to Him,  
and they are flooded in brightness.  
Worry may never cast a shadow  
on the radiant path of light.  
And the summit of my joy will be a happy death.  
I thank You for the storms, for sun, for all my pain,  
for all I love, for books, for art,  
for all my joys!  
And for Your Church which shows the love You bear for all,  
for the holy meal of joy in which You give Yourself to us;  
Since You dear God alone are the joy of my soul,  
I thank You that I may sing this song of joy to You."

Should he be poor and destitute, the everyday saint will be stirred to immense gratitude by the thought of death. Others may find it hard to part with their riches—for him parting brings no regret. When death approaches, all are equal. We entered the world naked and helpless and we leave the world even more helpless and poor, and "shrouds have no pockets."

A legend tells us that the Macedonian King Alexander ordered that after his death his empty hands should hang outside his coffin so everyone could see that even the rich and mighty Alexander could take nothing into eternity.

The most pressing external circumstances can never rob the everyday saint of his sunny cheerfulness of contentment. His poverty is the will of God—otherwise He would not have imposed it—and this knowledge brings interior happiness. It is his spiritual food to do, as the Savior did, "the will of Him who sent me." A lowly state of life may have been his lot for so long that his daily acquaintances take it as a matter of course. Furthermore his poverty, unlike that of the religious, is without glamor,

not arousing the esteem of others. When his soul is troubled he finds peace of mind and comfort in prayer.

One day an elderly housemaid found a ten-pound note in the shopping basket. At once she gave it to the housekeeper who was surprised at such honesty and asked why she had handed it in. The honest woman replied: "Every day I pray that Almighty God will keep me content with my situation and job and preserve me from discontent and the temptations which come from it."

Since the contentment of the everyday saint is so deeply rooted in God, little can disturb him.

There is an old tale told of the scholarly Ecclesiastic who, in pursuit of his own perfection, sought a spiritual guide and advisor. After much searching he found his answer at the door of a church in the person of a beggar who was crippled and covered with sores.

"Good day, brother," he greeted him.

The reply was, "I have never had a bad one!"

"Then may God send you better days."

"My lot has always been the best."

"How can that be? You are ill and crippled!"

"That is true, but it is the goodness of God that has sent this upon me. When the sun shines, I enjoy the sun. When there is a storm, I enjoy the storm because God sends it."

"Who are you?"

"I am a king."

"Where is your kingdom?"

"My soul is my kingdom, and no rebellions ever happen there."

"How did you arrive at this supremacy?"

"I sought it in prayer and meditation for a long time until I found it."

"And how did you find it?"

"I found it as soon as I had rid myself of the external world (Keppler, *Mehr Freude*, p 181).

The everyday saint attends eagerly and honestly to ensure his income and employment. When he has found both, he remains content. He does not experience feelings of inferiority, for he knows he is loved and protected by God. "Man himself begets mischief, as sparks fly upward" (Job 5, 7). "Anyone who would not work should not eat" (2 Thes 3, 10). Such words are the expression of the everyday saint's conviction with the restriction which Pope Pius XI makes in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*:

"In this text the apostle is passing judgment on those who refuse to work though they could and ought to do so; he admonishes us to use our time and powers of mind and body diligently not becoming burdens on others as long as we are able to provide for ourselves. In no sense does he teach that labor is the sole title which gives a right to a living or to profits."

If the everyday saint is forced to remain without employment and income, then, as in all other circumstances of his life, he places all his confidence in Him Who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies of the field and Who tells us, "Seek first His kingship over you, His way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt 6, 33).

In the Old Testament we were given God's promise, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit" (Jer 17, 7f). Also, "Cast your cares upon the Lord, and He will support you" (Ps 55, 23).

In one of her visions, St. Catherine of Sienna heard Our

Lord say, "My daughter, think of Me, and I will continually think of you."

St. Theresa of Avila wrote on her bookmark:

"Let nothing disturb you;

Let nothing dismay you;

All things are passing,

God never changes.

Patience attains

All that it strives for.

He who finds God

Lacks nothing:

God alone satisfies." (12)

Thus in all his needs a man is sheltered in God; in all truth, God is everything for him, "Bread when he hungers, water when he thirsts, light in his darkness, clothing for his nakedness" (St. Augustine). His love for God makes him restless until he has fulfilled the word of Our Lord, "Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment" (Lk 6, 38).

He is ready to share the dry bread of poverty with his fellowmen. He obeys the word of the Baptist, "Let the man with two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same" (Lk 3, 11). He is quite convinced that in so doing he is taking seriously Jesus Christ, "the first-born of many brethren." He can say with the Apostle St. Paul, "I am experienced in being brought low, yet I know what it is to have an abundance. I have learned how to cope with every circumstance—how to eat well or go hungry, to be well provided for or do without. In Him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything. (Phil 4, 12-13).

Since it is love which motivates the everyday saint, he radiates brightness and warmth everywhere, whether well-to-do or poor. Even his business affairs are transfigured by love. He has learned in the school of Our Lord and of the saints that it is not justice alone, but justice linked with love, which is the foundation of social and economic prosperity. He lives and works in the spirit which Pope Pius XI desires for our times:

"Now, in effecting this reform, love 'which binds the rest together and makes them perfect' (Col 3, 14) must play a leading part. How completely deceived are those thoughtless reformers who, intent only on restoring justice, proudly disdain the importance of love!

Clearly, love cannot take the place of justice unfairly withheld. But, even when every man receives all that is due to him, a wide field, nevertheless, remains open for love. Justice alone can remove causes of social strife but can never bring about a union of hearts and minds, even when it is most faithfully observed. This inner union, which binds men together, is the main principle of stability in all institutions which aim at establishing social peace and promoting mutual aid. In its absence, as repeated experience shows, the wisest regulations come to nothing. It will only be possible to unite all in harmonious striving for the common good when all sections of society are imbued with the awareness that they are members of a single family and children of the same heavenly Father, and further, that 'so too we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another' (Rom 12, 5), so that, 'if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it' (1 Cor 12, 26). Then the rich and others in power will change their former negligence of their poorer brethren into solicitude and effective regard, will listen with kind feeling to their just complaints, and will readily forgive them the faults and mistakes they possibly make. Working men, too, will lay aside all feelings of hatred or envy which the instigators of social strife arouse so skillfully. Not only will

they cease to feel weary of the position assigned them by Divine Providence in human society, they will become proud of it, well aware that every man by doing his duty is following in the footsteps of Him, who being in the form of God, chose to become a carpenter among men and to be known as the Son of a carpenter.

"Because of this new diffusion throughout the world of the Gospel spirit, which is a spirit of Christian moderation and universal charity, we confidently look forward to that complete and much-desired renewal of human society and to 'the peace of Christ in the kingdom of Christ,' to which, at the very beginning of our pontificate, we firmly resolved to devote all our care and all our pastoral solicitude" (*Quadragesimo Anno*, May 15, 1931).

Love solves every problem. Quite a few people think that poverty in housing and clothing spoils good taste and makes people uncouth. Attempting to prove this, they point to examples from everyday life. Others say: It is better to be in a room tastefully furnished and to enjoy beautiful clothes than to stifle one's longings and seek an outlet in other more dangerous ways.

A person who speaks in this way does not know what the spirit of poverty means. He forms his judgment without taking love into account; probably he has never known anyone who is truly poor in spirit after the example of Christ. The person who is firmly rooted in the love of God is interiorly detached from things which are only partly good or which falsely appear to be good. Simplicity, unpretentiousness and detachment are his expression and protection for great spiritual richness. They safeguard his heart and mind from becoming hard and violent, keeping his home from neglect, untidiness and discomfort.

Problems of social justice, which are far from being solved, cause serious trouble today. With more everyday saints among all classes of people—laborers and employers—the disorder could more easily and quickly be solved. There is an almost proverbial saying that "Good Christians are today the only Bible most people care to read." It is clear that more than ever everyday saints are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They do not talk much but work, pray and achieve much according to the will of God. First of all, they reform their own inner lives before they begin the reformation of those around them. They are optimists—for being God's people, they know that the final victory will, of necessity, be on God's side. They act like leaven in their environment. May Divine Providence give us more and more everyday saints!

Fr. William Doyle, S.J., used to pray, "My God, make me a great saint and do not spare my weak nature!" Can I dare to invoke the omnipotence of God, without whose assistance my selfish nature can never be reformed, and say: Almighty God, make me an everyday saint? Do not spare my poor, weak nature, and grant that I not spare it either. Instead, spare our people and protect and guard our holy Church and our own dear country!

It is quite certain that only saints, real everyday saints, can save the world. As Elias of old stood on Mount Carmel, so the Lord stands before His people today and asks, "How long will you straddle the issue? If the Lord is God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18, 21).

In our days all half-heartedness is overthrown. Only the spirit of totality can assert itself. And if we do not have the courage to strive after this spirit, after the ideal of the everyday saint, at least we should be able, by self-denial, prayer, sacrifice and striving, to create an atmosphere in which great men and women rise and mature. Let us then be grateful for being part of the foundation on which everyday saints of our time will be raised.

## C. Attachment to Suffering

### 1. Suffering and Life

a. There is an ancient proverb which says: Ora et Labora —pray and work. This combines two essential characteristics of our Christian life and firmly impresses them on our minds. But why was the idea of suffering left out? Was it mere forgetfulness?

To be human is to be subject to suffering. The art of suffering is difficult and rare to acquire. Cross and suffering play a unique and outstanding role in our lives. It has been this way since the fall of our first parents. But today the cup of suffering is filled to the brim and for very many is overflowing. Together with work and labor, suffering must be considered an essential part of our Christian life.

The cross and the Christian are inseparably interrelated. Our Lord said clearly that the cross and suffering are the normal lot of a Christian. "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. A disciple is no better than his Master, a servant than his lord; it is enough that the disciple should be like his master" (Mt 10, 24).

Blessed Eugene de Mazenod, Founder of the Oblate Fathers, once said to a brother who had just received his professional cross, "On the back of that cross you should nail yourself. A true missionary hangs with Christ on the cross."

We might also say, "Every Christian hangs with Christ on the Cross." The life story of a Christian is the story of his sufferings. Therefore, we are not surprised that St. Paul sends the Corinthians the catalogue of his sufferings:

"We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed; full of doubts, we never despair. We are persecuted but never abandoned; we are struck down but never destroyed. Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may be revealed. While we live we are constantly being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh. Death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Cor 4, 8-12).

Very few Christians have ever been called upon to endure as much as St. Paul, but everyone has their own cross to bear.

The German mystics of the 14th century ask:

"Who is there without suffering on this earth?"

They reply:

"Indeed, no one at all! No matter how high their castles or great their cities, they cannot flee from the cross nor will purple and rich silk avail anything against suffering!

"All the more will suffering pursue those who are good and who wish to come close to God, for suffering prepares a man for beatitude, provided he will only use it right. We have to carry some cross, no matter what it may be—if we flee from one, we shall find another. No eloquence on earth can deny that we all have to carry our cross. 'Did not the Messiah have to undergo all this so as to enter into His glory' (Lk 24, 26).

"Sometimes it happens that for a while God shoulders the heavier part of our cross for us. It is then we feel so light and free that we begin to imagine that we have never known what it is to suffer. But as soon as God withdraws His helping hand, the burden falls on us again with all its weight and pain. "The sufferings and crosses which God sends us through our friends and relatives are much more profitable and noble to us than those we choose to carry ourselves—just as God is far nobler than we are. Christ redeemed us, not by a pain which He inflicted on Himself, but by torture inflicted

unjustly by His enemies. He redeemed us by His ignominious death, when only His virginal Mother Mary and a few friends remained faithful to Him and stood at the foot of the cross.

"The Book of Job and the chronicles of the misfortunes of nations, generations, families and individuals tell us how deep the furrows of the plowshare of suffering mark the human race. The Book of Revelations gives us a vision of a great host of the redeemed—whom no one can number taken from all nations, tribes, peoples and languages. And one of the elders before the throne of the lamb explains: "These are the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. . . . Never again shall they know hunger or thirst, nor shall the sun or its heat beat down on them, for the Lamb on the throne will shepherd them. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7, 14f ).

From time immemorial those stricken with suffering have asked the question: "Why?" Many pagan philosophers taught that, besides God, there was a mighty principle opposed to God—the principle of evil. Holy Scripture teaches us more. The words of St. Paul in regard to death hold good for every kind of suffering. The Council of Trent teaches that by committing the first sin Adam brought death and suffering to the human race by way of punishment—as well as passing on sin itself. He who denies this denies the word of the apostle, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world and with sin death, death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned" (Rom 5, 12 ).

Every Christian knows from childhood that the cross and suffering are consequences of original sin. Baptism frees us through the Blood of Christ from original sin, but its consequences remain. They grow stronger as man weakens his human nature by committing actual sins. Sin brings misery to nations—Christian nations have sinned just like Christian individuals, and we can thus understand how both can become immersed in a sea of suffering.

We must never lose sight of our mystical union with Christ; we are His members as long as we remain in the state of grace and are children of God. It is fitting that we make up with our bodies what is still "wanting" to the sufferings of Christ. The Church must become like her Bridegroom who redeemed the world by His sufferings.

She always bears the marks of her dying Savior, but there are periods in history when this mark of suffering is more evident, when the Church as a whole or individual members must be prepared for a great deal of suffering. Today we are living in such a period. This is easily seen from the numerous persecutions which the Church is enduring in so many places and when so many souls, both in religion and in the world, feel urged to accept suffering as a means of reparation.

The everyday saint should be a man of prayer and a model of efficiency in his profession. However he must also be a hero of suffering if his daily tasks are to be completed. Ordinaria extraordinarie—Ordinary things must be done extraordinarily well. The will of God not only has to be fulfilled, but sometimes suffered. Everything, without exception, should become as perfect as possible; otherwise one may speak of Sunday or feastday holiness but never of weekday holiness. The weekday saint understands the importance of acquiring the art of suffering.

b. First and foremost, he has the courage and honesty to recognize suffering as suffering. The Indians see their strength in being able to bear pain and suffering without feeling it. They become insensitive. At the other extreme, weak Christians lament every little trouble and crave the sympathy of others. The everyday saint knows how to suffer correctly and to steer a middle course. In the Garden of Olives Our Lord felt bitter suffering and cried out to His Father, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by" (Mt 26, 39). However, it was not beneath His dignity to seek

consolation and converse with His apostles without receiving help from them.

For the perfect Christian suffering is a source of great blessing. It gives him a fuller understanding of the inner life of Our Lord and His saints and why all those who bear a cross are sympathetically drawn to Him.

By suffering he understands anything which means the loss of a natural or supernatural gift. Pope Benedict XIV listed the sufferings considered in the process of beatification and canonization—these clearly define what we mean by deprivation and what can cause suffering:

"The sufferings and afflictions of which we speak can be divided into physical and spiritual. In regard to the former, there is bodily sickness, loss of possessions, good name, friends and relatives, temptations of the flesh, persecution on the part of the devil, on the part of evil men, and, sometimes, even of good men. In regard to spiritual sufferings there is the withdrawal of divine light and inspiration and of one's usual devotion, the temptation against faith, the temptation to consider oneself already lost and to despair, the fear of being abandoned by God, interior dryness, and the whole host of scruples."

It is obvious that physical sufferings have increased as a result of the last world wars and millions of people have psychological sicknesses due to shattering experiences which have spiritually uprooted them. Countless are the dispossessed and homeless—who know the number of shattered lives! Today many suffer due to psychological compulsion, persecution and oppression!

There was once a monk who every night appeared worn out and extremely tired. One day the abbot kindly asked him what made him so weary.

The monk replied, "Ah! I have so much to do every day that I would have to give up if God did not aid me with His grace. I have two falcons to hood, two hares to tame, two sparrow hawks to break in, a dragon to subdue, a lion to chain, and a sick man to care for!"

The abbot replied, "What foolish talk, my son! No one could do such tasks all at once! Besides in our monastery, no one has ever heard of such things!"

"And yet, Reverend Abbot," said the monk, "I have not told a lie. The two falcons are my eyes which I have to watch with the greatest care lest they peer into something of which my soul would be ashamed. The two hares are my feet which I must hold in check lest they tread forbidden and dangerous paths. The two sparrow hawks are my hands, which I must train to work and use so that we may have the necessities of life. The dragon is my tongue which I must constantly hold in check lest I say something unseemly or unnecessary. The lion is my heart with which I have to struggle constantly lest I fill it with vanity and self-love instead of the love and grace of God. The sick man is my own body that ceaselessly craves for this and that and does not always long for what is good for my soul and eternal life."

The abbot was amazed to hear this explanation and said to the monk, "My son, then you have certainly a most holy and important task to do. Go on with it courageously and for your efforts God will reward you with eternal life and happiness."

What would the monk have said had he lived today in the midst of the spiritual and economic upheavals of modern life? His inner struggle would most likely be much greater and his cross and suffering far harder to bear!

c. The everyday saint is quite resigned to the fact that he is spared no human suffering; there are limitations of human nature, inconveniences connected with his Christian faith and state of life, disadvantages of sex and calling. All are abundantly known to him, as are all those coming from one's own guilt, misfortune or malice. Persecutions, contempt, calumnies, frustrations,

vicissitudes of life all try to rob him of peace of soul. There may be periods in his life when he suffers from depression and agony similar to those of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives when His soul is abandoned to suffering and he feels as if His blood would pound against his temples and well in his heart. But, since the Father wishes Him to conform to the image of His Son, He will "prune the branch," and often in an extraordinarily painful way. He leads the soul into the dark night, first of the senses and then of the spirit, allowing the clouds of desolation to hang over it.

In a selection from the writings of German mystics of the 14th century, a conversation is recorded between Our Lord and one of His faithful servants. The servant complains that the beloved of God have such a hard time upon earth:

"Lord," he says, "there is something in my heart. May I utter it? Ah, sweet Lord, after the manner of Jeremiah and with your permission, may I dispute with You? (Jer 12, 1). O gentle Lord, do not be angry and hear me with patience. Lord, people often say, 'How sweet is Your love and Your friendship,' yet how often You turn it to bitterness by many hard sufferings which You send through the scorn of the world and through all sorts of unpleasantness—both from within and without. Hardly has a man attained Your friendship when he has to prepare to stand fast against a sea of troubles. Lord, for all Your goodness, what pleasure can Your friends find in such a state? How can You permit such things to happen to them? Or, are You not concerned to know what they suffer?" Jesus: "As my Father loved Me, so I love My friends. I treat My friends in the same way as I have done from the beginning of the world to this very day."

Servant: "Lord, it is this very thing that they complain of. And that is why they say You have so few friends. You give them so few happy days on earth. That is why, Lord, there are so many who fall away from You after enjoying Your friendship and having been prepared for suffering—O pity! I must say it with great pain and with bitter tears in my eyes!—then return to what they had renounced for Your sake. O Lord, what reply have You to make to this?"

Jesus: "This is the complaint of men of weak faith and few works, whose lives are careless and whose spirit is undisciplined. But do you, beloved, lift yourself up from the slime and deep morass of bodily lust with your whole heart. Open your interior senses, open your spiritual eyes and observe the great number of saints, see the beautiful living walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. See how the bright, fine stones of this city have been prepared and chiseled and worked over by suffering and how they now shine and glitter in the bright light. What was the life of our beloved St. Elizabeth? St. Paul was abhorred by the world; Job, Tobias and David trod the same path as St. Athanasius, who suffered so much that he felt as if the entire world was clamoring for his death. See how all the saints have either suffered spiritual or physical martyrdom!

"Thus, you can see that I never lay anything upon you in order to make you angry, but only in order to show you my love. I would never allow suffering but for the sake of the fruit which it brings forth for mankind. That is why I allow a sinner to suffer but little during his life, and that only now and then, whereas my best friends are never without suffering. I send them either sickness or persecution or poverty, hunger or thirst, misery and contempt or some other kind of pain and suffering, in order that they may endure for God's sake. Yes, rather than permit my chosen ones to be untrained and without suffering, I would create suffering and allow every man and beast to bear them in order that they are trained and prepared. The world and those who love the world are unworthy to suffer pain and contempt for God's sake. But my friends should be glad, like the holy apostles, when they are counted worthy to suffer pain and contempt for God's sake (Acts 5, 41).

"The wise man accepts suffering with more joy than if he were given all the goods of the world—for temporal goods are apt to rob man of his eternal happiness when he sets his heart upon them, but



suffering brings eternal happiness when he bears it out of love. A man would be foolish to refuse good and choose evil. Yet, you can find many people who are such fools. inasmuch as they choose earthly goods but flee from suffering. Therefore the so-called wise of this world are foolish before God.

"My dwelling-place is in the pure soul, as in a paradise of every delight; that is why I cannot allow a soul to become so enraptured with any creature as to seek its joy there. Since by its very nature a soul is inclined to seek dangerous pleasures, I strew its path with thorns. I send many an unpleasant experience, whether it may please the soul or not—with suffering, to prevent it from planting its foot where there be temporal pleasure—to the end that I may direct its path to the height of My divine nature. Man is always ready for the dangerous pleasures of the senses. Therefore, do I fence them in that I alone may be his joy.

"The myrrh I give is not without a good purpose, for I thereby attract men to great things. For the sake of suffering, I have set all things against man. I could have commanded that bread grow rather than wheat, but in all things man has to be trained. All these things have been foreseen by Me and prearranged from all eternity. Just as a skillful painter knows how to use each line in painting a picture: some short, some long, some fine, some broad, or what depth the blue and red colors should have if the picture be a masterpiece of art; so I fashion man with many lines of suffering and different colors so as to bring him to that form in which he is most pleasing to Me.

"Moreover I wish to try man, to test his faith and trust in Me, and to teach him abandonment. I train him so that he may recognize Me and My paternal friendship when I come to help him in his misery and needs, so that divine love and gratitude may increase in him, so that he may come closer and nearer to Me and, finally, so that he will be united with Me for all eternity."

In the same book we read how Blessed Henry Suso was freed from his fear of suffering:

Soon after his conversion to God Henry Suso determined to please God from the depths of his heart in even the smallest thing and in a special way—but he did not want suffering and trouble. One day he was traveling through the country to give a sermon and he took a boat across Lake Constance. In the boat, there was a handsome knight wearing court clothes, and the servant of God inquired who he was.

"I am an adventurer," replied the knight, "and I am trying to collect noble men to come to the court with me and take part in a tournament. They will tilt, joust and guard the ladies of the court, and whoever is the winner will receive honor and reward!"

Suso asked what the reward might be and was told that the fairest lady of the court would bestow a golden ring on the winner. "Then, tell me, my friend, what must one do to obtain this honor and such a ring?"

"The one who suffers the hardest blows and strokes and, nevertheless, does not despair—but shows himself manly and brave, though beaten all over, standing fast and not surrendering—it is he who will win the prize!"

"Tell me, would it be enough to be brave for the first bout?"

"No," answered the knight. "He has to remain brave throughout the entire tournament. Even if he is so beaten that blood flows from his mouth and nose, he would have to endure it all if he wants to win the prize!"

"But is he not even allowed to weep or be sad?"

"No," again replied the knight. "Even though his heart might shrink within his body, he must not even indicate that all is not well with him. Rather, he must behave joyfully and generously; otherwise he will be ridiculed and, above all, will lose all chance of ever winning the ring."

Suso was deeply moved by this conversation and with deep sighs confessed, "O God on high, if the knights of this world are prepared to endure such suffering for the sake of a small earthly reward, which is next to nothing, O God, how right it is that we should suffer ever so much more for the sake of a reward that is eternal! Alas! O Lord! Would that I be found worthy of becoming your spiritual knight! Yes, beautiful, loving, eternal Wisdom whose riches are unequaled in this world, bestow on my soul the prize of the golden ring of your grace! For this I am prepared to suffer whatsoever you desire to send me!"

When he came to his destination Almighty God sent him so many severe sufferings that he nearly despaired; frequently many eyes were filled with tears of pity for him. In dire straits, forgetting the daring vows of his spiritual knighthood, he became sad and despondent, wondering why God should send him such sufferings. One morning, as the sun rose, there came over his soul a calmness. His senses were filled with joy and his spirit with ecstasy, as something within him asked, "Where is all your noble knighthood now? What use is a knight of straw or a man of rage? He would love great adventures but then despair when suffering comes. That is not the way to win the everlasting ring which you covet!" He answered, "Woe to me, O Lord! The tournament which I have to endure is far too long!" But the reply came, "That is why the prize, the honor and the ring of my knights are permanent and everlasting." At this, the servant of God had no further argument and said humbly, "Lord, I have erred. Allow me to weep alone, for my heart is heavy with sorrow." But an inner voice said to him, "Why do you weep like a woman? You will be a disgrace to the heavenly court. Wipe your eyes, put on a joyful smile that it may not be known, either to God or to men, that you have wept for sorrow!" Then he began to laugh, though the tears were still wet on his cheeks, and he praised God that he

no longer wished to weep so that the spiritual ring might one day be his.

## 2. The Meaning of Suffering.

For many people the question of the meaning of suffering is more important than where it comes from. We live in a time of great conflict and suffering. On September 14, 1936, Pope Pius XI spoke to Spanish refugees about the suffering they endured:

"You are here to tell us of the great tribulation from which you escaped, the visible marks of which you bear. Your bodies and your possessions show the traces of the great battle of suffering which you fought, a battle that made you 'a spectacle to the world' and to us. You, who were robbed and plundered of everything, were chased by murderers and sought out in cities, villages, homes and the silence of mountains; you are like the early martyrs whom the apostle saw and admired. It was the sight of such men that moved the apostle to utter those great words in which he says the world is not worthy of possessing such men. 'The world was not worthy of them' (Heb 11, 38). You have come to communicate to us the joy you experience from the fact that, like the first apostles, you were found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus."

It is true that not all of us are called to undergo the same extraordinary trials and to prove ourselves as heroes of suffering, but everyone is given his own full measure of cross and suffering.

### a. Suffering and the Spirit of Faith.

"My brothers, count it pure joy," says St. James, "when you are involved in every sort of trial"

(James 1, 2). The man who understands such a saying can rightly consider himself fortunate. "It is always easier," says St. Francis de Sales "to be talking of the cross than hanging on it." But woe to one who loses the spirit of faith which St. James possessed when he wrote the words quoted above. A fair was held in some township. An art dealer had put a variety of pictures on display: famous generals, rulers, ministers, animals of every kind—and, among them all, a crucifix. Before long all the pictures were sold, but the crucifix remained. A blind man then came, guided by a young boy who stopped at the stall. The blind man asked the boy why he was delaying. "This is an art stall," he replied, "and while all the articles have been sold, the crucifix alone has found no buyer." "Ah," said the blind man, "everyone buys that which is his idol, so let me buy my God." "But," said the salesman, "what use will it be to you, since you cannot see?" "You are mistaken," was the reply, "we blind people often see far more than others!" And he bought the cross with the money he had collected.

Enlightened by a true spirit of faith, the everyday saint is 'blind' to things which worldly people value highly. He looks at all created things with the eyes of God and discovers, with great joy and gratitude, the hidden splendor radiating from the cross.

The spirit of our time seems triumphant and tries to dim the splendor of the cross. It may ridicule the cross calling it a symbol of disgrace, weakness and failure. On the wall of a university building students had painted a broken crucifix, bearing the inscription, "Down with the cross if Germany is to live." The everyday saint loves his country and is even ready to sacrifice his life on the battlefield so his nation may live. Because he is convinced that the Cross is the sole source of true life and peace, he embraces it all the more lovingly and prays that the blessings of Calvary not be refused to his homeland. The everyday saint is not only highly gifted in the art of living but also perseveres as a Christian hero of suffering. He sees his highest achievement in bearing things, enduring them and boldly pushing ahead. So he not only knows and practices active virtues but also the passive ones which are seldom esteemed today.

Day after day at Holy Mass he renews the offering of Calvary. Thus his heart as well as his understanding and will are enriched. In the midst of all the catastrophes of modern life he sees the cross as an invincible power shattering all forces of evil in the world and in the lives of men. *Regnavit a lingo Deus*—God rules the world from the cross! Even if the world was to destroy itself, the cross remains an immovable rock and an inexhaustible source of blessing. *Stat crux dum volvitur orbis terrarum.*

The early Christians were so deeply convinced of this truth that they signed everything with the sign of the cross. Tertullian wrote in the second century, "At every step and at every moment, on entering or leaving their homes, when dressing and putting on their shoes, at prayer, at meals, when going to sleep, in every kind of business the Christians bless themselves with the sign of the cross on their foreheads."

The everyday saint treasures and cultivates similar practices handed down from generations. His whole life is a realization of the profound truth which the poet F. W. Weber expressed in one of his works, there is no salvation and blessing except in the cross.

The blessings streaming forth from the cross of Calvary make the everyday saint see the ultimate purpose of suffering in his own life. He bears his cross and seeks it out, whereas others fear and reject it; he loves the cross as an excellent means of atonement and purification and therefore rejoices at every opportunity to intensify the fire of love by making sacrifices.

b. Suffering as Reparation.

Our spiritual faculties and senses often grasp at forbidden fruit. Every person must admit his failures; the everyday saint is no exception. In particular he suffers under his daily failings though they are small. Since the cross and suffering turn the spirit and senses away from forbidden pleasures, he sees them as opportunities for making acts of reparation. Faith shows him the suffering of Our Lord as the reparation for sin. Living constantly after the example of St. Paul—in Christ and with Christ—he wishes to continue His work of atonement in his own life. A number of saints and holy people have been permitted to share, in an extraordinary way, the sufferings of Our Lord. This can be seen as a certain proof that God wants to give love and grace to the world.

In the faithful, devotion to the Sacred Heart and the Holy Hour deepen the spirit of expiation making alive the spirit of prayer and untiring joy in suffering. In this way they console Our Lord especially during His hours of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemani—for He certainly knew of their offering and received strength and consolation from it, thus going forward to His passion as a hero. Thus they restrain the arm of divine justice on mankind, which has gone astray, taking away His avenging sword while calling down His mercy.

If there were fewer scandal mongers and more generous souls among Christians—who, in union with Christ, remain unknown while making full reparation for sins—we could today have a more perfect Christianity.

One day St. Francis Xavier was hearing the confession of a great sinner. After absolution he imposed an exceptionally light penance. The sinner was very much surprised, but St. Francis told him that he would make up the penance, and for some days thereafter the saint kept a very strict fast and disciplined himself severely.

The everyday saint, in his own particular way, offers reparation in and with Christ for his own sins and the sins of others.

### c. Suffering as Purification.

Our Lord told His followers that His Father would prune the "branch of the vine," so it might bear more fruit. We then see that there is a second task to be accomplished in suffering according to the will of God.

Even after sins and faults have been forgiven there remains in the soul a strong tendency toward wrong-doing. Our nature was wounded by original sin, and this state has been increased by our sins. To restore balance and become like God and our Savior, a thorough cleansing and purification is needed.

As gold is purified in the furnace, as hard soil is broken by the plow and prepared for seeding, as grapes are pressed and crushed to make rich, sparkling wine, so must the soul be treated with suffering of every kind. Otherwise it will never be freed from slavery to earthly goods and of its self-centeredness. Master Eckhard summed this up when he said, "The fastest mount to bring us to perfection is suffering." So, the love of God always keeps pace with our love of the cross in the development of our spiritual life.

A holy man remarked that God invariably opens the heart and eyes of the soul to the value of suffering whenever He reveals Himself to the soul.

Another speaks of unpleasant things as "pearls and precious stones"—in fact, the more the better! And this is really so! Even if there were a whole hailstorm of gold. A good farmer certainly would not complain if such a hailstorm fell on his land. Even if his crops were ruined and scattered he would rejoice in collecting the golden hailstones. That is exactly what we do when judging

calamities by the light of faith. When the golden drops of calamity destroy the earthly fruits of honor, comfort, pleasure—all that remains is to say, *Bonum mihi, Domine, quia humiliasti me*—It is good for me that I have been afflicted (Ps 119, 71). The profit that comes from this is immeasurable for true, supernatural and eternal life. Have we not experienced this in our lives? Looking back, do we not admit that the days when we suffered were most fruitful?

"For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he receives," says St. Paul. Since God loves all of us, nobody is spared suffering—especially the Christian. "Endure your trials as the discipline of God, who deals with you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you do not know the discipline of sons, you are not sons but bastards" (Heb 12, 6f). Indeed, the more a person is loved by God, the more he will be introduced into the school of suffering. This fact is known from our own daily experience and all spiritual writers are unanimous on this point. One of them said:

"When God chooses a soul for Himself and calls it to His love and friendship, He does not tolerate the least disloyalty. In vain does the soul try to attain a close union with God, as long as it has not stripped itself of every inordinate attachment to creatures. God's sole purpose in sending trials and crosses to good people is that He sees that there is no other means of detaching them entirely from vain love of creatures. It is the person whom God tries most who is happiest because he realizes that through suffering he reaches his goal most quickly. It is a great pity that people who suffer are not aware of the privilege God bestows on them and that they do not see that their state is the beginning of eternal happiness but in their misery regard themselves as abandoned by God."

One may wonder what God has in mind for today's Church, which is going through a process of cleansing and purification. Will the Church be rejuvenated? Will a new spring come? Will the rotten fruit be shaken off, the cockle separated from the wheat and the thrashing floor cleaned? What we could never attain by our own efforts such as special resolutions, frequent confession, mortification and prayer, God easily attains through the violent storms of our times. If only we understood His language!

In the hours of trial and suffering, grace seems to work in a special way. One rarely feels as close to God and the divine as in suffering. A bright light seems to flood the understanding and one seems to see and experience the transitory character of earthly goods. One begins to realize the wisdom and depth of the words: *O vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas*—O vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. Until God sends disappointments both in things and people, people do not often succeed in renouncing occasions of sin and avoiding dangerous attachments. He does this in order to accelerate the process of purification and maturation, since His love and kindness know what best contributes to our eternal happiness. How paltry those things seem, which yesterday we worshiped, when God destroys the works of our hands overnight or when friends, for whom we have made big sacrifices, no longer sing their 'Hosanna' but suddenly turn traitors crying 'Crucify him.' Only when our freedom of action, influential position and financial security are impaired or taken away from us do we clearly see how transient the things of this life really are.

#### d. Suffering as a Test.

The more thorough this process of purification, the more the moral and theological virtues will be practiced and perfected. In this the soul may fare like a young tree which must be brave in winds and storms—while the gale lashes the tree, shaking and tossing its branches, the sap is at work underground, strengthening the taproot which sinks deeper and deeper into the earth until one day

the trunk and crown of the tree will withstand every storm. In a similar way the storms of suffering make a man strong, deep and fruitful. We allow the roots of our soul to sink more deeply into God, and once the soul is deeply and firmly rooted in Him there is no power on earth which is able to uproot and break it.

In Rome, in an old church called Dominus Sub Aquis—Our Savior near the Water, there is a beautiful crucifix which has brought consolation and help to many who prayed there with hearts full of faith. Legend relates that the artist Bernardus made two fruitless attempts during years of hard work before the final piece was completed. Each time the work of his hands did not correspond to his ideas he smashed the marble and began again. During these years God, in His wisdom, afflicted Bernardus' soul with gusty rains and parching heat, with storms and tempests in order to turn the wasteland of his soul into fertile soil. He fell into disfavor with his friends and lost his wife and children. In his plight he began to pray and allow God more room in his heart. Through prayer his suffering was diminished and transfigured by love. Eventually God's plow broke the soil of his soul and cast out all fear. He began his work anew and, behold, this time he was successful. The ideal picture of the crucifix—in his mind—grew like a tree planted near the waters of purest love. The arms of the crucified Savior extended as to embrace all men. The eyes flowed over with compassion, the mouth spoke gently, the brow granted pardon. The limbs of the God-man, however, were twisted in pain so everyone who looked at the crucifix was overcome with sorrow and repentance.

Yes, suffering is a blessing which makes our lives spiritually successful, rich and deep. This should not surprise us. Suffering enables all the virtues, implanted in our souls like tender shoots, develop through continuous exercise into sound maturity. What person will understand others if he has never gone through trials and temptation? And it is only those virtues, strengthened in trial and storm, which will reach the heights of heroism and become permanent attitudes. Cross and suffering are often compared with a pike in a fish pond; the pike keeps the carp in constant movement—so too cross and suffering keep the soul active. They are constant reminders of God urging us to become more detached from the world and inordinate desires of the flesh in order to bring us closer to Himself.

According to a mystic of the Middle Ages:

"Nothing stimulates the life of the soul more than suffering. It uproots all that is decaying, but when this has been removed life alone remains, and so it is that immense joy is born out of great suffering. Suffering is cast out by suffering, and when a soul has passed through every kind of suffering he is rid of every suffering. Then the peace of Christ—which is the only true peace—and joy are in his heart. But a man who runs away from suffering will never be free from it."

According to the design of God, even temptation and sin permitted by Him may bring a soul into His arms. It is for this reason He allows suffering to happen. Therefore, when it does happen we have no reason to be bewildered or downhearted. On the contrary, our soul should be stirred and turn to God. St. Paul once asked himself why God allowed sin to come into this world and he gives the bold answer, ". . .that He might have mercy on all" (Rom 11, 32). He interpreted this statement elsewhere when pondering these great thoughts: "And so I willingly boast of my weaknesses instead, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor 12, 9).

On Holy Saturday the Church draws our attention to the same thing, this *mysterium iniquitatis*—the mystery of sin when she sings, "O happy fault of Adam which has brought us so great a Redeemer." Temptation and sin awaken a profound sense of weakness in our hearts, deepening our humility. We learn humility far better from humiliations than from meditation. A noble-minded man feels more

humiliated by faults and mistakes than by any other means. True humility forces man to trust in God's mercy and in the Precious Blood of Our Savior. Furthermore, by recognizing our own weakness we become more patient with the faults of others. In our own weaknesses we can learn to understand and excuse their weaknesses and shortcomings. God arranges everything for our good. St. Augustine was right when he used the words of St. Paul, "God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree" (Rom 8, 28). The love of God makes itself evident in everything so that from our hearts we fervently return His love.

Often God allows us to be tempted in those very virtues in which we once wished to excel—partly so that we may better understand others and be able to counsel them, partly that we may imitate and glorify Him in a special manner. This is a great consolation for all who are troubled with difficulties against faith or who struggle with temptations against holy purity, gentleness, trust in God, etc. The everyday saint is aware of the interrelation of these truths from personal experience and meditation. St. Augustine once wrote about his mother, *Nesciebat, ideo flebat*—She did not know and therefore she wept. He had secretly left her in Africa and gone to Rome. She wept and lamented that he would not be converted, not realizing that God intended to lead him from Rome to Milan where he would meet St. Ambrose and be converted to Christianity. Therefore St. Augustine wrote in his Confessions, "She did not know the joy you were preparing for her in my absence; she did not know and therefore she wept and wailed."

Because the everyday saint knows the great value of suffering, he strives for patience and gratitude whenever God considers him worthy of it. His favorite virtue is patience and, with St. Thomas, he sees it not only as a quiet endurance but also as the consequence of courage and action. He comes to appreciate the words of our Lord: "By patient endurance you will save your lives" (Lk 21, 19). Thus he strives after the ideal set out by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans: "But not only that—we even boast of our afflictions! We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope" (Rom 5, 3). In this way he follows the admonition of the apostles Peter and James, "Even if you should have to suffer for justice' sake, happy will you be. 'Fear not and do not stand in awe of what this people fears.' Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ, in your hearts. Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully. Keep your conscience clear, so that, whenever you are defamed, those who libel your way of life in Christ may be shamed. If it should be God's will that you suffer, it is better to do so for good deeds than for evil ones" (1 Pet 3, 14-17).

'You must also wait patiently and take courage; the Lord's coming is close at hand. Brothers, do not bring complaints against one another; if you do, you will be judged, and the judge is already standing at your doors. If you learn how to work on and wait patiently in evil times, think of the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name. See how we congratulate those who have shown endurance. You heard of Job's endurance; you read in that story how kind and merciful the Lord is in rewarding us. But above all, my brothers, do not bind yourselves by any oath, by heaven, by earth, or by any oath at all. Let your word be yes for yes and no for no; if not, you will be judged for it" (Jas 5, 7-12).

The everyday saint's patience is genuine and intelligent. He remains calm and courageous and does not seek to relieve himself with false substitute satisfactions. Human nature strongly urges us, when suffering does not cease, to shorten prayer time and gain relief in the pleasures of the palate, or it seeks consolation in attention, sympathy and admiration from others. But the everyday saint does not easily succumb to such subtle self-deception.

On the other hand, he is prudent enough not to go to the other extreme. He strives, by supernatural means, to deepen his union with God in suffering, knowing how to obtain relief not contrary to the

will of God—by natural means—unless the ideal and inspirations of grace strongly move him to self-denial. With humility and without losing control of himself, he airs his grievances to God and to a person worthy of trust—regarding this as permissible and advisable, since he is imitating Our Savior in the Garden of Olives. When afflicted with some suffering or sickness, he endeavors to cure or alleviate it by lawful means. But in all circumstances he is ready to unite himself to the will of God when suffering enters into God's plan. He makes moderate use of entertainment, reading and amusement as God's creation in order to guard himself against the danger of falling victim to paralyzing depression and perverted infatuation.

In times of fatigue he does not overburden himself with practices of devotion, but rather turns his suffering into prayer. In one of his letters St. Francis de Sales explains how this can be done:

"When, because of sickness, you are unable to offer many prayers, turn your physical sufferings into prayer. Offer them to Him who loved your weakness so much that on the day of His marriage, He was crowned and glorified with them. Let us simply abandon ourselves to the loving direction of our Savior, which enables us to find more spiritual profit in toil and suffering than in joy and consolation.

"It may be that you are overwhelmed by the cross and suffering. Then let holy love be your teacher. In order to imitate the Divine Beloved we have to first, with humility, remain on the cross—since we consider ourselves unworthy to suffer anything for Him who has borne so much for us, then with patience, so as not to come down from the cross before death—if that is the will of the heavenly Father.

"You reply that fever is consuming your body like fire, and that fire like a fever destroyed your house. That is a lot of fire all at once! But the fire of divine love will place your soul in such a state that you will be able to say in all these happenings: 'The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1, 21). No doubt it is true that these misfortunes bring you poverty and great embarrassment. However, blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You must keep the sufferings and the patience of Job before your eyes and contemplate this great man on his dunghill. He practiced patience, and God finally doubled all his earthly possessions and gave him a hundred times as much in eternal riches.

"You are a child of Jesus Christ, the crucified one. Are you surprised then if He gives you a share in His cross? 'I was speechless and opened not my mouth,' says David, 'because it was your doing' (Ps 39, 10). We have many disappointments in order to attain eternal life! Have a great trust in God, commend yourself and all your wishes to Him, direct all your thoughts toward Him; then He will care for you and always be merciful."

The everyday saint is prudent and humble in making direct requests for further suffering. He is like the prudent and learned Doctor of the Church, St. Robert Bellarmine who, at the time of the persecution of the Church in England and Japan, reminded his confreres of the great number who would prove weak. We have to prepare ourselves for the grace of martyrdom by hunger, thirst and the uncomplaining endurance of insults. Only after a long probation, and when his confessor recognizes his inner inclination as the will of God and not dangerous self-deception, will the everyday saint be ready for such a step.

However if God should of His own account send him a trial, then he will not complain. His spiritual attitude will prompt him to offer thanks to God from the depths of his heart. Gratitude is the reply to a gift, and the greater the gift the greater the gratitude. The everyday saint considers cross and suffering as the greatest gifts in his life. He knows, as spiritual writers say, that God unfailingly reaches His aim of purification and sanctification of the soul by means of the cross only if the soul



remains docile. So his ready response to every misfortune is an earnest cultivation of childlike gratitude in order not to frustrate God's designs.

St. Felix of Cantalice made a practice of saying *Deo Gratias* every time anyone offended him. In time he became known as Brother *Deo Gratias*. When anyone mocked him or deliberately offended him he would say, "May God make you a saint." One day St. Thomas More heard from his wife that part of his house and his barns full of grain burned to the ground through the carelessness of a neighbor. He replied, "I wish you very good health, dear Aloysia. I learned that our barns with all the grain, as well as those of our neighbor, were burned to the ground. It is right to deplore the loss of so much crop but, since it happened according to the will of God, we have to be patient and willingly endure the outstretched hand of God. We have lost only what God gave us in the first place, as He has taken it back again, may His will be done. We must not complain about this misfortune but thank God from the depths of our hearts—in misfortune as well as in good fortune. If we consider the matter properly, these afflictions are a greater gift of God than the greatest material profit. For God knows better than we do what is good and profitable for us." Thomas a Kempis often expresses the same thoughts in the *Imitation of Christ*.

#### e. Suffering and Love.

If we consider the virtues which are tested in times of suffering, we cannot forget the queen of them all which is love. The school of suffering is the school of love, the training ground prepared by love and diligently watched over by love. This concept of every noble Christian is expressed in a simple verse:

"What is pain to a child of God?

The Father's call: Come to my heart."

A family in dire need once wrote to rich relatives in America. When a parcel eventually arrived they opened it with great excitement only to find a few trifles in the box. Angrily, the man threw this into a cupboard, thinking that his rich relative was making fun of his poverty. Later, while cleaning up, a small child found the parcel and, on tearing it open, discovered a double bottom containing an envelope with a check for \$20,000.

In the suffering God sends there is a similar letter and similar treasure, and something very comforting as well. If only we would look for the treasure instead of becoming angry. Once we have grasped the secret of the cross, then it no longer causes pain. It becomes a special message from God—a blessing and privilege.

As the everyday saint matures spiritually, suffering becomes a consuming fire enkindled by the heat of divine love and kept ablaze by human love given in return. Divine Love sends suffering; human love accepts it as a gift of Eternal Love who wishes to make the soul conform to the image of the only-begotten Son.

Thus he understands the attitude and practices of Henry Suso. It is related that "God got him used to the fact that when one suffering departed, another would soon appear. And so God played with him without interruption. He was only occasionally free from suffering. On one such occasion he arrived at a convent and his spiritual children asked him how he was. He answered, "I am afraid that things are not very good at present because, contrary to all expectations, for four weeks I have not had anything to bear in body or reputation and I am afraid that perhaps God has forgotten all about me." He stayed with them for a while until a brother of his order came calling him and said, "I have just been in town and the squire was asking where you were staying. He questioned me abruptly and

raised his hand, swearing before all present that if he found you, he would run his sword through you. Some insolent soldiers and neighbors said the same in order to vent their ill-will against you—so be forewarned and hide if you value your life!" When the servant of eternal wisdom heard this, he replied, "Praise be to God!" Then he hastened to his spiritual daughters saying, "Good-bye my children, be faithful, look after yourselves. God has remembered and not forgotten me."

On the cross Our Savior won the greatest victory of love for His Father and for men. "There is no greater love than this," He said, "to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15, 13). He exemplified this in a most shattering manner when, out of love, He handed Himself over to the Father. On Calvary He fulfilled the words He had uttered in a most obvious way, "I have come to do Your will" (Heb 10, 9). And again, "Doing the will of Him who sent Me and bringing His work to completion is My food" (Jn 4, 34). Since that time, for the Christian, the cross has become a symbol of complete devotion and abandonment—devotion to the will of God and abandonment of all the faculties of body and soul. The highest striving of the everyday saint in his practical life is to realize this perfect exchange of interests and goods between God and himself—seeing this as the true and original meaning of the cross. He no longer wishes to keep even the smallest thing for himself but desires to give all to God, making himself dependent on Him in order to embrace all, which is God. This is what the Mother of God did—not only in speaking her fiat but in living up to it, even to the extent of becoming the Queen of Martyrs beneath the cross.

Spiritual writers call this total sacrifice. *Da totum pro toto!* Give all to obtain all! In ascetical books, other expressions are used to convey the same idea of self-immolation, or hatred of self, when emphasis is placed only on one particular feature:

giving oneself totally to God,  
to be a victim of expiation or simply  
love of the cross.

In order to make such a holocaust, one need not necessarily undergo martyrdom, severe pain or suffering. It is possible for people who live in normal circumstances in times of peace and prosperity. The only thing required is that their love be fervent enough to detach them thoroughly from earthly things, binding them to divine things in intimate union with God. Then they can make the words of the martyr bishop, St. Ignatius, their own:

"Now I am beginning to be a soldier of Christ as I desire nothing visible in order to find Christ. Fire, cross, wild animals, breaking of bones, dismembering of the body, trampling of the body; let all tortures of Satan overwhelm me, if only I have part with Christ."

St. Ignatius of Loyola crystallized the same idea in a prayer to be said at the end of his Spiritual Exercises:

"Take, O Lord, my entire freedom, my memory, my understanding and my will. You have given me all that I am and have; I give it back to You again. Do with it as You will. Give me only Your love and Your grace—then I am rich enough and long for nothing more. Amen."

This is the ideal of the everyday saint. With St. Francis de Sales he says:

"If I knew that there was even the finest thread of love in my soul which was not from God or for God, I would sever it instantly. I would far rather not exist at all, than exist and not belong entirely to God."

It is by no means easy to put this heroic attitude into practice day after day. The everyday saint also has painful experiences like those of St. Augustine who admitted in all honesty:

"I know that I should eat and drink for the sake of health. But what would suffice for one's health would be too little for greed. One can wonder whether care for one's body demands more food or

whether one is only satisfying one's drives. Precisely this uncertainty enkindles one's desire, which delights in hiding its ingenuity behind reasons of health. For those who are not so intent upon the good, this is surely not a problem, but for me—as I am often a riddle to myself—it is a real sickness. How quickly my ear captivates me, how often I am ensnared by my eye, how easily I am enchained by inquisitiveness in order to experience something new, and then I try to excuse these excesses under the cloak of thirst for knowledge. How petty and contemptible, and yet who could count how often I fail! My life is full of such defeats. My heart is like a container for futile and disturbing things. Even my prayer is often spoiled by vanity. While the voice of my heart wants to reach the face of God, I am also driven by ridiculous thoughts which disturb this most important activity—the most important one of my entire life" (Conf. 1, 10 c. 30-39).

With St. Catherine of Siena the everyday saint resolves:

"Nothing shall fasten my heart to this world. No, no more inclination to anything that the world loves. If I were to rule over a thousand worlds, I would gladly give away all in order that God might be the perfect Lord of my heart."

He must be so completely detached from everything that he can reply like Raymund Lullus to these questions, "To whom do you belong? Where do you come from? Where are you going?" with the answers: "I belong to love, I came from love and love has led me here." He does not rest until his attitude is like that of the blessed soul who, when asked what the time was, replied, "It is exactly the time to love God." With Henry Suso he prays:

"Eternal Wisdom, if I should have all the power that a man could wish for, I should not wish for anything other than that I could die to myself and to all things and live for you alone, to love You with my whole heart, to embrace You lovingly and praise You worthily."

The path leading to this sublime ideal is long and difficult to travel. But the everyday saint does not shirk the task or shrink back. As a man of common sense with a realistic outlook on life he does not set off rushing to the peak of Christian perfection but follows the ordinary "cowpath" up the mountain. He never loses sight of high aims, however, and is not wanting in fervor and determination to use both natural and supernatural means to help him reach the goal. "Never enough" is his motto. Therefore he is not content until he penetrates the depth of the mystery of the cross. If he only makes slow progress in acquiring this knowledge, he is comforted by the example of the apostles: How long it was till they understood the Savior! He described the true meaning of suffering to them in these simple words: "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16, 25). Our Lord meant that he who tries to save his life is the person who holds something back for himself and is not prepared to surrender it to God; the result is that he loses it. "But, he who loses his life for My sake, will secure it," means that he who gives all his abilities, interests and whole self will find Him and His gifts as an overflowing reward. The apostles lacked the right understanding for such heroism and the Savior kept preaching on deaf ears. At the first suggestion of the crucifixion St. Peter reacted with such a strong protest that the Savior had to reply very sharply, "Get out of my sight, you satan!" (Mt 16, 23 ). He encouraged the apostles to take up their cross daily and follow Him, but they did not respond. He explained to them: "I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. The man who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this world preserves it to life eternal" Jn 12, 24f).

Even these words did not help! He was to wash their feet as a token of His boundless love. In His suffering He was to submit unreservedly to His Father's Will, obedient unto the death, even death on the cross. Yet all this was still not enough to unveil to them the meaning of the cross. It was only

when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and brought to mind all that He had taught by word and example that the scales fell from their eyes. Then a new world opened before them—they now rejoiced to be considered worthy to suffer for Christ. With St. Paul, they declared: "But we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1, 23) and "May I never boast of anything but the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Through it, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Gal 6, 14). With the exception of St. John, they all suffered martyrdom joyfully in order to become as like as possible to their crucified Savior.

The person who ponders deeply on the mystery of the cross, bows down in great wonder at its wisdom and strength, agreeing at the same time with St. Paul who complained: "Unfortunately, many go about in a way which shows them to be enemies of the cross of Christ. I have often said this to you before; this time I say it with tears" (Phil 3, 18). With Christ he deplores and regrets two kinds of enemies of the Cross: "But we preach Christ crucified—a stumbling block to Jews, and an absurdity to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1, 23). The cross of Christ seems foolishness to many today who think they can redeem themselves. To others, it is a stumbling block; they wish to have as little as possible to do with it, for its message is too challenging. But to us, as St. Paul says, "Those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1, 24).

The Savior did not want to establish a political kingdom but wished to rule over the hearts of men. The most effective means to that end is the complete surrender of one's own life out of love. The heart generally submits most readily and lovingly when it recognizes itself as being loved in an obviously deep way.

When Philip Beniti, the Superior of the Servites, lay dying his lips kept repeating, "My Book!" His confreres brought him Holy Scripture—but that was not his book. Then they brought him the Rules—but that was not the book he meant. Finally they gave him the Crucifix, and at last he was satisfied.

May the cross become for many Christians the Book of Life in which they read time and again the joyful message of the boundless love of God as well as the meaning of the cross and suffering. It will then be easy for them to master life and to orient themselves more and more on the ideal of everyday sanctity.

## Book Three

### ATTACHMENT TO FELLOW-MEN

#### I. The Distinguishing Mark of Christ's Disciples

The everyday saint does his best in everything, even in the smallest matters, accommodating himself to the objective order of things. In both natural and supernatural matters, he is a realist. Just as his nature, profession, sex and country reveal what God expects of him and arouses his highest generosity, so too he orientates himself in the supernatural order of things as clearly set out in Holy Scripture. Therefore he gives the Person of the God-Man a paramount influence on his personal striving, prayer and work. He recalls that the Lord said, "I am the light of the world. No follower of Mine shall ever walk in darkness" (Jn 8, 12). "No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws Him" (Jn 6, 44). "Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (Jn 17, 3). God solemnly declared: "This is My beloved Son on Whom my favor rests. Listen to Him" (Mt 17, 5).

The apostles were true to this command. They built the Church on Christ the "cornerstone." They loved Him with a burning love and made His life the pattern of their own. Christian life for them was nothing less than the life of Christ. Vincent Pallotti put it briefly when he said, *Modellum nostrum Christus est*—Our model, our pattern, our example in forming and shaping our life and character is Christ. That is the principle which the apostles put into practice.

This is also the unchanging standard for the everyday saint. Christ is the center of his thoughts, heart and actions. He follows the example of the Mother of God in pondering all the words of Our Lord in his heart.

#### A. The Uniting Bond

The everyday saint takes his cross on his shoulders daily while bearing in mind the Master's words, "If a man wishes to come after Me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in My steps" (Mk 8, 34). He is clear and truthful in his thoughts, words and actions as in the advice, "Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no" (Mt 5, 37). In everything he seeks the supernatural, the Triune God, recalling, "Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt 6, 33). He strives after humility and meekness accepting the advice of his model, "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11, 29). He is not overly occupied with earthly things, knowing that if only he has confidence the Father will take care of these things. He loves obedience, since the God-Man was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. According to his state of life, purity and poverty are his high ideals—since the Savior recommended both so perfectly and practiced them so faithfully. He holds firmly on to faith and baptism because he knows, "The man who believes in it and accepts baptism will be saved" (Mk 16, 16). "No one can enter into God's kingdom without being begotten of water and Spirit" (Jn 3, 5).

His life centers on the altar according to the teaching, "He who feeds on My flesh and drinks My blood has life eternal" (Jn 6, 54). He welcomes instruction from the Church and her servants because the Savior said very clearly, "If he ignores even the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile

or a tax collector" (Mt 18, 17). "He who hears you, hears Me. He who rejects you, rejects Me. And he who rejects Me, rejects him who sent Me" (Lk 10, 16). Putting it briefly, the everyday saint loves and practices every virtue in the way the Lord loved, practiced and recommended them.

Could it be that all these various precepts and admonitions confuse and overwhelm the everyday saint? Actually, he may not pick and choose as he likes, for then Our Lord's sharp words would apply to him, "That is why whoever breaks the least significant of these commands and teaches others to do so shall be called least in the kingdom of God. Whoever fulfills and teaches these commandments shall be great in the kingdom of God." (Mt 5, 19); and "Whoever falls into sin on one point of the law, even though he keeps the entire remainder, has become guilty on all counts" (Jas 2, 10). In Revelations, Our Lord says, "If anyone takes from the words of this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city described here!" (Rev 22, 19), that is, he will be erased from the Book of Life. How can the everyday saint fulfill all these counsels and commands and at the same time not lose sight of the essential issues of life?

Our Lord gives us the answer. He points to the bond which easily and surely binds all virtues into an organic whole (Col 3, 14), to a short, easily understood compendium of all commandments (Mt 22, 40)—to love. Love is the first commandment (Mk 12, 30). It is the essence, the aim (1 Tim 1, 5), and the perfect fulfillment of the entire law (Rom 13, 10).

On a very solemn occasion, just after Our Lord had given the greatest proof of His love in washing the feet of His apostles, He said, "Do you understand what I just did for you? You address Me as Teacher and Lord—and fittingly enough, for that is what I am. But I who am Teacher and Lord—then you must wash each other's feet. What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do. I solemnly assure you, no slave is greater than his master, no messenger outranks the one who sent him. Once you know all these things, blest will you be if you put them into practice" (Jn 13, 13-17).

But this was still not enough. He explained, "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15, 13). He wished to give them even another proof of His heroic love. He instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Altar and, in a mysterious manner, gave Himself as food to His own, going immediately afterwards to Golgotha to die the bloody death of the cross. In that solemn moment He united the commandment of love with the highest act of His own love. "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as My love has been for you, so must your love be for each other. This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another" (Jn 13, 34f).

Here Our Lord gave the essential and irreplaceable distinctive mark of discipleship as love of our neighbor which must flow from a true love of God and be nourished by it. Together love of God and love of neighbor form the main commandments, "The second" (the commandment to love one's neighbor), "is like unto this" (the command to love God). Perfection consists, essentially, of both—as St. Thomas says, the love of God is spoken of as being the first element and the love of neighbor as the second. Every outpouring of love applies equally to the love of God and the love of neighbor. "The love of neighbor is produced by the love of God, and the love of God by love of neighbor" (St. Gregory the Great).

"If a person wishes to discover the degree of his love for God, he has only to find out the degree of his love for his neighbor. Both are equally great; together both are born, increased and perfected; they live and die together" (Pergmayer). If a man were to have every virtue and every ability, and yet lack love, then he is no better than "a noisy gong, a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13, 1). On the other hand, if he has the one virtue of love, then he has all the others as well, for this is the teaching of the

apostles, "Love is patient, is kind, love is not jealous" (1 Cor 13, 4).

From one point of view love of neighbor is really more important than the love of God—it gives to the love of God a visible form. Hence, St. John says:

"We, for our part, love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'My love is fixed on God' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. One who has no love for the brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen. The commandment we have from Him is this: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 Jn 4, 19-21).

Spiritual teachers draw attention to the fact that, because of this inner connection between love of God and love of our neighbor, we have a welcome opportunity of paying our debts to God in our neighbor.

Even if the everyday saint knew nothing of this great truth, he would still earnestly strive after love for his neighbor. His uniqueness requires him to imprint the mark of exterior and interior perfection on all his dealings, circumstances and encounters. A great part of his day remains uninspired by his deep love for God if his direct and indirect dealings with his fellowmen are not drawn into this sphere. Once he realizes the great value Our Lord places on brotherly love and its subsequent importance for his entire spiritual life, then he sees it as his final, firm and lasting aim. His extraordinary endeavor to cultivate this attachment to persons in a way which is pleasing to God is the masterpiece of his striving for holiness.

## B. The Fundamental Law of Creation

Our Lord gave us the deepest reason for loving our neighbor when He said, "Love one another. Such as My love has been for you, so must your love be for each other" (Jn 13, 34).

Love was the greatest driving force of Christ's life; it set all the faculties of His body and soul into motion. It is the fundamental law in the life and activity of God and also for Christ. St. John gave us the shortest formula to which we can attribute all the activity of God and the God-Man in "God is Love" (1 Jn 4, 8).

God is Love! This truth is the clue to the life of the God-Man. He is indeed the eternal incarnate love of God, and His whole earthly life is but a perfect expression of the love of God which is the underlying law of creation.

"Christianity and all its great events, the Incarnation as well as the death on the Cross, make if abundantly clear that there is no better word in the human language which comes nearer to the inexpressible nature of God than the friendly, intimate, ancient, little word: Love. Of all our poor inadequate words, this one is still the most adequate expression for the deep mysteries of the life of God. God is not primarily justice, wisdom, eternity or omnipotence, but love. His is a love which cared for the sparrows and clothed the lilies of the field; a love which allowed Him to be crucified for men; a love which created, preserved and blessed the world; a love which embraced heaven and earth. If then love reveals itself as the thing most akin to God and which best expresses Him, should it not be the greatest, highest, most beautiful and precious thing in the world? No matter how great and precious other things are, no matter how magnificent and holy, the greatest will be that which is most like Almighty God, and that is Love" (Woehrmueller).

Therefore if Christ requires that love is the characteristic note of our imitation of Him, then we must make love—which is the fundamental law in the kingdom of God and in His own life—the guiding principle of our lives and education.

Out of this clear knowledge the everyday saint perceives the organic unity of the truths of the Bible.

In the eight beatitudes he discovers the application of the fundamental law of creation to the kingdom of God on earth. Thus the fundamental law of creation becomes the fundamental law of the kingdom of God.

If we study closely the fundamental principles of education which Our Lord gave us, we discover the fundamental law of creation again. The divine Teacher said:

"Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mt 19, 14). "It would be better for anyone who leads astray one of these little ones who believe in Me to be drowned by a millstone around his neck in the depths of the sea" (Mt 18, 6). "Whoever welcomes a child such as this for My sake welcomes Me. And whoever welcomes Me, welcomes not Me, but him who sent Me" (Mk 9, 37).

It should not surprise us that at the end of time love will be the basic deciding factor. At the Last Judgment the ultimate norm by which people are judged will not be their position or achievements. A person may have performed many miracles during his life, may have cast out devils or had the gift of prophecy—but if the fundamental law of creation did not also become the fundamental law of his life, then God will pass severe judgment: I know you not: depart from Me, you cursed . . . you are lacking in the essential characteristic, the distinctive mark of all my followers.

Our Lord clearly tells us:

"None of those who cry out 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. When that day comes many will plead with me, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? Have we not exorcised demons by its power? Did we not do many miracles in your name as well?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Out of my sight, you evildoers!' " (Mt 7, 21-23).

However he who consistently makes love the guiding principle of his self-education and life will be met with a joyous welcome at the last judgment, receiving a place at the right hand of the Lord. St. Matthew painted a clear picture of the final judgment which will be so joyful for those bearing the essential mark of the true Christian and so terrible for others:

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, He will sit upon His royal throne, and all the nations will be assembled before Him. Then he will separate them into two groups, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. The sheep He will place on His right hand, the goats on His left. The king will say to those on His right: 'Come. You have My Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed Me, naked, and you clothed Me. I was ill and you comforted Me, in prison and you came to visit Me. Then the just will ask Him: 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You or see You thirsty and give You drink? When did we welcome You away from home or clothe You in Your nakedness? When did we visit You when You were ill or in prison?' The King will answer them: 'I assure you, as often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me.'

"Then He will say to those on His left: 'Out of My sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a way from home and you gave Me no welcome, naked and you gave Me no clothing, I was ill and in prison and you did not come to comfort Me.' Then they in turn will ask: 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or away from home or naked or ill or in prison and not attend You in your needs?'

"He will answer them: 'I assure you, as often as you neglected to do it to one of the least



ones, you neglected to do it to Me.' These will go off to eternal punishment and the just to eternal life" (Mt 25, 31-46).

Our Lord illustrates these principles in His solemn prayer at the Last Supper:

"I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; I pray that they may be [one] in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. I have given them the glory You gave Me that they may be one, as we are one—I living in them, you living in Me—that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you loved them as you loved me." (Jn 17, 20-23).

Everyone who makes love the basic principle of his life will thereby be drawn into the great stream of love which binds the Father to the Son, for the bond between them is personified love—the Holy Spirit. Shortly before His death, the Savior made this request to His Father:

"I am in the world no more, but these are in the world and I come to You. O Father most holy, protect them with Your name which you have given me [that they may be one, even as we are one]" (Jn 17, 11).

We are made similar to Him who is Love when drawn into the Blessed Trinity's stream of love.

"My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors. This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father, for His sun rises on the bad and the good, He rains on the just and the unjust. If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Do not tax collectors do as much? And if you greet your brothers only, what is so praiseworthy about that? Do not pagans do as much? In a word, you must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5, 44-48).

The apostles understood Our Lord very well in their own way, especially St. John and St. Paul who became eloquent messengers of the great underlying law of creation.

St. Jerome tells us that when St. John, in his old age, could no longer walk to the church, he was carried there by his disciples and once there he always preached the same lesson: "Little children, love one another." They once asked him: "Master, why do you say the same thing over and over again?" The apostle replied: "Because this is the command of the Lord. Fulfill that and you do everything."

St. John wrote a sequel to his Gospel telling that faith in Jesus Christ is shown mainly in a holy life and the practice of charity. It is not surprising, therefore, that in them we find wonderful, simple and deep instructions on the basic laws of love which are easy to understand and yet which, through deeper study, can help us learn to love and live more fully.

The man who strives to make love the secret and guiding principle of his life considers himself personally addressed by St. John:

"Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is Love." (1 Jn 4, 7f).

These words of Our Lord's beloved disciple are simply an echo of his soul to the message of love which the Savior announced during His own life when He said:

"As the Father has loved Me so I have loved you. Live on in My love. You will live in My love if you keep My commandments, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love. All this I tell you that My joy may be yours and your joy may be complete. This is My commandment: love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do what I

command you. I no longer speak of you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead I call you friends since I have made known to you all that I heard from My Father" (Jn 15, 9-15).

The apostle John in his first Epistle continues:

"No man has ever seen God. Yet if we love one another God dwells in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us" (1 Jn 4, 12).

It is true that God is a spirit and we cannot see Him. However in the light of faith we can discern various manifestations of His presence and assume He dwells in a special way in the hearts of those who comply with the cherished wish of the Savior:

"Anyone who loves Me will be true to My word and My Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words" (Jn 14, 23).

For the sake of God, those who really love their neighbor often see God visible in him through the interior and exterior blessings which flow to those who follow His steps. The psalmist sings of some of these external blessings:

"Happy is he who has regard for the lowly and the poor; in the day of misfortune the Lord will deliver him. The Lord will keep and preserve him; he will make him happy on the earth and not give him over to the will of his enemies. The Lord will help him on his sickbed; he will take away all his ailment when he is ill" (Ps 41, 1-3).

We understand that among interior blessings an increase in grace enabling one, in time, to tangibly feel the nearness of God. This is the greatest joy we can experience here on earth, and all other joys pale in the face of its richness. In such moments or hours the words of the apostle are verified:

"He who obeys the commandments he has from Me is the man who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I too will love him and reveal Myself to him" (Jn 14, 21).

In his sequel John repeats the same thought:

"The man who continues in the light is the one who loves his brother; there is nothing in him to cause a fall. But the man who hates his brother is in darkness. He walks in shadows, not knowing where he is going since the dark has blinded his eyes" (1 Jn 2, 10-11).

God abides with delight in him who loves his neighbor. He reflects God Who is Love most perfectly. Henry Suso once wrote of himself:

"Lord you know all things. I call on you. Bear witness that, from my mother's womb, I have had a tender heart all my days. I have never seen anyone in pain or affliction without having sincere compassion for him, and never would I listen to a word which might hurt another whether he were present or not. Again, all my companions must admit that I was never heard to speak against a brother so as to cause him any injury before a superior or anybody else, but, on the contrary, I have furthered the interests of others as far as I could. If that were not possible, I was silent or left the place that I might not hear. I purposely confided in people who had suffered the loss of their honor so that they could regain their honor all the more quickly. I was known as the faithful father of the poor; I was the special friend of all the friends of God. Anyone sad or depressed would come to me, and always receive some counsel, wept, and I was sorrowful with the sorrowful until I had comforted them like a mother. No matter how much a man might have grieved me, if he only smiled at me afterward then, in the name of God, it was as if it had never happened. But what am I saying, Lord? I will speak no more of men. When I saw the sorrow and affliction of little birds and

other creatures of God, it went straight to my heart, and if I was unable to help them, I would sigh and offer a prayer to the kindly Lord in heaven that He would help them. Everything that lives on earth found grace and tenderness in me."

Finally St. John interprets the most cherished wishes of His Master and expresses his personal experience when he writes:

"That we have passed from death to life we know because we love the brothers. The man who does not love is among the living dead" (1 Jn 3, 14).

Life without love is not worth living, it is more like death. But once a person begins to love, his soul is flooded with new life and he is able to create new life. This holds true in the natural order but applies all the more to the supernatural order.

"Love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God" (1 Jn 4, 7), "God is Love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him" (1 Jn 4, 16).

"Love has no room for fear; rather, perfect love casts out all fear" (1 Jn 4, 18).

St. Peter speaks of another effect of true love:

"Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4, 8).

Here he emphasizes the reparatory value of genuine love. What Our Lord promised in a general way with the words "Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs" (Mt 5, 7), St. Peter applies to a special case. The mercy we obtain when we are merciful is forgiveness of our sins.

St. James leaves no doubt in the same matter, stating clearly that "Merciless is the judgment on the man who has not shown mercy" (Jas 2, 13).

A great Father of the Church wrote: "Although it may not be possible for man to be without sin, it is still possible through the mercy of God that everyone, by good works—especially through almsgiving—can free himself from sin."

### C. The Secret of the Lives of the Saints

By His life Our Lord wished to enable mankind—which is so strongly divided as a consequence of original sin—to be reunited in a holy community of love. The Jews stressed the justice of the law and John the Baptist demanded austerity from his followers but, no matter how much Our Lord valued and taught these and many other virtues, the essence of all he taught always remained love of neighbor which flows from a supernatural love of God.

This was well understood by the first Christians who were historically closer to the time of Our Lord than we are. "The community of believers were of one heart and one mind" (Acts 4, 32). About the year 200 Tertullian noted that the Christians were easily distinguished from the pagans by their mutual love and in pagan cities the saying was, "See how they love one another."

Love should be the distinctive mark of every Christian and every Christian community. Regarding Christ's chosen ones, i.e., the saints, holy men, or religious communities—love among them must be the strongest bond and the fundamental law permeating their lives and teaching.

People of our time tend to complain that today Christianity in all its degrees and ramifications has to a large extent lost its vitality because there is so little understanding and evidence of the commandment of love. It is true that, with everything so commercialized, anything may be purchased for money—even charity. When money fails, they say, there is no love either in the world or in the Church.

Since the everyday saint is part of his own time he endeavors to overcome the prevailing worldly

spirit, both in himself and others. Like attracts like; he finds himself attracted to the lives of the saints. Each saint has his own individuality, but they are all alike in their keen striving after the heroism of love which is the secret and crown of their teaching and life.

Who could attempt to gather together properly all that the saints and holy people have written about the spirit of their Master and of the meaning of love! It is far too much to attempt in a work as short as this—and the more one studies the wider the field becomes. All concerned Catholics should therefore embark on their own search. Through this, new light will dawn for them. Everyone can help to heal the festering wound which has been inflicted on the Mystical Body of Christ due to the growing indifference of the masses to the great command of love. Only a few accounts are given here. St. Francis de Sales complains:

"I hear a good deal about perfection but see little in practice. Each person sees it according to his own taste: plain clothing, simple living, almsgiving, frequent reception of the sacraments, stress on prayer or visions, extraordinary graces, but all deceive themselves since they take the means, or effects, as reality.

"I see no other perfection than to love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves—any other perfection is false. Love is the sole bond of perfection between Christians and among the virtues which unite us with God and our neighbor—our final goal. Love is the aim of all perfection, and whoever tries to substitute any other kind of perfection misleads us. All other virtues are nothing without love—no matter how great they are: faith which moves mountains, fathoms and depths of mysteries, the gift of miracles, tongues of angels and men, the giving of all one's wealth to the poor, martyrdom on a burning fire—all are nothing without love. The person who does not practice charity is dead and all his works, no matter how fine they seem, are dead and have no value for eternal life."

Prayer and practice of all the virtues are selected means for reaching perfection but only if accompanied by love. Therefore perfection must not be seen as the means but as the aim to which prayer and virtue lead. Otherwise we would remain on the way instead of reaching our aim.

Fr. Eberschweiler expresses the same ideas:

"Thank you, O my Jesus! For You have fulfilled Your word in me: *Excellentiorem viam vobis demonstro*—I can show you a way which is better than any other (1 Cor 12, 31). With the help of Your grace I certainly should and will deny myself in everything—to the extent that this complies with Your wishes—and work and strive for this. All things have their limits being bound by place, time, strength and the circumstances of life. Yet love has its place everywhere, ruling and lasting forever. Love never dies. Beyond this, everything else is but the means, nourishment, fruit or expression of love. Love is the aim—the queen—and to love God is everything (November 26, 1874).

"O my God, how clear it is to me that everything exists in You to the most perfect and highest degree. All that my heart can only guess is found in You. Everything that creation can offer is in You, eminent one. *Tu immensus, aeternus, sapientissimus, fortissimus, dulcissimus*—You are boundless, eternal, most wise, strong and most worthy of love. How true it is that I already possess You by faith; often You let me savor it, but very soon it will be clear and complete.

"How clear it is to me that it is lasting! What a simple truth! And how plainly St. Ignatius puts it before us. Father, with the aid of Your light, one does not need a long study and search."

The Bishop of Avila wrote of the great St. Teresa:

"If anyone wishes to be loved by Teresa, there is no better way than by offending her."

And St. Teresa said:

"Never speak without thinking well of what you are going to say, commending it earnestly to Our Lord lest you say something displeasing to Him. Never be importunate, especially about things of small moment. Speak to everyone with restrained cheerfulness. Never make a mockery of anything. Never reprove anyone, save discreetly, humbly, and with a sense of your own nothingness. Fall in with the mood of the person to whom you are speaking. Be happy with those who are happy and sad with those who are sad. Do not listen to people speaking badly of anyone except yourself. Be gentle to all and stern with yourself. If only we understood the value and worth of love for our neighbor, we would not be concerned about anything else."

Meister Eckehard writes:

"If a man were in ecstasy like St. Paul and knew that there was a sick man begging for a little food, I think that it would be better to leave the ecstasies and serve the needy neighbor with great love."

St. Catherine of Genoa once asked her spiritual director what she should concentrate on in her prayers and reading. He replied:

"My daughter, at prayer always ponder on the words Your will be done. When you read Scripture, concentrate on the word love as often as you see it written. For you must know that this little word is the greatest and most profound in the whole of Holy Scripture. Your perfection consists in fulfilling the divine will in love. With these two virtues you can walk safely and never wander from the path to heaven, needing no other light or guide."

A person who knows and practices the love which Christ commanded joins in the song of love which Father Weiss so touchingly sings:

"Happy the one who possesses love, but only when he understands that it is the beginning of a new life—a life which will know no end. Everything will have an end—faith, hope, patience, renunciation, sacrifice, hardships, miracles, knowledge and worldly brilliance. Everything which is complex and imperfect is transient. Only one thing shall never be lost, and that is love because it is the perfect thing. Love is eternal—eternally young and eternally new. Love will always find something to offer from its treasures, having everlasting strength in itself. Being strong and effective, it is never possible that love remain idle or selfish. Yet it will never feel exhausted, for while it pours itself forth it creates a new surge of activity and vigor. Thus it must remain ever fresh, rich, active and an inexhaustible fount of eternal life and beatitude. One can easily see why the world cannot grasp this—because it lives a life of self-seeking and enjoyment or, at best, of so-called prudence. What love really is and as worth is known only to those who dedicate themselves to it, and everyone is called to this. Whoever tastes it will find the experience beyond description, but he nonetheless, knows and feels what love is. Loving kindness becomes the pivot and the driving force of his entire being, his entire existence. He soars, hardly aware that he is moving. He accomplishes more than is entrusted to him, more than he is aware of himself, and does not feel tired.

"A new spirit inspires him and all that he does. As the spirit is, so is his strength, work and entire life; for as love is, so is the spirit.

"Everyone of us lives and works according to the degree of his love. What one is, and what one can become, depends on one's love. Therefore everything depends on whether we fix our love on someone who will make something better out of us. In fact it only deserves the

name of love when it is fixed on someone who merits our love, and only he who through love lifts us out of ourselves merits it. Happy is he who sets his love on God, he has found the only worthwhile model on which to recreate himself. Happy are we who are united through love to Him who sustains the whole world through His omnipotence. In Him weakness is power. With Him we leap over every obstacle and hindrance. Through His strength we can bear—even with joy—the weight of trials, the need for love, the burden of a whole world, we who on our own strength can scarcely bear ourselves.

"Therefore, poor soul hungering for love, do not be cruel to yourself. You cannot live without love. You have asked all living things for love and all things have asked love of you; yet everything has betrayed you. Instead of returning your love, instead of repaying you with love, the world has only robbed you of love. There is only one person Who has given you His love without being asked and without taking anything you have. He will always wait for you, even though you make Him wait so long. Therefore let go of all the old, false, passing half-loves which cause you so much grief. Study and acquire this true love which alone merits your search. Pledge your love to Him who will not forsake you if you do not forsake Him, who will protect you so completely so that you will never leave Him. Do you not know how one seeks and finds love? You have only to start to love. One can only seek love through loving. One can only find love through loving. Love teaches you to ask for love; love knocks on the doors; love remains strong and true until you give an answer and He takes you to Himself; then you are happy."

The true disciples of Our Lord strove to put into practice all they had learned. Of all the saints, the Mother of God stands out the most. Her Fiat at the Annunciation, her endurance along the way of the cross, and her silent vigil at the foot of the cross are valued as heroic acts of love for God and neighbor. With the Savior beneath her heart, she hastened over the hills to be of help to her cousin. At the wedding feast of Cana, with motherly tact, she came to the assistance of the troubled married couple.

Every Catholic knows that St. Vincent de Paul was a hero in the kingdom of brotherly love. His spirit of love of neighbor is perpetuated in two great congregations of the Church. So highly did he value the queen of all virtues that he went so far as to break with the traditional form of religious life and create a new type of order in the service of brotherly love. His daughters, the Sisters of Charity, were freed from strict enclosure to carry out their works of mercy and love. He taught them the art of sometimes moving away from God in order to carry out His will as the following shows:

"Without hesitation carry out whatever the service of the poor demands and, if it is sometimes necessary to give medicine to a sick patient instead of saying your morning prayers, then do it with a peaceful heart. O what a consolation it is for a Sister of Charity to be able to say, 'Instead of saying my prayers and doing my reading, I am now going to my poor, sick people who are calling for me and I know that my work is pleasing to God.' With such thoughts a Sister of Charity goes happily wherever God calls.

"Perhaps you may think that God has called you only to give to the sick a piece of bread, meat, soup or medicine? Oh, no! He also waits for you to care for the needs of the soul. You must also give them spiritual manna and share with them the Spirit of God. My daughters, you are not enclosed nuns, and if there is someone among you who says, 'I would like to be a nun for that would be better'—then my dear sisters, know that would be the end of the Congregation! Guard against such thoughts, my dear daughters, and never admit them as long as you live. Weep, sigh and place your thoughts before your superiors, but let none

of you ever willingly think of these changes—for when one speaks of nuns one naturally thinks of the cloister. Sisters of Charity must be free to go everywhere.

"The cloister of the Sister of Charity—the hospital, her cell—a room in prison, her chapel—the parish church, her stations of the cross—the pavement of the city or the stairs of the hospitals, her enclosure—obedience, her grill—the love of God, her veil—holy modesty."

Father Eberschweiler was able to say of himself,

"As Rector, I have never for an instant had an unkind thought in my soul toward any of my subjects."

And a confrere added:

"He certainly kept this principle throughout his life. I was always amazed that he never uttered an unkind word. That would not have been possible since there never were loveless thoughts in his mind."

The Little Flower once wrote:

"Formerly a holy nun of our community was a constant source of annoyance to me. The devil must have had something to do with the trial, for undoubtedly it was he who made me see so many disagreeable points in her. Unwilling to yield to my natural antipathy, I remembered that love should not only exist in the heart but should also show itself in deeds—so I endeavored to treat this sister as I would treat the most cherished friend. Whenever I met her, I prayed for her, at the same time offering to God her virtues and her merits. I knew this would delight Our Lord exceedingly for there is no artist who is not gratified when his works are praised, and the divine artist of souls is therefore well pleased when we do not stop at the exterior but penetrate to the inner sanctuary He has chosen for His abode, admiring its beauty.

"I was not satisfied with praying earnestly for the sister who gave me such occasions for self-mastery, but I also tried to render her as many services as I could. When tempted to give a disagreeable answer, I made haste to change the subject of conversation. Sometimes when the temptation was particularly violent, if I could slip away without her suspecting my inward struggle, I would run like a deserter from the battlefield. The final outcome was that she said to me one day, with a beaming countenance, "Tell me, Sister Therese, what is it that attracts you to me so strongly? I never meet you without being welcomed with your most gracious smile!" "

## II. The New Commandment

Our Lord called the commandment to love our neighbor a "new" commandment. "I give you a new commandment: Love one another" (Jn 13, 34). Immediately these words raise the question: Was there no love in the world before this? Our Lord Himself gives the answer in the profound words:

"Love one another as I have loved you." Therefore love in itself is not new—but the kind of love which Christ and the Christian faith teach and practice is different from merely natural and ethical love practiced by non-Christians.

Christian psychology and education recognize three kinds of love. The first and highest kind is supernatural, the Christian virtue of love. This is expressed by the Latin word *caritas*. The second is the natural virtue of love, which in Church writing is called *dilectio*. The third is an involuntary tendency, a natural drive or passion—expressed in the word *amor*. The words drive or passion mean

a strong natural tendency of the senses. Today these words are explained differently in different circles. The well-known apologist, Weiss, says:

"One should not be shocked at this expression, which through our own fault has become so misunderstood that one should blush to mention it. No one has in mind that profanation of the heart, the loss of virtue, or the general voluptuousness which the sophisticated apply to the term love. When we speak of the passion or of the affection of love, we mean that natural movement, involuntary inclination or attraction toward a thing or person which we perceive in our heart as soon as something good, beautiful or attractive is presented to us."

## A. Natural Love

When people are bound together by blood or natural interests, this is called natural love. It can also be described as instinctive love. The opposite of this is enlightened, purified, transfigured love. The relationship between these two forms of love is like the difference between a drive and a virtue, between instinct and will.

The everyday saint sees it as his task not to uproot this basic natural drive for love but to purify and ennoble it. Natural love has three characteristics: instinctive, limited and self-centered.

### 1. Instinctive Love

It is easy to see that natural love is instinctive. For instance think of the attraction between sexes, the love of a father or mother for a child, of a man for his friend or country. In all these forms of love there is no premeditated perception or act of the will; rather, they originate from an instinctive urge of nature. In the sphere of the drives which arise from the sensual appetite, the instinctive drive for love exercises the most far-reaching influence on man's spirit, providing a great and worthwhile challenge in the realm of education. It is an irreplaceable creative power for the preservation, improvement, formation and spiritual perfection of the human being. It is, for instance, the drive which ensures the reproduction of the human race, care of infants and preservation of human life. The everyday saint considers the power of instinctive love as the finger of God pointing toward perfect love of neighbor. At the same time he also sees it as a fertile but unweeded and untilled field which his entire plan of self-education must improve and change into rich pasturage by tilling, weeding and applying the right natural and supernatural means. Happy indeed is the man who can say he has strong and numerous natural drives. Certainly he must be ready to face difficult situations but, with the grace of God and his own prudent and faithful cooperation, his life can become remarkably rich and fruitful.

This thought is prominent in the doctrine and teaching of St. Francis de Sales. With other Doctors of the Church, he knew that the purification and ennobling of the drives is impossible without adequate renunciation, but he was also careful to baptize the power and warmth found in the drives, using them in the service of Christian love of neighbor. In times threatened by collectivism when we are in danger of becoming soulless, cowardly, depersonalized and simply one of the mass, we should not be ashamed to go to the saints and at least try their methods of educating and forming the new, personalized man.

The everyday saint goes to this task with a willing disposition. Everyday sanctity is something pleasing to God. It is harmony between affective attachment to God, work and one's fellowmen in all life's circumstances. The everyday saint must be wholeheartedly attached, not only to God and



his work, but also to his fellowmen. Today this is more necessary than ever. Even more than we realize through capitalism and industrialization, we have become like a replaceable cog in a machine. In spite of great technological achievements, we suffer from spiritual emptiness. As a result there is increasing susceptibility to collective thinking and regimentation, with men becoming colder and puppet-like.

The everyday saint realizes the great significance of a sound education of emotional life, feelings and the drives of man for the day-to-day dealings with his fellowman.

In all the spiritual uncertainty of the present time we should be deeply grateful for the solid leadership of the saints and doctors of the Church. St. Francis de Sales and other great pillars of holiness and learning, each in his own way, show us the same path. In his spiritual exercises St. Ignatius not only strives for the thoughtful comprehension of truth but also for tasting and savoring divine things.

St. Francis de Sales seems to have a special mission in leading us along the path of love. His love of God is interwoven with feeling. From his whole spiritual attitude it is easy to understand that his love for his neighbor—which for him was as important as his love for God—is stamped with affection and has a human touch. He was not disturbed when he realized that in this regard he differed from other saints.

At the death of his mother St. Augustine strove to retain interior calm. However he was unsuccessful and had to weep "for one short hour." He considered this blameworthy, yet pardonable.

On the other hand, St. Francis de Sales thought and acted quite differently. He speaks quite calmly of the deep emotion he experienced at the deathbed of his mother:

"I had the courage to give her the last blessing, to close her eyes and mouth and at the moment of death, to give her a last kiss of peace. But then my heart was so heavy that I wept for this good mother more than I have ever wept before or since I belonged to the Church. But it all took place without spiritual bitterness."

In a similar way he received the news of the severe illness of his brother:

"Ah, I understand that my brother is happy, but nonetheless I cannot help weeping for him. I cannot stifle the compassion for suffering which nature stirs in my heart."

The attitude of many other saints is quite different. For example, St. Angela of Foligno explains that the loss of her family was a great consolation to her. While this makes her admirable, her ideal was quite different than that of St. Francis de Sales—something he would find difficult to follow.

St. Francis de Sales once praised a young widow for her abandonment to the will of God—but then he added with special emphasis: "She shows this joy even in the midst of her tears and sighs."

On receiving news of the death of Madame de Chantal's little daughter, of whom he too was fond, he replied:

"Our dear little Charlotte is blessed in having left this world before she was touched by it. Ah, we must still weep a little for, after all, have we not a human heart and a sensitive nature? Why not also weep a little over those that have passed away for, after all, the Spirit of God not only permits this, but even points it out to us."

He feared that Madame de Chantal would become dehumanized in her striving after holiness—hence he advised her to show her children all the signs of tenderness and affection that are customary. On one occasion he wrote:

"How disturbed I am that I am unable to give the affection which Celse Benine should receive from his mother; she has become insensitive to the natural promptings of her motherly heart. For I really believe that it is unnatural when these manifestations are

repressed. Ah, my dear daughter, do not be so terrible. Show him that you are pleased when he comes to you, this poor little Celse Benine."

Francis' ideal was the combination of perfect indifference and affectionate love. He showed how this could be achieved, as is related by someone who knew him best:

"The soul first concentrates with all its strength, without reserve, on God the sole aim of its existence. Quite freely it soars up to the very peak of perfection where God alone dwells before its eyes in infinite majesty. Then the earth disappears from view; earthly goods have no more attraction and the heart becomes indifferent to all things of earth. But in God, man finds the Creator of all that is true, good and beautiful on earth. It is a reflection of His being and His plan that man be attracted to these things. Then the soul descends down Jacob's ladder of love. It once again loves its home, forest, flowers, family and friends, art and science—but with a new love. They are loved, not as something pleasing to the earthly ego, but for the sake of the ever-loving Father in heaven who made all these good things and wants His child to find pleasure in them."

St. Francis used the following image:

"The soul laid aside all its longings and stood naked before God. Then He clothed it anew with the former longing for parents, home and friends—but it was a new and different longing. This new love was born out of the petition of the Our Father which asks: "May your name be held holy, Your Kingdom come, Your will be done."

Not everybody succeeds in joining affectionate love and holy indifference so that both are enhanced. Many people, moved by a well-founded fear of the dangers of the drives, may have to hold the reins more tightly. Francis de Sales, however, achieved a splendid combination—that is why he stands as the classic model for all everyday saints in the world.

When we understand that instinctive, natural love can be purified and refined in God and then practice it, we not only create a new redeemed man—which our times so urgently demand—but at the same time we shield Christendom against the reproach of being inhuman, unnatural and artificial.

## 2. Confined Love

Just as the drives are very limited, so too is purely instinctive love. Of itself it is unable to rise beyond certain limits. And so a new field of work is opened up in the everyday saint's comprehensive striving for holiness. It can take a long time before he embraces all men with a genuinely ordered Christian love.

Daily experience teaches us how limited and narrow instinctive love can be. If we do not discipline ourselves the circle in which we live and which we really love becomes exceedingly small. Consider purely instinctive mother-love, which is seldom found. Many who turn aside from Christianity do, nonetheless, remain under the influence of mother-love in their attitudes and needs. The world characterizes primitive mother-love as 'calf-love'—thus branding it as something narrow, small, childish, onesided and morbidly self-seeking. When the love of a child for his parents, love of friends or married love bears the mark of the purely instinctive, endless misunderstandings, jealousies and quarrels follow. Indeed, the narrower the passion and the more it is centered exclusively on one person, the more it provokes and wounds the susceptibilities of others. As Nietzsche says, "Do not become too dependent on one person, even the most beloved. Every person is a prison and a dead end."

Experience shows that those who, from their early years, mix with only a few people become so

narrow that they are introverted adults and, consequently, poor marriage partners and selfish parents. It is only love which is pleasing to God and related to Him that makes a man free, happy and fruitful. Such love enables one to grow more and more into the riches of God Who can give continually without becoming poor.

In ancient times society was oriented in an extreme way on instinctive love. Only members of a tribe or race were recognized—all others were considered foreigners and enemies and, later, barbarians. They were treated as having no rights, value or defense. Israel was an exception—foreigners dwelling there were given the same rights as the native-born. But among the pagan people of the time the nation was everything—through it and in it alone the individual received his value and right to existence, but he personally had no value or worth.

Following the example of Aristotle, the ancient philosophers insisted on regarding man as a social being, as the animal sociale. When we use this expression today we mean that man is, by his very nature, a social being. The ancients understood this expression as the natural tendency in man toward the making of a state and the urge to enslave the individual to the masses.

Christianity throws off the shackles of limited instinctive love. It overcomes narrow-mindedness, offering the light of faith to all without distinction, regarding them in their God-given greatness and worth. Narrowness cracks like ice before the warm beams of the sunshine when God, who loves everything and hates nothing which He has made, takes possession the Christian's soul.

Christianity means recognition of the individual Christian personality and establishment of a Christian ideal of society which, according to the model of the Blessed Trinity, can be described as the perfect community, based on perfect personalities. Both, however, must be rooted in the fundamental power of love. Today people are relatively unaware of just how much our civilization has benefited from Christianity in this regard. Above all, it teaches man's relatedness to God and his natural and supernatural likeness to Him, giving particular inalienable personal value and inner independence without estranging him from his natural, freely chosen and divinely willed place in society. St. Augustine draws our attention to the fact that the hardest blow befalling a Christian is being expelled from his country.

According to the teaching of Christianity man belongs first to God and then—in dependence on God—partly to himself and partly to society. That is why St. Paul says:

"You have been bought at a price! Do not enslave yourselves to men" (1 Cor 7, 23). "To slaves I say, obey your human masters perfectly, not with the purpose of attracting attention and pleasing men but in all sincerity and out of reverence for the Lord" (Col 3, 22). "Each one of you is a son of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus. All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Him. There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3, 26-28).

It is only when an individual realizes that he is a personality and gives himself as such that true love of neighbor and true community life is possible. A person brought up under a collective system is society-orientated only insofar as his abilities are used by that system. If he withdraws he becomes conspicuous in his self-centeredness, for the individual, separated from the mass, has no personality and no further meaning. The system has no further need of him and takes no further notice of him. Here personal love of neighbor is irrelevant and nonsensical.

Through the recognition of the dignity and the nobility of individual Christian personalities, Christian obedience, relationships with one another, authority and government receive the mark of consecration.

Those who are subjects bow in kingly freedom to God Who is behind all lawful authority. Those in

authority take the place of God, but they are not substitute gods. Obedience is thus offered not to men, but to God. The ancient mystics tell us:

"Obedience is only a virtue inasmuch as man lays aside his own will and gives it up, striving to do what another has commanded him in God. To be obedient means to have a humble, submissive, pliable attitude and a willing inclination toward all good things.

"Above all, obedience makes a man submissive to commandments and laws, in other words, to the will of God. God has told us we should obey His laws and strive to do His will in all things. He said, 'If you would enter into life, keep the commandments.' And another time, 'You will live in My love if you keep My commandments, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love' (Jn 15, 10). Love is the first and greatest commandment, and no one can really love without living in the Christian faith.

"If you wish to keep God's commandments you must believe and trust in God, cleansing your conscience from sin according to the Christian law and the commandments of the Church.

"The voice of God and the voice of the Church are really one voice, for the voice of God is uttered through the voice of Mother Church in her teaching, counsels and commands. Therefore obedience makes a man submissive to Holy Church, her sacraments, head, teaching, precepts, counsels and customs.

"Obedience makes men submit to their superiors and those over them for the sake of God. It also makes them pliable and open toward others in regard to advice, action, service—according to the individual needs and prudence.

"There is nothing dearer to God nor more necessary to man than this humble obedience. No greater sacrifice can be offered to Him than a humble, obedient heart—as obedient to the Father as the Eternal Son of God Jesus Christ who came down from heaven for man's sake, took on human nature, went forth to the holy cross, and from the cross to bitter death.

"Obedience makes the best of everything. It is a virtue without which no work, no matter how great it may be, has any great worth, whereas an insignificant task performed obediently has great value. Take whatever work you choose—obedience makes it nobler, better, and more meritorious than the greatest works we may undertake of our own accord. To say one Psalm in obedience is to say several Psalms. It is a greater sign of holiness to do something willingly out of obedience than to raise a dead man to life.

"The man who is obedient need have no fear; he is on the right road and is following Christ. In obeying orders he lacks nothing. When a man is obedient, does not seek himself but goes out of himself, God enters into him. This means that, to the extent in which we surrender ourselves in obedience, God will be born in us with His grace and virtues. Only then can He work in us without hindrance. Then we receive the living fountain in rich abundance, making every virtue flourish in our souls.

"The obedient man gives himself to God without reserve for, due to the help of grace, he is free from self and has his soul in his hands. He can give it to whomever he will, when he wills; he is master of himself and has given himself over to the most holy will of God.

"Obedience brings peace to communities, for no one can be at peace who is not truly obedient. On that account he will be loved by all his acquaintances, for the truly obedient man sets aside every wish and fancy. He does not wait for official commands nor delay in carrying out his duties, for as soon as he knows the wish, he is ready to lovingly obey."

St. Paul said to the slaves of his time:

"Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being. Do it for the Lord rather than for men" (Col 3, 23).

If only this concept of service and obedience could be given to our working people today! It would lighten all the burdens of modern life if people would consider themselves as "Prisoners of Christ Jesus" (Philmn 1). Whose "yoke is easy and whose burden is light" (Mt 11, 30). All the strenuous work that is done could become a continuous Gloria Patri.

The everyday saint knows the art of sanctifying all his activities and transforming them into God's service. In the light of faith he recognizes that he is a subject and God speaks to him through the voice of his superiors, guiding and sanctifying him. He strives for the highest in everything. He is not content with fulfilling written commands and wishes exactly, readily and perfectly, nor does the inner attachment of the will to orders completely satisfy him. Instead he strives for the highest degree of obedience and for sound, blind obedience—which is obedience of the intellect. Therefore he adheres to the principle that the task given by the superior is right. If he knows however that it is not expedient, then with a humble spirit of frankness he draws attention to this fact. If this is of no avail, then he makes the natural light of his intellect submissive and practices blind obedience. Through this he allows the light of faith to shine all the more brightly in his soul, and this convinces him that God in His wisdom and providence knows how to lead all things—even the mistakes of superiors—to good, if only people strive to love Him.

Without complaint or bitterness, the everyday saint goes his way. He remains undisturbed if in the same matter he later makes a decision and acts as if he thought best in the first place, according to the will of God. In this way he unites freedom initiative and reverent obedience.

Since he recognizes and reverences God and the divine in man, and particularly in his superiors, his whole being is filled with reverence in his dealing with others. A teacher expressed this beautifully,

"From childhood I was taught to treat every priest like a monstrance or a consecrated church." The everyday saint sees everyone in this light.

Goethe writes,

"There is one thing which no child brings into this world, and yet it is something which is essential if man is to be human in the full sense of the word—this is reverence. Since holy reverence pervades the person of the everyday saint, he is perfect in his deeds and in all his activities. In his own surroundings he helps to bring order into a troubled world. Shakespeare called reverence the 'axis of the universe.' It is fairly clear then why the world today is in such turmoil: because of lack of reverence for God and for one another."

Reverence accompanies the everyday saint everywhere and in his dealings with his equals. He treats all people with simple, natural, Christian tact. His whole life is so deeply permeated with supernatural thoughts that they form the foundation of a supernatural love of his neighbor. He also has a fine sensitivity as to what love requires in the needs of the moment.

He lives out of a continuous supernatural awareness of the Mystical Body and treats others with the dignity and nobility due to members of the large united family of God. Christian tact is indeed nothing more than the ability to adapt oneself to the demands of loving-kindness at any given time. The everyday saint is never tactless. He does not strut through the world full of his own importance and value, without a thought for others. He is always concerned about doing things correctly and this is why he is so reliable and confident in his dealings with others. He knows when to be silent and when to speak and act.

On the other hand, the tactless person struts along with self confidence filled with his own importance, but very often in practical life he walks around like an elephant in a china shop. Tact

wages continual war against superficiality, self-complacency and self-seeking; it demands a constant, interior complacency and self-seeking; it demands a constant, interior alertness, flexibility in the feelings and will and a high degree of selflessness. There are many people who can discourse brilliantly on these matters but, because they lack this inner tact, fail to observe even the most elementary rules of conduct and behavior.

St. Paul the great missionary gives us one of the very best examples of tactful dealings with all men—with the well-to-do, poor, learned and uneducated. He could be quite frank with all—not only with his equals and his inferiors but also with his superiors. We have only to recall how he faced St. Peter and opposed him. But he always acted with perfect tact. He confessed to the Corinthians that he came to them with distrust of self, full of anxious fear (1 Cor 2,3). Apparently he was thinking how he might combine fatherly kindness and authority without offending them. He was a master of farsighted, compassionate love. One has only to read his honest confession to see this:

"Although I am not bound to anyone, I made myself the slave of all so as to win over as many as possible. I became like a Jew to the Jews in order to win the Jews. To those bound by the law I became like one who is bound (although in fact I am not bound by it), that I might win those bound by the law. To those not subject to the law I became like one not subject to it (not that I am free from the law of God, for I am subject to the law of Christ), that I might win those not subject to the law. To the weak I became a weak person with a view to winning the weak. I have made myself all things to all men in order to save at least some of them. In fact, I do all that I do for the sake of the gospel in the hope of having a share in its blessings" (1 Cor 9, 19-23).

His tact is obvious, from the way he handled the question of eating meat which was offered to idols and later sold in open market:

"No man should seek his own interest but rather that of his neighbor. Eat whatever is sold in the market without raising any question of conscience. 'The earth and its fullness are the Lord's.' If an unbeliever invites you to his table and you want to go, eat whatever is placed before you, without raising any question of conscience. But if someone should say to you, 'This was offered in idol worship,' do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who called attention to it and on account of the conscience issue—not your own conscience but your neighbor's. You may ask, why should my liberty be restricted by another man's conscience? And why is it, if I partake thankfully, that I should be blamed for the food over which I gave thanks?

"The fact is that whether you eat or drink—whatever you do—you should do all for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jew or Greek or to the church of God, just as I try to please all in any way I can by seeking, not my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved. Imitate me as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor 10, 24-33).

Sacred Scripture has little to say about the Blessed Mother of God, but those events recorded serve to emphasize her dignity, reverence and tact. When loving-kindness demanded it, she took an active part at the wedding feast at Cana and manifested her tactful feeling and conduct—she, the blessed among women.

The everyday saint learns in the school of Holy Scripture and from the example of the saints to acquire this tactful reverence and love in dealing with others. Therefore in his dealings with them he is inwardly relaxed but outwardly reserved. He surrounds everyone—friends, children and spouse—with the holy bond, the love of God on earth, in order to lead them on to the very heart of God. He knows that people can become too attached to him, that they can become enslaved to him

and thus hinder the organic passing on of love to God. Hence his regard for a fitting aloofness in his whole being. True love always includes both a giving and a return. The giving includes a warm flow of love from person to person. The return is modest reverence and faithful preserving of one's own integrity.

When the everyday saint acts as superior with his subjects, his attitude is governed by deep reverence. He realizes that in his own way he has to be an image of the heavenly Father and Creator who does everything out of, through and for love. His sound common sense warns him to distinguish between a vigorous fatherliness and an indulgent grandfatherliness. God not only gives joy but also causes pain, yet always with reverent love.

In the responsibility for others, God has indeed entrusted a precious jewel to him—he does not have blocks or stones or slaves to consider, but free children of God, members of God's great family. They, like himself, were bought at a great price—the price of the Precious Blood of Christ, and therefore in justice they too belong to him. The everyday saint thus exhibits a deep reverence for all men whatever their work or their human circumstances. His attitude to his employees should always be ruled by a strong sense of justice, linked with a warm, modest love and respect. His firmness and strength are always well under control. He rules through tact and generosity rather than with severity. Thus he can solve all problems of social justice.

A modern philosopher made the following remark:

"In industrial papers we often come across a certain type of ad: 'Wanted, an energetic engineer.' It is a pity that such advertisers do not have that deeper energy in mind which gives a man sufficient strength and confidence to be full of goodness and modesty in spite of all the exigencies of progress. In its place one finds the barking, biting, degrading type of energy which employees meet continuously and which fully destroys the true joy of service in work. One must also remember that a great deal of bitterness arises from the fact that man has a great interior craving for joyful obedience; he is not angry with the bully for taking away his freedom, but rather because he makes obedience impossible and is insensitive to the fact that men wish to be obedient as human beings and not as mere animals. Just as one injurious word can set off a real explosion between individuals or groups, so too a single word of recognition or encouragement, and an attitude of respect even amid strictness, can produce real miracles of loyalty and contentment. Dostojewski speaks of the effect of kindness of heart in the camps of Siberia 'I met well-meaning overseers; I watched the influence which they built up—a few friendly words, and the prisoners were morally uplifted, until they responded like children and began to love like children.' "

If an everyday saint is the superior of a religious community he strives continually to follow the example of Our Lord with his apostles. The saintly Father Ginhac was the rector of a large community. Before taking office, he laid down certain regulations with which he would govern his community. They are a clear echo of the mind of Our Lord, and if we wish to become everyday saints we must administer our office as superiors accordingly:

- (i) I must be one with my confreres—therefore no exceptions, no privileges, nothing special, a brother to all my brothers, and a superior as little as possible. I will use my authority only when it is absolutely necessary.
- (ii) In my own eyes I must be the least of all—therefore I will regard myself as the least, revere all, be ready to accept advice from all, and be glad whenever anyone draws my attention to something. I will endeavor to appreciate and imitate all their good qualities.
- (iii) I must be the servant of all—therefore I will apply to myself in a special way the word

of the Lord: 'I have not come to be served but to serve.' I am not here for myself, but for others; not in order to do my will, but theirs; not to be served by all, but to work for all. All my time belongs to them—therefore, I must not regard the hours given to listening to them as lost time but see them as something of great profit, for it is the will of God. I must not expect any reward and must be glad if I find no recognition. In any case, could I make any claim for recognition? Am I not working for God?

(iv) I must consider myself unworthy of the honor of being in the Order. What contempt one must have for oneself on realizing that one has absolutely nothing, neither virtue, learning, ability nor merit! Therefore, I must be grateful that I am allowed to live in the house of God, to converse with saints, to serve, work and strive with them."

### 3. Self-centered Love

All earthly love is self-centered and self-seeking. As long as it remains purely natural it bears the features of self-complacency and pride. The everyday saint endeavors to practice sound self-love without self-seeking in the service of God.

The example of possessive mother-love may suffice to describe what we mean by self-centered love. It may happen that a mother wants a child to stay with her all her life and for this selfish reason refuses to have the child educated or stands in the child's way in matters of vocation and marriage. In a similar manner, love of friendship or love of children for their parents can be extremely selfish by seeking attention, sympathy and companionship for one's self at the cost of the health, duties or work of the other. Instinctive love is especially damaging in community life, be it in the guise of motherliness, fatherliness, childlikeness or friendship. Discord and dissatisfaction, sensuality and a lack of discipline, vitality, and fruitfulness are the evils which result. So much good has remained undone in the world and in the Church as a result of primitive, instinctive love.

Instinctive love appears in a variety of forms: as individual egoism, as group egoism, or even as egoism of a religious order. It enters everywhere—into palaces, monasteries and the most humble dwellings. A fine judge of men once wrote: "There are few benefactors who do not say, 'If you will fall down and worship me,' as the devil did."

Aeschylus was right in referring to instinctive love as "loveless love." In this connection, a good observer of modern life slashingly criticizes the type of charity which has been practiced for so long in the Western World. He said:

"Many things appear amazing to us in modern works of charity and not only to us but also to men who are on familiar terms with the world. We are reminded of Victor Hugo's famous remark: 'Collections for one and the same purpose may be taken up by churches and by state authorities. The latter always receive more donations than the churches. Why is this? State authorities publish the names of their donors in the papers; the churches do not. Can you blame a man if he takes advantage of the fact that the world prefers to draw attention in the practice of charity, and on the fact that he is certain of gaining reputation?' "

But is this charity worthy of the name? Are not such donors "acrobats of charity," as a famous writer calls them! This is perhaps a harsh judgment, but understandable when one considers such forms of organized charity as Charity Parties and House Parties for the benefit of the crippled and the homeless, banquets at which one eats for the benefit of the hungry. Such functions indicate that far too many worldly people delight in throwing a penny to the poor in order to reap a pound's worth of pleasure and publicity.



There is, however, a purer form of charity which comes, not from worldly or natural motives, but from a true Christian attitude. Rarely, though, do such cases of charity make headline news. The occasions are few since so many today indulge in immoderate seeking the limelight and blowing one's trumpet, which reminds us of that kind of charity which Our Lord criticized in the Pharisees. Even in ancient times philosophers complained that the nobler forms of charity were rare and often held in disdain.

Nietzsche declared:

"Loving man for the sake of God is the noblest sentiment that has ever been attained among men. To love man without any supernatural intention would be folly and animal-like; the inclination to this love for man has to receive its measure, nobility, essence and clarity from a deep, interior motive. The man who understands and lives this, even though he is unable to express it, will, in our eyes, remain holy forever."

Hilty maintains:

"All so-called love of man is an illusion, a self-delusion unless it is rooted in a deep love of God. Without God, man loves only the most attractive or those by whom he himself is loved—sudden attractions that are apt to fade as soon as the reason for the love vanishes. Love of neighbor is generally a nice expression for the harmless sort of attitude which well-looked-after animals adopt toward people. If ours was this type of neighborly love, millions could die every year, either of spiritual or bodily hunger, for such love is not really concerned about anyone, nor does it go out of its way to practice the slightest self-denial."

We should also consider what St. Francis de Sales says:

"We often believe that we love a person for God's sake, and yet we love him only for our own sake. We often pretend we love him for God's sake, when actually we love him only because of the consolation such love offers us. Do you not experience more joy if you meet a person who is full of love toward you, who willingly follows your direction, and quietly and faithfully treads the way you have marked—in contrast to someone who is always restless, undecided, weak of will, to whom you have to repeat the same thing a thousand times? You will certainly have more joy with the former: however you do not love him for the sake of God. In the case of the latter, you should love him because you have an opportunity of doing more for God and because he also belongs to God. It is quite true that we show more love where there is more God-likeness—where there is higher virtue—because it participates more in the divine attributes.

"The consideration and the marks of friendship which we practice toward fellowmen against our inclinations have more value in the eyes of God and are more pleasing to him than those which we perform out of personal liking.

"This way of acting against the natural inclination cannot be called hypocrisy or dissimulation—for even though I act against my own feelings, these feelings come from an inferior part of the soul, while the acts which I perform have their rest in reason, which forms the superior part of the soul. Indeed, if they to whom I offer such service of love only knew that I have an aversion toward them, they would not feel hurt on account of this, but regard these actions of even more value than if they had been inspired by natural inclination. For aversions are not evil if we do not follow them but use them as a means of practicing various virtues, and Our Lord has greater delight when we kiss His feet with utter repugnance than when we do this with great consolation. Accordingly, those persons are lucky who have nothing attractive, for they can rest assured that the considerations which one shows them are sincere because they are prompted by the love of God."

The everyday saint knows how to interpret the teachings of St. Francis de Sales. His working at his

own self-love is based on three principles. First he maintains that ordered self-love is a great virtue and there is no totally disinterested love here on earth. He knows, of course, of the higher degrees of love and tries to reach them with the help of grace, without disdaining people who do not attain more than the love of desire. They love God and keep His commandments in order to perfect themselves, to become more mature, pure and strong. Through his loyalty to God the saint also acquires this perfection of his nature, even if it is not always pursued as such. Our Lord made one's self-love the measure of one's love for neighbor; therefore St. Francis de Sales says:

". . . as it is commanded, it, (i.e., one's self-love) can only be good. We are bound to love ourselves in God and second to God, in order to desire and build up stores of grace and eternal glory with all our strength. This kind of self-love can be both natural and supernatural. It is natural if it aims at natural goods; that is why the apostle says, 'No one hates his own flesh' (Eph 2, 30). True natural and supernatural self-love are pleasing to God because He is the Author of nature as well as the Author of grace. Supernatural self-love, of course, exceeds natural self-love as much as the goods of grace and glory exceed the goods of nature. Natural self-love identifies itself with and, in fact, falls in with God's holy will if a man devotes himself entirely to the love of God or he awakens it in all his actions."

During his earthly life Our Lord often used the motive of developing and perfecting oneself in His sermons. He knew how to arouse moral striving in His listeners in an effective manner whether by referring to the reward—even a hundred-fold reward—the sweetness of His yoke, participation in His right to judge, or in the peace which He promised. His apostles followed very closely in His footsteps.

Man cannot be entirely self-sufficient because he is a created and limited being. All his innate powers yearn to be developed, perfected and returned to their original source, the Triune God. Thus, the instinctive powers of human nature—for instance, love—can become a tremendous driving force in one's total self-surrender to God.

The everyday saint, who always has both feet on the ground, realizes the importance of these innate drives of human nature. Wherever he tries to perfect himself or bring out the best in others, he makes prudent use of them. He knows the truth of the words of St. Augustine: "O God, You have created our hearts for Yourself, they will be restless until they rest in You" (Confessions).

According to these principles, one need not reject ordered self-love and being loved by others. If, however, God wants us to renounce these altogether, He will clearly manifest this through the circumstances of life and the inspirations of grace. Eternal love has built love into man's nature and made the drive for love an essential part of his being. That is what St. Ambrose referred to when he said: "Nothing is as useful as being loved and nothing so useless as wishing to renounce all love." This is true unless God shows that He wills otherwise.

We must carefully avoid fostering in ourselves any desire for particular loves—for example, for a love which does not seem to fit in with one's particular state of life and therefore is not willed by God.

Bishop Camus made a compilation of the teaching of the Holy Doctor of the Church, St. Francis de Sales, on this point:

"One must hate love, unless it is a love in and for God, for:

1. The risk is great that human friendship (no matter how permissible and noble it may be at the start), may degenerate into a danger to be feared, particularly between persons of different sex.
2. To wish to be loved, other than by God, is a sort of theft in which we really steal

a part of those hearts by whom we wish to be loved from God. And in any case they cannot love God worthily, since He is infinitely greater than our hearts.

3. It means an injury to God's jealousy since He will not tolerate any rival or competitor in our hearts. His love must be all or nothing; He wants to be king or nothing at all.

4. It is great vanity to believe that one may, through one's own merits, claim a right to the love of another.

"O, how fortunate are those," says the saint, "who have nothing attractive or worthy of love, for they are sure that the love which is given them is of the most perfect kind because it is rooted in God."

"To love somebody next to God without directing this love to God—even though it is not against one of God's commandments—means to diminish the love which we owe to God who wishes to be loved with our entire heart.

"O God, take us away from this world, or take this world away from us! Tear our hearts free from the world, or tear the world away from our hearts! All that is not God is nothing! 'For what do we desire on earth or in heaven, save You, O God' " (Ps 72, 15).

At the same time the everyday saint maintains, as an immutable law, that every spiritual attachment to persons which is prompted by the natural inclination of the heart results in a deeper attachment to Him whom the beloved person dimly reflects and Who unites in Himself all perfections as in an ocean in which every created, lovable thing is only one tiny drop.

In all his dealings with people the everyday saint is governed by tact, interior ease and outer reserve. Time and energy-consuming talk and sentimental conversation are avoided. All that might hinder or diminish steady and continuous growth in the love of God, all that might interfere with one's training and work, must be classified as a lack of true love.

In some particular cases the everyday saint regards himself unworthy of being loved and is ready to renounce love whenever God wishes it. This applies especially when God deprives him of a person's loving affection in order to purify him and to possess him exclusively.

In order to prepare himself for such a trial the everyday saint strives rigorously to detach himself from all sinful attachment to people and things. As St. John advises:

"Have no love for the world, nor the things that the world affords. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love has no place in him, for nothing that the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show" (1 Jn 2, 15f).

Even this is not enough for the everyday saint. He does not tolerate in his heart any purely instinctive and natural love—whether it is for his parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, superiors or subjects. By continuous prayer for true self-knowledge he acquires a keen sense for the finest manifestations of selfishness. He detects self-seeking where, in doing good works, he thinks less of God and the divine than of his own self-satisfaction or when, as a superior, he misuses his position to care for himself first while neglecting his subjects; or, as an ordinary person—no matter what his position may be—he seeks his own advantage to the disadvantage of his neighbor.

In our daily lives there are more opportunities than we realize for practicing true love—above all in business and community life. For instance, one may seek better work, position, living quarters or equipment while leaving the dirty work to others. One can also impose a burden of another kind through unpleasant habits and a lack of order and cleanliness. If one is too easy-going and lazy to make a thorough change in all such faults, others will suffer as a consequence.

The everyday saint is eager to utilize even the most insignificant opportunities. To overcome selfish

desires he practices the *agere contra* most energetically. He joyfully bears irritations and the pinpricks of his neighbors; he prefers to deal with those whom he dislikes or who have offended him. Yet all this is not enough to bring the everyday saint to his goal. God must take a hand and send disappointments; otherwise the soul will not reach the degree of unselfishness necessary for belonging entirely to Him.

## B. Rational Love

Rational love, i.e., true human love is easily distinguished from instinctive as well as from supernatural love. Instinctive love manifests itself as an upsurge of a blind force of the heart; rational love is real virtue. It directs and utilizes the blind force with clear knowledge and determination. Since its principal motive and aim stem from nature, it is called a natural virtue, whereas supernatural love is guided in everything by faith and grace.

Generally we describe as natural all that originates from natural strength and from a natural motive. A person eats and drinks, sees to his digestion, exercises for a healthy change from rest and work, studies carefully to pass an examination—in all these actions one attains a natural worthwhile aim by natural powers and from natural motives.

Love of neighbor is also natural when and insofar as he is loved on account of natural gifts or natural advantages without any enlightenment from faith and without the aid of grace.

Natural gifts can be physical, spiritual or a mixture of both. For instance, physical gifts are, for example, physical attractiveness, pleasant complexion, beautiful face or fine clothing. Spiritual gifts include a clear intellect, strong will, compassionate heart or a rich personality. Artistic ability, outstanding conversational gifts or a winning manner would be regarded as a mixture of gifts.

Natural advantages which follow from natural love may be reputation, economic security or a good education. One could apply Our Lord's words in a general way to natural love:

"If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Do not tax collectors do as much? And if you greet your brothers only, what is so praiseworthy about that? Do not pagans do as much?" (Mt 5, 46, 47).

Natural love was taught and practiced by the pagans. When Christians lose supernatural love, they return to the standards of ethical love and try with its aid to break down narrow national barriers and remove causes of conflict. The general idea of humanism, the ideal of brotherhood, the task of transforming the earth into a paradise free from suffering, or the defense of the basic right of man to freedom and equality—each of these is at times regarded as the sole means of binding communities and nations together.

The everyday saint knows how to judge and value natural love of neighbor in a sensible manner. In the first place, he does not underestimate the power and effectiveness which it has at times.

Dostoyevski, the famous Russian writer, was condemned to death for his political views after a long imprisonment, but no sooner had he arrived at the place of execution than he was reprieved. His biographer says:

"Those moments which he spent under the gallows left an indelible mark on his whole future life. Separated in spirit from all the living, he had seen the vast grey sky above him and then he had looked down from the gallows to the populace at his feet. Since his soul had cast away all fear and desire in the face of death, the hearts of those below lay open to him. He read them far more deeply than when he walked with them. He saw they were depressed, poor slaves who groped in the dark, but in the depths of their hearts they were without guilt

and therefore worthy of forgiveness. When he stepped down from the gallows, everything now appeared as of little worth—everything that had value in the eyes of the world. All was worthless, except love. Even his life, which was to last for another thirty years in disgrace, misery and sin, was of little worth. He saw everything measured against the background of that vast grey 'heaven' which had vaulted above him on the day he saw the multitude at his feet beneath the gallows. Once and for all, he grasped the fact that every one is suffering, that everyone will remain worthy of compassion—and that no one can be unworthy of love—and this he proclaimed for the remainder of his life."

His life is a constant confirmation of these great words:

"Brother, whatever you may do, I will never cease loving you."

This was the extent to which natural compassion worked in one man. Natural love can become effective as a great power where natural motives regulate the actions of the masses and supernatural love becomes devitalized and replete because of the laziness and indifference of man. But can merely natural love be maintained at this high level on a long-term basis?

Through self-knowledge and guided by faith the everyday saint knows of the limitations of human nature. He knows the human heart which is distorted by selfishness. Even ancient writers realized this. Although Aristotle and Cicero praised and recommended natural love as the bond between men and the factor keeping a state going, they admitted that in practical life it was fighting a losing battle because of too much selfishness. Love of neighbor, they said, is sometimes more self-seeking. Some modern philosophers maintain that no one loves his friend unless there is an advantage to be gained. They call virtue hypocrisy and stupidity. Nietzsche passed the sarcastic remark, "Before God all men are equal. Before God! But this God has died. Before the mob we do not want to be equal."

The origin and history of the discord among human beings is clear to all Christians. Before original sin the grace of God was so strong in man that the animal and the angel in him continuously bowed to the child of God: Hence the harmony between flesh and spirit, child of God and angel, animal and angel, and spirit and grace. Through sin man thoughtlessly destroyed the harmony between the angel and the child of God, and for punishment God destroyed the harmony between the angel and animal. Nevertheless even in the state of fallen nature man is still a microcosm—a world in miniature—a summary of all created forms and perfections. The plant, animal and spiritual lives are all "embodied" in him. In a true sense man stands at the center of all creation as a ruler, but in his fall he plunged all visible creation into ruin.

St. Paul hears the sighs and groanings of all creation in its desire for redemption and knows how to express this dilemma in man most profoundly, "What happens is that I do, not the good I will to do, but the evil I do not intend" (Rom 7, 19). The ancient writers sang their lamentations in much the same manner as St. Paul, since the discord is older than Christendom, as old as original sin.

Plato speaks of two horses that are harnessed to the chariot of the soul—one of them noble and easily guided, the other full of cunning and obstinacy. The Greek historian Xenophon clearly notices two souls within himself, one which draws toward good and the other toward evil. A line from Goethe says, "Two souls are housed, alas, within my breast; the one opposes the other." Aristotle admits that man thinks one thing and does another. Epictetus, the Stoic Greek philosopher, considers that every sin entails a struggle and the sinner does not do what he ought. Ovid admits, "I see that which is good and praise it in myself, but the evil draws me on and binds me to itself." In a similar vein, Roman playwright Terence declares, "I glow from evil lust, my heart and sense disgust me and I still deliberately throw myself into the abyss." The Greek poet Euripides maintains that our thoughts

which are better than our desires, fight a losing battle because the evil will get the better of them. The cynic, Crates of Thebes, puts the blame of our guilt and evil deeds onto our evil inclinations which he compares with the bad core of an apple.

The Christian thoroughly realizes this discord of nature and regrets it. Clement of Alexandria compares man with the mythical Centaur who was half man and half horse. The realistic Middle Ages called man an animal in human skin. But this realization did not prevent the upright Christian from having a deep respect for man in whom—in spite of all distortions—the image of God is still clearly distinguishable and who can be purified and perfected through effort supported by grace.

The mystics have a contribution to make on the subject of taming the animal nature in man:

"In order that the flesh may be weakened in this struggle and not get the better of the spirit one has to shackle it by mortification, keeping it down so the spirit always has a chance of victory. We have to partition ourselves and keep in check the lower part of us which is animal-like and to which our nature became subject in the first fall from grace, for it is always against us in our striving for virtue. Since it can cause our separation from Almighty God, it must be hated, persecuted and afflicted by mortification and the hardships of life in order that it may always remain subject to and ruled by reason, justice and purity of heart—these must always control all works of virtue.

"The senses and animal powers must always remain servants and must work, for they are born of the flesh while the spirit is born of God. God is its home; it is created by God according to His image and likeness. The man who serves sensuality is like the man who abandons his friend and serves his enemy—for all that is sensual is the enemy of the soul. Indeed, the flesh is our principal enemy—it is with us constantly—and he who serves it receives his reward in eternal death. This happened to Eve—she saw the apple, was delighted in beholding it, desired and ate it. Pandering to sensuality and death was her reward. It is still the reward for those who live according to their senses.

"Since the soul already possesses a natural nobility the body should be submissive to it, for it is right and just that the inferior be subject to the superior part and that which is better suppresses evil.

"Therefore we beg you to come to the help of the noble soul which is so often troubled in the struggle to make the flesh obedient so that the soul may rule over the body. Submit your body in everything that you may rule it in everything, and it will never hinder you in doing God's will. That is the way the saints dealt with their bodies, so when the spirit spoke the body jumped to attention as if to say, 'I am ready even before you are.' "

In recent centuries a cult of humanism, based on the divinization of man and which later degenerated into a frightful contempt for man, developed outside the Church. In 1870, while speaking to a distinguished circle of learned men, a professor of the university and president of the Academy of Vienna stated, "When the gods have gone, humanity will triumph." Mankind has indeed turned toward the divinization of man. Humanism sees only one god and that is the spirit of man; it sees only one revelation of God and that is the history and culture of the human race. It considers that he who believes in divine providence and prays to God for help or thanks Him for His grace is primitive and only half-civilized. Following such distorted ideas where humanity becomes the god, it is not long before man regards himself as his own law-giver.

As a consequence of all this a new ideal appears on the horizon. It is clothed in various names – superman, genius, hero – but in all its shades it resembles the Tower of Babel. In the life of such a "hero" there is, understandably, no place for God, no sin, no Redeemer, no Christ.

What might finally become of this divinization of man? Even its promoters express their disgust at

this caricature of man! On one hand, they declare that a man who swears by religion as it has always been understood has less brains than a domestic pet or colt in the paddock and that it is time to uproot this mental disease—not by force, but by a new education quite different from the old! People ought to be taught to think clearly about the truth of their own absolute glory and power and then the old religion would, of itself, disappear (Babel). On the other hand, some follow a doctrine that man is radically corrupt and, with this as the fundamental principle of their ethics, consider that all contact with man brings contamination. They agree that in order to bring stupid man back to reason and wisdom he should be treated like a wild animal, either by instilling into him apprehension and fear or by over-awing him with authority and glory. Montaigne, the disciple of Charron (French theologian and philosopher), goes even further. In his opinion, one can never condemn man too much since he deserves it; it is only our unreasonable and strong-willed pride that suggests that we should be better than animals.

Mephisto accuses man before his Creator:

"His life would be less difficult, poor thing,  
without your gift of heavenly glimmering;  
he calls it reason and simply uses it  
to outdo beasts in being more bestial."

(Faust, Part 1, Prologue).

In the same vein there is an inscription on a grave in the Pets' Cemetery in Paris: The more one learns about man, the more love one has for animals.

It was obviously a fine judge of man and history who said: Humanity without religion becomes brutality. The last link in the chain of retrogression can then be added: brutality can soon become bestiality. World history demonstrates many striking examples of it. A philosopher of history, putting together the results of his studies wrote:

"Man may observe in Nero the rottenness to which it was possible for him to descend. This tyrant, particularly, had embodied in himself the characteristics of the Roman people and had made himself so popular they could not believe he was dead and awaited his return with longing and impatience. Three impostors dared to appear in his name, and yet they still longed for him, so that, even among the Christians who were waiting for Anti-Christ to appear, some thought that this would be none other than Nero. Nor was it different after the deaths of Caligula and Domitian. All the excess of fury, mania, contempt of man and debauchery with which these monsters had contaminated the good name of man were not sufficient to rob them of the popularity of the mob—on the contrary, the sympathy of the people followed them even into the underworld.

"Another example is Ivan the Terrible of Russia who became the hero of his people mainly through the atrocities he committed. The fact that he killed some sixty thousand people in a few weeks seems to have inspired his people with tremendous reverence for him—an admiration which persists even today. It seems as if the desire to pay a tribute of honor to monsters of history has become contagious . . . ."

The everyday saint may be affected by grim experiences with mankind as a whole or with individuals—perhaps even in his dealings with his neighbor. But, in spite of all, he believes in the natural goodness of man. He is never disappointed in man because he loves man and sees God's image in him. That is the reason he is not satisfied with an exclusive natural love of neighbor.

The reason why our love is often anemic and stunted is because it is not sufficiently supernatural. We allow ourselves to be directed too much and too strongly by natural motives. It is therefore worthwhile to learn true and genuine Christian love of neighbor from the experts.

It is supernatural love which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts that enables us to love God for His own sake and our neighbor for God's sake. This is God's will; it pleases Him and He is glorified by such love which is oriented on Him. This is the real meaning of loving one's neighbor in and because of God. It means that we do not seek our own advantage but that of our neighbor and this only in as far as it is pleasing to God. Such love is rare since nearly all men seek themselves rather than Christ and their neighbor.

St. Francis de Sales said:

"Those loving acts which are done to our neighbor for God's sake are the most perfect of all because they are directed to Him alone. And the good services which we offer to those whom we love because of some personal affection are less worthy. This is so because of the satisfaction and pleasure we find in them, which is what usually prompts them rather than love of God."

So, far from loving our neighbor less because we love him in and for God, we love Him far more and better because our natural friendship becomes supernatural.

St. Catherine of Siena once said:

"If you place a cup beneath a fountain and keep it there while you drink it will never be empty, drink as you will. But take it away and you will soon empty it. The same is true of our friendships—as long as we do not withdraw them from their real source, they will never become empty."

St. Francis said:

"We should always see our neighbor as if leaning on the breast of Christ. He who does not do this runs the danger of not loving in a pure, faithful or constant manner. But, if we really love our neighbor in Christ, Who would not find it hard to bear with his imperfections, how can we be impatient or intolerant toward him? The Savior on Whose breast we see him, loved him so much as to die for him. Truly, no other love is worthy of the name."

A modern writer says:

"The supernatural love of man is nothing else but the love of God. It is unnecessary to have a particular commandment of supernatural love of neighbor—for without such love, the love of God would be imperfect. It would be an illusion to imagine that, without it, we can love God. But where genuine love of God exists, there also love of man necessarily exists. We have this command from God: that we love God and that he who loves God, also loves his brother."

Christian love of neighbor can, therefore, only draw its strength and life from love of God. Only divine love can impart to it that superiority and supernatural elan which it needs so much if it is to overcome passions, human respect and rise to those heights which natural love can never reach. Much more is required from supernatural love than from mere human virtue. It must persist of its own accord, even in the face of extraordinary difficulties. To understand this we need only consider the words of Him. Who taught us this love and implanted in us the capacity for it:

"If you love those who love you, what title have you to a reward? Will not the publicans do as much? But I tell you love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you, that you may be true sons of your Father in heaven" (Mt 5, 44-46).



These words of Our Lord clearly show how much moral strength true love requires. He who loves because of his inclinations or preference can claim no honor and merit. It is even doubtful whether this is love at all. Only when love has proved that it can bear the faults and shortcomings of others, be patient and make sacrifices, only then is it a true and strong love—for it is obvious that to do all this, real virtue is needed.

Those who think of love in terms of pleasure and receiving are greatly deceived. True love consists in giving and doing good, not in merely receiving.

If love is a virtue, then it must express itself in deed and action; one has to practice it with all one's heart and will. The most magnificent achievements of love are impossible without self-effacement, indeed, without self-immolation.

Without sacrifice or unselfishness, love is inconceivable. We must be able to love those who seem most unworthy of love in order to please God, to Whom we can show our love by so doing. Love must make it easier for us to surrender everything that is dear to us rather than see others suffer and in need. Love must enable us to tolerate the opinions of others (even though they may be opposed to our own, strange and different), to bear others' shortcomings and to excuse rather than judge them harshly.

Love has a keener eye for the needs of others than for their weaknesses. Love has a tender heart for another's sufferings as if its own. Its hand covers defects with forbearance so that the person who is wounded or ashamed cannot wish for greater consideration. Where the rigorist sees no avenue for mediation, love is the first to be reconciled, greet, give in, even sacrifice one's self when necessary, until peace is restored. This is how true love thinks and acts, and it sees nothing extraordinary in doing so. In fact, it sees efforts as the mere fulfillment of the words, "We are unworthy servants; we have done no more than our duty."

In following these principles the everyday saint loves his neighbor for the sake of God and Christ. For the sake of God he loves his neighbor in a twofold way: first, because God's perfections are reflected in his neighbor and he is thus an image of God. Noble and sublime qualities do not attract so much for their own sake but because they are a reflection and mirror of God. Secondly, he loves his neighbor because it is the will of God and God is thereby glorified.

In loving his neighbor as in everything else in his life Christ plays an important part. He knows Our Lord's words:

"Whoever does the will of My heavenly Father is brother, and sister and mother to Me" (Mt 12, 50).

"I assure you, as often as you did it for one of My least brothers, you did it for Me" (Mt 25, 40).

"Whoever welcomes one such child for My sake welcomes Me (Mt 18, 5).

The everyday saint regards everybody as a child of God and a member of Christ's Mystical Body. That is why he is delighted to serve Our Lord in his neighbor, preferring above all, to "wash the feet" of his neighbor in the lowliest type of service. He confesses with Father Eberschweiler:

"I do not need a long introduction or acquaintance in order to be friendly and fully able to love another with all my heart. Why? Because with your grace, O my God, I recognize at the first meeting why he is worthy of love; it is You in him . . . . These motives remain and, therefore, love itself remains even though further acquaintance may reveal faults."

Whether the everyday saint performs spiritual or physical works of mercy – and even if he is exploited by trickery – he serves the Savior with pleasure in the poor and needy. He has a special preference for the poor who are victims of adverse circumstances. He notices with pity how many

heroic sacrifices are made so often for merely natural motives in order to remove poverty. This confirms his conviction that the fate of the Church and Christian society depend to a high degree on the cultivation of the Christian ideal of poverty. He knows that the words of Our Lord will always apply: "The poor you have with you always." Wherever he can, he fights poverty by supplying labor and money because he sees the danger for the salvation of souls in enforced poverty. If he is a member of an order he endeavors to be faithful to his ideal of poverty even at the price of great sacrifice and under conditions of total economic insecurity.

Thus he meets with opposition from those who consider the poverty of a religious to be "a particularly refined form of wealth, namely, freedom from earthly goods but protection against need and discomfort." Through his freely chosen poverty he helps those who possess as well as those who—through no fault of their own—are dispossessed, understand the limited value of all material goods.

At all times, whether layman, priest or religious, he sees to it that the poor are regarded as the greatest treasure and riches of the Church. In them he loves and serves Christ. In the early Church the poor lived by the table of the Lord, i.e., the altar. Gifts were placed on the altar which symbolized Christ; they were given to Him and from Him to the poor. In former times the mark of personal service to the needy was emphasized. There is a danger in socializing charity in the modern world, making it cold and impersonal.

The everyday saint not only gives from his abundance but also at the cost of personal sacrifice. Whatever he owns he regards as the property of Christ to be shared readily with His members. The words of St. John Chrysostom on this subject may sound rather hard, but to the everyday saint they will appear to be normal. Where the great Doctor of the Church speaks of Christ, we may substitute Christians in his writings to the rich:

"You eat to excess, but Christ was destitute. You eat all kinds of cake, He did not even have dry bread. You drink wine of Tarsus: and to Him who was thirsty you do not even give a cup of cold water. You rest on a soft couch covered with an expensive rug, but this man died of cold. Even if your dinners are not bought with unjust money you are still to be blamed, for you always have more than is necessary while you do not give the poor man his basic needs and prefer to squander his property. If you were the protector of a child and wasted his inheritance, not caring for him when he was in extreme need, thousands would accuse you and you would be punished according to the law. But when you take Christ's property away and waste it without reason, you think you can escape punishment.

"I am not speaking to those who summon loose women to carousals (I no more have these in mind than the very dogs), or to the unjustly rich, for I wish to have as little to do with these as with pigs and wolves; rather, I speak to those who enjoy their own property but do not share it with others—who keep the heritage of their fathers selfishly for themselves. These too are not free of guilt. How will you escape blame and accusations of guilt when your parasites are filled as is your dog who stands beside you, while you do not regard Christ worthy of good, if the jester is paid so well, whereas the King of Heaven does not receive the smallest share? One goes away richly endowed having his fill of good things because he has said something funny; yet Christ who has taught us everything and without Whose knowledge we are not better than the dogs, does not even receive as much as the jester.

"Do you shudder at these words? Then shudder at your actions! Throw out the parasites and make Christ your table companion. If you give Him a place at your table, then He will be a merciful judge to you; He knows how to appreciate the honor of a banquet."

## C. Supernatural Love

Is it really necessary to deal at length in a special chapter with the supernatural love of fellowman just as we have tried to paint a picture of instinctive and rational love by bringing out the essential features? Because of its significance, supernatural love of fellowman will be dealt with under the aspects of its content, degree and motive.

### 1. The Content of Love

Because God loves everything He has made, and because the God-Man died for all of us without exception, supernatural love must not exclude anyone—neither Christian, Jew, pagan, rich, poor, benefactors, enemies, those we like or those we dislike.

When Our Lord says: "Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors," He gives as His reason the example of His Father: "This will prove that you are sons of your heavenly Father, for His sun rises on the bad and the good; He rains on the just and the unjust" (Mt 5, 45). St. Paul says: "For He wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth. And the truth is this: God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2, 4-6).

And Our Lord says: "The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost . . . Just so, it is no part of your heavenly Father's plan that a single one of these little ones shall ever come to grief" (Mt 18, 11, 14).

To love everyone, without exception, does not mean to love them all in exactly the same way. There is a hierarchy of love:

(i) We come first. Our Lord takes this for granted, inasmuch as He declares that love of self should be the measure of love for our neighbor. Then there are our relatives, friends and acquaintances.

An old proverb says: "Charity begins at home." This should be borne in mind, especially by those engaged in external works of charity or other social activities who often forget the fact that the "neighbor" is also in their own home. St. Francis de Sales had this in mind when he admonished: "Among those who are to be called neighbor, there are none who have a better claim to the title than those who live under the same roof."

(ii) Among our neighbors there are also those who have treated us badly—whether by uncharitableness, in hurting and offending us or, by injustice through theft and calumny—those we normally call our enemies.

Because human nature so easily avoids such people and shrinks from logical thinking, Our Lord has extended the all-embracing commandment of love to our enemies. And to encourage us to carry out this command, He gives us His own example. Holy Scripture tells us that He prayed for His enemies, that He did good to them, suffered and died for them as well. Those who act in a similar manner can apply the following words to themselves:

"If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you" (Mt 6, 14-15).

The everyday saint orients his life on these words of Our Lord and takes the matter of forgiveness very seriously. With the help of God he is successful in his striving to overcome deliberate aversions and feelings of revenge.

If temptations to aversion arise, he considers whether he is the victim of his own imagination. So often religious-minded people are oversensitive to injustice and hurt, imagining wrongs. If he really is the victim of injustice, the everyday saint diverts his attention; he tries to arouse gratitude that he is found worthy to share in Our Lord's humiliation, or he remembers the good qualities of his "enemy." In all his external dealings, he is always kind and considerate.

When offended, one must not repay evil with evil, although for noble motives one could wish suffering on a transgressor only in order that his life may be purified and his tendency to do harm curbed. When injured, one must never take revenge but demand restitution of honor or property to keep one's good name intact or to protect one's self against great loss.

The everyday saint is never unduly sensitive in these matters, particularly when his honor is involved. He prefers to be held in contempt in company with Our Lord and disciplines himself against self-seeking and self-complacency; therefore he takes time before defending himself. If God wishes his justification, however, and indicates this through the circumstances, then he knows how to defend his honor with fitting dignity. But he still does good to his enemies, prays, greets and offers them his services.

## 2. The Degree of Love

St. John declared unmistakably: "The way we came to understand love was that He laid down his life for us" (1 Jn 3, 16), and he draws the conclusion: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15, 12). Supernatural love of neighbor goes as far as sacrificing one's own life.

This concept is something significantly new. In the Old Testament we see God the Father ceaselessly pouring out abundant proof of His love as a model for neighborly love. In the New Testament the God-Man follows the same pattern while taking the form of a servant and laying down His life for men. In God the Father we learn the universality of love while the God-Man, through His words and life, teaches us its intensity.

St. Mark points out: "The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve—to give His life in ransom for the many" (Mk 10, 45). St. Paul too says: "Rather He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that He humbled Himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross" (Phil 2, 7f). St. Matthew draws the conclusion: "Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest, and whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all" (Mt 20, 26f).

The history of the saints shows us many splendid examples of selfless, self-sacrificing service. Many of them gave their lives heroically for their neighbor either by nursing the sick or through zealous work for the salvation of souls. Others spent all their strength of mind, body and soul in this service in ordinary circumstances. Their prayers, study, recreation, interests and love were all sacrificed for their neighbor. Some of them took the perpetual vow of submission, pledging themselves to regard everybody as a superior and to willingly submit to their slightest wishes.

Whoever wishes to sacrifice his life for his neighbor first of all must practice ordinary interior and exterior charity.

The spirit of charity entails a deep appreciation of one's neighbor as an image of God and, further, the love of delight and benevolence.

Supernatural love rejoices in the supernatural qualities and achievements of one's fellowmen because God is glorified in them. It wishes them all good things in body and soul, prays for their intentions and bears their faults and weaknesses (though deploring them because God is loved less because of them). Thus the everyday saint fulfills the advice of the apostle: "Clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience" (Col 3, 12).

These interior acts are the preparation for all practical love of neighbor and continually accompany it. Therefore St. John says: "Little children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it" (1 Jn 3, 18).

### 3. The Fundamental Principles of Love

In His reply to the scribe who asked for the first and most important commandment Our Lord gives us a clear and comprehensive idea of our love for our neighbor. He shows us the source from which it flows and points to its effectiveness.

#### a. The Source of Love

Our Lord explains briefly and unmistakably that: "The second commandment is like the first: You shall love your neighbor. We realize what this means—love of God and our neighbor are, in principle, one and the same love; they are twin brothers. As theologians teach, they ultimately have one aim—God—even if the intermediate aim is different.

Love of neighbor, therefore, flows from the love of God. Try to visualize this truth in a broader context.

We know from experience how much our individual attitude influences us in judging circumstances, things and people in every day life. For instance, the sun is 1,300,000 times as large as the earth. Yet to us it appears no larger than a small coin, while the relatively small part of the earth on which we stand appears immeasurably great. In a similar manner, our own personal interests appear so great to us that they capture all our attention, while the more important interests of others completely escape our notice or seem mere trifles.

A change can come about in this regard only when we take a neutral point of view which enlarges the narrow horizon of our egoism and allows other things to appear in their true size. Since our point of view must be neutral we will not find it in ourselves nor in our neighbors, but we must transcend both and take our stand in God. Everything receives its measure and value from God, He is the measure in all things, the standard for the appreciation and valuation of our neighbors. He has adopted them as His children, made them members of Christ and temples of the Triune God and, as such, they stand before us as a wonderful new creation of divine love. The nearer we come to this God of love with mind, will and heart, the more everything will change before our eyes; His light and life become more and more our own possession and, at the same time, the standard for our appreciation and evaluation of the works of His hands. God loves man in spite of his weakness; therefore, He redeemed him at the price of the Precious Blood of His Only-begotten Son. He always nourishes man with His divine life so that He can receive him into the eternal community of His life and love. God is love.

Clement of Alexandria draws our attention to the fact that God made use of His omnipotence in creating the world in order to lavish His kindness and love on it. We, His children, hold the best and the safest position in His creation. "More than anything else, He loves man—His most beautiful

creation. Just as a father and mother look upon their child with joy, so the Heavenly Father looks upon the children who serve Him. He loves, supports, protects and, with tenderness, calls them "little children." We must know that we belong to Him, we who are His most beautiful creation—and knowing this, must confide in Him. We must love the Lord our God and loving Him, make Him the main interest of our life." God loves us. "See, upon the palms of My hands I have written your name" (Is 49, 16). "Of your kindness, O Lord, the earth is full" (Ps 119, 64). It is therefore blasphemy to assert that God takes no interest in man or in his welfare. No hair falls from our heads without the care of His loving providence! At all times, He is ready to forgive us. He tells us: "though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red they may become white as wool" (Is 1, 18).

There once was a young man in Salamanca who inherited a great fortune. He squandered it in gambling and in a single year had nothing left but his life. He blamed God for his misfortunes, blaspheming, calling Him a tyrant who took pleasure in allowing him to lose his money and to suffer. In his rage he blasphemed and made fun of God. Not even this was sufficient for him. He came across a book written for priests in the confessional, explaining the various kinds of sin and their gravity and he decided to commit them all. He read how grave a sin it was to make a bad confession and he made several bad confessions merely to offend God. One day he came to a confessor who listened to his heaven burden of sins and then said in kindness and friendliness: "Be sorry for what you have done and God will forgive you for His Son's sake." These words gripped the heart of the hardened sinner. "Father," he replied, "I have sinned more than anyone in all Salamanca!" The priest then answered: "And even if you had committed all the sins of Salamanca, all the sins of the whole world and of hell, be sure that God will forgive because His love is greater than all wickedness." "Is that true?" gasped the sinner, full of sorrow and bewilderment. "It is true," said the priest. "It is as true as the fact that there is a God and that God is love." The sinner was converted and became a monk in one of the strict penitential orders.

The everyday saint loves his neighbor because God loves him in the same manner. His love of neighbor therefore is great, deep and wide—as God's is. It is persevering, helpful, understanding, watchful, conciliatory and forgiving—as is God's love. One's own small needs and troubles disappear at the sight of the needs and troubles of the great family of God on earth, and a new world of undreamed vistas and wonderful providential planning is opened up.

In the light and love of the infinite God all natural shortcomings, moral imperfections—even crimes and offenses and enmity—appear small and insignificant. The all-merciful God does not withdraw His love from man because of these things—His love cannot be narrow because it embraces heaven and earth.

The everyday saint understands the implications of the words of St. John: "Remember that we have changed over from death to life in loving our brothers as we do" (1 Jn 2, 9). No matter what and how he saw and loved things before he loved God and valued Him, they now appeared as mere shadows and phantoms of death. Since his love of neighbor became a form of his love of God, real and true love began for him and he realized the truth of St. Vincent de Paul's words: "A Christian who has no love of his neighbor is only a shadow of a Christian."

The everyday saint values the individual talents and characteristics of his fellowmen, knowing that creatures do not exist of themselves but only in God and that each one individually represents a particular perfection of God in a special and original manner. He loves his neighbor with a personal and sincere love, just as the blessed in heaven love one another with sincere affection and yet all in God and because of God.

Our Lord called love the first and the most important of the commandments—consequently, we must apply ourselves to it with all the powers of our hearts. To make this endeavor easier God has not deprived fallen nature of its instinctive power of love. St. Augustine tells us: "Love is the center of gravity of the soul." St. Francis de Sales points out: "Just as the body has been created for the soul, so the soul has been created for love. God, Who made man in His image and likeness, wishes that in man, as in Himself, everything may be done through love and for love. Man's love for God has its origin in, and its success and perfection derived from, the eternal love of God for man."

Because our ability to love is set in motion by acts of love, God in His goodness has heaped countless benefits of body and soul upon us. He expects us to recognize and acknowledge His gifts and to believe that we are loved by Him as the apple of His eye.

The everyday saint has a fine capacity to adapt to the wishes and intentions of God. In all his strivings and efforts he makes love his most important aim. Even his religious knowledge and study are deliberately used to foster love; he does not act like the Christians who read many spiritual books, think over and discuss religious problems, but do not grow in love. These Christians can be compared to an artist who makes his own tools for his particular work but then putters around for the rest of his life without creating anything. Or one could also compare them to the wanderer in the desert who is nearly dying of thirst. At last he finds an oasis, but instead of quenching his thirst he philosophizes about the nature of water. The tools, or the spring in the case of religion, are speculation and knowledge—both of them must enliven love. St. Paul regards it as the greatest virtue of all: "There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13, 13).

And He begs his followers: "Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect" (Col 3, 14). In both cases, the apostle is thinking of love of God and love of our neighbor. St. Peter and St. James also strike the same note. St. Peter admonishes his flock: "Above all, let your love for one another be constant, for love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4, 8), and St. James calls love "the royal law" (Jas 2, 8).

The everyday saint takes this chief commandment very seriously; he forms his whole life in the spirit of love. Love is the central motive for all his activity. Other motives may also play their part, but the keynote of his life always remains: What will please God? And the basic attitude of his soul is this generosity and big-heartedness. With St. Francis de Sales, he knows that on the royal barge of love of God there are no slaves but only willing rowers. With the same saint, he remains constant to the fundamental law that a person who wishes to love God must always be deeply and exclusively intent on the love of God.

To the everyday saint, health of soul means the same as love. He desires God with all his heart, mind and strength. He accepts the advice which St. Francis de Sales gave to a loving soul: "Examine yourself often as to whether you can truly say 'My Beloved is mine and I am His.' Examine yourself whether there is perhaps some power in your soul or instinct of your body which does not belong to God. Then if you should find something there, take it and give it to God. You belong entirely to Him."

Love unites and makes men alike. We become similar to the object of our love. Thus the love of God makes us like God as no other virtue can. Many good Christians, with the help of grace, work diligently to acquire moral virtues but, because they forget to give love its God-willed place in their lives, they are changed very little interiorly and in later life astonish their neighbors because their nature is "divinized" and transformed to such a small degree.

The everyday saint may have no important role to play in public life, but in his own smaller circle

he cannot conceal his real worth. As fire transforms iron, so love transforms and molds his whole personality. Unpretentiously and inconspicuously he goes his way. Love may not have removed all limitations, but the harmony of his whole being, clarity of his kindness, reserves of power which he radiates and his readiness to be of service—all these make him the heart and soul of his surroundings.

The quiet, deep radiance of love of God drives him to unseen heroism and self-sacrificing love of neighbor. He may still have his limitations and shortcomings, but one quality and power is highly developed: the untiring, affectionate love which urges him to make his surroundings a little bit of heaven. He helps numerous people transform their lives which are darkened by original sin and the consequences of personal sin. His kindhearted nature loosens tensions between justice and injustice, bringing many sinners back to the Good Shepherd. On the question of kindness, Father Faber writes: "Kindness has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence, or learning, and these last three have never converted anyone unless they were also kind. In short, kindness makes us as gods to each other. Yet, while it lifts us so high, it sweetly keeps us low. For the continual sense, which the kind heart has of its own need of kindness, keeps it humble. There are no hearts to which kindness is so indispensable, as those that are exuberantly kind themselves."

True love is like the warmth of sunshine. Love awakens and promotes the development of seeds deeply hidden in man's heart. Many people are spiritually and morally crippled because they have desired the sunshine of love in vain. Others have the drive toward heroism—they could fly like eagles in the sun's rays—but they remain in the dark valleys of life because they have received too little love.

The everyday saint receives abundant love from God and passes it on to his neighbor from his abundance. If he has ever experienced lack of true Godlike love from his neighbor then he is all the more generous in passing on his own gifts of love to others. Above all, his way is marked by kind, uplifting understanding. He is not backward in encouraging and praising; he is inspired by his belief in the goodness of man and his mission. Many precious qualities in man are stunted because of lack of praise and encouragement. It is a pity that so few today know the human heart as well as he who wrote: "The least of love's duties is compassion—the first is to encourage. For there are many people who, having fallen so deeply, do not like to be pitied; whereas everyone, no matter how highly placed in authority, likes to be praised."

Our Lord set an example for the everyday saint in His dealings with St. Peter. His first successor on earth made the first confession of faith in His divinity on behalf of all the flock. Immediately Christ replied: "No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father" (Mt 16, 17), thus making two points: He recognized Peter, and He returned praise to God. In order to make use of the energies now awakened, His master pointed to the great new task of Peter's: "You are Rock, and on this rock I will build my church" (Mt 16, 18).

Where the everyday saint finds it necessary to correct, he will always be tactful and reverent. It is not only toward children but also adults that this saying applies: "Harsh words have no educational value. They do not improve nor do they humiliate. At most, they provoke only a subdued hatred against the teacher." Thus, the everyday saint goes through his life quietly with guided zeal and controlled energy. His true worth is often realized only after his death.

The everyday saint does not find it difficult to live up to the standard laid down by Our Lord. "You shall love your neighbor as yourselves," He told the scribes. The measure for the love of neighbor is, therefore, a sound love of self which must bear three qualities: It must be honest, resourceful, and ever ready for sacrifice. The everyday saint is not satisfied until his love is adorned with this



three-fold crown.

b. The Efficacy of Love

St. Paul wrote to the Romans: "Owe no debt to anyone except the debt that binds us to love one another. He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,' and any other commandment there may be are all summed up in this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love never wrongs the neighbor, hence love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom 13, 8-10). In effect, the apostle tells us that love is a compilation, a short summary, a fulfillment of all Christian counsels and commandments. Our Lord impresses the same truth on the Doctor of the Law. After pointing out that the love of God and neighbor was the most important of the commandments, He concluded: "On these two commandments the whole law is based and the prophets as well" (Mt 22, 40). And ever since St. Thomas and all the theologians place Christian perfection solely in the perfection of love. St. Francis de Sales gives us the words: "Where there is no love, the whole store of our virtues is as a useless heap of stones," and this teaching is endorsed by St. Paul: "Love is the bond of perfection." St. Augustine goes further, saying: "Love, and then do what you like." He knew the power of love which unites and identifies itself with the beloved, and it was therefore clear to him that the person who loves God will conform his will entirely to the Will of God. Perhaps we may be able to repeat with Our Lord: "He who has sent Me has never left Me alone! He is always with Me because I always do what pleases Him." Love, and then do what you like: love and, as a result, you will do what is pleasing to God. With his well-known expression, St. Augustine has summarized what St. Paul expressed at greater length in his canticle of love: "Love is patient, love believes everything, hopes for everything, love persists" (1 Cor Passim.).

The following examples may demonstrate how love can bring each virtue to perfection and can be the guiding star in our striving after sanctity.

c. Love and Sin

The everyday saint is confronted with evil and sin. He takes his stand against the undying enemy of love, which is sin.

We know from our catechism that love is a power which can destroy sin. An act of perfect contrition can destroy even a mortal sin, although the obligation of confessing mortal sins remains. Our Lord said of Mary Magdalene: "That is why her many sins are forgiven—because of her great love. Little is forgiven the one whose love is small" (Lk 7, 47). And St. Peter says: "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4, 8).

The everyday saint takes this truth seriously and makes himself a master and apostle of the act of perfect contrition. He teaches children and adults, particularly the sick and the dying how to practice the act of perfect contrition.

Love is so strong and powerful in him, that it enables him to avoid many imperfections and sins, particularly those of hidden aversion, envy and jealousy. There are few—even among the devout—who can eradicate these three kinds of uncharitableness; most of us succumb without realizing it. For those people who make a show of frequent confession and holy communion but are still obviously uncharitable; for these religious hypocrites, healthy common opinion has the greatest contempt. It also rightly criticizes that form of holiness which performs a multitude of religious

practices but lacks love.

Much havoc is caused everywhere through aversion. Originally aversion begins as an instinctive dislike of anything that is unpleasant, hideous, repulsive or hateful—be it a physical defect in the way one acts or a moral defect or limitation as, for instance, narrow-mindedness or prejudice, imagined or real injustice. As long as the intellect, will and actions are not influenced by instinctive impulse, but by the wishes and will of God, there can be no question of any moral fault. Very often, not always but far too frequently, natural aversion becomes a dangerous guide and adviser. It colors the judgment so that the intellect exaggerates (partly due to valid reasons, partly due to imagined new reasons) and entirely forgets the supernatural point of view which shows man as lovable in spite of his weaknesses. Such faulty judgments lead to faulty acts of mind and will, to unjustified, ungodly displeasure, wishing, speaking and doing evil.

Again, there are deeply religious-minded men with fundamentally good hearts who are all love to outsiders—but are wanting in kindness and consideration in treating individuals of their own community. They make tremendous sacrifices but still repel all who live with them. They are like volcanoes continually boiling over and terrifying their neighbors. Unless they are heroic, no one can bear to live with them. Yet such people are convinced that everything is always right with them—so much are they lacking in self-knowledge. Their entire outlook and behavior is colored to such an extent by tensions set up by their aversions that explosions are always imminent. So destructive and disintegrating are they in the life of the community that their path through life is lined with ruin. A religious community ruled by such people is open to tremendous harm unless it is offset by the heroic striving of the members. Though we may not belong to the ranks of those clearly recognizable, unhappy people, we are probably given to aversion much more than we actually realize.

To counteract this we must investigate, first of all, the causes and reasons for our aversions. Dullness of mind plays a part in preventing us from seeing things objectively, or it may be a lack of the spirit of faith and the failure to take into account that man is dependent on God. Almost always, a deeply ingrained envy or an overwhelming self-love plays an important role. Occasionally an innate and strongly-developed attitude of soul or a particular tension of the nervous system may be the cause.

A certain psychologist asked himself this question:

"Whence comes this strong aversion which takes away the light from our glance, the word from our lips, the warmth from our hearts?"

His reply was:

"To such questions, one generally hears the answer 'O! This or that fault is present and makes so-and-so unbearable; such vanity, egotism, childish behavior, crawling flattery—all this goes against my grain! One can have the most violent aversion toward someone who has exactly the same faults as oneself; even among our best friends there are some who suffer from the same unbearable faults—and even worse defects—and yet they are dear to our hearts. Finally, there are some of our acquaintances who also display the same unbearable faults without our taking exception to them or being irritated by them. So it is clear that the exterior and interior faults of our neighbor cannot be regarded as the real reason for our aversion. With more honesty, one might say that the aversion can be traced back to ourselves—to some personal failing. Aversion may be a kind of misunderstanding—often we do not have the key to understanding many men, are unable to unearth the deep, invisible treasure and see the deeper unknown layers in the character of the other person. However, this is only partly true because very frequently, our aversion has, in the first place, no

spiritual but only a physical basis. Sometimes a man will have an inexplicable aversion or, on the other hand, a deep attachment to lifeless objects, and such feelings can only have their roots in the secret fabric and cravings of our bodies, especially of our nerves. That powerful emotion, which fills the soul with aversion or attachment toward other people, springs from the same ground. Aversion is very often only a disturbance of our consciousness due to the upsurge of undercurrents of our nervous system. We must not be surprised when we experience similar movements in our soul. It is not always a sin to be troubled by these currents—but it is a sin to give in to them and allow oneself to drift along without resisting them. It is God's will that we restore the former beauty and tranquillity of soul which has been devastated by these currents and similar torrents of muddy water. We must dam up, divert and level off the muddy places, the sentiments and passions which spring from subterranean wells—until only a clear ray of love shining from heaven floods through the soul. Purify your heart."

He who knows the causes of spiritual affliction immediately has a clear guideline for the suitable remedies. The intellect is the first faculty for seeing with clarity. It does not require exceptional sharpness of mind to discover in a neighbor many hidden virtues under the ashes. And even the ash does not seem so bad when the reason for it is apparent.

Finally, clear thinking demands that we measure the faults and limitations of our neighbor by those standards by which we judge ourselves. We should love our neighbor as ourselves—he can claim the same excuse and explanation for his faults as we claim for our own. If we really understand the reason for our own shortcomings, should we not try to spread the mantle of charity over those of our neighbors?

Thomas a Kempis warns us very strongly on this point:

"You know well how to excuse and gloss over your own deeds, but you will not accept the excuses of others. It would be more just for you to accuse yourself and to excuse your brother. If you wish to be borne with, then bear with others" (Imitation of Christ 2, 3).

In another book, *The Little Rose Garden*, he gives the advice:

"O beloved brother, bear with others and you will be borne with; excuse and you will be excused; have compassion on the failings of others and they will show compassion to you; have sympathy with those who mourn and you will be consoled by those who are joyful; lift up the one who has fallen, and you too will be uplifted through God's assistance. Whatever you do to others they will do to you, for God judges and gives according to justice. No one may find fault with another if he overlooks his own, for if you look down on someone who has a fault you act like a blind man teasing another blind man or a dumb man who curses another dumb man or a fool who laughs at another fool."

We must at all times see to it that the commandment of Our Lord is carried out; in practical life we must love our neighbor as ourselves.

Let us act like the artist commissioned to paint a portrait of Alexander the Great. Alexander had a scar on his forehead due to a sword cut—but what was the artist to do? If he omitted the scar, then the picture was not true to life; if he painted the scar, it would spoil the picture. He solved the difficulty by painting the king in a thoughtful posture, his head resting on his hand so the scar was concealed in a natural manner.

This approach to our neighbor should be all the more easy for Christians because we know by the light of faith that God loves our neighbors in spite of all their faults and treats them as His children. As we grow in the natural and supernatural clarification of the intellect, so too the purification and clarification of the emotions should keep pace. No one will ever become a saint who does not, with

the help of God's grace, energetically practice the *agere contra* so as to overcome his instinctive inclinations. Knowing this, the everyday saint is not content with patiently bearing his neighbor's faults. He also stretches out his hand, to the highest degree, toward heroism.

The precepts of the apostle Paul are his guide in patient endurance. One of them, from his canticle of love, is: "Love is patient, love bears all things." Thus it is not tense, narrow-minded or petty. The second precept is found in the Epistle to the Galatians: "Help carry one another's burdens; in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6, 2). The law of Christ is the law of love, of daily taking up the cross out of love. Under "burden" we include all the troubles of life which we carry and also the cross which our neighbor places on our shoulders through his faults. If we bear this burden—if we try, in all humility and charity to improve the faults of others and at the same time suffer from their limitations and weaknesses and add it to our own burden, then we fulfill the double commandment of Our Lord.

Under normal conditions we often do not realize how much we depend upon relationships with others. Prisoners in solitary confinement suffer most from constant loneliness and separation from human sympathy.

The Italian poet, Silvio Pellico, spent ten years for a political offense in strictest confinement. In his book he writes:

"O how vivid is the wish for a prisoner to meet a sympathetic person. The Christian religion which is so rich in love and compassion did not forget therefore to include, among its works of mercy, visiting the imprisoned—to see a person who bears our misfortune with us and also consoles us. How often did I go to the window of my cell and look out for a human face! I considered myself happy when the sentry did not walk up and down too closely to the wall so that I could see him look up to me when he heard me cough and when I thought to discover in his face a trace of kindness. Then sweet sentiments overpowered me as if this unknown soldier was my very best friend. When he passed on I waited most impatiently until he came back, and when he returned I rejoiced as if he had done me an act of kindness."

A similar story is told of Count Lauzun who had to remain in a dark room for years, alone and abandoned. So great was his desire to make some contact with a living creature that he sometimes jumped up and embraced the wall of his dungeon. His joy was overwhelming when he discovered a spider in a crevice of the wall—it was the first living thing he had seen for many years. Now, thank God, he had something to entertain him—and he conversed with the little artist as with a human being while he watched her at her work. From then on he did not feel as unhappy as before—but his talks were overheard, the spider was killed and his loneliness weighed down on him more than ever before.

The everyday saint diligently exercises himself in bearing patiently the faults of his neighbor. Because love is the unmistakable mark of the true disciple of Christ, he always tries to think kindly of others—especially those whom he dislikes—and he seeks their company instead of avoiding them. He will speak only of what is praiseworthy in others and lovingly pass over their defects. He also performs acts of kindness and small favors to his neighbor flowing from a heart full of riches.

Similarly he resists the impulses of envy and jealousy. Envy is regretting some good which comes to our neighbor, in the sense that it might dim one's own reputation or encroach upon one's own achievements. Two characteristics are usually present: First, the envious person is sad, irritable and disagreeable because of the good his neighbor possesses (possessions, talents, success, beauty or the love and reputation one enjoys from either superiors or subjects). Secondly, this sadness is nourished by the fear of one's own loss of popularity, esteem or the fact that one may lose one's

position.

Jealousy presents itself when this encroachment is feared because we must share the good we possess as our own with others (such as possessions, power, learning or the love one receives from another). Envy and jealousy must not be confused with the sadness which arises from not possessing similar gifts as our neighbor or with the competition stimulated by the gifts a neighbor possesses or with justifiable indignation when a person acquires possessions unworthily.

In all these matters, the everyday saint has clear-cut ideas and opinions, but at the same time he realizes how easily one can deceive oneself because of the weakness of human nature and because these faults stem from a subtle seeking of self and honor. He also knows that theologians are of the opinion: "That after the passions have been defeated, two enemies remain; apart from impurity there is envy because one does not wish that others may be pleasing to God." They regard envy as the source from which uncharitable thoughts, offensive words, and even crimes spring forth. Holy Scripture declares: "But by the envy of the devil death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it" (Wis 2, 24). "Jealousy and peevishness shorten a man's days" (Eccl 30, 26). "Jealousy rots the bones" (Prov 14, 30).

The everyday saint wishes to overcome this powerful and crafty enemy. He therefore uses the attacks as opportunities for performing heroic interior and exterior acts of charity. To the disciples who were jealous of Our Lord and His success, St. John the Baptist said, "He must increase while I must decrease" (Jn 3, 30). And that is the attitude of the everyday saint in dealing with all who arouse envy and jealousy in him. Thus he puts into practice the words of St. Paul, "Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous; it does not put on airs; it is not snobbish. Love is never rude; it is not self-seeking, it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor 13, 4f).

#### d. The Little Virtues

These virtues are referred to as little only because in the eyes of the world they are hardly respected or valued at all. The everyday saint focuses special attention on them because they help him form the life of each day into a pattern of holiness.

Following the example of St. Francis de Sales, Father Roberti wrote a book on the little virtues. In it he explains their merit:

"There are many, and I will briefly enumerate them: Forbearance toward an ill-tempered neighbor and readiness to forgive him even when one cannot count on similar consideration; a kindness which does not seem to notice obvious faults—which, as you can see, is the opposite of the unhappy knack of revealing the faults of others; a certain sympathy which makes the sufferings of the unhappy and depressed unhappy in order to increase them; a certain pliability of mind, which willingly accepts the opinions of others as the reasonable and right thing—even though at first sight it does not see the reasonableness of the matter and which, without jealousy, pays tribute to the other's better knowledge; a certain consideration which anticipates the needs of others in order to spare them pain and save them the humiliation of asking for one's help; a magnanimity of heart, which tries always to do what lies in its power to help and be pleasing and which desires to do more than it is able; a friendly popularity which listens to bores without showing any sign or feeling bored and which instructs the ignorant without hurting their feelings; a certain politeness which does not show the false friendliness of worldly people as regarding manners but sincere Christian affection." Bishop Camus reports that in a dialogue which he once had with his friend, Francis de Sales, the

saint said:

"How much should we love the little virtues which grow at the foot of the cross and are nourished by the Precious Blood of His Son!

"And what kind of virtues are these?

"Humility, patience, charity, kindness, forbearance, meekness, willingness, warmth and gentleness of heart, sympathy, forgiveness of injustice, simplicity, sincerity and other similar virtues. These virtues are like violets which grow in cool shade, thriving on the dew while they appear insignificant and spread abroad a most pleasing fragrance.

"Are there any of these virtues accompanying the cross?

"Very many! They are those which shine with splendor when visibly accompanied by love—for example, wisdom, justice, magnanimity, zeal, generosity, almsgiving, courage, chastity, exterior mortification, obedience, contemplation, steadfastness, contempt for riches, honor and similar achievements which everyone wishes to reach because they are more esteemed, honored and, very often, because they make us more important or more famous. We should, in fact, love outstanding virtues because God loves them more and because they are the means by which we can show Him our love in an outstanding way."

Thus the little virtues are of great importance because they can be regarded as social, safe, ordinary and common sense virtues. They are social because they animate social life; one cannot live without them. They are called safe because they do not bring much honor in their train and therefore do not lead to pride. They are called ordinary because there are unlimited opportunities in daily life to practice them. They must be regarded as sensible virtues because we know from experience that others suffer through our lack of virtue and that we suffer through their faults.

In his booklet on humility Pope Leo XIII suggests a golden rule for practical life:

"In conversation, never contradict anyone when it is a question of matters of doubt and which are optional. Therefore one must give in on unimportant matters even if convinced that others are mistaken. On all other occasions, when it is a question of defending truth, act with courage but without passion and disdain and you may be sure that you will be more victorious with self-possession than with impatience and contempt."

The little virtues can easily be misunderstood and lead to spineless, unmanly education of self and others. In this connection, today we often encounter an objection to Christianity as a whole and to Christian meekness in particular. But where patience with the faults of others is prompted by a deep love, it stands as a summary of all the little virtues; if it is condemned, then all the little virtues are also condemned. Difficulties have their origin in the tension which exists between meekness—as a consequence of love—and justice and love of truth.

We must admit that meekness is frequently practiced in some circles in an unhealthy manner. Moreover, some spiritual teachers, like St. Francis de Sales, advise us not to be angry at all. The reason for this may be that there is a danger of misusing this elementary instinct of our nature too easily. Aristotle says, "As you bend the bough, so shall it grow." St. Francis de Sales, of course, endeavored to ennoble his own vehement temperament through the *agere contra* while St. James did not forbid anger but kept it in control, "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (Jas 1, 19).

It must not be overlooked that in His teaching Our Lord stressed meekness. This was necessary because He preached a doctrine—the form and extent of which were little known—to the Jews and pagans.

Yet it was not entirely unknown to the pagans. It is said that when the Samnites, the ancient enemies

of Rome, had completely encircled the Roman army they asked the advice of Herenius, a wise and ancient man of the people. He replied, "Let the Romans go in peace." To the victorious leaders this advice seemed unintelligible. They thought the old man must have misunderstood and explaining the situation again, asked his advice. This time he said the opposite, "Exterminate the Romans to the last man." The leaders were even more astonished and questioned him a third time. Herenius then replied, "If you kill the enemy you have conquered him; if you pardon him with life and freedom you have also conquered him—but better and more fundamentally because in this case you do not have to fear those who will take revenge for those you killed. You have obtained true honor and transformed the enemy into a friend."

Another pagan, Valerius Maximus, says, "It is more fitting to overcome offenses through goodness than to repay them with obstinacy of mutual hatred."

Our Lord's advice, rules and commandments in this direction are seen today as a thorn in the flesh. He demands meekness to offenders asking pardon, to personal enemies and the enemies of the nation. The parable of the unforgiving servant makes it clear that the attitude of forgiveness must be permanent whenever someone who offends begs pardon. Matthew relates:

"Then Peter came up and asked Him, 'Lord, when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive him? Seven times?' Jesus answered, 'No,' Jesus replied, not seven times; I say seventy times seven times.' That is why the reign of God may be said to be like a king who decided to settle accounts with his officials. When he began his auditing, one was brought in who owed him a huge amount. As he had no way of paying it, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that the official prostrated himself in homage and said, 'My lord, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with pity, the master let the official go and wrote off the debt.

"But when that same official went out he met a fellow servant who owed him a mere fraction of what he himself owed. He seized him and throttled him. 'Pay back what you owe,' he demanded. His fellow servant dropped to his knees and began to plead with him, 'Give me time and I will pay you back in full.' But he would hear none of it. Instead, he had him put in jail until he paid back what he owed.

"When his fellow servants saw what had happened they were badly shaken, and went to their master to report the whole incident. His master sent for him and said, 'You worthless wretch! I canceled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. Should you not have dealt mercifully with your fellow servant, as I dealt with you?' Then in anger the master handed him over to the torturers until he paid back all that he owed. My heavenly Father will treat you in exactly the same way unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart" (Mt 18, 21-35).

The meekness shown to our personal enemy must be directed by the following words:

"You have heard the commandment, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' But what I say to you is this: offer no resistance to injury. When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other. If anyone wants to go to law over your shirt, hand him your coat as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the man who begs from you. Do not turn your back on the borrower" (Mt 5, 38-42).

"My command to you is: love your enemies and pray for your persecutors" (Mt 5, 44).

"You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers, 'You shall not commit murder; every murderer shall be liable to judgment.' What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; any man who uses abusive language toward his brother shall be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and if he holds him in contempt he risks the fires of Gehenna" (Mt.

5, 21-22).

This statement neither interferes with public justice nor opens up a door for injustice—but presents a high ideal to guide Christ's disciples, an ideal of such paramount importance that it must not be disregarded.

Our Lord's attitude toward national enemies was even less understandable to His people. In the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan He demanded that love transcend national barriers in rendering aid to the needy. St. Luke recounts:

"On one occasion a lawyer stood up to pose Him this problem: 'Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus answered him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' He replied: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' Jesus said, 'You have answered correctly. Do this and you shall live.'"

"But because he wished to justify himself he said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'There was a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell prey to robbers. They stripped him, beat him and then went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road; he saw him but continued on. Likewise there was a Levite who came the same way; he saw him and went on. But a Samaritan who was journeying along came on him and was moved to pity at the sight. He approached him and dressed his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. He then hoisted him on to his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him. The next day, he took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request: 'Look after him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?' The answer came, 'The one who treated him with compassion.' Jesus said to him, 'Then go and do the same.'" (Lk 10, 25-37).

Our Lord lived all that he taught—and without that one-sidedness which He is sometimes accused of. He kept the balance between meekness and justice and between meekness and love of truth. His humble life and passion reveal His meekness in an excellent manner. He practiced in a heroic way what He advised others to do. His public life reveals Him as a man capable of action, courage and just anger, but even here His meekness is evident. He eludes His enemies, is kind to sinners, although they personally offend Him as God by their sins; He weeps bitterly over Jerusalem. He says: "Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart" (Mt 11, 29), and by this He does not wish that meekness become weakness but self-sacrificing love. This is clear when He adds: "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Mt 11, 30). He implies that the yoke and burden imposed by other masters is heavy; what He asks of us is fitted to our strength. In every aspect of life and conduct, He stands as the supreme model, the great spiritual leader of His people.

According to Holy Scripture, Jesus approves of and practices the exterior expression of anger. St. Matthew and St. Luke narrate parables in which the central figure becomes angry or acts with determination, and power and Our Lord adds no word of disapproval. Thus we are told of the householder who invited guests to his banquet. When they refused to come the host fell into a rage and said to his servant: "I tell you that not one of those invited shall taste a morsel of my dinner" (Lk 14, 24).

In a similar way we hear of the king who prepared a wedding feast for his son and invited his subjects.

"Some ignored the invitation and went their way, one to his farm, another to his business. The rest laid hold of his servants, insulted them, and killed them. At this the king grew furious and sent his army to destroy those murderers and burn their city." (Mt 22, 5-7).



"My friend,' he said, 'how is it you came in here not properly dressed?' The man had nothing to say. The king then said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the night to wail and grind his teeth" (Mt 22, 12f).

Our Lord expressly approves of this manner of acting, when He says:

"My heavenly Father will treat you in exactly the same way unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart" (Mt 18, 35).

God created the passion of anger. When used rightly it is a useful power as the examples from Our Lord's life show.

On one occasion Christ rebuked the pharisees after they found fault with the Hosannas sung at His entry into Jerusalem. He said to them, Did you never read this: 'From the speech of infants and children you have framed a hymn of praise?' " (Mt 21, 16f). Again He went into the temple, "and drove out all those engaged there in buying and selling. He overturned the money changers' tables and the stalls of the dove-sellers, saying to them: "Scripture has it, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you are turning it into a den of thieves.' " (Mt 21, 12f).

Christ was ruthless with the pharisees: "You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for Me?" (Mt 22, 19). "Serpents, brood of vipers!" (Mt 23, 33). Peter has to hear the bitter reproach: "Get out of My sight, you satan! You are trying to make me trip and fall. You are not judging by God's standards but by man's." (Mt 16, 23). In stern words, Jesus told the leper who expressed joy at his healing to depart immediately. "He looked round at them with anger" (Mk 3, 5) because they did not want to understand that healing on the Sabbath day was not a violation of the Sabbath. The ills called down on Chorazin and Bethsaida were frightful (Lk 10, 13), as were those which He called down on the scribes and the pharisees (Mt 23, 13). This picture of power and strength foretells the Last Judgment—when the foolish virgins are turned away from the door of heaven; the lazy and unprofitable servants are handed over to the torturers and these terrible words are addressed to the godless: "Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!" (Mt 25, 41).

So in His own life Our Lord shows that justice as well as charity have their place. It was indicated that fatherliness must never become grandfatherliness.

Courageous and just action is necessary and useful where community life is concerned. Famous educators show unflinching attitudes in public but in private life prove the sincerity of their intention through their kindly natures. Anger must never destroy love; it must actually be the expression and proof of love, and as such it must not be prompted by aversion and selfishness.

This particularly applies to the education of individuals. God trains the soul through a perfect balance of mildness and severity. In order to help our fellowmen face the hardships of life, we too must try to combine both—but always out of love.

The kind of severity being applied will depend on each soul and the circumstances. Where there are intimate, personal bonds—bonds of affection—one look, word, or denial of a privilege is sufficient. It was the mark of an exceptionally fine relationship when the charges of Don Bosco felt that their greatest punishment was to be denied his nightly greeting. It is not always easy to measure punishment exactly and fulfill the advice of the Apostle Paul, "And fathers, do not nag your children lest they lose heart." (Col 3, 21).

It is far better to follow the advice of St. Francis de Sales:

"Corrections are not easy to digest. Fraternal love (the same applies to paternal love) must know how to mellow them so that they lose their bitterness; otherwise they resemble green fruit which causes indigestion. Love does not seek its own advantage but only the glory of God. Bitterness and

severity come from passion, vanity and pride."

When facing correction regarding personal limitations

where there is no question of God's honor or the good of our neighbor; the person striving for holiness replies with simple, quiet meekness out of a spirit of generosity while applying the words of the rabbis: "Speech is valued at a single piece of silver, but silence is of double worth," and the more striking precept of St. Francis de Sales: "Reasonable silence is always better than truth spoken without a spirit of love."

In the same spirit the everyday saint solves the tension between meekness and a sense for truth. When circumstances demand one is permitted to, and must, rebuke error as demonstrated by the apostle of the Gentiles who opposed the application of the Jewish law of unclean meat:

"When Cephas came to Antioch I directly withstood him because he was clearly in the wrong. He had been taking his meals with the Gentiles before others came who were from James. But when they arrived he drew back to avoid trouble with those who were circumcised. The rest of the Jews joined in his dissembling till even Barnabas was swept away by their pretense. As soon as I observed that they were not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel I had this to say to Cephas in the presence of all: 'If you who are a Jew are living according to Gentile ways rather than Jewish, by what logic do you force the Gentiles to adopt Jewish ways?' " (Gal 2, 11-14).

Other similar incidents in the history of the Church where saints opposed each other seriously in religious, scientific and practical questions indicate that a courageous outspokenness and opposition to error is not to impair charity but rather to foster and further it. One must act according to the principle of St. Augustine: *Interfucite errores, diligit homines*—Death to error, but love for the erring. You must thus always be on guard against personal sensitiveness and hurt feelings—both blind the judgment and make you biased so that you do not fight for the victory of truth but for personal justification and your own honor. Again, one should not assume bad motives or deliberate lies in an enemy until the contrary is proved true. Finally, contrary opinions must be sorted out immediately from authentic and not from false sources. They must be balanced in order to discover the value hidden even in an error.

In an era of spiritual instability and escapism, an important thing is the courageous fight for truth. Those who fight without offending charity have achieved something—love is, and will always be, the greatest of all virtues.

On his epitaph Pope Pius X is described as courageous and mild. In his Encyclical *E Supremi* he shows the everyday saint this way:

"In order that the desired fruit may be derived from this apostolate and zeal for teaching (and that Christ may be formed in all), it must be remembered, Venerable Brethren, that no means is more efficacious than charity for 'The Lord was not in the earthquake' (I Kings 19, 11). It is utter folly to think that one can draw souls to God by strict demands. On the contrary, more harm than good is accomplished by harshly taunting men with their faults and bitterly reproving them for their vices. Even though the apostle counselled Timothy to 'correcting, reproving, appealing,' he took pains to add 'never losing patience' (2 Tim 4, 2). Christ has left us many clear examples of this. 'Come to Me,' we find Him saying, 'come to Me all you who find life burdensome and I will refresh you.' (Mt 11, 28). By those who labor and are burdened He meant none other than those who are slaves to sin and error. What gentleness was shown by the divine Master! What tenderness, what compassion toward all kinds of misery! Isaiah marvelously described His heart in the following words: 'Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice

heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench.' (Is 42, 1-3). This charity, 'patient and kind' (1 Cor 13, 4), we should show even to those who are hostile and persecute us. St. Paul cried out: 'When we are insulted we respond with a blessing. Persecution comes our way; we bear it patiently. We are slandered and we try reconciliation' (1 Cor 4, 12-13). Perhaps they only seem to be worse than they really are. Their association with others, their preconceived opinions, the counsel and advice of others, and a false sense of shame have dragged them into the company of the wicked. Nevertheless, their wills are not so depraved as their actions would lead people to believe. Who can prevent us from hoping that the flame of Christian charity might dispel the darkness of their minds and lead them into the light and peace of God? Perhaps the fruits of our labors will be slow in coming, but charity wears not with waiting. Charity knows that God looks to the good intention and not the results of effort."

e. Zeal for Souls

St. Ambrose describes zeal for souls as the glow of love, thus singling out in a special manner the inner connection between love and apostolic activity. Without love there can be no true zeal for souls, and where there is no zeal for souls, there is no real love! Who can imagine a blazing fire without a white-hot center? Similarly, there is no real profound love of God without zeal for souls. As St. Ambrose says: "He who does not glow with a passion for souls has no real love." William of Paris refers to zeal for souls as the blazing flame enkindled in the divine furnace which consumes the heart and from which it leaps forth to set other hearts on fire. St. Bernard sees it as "a certain earnest prompting of love which presses us in a holy manner to be active for the honor and glory of God through fostering the salvation of our fellowmen."

It is quite obvious that the measure of love determines the degree of one's zeal for souls. St. Ignatius used to say: "If it were possible for me to help a single soul by dying a thousand times every day, I would willingly undergo death a thousand times." His great disciple, St. Francis Xavier, once baptized a little child in danger of death and declared full of joy, "This would be enough to make up for the long and tedious journey which I have undertaken to India." Magdalen of Pazzi prays: "I have such an ardent desire to lead souls to You, O God, that this desire causes me pain; this suffering is so intense that it becomes like hell to me because I cannot fulfill my desire."

St. Rose of Lima, burning with interior love, complained: "O if only I were not a woman! Dressed only in a hairshirt and bare-footed, I would go out to save souls, to preach the Gospel to the poor in order to gather up the drops of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in the most remote parts of the world."

From these examples it is seen that the value and significance of love cannot be stressed too much by all wishing to save souls. They should not only be aqueducts which allow the waters of truth, love and grace to flow, but they should also be wells filled to overflowing with the good they would freely make available to others.

Pope Pius XI, who wished to enkindle an ardent zeal for souls in the entire Church, referred to this matter again and again. On September 25, 1934, he addressed the working women of France: "Apart from a fiery enthusiasm, there is also a quiet, peaceful enthusiasm which is genuine enthusiasm. One must persevere, hold firmly, enkindle and foster it, especially when hard daily work begins once again—the grind of everyday life which at times becomes unbearable since it is not accompanied by poetry and fiery ardor. It is the true secret of fiery activity and of tranquil fire. As you well know, this is the great difficulty but also the great need of life: the tranquil fire and the

fiery tranquillity."

On November 4th of the same year he said:

"There are two things that must animate you: continuous striving to the greatest heights, to the heart of God and an urge which not only keeps this desire alive but makes apostolic activity a holy necessity."

St. Catherine of Siena, who was privileged to do extraordinary apostolic work for the kingdom of God, said of herself: "My nature is fire."

The everyday saint can apply this phrase to himself because he stresses the growth and enormous efficacy of love. His love for neighbor must be principally a love for souls; his common sense shows him that souls are redeemed at a high price. In this endeavor he is encouraged primarily by his high regard for the sacrament of Baptism, through which we have become "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet 2, 8), and by the sacrament of Confirmation, the sacrament which makes us soldiers and knights of Jesus Christ, able to act according to the principles of Pope Pius XI.

Just as a fire glows, warms and shoots upward, so the everyday saint is like a beacon in the darkness of our times, a furnace in the cold desert of our modern life, and a living sursum corda in a world that tends ever downward.

Our Lord said of Himself: "I am the light of the world." The world—even the pagan world—does not realize what it would lose if this light were ever extinguished. "Apart from Christ," says Pascal, "we do not know anything about life and death, about what God is or what we ourselves are." All Christians, especially the laity, must become light and bring light into the darkness of the world by their enlightening, vivifying and encouraging works, as was the case in the early Church.

St. Peter, as the first Pope, admonishes us: "Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ in your hearts. Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply." (1 Pet 3, 15). The apostle of the Gentiles says the same thing: "Be prudent in dealing with outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your speech be always gracious and in good taste, and strive to respond properly to all who address you." (Col 4, 5-6).

The Acts of the Apostles reports at great length the first persecution of the Christians which had broken out in Jerusalem and which cost Stephen his life (fr. Acts 8, 1-11; 21). The apostles remained in the town while the lay people fled into various directions. Those who were dispersed as a result of the persecution that was raised over Stephen had traveled as far as Phoenicia Cyprus and Antioch without preaching the word to anyone except the Jews. Their preaching had Christ as its main subject and was amazingly successful. And the Lord's power went with them so that a great number learned to believe and turned to the Lord. Later in the Acts, three lay apostles are named: Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos.

"A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria and a man of eloquence, arrived by ship at Ephesus. He was both an authority on Scripture and instructed in the new way of the Lord. Apollos was a man full of spiritual fervor. He spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, although he knew only of John's baptism. He too began to express himself fearlessly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home and explained to him God's new way in greater detail.

"He wanted to go on to Achaia, so the brothers encouraged him by writing the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived he greatly strengthened those who through God's favor had become believers. He was vigorous in his public refutation of the Jewish party as he went about establishing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah" (Acts 18, 24-28).

Our world today offers numerous occasions to preach Christ by word, at work, in the family and on

the street. "The Light shines on in darkness, a darkness that did not overcome it" (Jn 1, 5). Everywhere ignorance of Christ and Christianity is astonishingly great—at home and abroad, in your own village, on the missions, even in Christian circles.

He who provides our times with everyday saints gives it, in them, the Light of the Word of God. They know how to preach in a prudent, simple and convincing manner—by word of mouth, through the apostolate of the press and through action. They act according to the method of St. Francis Xavier and Alphonse Rodriguez:

"The greatest missionary of India was not satisfied with consuming himself in his immediate sphere of action for God and souls. He also found time and energy to continue apostolic correspondence with those at home. On one occasion he wrote: 'The thought of going home to Europe often comes to me in order to announce to all our universities and to shout it into the ears of those men who possess more wisdom than love: how many souls you could save if you wished to; they will accuse you at the last judgment for letting them be cast down into hell.' "

Rodriguez wrote to St. Peter Claver:

"How many idle people there are in Europe who could make good apostles in America. Magnificent work, a holy enterprise! Should not the love of God make a pathway through oceans, which are strewn with the avarice of man? Are not pagans also worthy of being valued as sons of God? Christ has not died in vain for them. O Peter, my dearest child, why do you not hurry to gather the drops of the Blood of Jesus Christ and to make it effective?"

Because the word of God radiates so much light and strength, the everyday saint likes to work in a special way for the propagation and understanding of Holy Scripture. In his forthright way St. Paul says: "Indeed, God's word is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates and divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the reflections and thoughts of the heart." (Heb 4, 12).

This has been proved often in history and life, as this example shows:

A light-hearted student received a Bible from a well-meaning friend. He was going to throw it away at first but then used the single pages to roll his cigarettes. Jokingly he said, "I sent the word of God up in smoke." So it was that he smoked sheet after sheet, the gospel of St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and part of St. John. Then one day it occurred to him to read a page, and it was the tenth chapter of St. John. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." This shook him considerably and he continued to read. His eyes were opened, and from that time on he became a changed man.

The everyday saints influence others by their good example more than their words. Our Lord said, "In the same way your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father" (Mt 5, 16). The warmth which they spread draws many under their influence and leads them back to a warmer, more devout Christian life. You cannot light a fire with an icicle—nothing could be truer! But it is just as true that ice cannot resist the heat of a fire for long.

St. Peter made the first Christians realize that they were a royal priesthood. Then he pointed out their task:

"Beloved, you are strangers and in exile; hence I urge you not to indulge your carnal desires. By their nature they wage war on your soul.

"Though the pagans may slander you as troublemakers, conduct yourselves blamelessly among them. By observing your good works they may give glory to God on the day of visitation" (1 Pet 2, 11-12).

"You married women must obey your husbands so that any of them who do not believe in the word

of the gospel may be won over apart from preaching through their wives' conduct. They have only to observe the reverent purity of your way of life." (1 Pet 3, 1f).

The power of good example has at all times been very great and irresistible. In an era which makes many apostolic methods ineffective or impossible, the power of good example cannot be over-rated. We know, for example, of a French general, De Sonis, whose presence was like a retreat for his soldiers. Many of our present day Catholics could easily be called half-hearted. They dare not raise their voices in a whisper when Christ and his Church are attacked. Therefore the Holy Father calls for numerous courageous lay apostles who, by their example, create a Christian atmosphere and uplift their surroundings.

In *The Mirror of Perfection* (sometimes attributed to St. Francis of Assisi) we read of the way in which good example should work:

"During his stay at Siena a doctor of theology and member of the Dominican Order—a very humble and devout man—came to see St. Francis. After exchanging a few words with St. Francis on the teachings of Our Lord, he asked about the words of Ezekiel: 'If you do not warn the evildoer of his misdeeds, I will demand his blood at your hand' (cf Ex 3, 19). 'I know many great sinners whom I do not reproach for their godlessness,' said the Master. 'Will their souls be demanded at my hands?'"

"St. Francis humbly replied that he was unlearned and that it was more fitting for him to receive instruction than to give an explanation of Holy Scripture. Finally at the other's pressing entreaty, he replied: 'If that word is understood in general, I think it means that the servant of God should radiate such light and splendor through his holiness, example and eloquence of speech, that his behavior is a reproach to all the godless and will show up all their godlessness.' So the learned man went away highly edified and said to the companions of the Blessed Francis; 'Dear Brothers, this man's knowledge of theology rests on sincerity and meditation. He is like a soaring eagle.'"

In the writings of Cardinal Newman we find a precious prayer which expresses the teaching of everyday saints in a few words:

"Let me praise you in the way that you love best, by being a light for those around me. Let me preach to you without preaching, not by words but by my example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love I bear you in my heart. Amen." Holy Scripture stresses the example and apostolate of charity. St. Luke says:

"After this He journeyed through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God. The Twelve accompanied him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and maladies: Mary called the Magdalene, from whom seven devils had gone out; Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza; Susanna; and many others who were assisting them out of their means" (Lk 8, 1-3).

According to the example of Our Lord, the apostles were accompanied by women as their assistants who supported them with their means and, if this was not practical, then those for whom the apostles worked had to provide for them. "Likewise the Lord himself ordered that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel" (1 Cor 9, 14).

There are innumerable opportunities today for doing works of mercy for the poor individually or for the Church and religious communities as a whole. All that was previously said of the importance of poverty for Christians in our times can be applied in detail to charitable works.

The most fruitful apostolate is prayer and sacrifice. Those who practice it are a continuous, living sursum corda for those around them. Our Lord stresses the apostolate of prayer when He says: "The harvest is rich but the workers are few; therefore ask the harvest-master to send workers to his

harvest" (Lk 10, 2). He promised to stay with them until the end of time. He pledged His word that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. Why then, in spite of this, does He invite them to prayer? Because God in His goodness and wisdom has decided to apply Christ's fruits of redemption only with human cooperation, and this is done mainly by prayer. St. Paul wrote to Timothy:

"First of all, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be offered for all men, especially for kings and those in authority, that we may be able to lead undisturbed and tranquil lives in perfect piety and dignity. Prayer of this kind is good, and God our savior is pleased with it for he wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth" (1 Tim 2, 1-4).

In the Epistle to the Colossians, he asks:

"Pray for us, too, that God may provide us with an opening to proclaim the mystery of Christ for which I am a prisoner. Pray that I may speak it clearly, as I must" (Col 4, 3f).

He admonishes the Thessalonians:

"And now, brethren, let us have your prayers, that the word of the Lord may run its course triumphantly with us as it does with you" (2 Thess 1).

The everyday saint is filled with the spirit of Holy Scripture. He thus realizes that it is not himself who plants or waters the seeds but God who also lets things grow. He gladly unites His grace to our words, instructions, activities, and especially to our prayers.

St. Bernadine of Siena, commenting on the intentions for which the Mother of God, the Queen of Apostles, prayed while on earth, said:

"The most frequent wishes and desires were those by which she implored God to save and redeem man. We can hardly imagine the intensity of the longing with which she continually sighed."

Magdalen of Pazzi admonished her spiritual daughters:

"Let us ask God for as many souls as the steps we take through the convent. Let us ask God that He may convert as many souls as the words we speak in our prayers or the stitches we make with our needles."

When she noticed that her sisters' zeal for souls was flagging, she told them indignantly:

"You have no love of God; why do you not pray for the salvation of souls? Who knows how many souls are lost because we pray so little for them and so seldom offer up the Blood of Christ to God the Father for them?"

A lay brother had a special gift for winning souls for God. When asked for his method, he answered simply:

"For one word which I speak to them, I speak a hundred to God."

The efficacy of prayer is enhanced when it is joined with suffering and sacrifice. Tertullian epitomized what so often happened in the history of the Church: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians." We generally distinguish between a bloody and an unbloody martyrdom, but both make the soul share in the suffering of Our Lord Who redeemed the world through suffering.

Great apostolic souls have always known this and therefore have loved suffering as the great means of saving souls. Some practice it physically and others, spiritually, for example, Rudolph Aquaviva, who labored in India for a long time without any noteworthy success, said to himself: "This stony ground must be watered with our blood before it will bear fruit." His words were prophetic for he was murdered with his companions, and the faith remarkably began to spread.

Fernandez, one of St. Francis Xavier's companions in Japan, once gave religious instructions to a crowd of people. When one of the audience suddenly spat in his face, he said nothing but, wiping it, continued his instruction. This made a very deep impression on those present, so much so that

a famous doctor asked for Baptism.

In the Japanese persecution a well-known Christian was asked to renounce his faith in Christ and return to the beliefs of his fathers. He declared himself ready to do so but on the condition that the most learned Japanese first prove that he was wrong.

The tyrant Xoguasama declared he was ready to meet the challenge. It was not very difficult for the Christian to refute all the objections of his adversaries so that the judge had to admit he had won. But the pagan priests objected in indignation, "So far, these are mere words which prove nothing. But if you wish to show the truth of your religion, then do it by action—show us a miracle and we will admit defeat."

The Christian replied, "I will show you not only one miracle but two. Let me first ask you: Do you think that my house and my family are worth as much to me as the prosperity of the people is to Xoguasama?" The answer was unanimous, "Of course!" "Well then," Said the Christian, "I am ready to sacrifice this prosperity and all the possessions of my people for the sake of Christ. This is the first miracle. If, however, you are ready to do the same for your gods, Xaca, Chamis and Amidas, then that will be a miracle too. The second miracle will be that I am ready and willing to lose my life rather than my faith. Do you have the courage to do the same for your gods?" No one gave an answer—they had to admit their defeat, not so much by his words, but by his readiness to make the heroic sacrifice of his life.

The everyday saint practices every kind of zeal for souls. The more he penetrates into this world, the more he experiences the truth of the words, "The most divine work of all is to cooperate with God in the salvation of immortal souls."

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