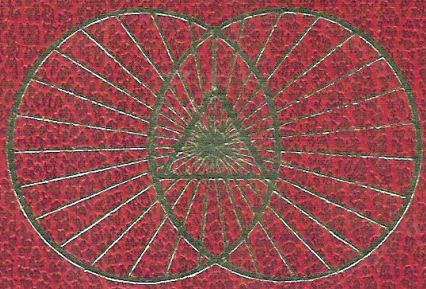
Living the Gospel with the Mother



"...that All may be One"

LIVING the GOSPEL with the MOTHER

Josefina Chacín Ducharne

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WITH THE MOTHER

This work was first published in Spanish under the title *"Viviendo el Evangelio" (Living the Gospel),* an abbreviation or simplification of the original title under which it was born, *"Viviendo el Evangelio con la Madre" (Living the Gospel with the Mother).*

In this English translation it has been thought well to return to the full title, above all so that we might not lose what is disclosed to us in the phrase "... *with the Mother,"* which is of irreplaceable value and of which we have an urgent need.

"The Mother," in its highest acceptation is, par excellence and par ultimate essence, the name ascribed to the Will of God, the Will of the Father; Will which, through the instrumentality of the humble Mary, «... *let it be done unto me according to thy word,*» begot the Word *in Mary's day,* Word which is substance and form of the "good news," the Gospel, which brought to man the fulfillment of the ancient Promise; Will, which was "the Mother" who nourished with Herself the Man Christ

from the first instant to the *supreme moment* of his existence among us: *«My food is to do the will of Him who has sent me»* and « *.. .food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you»:* His identification with the Father's Will — His Mother — has made Him food for us. And with His flesh and with His blood, He was giving to the world "the Mother," which that flesh and that blood had engendered and nourished, the eternal and only "Mother," in order that, *in our day,* She might be, to the world, Mother of the Spirit of the Son and of the Father, in which Spirit each person must also be regenerated from Her and then, everything else.

To believe that we are able to nourish ourselves from the Word of God, able to "live the Gospel," without tending toward this unity with God's Will, "the Mother," and depending on Her, is for man a vain and sterile presumption, for no one other than She can communicate to us the authentic Spirit of the "Word of God"; this is the reason for our returning to the complete title for this book.

PRESENTATION

The history of Christianity is the story of how men have responded to the absolute demands of the Gospel. And with the unfolding of this story, it would seem as if there had been a watering down of the Gospel's power to transform Christians and that the latter have accommodated themselves more and more to the spirit of the world. Thus the urgency that was felt by the contemporaries of the Apostles regarding the Lord's coming, and which led them to consider this coming as imminent, has become for us today an incomprehensible matter, and we try to explain it away as an error in their time perspective. The reason for this is that, to us, faith's view of the world lacks reality.

Among the purest and most vigorous stands taken against this adapting to the spirit of the world, we find that of Francis of Assisi, a stand he proclaimed with his life. When one speaks of the Gospel as a way of life, it is indispensable to mention this voice of protest that arose with Francis, because this voice is still present and resounds among men even today.

The Rule given by St. Francis begins with this synopsis: *«The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in*

chastity,» a synopsis which Francis would often repeat, recapitulating it in an even shorter phrase: *«Live the Gospel.»*

Francis has represented an attempt on God's part to bring the world back to the purity of the Gospel, but even this attempt has failed and is the doing of the very ones who claimed to be following him the closest. Without perhaps being aware of this, and while they thought they were ensuring the purity of the Gospel, they have reduced it to a form of religious life that is more or less like all the others. The "Rule" has represented the effort to interpret that initial attempt to return to that purity, but the end result has been that the Gospel is all but forgotten. It certainly seems that Francis would never have wanted to leave, to those who wanted to listen to him and follow him, any rule other than the Gospel. To him the only thing that mattered was the observance of the Gospel to the letter, and he sustained his requirement by saying: *«The most High God Himself has revealed to me that I must live according to the form of the Holy Gospel.*»

It is truly surprising that Francis, as an explanation and justification of his way of living "according to the holy Gospel" – something that Christ has commanded for everyone – should have had to appeal to a personal revelation that required this of him. To us, today, because of our lack of faith, as well as our lack of knowledge regarding the ways of the Spirit, the living of the Gospel seems meaningless. To try to understand it, whether we focus our attention on the situation of that

time or on that of today, we must remember what the Gospel has been reduced to in our everyday living, then as well as now. The Gospel was not rejected, it is true, but neither did it have any influence on one's life. Francis certainly felt called to make the Gospel his life, and this was so new that, as he himself says, it had to be made known to him by means of a divine intervention.

I belong to a religious institution that claims to be following the call of God in the spirit of Francis in one of the forms of its historical interpretation. And yet at times I realized how Francis' "living the Gospel" did not come to fruition in the reality of our own daily living. My astonishment at this at first was great. Then I began to adjust myself to the situation, but I never did come to understand what "living the Gospel" truly consisted in, since it did not seem that it could become a reality. Could it be that it consisted in a mere aspiration?

On the occasion of some research work made within the framework of what has been called the "renewal," *"aggiornamento"* I was offered the opportunity to ventilate my reflections on this point. I take the liberty to introduce this personal concern, because I believe that there exists some relationship between this and the book I am presenting, and it can, in any case, be useful to those to whom God will make this book available. This research did in fact provide the possibility of expressing even spontaneous suggestions and proposals. It seemed to me to be the moment to request that on such an important issue, as is that of "living the Gospel" according to the spirit of Francis — upon which the supreme aspi-

ration of the institution to which I belong was based — it might, with all accuracy, be clarified and explained to us by the learned what we were finally to understand. I asked that we be told what Francis meant by the expression: "Live the Gospel," which meant everything to him and which to us, in actual practice, meant very little, since we have had to spell out its contents in another formula: "The Rule," considered to be the concrete and tangible translation of the abstract ideal. Furthermore, independent of Francis' personal way of living, I asked that we be told what the Gospel of God, the "word of God," could mean in its concrete application to each one's life.

I was asking something that many others before me had already asked, and they had asked in the same way. They had received the answer in that which we are living and which does not entirely satisfy us. In reality that answer, translated into the Rule, that is, into rules and precepts, could not satisfy us, because it was coming from the creatures. I, in my naiveness, had continued to do likewise, asking the creatures for an answer. I did not know —though I should have known —that the creatures were not the ones who could give me the answer, But it is here that the Lord's Mercy exceeded all bounds, harkening to my request in a way that went beyond my wildest expectations, even though my question had not been directed to Him, but to the creatures. How great are the wonders of the Lord who hears and sees our most secret thoughts! To express what God has done, I find no better words than those of the Psalmist: «*You have granted him his heart's desire; you refused not the wish*

of his lips. For you welcomed him with goodly blessing...» (Ps 21:34).

While I in fact received no answer from men, the Lord at the opportune moment placed in my hands, as His answer to my heart's desire, this book which I am presenting, entitled, *Living the Gospel with the Mother,* and which I offer to all who have had the same desire. It is the most complete answer that I could have desired, valid not only for those called "Franciscans," but also for all who wish to make of the Gospel their own life.

The explanation of the Gospel in all its purity – which the Lord has given us here – makes us understand not only why a personal revelation became necessary for Francis, calling him to live according to the Gospel, but why a similar intervention has also become necessary for us. As a matter of fact, even if we believed that we were following Francis by taking seriously his invitation to live the Gospel (very often with the conviction that we were actually doing so), in reality what we were following was an "interpretation" in which the Gospel had been all but forgotten. To be able to free ourselves from the condition into which we had fallen, we truly needed an intervention from on High which would come to remind us of the one and only thing that is truly necessary.

And in presenting this book I am giving my testimony that this divine intervention has taken place.

But even more directly a testimony is given by the person through whom the Lord has given us these writings. She expresses herself in the following manner:

«On December 15, 1965,1 was, by Will of the Lord, in San Giovanni Rotondo (Foggia), Italy. And there, the Lord made known to me that I should write down the Gospels and their explanations as the Lord Himself was giving me to understand it and in the order in which I was receiving it, which is how it appears in the book and booklets [this refers to the first edition which comprised a single volume and 18 booklets or pamphlets]. *Even though the wording is mine and has my deficiencies, the sense of what I have wished to express in them is the Lord's, and to this I bear witness, and so will He when the time comes ...*»

What in the foregoing quotation is referred to as "explanations" is what, together with the Gospel texts, comprises this book.

And speaking not only of this book but also of other books that express the same "message," she adds: «... *the Lord made known to me that, concerning the books which you are presenting* – "I," in Christ Arisen, Living the Gospel *with its booklets, and* Pilgrimage of the People of God *with the* Explanation of the Drawings – *it must be made known to the world that this is a matter of a "message" from God, a call to men so that they may know the truth and dispose themselves to enter through His Mercy before His Justice manifests itself.* IT IS IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY THAT THE WORLD KNOW THAT IT IS A MATTER OF A DIVINE INTERVENTION. *This is what I have understood the Lord desires.*»

In every page of this book, the only thing that we are constantly reminded of is that, at long last, we might let God be the one to do in us, because He is the only one who can offer the world the realization of His word. The reading *of Living the Gospel with the Mother* requires one's having already accepted the foregoing views. In fact, this is how one should read the "explanations" that accompany the "Gospel" texts, and especially that which, because of its demands and severity, can be a cause for scandal. But hasn't the Gospel always been a scandal, and isn't it to continue being so in the eyes of the world?

Viewing the "Gospel" as the life of Christ and, at the same time, as the life of the Christian, or rather, as the only source of life for the world, is what has determined the arrangement of this book and its division into three parts.

The first part, INFANCY, is concerned with the action of the Spirit in Jesus during his infancy. These are the first mysteries that are to become reproduced in each Christian as a result of the transforming action of the Spirit. It is the "coming" of Christ in the soul.

The second part, THE PRECURSOR, is a follow-up of the Life of Christ, based on the attitude of John the Baptist. It is characterized by the soul's "yielding" to Christ, in imitation of the Precursor: *«He must increase, but I must decrease»* (Jn 3:30).

The third part, THE PUBLIC LIFE, is concerned with the rest of the life of Christ Jesus. It is the life of the soul in Christ, her going forward, «*snapping the chains of her yoke,*» (cf. Jer 30:8-9) on her way to becoming identified with Christ.

I close this presentation by once again quoting Francis. And they are words that he has addressed to us by means of the same person through whom this book has come to us:

«...you have a mission to fulfill, the most difficult mission my Master could assign to you in these times of activity and eagerness to do many things "for God" namely, that of doing nothing*, in order that He may* undo *and* do *in you what you have done on your own, hindering the Work of God.*

« ... I gave you a Rule, yes, and though I did not mean to give you any other Rule than the Gospel of my Lord, yet here there may also be much error in what is mine. Therefore I tell you:... Live the pure Gospel *and you will give me rest! If I tell you that you will give me "rest" though I am delighting in the eternal rest of the Blessed in the presence of my Lord, it is because neither He, nor our Mother, nor all the saints can* "rest" *until the eternal kingdom of the Son of God comes to all souls, until all the places in the Work of Redemption are filled, are complete, and this will not happen* until the Gospel of our Lord and Savior is lived with purity.

«... "Repair my church which is threatening to crumble," I was told; and I started to gather bricks, stones and sand. You too have done what I did then. Because

you, my brothers, have held on to Francis Bernardone and have not followed the Lord's instrument. Had you followed the "instrument" you would have held on to the Lord and not to the man. You have, moreover, "strained out" the "gift," and are left with the "dry pulp." This is why you have not understood the most important thing about my life; you have held on to the life I left and have not understood the Life which I received.

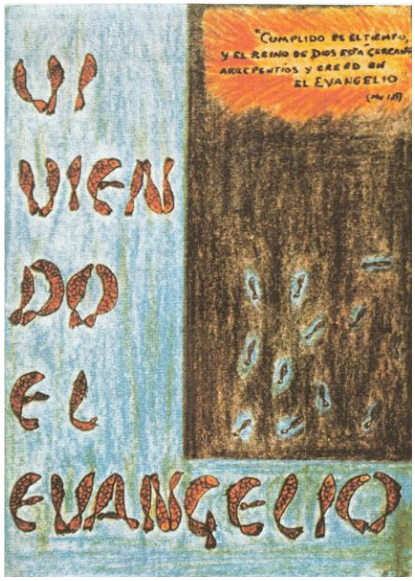
«I understood this perfectly when I was still among you, and my sorrow was immense!»

José Barriuso

Bethlehem, May 20, 1979

«The time is fulfilled,
and the Kingdom of God is at hand;
repent,
and believe in the gospel.» (Mk 1:15)

«The kingdom of heaven
is like a net
which was thrown
into the sea
and gathered fish
of every kind;
when it was full,
men drew it ashore
and sat down and sorted
the good into vessels
but threw away the bad.»
(Mt 13:47-48)



Cover of the first Spanish edition

The Christian who does not live the Gospel is like a fish out of water – he will not be able to "live" for long.

The *only positive thing* for God is the Gospel – *the denial of self* – for this is the life of His Son on earth, and the kingdom of God comes about as a *consequence* of *"living" the Gospel.*

No soul can enter into the kingdom of God except by virtue *of living* the Gospel – *the denial of self;* if he does not live it *totally* here on earth, he will have to "live" it in Purgatory.

A Christian is not one who receives baptism only but one who *lives* the life of Christ – *the denial of self.*

Religious Orders today are like dry ponds where there remain only a few “puddles of water” in which a few little fish are in their “death throes”; it is for these who have not yet died that the Lord extends His call:

«THE TIME IS FULFILLED, AND
THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND;
REPENT,
AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL.»

(Mk 1:15)

His call also reaches out to all souls of “good will” who suffer “hunger and thirst” for Truth, Justice, and Love.

IMPORTANT!

Do not read these explanations without first reading the Gospel text, even though you may know it by heart. Read it as if it were for the first time. The word of the Lord is ever new, and in these "clarifications" it could say more to you than it has said to me.

Try not to look at the "instrument" who wrote them, look at God, and that which He says to you in your conscience is what He wants for you. Only in this way, with this disposition, will you discover the "secret" that Christ wants to reveal to you in these "explanations" of His Gospel. The errors are the 'instrument's" give them no thought; retain what you consider to be of benefit for your soul.

Part One

CHRIST IN THE SOUL

INFANCY

«Be it done unto me according to Thy word.»

I

THE ANNUNCIATION

Have you listened to the word of God? Has this "word" reached your heart?

«Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee» (Lk 1:28).

To have received the word of God in her heart is already a grace for the soul.

By means of a sermon? By means of a book, a conversation, or an inspiration?

It matters not in what form this "word" reached you. It is the "angel of the Lord" who announces the Savior to you.

«Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God» (Lk 1:30).

If this word of God has "wounded" your heart, *has touched your conscience,* do not be afraid; it is because you have found grace with Him. This is already an election. Oh soul, you are chosen!

«Behold, thou shall conceive in thy womb and shall bring forth a son; and thou shall call his name Jesus» (Lk 1:31).

That this grace, this "election," may become a reality, conceiving in your bosom the things of God, depends on your liberty.

«How shall this happen, since I do not know man?» (Lk 1:34).

"How shall this happen if I do not know the life of the spirit? How will I be able to change overnight the life I have led until now?" you will ask yourself.

«The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God» (Lk 1:35).

Wait *attentively with faith,* and meditate God's "word" in your heart, for *«the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,»* to guard you against your spiritual enemies, for that which will begin to sprout in you is work of God and not yours; you have only to be willing, like Mary, to fulfill His Will in each moment of your life.

«Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word» (Lk 1:38).

You ought not forget the "annunciation" that God makes to you, so that you may receive the light of His

Spirit, light that will begin to direct your steps, “conceiving” in your bosom the things of God.

II

EXPECTATION (The Visitation)

«Now in those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town of Juda. And she entered the house of Zachary and greeted Elizabeth» (Lk 1:39-40).

"Leaning" on the word of God, the soul begins to walk.

«And it came to pass, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe in her womb leapt. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And how have I deserved that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, the moment that the sound of thy greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy"» (Lk 1:4144).

A simple greeting like Mary's, a good deed, a word of yours, prompted by your faith in God, can "awaken" a soul, filling her with joy. Do not forget that it is the Holy Spirit who is working through you; do not appropriate

for yourself the praises you receive. That which you have received from God is “showing.”

«And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord» (Lk 1:45).

Oh, soul, if you have been faithful in the “annunciation,” you will be called blessed, because you will see the fulfillment in you of what has been spoken to you by the Lord.

Humble yourself and praise Him, as Mary did, recognizing with humility— which is to recognize the truth — that not through any merit of yours, but only by His grace, does the Almighty do great things in you.

«My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior» (Lk 1:46-47).

If you have believed in the word of God and *live by it,* your soul will magnify the Lord, and your spirit will rejoice because you will begin to live in God, your Savior.

«Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid, for, behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He who is Mighty has done great things in me, and holy is His name» (Lk 1:48-49).

If you abide in a “living” and humble faith, all generations shall call you blessed, because God’s gaze shall .not depart from you, for He is pleased in the «*lowliness*

of His handmaid,» and He who is Mighty, whose name is holy, shall do great things in you.

«And His mercy is from generation to generation on those who fear Him» (Lk 1:50).

God will shower his mercy upon you if you are faithful to His word, fulfilling it with love, in the fear of offending Him by transgressing His commands, for you will feel the severity of His Justice because He is Just.

«He has shown might with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their hearts» (Lk 1:51).

But if you use the word of God to exalt yourself by it and become conceited with the thoughts of your heart, then He will show the might of His arm, and you will be scattered because you will not partake of the "unity" in His Spirit.

«He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and has exalted the lowly» (Lk 1:52).

He will put you down from the "thrones" you have raised up in your pride and will exalt all those whom you humbled, for God is pleased with the humble of heart, those who abide in the knowledge of their "nothingness" and await all things from Him.

«He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty» (Lk 1:53).

If you "hunger" after God, He will fill you with His eternal goods, but if you feel satisfied (rich) with the

goods of this world, then He will send you away empty, because you did not desire the eternal goods, and you "filled" yourself with the temporal ones.

«He has given help to Israel, His servant, mindful of His mercy — even as He spoke to our fathers— to Abraham and to His posterity forever» (Lk 1:54-55).

If, in spite of the fact that you have fallen into sin many times because of your frailty, you have not lost your faith and *live by it*, God in His Mercy will give you His help because you are "His Israel" — son of Abraham by faith— for so He promised it to "our fathers" and to their posterity forever.

III

THE BIRTH

«Now it came to pass in those days, that a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken .... And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the town of Nazareth into Judea ... to register, together with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child» (Lk 2:1-5).

The soul who is obedient to God regards neither persons nor circumstances in order to obey. She directs herself in a vertical manner and notices neither herself nor what is around her. The fact that she was chosen mother of the Son of God does not exempt Mary from complying with the laws of men; she obeys God. Nor is the difficulty of traveling in her advanced state of pregnancy an impediment, as is neither the uncertainty of lodging or the lack of means; nor does all this entail *a. painful* sacrifice for her; the joy of fulfilling the will of her Lord makes everything smooth and sweet because love reigns in her! This is how it is with the soul who *"believes"* in God.

«And it came to pass while they were there, that the days for her to be delivered were fulfilled. And she

brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn» (Lk 2:6-7).

The soul who is obedient to God does not even notice the "gift" from God; her gaze is fixed on the "Giver."

To Mary, the Son of God was the "Gift" from the Father, and He came to fulfill His Father's Will: *«Behold, I have come to do Thy Will, O God.»* Obedience to the Father, who is in heaven, is the best "care" that can be given to the Son. How many souls, out of a false zeal, obstruct God's work by thinking that they are the ones who should take care of the "gift," and they make these rationalizations: "It is not fitting for a soul of God's to go here and there, do this or that; what then will people say! We have to set a 'good example' because we are bearers of Christ." Oh, mistaken soul! Why do you not follow Mary's example? Do you think that you can set a better example?

This is how souls "abort" the Son of God and continue to think they possess Him and that they are taking very good care of Him, when what they are really caring for is their own personal honor, their name, security, and their glory in this world.

«Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him"» (Mt 2:1-2).

It should not surprise the soul who has let the Son of God "be born" in her that people will admire her and seek her out at first: They have seen the light of the star and go to her, seeking the Son of God. Let her not conceal him; let her, like Mary, present the "newborn" with humility: Let your mouth speak of what God has placed in your heart, without fear and without boasting—the truth, pure and simple.

«And there were shepherds in the same district living in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them and the glory of God shone round about them, and they feared exceedingly. And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be to all the people, for today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will"» (Lk 2:8-14).

Simple souls, too, and the faithful "shepherds" of the Lord will learn with joy of that which has been born in you, for the "birth" of the Savior in a soul is a "joy to all the people" of God.

But do not forget that they have the "sign" for perceiving if that which has been "born" in you is of God, the Savior; that sign is your humility and spirit of pov-

erty. And do not forget that this will be a *consequence* of your life in God; do not make the mistake of attempting *to feign* what you are not carrying within, making of that which ought to be a *"consequence"* a *"means"* for deceiving yourself and everyone else.

So too will the saints and *«the multitude of the heavenly host»* praise God because of you, saying, «*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of good will,*» because all souls of "good will" benefit from this grace received by a member of the Mystical Body.

«And when the Magi saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. And entering the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they worshipped him. And opening their treasures they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh» (Mt 2:10-11).

Receive with love and humility the "gifts" presented to you from the "treasure" of the hearts of the persons who have seen in you the light of the "newborn": words of praise, gratitude, and affection for the good you do; all this is for the Son of God whom you carry with you. But do not remain with the "gifts" or the individuals; flee through the "desert" to Egypt — nakedness, detachment from everything that is not God alone, His Will — because behind "the kings," the praise, comes Herod, the enemy of your soul, who wants to destroy the King who must reign in your soul.

«And when the days of her purification were fulfilled according to the Law of Moses, they took him up to Je-

rusalem to present him to the Lord—as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord"—and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons"» (Lk 2:22-24).

As the days of this "new life" pass, the soul understands that she must consecrate her whole self to the Lord in order to be purified by Him, and must offer Him, in sacrifice, the gifts that He Himself has given her, above all, her liberty.

«And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. And thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed"» (Lk 2:34-35).

The soul who has "received" the Son of God will be like unto Him — "a sign that shall be contradicted" — for she is destined for the fall of many idols that she has in her heart and which are esteemed by the world around her, and destined also for the rise of values not esteemed by this world. A sword shall pierce her heart, for the thoughts of many hearts, that is, the falseness of the human heart in which she had placed her trust, will be revealed, because the "values" in her life will change completely.

IV

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT, AND NAZARETH

«But when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, saying "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and remain there until I tell thee. For Herod will seek the child to destroy him"» (Mt 2:13).

The soul who is faithful to God will not fail to heed His "inspirations," by which He will undoubtedly command her to flee from (he world, from the flatteries and social conveniences, for the "enemy" uses these to destroy grace in the soul, the "son of God" in them, the souls thus failing to please God in order to satisfy men, the creatures. And we can well apply to those souls who live by I his spirit of the world the words of the prophet Jeremiah, who says:

«A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more» (Mt 2:18).

Are not people who partake of the spirit of the world constantly moaning and groaning because of the economic situation, illnesses, dissatisfactions of all kinds,

and so forth and so on? The fact is that their souls wail and they do not realize it because they are unfamiliar with the "Life" of the soul, and they want to silence her "wailings" with many things that do not satisfy the soul, and she "refuses to be consoled," because what fills and comforts her is not in that "world" but in God, of whom she is "image."

When a person becomes aware of this and flees from that superficial and vain "world," he begins to walk through the "desert," because all his former friends leave him; he goes toward another world, looking for souls who, like himself, have "conceived" God "in their bosom." It is then that the soul arrives in Egypt, because in that "world," too, she finds many false Christians who, having hardly conceived the "son of God" in their bosoms, let Him die. Like the Jews of the Diaspora whom the Holy Family found in Egypt, these false Christians adore strange idols, and they will cause much suffering to the soul who carries with her the "living God"; and she will find many enemies of the Truth who will try to make her lose her faith. But it is at this point where the soul who is faithful to God reaffirms her faith, for by keeping her sights ever uplifted, she will receive the most sublime teachings for preserving the life of the "God-Child" who begins to grow in her.

«But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into

the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead"» (Mt 2:19-20).

In "Egypt" a purification has been accomplished in the spirit that formerly dominated in the soul if she has been faithful to God's inspirations, and now the flattery of the world can no longer attract her: *«Those who sought the child's life are dead.*» For this reason, and in order to test her, God tells her that she may return to the world.

«But hearing that Archelaus was reigning in Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there; and being warned in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee. And he went and settled in a town called Nazareth» (Mt 2:22-23).

But the soul, knowing that there is in that "world" another type of enemy that will endanger her spiritual life, having no confidence in herself, fears to go there. God is pleased with this "self-distrust," which is fidelity and trust in Him, and He directs the soul to a hidden life in the home, which is Nazareth, where she endeavors to live far from the world, though in it, and thus she grows and becomes strong in God's grace.

«And the Child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him» (Lk 2:40).

It is in recollection and prayer that the life of grace becomes strong and the wisdom for transmitting this "new life" to other souls is received.

«... and when he was twelve they went up for the celebration as was their custom. As they were returning at the end of the feast, the child Jesus remained behind, unknown to his parents .... Looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances, not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem in search of him. On the third day they came upon him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions» (Lk 2:42-46).

The soul ceases to experience God's inspirations in the almost perceptible manner I bat she did before. God conceals Himself from her so that she may seek Him "within," in a less perceptible manner. It is the Father who is silent so that the Son may be sought: *«No one comes to me unless the Father draws him.»* Where to find Him ...? In your inner temple and in the Eucharist

(p57 missing when you receive Him; there, "listening to Him" and "inquiring of Him," you will learn to know Him.

«And when they saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold, in sorrow thy father and I have been seeking thee." And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"» (Lk 2:48-49).

The soul will be astonished at the teachings of Jesus, but also surprised and sorrowful; Jesus does not want you to become attached even to his company: *«Did you*

not know that I must be about my Father's business?» The soul has been alerted: it is Jesus himself who is going to fulfill in the soul the Father's Will.

«And they did not understand the word that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them; and his mother kept all these things carefully in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace before God and men» (Lk 2:50-52).

The soul will not immediately understand these things. It is only an alert that Jesus has given her in order to begin preparing her to follow the path of the Father's Will. The soul should carefully keep in her heart all He tells her, so that by growing in the life of the spirit — in the knowledge of God and of men — she may travel Mary's path, letting the son of God, whom she carries with her, fulfill the Father's Will.

Part Two

THE SOUL YIELDS HER PLACE TO CHRIST

THE PRECURSOR

He must increase, but I must decrease.»

I

BRIDGE" OR "CHANNEL"

The soul, up to now, has cooperated with (he grace, receiving God's inspirations and the teachings of the Master; she has let Christ increase in her. And she has "increased" spiritually; she is now ready to be a "channel" or a "bridge." The Master has made known to her the Father's Will and what she must do in order that He, Christ, may fulfill it, accomplishing the Redemption—that which is lacking in her of His Passion.

All this has transpired since the alert: *«How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?»* (Lk 2:49).

A brief meditation: What was Jesus doing from the age of twelve — when he was lost and then found in the temple — and until the age of thirty, at which time he revealed himself to the people? He was "communicating" to his Mother the things that the Father was making known to him — all that which he later told the world. And Mary *«kept all these things carefully in her heart,»* meditating them. She let him "follow" his own path of doing the Father's Will.

And where was Mary during the time of her Son's public life, for she is hardly mentioned in the Gospels?

She was “hidden” with Christ in the Father’s Will and later is present on Calvary in order to be our example and our Mother.

The moment of the final test has arrived for the soul, moment when she must put into practice — making it a reality — what up to now have only been promises. She is going to face the “prince of this world,” who has God’s permission to win her over by offering her his kingdom, or to despoil her if she renounces him. This is God’s justice in the free choice of His creatures: the fallen angel and the soul. According to her election, the soul can be a “channel” *within* the world for the Usurper to pass through, thus blocking the kingdom of God and prolonging the kingdom of the “spirit of the world,” or she can be a “bridge” *over* the world for the Redeemer to cross, thus cooperating toward the coming of the kingdom of God.

Either she does as Judas did, reaffirming herself in herself, becoming an instrument of betrayal, delivering up the Son of God whom she carries with her, or she does as the Precursor, John the Baptist, did: “disappear,” letting her head be cut off, so that Christ may appear.

The Son of God “ardently” awaits His “hour,” because for this has He come, and He seems to say to the soul: *«What you are going to do, do quickly,»* so that He may go His way alone, redeeming other souls, or take her with Him, redeeming her as well.

It is Jesus' Precursor, John the Baptist, who will give the soul the "materials" for building the foundations of the "bridge." She herself is the bridge that must lie across these foundations, a bridge "over" the kingdom of this world, so that the Redeemer can cross over to "Calvary," while at the same lime she *in* Him is redeemed and, "hidden" with Christ in the Father's Will, passes from death to life.

II

THE BAPTISM OF PENANCE

«Behold I send my messenger before thee, who shall prepare thy way, the voice of one crying in the desert, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight his path"» (Mk 1:2-3).

«Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God» (Lk 3:5-6).

The most important moment for the soul has begun. God sends His angel to prepare her for the way of the Lord, and the model is John the Baptist: she should begin a more austere way of life — one of retreat and prayer — so that she may come to know her "nothingness" and the "All," God, who must *totally* invade what she has considered to be "her properties." In this way, she will begin to

make straight her paths,
filling with God the emptiness of her life
and letting herself be emptied
of all that which is not He, His Will,
humbling herself,

putting herself on an equal level
with all souls,
her pride and arrogance disappearing,
pride that made her see herself
as superior to others.
And then her flesh will begin to receive
the salvation of God.

«He said therefore to the crowds that went out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who has shown you how to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits befitting repentance, and do not begin to say, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that God is able out of these stones to raise up children to Abraham"» (Lk 3:7-8).

The soul should bring forth *«fruits befitting repentance»*— that which God inspires in her — and, in a special manner, accept with love all the inconveniences and sufferings that come her way in her daily living as the best penance, without parading her sufferings so that they may be known by others, and without believing herself, because of this, a better Christian than others who do not do the same, for what she does, she can do only by the grace of God. On her own she could do nothing.

III

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE “BRIDGE”:

THE FIRST FOUNDATION

The soul loves God above all things, submitting herself to being stripped of all that is not His Will.

«”Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” And the crowds asked him, saying “What then are we to do?” And he answered and said to them, “Let him who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise!”» (Lk 3:9-11).

«Even now the axe is laid to the root of the tires»: Every work that does not bear fruit for God will be taken away from you — honor, renown, reputation, material goods, and even some spiritual goods and virtues. This is when the soul starts to see the beginning of the destruction of “her values,” something that will not fail to be very painful and, at times, difficult to accept. Only her union with God, in *constant* prayer, will be able to sustain her, for when those “trees” that served for her to lean on are “cut down,” it is as if a powerful hurricane, destroying her possessions, were threatening to destroy

her as well. Nothing remains but to ask God the question that "the crowds" asked the Precursor: *«Lord, what am I to do ... ?»* Then He will answer, and His reply continues to strip her: *«Let him who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise.»*

You thought you had nothing left and you were feeling worthy of compassion; well, lo and behold! He who sees the hidden recesses of your whole being orders you to give even more; this means that you still have "too much"; that you should not even try to justify yourself, to claim or recuperate whatever is taken away from you, even if you consider it unfair. Do not look at the "instruments" who carry out the stripping; look only at God who is preparing the way of your salvation.

«And tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Master, what are we to do?" But he said to them, "Exact no more than what has been appointed you"» (Lk 3:12-13).

People will also come who, inspired by good intentions, will want to protect you. As for you, ask your Master again: "What am I to do ... ?" No doubt He will answer as John answered the tax collectors: «*Exact no more than what has been appointed you.*» "Appointed" (or ruination are your personal works, even if they have been good, and inspired by God, to get you where you are today. These works have accomplished their purpose and must now disappear. You can receive no help that prevents this destruction. Those who want to help you

are right in offering their help, but you would not be doing right in accepting it. Your help comes to you from on high, and this help is your strength for continuing on until the end.

«And soldiers also asked him, saying, "And we—what are we to do?" And he said to them, "Plunder no one, accuse no one falsely, and be content with your pay"» (Lk 3:14).

Oh, soul! Do you not see that you are being submitted to the test? They will also come to offer you protection for your apparently legitimate rights: "They are ripping you off; they should be punished by the Law," will be said to you by men who hold the power of the world in their hands; but you alone can present the evidence for their conviction. "Lord, what am I to do ... ?" *«Plunder no one, accuse no one falsely.*» Wouldn't your accusation be false, knowing that you are before God's Tribunal and not men's, and that the other person is also fulfilling his mission? Therefore, he too must be judged by God's Tribunal.

«Be content with your pay.» You should be content because you will be highly rewarded for the tribulations that you are going through today.

«Now as the people were in expectation, and all were wondering in their hearts about John, whether perhaps he might be the Christ, John addressed them, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water. But one mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not

worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire"» (Lk 3:15-17).

The soul's courageous and determined attitude, sustained by her living faith, will create an "expectation" in those around her, and they will come to think that she is something" or "someone" — a saint, perhaps or a hero or heroine. The soul must be alert to this, so as to bear witness, in those moments, to Jesus, the Messiah, the Holy One, who is carrying out this purification in her, and to the fact that she is sustained by His grace, without which she could do nothing and of which she is not worthy.

The soul has received the baptism of penance. If she is faithful, abiding in the Lord's Will, He will baptize her in the Holy Spirit and in fire, burning *«the chaff*» with unquenchable fire, burning all that which belongs to the action of Evil — whatever "wretchedness" still remains in her — in older to *«gather the wheat into his granary,»* vesting her with works that are worthy of the eternal granaries.

«Then Jesus came from Galilee to John, at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. And John was for hindering him, and said, "It is I who ought to be baptized by thee, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Let it be so now, for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice." Then he permitted him. And when Jesus had

been baptized, he immediately came up from the water. And behold the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming upon him. And behold, a voice from the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"» (Mt 3:13-17).

After the soul has become purified in her "despoliation," loving God above all things, Jesus manifests Himself to her in such a loving, grateful, and humble way that the soul must exclaim: "Lord, it is I who should be grateful to you for what you have done with me, and do you come to thank me?" But Jesus says: *«Let it be so now, for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice»*: "Let me act in you, setting an example for you as to how you should give thanks to my Father for having given Me to you; you give thanks to Me, and I in you give thanks to my Father for having given Me to you." And the soul, afire in the love of the Son, will see within herself the open heavens and the Spirit of God coming upon her, while a voice, the voice of the Father, will make known to her that it is in His Son, Christ Jesus, in whom He is well pleased, for which reason she must "disappear," so that it may be Christ Jesus who lives and acts, and that the Father may also say of her: This is my beloved daughter, because in her I see the Son in whom I am well pleased.

IV

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE "BRIDGE": THE SECOND FOUNDATION

The soul renounces the "spirit of the world": *«Not by bread alone does man live.» «Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.» «The Lord, thy God, shalt thou worship and Him only shalt thou serve.»*

«Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit, to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread" But he answered and said, "It is written, 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God'"» (Mt 4:1-4).

The soul will be tempted in different ways by Satan to make her accept the "spirit of the world" (her convenience). First he will place her in a difficult situation; he has *permission* from God to do this. For the soul, this situation, "difficult" as it may be, is God's Will. Then he will suggest to her that she use the power she has before God in her prayer to come out of the situation: «*If thou art the son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.»* The soul must trust in God, submitting herself to His Will, asking for nothing except the ful-

fillment of what He wants: *«Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*» Trust and faith in her Creator is the best weapon she can use against her "enemy."

«Then the devil took him into the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If thou art the Son of God, throw thyself down; for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge concerning thee, and upon their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "It is written further, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'"» (Mt 4:5-7).

Now the "enemy" uses her very faith to tempt her, but the soul who loves God above all things, loves only His Will. She has a living but very humble faith and realizes that to do this would not be faith but audacity, the fruit of pride, for tempting God. *«Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.»*

«Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And he said to him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me!' Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and him only shalt thou serve.'" Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered to him» (Mt 4:8-11).

Upon her overcoming the previous temptations depends the soul's having the strength to overcome this last temptation, which is definitive for her because on this depends the grace she is to receive for overcoming

the “spirit of the world,” spirit that will go against her for having rejected it. This is when she decides which of the two kingdoms is to reign in her — the Spirit, or “the flesh”: *«All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.»* Either she renounces the kingdoms of this world so that the Son of God may reign in her, fulfilling the Father’s Will, or she accepts these kingdoms in order to prolong the reign of the “spirit of the world.” It is the test of fire for the soul — this would be something like living her “purgatory” on earth. She must choose between the cross (the sacrifice of *her personal identity)* or her gratification (her own personal satisfaction), reaffirming herself in the world or being scorned by the world, with all the consequences that this brings. The Son of God, who lives in her, is awaiting her answer or decision in order to leave her in “the world” and continue on His way, or to fulfill in her the Father’s Will.

«The Lord thy God shalt thou worship and Him only shalt thou serve.» This is the answer — made a reality in one’s life — that expels Satan and receives the Son of God, but this is not just theory; it means the *total renunciation of everything that is not He alone* — His Will. Then the soul, according to the choice she has made, will see herself served either by the angels of God or by the angels of darkness at the service of Satan. And if she has chosen “the world” — ambition for “power” — accepting the temptation, she will be with the “Caiaphases” the “Pilates” or the “Herods” for “judging and con-

demning" the Son of God in those souls who are brought before her, thus jeopardizing her own salvation.

The soul has already renounced the "spirit of the world," but she must still go through other "tests." Still missing are two Foundation-pillars," which are very important in order for her to be able to pass "over" the "spirit of the world," becoming God's "bridge" or God's "channel": election of the Redeemer and "death" of the "I."

V

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE "BRIDGE": THE THIRD FOUNDATION

The soul chooses the Redeemer: *«He must increase, but I must decrease.»*

«An argument arose between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of purification. They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one you testified about — well, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him." To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices exceedingly at the voice of the bridegroom. This my joy, therefore, is made full"» (Jn 3:25-29).

Because of the "purification" the soul has suffered (the stripping away of the values esteemed by the world), "arguments" will arise — doubts in those who had been "observing" or "following" her — for they, scandalized by her material and moral ruin (her honor, reputation, name), will hold her in contempt, thinking that she is not one of God's souls; but, as a consequence, these souls will follow God Himself even more fervent-

ly: it is Jesus calling them to "follow Him" alone, in their own souls, for the soul whom they had been following and admiring has fulfilled her mission as "precursor" for them, bearing witness to Christ Jesus: *«Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. I said, "I am not the Christ"...»* "Nothing that I had (those virtues that they saw in that person) was mine but God's, and if I did any good, it was God who did it, not I."

Still others will be scandalized by these who are talking about her and will come to tell her: "People are talking about her; everyone will end up looking down on you; you should do something about recuperating your status; it's not enough to be honorable, you have to let it be known."

And still others will say: "How can you lose your good name, your honor, and even your material goods that have cost you so dearly? A life, a position in the world and in society shouldn't be destroyed this way." They will also say to her: "You're not being a good Christian. With your attitude, you're setting a bad example. That's *'burying the talents'* God has given you to use for the benefit of 'your brothers' The world needs you; your place is there. You can do so much good for your neighbor! It's in your 'neighbor' where you should see Christ. You're not being charitable!", and so on and so forth.

The soul understands these people perfectly, but she also understands that they cannot understand her, be-

cause she knows that she would not understand it either without *"this* grace" that God has given her.

«... that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan — the one you testified about— well, he is baptizing and everyone is going to him.» By this time, the "human side" has accomplished its "precursor" mission, as the soul was becoming purified and, through her works, taking other souls to God. Now she must yield her place to Jesus, not only in her own soul, but also in those other souls.

«No one can receive anything unless it is given to him from heaven .... I am not the Christ but have been sent before him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom .... » Jesus is the "bridegroom" of the souls; the "friend" is the human side that must yield its place to the divine — the "bridegroom" — renouncing even the good she was doing for souls: *«... but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices exceedingly at the voice of the bridegroom. This my joy, therefore, is made full.»* The soul, on seeing that people disregard her and do not stay attached to her person, experiences a great joy, for she understands that she has fulfilled her mission, yielding her place to the Bridegroom, Christ.

«He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is over all. He who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and of the earth he speaks. He who comes from heaven is over all. And he bears witness to that which he has seen and heard, and his witness no one receives. He who receives his witness has set his seal on this, that God is true. For he whom God has sent

speaks the words of God, for not by measure does God give the Spirit. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hands. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; he who is unbelieving towards the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him» (In 3:30-36).

It is necessary that Jesus, the Word of God, increase in the soul, and that the "human" decrease. For the "life of the soul," which is the Word, the Son of God, comes from above and is over all. The human comes from the earth, and its works are earthly. The Son of God, Christ, who comes from heaven, bears witness to what He has heard and seen from die Father: *«He who receives his witness has set his seal on this...,»* he receives Christ Himself to whom the Father has given His Spirit without measure and in whose hands He has placed all things — those of heaven and

Those of the earth. *«And his witness no one receives,»* because the souls frequently stay in "the world" and do not pass "over" it.

He who believes in the Son and receives Him *as Redeemer* has eternal life, because in Him he is redeemed. He who is unbelieving inwards the Son and does not receive Him as Redeemer will not see life, but he will feel the wrath of God upon him, because he will remain in his sin, accepting the spirit of evil.

VI

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE "BRIDGE": THE FOURTH FOUNDATION

The soul trusts in the Redeemer and surrenders herself to the "death" of the "I"; she surrenders her "head." *"Art thou he who is to come, or do we look for another?"*

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1:14-15).

After the soul has yielded her place to the Son of God, placing at His service all her faculties, she will, in a way, feel like a prisoner whose wings have been clipped. But Jesus prepares her, announcing to her the "new life." *«The kingdom of God is at hand»* for you, He seems to say to her, and He gives her to "taste" of the Gospel in its true practice, so that, believing in His words, she may submit herself *unconditionally* to the Will of the Father which He, Christ, will fulfill in her. Only one more thing is needed: that she be "beheaded," which means the death of her "I," whose "beheading" will yield its place to the "Head" of her soul, the Bridegroom who must reign in her, because the Bridegroom, Christ, is the Head of the Bride, the soul.

But first she will see herself assailed by doubt: Is this of God? — for her life seems like a complete failure.

«"Art thou he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" In that very hour he cured many of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and to many who were blind, he granted sight. And he answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not scandalized in me"» (Lk 7:20-23).

«Art thou he who is to come, or shall we *for another?*» Is this of God, or have I made a mistake? And Christ sweetly seems to tell her: Have you forgotten, dear soul, all I have done for you? You were blind, walking in error, and now you have the light of truth; you were "limping" from so many defects, and now they're gone; you were covered with the "sores" of your sins, and you are cleansed of them; you were "deaf to God's voice, and now you hear; you were walking on the brink of death, and I have placed you on the brink of Life; you knew not the Gospel, nor did you understand the Scriptures, and now you know and understand them. Blessed will you be if you are not scandalized in Me for all the sufferings that *in you* I must undergo, fulfilling the Will of my Father, in order to redeem you from sin, the spirit of evil, and so that you may receive my Spirit, the Consoler, who will clarify all things for you.

And the soul understands that the sacrifice of her person is necessary in order to receive the "new life," and she surrenders with joy, desiring to "disappear" so that Christ may fulfill in her body what is lacking in her of

His Passion. *«Without me you ran do nothing.» «I can do all things in him who strengthens me.»*

«But sending an executioner, he commanded that his head be brought on a dish. Then he beheaded him in the prison ...» (Mk 6:27).

Only God knows who will be the "executioner" that will behead the "I" in each soul. It falls to the soul only to wait with faith and to surrender herself *unconditionally* to God's Will. These jobs are almost always carried out by the "servants" of the "enemy," believing they are rendering a "service" to their master. God permits for the *sake of justice* and for the *liberation of the soul.*

NOTE:

Parts One and Two are the soul's role: the surrender of her liberty, her "self-donation." What follows in Part Three is work of the Lord in the soul, according to the soul's *perseverance* in her total surrender to the Divine Will; this is the "donation," and it must be *constant* and *real* so that God may act in the soul according to His good pleasure, to the point of liberating her *totally* from evil. This is her personal redemption.

Part Three

THE SOUL IN CHRIST

THE PUBLIC LIFE

«Snapping the chains of her yoke »

SNAPPING THE CHAINS OF HER YOKE»

«On that day — it is Yahweh Sabaoth who speaks—I will break the yoke on their necks, and snap their chains. They will no longer be servants of aliens, but will serve Yahweh their God and David their king whom I will raise up for them» (Jer 30:8-9).

What is meant by *«snapping the chains of her yoke»?*

The "chains" are the spirit of evil, and the "yoke" is attachment to ourselves.

This participation by the spirit of Evil, which, because of original sin we receive ever since we come into this world, is what *"chains"* us to *"ourselves"* to keep us from reaching God, thus enabling Evil to take the soul. The more a person is *in himself,* the more he partakes of the spirit of "Evil" and the closer he comes to belonging to it.

Only by LIVING the purity of the Gospel can we free ourselves here on earth from the "yoke" or slavery of sin, because this *"vivencia"* ("living") of the Gospel would be our identity with Christ, who will give us His Holy Spirit.

I

JESUS IN GALILEE

«And leaving the town of Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capharnaum, which is by the sea, in the territory of Zabulon and Nepthalim; that what was spoken through Isaias the prophet might be fulfilled: "Land of Zubulon and land of Nepthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen." From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"» (Mt 4:13-17).

The soul with Jesus (by following his life of self denial) has crossed *«beyond the Jordan.»* She is "above" the "spirit of the world" relinquishing its kingdom, even though she lives in the world.

«The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light; and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen.» The soul, who sat in darkness under the action of the spirit of evil, saw a great light, upon placing her liberty in Christ, Light of the world; and for the souls who still *«sit in the region and shadow of death, a light has arisen,»* because, through her, the Light, Christ Jesus, which came to illuminate the world of the souls, will manifest itself.

Repent, He will say to all souls of good will, «*the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*» for each soul who lets me reign in her, cooperates in its coming by sweeping along many other souls.

JESUS, LIGHT OF THE WORLD, TESTIFIED TO BY THE FATHER

«"I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life!' The Pharisees therefore said to him, "Thou bearest witness to thyself. Thy witness is not true!'Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness to myself, my witness is true, because I know where I came from and where I go. But you do not know where I came from or where I go"» (Jn 8:12-14).

It is Christ in Jesus who is the light of the world, not the soul; she, *by following Him,* will not walk in darkness, *«but will have the light of life.»* And it is He who will bear witness to Himself and to the soul, for His witness is true, because He knows where she comes from and where she is going, while she, the soul, cannot know where she comes from or where she is going, since Christ in Jesus will take her along according to the Will of the Father, which only He knows, and He alone knows how to fulfill it perfectly.

«You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And even if I do judge, my judgment is true, because I am not alone, but with me is he who sent me, the Father. And in

your Law is written that the witness of two persons is true» (Jn 8:15-17).

«You judge according to the flesh »; this is why lilt! soul should judge no one, not even herself, because if she judges, her judgment will not be true. Only God is Judge of his creatures; and the Son of God, Christ, who has received from the Father the plenitude of His Spirit, can judge with true judgment because He is not alone; the Father, who has sent Him, is always with Him; and in the Law it is written that the witness of two is true. Therefore, no other testimony is necessary.

«"It is I who bear witness to myself, and He who sent me, the Father, bears witness to me" They therefore said to him, "Where is thy father?"Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would then know my Father also!'Jesus spoke these words in the treasury while teaching in the temple. And no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come» (Jn 8:18-20).

A serious error is committed on the part of the soul who takes it upon herself to "bear witness" to Jesus: this means that she has not yet "disappeared." The testimony that was hers to give was the one she has given in her moment as "Precursor." It does not matter that people may question and not understand her life; if they knew Christ, they would also know the Father, who sent Him, and they would know that this soul fulfills His Will.

The soul should not fret over anything or anyone, for no one, however much he may wish to, can harm her until "her hour" is come — that hour which only Jesus

and the lather know, and which is not the soul's to inquire about. That hour is the "hour" of Christ Jesus, which becomes prolonged in the souls that He is redeeming, fulfilling that which is lacking *in them* of His Passion.

THE CALLING OF THE FIRST DISCIPLES

«As he was walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). And he said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And at once they left the nets, and followed him. And going farther on, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And immediately they left their nets and their father, and followed him» (Mt 4:18-22).

The soul will continue her usual, normal life, fulfilling the duties of her station in life, but ever attentive to the inspirations of the Lord, who at any moment may call her to fulfill some mission; she should leave *everything* "at once" in order to fulfill *«with haste,»* like Mary, the Will of the Lord. *«And at once they left the nets, and followed him.»* What she is doing in the moment or for whom she is doing it does not matter; she should leave it all, for God's Will comes first, before all things and persons around her: *«And immediately they left their nets and their father, and followed him.»*

THE APOSTLES' REWARD

«Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has left house, or parents, or brothers, or wife, or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive much more in the present time, and in the age to come, life everlasting» (Lk 18:29-30).

Nothing and no one should be an obstacle to our fulfilling the Lord's call. The soul who has become decided for *God alone,* letting Him reign in her, must regard nothing but His Will. In it she will find her "relatives," friends, and everything else.

JESUS' RELATIVES

«While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers'?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother"» (Mt 12:46-50).

The person who desires to keep the love of his parents, brothers, relatives, and friends must be very sincere with them regarding his "new life": if they wish to continue being his lather, his mother, brothers, relatives, and friends, they must never be an obstacle to his fulfilling God's Will; what's more, they must cooperate

with him if they expect him to continue having contact with them. His life of faith — firm and unshakable in the fulfillment of God's Will — will be the best example he can give to his own, and the greatest good he can do their souls, for he will bring them close to Christ, who will accomplish in them what they need for their salvation.

IN PRAISE OF THE MOTHER OF JESUS

«Now as he was speaking, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said, "Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked!" But he replied, "Still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!"» (Lk 11:27-28).

If Mary is happy and is called blessed by all generations, it is because, hearing the word of God, she was faithful to that word, *fulfilling it.* Her being mother of the Son of God was somehow contingent upon this fidelity: this is why Jesus said: *«Still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!»*

CONDITIONS FOR FOLLOWING JESUS

«Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. For he who would save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it. For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man

is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will render to everyone according to his conduct. Amen I say to you, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death, till they have seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom"» (Mt 16:24-28).

The soul who makes up her mind to follow after Jesus has to "deny herself *constantly,* for the fact of having given up "her head" does not mean she has no liberty (freedom of choice); she is free to the very end, and this liberty is untouchable for God; she can retrieve it at any moment, though if that "death" or surrender is real, if it has been a reality and not just an illusion, she will enjoy a grace that will fill her with the strength to go on. This CONSTANT SELF-RENUNCIATION IS THE CROSS SHE MUST CARRY TO THE END, AT WHICH TIME SHE CAN SAY: *«All is consummated.»*

On that cross goes her Redeemer; the very instant she leaves it, she has left her own redemption. The soul must only take care of this "cross," for on it depends the fulfillment of God's Will and on this, everything else.

The soul must not even think of her own salvation; this would be to "appear" anew, for if she "disappears," she is not to be found at all. *«For he who would save his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it.*» Nor must she think of saving the souls of others; this too comes about as a *consequence* of her fidelity in fulfilling the Divine Will.

«Amen I say to you, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death, till they have seen the son of Man coming in his kingdom,» for everyone who *con-*

sciously cooperates with a soul so that she may fulfill the Will of God will not fail to be rewarded and will not taste death; rather, he will see in himself the kingdom of God, because it is as if he himself had fulfilled it; it is the start for his entering the path himself; it is like *crossing the "bridge"* toward the Redeemer, he himself becoming "channel" for other souls. This is the "divine commerce" with the souls in the mystical Body: a soul who "builds" the "foundations" and becomes "bridge" brings to the Mystical Body many other members who are waiting on the other side of the "bridge" to cross over, they themselves becoming "channels" for still other members. The "channels" will not have to undergo all the trials that the "bridge" went through in laying her "foundations," for God gives graces for "bridge" and graces for "channel," according to the soul's mission. The soul's merit lies in her responding to the graces given her, this is so, whether she is "bridge" or "channel." This is why souls must not govern their lives by the lives of others, but by the voice of their conscience, which will make God's Will known to them; He alone knows for what function he has chosen them.

IN THE SYNAGOGUE AT CAPHARNAUM

«And they entered Capharnaum. And immediately on the Sabbath he went into the synagogue and began to teach them. And they were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. Now in their synagogue there was a

man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying "What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Hast thou come to destroy us? I know who thou art, the Holy One of God." And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Hold thy peace, and go out of the man." And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, went out of him» (Mk 1:21-26).

The *life* of a person who travels this path of God's Will is the best "preaching" and "teaching" that can be imparted, for in this soul the Savior is at work. *«And they were astonished at his teaching; for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes,»* for the soul's teaching is as from "one having authority" — a living example, like Mary, and not just words like the "scribes" and "pharisees," who write and preach but do not live what they write and teach. But let not the soul who lives this think that everyone will be in agreement with her, for "impure spirits" — those who say they know Jesus, but do not really "know" him because they do not live His Doctrine — will step in to hinder the Work of God, because they think they will lose their prestige when other people see that they do not practice what they preach. *«What have me to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Hast thou to me to destroy us?»*

Others carry out this destructive work by making other souls see that those are "chosen souls," "saints" on earth, and that that path is not for everyone. *«I know who thou art, the Holy One of God.»* None of this should matter to the soul. Jesus, when the moment arrives, will

cast out these “impure spirits” that have tried to obstruct the path of the souls toward God.

INCRIMINATING THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

«But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men. For you yourselves do not go in, nor do you allow those going in to enter» (Mt 23:13). ,

Woe to you if you place obstacles to souls’ living a more perfect life according to God’s Will, imposing upon them your own will, thus obstructing the kingdom of God in them, as well as in other souls who were disposed to follow them!

Woe to you if by acting hypocritically you create doubts concerning the word of God! You do not enter because you have no faith, nor do you let faith live in those who have it. *«For you yourselves do not go in, nor do you allow those going in to enter.»*

«Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you traverse sea and land to make one convert; and when he has become one, you make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves» (Mt 23:15).

Woe to you if you are like those false observers of the Law of the Lord, who with hypocrisy preach the word of God, “traversing sea and land to increase the number of their followers,” and after winning them over they make them like unto themselves, or worse than themselves, because of the bad example they give them!

«Woe to you, blind guides, who say, "Whoever swears by the temple, it is but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound"» (Mt 23:16).

Woe to you if, having neither faith nor conscience because you have left the Way of the Lord, you become a "blind guide" by giving precepts and laws that are not of God, and then after having given them you tell men that they are obligated to fulfill them, even if those laws go against their conscience and they carry them out without a spirit of faith!

«You blind fools! for which is greater, the gold, or the temple which sanctifies the gold? "And whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is upon it, he is bound" Blind ones! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which sanctifies the gift? Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it and by all things that are on it, and he who swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it» (Mt 23:17-22).

You blind fools! Which is greater, the law or faith — the spirit — which sanctifies the law? And they say: if one fulfills what is "commanded," even if he has no faith in it, this is all right, but if he does not obey by fulfilling what is "commanded," he is falling short. Blind fools! Which is greater, faith and conscience, which sanctify obedience, or "obedience"? (cf Acts 5:29). Is it not in each one's conscience where God manifests Himself, and is not each soul to be judged by it?

Does not St. Paul say that *«anything which does not arise from conviction is a sin?»* (cf Rm 14:23).

«Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it, and by all things that are on it, and he who swears by the temple swears by it, and by him who dwells in it.» The body is God's temple, and the heart is the altar. Above the sentiments of the heart is the conscience which is where God's voice manifests itself. Every deed must be governed by conscience, which is the voice of God, so that it will not defile the heart, which is the altar for the offerings, and so that its temple, which is the body, may not be desecrated, because the deeds of the body must be according to him who dwells in it, and if these deeds keep your soul in grace, it is the throne and tabernacle of God; therefore, your deeds must be according to this Will and not your own or that of others.

«Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!» (Mt 23:23-24).

Woe to you if you live with your sights set on the "goods" and do not fulfill what is essential, which is the Will of God, failing justice and mercy, endangering the good faith of those around you! Don't you know that by fulfilling God's Will, all else is fulfilled? But if you know this and doubt that someone can truly fulfill it, it is because you do not even fulfill the first commandment

(if God's Law; you love yourself and all things more than God. You, like the Pharisees whom Jesus admonished, are a blind guide who takes care of trifles, human precepts, "pharisees" who live committing sins in their hearts against God's Law: *«Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!»*

«Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all kinds of filth. Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness» (Mt 23:25-28).

Woe to you if you act like hypocrites who feign a virtue they do not have: who in the sight of men behave in one way in order to be esteemed by them as righteous, and in the sight of God their hearts appear for what they are — full of plunder, self-indulgence, and all manner of sins! They are blind men who attempt to deceive God and men and only deceive themselves. Blind man, take care, instead, that you keep your conscience clean, so that through it you may see the filth in your heart and, humbling yourself before God, you may be made clean by Him; the virtues that you attempt to feign will be real. So what if men know your defects! It is better for you if they know them, because they will help you to correct

them, and you will not deceive yourself, believing yourself in be a possessor of virtues that you do not have. What good does it do you to appear very virtuous outwardly if inwardly you are lull of defects and sins? You are, then, as those tombs — marble mausoleums, white and shining — that appear very clean on the outside, and on the inside, in their recesses, they keep dead men's bones, full of worms.

«Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, saying, "If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?» (Mt 23:29-33).

Woe to you if you are like the scribes and: Pharisees, a hypocrite like they, who build altars for the saints, write about their lives, adorning them with all kinds of virtues, as if they had been born saints, so that people will think that the way of holiness is only for certain "chosen souls"! And if they hold some authority, they are the first to persecute the souls who are heading toward the way of holiness.

Woe to those who use the saints for commercial gain — enshrined saints as well as pious souls who are disposed to give everything for God!

Woe to those who, holding "authority," misuse it in the name of God! *«Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?»*

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES EXPOSED

«Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, "The Scribes and the Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses. All things, therefore, that they command you, observe and do. But do not act according to their works; for they talk but do nothing. And they bind together heavy and oppressive burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders; but not with one finger of their own do they choose to move them. In fact, all their works they do in order to be seen by men"» (Mt 23:1-5).

And to his disciples of today as well, the Lord has said: «On *the chair of Peter, many of his faithful followers have sat; these have reached identification with Me. But there have also sat on the same chair those who, living on the margin on Peter's life, have used Peter's authority.»*

Woe to those who using Peter's authority have not lived as he did, so as to identify themselves with the Master!

Woe to those who lay heavy burdens upon others, but they themselves do not choose to carry them! — who behave in front of men in such a way as to make them believe that they "live" what they impose on others, but who in reality act quite differently.

Do not order another to do what you yourself are not capable of fulfilling. Fulfill it yourself first, and by your example you will already be "ordering" others to do it. Behave like the servant before his Lord, so that those who are under your direction may do the same thing they see you doing.

Endeavor to please *God alone,* and do not do anything "so as to be seen by men," that they may think more highly of you than of others, and esteem you. By this fact alone, you will be setting a bad example.

«... they widen their phylacteries and enlarge their tassels, and love the first places at suppers and the front seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the market place, and to be called by men "Rabbi." But do not you be called "Rabbi"; for one is your Master, and all you are brothers. And call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called masters; for one only is your Master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted» (Mt 23:5-12).

Do not imitate the "scribes" and "Pharisees," letting everyone know your rank or authority by means of external status symbols, using insignias, medallions, stars, rings, or chains. Neither wear clothes different from those of others in order to make known to others your position before God or before men. Your only "badge" should be an exemplary life, being a "living gospel."

Do not look for the best places in or outside your home, nor the first places at the table, or in church, or

anywhere else. Neither assign yourself the last place, thinking that *«the last shall be first,»* because by this you are already choosing the first. Stay where you are put, and if you are to choose, choose "the middle," where you will not stand out.

Do not seek to be noticed for anything; nor go after men to be greeted by them in social gatherings or interviewed by the press. Behave naturally wherever you go. That will be the best testimony you can give of your life as a true Christian.

Neither call yourself "teacher," "doctor," "excellency," "most reverend," etc. Only God deserves all these titles. Christ is the Doctor, because He is the true physician of our illnesses, not only of our souls, but also of our bodies — if we have faith and let ourselves be taken care of by Him. And the Holy Spirit is the Teacher of all science and the advocate for our defense.

And do not be saying we have Francis, Ignatius, Augustine, or any other saint as father, «*for one is your Father, who is in heaven,»* and all the saints are our brothers.

«He who is greatest among you shall be your servant.» Do not forget that your spiritual or moral stature will be in accordance with the example you set and the service you render to others, according to God's Will, as Christ, our Teacher, did. If you exalt yourself before men, you will be humbled by God before them. If you are humble before God, He will exalt you before men.

TRUE WISDOM

«Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father in heaven shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name, and cast out devils in thy name, and work many miracles in thy name"?" And I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity!"» (Mt 7:21-23).

Do not be thinking that because you frequently have the name of God on your lips and because you say many oral prayers that the gates of His kingdom are open to you. Alas for you if your heart does not correspond to the words of your mouth and if your works are not according to God's Will!

Do not be thinking that being possessors of a "gift" from God, be it the gift of prophecy, that of being an intermediary of His miracles, doing exorcisms, or even administering His Sacraments, will give you the right to enter into His kingdom. These "gifts" will make you more accountable; and if you are not faithful according to the graces That have been given you, you will have to listen to the words of the Lord that say: *«I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity!»* because the "gifts" that were given to you in order that you might cooperate toward the coming of the kingdom of God were placed by you at the service of iniquity, thus setting a bad example with your life.

«Everyone therefore who hears these my words and acts upon them, shall be likened to a wise man who built

his house on rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, but it did not fall, because it was founded on rock. And everyone who hears these my words and does not act upon them, shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house on sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and was utterly ruined» (Mt 7:24-27).

He who hears the word of God and acts upon it is the one who enters into His kingdom. All the calamities in this life, all the sufferings, temptations, illnesses, persecutions, and so on, will not be able to shatter his faith because it is founded on the living Rock, which is Christ, the Word of God.

But he who hears the word of God and does not act upon it, even if he preaches it and exercises the "power" that God has given him, will not have, in the moment of the test, the solid foundation of faith, which are his works, and he will waver *"falling into utter ruin,»* for he will have lost his soul.

"For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will render to everyone according to his conduct» (Mt 16:26-27).

For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and all the souls if he loses his own? What will a man give in exchange for his own soul? He will not be able to ransom it from the hands of the "enemy" — not

even with all the gold, the kingdoms, the power and the glory of this world, for these kingdoms" and this "glory" are the enemy's: *And the devil led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And he said to him, "To thee will I give all this power and their glory; for to me they have been delivered, and to whomever I will I give them. Therefore, if thou wilt worship before me, the whole shall be thine"»* (Lk 4:5-7).

Thus, then, he will not be able to ransom his soul from the hands of the devil, the "enemy" with all the power of this world, for that was the price that he received from the devil himself in exchange for his soul, upon "worshipping" before him: *«Therefore, if thou wilt worship before me, the whole shall be thine.»*

Neither will he be able to ransom his soul by saving other souls, nor even by losing them in order to turn them over to Satan in exchange for his own, for these souls belong to God, and only their own liberty can place them in the hands of the "enemy." And the Son of man, when he comes in the glory of His Father, with His angels, will render to each one according to his works — according to the use he has made of his liberty.

GOD AND MAMMON

«No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon» (Mt 6:24).

«No one can serve two masters,» and the "master" that hides in the "glory" and "power" of this world is none other than Satan; and he gives it to whoever worships before him: «*Therefore, if thou wilt worship before me, the whole shall be thine.*» But as he is father of lies and deceit, he does not say that he gives it in exchange for the soul. This is why the first thing he does in those whom he begins to win over is to make them forget "their" soul — but this is not the "self-forgetfulness" for fulfilling the Will of God that we mentioned earlier; it is just the opposite: it could be that Satan is interested in their not forgetting the *life of the soul* — but this would be with regard to the souls of others, not their own. This is how he has gained access into the realm of the souls of "good will." Unable to win them over through ambition for the "power" and "glory" of this world because they seek to enter through Love, he devises this line of reasoning for some: "You need to win many souls in order to save yourself, to think about your own salvation is egoism"; and for others: "Your mission is to win souls for God; by this you will save your own; you must work' hard; many 'apostolic works' are needed." And he even quotes some words from the Gospel, such as: "The harvest is plentiful... , the workers are few." And since all this is partly true, though not the truth of *his intention,* souls fall into error. He makes them see that this is not a "time for prayer, but for much action." He, Satan, knows better than anyone that action without prayer and penance (the denial of self) is "victuals for his table."

As a logical consequence, whoever betrays his conscience in order to accept the "power" and the "glory" of

this world will end up hating what is of God, which is the opposite of that power and glory which he enjoys for having chosen his "convenience."

But, is it not God who places this temporal power in the hands of men? Yes, but "power" in God's Will is one thing, and "power" in God's Permission, when man's will chooses it, seeking his "self-interest," is quite another; God gives him that power because his liberty has chosen it, and man, choosing "power" instead of "Love," clings to the "master" Satan, desiring the same thing Satan desired, despising the Master Christ who, following the way of LOVE, *«annihilated Himself by taking the form of servant.»* No man, therefore, can serve two masters, least of all two such opposite masters, *either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.»*

Are not power and glory the most coveted riches" of this world?

II

THE BEATITUDES

"And seeing the crowds, he went up the mountain. And when he was seated, his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth he taught them saying:

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN» (Mt 5:1-3).

Blessed be they who, loving God above all things, do not seek after the things of this world; theirs is the kingdom of heaven because they prefer to be submitted to others rather than to betray their consciences by accepting the power and glory of this world; "the world" will *contemptuously* call them "poor in spirit," because they do no aspire after the "power" and "glory" that comes from men but instead seek the Love and glory of God

«BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL POSSESS THE EARTH» (Mt 5:5).

Blessed are those who practice true meekness of heart—those who, with patience and love, bear all the vicissitudes of this life, placing their trust and hope in the Redeemer; they will possess the earth when in it the kingdom of God "manifests" itself.

«BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE CONSOLED» (Mt 5:4).

Blessed are they who mourn, for they have not conformed to the "spirit of the world" and suffer in this life

the consequences of their fidelity to the Spirit of God; they will be consoled by God in their afflictions, even here in this world.

«BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE, THEY SHALL HAVE THEIR FILL» (Mt 5:6).

Blessed are they who, "hungering and thirsting for justice," suffer because of the injustices committed in this world, they themselves being "just" in their deeds, and even if injustices are committed against them, they do not take "justice" into their own hands, letting God be the one who carries it out; these will have their "fill" of joy because they will behold the Justice of God, which is very different from the "justice" practiced by men.

«BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY» (Mt 5:7).

Blessed are they who practice "true" mercy: forgiving offenses, bearing with love, and correcting in the same way, the shortcomings of others, rendering their services, according in God's Will, anywhere and to anyone who needs it. They will obtain mercy, because as they did with others so will God do with them.

«BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD» (Mt 5:8).

Blessed are they who keep their hearts clean, *not accepting* any impure thought: because the mind defiles the heart, and from the heart spring the deeds, and through the purity of one's deeds, one gets to God.

Blessed are they who keep peace with God, fulfilling His Will, for they shall be called "sons of God," for having identified themselves with His Son, Christ.

«BLESSED ARE THEY WHO SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR JUSTICE' SAKE, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN» (Mt 5:10).

Blessed are they who, being "just" in the sight of God, suffer persecution under the justice of men. Because they are a "testimony" to God in the world, they are persecuted; to these belong the kingdom of heaven.

«BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN THEY INSULT YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU AND UTTER EVERY KIND OF SLANDER AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF ME. BE GLAD AND REJOICE, FOR YOUR REWARD IS GREAT IN HEAVEN; THEY PERSECUTED THE PROPHETS BEFORE YOU IN THE VERY SAME WAY» (Mt 5:11-12).

Blessed will you be when they insult and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because you are faithful to Christ in fulfilling the Will of the Father. Be glad and rejoice, because great is your reward in heaven, for this is what they did to all the saints who are today rejoicing in the glory of God.

THE CURSES

«But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation» (Lk 6:24).

But woe to those of you who have set your hearts on temporal riches and have not sought the eternal riches!

Woe to you if you have become rich through anxious and unremitting toil and hoarding, closing your eyes to the needs of the poor who come your way, so as to avoid extending your hand to them!

Woe to those who get rich by swindling others of their possessions!

Woe to those who cheat the widow, the orphans, and the helpless in order to get rich themselves!

Woe to those who get rich through the work of others and do not justly remunerate the work of those who serve them!

Woe to the rich man who snatches from the poor man his means of livelihood and does not see to the needy!

«Woe to him who stores up what is not his and unceasingly increases the burden of his debt!» (Hab 2:6).

«Woe to him who pursues evil gain for his household, setting his nest on high to escape the reach of misfortune!» (Hab 2:9).

Woe to him who oppresses the poor man and does not deal with him justly, relying on the power that his money can buy!

Woe to those who practice a profession in order to get rich by it; they do not act with righteousness of conscience, setting their sights on their "self-interest"!

Woe to the professionals who, setting their sights on their "fees," commit injustices against their fellowmen and turn their own hearts away from God!

Woe to those who take advantage of another's misfortune in order to enrich their own household!

Woe to those who get rich by wrong-doing—sin, their own or that of others.

Woe to him who places his trust in material riches and does not seek God's protection! Woe to those who commercially exploit the word of God!

«Woe to you who are filled! For you shall hunger» (Lk 6:25).

Woe to those who think they are "filled" with the goods of this world and feel no "hunger" for the eternal goods; they will be forever hungry in eternity, where they cannot take the goods that "filled" them in this world!

Woe to those who, having more than enough, do not share what they have with those who lack even the basic necessities!

Woe to those who, having within their reach the things of God — graces — do not "fill" themselves with them and "hunger" alter the things of the world! They will hunger eternally.

«Woe to you who laugh now! for you shall mourn and weepy (Lk 6:25).

Woe to those who, fleeing the sufferings of this life, make others weep that they may laugh, for they will mourn and weep in eternity!

Woe to those who having a temporal power use it to make others weep!

Woe to him who laughs at those who mourn and weep under the oppressive yoke!

«Woe to those who, in their beds, scheme iniquity, which they prepare to carry out at daybreak, for they have the power in their hands » (Mic 2:1).

«Woe to those who covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they cheat an owner of his house, a man of his inheritance» (Mic 2:2).

«.. .for power is given you by the Lord, and sovereignty by the Most High, who will examine your works, and search out your thoughts» (Wis 6:3).

«Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets» (Lk 6:26).

Woe to those who hush up the truth and come up with a lie in order to get in good with men!

Woe to those who, in order to be in good standing with men, heed not the voice of their conscience, for the sake of "expedience."

Woe to those who, knowing the truth, go along with men's demands and violate God's Law in order to gain the esteem of men!

Woe to those who oppress the humble in order to be in good standing with the powerful!

Woe to those who, having the duty to preach the word of God, accommodate that "word" in order to be in accord with men and be esteemed by them!

Woe to those who cover up the truth which they know to be from God and adjust themselves to the falsehood of the world in order to win the esteem of men!

Woe to those who, knowing the truth and the prophecies of God, preach a peace based on a balance of human interests in order to win men's esteem!: *«Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets!»* "False prophets" are all those who preach a peace based on a balance of human interests, because true peace will not come about until all men turn to God with their hearts. The peace that Christ came to bring us is not the peace of this world: *«I have not come to bring peace, but a sword»* (Mt 10:34). *«I came to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it were already kindled? ... Do you think that I have come to give peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division»* (Lk 12:49-51).

REPRIMANDING THE PHARISEES

«The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and laughed at him. He said to them, "You are the very ones who pass yourselves off as virtuous in people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For what is thought highly of by men is loathsome in the sight of God"» (Lk 16:14-15).

All who are shocked by these things and disregard the word of God do so because they are like the Pharisees, "money-lovers," and they cannot conceive in their greedy hearts the purity of the things of God. They try to pass themselves off as virtuous before men, but in their hearts they are forever offending God, because what is thought highly of by men is loathsome in the sight of God.

People who, out of *ignorance* and not out of *"hard-heartedness,"* have fallen into these errors will humbly acknowledge their mistake, and God will give them the grace to correct it. This is precisely what the Lord desires of each person: that he recognize his sin and trust in God so that God may shower His Mercy upon each one before His Justice comes.

«The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and each one is to force his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the law to become void» (Lk 16:16-17).

The world has never been without this type of spirit [pharisaical] — men who have accepted these spirits. They interpret the Law according to the way it suits them and do not practice the purity of that Law that they preach. And the same thing that those men of the past did with the Law and the Prophets, men of today do with the Gospel. They concern themselves with living comfortably, basking in the kingdoms of this world, and do not "force" their way into the kingdom of God. But all of men's attempts, in cooperation with the "prince of this world," Satan, to perpetuate his kingdom, will be in vain and will only be to their own detriment, for it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void; because there will indeed be souls who will fulfill the purity of this Law — the Gospel of the Lord — and then His kingdom will come, and His justice will manifest itself in the world.

JESUS' MISSION WITH RESPECT TO THE OLD LAW

«Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished» (Mt 5:17-18).

It is a mistake to think that Christ came to liberate us from having to *fulfill* the Law; His words are quite clear: «*... till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.*»

Nor should we think that this liberation means giving free rein to the flesh — "the old man" — as was thought by men of old, men who were expecting a Messiah invested with temporal power, who would liberate them from the Roman yoke, as well as from the "burden" of the Law. Jesus came to liberate us from the spirit of slavery: sin is the spirit of slavery, and it is this spirit that makes the Law "burdensome" for us. We will find this liberation in the very fulfillment of the Law, but this *total* liberation will not become a reality until we fulfill *all* of it, for it is not enough to fulfill a part of the Gospel, we must *live* it all — this is the fulfillment of the Law — fulfilling it in order to attain the liberty of sons of God. Then we will no longer be "bound" to the Law, because God is Spirit, and where there is the Spirit of God, Spirit who will take us to live the Gospel, there the liberty is to be found. This is the Christian liberty of which St. Paul speaks, for one is not a Christian through baptism alone, but through one's identification with the

life of Christ. He who does not *live* his baptism fails to be a Christian. It is not baptism that supersedes the Law but Charity, because Charity is God's *actuating;* but if we do not let the Holy Spirit "act" in us, we have no charity; therefore, we are bound to the Law. What "binds" us is not the Law, but the "flesh," our attachment to self, which makes the fulfillment of the Law impossible for us, and this is why we say that the Law "binds" us, because in having it and not fulfilling it, we feel guilty, and the Law itself testifies against us in our conscience — testifies to the fact that we are transgressors.

As souls liberate themselves *on earth* from the spirit of slavery, through their fulfillment of the Gospel, which is to *"enter"* into Christ, living the life that He lived on earth, the whole of creation also becomes liberated — those creatures who, as St. Paul says, were *«made subject to vanity, not of their own will but by reason of him who made them subject.»* And just as the Holy Spirit has come to accomplish this liberation in the souls, so will He come to accomplish it in the whole of creation. But the Holy Spirit cannot *manifest Himself* until the souls have done their part. Until all the "elect" have entered into Christ, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit cannot manifest Himself in the world.

The last of the "elect" will be true saints on earth, and among them the Holy Spirit will "manifest" Himself; just as among the wicked, "the man of iniquity" — who will be the person of Satan, the Antichrist—will manifest himself.

«Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven» (Mt 5:19-20).

Whoever then relaxes one of these commandments, even if it be the least significant, and teaches others by saying that because it is minor it is not important, will be called to account about this by God on the day of judgment. But he who practices the whole Gospel, teaching by his example, words and deeds, that this is the true life, will be great in the kingdom of heaven.

But neither will God accept the excuse that we have not fulfilled the Gospel because we have not been taught to fulfill it:*«... unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*» If the "teachers" we have had have been like the scribes and Pharisees — who say and do not do — this fact does not give us the right to be like them and still save ourselves, for each one has a conscience and must act according to it. The very fact that we see the "pharisaical" in the other is an indication that God is calling us to a better life, for He does not let us know the shortcomings of our fellowmen so that we may dwell on our criticism of them or for us to judge, but rather so that we may transcend our own way of life and also be a help — above all through our prayer and sacrifice, our self-offering—to someone else's self-

transcending. It may be that this someone else has no responsibility before God, and we, for having seen the wrong, do indeed have it: *«For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.»*

Let us, then, discern what in each case is the right and perfect thing for us, that we may transcend the deeds of those others, that is to say, what they consider "righteousness," for perhaps to them what they do is "right" because God has not revealed anything better to them, and in the sight of God they are "justified," for God does not require of us what he has not given us; but we must act according to the knowledge we have received, for it is according to this knowledge that our judgment before God will be.

EXPLANATION OF THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

«You have heard that it was said to the men of old, "You shall not kill; and whoever hills shall be liable to judgment!' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; and whoever says to his brother, "Raca," shall be liable to the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, "Thou fool!" shall be liable to the fire of Gehenna» (Mt 5:21-22).

We think that if we have not taken someone's life, we are free of guilt against the fifth commandment of the Law; well, this is not so; the Lord says: «... *everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment.»* If our criticism arises from a feeling of dislike for our "brothers," and with it we do not seek to give an

example Or a lesson, but rather to destroy his good name, we are sinning against the fifth commandment, because we have been moved by an intention that is not pure, and we are liable to judgment. We are contributing to the death of that good name which is not ours to touch: *«... whoever says to his brother, "Raca," shall be liable to the Sanhedrin.*» If we *accept* that feeling of hatred against our "brothers," we are accepting the action of the spirit of evil, and we have sinned against God. And if we hurl insults at them, judging them according to our opinion, and we do not repent of those wrongs we have done them, we are liable to the fire of Gehenna, for the sin is mortal: *«... and whoever says, "Thou fool!" shall be liable to the fire of Gehenna.»*

«So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift» (Mt 5:23-24).

«So if you are offering your gift at the altar ... »: when we go to offer our prayers to God, if there we remember that someone has something against us, let us first pray for him, asking God's forgiveness for him: *«Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does.*» Let us take a good look at what the Lord says: «*... and there remember that your brother has something against you»;* perhaps you have nothing against him, but it is enough for us to know that he has something against us in order for us to be *obligated,* before God, to intercede for him, as

Christ did for each one of us; then our offering will be pure and pleasing to God.

«Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny» (Mt 5:25-26).

While we are still going along the way of this life, we should settle matters quickly with our adversaries, even if we are dealing with our worst enemy, behaving with him as Christ behaved with all men, lest our deeds give God cause, *for the sake of justice,* to permit the "enemy," the spirit of evil, to tempt us and we be thrown into the prison of sin. Then our debt will be even greater, and we will have to pay for all we have done, for not having behaved like Christians, but just the opposite: *«I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.»* We will not get out of the temptation of the enemy, spirit of evil, until we have paid to divine justice all that it requires from us for our liberation from the tempter.

EXPLANATION OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

«You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart» (Mt 5:27-28).

From the impurity of the heart, these sins of adultery are born, because if our heart is pure, our way of looking at things will be pure.

Does not this impurity enter the heart through the eyes? No. Impurity enters the mind through the eyes, ears, and our other senses; these impure thoughts, when accepted, reach the heart and settle in it and become works. If the heart is pure, the works will also be pure.

«Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.» It is in the accepted "desire" where sin lies, not in looking. If the heart is pure, our looking will also be pure, but if the heart is not pure, our looking cannot be pure and will be darkness for the body. "Desire" is one thing, and disorderly "appetite" is another. Man is not to blame for this disorder of his appetites, but *desiring* what his body craves depends on his will; he can gratify it or deny it.

THE LIGHT OF CHRIST, LIGHT OF THE SOUL

«Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. For if the light that is in you is darkness, what will the darkness be like?» (Lk 11:34-35).

As we said before, "darkness" is produced by the impurity of the heart; this impurity — accepted impure thoughts — enters the heart through the mind, and those thoughts can enter the mind through one's vision. Let us, therefore, guard our sight so that we do not give occasion for impure thoughts, and let us, even more so, guard

our mind by not accepting those thoughts that can defile the heart, so that our eyes may be light and not darkness for our bodies. For it is not what is outside that is bad, but what resides within us, and while we are not yet *totally* liberated from the consequences of original sin, we are not exempt from this impurity of heart that defiles all things. Only when the soul is *totally* led by the Holy Spirit is she able to look at all things without becoming contaminated, because her eyes will always be light for her body, for she sees all things *in* Christ, the perfect purity.

«If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell» (Mt 5:29-30).

If such is the condition of your eye, of what good is it to you to have eyes? You would be better off without them. Is not the darkness within us already enough but that our body must be made even darker by our looking? If such is the condition of our eyes, it is better that we begin to mortify our sight, living like blind men, and thus be able to purify our minds and hearts. We are to do the same with our hearing, our sense of smell, and any other sense that triggers in us an inordinate appetite; for it is better to do without those members of our body willingly — living as if we did not have them while we are living in the dimension of "Time," doing penance

(practicing self-denial) in order to save our souls — than that our whole body together with our soul be thrown into "eternal fire." In saving the soul, we will also be saving the body, which will be returned to us in a glorious and perfect state in the Resurrection.

The members of our body that have been placed at the service of sin— instruments at the service of iniquity — cannot, if we do not repent of our sin, participate in the resurrection of the saints, because those members will form part of the "body of iniquity," "body" formed by "members" separated from the "Mystical Body" of Christ. Let us, then, place the members of our body at the service of God's Justice if we want to participate in the resurrection of the saints. Even though the members of our body have served sin, while God's Mercy is still active in the world, we have time to repair our failings by placing these members at the service of God's Justice. "Entering" into Christ, we will be grafted into Him (cf Rm 11:17).

THE QUESTION OF DIVORCE

«And some Pharisees coming up asked him, testing him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" But he answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted us to write a notice of dismissal, and to put her away" But Jesus said to them, "By reason of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you that commandment. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and

cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder." And in the house, his disciples again asked him concerning this. And he said to them, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if the wife puts away her husband, and marries another, she commits adultery"» (Mk 10:2-12).

«But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."» Marriage was consummated by the sexual relationship. It was an *irrevocable* "natural law"; God Himself united them: *«Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.»*

After the sin, man broke this "natural law." Upon losing the grace of God, the virtue of the Holy Spirit, he turned animal, because he acted like one; he returned to his primitive life. Because of the hardness of their hearts, Moses, upon giving them the Law, *consented to* the notice of dismissal, and this he did, so that through *obedience* to this law, they might become purified (drawing close to God through their obedience). In this, men did not act with purity of intention either, dismissing without justifiable cause, thus falling into disobedience.

Later, *the Apostles,* making use of the power conferred on them by the Lord, "enclosed" marriage within a sac-

rament so that in this way the union might become purified through "obedience" by means of the sacrament, which would give them the grace to reach this purification. «*I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven*» (Mt 16:19).

«*What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.*» But men have not measured up to this either; they have transgressed this "sacramental law," not only with divorce, which is to legalize sin, legally accepting adultery, but also by presuming to deceive God and men in not accepting divorce, yet *committing the sin;* the one is wrong, the other worse *because of its consequences.* NEITHER THE ONE NOR THE OTHER SHOULD BE DONE, for he who rejects his wife and takes up with another commits adultery against her; and if the wife rejects her husband and takes up with another, she commits adultery; and he who joins himself to her who has been divorced also commits adultery, even if he himself is free. For sin lies not in what is external — what men see — but in what is intimate — what God and the soul see. It is God, not men, whom one offends, to the detriment of one's own soul.

Let us, then, be on guard that we do not commit any action that *we know* is not in accord with God's Will, even if it is in accord with men's opinions.

Let us not forget that marriage is a "holy vocation," a state of purification and sanctification that should take a man and a woman to that spiritual reality of which mar-

riage is an image: the identification of the soul with the Spirit; man and woman are representing the Spirit and the soul. This image presents itself to us *finished to perfection* in the relations of Christ and His genuine Church, as St. Paul says to the Ephesians: *"Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, being himself savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water by means of the word; in order that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. Even thus ought husbands also to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife, loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh; on the contrary he nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also does the Church (because we are members of his body ...). "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery—/ mean in reference to Christ and to the Church»* (Eph 5:22-32). This means, in reference to the man and the woman, in the union of the two in the same Spirit, as are Christ and His Church united; that is, Christ and the souls who have identified themselves with the Holy Spirit and have been confirmed in Him — the Church Triumphant.

The Church Militant represents those souls who are in their moment for electing I he spirit, in a struggle with the spirit of the world to which they are subjected, not willingly, but by reason of original sin; and they will be totally liberated upon dying to themselves in Christ Jesus in order to resurrect with Him, receiving the Spirit of Holiness. This “death in Christ” is not accomplished until we renounce our own will in order to fulfill the Will of the Father, who is in heaven.

The chastity vow *lived* with purity, inaugurated by Mary, has been the holocaust accepted by Divine Justice for “purifying” this “union” of man and woman. *«In the beginning of creation God made them male and female,»* giving them this commandment, *«increase and multiply...»* And when the “consummation of the times” arrives, things are to return to their beginning, as they would have been, had there been no sin, so that all justice may be fulfilled. This will happen when everything is purified in those who will form the Church Triumphant on *earth.* What generation will get to see this "Paradise" or "Garden of Eden"? Only God knows, but it is up to each person *as of now* to cooperate through his real contribution, living with purity of heart and righteousness of conscience, so that this purification may soon be a reality. The rest is up to God. Married couples especially should live their conjugal life with purity in the presence of God, so that they may beget children according to God’s Will, and so that a generation which is pure in the spirit and in the flesh may come. The following prayer should be the married couple’s "prepara-

tion" before each act, as well as their whole life's sentiment:

«*Here we are, oh Father! We offer you "our body," soul, blood, and liberty, in the Body, Soul, Blood and Divinity of your Son so that He may accomplish in us Your Will.*»

In heaven or on earth, all of us who may have cooperated in one way or another toward this "purification" of mankind, fulfilling the Will of God, will delight in its effects, for this will be the *manifestation* of the kingdom of God on earth.

«It was said, moreover, "Whoever puts away his wife, let him give her a written notice of dismissal!' But I say to you that everyone who puts away his wife, save on account of immorality, causes her to commit adultery; and he who marries a woman who has been put away commits adultery » (Mt 5:31-32).

He who divorces or rejects his wife, or vice versa, exposes her to adultery, because she will seek in another what she does not Mud in her husband, which makes him an accomplice to her sin, or vice versa — save on account of his leaving his wife or the wife her husband because of adultery without any cause on the other's part; then that other will not be an accomplice to the sin. And, whoever has "relations" with another's husband or wife commits adultery, even if he himself is free.

Just as marriage is an image of this identification of the soul with the Holy Spirit, so adultery – a breach of conjugal trust – is a sin that represents the soul's opposition to the action of the Holy Spirit in order to ally her-

self with His opponent, the spirit of iniquity. And of this, St. Paul also says: *«Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? By no means! Or do you not know that he who cleaves to a harlot, becomes one body with her? "For the two," it says, "shall be one flesh!' But he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with him. Flee immorality. Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought at a great price. Glorify God and bear him in your body»* (1 Cor 6:15-20).

Those who have been "immoral," "cleaving" to harlots without having previously known the Spirit of the Lord — they who have not had an *"experience"* of this action of the Spirit in their souls — have not committed "adultery" in the sense in which St. Paul speaks, and we cannot say of them that they have become one body with that spirit which is represented in the "harlot"; these men, now knowing the Spirit of the Lord, cleave to Him, as "virgins" to the Bridegroom, in whose presence they must remain faithful horn then on, in order to be confirmed in this Spirit of Holiness. St. Paul was speaking to the Corinthians who had already received the firstfruits of the Spirit, not simply as members of the church through baptism, but also as having "relished the

Spirit of the Lord" in their souls — they had hid the "experience" of the action of the Spirit.

«Come now, let us talk things over, says Yahweh: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool» (Is 1:18).

«Therefore I say to you, that every kind of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven» (Mt 12:31).

EXPLANATION
OF THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

«Again, you have heard that it was said to the ancients, "Thou shall not swear falsely, but fulfill thy oaths to the Lord." But I say to you not to swear at all; neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither do thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, "Yes, yes"; "No, no"; and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one» (Mt 5:33-37).

We must not swear at all; neither to convince anyone nor to promise the fulfillment of something. The Lord says it very clearly: *«Let your speech be, "Yes, yes"; "No, no"; and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one.»*

Let your "yes" and your "no" have the force of the truth that you live, so that others may believe you. And,

as for you, believe also the word of others, without falling into contrary or additional suppositions of your own, because this, too, "comes from the evil one." If you are being deceived by another, he, and not you, will have to render an account to God for his falsehood, but if you by your suppositions deceive yourself, the other stands justified, and you will have to render an account for your rash judgment.

Neither should you make any kind of promises to God or to men: not to God, because it is not in your power to fulfill what you promise, for He is the master of your life, .and without His grace you can do nothing good. To Him, *in each action,* you should give the only thing that belongs to you: your liberty; nor to men, for if you are willing to surrender your liberty to God, you do not have at your disposal either yourself or your actions.

Nor should you make any kind of vow to God; this would mean tying His hands; not concerning your body, for this is His temple and it should be solely at the disposal "I Him who dwells in it; nor concerning your actions, for it is God who should govern them according to His Will. Not even for a day should you tie God's hands by making a vow, much less in perpetuity. This would he making use of the liberty you have surrendered to Him.

Did not the saints do the right thing in taking "vows" of obedience, poverty, and chastity? Yes they did, for they were fulfilling God's Will; otherwise they would not be saints. The fact is that God does not take anything away from us without our consent, even if it be for our

salvation: if the soul is inclined to act *on her own* and does not govern herself *by conscience,* since God needs her *obedience,* He makes this fact known to her, and the soul accepts it or rejects it. This acceptance is what has been referred to as "vow." God orders her to submit herself to her superiors, so that they can form her conscience and she can thus heed the "voice" of God. In this way, the soul by obeying her superiors is obeying God by means of them. But these superiors must not appropriate the liberty of the soul but, rather, form her conscience so that she, once free from herself, may obey God directly. The same thing happens with the vows of poverty and chastity: if God wants the soul to let go of all things because she is attached to them, He lets her know this, and her acceptance is her vow of poverty. In this "poverty" lived with spirit, all else is encompassed, for it is the total giving-of-self, and for those who live it with perfection is the kingdom of heaven.

As we have said before, God, upon creating man and woman, gave them this command: *«Increase and multiply* ...,» but "Sin" unleashed its fury on the most sublime function that God was giving the human beings upon giving them the divine participation, that is, their cooperation with Him in the creation of those beings who would bear His image. Man, having accepted the temptation at the dawning of his "divine life," detoured from the plans of his Creator when he took a "horizontal" position — his will directed toward the creature, accepting the intervention of the spirit of evil. In order to purify these "procreative" relations of *the man and the woman before God* (a vertical position — their will directed

toward the Creator), Divine Justice has needed a "sacrifice," a holocaust, in that area where sin unleashed its fury; hence, the vow of chastity. The value of the vow lies in the fact that the will of the creature — man or woman — directs itself, out of love, toward the Creator, renouncing the creature.

But once the soul has accepted what God has asked of her, she must not "attach herself to it, thinking that she is perpetually I bound by a promise she must fulfill, because then that which should be a free and continual surrender, fruit of love, for uniting the soul all the more with her Creator, becomes a "snare" that the "enemy" will use for tempting and separating her from God, the soul thus placing her sights on what she *has given,* and not on her Creator.

This "surrender" should be free, and should be renewed at each moment according to God's Will, as has been said before of the conjugal act:

«Here I am, oh Father! I offer you my body, soul, blood, and liberty, in the Body, Soul, Blood, and Divinity of your Son, Jesus Christ, so that He may accomplish in me Your most holy Will.»

It is God, and not the soul, who must determine the time and mode of her "sacrifice," which will be a Mass intimately lived in the temple of her body and on the altar of her heart, she herself being the substance (bread and wine) that offers itself to Divine Justice, so that Christ may say of her: *«This is my body ..., this is my blood ...»*

It is up to the soul simply to "watch and pray" *constantly* in order not to lose the presence of God and fall into temptation, so that she may always know what the Will of her Lord is. Not to *fall* into temptation does not mean that she will not have temptations; she cannot be without them while "all justice" has not been fulfilled, for there lies the price exacted by Divine Justice for overcoming the "tempter" and rescuing the "fruit," seed of procreation.

To those souls who have not yet allowed themselves to be "molded" by grace, submitting themselves *constantly* to its regenerating force, all this will seem like an illusion, impossible to put into practice, for it is only in that *constant submission* to the Divine Will that one can savor the effects produced by grace; it is like living a continuous "miracle"; it is like seeing the hand of God ever "creating" in us, molding in us the image of His Son so as to give us also His "likeness" in our doing, moved by His very Spirit.

THE OBSERVANCE OF CONTINENCE

«Not all can understand this teaching; but those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born so from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made so by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who can, understand» (Mt 19:11-12).

Not everyone has understood nor will they understand this teaching, but only those to whom God has granted

the grace to live it and the light to understand the purity of His ways. For there are those who observe "chastity" are "poor," and "obey" because they have no other choice; they are like those of whom the Lord says *«were born so from their mother's womb»;* there is no merit in these.

«... and there are eunuchs who were made so by men.» These (and here we are referring to the "vows") have found themselves "obliged," in a way, to become "eunuchs," and they bear these "vows" like a burden, an oppressive yoke. Their merit is relative: if they bear with it for their "convenience," they will end up in "hard-heartedness"; this "convenience" can have many aspects and at times may seem like a "good convenience" — being "saintly," setting a good example, etc. These individuals will fall into spiritual pride — "I am," "I do," "I live up to ...," and they will not have occasion to "relish" the regenerating force of grace, which leans on their *weakness* and picks them up. Drawing on their own strength – "my willpower" — they do not allow grace to act. But if they carry the "burden" out of fidelity, in order not to break a promise made to God, acting in *conscience,* their merit is great, and the Lord Himself, granting them the freedom of spirit of the sons of God, will shatter the *«bonds of their yoke »* — liberating them totally from the spirit of slavery that makes them feel the burden heavy; these will enter with those who *«have made themselves so for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who can, understand,»* says the Lord.

EXPLANATION
OF THE PENALTY OF RETALIATION

«You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one force you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.» (Mt 5:38-42)

«Do not resist evil»: Do not resist the evils that come your way or that men cause you, for those evils are *permitted* by God for your own good, and you should accept them as coming from God, if in fact you have not brought them on yourself, because if you have, then these are permitted by God by *your will*— all the more reason why you should accept them — for having misused your liberty. And not only should you not resist them, but you should receive them with joy and generosity, for these "evils" carry out a purifying mission that will be a joyful reality for you if you cooperate with them, seeing them in God. And, besides, since it is a matter of the Will of God, whom you love, shouldn't it be so?

«But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also»; this seems difficult to put into practice; the truth is that it is *impossible*, without grace, to offer oneself to those who make us suffer, but offering the other cheek will be a joyful gladness for the soul

who has let God reign in her, because she knows that that suffering is the path of her own redemption.

«And if any would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.» For the soul who has become "established" in God's Will, all this is easier than one would think and it certainly means a great joy for her, because in her, love prevails. Love does not bargain, is generous, gives itself totally and never considers it to be enough.

All this is in keeping with the "spirit of poverty" and is only realizable with the one and only "vow": the denial of self, the renunciation of one's liberty to God.

«Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.» If the soul has become "established" in God's Will and not her own or that of another, she will fulfill this as a consequence.

LOVE OF ENEMIES

«You have heard that it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shalt hate thy enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust» (Mt 5:43-45).

How will we *truly* love our enemies and pray *wholeheartedly* for those who persecute us? By not forgetting that there is only one "enemy" common to us all: Satan,

who is opposition to Love; and that it is he who sets the souls against each other, so that by their accepting hatred and discord, which are proper to him, they may separate themselves from God, giving Divine Justice cause to permit him to tempt them further.

The souls belong to God; they were created by Him to His image so that they might also receive from Him His likeness in their way of behaving, "moved" by Love, His Holy Spirit. If we love God above all things, we will also love the souls, and we will not want them to end up in the hands of the "enemy," accepting his "promptings" of hatred and resentment; we will then do *all* we can to liberate those souls, our sisters, who have fallen into the temptation by receiving the poison of hatred, becoming our enemies and persecutors, deceived by Satan, that they may serve as his instruments and not God's. We will attain this "liberation" through love and prayer, our self-offering: praying and offering ourselves to the Redeemer for them, in order to attain their redemption as he attained it for us. Then we will be "sons of God," because *in our works* we will identify ourselves with His Son.

«For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have'? Do not even the publicans do that? And if you salute your brethren only, what are you doing more than others'? Do not even the Gentiles do that? You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect» (Mt 5:46-48).

For if we love only those who love us, how is our life different from that of others? What reward will we

have? Do not they also do this who live by the spirit of the world and do not yet know God? And if we forgive and pray only for those who behave as we do, what are we doing that the others are not? Are not they who are in danger of getting lost, because they act influenced by the action of Evil, the ones who most have need of our prayers and our love? Just as God makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, let us make our love to be the fire that will melt the hardness of their hearts, and our prayers and sacrifice to bring down upon them the shower of grace that will wash away their resentments.

«You therefore are to be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.» The Lord invites us not to remain in our mediocrity, but rather to be *perfect,* as our heavenly Father, from whom we proceed, is perfect. So that we might reach this "perfection," the Son of God became man, introducing Himself into "Time" in order to give us, in addition to Redemption, an example of the true life. Let us then, aided by His grace, *live* the life that He lived in this world, fulfilling the Will of the Father. In our fulfillment of His Will, we will find everything else. Then will we love and forgive our friends, and our enemies and persecutors, drawing them toward the Father, and we will feel the joy of a true son of God who rejoices for the brother that returns to the Father's house.

III

THE PRODIGAL SON

«A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me!' And he divided his means between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered up all his wealth, and took his journey into a far country; and there he squandered his fortune in loose living. And after he had spent all, there came a grievous famine over that country, and he began himself to suffer want. And he went and joined one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his farm to feed swine. And he longed to fill himself with the pods that the swine were eating, but no one offered to give them to him. But when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired men in my father's house have bread in abundance, while I am perishing here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired men.'" And he arose and went to his father » (Lk 15:11-20).

Very often God *allows* souls to leave "His side" because He knows that after their "trials" they will return more humble and will never again leave Him.

The “prodigal son,” after having *«squandered his fortune,» «began to suffer want.»* So it is with those souls who, having lost contact with God, after a time suffer want — “hunger” for God, for His grace, and nothing satisfies them, even though they themselves do not know the reason for the “hunger” they suffer. They go about trying out everything in the world, seeking to fill their emptiness but, like the prodigal son with the pods the swine were eating, even though they feed sin, they themselves are not offered satisfaction by sin, because it is God who is putting them to the “test,” and He does not allow them to fall into sin altogether. When they have already been sufficiently “tried,” God gives them the grace “to come to themselves,” and then they realize their mistake in having left their “paternal house,” God, in order to go after the things of the world, and they return to God more humble, with no expectations of being “great saints” here on earth, possessors of many virtues in order to be praised by men, and they are content to be the least of the slaves of the Lord: *«”Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired men.” And he arose and went to his father.»*

«But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck and covered him’ with kisses. And the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son.” But the father said to his servants, “Fetch quickly the best robe and put it on him, and give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet; and bring out the fat-

tened calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to make merry» (Lk 15:20-24).

The father's joy and love is so great that he does not wait for the son to get there to greet him; it is he who runs out to greet him first. *«He ran and fell upon his neck and covered him with kisses.*» This is how God's Love goes out to meet the soul who has sincerely repented of her sins, confessing them: *«Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. I am no longer worthy to be called thy son* ...» Enough! The father does not let him finish. This is sufficient and is all that God "needs" to forgive a soul and "cover her" anew with His grace: what the "prodigal son" did concerning his father: namely, that she make up her mind to "get up" and return to him: *«He arose and went to his father,»* recognizing her sin and confessing it: *«I have sinned against heaven and before thee»;* plus her humility, which is to recognize the truth, *«1 am no longer worthy to be called thy son.*» Then God will begin to "clothe" that soul with his gifts, «*Fetch quickly the best robe and put it on him,*» she receives the "robes" of her baptism, the grace she had lost; *«Give him a ring for his finger,*» He distinguishes her as her Father's "child"; *«and sandals for his feet,*» He gives her the grace that she may not walk outside of "His boundaries"; *«and bring out the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead, and has come to life again»;* and He gives her to savor His own food, *«My food is to do the will of Him who sent me»;* and all the saints and an-

gels of heaven share in His joy because this soul has passed from death to life. The "sin of the world," instead of putting her to death, by making her proud and arrogant, contributed, because of her *cooperation with God,* to its becoming "life" for her *in the humbling of herself.* Even out of "the sin of the world" a good can be derived if the soul is not "satisfied" with evil. The *satisfied,* lukewarm soul is worse off; there is not in her that opening through which grace — the "need" for something else — can penetrate.

«Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And calling one of the servants he inquired what this meant. And he said to him, "Thy brother has come, and thy father has killed the fattened calf, because he has got him back safe." But he was angered and would not go in. His father, therefore, came out and began to entreat him, but he answered and said to his father, "Behold, these many years I have been serving thee, and have never transgressed one of thy commands; and yet thou has never given me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But when this thy son comes, who has devoured his means with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fattened calf." But he said to him, "Son, thou art always with me, and all that is mine is thine; but we were bound to make merry and rejoice, for this thy brother was dead, and has come to life; he was lost, and is found"» (Lk 15:25-32). But there are souls like the elder son who, loving the father's fortune more than the

father himself, do not share in the father's joy over the return of the son who *«was lost, and is found.»*

«Behold, these many years I have been serving thee, and have never transgressed one of thy commands; and yet thou hast never given me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.» These are those souls who do not lose God's grace, but not out of love for God, but rather out of love for the "grace"; they love the "gift" more than the "Giver," concerned only about losing their souls. And when they see that God bestows His graces liberally upon a more sinful soul, but one more humble than themselves, they complain to God, saying as did the elder son, «*Behold, these many years I have been serving thee, and have never transgressed one of thy commands»;* and they seek the "gifts" of God in order to be noticed by their friends: *«and yet thou hast never given me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.*» What they care about are the "gifts," not the Father's Love.

«Son, thou art always with me, and all that is mine is thine»; these souls are always with God because they do not lose "the grace," and having all "His goods" at their disposal, they consider the kingdom of heaven "a sure thing," and they do not bother to acquaint themselves with the Father's sentiments and Heart. They, like the elder son of the parable, are always out "in the field," taking care of the Father's goods, and they have no time to converse with Him so as to enter fully into the spirit of His Love. This is why they cannot understand His joy over the return of the son whom He had lost and has

found, and they do not know what to make of it— they are "angered" when they see the "merriment" that the Father makes with all his "servants" over his son's return. *«Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And calling one of the servants he inquired what this meant.... He was angered and would not go in.»*

Take care, then, not to imitate the elder son so that you may come to know the Heart of your Father, who is in heaven. And if you cannot yet behave like the father of the parable, going out to meet the "prodigal sons" who return to the paternal house, then be content to be like one of the servants who, obeying the father's order, celebrated with him the return of his son; I assure you that the obedient servants gladdened the father more than the envious son who was covetous of his fortune.

THE PHARISEES' CRITICISM

«Now the publicans and sinners were drawing near to him to listen to him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them"» (Lk 15:1-2).

It is the false Christians who are scandalized when God draws near to a sinner. This is why the soul who fulfills God's Will can not be understood by these kinds of people, for she, fulfilling her Lord's command, will go where He sends her and not where men think she should go.

THE LOST SHEEP

«But he spoke to them this parable, saying, "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And on coming home he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost! I say to you that, even so, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance" » (Lk 15:3-7).

All the parables of the Lord contain profound teachings, each one different from the other. He did not say one more word than was necessary, as it is believed when it is thought that the repeating in the Gospels is a repetition of the same thing.

The shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep that were "in the desert" in order to go after the one that was lost. Most likely this "little sheep" was "thirsty" and "hungry" because there was no "water" or "pasture" in "the desert," and in searching for the "spring" and the "grass," it became lost. And the shepherd, understanding the "need" of the stray sheep, goes in search of it and does not worry about the ninety-nine that are *content* in "the desert" and are not moved by the "need" for "food" because they feel no "hunger" or "thirst."

These are the lukewarm souls who are satisfied with the minimum — a mediocre spiritual life — and, not having that "hunger" and "thirst" for God, they do not

strive through prayer and penance (self-denial) to attain anything better: some of them because of spiritual laziness — they believe they need do nothing more to save themselves; others because they think that those are "dangerous roads" and that they can go astray on them. They do not trust in the Love of the Shepherd who, knowing his sheep, will not let the little lamb get lost, lamb which, hungering and thirsting after Him, going off in search of the things of God, met the "enemy" who led her astray. He will go after that sheep *«until he finds it. And when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing. And on coming home he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost."»* God will "make merry" with His saints and angels over that soul who, having "hungered" and "thirsted" after Him, was not content—like the others — "in the desert" of a mediocre spiritual life, and she risked her life to find Him.

For this reason the Lord says: *«I say to you that, even so, there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just who have no need of repentance.*» These "just," "who have no need of repentance," are those souls who believe they need nothing more to save themselves other than to *halfway* fulfill the commandments, or to fulfill "what is commanded." There is no certainty that these ninety-nine will be with the Bridegroom on the Wedding Day.

THE LOST DRACHMA

«Or what woman, having ten drachmas, if she loses one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I had lost." Even so, I say to you, there will be joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents» (Lk 15:8-10)

If we toil so to recuperate the possessions of this world when we lose them — these possessions being only temporal — how much more should we not concern ourselves when we see that in our hearts the fire of God's love is dwindling? Like the woman of the parable who has lost her drachma, we must enkindle the light of our faith by means of prayer and self-forgetfulness until we come to see, ablaze in our hearts, the flame of God's love which had begun to die out. Then, aglow in the love of God, we will do as the woman did when she found the lost drachma: we will speak of God to friends and neighbors with the ardor and joy of the early days, when we came to know Him. *«"Rejoice with me, for I have found the drachma that I had lost." Even so I say to you, there will be joy among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.»* For there is no doubt about it, "when the spring does not flow forth, it is because there is something blocking the flow of the water." When the soul who is in "God's grace" does not feel within herself this force of "living water" that makes her live more in heaven than on earth, it is because she has created an

impediment. It is not as is said by so many religious souls who live more in the world than in God, that this fire is "beginners' fervor" but that "this" passes away. The fire of God's love is a "living flame" that does not die out or diminish but burns ever greater, up to "consuming" the soul and leaving her transformed into its very light. The fact is that in the spiritual life there can be no "vacationing"; it is a constant vigilance in prayer and self-denial so that the light may always be a "living flame" and not coals in ashes. These "living flames" will be the lamps that will illuminate at the Wedding Banquet of the Bridegroom.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

«At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps» (Mt 25:1-4).

When the "manifestation" of the kingdom of God comes, some souls will find themselves like the wise virgins and others like the foolish ones. The foolish will be those who, having the lamps of faith, were not careful to keep that *faith "alive,"* aflame, because they neglected to provide themselves with the oil of Love, prayer, while the souls who have kept their faith "alive," because they fed their "lamps" with love, will be like the wise virgins who will be ready when the Bridegroom comes.

«The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves!' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" But he replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour» (Mt 25:5-13).

«The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.» Since the "manifestation" of the kingdom of God is such a long time in coming because the Bridegroom delays so, the souls gradually lose their faith and have by now forgotten about the Lord's return. But He will not fail to fulfill His word, and He will come "at midnight"; when everything seems dark and He is least expected, "a cry will ring out": Here is the Bridegroom! Come out to meet him! Then all the souls "will wake up from their sleep," and in the light of their lamps, their faith, they will see the Bridegroom who has been announced. The foolish, for not having the oil of Love, let the lamps of their faith die out and will not know what to do, for they will have doubts about the truth and will question those others

whose faith is “alive” through Love, but there will be no time for explanations then, and it will not be” possible to transmit “Love” in those moments. Then the foolish will go ask others, and while they are asking, the Bridegroom will arrive; He will shut the “door,” and they will be left outside. *«But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.»* Those souls will enter who have abided in Love, ever trusting in the word of the Lord.

«Later the others also came, “Sir! Sir!” they said. “Open the door for us!” But he replied, “I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.”» Because they have lived on the margin of Love, which is His Spirit, they did not identify themselves with Him. *«Therefore, keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour,»* says the Lord.

THE PARABLE OF THOSE INVITED TO THE WEDDING

«Jesus began to speak to them in parables once again, “The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. A second time he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited,’ he said, ‘that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding! But they were not interested: one went off to his

field, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. At this the king grew furious and sent his armies to destroy those murderers and set their city on fire"» (Mt 22:1-7).

«The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.» The king is the Father, who prepared the wedding feast for his Son, Christ, placing in His hands all things — those of heaven as well as those of the earth — giving Him for His bride the souls, who make up the Church and are "unified" in Her, forming one Body through their identification with the Spirit of the Bridegroom.

«He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come.» The prophets came announcing the kingdom of God, but "those who had been invited" — the Jews of that time — did not respond to God's call.

«A second time he sent other servants,» the apostles were sent: *«"Tell those who have been invited," he said, "That I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding"»: «I have my banquet all prepared,»* the Will of my Father has been fulfilled; I am your food. *«My oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered,»* I have slaughtered sin, I am your food for slaughtering sin in you; *«everything is ready»* for you to come to a union with Me; *«Come to the wedding.» «But they were not interested: one went off to his field, another to his business.»* These other "invited ones," the "Gentiles," not interested in the invitation to "the wed-

ding," have gone off, some to work "the field" neglecting the "invitation" which is *union with the Bridegroom,* "the wedding"; others made a business of the "call," disregarding the invitation of the Bridegroom.

«... the rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them.» These are they who killed the prophets, apostles, and disciples of the Lord; and they are also the ones who have in some way "mistreated" all those who have come with a message from the Bridegroom or from the Mother.

«At this the king grew furious and sent his armies to destroy those murderers and set their city on fire.» The fury of God — which is nothing other than His Justice — will send His "armies," executors of His justice, and He will have all those destroyed who, in one way or another, are "murderers" of His word, and He will set "their city" on fire. Let him who reads understand.

«Then he said to his servants, "The banquet indeed is ready; but those who were invited were not worthy; go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests, he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment"?" But he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be the weeping and gnashing

of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen» (Mt 22:8-14).

Following the punishment of those "murderers" and their city, the banquet will have its fulfillment.

Those invited first were not worthy; neither were those invited next, because they did not identify themselves with the Will of the Father, who wants them "identified" with His Son.

«"Go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out on to the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests.» These new servants have orders not to extend a special invitation but, rather, to call all those who are willing to attend the "banquet," whether they are "good" or "bad," Jews or Gentiles. If they are well-disposed, they can "enter."

«When the king came in to look at the guests, he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?"»

This one thought that having been "called" was enough; he did not see to the main thing: his identification with the Spirit of the Bridegroom. It is Love, the Charity of the Father, who will give you the wedding "garment"— His very Charity. *«But he was speechless»;* he will be speechless because he himself will realize that his garment "clashes" with that of the others who are at the banquet table. These others probably had not noticed that he did not have on the same "garment" as they, but

no one can deceive God, even if he deceives those who are with Him.

«Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and the gnashing of teeth."» Bound hand and foot, so that they may no longer deceive the "sons of God," is how all those will be who remain in the "outer darkness," where there will be nothing but *sweeping and the gnashing of teeth,*» because in them will reign hatred instead of Love (for their having cast out Love); falsehood and deceit, instead of Truth (for their having remained in error). This is why, even though many are "called," few are "chosen," because chosen only are those who have identified themselves with the Father's Love and Truth.

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

«"But what do you think? A man had two sons; and he came to the elder and said, 'Son, go and work today in my vineyard.' But he answered and said, 7 will not'; but afterwards he regretted it and went. And he came to the other and spoke in the same manner. And this one answered, 1 go, sir'; but he did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?" They said, "The elder."Jesus said to them, "Amen I say to you, the publicans and harlots are entering the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him; whereas you, seeing it, did not even repent afterwards, that you might believe him"» (Mt 21:28-32).

Let us not be thinking that because we know God's word or His Will and accept it, like the younger son of the parable — making God many promises to fulfill it and not fulfilling it—that we are going to be saved. It is not he who listens to God and accepts the things of God who enters into His kingdom, but rather he who fulfills His Will. Whoever hears the word of God and does not fulfill it, making a life of it, even if he preaches very well and "saves" many souls, will have a great surprise on the day of final judgment when he sees, as the Lord says, that the "publicans" —public sinners — and the "harlots" are entering the kingdom of heaven before him. Because those "publicans," being in the "enemy's" camp — busy with the affairs of the world—were not content with "the world" and turned to God. And those "harlots," living in sin, did not feel satisfied with men's love and sought God's Love; they, like the elder son of the parable, with their deeds said to God, "I will not," but in the end they repented and, doing penance (denying self), went to Him.

On the other hand, many of those who are always busy in the matters of God find greater satisfaction in the "business" and matters of the world and never come to identify themselves with God's Love. The former, though busy in the affairs of the "enemy?' the kingdom of this world, kept their soul for God. But how sad it is to see how those who, being at the service of God's affairs, gradually sell their soul to the "enemy" for love of the kingdom of this world.

«Amen I say to you, the publicans and harlots are entering the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of justice, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him.» John came announcing "JUSTICE" and came upon "MERCY": *«For even now the axe is laid at the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, that is not bringing forth fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire»* (Lk 3:9). «*Art thou he who is to come, or shall we look for another?»* (Lk 7:19; Mt 11:3). Those who, heeding John, became converted for *fear* of God's Justice, found "LOVE" in His "MERCY"; but those who, having lived in the time of His "MERCY," did not come to know LOVE'S Justice in that "MERCY," because they did not repent of their sins or do penance, will have to feel the full rigor of His "JUSTICE." What can we say after the Father has given us His Son and with Him all that we need for saving ourselves and entering into His kingdom?

«Whereas you, seeing it, did not even repent afterwards, that you might believe him.» If this is how Jesus spoke to those who did not believe in John, what will the Father say to those who have not believed in His Son, who gave His life for all? *"Believing"* in the Son of God and *"repenting"* is not simply to have received baptism, nor is it simply to listen to His Gospel and preach it, or to confess one's sins and make many purposes of amendment but, rather, it is to fulfill His Gospel by living as He lived: *«My food is to do the will of Him who sent me.»*

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN

«As John's messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about him: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall make ready thy way before thee! Amen I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law have prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elias who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear"» (Mt 11:7-15).

«What did you go out into the wilderness to see?» What have you thought is a soul surrendered to God? A person concerned about the things of the world, "swayable" in accordance with men's opinions, like a reed swaying in the breeze? What do you expect to see in a soul committed to God? *«A man wearing fine clothes?» A* person who lives on all the creature-comforts and flattery of this world, in accord with men's opinions? *«Those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palac-*

es»; they have already received their reward in this world.

«Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet?» What then do you expect to find in a soul who belongs to God? That she have the gift of prophecy? *«Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet»;* for if this is all she is and does not become "holy," she will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The gift of prophecy and any other "gift" is for preparing the way of the soul so that she may reach identification with the Son of God. *«... he is the one of whom it is written "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall make ready thy way before thee!'»*

«Amen I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.» I tell you that however great a prophet may be, the least of those who identify themselves with the Son of God, fulfilling His Will through the denial of self, and enters into His kingdom, is greater than he.

«But from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force.» From the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven, for *the sake of justice,* is seized "by force" in the souls who accept this, and nothing and no one will be able to go against this, because if the soul *wants it and is willing,* the kingdom of heaven "endures violent assault." But only courageous and determined souls "seize it by force," because the cowardly and irresolute do not hold

up under the “trials” of purification, and they come to a halt along the way. The kingdom of heaven comes about for justice’s sake, *«for all the Prophets and the Law have prophesied until John,»* and those enter who seize it “by force”

«And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elias who was to come,» as the prophet Malachi says: *«Behold I will send you Elias the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come, and strike the earth with anathema»* (Mal 4:5-6).

«He who has ears to hear, let him hear,» says the Lord.

IV

THE MIRACULOUS CATCH

«Now it came to pass, while the crowds were pressing upon him to hear the word of God, that he was standing by Lake Genesareth. And he saw two boats moored by the lake, but the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. And getting into one of the boats, the one that was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And sitting down, he began to teach the crowds from the boat» (Lk 5:1-3).

There are still in this world many souls who are thirsty to hear the "pure" word of God, but the Lord does not find "boats" "moored by the lake" to get into, so that, putting out a little from the land, he can teach the crowds "from the boat." «*And getting into one of the boats, the one that was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land...»*

«But when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep, and lower your nets for a catch." And Simon answered and said to him, "Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will lower the net." And when they had done so, they enclosed a great number of fishes, but their net was breaking. And they beckoned to their comrades in the other boat to come and help them. And they

came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.» (Lk 5:4-7).

The apostles of the Lord need only be disposed like boats "moored by the lake," not "anchored" on land, in order for Jesus to avail himself of them at any time for "teaching the crowds" who await Him. *«But when he had ceased speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep* ... "»: meditate within your heart the teachings you receive; *«and lower your nets for a catch»:* and draw from it the lessons for your practical life. As soon as He has finished speaking, He will give the order to "lower the nets," because the souls, having received the Master's teachings, will be disposed to "teach" other souls by the example of their lives. It does not matter that they have been "preaching" for many years and that their own souls have not yet "entered" into the kingdom of God: *«Master, the whole night through we have toiled and have taken nothing»; «We have toiled* ... »: here is the reason why they have "caught nothing" — the apostles have been "toiling" without the Master. *«But at thy word I will lower the net»;* now the Master is "in the boat," trust in His word and lower your nets, you will notice the difference.

«And when they had done so, they enclosed a great number of fishes, but their net was breaking. And they beckoned to their comrades in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.» The conversions will be so numerous that they will not be able to handle them alone

and they will have to call “their comrades” to come and help them.

«But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch offish they had made; and so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; henceforth thou shalt catch men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him» (Lk 5:8-11).

«But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees »; here is the first thing that the apostle should do: fall down at the knees of the Master. «*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord»:* recognize that he is not worthy and that what he has done is work of the Lord and not his own.

«Do not be afraid; henceforth thou shalt catch men.» Do not be afraid, the Lord will say, this is to show you that without Me you can do nothing.

«And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him.» The “boats” can now be brought to land; the “apostles” *follow* after the Master. The apostle must not remain “in the catch.” ^*Henceforth thou shalt catch men»* — this will be a *consequence* of his following the Master; he must *“leave all”* in order to follow the Master and enter fully into His Spirit. Everything else is up to the Master, who will accomplish in the apostle the Will of His Father, who is in heaven.

«And it came to pass as they went on their journey, that a man said to him, "I will follow thee wherever thou goest." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head"» (Lk 9:57-58).

«I will follow thee wherever thou goest.» The Son of man came to open a *vertical* path, the destination of which is in the Father, who is in heaven. He is the Way; if you wish to follow Him, you must begin by "entering" into Him, becoming identified with His life.

«The foxes have dens, and the birds of the air have nests»: the animals, which were created for man's service on earth, have on the earth their caves and their nests; *«but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head»:* but man, who was created for God, must not "lay his head" — place his thoughts on the earth — anywhere but in the Heart of the Father, who is in heaven. If his path is "upward," his position must not be "horizontal."

«And he said to another, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their dead, but do thou go and proclaim the kingdom of God"» (Lk 9:59-60).

«"Follow me …" "Let me first go and bury my father."» What! You have found the Life and are considering the dead? Your father is no longer here on earth, his soul has gone its way.

«Let the dead bury their dead, but do thou go and proclaim the kingdom of God»; let those who have not yet found the "Way" and the "Life" bury their dead;

you, who have found the Path of Life, go and proclaim to them the kingdom of God.

«And another said, "I will follow thee, Lord; but let me first bid farewell to those at home!' Jesus said to him, "No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God"» (Lk 9:61-62).

«I will follow thee, Lord; but let me first bid farewell to those at home.» I will follow thee? If you have found the "Way," how are you going to leave it to go bid farewell to those who are coming from another direction? Are you not afraid to lose the Way you have found? "Travel it" first so that you may lead those at home along the same path. To do otherwise would be to miss the elevator and get stranded in the cellar; perhaps you will never again have the opportunity to take it, and there is no "stairway" to the kingdom of heaven.

«No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven.» Unfit for the kingdom of God is he who does not make up his mind to work for it *immediately* after having received the call, because the undertaking is not a small one and the "time" is short, and he who has not completed the whole journey will not gain the kingdom of God.

ELECTION OF THE TWELVE

«And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons: Simon whom he surnamed Peter; James the son of Zebedee and

John the brother of James, whom he surnamed Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him» (Mk 3:13-19).

«And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired ..., to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.» It is Christ who will designate those who will "accompany" the soul in her "regeneration"; He Himself will give to these the power and knowledge for accomplishing their mission with the soul, at the same time that they themselves, in this contact, prepare their own "regeneration." Some will impart teachings to the soul through the "preaching" of their own life. It does not matter, to the soul who is in Christ, whether that life or that example is "positive" or "negative"; for the soul who has left the primacy to Christ and not to her "I," it will always be *"positive,"* for even from the shortcomings of others she will draw out a good. Others will "cast out" the impure spirits from her by making her see, in the way that the Lord prescribes, those habits and shortcomings that stem from the action of Evil. And they will all be helping her to cure her "sicknesses" by giving her the opportunity to renounce self, and more than once she will have to feel the pain of the "surgical knife" that cuts out pieces of her heart, when she feels lacerated in the affections she had placed on those creatures. And let her not doubt that among the "apostles" whom the Lord designates for her, there may also be found a traitor like Judas, who will lend himself

for bringing about her "crucifixion" and death, and who will not be revealed to the soul until "her hour" is at hand. She must do as Jesus did: surrender herself to the Father's Justice when that moment arrives, and give no thought to the "instrument"; that same Justice of the Father will deal with him.

THE DANGER OF RICHES

«And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone"» (Mk 10:17-18).

Do not do as this young man did who, in order to get on the good side of people, gives them compliments that he does not know that they deserve. It is true that the young man of the Gospel is speaking to Jesus, the Son of God, but he did not know that he was in the presence of the Son of God; this is why Jesus says to him: *«Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.»* The young man said this out of habit, as one is apt to do in the world in order to ingratiate oneself with people.

«You know the commandments: "Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother." And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." At that saying his coun-

tenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"» (Mk 10:19-23).

Are "riches" the impediment for entering the kingdom of God? No, the impediment for entering the kingdom of God is attachment to *self*—self-love. The young man of the Gospel says that he observed the commandments, but let us note that. among the commandments that the Lord mentions, the first one is not included, commandment which, on another occasion, Jesus Himself had declared as the most important: *«You shall love God above all things.»* Why did Jesus not mention it to him? Was it an oversight on the part of the Lord? No, the Lord knew what was in the heart of him who was asking: *«Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?»* The young man had everything, and he wanted "something" more — "eternal life"; that is to say, he wanted to "eternalize" the life he was leading. This is why Jesus first responded, not to the young man's question but to his affirmation: *«Good Teacher.» «Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.»* The words of the Lord are measured by His wisdom. He does not talk for the sake of talking; each word of His is a program to be lived for those who desire to *truly* follow him, but like the rich young man, we too assign value to many things and forget that *nothing and no one* is good, but God alone.

The rich young man of the Gospel, from what we have read, observed almost all the commandments, but he

lacked the main one: “to love God above all things.” This is why he preferred his “riches” to God.

«And Jesus looking upon him loved him.» With how much sadness must the Lord have loved this young man who was selling his soul for his “riches.” *«How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.»*

«The disciples were astounded by these words, but Jesus insisted, “My children,” he said to them, “how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” They were more astonished than ever. “In that case,” they said to one another, “who can be saved?” Jesus fixed his gaze on them, “For men,” he said, “it is impossible, but not for God; because everything is possible for God”» (Mk 10:24-27).

«And the disciples were astounded by his words,» proof of the fact that the disciples were still very much attached to themselves. *«It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.»* We again ask: Is it material riches that impede entry into the kingdom of God? No, attachment to self is the ONLY impediment for entering into the kingdom of God.

«My children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!» for the hardest thing to do is to detach from self, and this egoistic “I,” product of sin, cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Into the kingdom of heaven enters *the I of the soul, which tends toward God alone,* God of

whom she is "image" and in whom she acquires His "likeness." And this the disciples understood very well *in that moment* because of a great grace from the Lord (although they would later lose sight of it). This is why they were "astounded" by his words, and *«they said to one another, "In that case, who can be saved?"»*

If it were only a matter of relinquishing material riches, they had no reason to say this. Are not the poor more numerous than the rich in this world? This being so, the majority — which are those who lack "riches," material goods — would enter into the kingdom of God.

Material goods, then, are not the impediment for entering the kingdom of heaven, but attachment to one's self. For the person who loves God above all things, and especially above himself, it will be very easy to leave all the material riches he possesses in the very moment that God requests this of him in order for him to enter into His kingdom, following after Christ Jesus: *«You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.»* And his countenance will not "fall," as did the rich young man's, but he will feel that he is the happiest of creatures.

In the kingdom of God we are going to see many possessors of material riches enjoying the blessings of the poor in spirit; these are the "camels" passing through the eye of a needle. They did what seemed impossible in the eyes of men because they let themselves be "inserted" by God. On the other hand, we will see many "mosquitoes" on the outside because they cannot pass through

the narrow door; these are the outwardly poor who are inwardly puffed up with themselves. The former became "rich" *by following the voice of their conscience;* the latter became "poor" *through personal convenience.*

THE APOSTLES' RENUNCIATION AND THEIR REWARD

«Then Peter addressed him saying, "Behold, we have left all and followed thee; what then shall we have?" And Jesus said to them, "Amen I say to you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, shall also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"» (Mt 19:27-28).

«We have left all and followed thee; what then shall we have?» «We have followed thee,» this is what is important—*to follow Christ.* It is not the relinquishment of all things — what we leave behind — that is important for entering into the kingdom of God, but what we "follow." If one leaves *all things* to "follow" one's self, one has left nothing.

«Amen I say to you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration ...» "Following" in the "regeneration" is what will give the soul her "pass" for entering into the kingdom of God.

«And everyone who has left house, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall possess life everlasting (Mt 19:29).

For life everlasting is a consequence of that "regeneration." Leaving father or mother, brothers or sisters, children, or lands does not mean separating oneself from them, but it means that God's Will is above these persons, affections, and things. If we leave father or mother, brothers, children, and lands in order to remain in ourselves, we have left nothing. Very often these things are relinquished in order to reaffirm oneself in oneself even more — for the sake of one's own name but not for the sake of Christ's name, because we take better care of our reputation and position in the eyes of men than of coming to know the Will of Him in whose name we have "left all." To leave all *«for my name's sake,»* for the sake of the name of the Son of God, Christ! But, oh, how many leave *all* to make a name for themselves, for love of their own name!

«Many who are first will be last, and the last, first» (Mt 19:30).

For this will be better fulfilled by the "last" than by many of the "first," and many who have believed themselves first, will be last. Let him who can, understand.

LABORERS SENT TO THE VINEYARD

«For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And about the third hour, he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and he said to them, "Go you also into the vineyard, and I will give you whatever is just."

So they went. And again he went out about the sixth, and about the ninth hour, and did as before. But about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing about, and he said to them, "Why do you stand here all day idle?" They said to him, "Because no man has hired us." He said to them, "Go you also into the vineyard"» (Mt 20:1-7).

«For the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.» The "householder" is God who, from the very hour of original sin, the "morning of the world" when man became separated from Him through sin and entered the dimension of "Time," is calling the souls to "work" in order to atone for their guilt and enter into "eternity?' the kingdom of heaven. Ever since Adam and Eve, even to our day, God has been "calling" each soul to go to "work" in "His vineyard," enabling all to enter into His kingdom. Not a single soul will be left without receiving "the call," but only those who have "worked," receiving their "wages," will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

«But when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers, and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first" Now when they of the eleventh hour came, they received each a denarius. And when the first in their turn came, they thought that they would receive more; but they also received each his denarius. And on receiving it, they began to murmur against the householder, saying, "These last have worked a single hour, and thou

hast put them on a level with us, who have borne the burden of the day's heat." But answering one of them he said, "Friend, I do thee no injustice; didst thou not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is thine and go; I choose to give to this last even as to thee. Have I not a right to do what I choose? Or art thou envious because I am generous?" Even so the last shall be first, and the first last; for many are called, but few are chosen» (Mt 20:8-16).

«But when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, "Call the laborers, and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first'."» When the "evening" of the world arrives, and "time" and "work" come to an end for entering into eternity and the Lord's "rest," the Householder, who is the Father, will say to His Steward, who is the Son: *«Call the laborers, and pay them their wages, beginning from the last even to the first»* — from the last who will "work" for the kingdom of God to the first who have "worked," they will receive their "denarius," which is their "seal" for entering into the Kingdom.

Each soul is responsible before God from the moment she receives the "call." This is a very intimate and personal matter. This "call" of God's to each soul is very subtle: only the soul and God know when the "hour" of the "call" has sounded. This is why no one can judge the "work" of another, because he does not know when the other has been "hired" by the Householder.

«These last have worked a single hour, and thou has put them on a level with us, who have borne the burden

of the day's heat.» It is not the length of time that counts for God, but our *response* to the call. He knows what each person needs for earning his "denarius" and entering into His Kingdom. The one who worked only one hour did so because this was all he needed according to the Father's Justice. The one who had to "bear the burden of the day's heat" had to do so because he could not enter otherwise. Let us not be judgmental, then, about the "work" of others, but let us be *alert* in order to respond to the "call" and to work in the Householder's vineyard, for if we remain behind expecting to arrive with the "last," in order to work only one hour and receive the same "denarius," we are very much mistaken. The "call" is not repeated, and you will not earn what you have not "worked for," because even though the "reward" is the same, the "work" is not. For this reason, even though many are called, few are chosen. "Chosen" only are those who go to work in the vineyard in the *very moment* of the "call." The Householder, according to His Justice, has a stipulated time for each soul.

«Friend, I do thee no injustice; didst thou not agree with me for a denarius?» Have I not called you to "work" so that you may enter into My Kingdom? You will enter into my Kingdom if you have "worked." *«Take what is thine and go.»* What you need for entering into the kingdom of God is "redemption." If you "work" WITH the Redeemer and IN *"His vineyard,"* you will earn your redemption.

«I choose to give to this last even as to thee. Have I not a right to do what I choose?» I choose to give to this

one whom I called at the last hour even what you earned on having been called at the first hour, because it is not you who should set a price on my goods, but the Justice of My Father, who is in heaven. *«Or art thou envious because I am generous?»* Are you envious because I am just?

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

«For it is like a man going abroad, who called his servants and handed over, his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his particular ability, and then he went on his journey. And he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more. In like manner, he who had received the two gained two more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master!' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, "You delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more!' His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little. I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." He also who had re-

ceived the one talent came forward, saying, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." But his master answered him, "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with interest" » (Mt 25:14-27).

The "talents" is the degree of love that God has placed in our hearts; to some he has given more, to others less—to each according to his capacity. On the day of judgment, we will be judged according to the use we have made of this love. Our deeds will be assessed according to the degree of love we have put into doing them.

«Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.» What is the "joy" of our Master? His very Love! He who has been faithful over a little, will be "set over" much, *«enter into the joy of your master»;* he will enter into the joy of his Master because he will receive His very Love, the Holy Spirit.

But those who have become hardened, "burying their talents" for fear of losing their souls, will have to hear the words that the master spoke to the wicked and slothful servant: *«You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed?»* These are those souls who think that God wants works of per-

fection and that He does not take into account the love that is put into them. They take God to be a severe and hard judge who wants to gather "virtues" that He has not given: *«Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.*» These persons bury their love, putting a double lock on their hearts, and they often dedicate themselves to a most austere life — austere with themselves and with others as well — trying not to display one single manifestation of love for souls, because they are saving it all "for God," the hard and stern Master. What a surprise these souls will have on the day of judgment!

«Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received my own with interest.» You would have done better entrusting your love to those who trade in it, "the bankers," because those who trade in love give to God the "interests" of the suffering they bear as a consequence of that "commerce," for that suffering purifies their souls and increases in them their love for God; *«For he who is forgiven much loves much.»*

«So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has, will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for the unprofitable servant, cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth » (Mt 25:28-30).

To those whom the Lord finds with the most love in their hearts, to those he will give more and they shall have an abundance; this will be the degree of glory they will have. But from him who has none, even that which he thinks he has will be taken away. Love comes from God; it is that participation by His Spirit that there is in every soul, but since the soul also partakes of the spirit of evil, through "sin," and as the spirit has "bound" the soul's faculties to the "body of sin," it also binds love so that the soul will not discover its purity, and this is how deviations in human love come about. And the souls who are desirous of perfection, looking only at the "deviations," spurn love. Thus they bury their talent, and they, like the wicked and slothful servant, do not put it to "work." The perfect thing would be to fight against the "deviations" by placing our will in God. In this way God's Love would act, liberating "our love" from the action of "Evil," who is the one that causes the "deviations."

«But as for the unprofitable servant, cast him forth into the darkness outside»: "unprofitable," because by burying her talent, her love, the soul blocks the action of God's Love which cannot act upon her liberty; *«Where there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth,»* where she will receive the price of the denial of her love: hatred and despair.

THE NEED TO BE WATCHFUL

«Watch therefore, for you do not know at what hour your Lord is to come. But of this be assured, that if the

householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would certainly have watched, and not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, because at an hour that you do not expect, the Son of Man will come» (Mt 24:42-44).

Everyone who wants to enter into the kingdom of God must be on constant watch, because he does not know at what hour the Lord may come or when God may call his soul and, leaving the dimension of "time," a time that he had for "working" and gaining the kingdom of God, he will find that, having been careless, the moment came and he had done nothing.

«But of this be assured, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would certainly have watched, and not have let his house be broken into.» The thief of the souls is constantly at the door, waiting for the "liberty" of the soul to let him in. If the person is not watchful, the thief steals his soul, and when he stands before the Lord, he finds that his soul belongs to the "thief and not to the Lord. *«Therefore you also must be ready, because at an hour that you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.»*

«Who is the trusty servant, the sensible man charged by his master to manage his household staff and issue their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. Amen I say to you, he will set him over all his goods» (Mt 24:45-47).

Who, then, is this trusty servant and sensible man who issues to his fellow beings "their rations" of love at the

proper time? He who gives to each one—*when that one is in need* — from the love that God has placed in his heart; who does not act out of selfishness, but rather out of the purity of heart that seeks the happiness of his fellow being and not his own. *«Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing.»* This is he who acts out of conscience, doing good for the sake of Good itself, and not out of personal convenience — when it represents a good for himself or according to his reason. This is what it means "to issue their rations at the proper time": to do good when one's conscience dictates it and not when one believes it to be "expedient." For very often someone needs a word of affection, a sacrifice or service at a specific moment, and how often, because of one's own reasonings, and not out of conscience, one fails to act in that moment, when the other needs it, in order to do it later when it seems convenient. But whoever, forgetting about himself, acts impelled by love, directed by a righteous conscience, *«Amen I say to you, he will set him over all his goods,»* because by «*issuing his household staff their rations at the proper time,»* he lets Love act.

«But if that wicked servant says to himself "My master delays his coming," and begins to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day he does not expect, and in an hour he does not know, and will cut him asunder and make him share the lot of the hypocrites. There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth» (Mt 24:48-51).

The wicked servant is he who, unconcerned about what God asks of him in his conscience, acts egoistically, out of personal convenience, seeking above all to satisfy his pleasures and desires, though, in order to achieve this, others are wronged. When he does a good turn for his fellow being, he does it because it suits him, or because he finds a personal satisfaction in the good that he does, but not for the actual good of his neighbor. This is why he does "the good" whenever and however he thinks it best and not according to the need of the person and least of all according to God's Will; because for such as these, in actual practice, God is of no real concern, even if they do all things in his name. When the Householder comes to that servant, *«He will cut him asunder and make him share the lot of the hypocrites. There will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.»* This is the kingdom of iniquity.

V

THE MAN BLIND FROM BIRTH

«As he walked along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?" "Neither," answered Jesus: "It was no sin, either of this man or of his parents. Rather, it was to let God's works show forth in him. I must do the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world I am the light of the world"» (In 9:1-5).

«As he walked along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.» There are souls who remain "blind" with respect to their knowledge of God and His ways, like a child at birth, and even if they hear speak of Christ and are taught their catechism, go to confession, receive communion and go to Mass and hear the Gospel preached, nothing seeps in — as if they were not listening. Like the man blind from birth who, though he walks around and feels things with his hands, does not come to know their shape or color by sight because these things do not enter through his eyes, neither do these souls take in the things of God through their understanding, though they may be fulfilling His Law and naturally practicing His Gospel by acting in conscience.

«Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?» Whose fault is it that these people do not know or understand the ways of God, the life of the spirit? Is it their parents' because they did not know how to teach them, or their own because they do not want to learn? Neither they nor their parents are to blame if their parents have taught them what they knew. The fact is that God does not let what is His seep in through the understanding—"from without" — because He Himself will make these things known "from within." «*Rather, it was to let God's works show forth in him.»*

«I must do the work of him who sent me while it is day.» Christ, who lives in that soul through baptism, directs her by means of her conscience and does in her the works of the Father who sent Him, as He used to do them when He was on earth in person. While He is acting in the "world of the souls" and the Redemption is "open," it is day and He can "work" in those who receive Him by obeying the voice of their conscience. But when the moment arrives in which the Father's Justice puts an end to "time" and "work," closing the Redemption, "night" will come because it will be the time of the Antichrist, the man of iniquity, and the light, which is Christ, will not be able to act, and no longer will anyone be able to "work" to obtain his redemption. God's MERCY will make way for His JUSTICE, and *for the sake of justice,* the darkness of error will invade the earth because men by their deeds have accepted it.

«I must do the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.» «While it is day»: for the SUN of the "world of the souls" is the Spirit of Christ, which is *"acting"* in the world, in those souls who receive It, as is the spirit of darkness acting in those who receive it. But "night is coming," night which is the man of iniquity animated by the spirit of darkness, Satan; and the "SUN" will set and will no longer be able to illumine except in those souls who, having received the Redeemer, identified themselves with His Spirit. *«As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.»*

«With that Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with his saliva, and smeared the man's eyes with the mud. Then he told him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." (This name means "One who has been sent.")» (Jn 9:6-7).

These blind-from-birth in the knowledge of God will not wonder at the mud and the saliva that the Lord uses to give them light of the soul, because in conducting themselves with righteousness of conscience, all things will seem all right to them, so long as it does not go against their conscience: *«Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. (This name means "One who has been sent.")»* And after He has them go through the "mud" of the world, He will send them to wash themselves of their sins in "the pool" which means "one who has been sent"; for He will send them to His "sent ones," the priests, who have the power from Him to forgive their sins — to wash them in the "water" of the Sacrament.

«So the man went off and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and the people who had been accustomed to see him begging began to ask, "Isn't this the fellow who used to sit and beg?" Some were claiming it was he; others maintained it was not but someone who looked like him. The man himself said, "I am the one"» (Jn 9:7-9).

Thus, these souls, when they have "washed" themselves of their sins, begin to see clearly the ways of God and to live His Law with greater consciousness. His friends and neighbors, they who *«had been accustomed to see him begging»* will be astonished at the change they will see in his person and will ask themselves: "Wasn't this he or she who, knowing nothing about 'eternal life,' went around like a beggar through the world after temporal things?" — "begging," because "beggars" are those souls who go after the things of this world, and no matter how much they receive from the world of the creatures, they are always "beggars" because the soul's "need" is not met with temporal things, but rather with the Love of the Eternal One.

«They said to him, then, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered: "That man they call Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes, telling me to go to Siloam and wash. When I did go and wash, I was able to see" "Where is he?" they asked. He replied, "I have no idea"» (Jn 9:10-12).

Perhaps those "blind-from-birth," though having received the light, do not yet know Him, the Son of God, who has bestowed it upon them. They will at first see

only the "instrument" whom God has used to accomplish His work: *«That man they call Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes, telling me to go to Siloam and wash* .... » Following the voice of their conscience, those persons obey any "instrument," taking no notice either of the person or of that which they are told to do. *If their conscience does not reproach them,* they obey and thus, without realizing it, pass from the darkness to the light; *«When I did go and wash, I was able to see.»*

DISPUTE OVER THE VALUE OF THE MIRACLE

«Next, they took the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. (Note that it was on a sabbath that Jesus had made the mud paste and opened his eyes.) The Pharisees, in turn, began to inquire how he had recovered his sight. He told them, "He put mud on my eyes. I washed it off and now I can see" This prompted some of the Pharisees to assert, "This man cannot be from God because he does not keep the sabbath"» (Jn 9:13-16).

The "prince of darkness" has his soldiers spread around in all the different spheres of this world, and when those blind "from birth" see the "light," then the "darkness" which had thought that these souls belonged to it because of their blindness — their ignorance of God — goes against them and brings them before those persons who, having the light, live in the darkness; these latter are "blind through disease"; pride and arrogance have closed the eyes of their souls, and they see only with the eyes of the "flesh." They are false custodians of the Law of the Lord, who «*strain out a gnat and swal-*

low a camel,» who think that men were created for the laws and not the laws for men: *«This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath.»*

They are not concerned about the "health" of men's souls but, rather, about imposing on them what they consider to be "their" own duties or rights, which is nothing more than imposing their own opinion and, not only imposing it on men but also placing a limit on God's way of working, because the god that they invoke is their own judgments.

How often do we see this behavior in many of those individuals who have authority in the Church or have under their charge the care of souls! When they see that a soul is "opening her eyes," instead of giving her more light, what they do is to inquire into the "means," without taking an interest in or caring about the "light" or "health" that the soul received. And they give more thought to the "mud" that was "instrument" or "means" for opening her eyes than to the light the soul has received, and if they can, they end up extinguishing that "light" in order to place the soul in their own sickly darkness, closing the "eyes of his soul" and opening the "eyes of his flesh," (abandoning faith for reason).

«But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner work these signs?" And there was division among them. Again therefore they said to the blind man, "What dost thou say of him who opened thine eyes?" But he said, "He is a prophet"» (Jn 9:16-17).

So dense is the darkness of these "blind through disease" that they think they also have the right to judge the

conscience of another: *«How can a man who is a sinner work these signs?»* And today they say: "This or that soul is in sin." How can you, man, judge regarding what you cannot see? Has that one confessed his sin to you? You cannot judge another's conscience by your own.

«And there was division among them,» because those who live in this kind of darkness can never agree except when their personal interests coincide. The spirit of the world, to which they belong, is multiple as are error and lying; this is why there cannot be unity of thought or opinion among them.

«The Jews therefore did not believe of him that he had been blind and had got his sight, until they called the parents of the one who had gained his sight, and questioned them, saying, "Is this your son, of whom you say that he was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we ourselves do not know. Ask him; he is of age, let him speak for himself» (Jn 9:18-21).

Those people who live more in the darkness than in the light mistrust everybody; they believe no one, and even if they ask many questions and always receive truthful answers, they — because they are into themselves — do not believe anything except what they think is true.

«We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind... »; but those who ask couldn't care less about "the son" who was blind and now sees; what interests

them is the one who was "instrument" of the light. In this we can see that they are led by the enemy of the souls' salvation.

«These things his parents said because they feared the Jews. For already the Jews had agreed that if anyone were to confess him to be the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. This is why his parents said, "He is of age; question him"» (Jn 9:22-23).

And those who have power or authority in their hands use it to threaten weak and timid souls, telling them that they will be excommunicated if they associate with that person, and they use the name of the Church in order to back up their threats. Oh, what an account they must have to render to God for their words and intentions, soiling with them the name of the Immaculate Bride of Christ!

«They therefore called a second time the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God! We ourselves know that this man is a sinner!' He therefore said, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!' They therefore said to him, "What did he do to thee? How did he open thine eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you have heard. Why would you hear again? Would you also become his disciples?" They heaped abuse on him therefore, and said, "Thou art his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses"» (Jn 9:24-28).

The spirit of darkness, through his "instruments" whom he has succeeded in blinding with the sin of pride and arrogance, accomplishes a double mission: one is

with the individual who has received the light, and the other is with those who are around him – who could receive the light from him. The former, they intimidate with the power they wield; the latter, they lure with flattering words, telling them that they are better Christians because by obeying the "authority" they give greater glory to God than by governing themselves by their conscience, because they, the authority, are the ones who "know best" and represent God on earth. *«Give glory to God. We ourselves know that this man is a sinner.»* In these snares are caught only those souls who, not having received the light of the Spirit, trust more in men than in God. But those who follow the "voice" of their conscience and act with righteousness and purity of intention receive the light of the Holy Spirit, and nothing and no one intimidates them. One fear alone is in their hearts — the fear of offending God by not fulfilling His Will.

«Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.» The soul who lives in the light of the Spirit does not judge others because she knows that God alone knows what is in each soul. She knows only that she was blind before and now she sees, and because she knows what it means to be "blind," she guards the light that she now has in order not to lose it.

When the "instruments" of darkness do not achieve their purposes by means of their threats or their flattery, then mockery and abuse follow. «*They heaped abuse on him therefore, and said, "Thou art his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses."»* And they reaffirm themselves

in their pride, using the name of Christ as a pedestal for exalting themselves: "We are 'representatives' of Christ," just as the former used to take the name of Moses.

«"We know that God spoke to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where he is from." In answer the man said to them, "Why, herein is the marvel, that you do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he hears. Not from the beginning of the world has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered and said to him, "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they turned him out» (Jn 9:29-34).

The pride of these men is such that there is nothing they do not know, flaunting their feigned faith in Scripture with these words: *«We know that God spoke to Moses,»* and today they say: "We know that Christ spoke this and that to Peter and His other apostles." They feign belief in what they did not see in order to condemn what they are seeing with their eyes. Herein is the marvel, that having so much faith in what Christ did twenty centuries ago, they cannot believe what He is doing now before their very eyes. But the fact is that these, hardened as they are, interpret Scripture according to their blind reasonings, the ways of the Spirit remaining veiled to them because they govern themselves by "the flesh" — their attachment to self—and when the light is the most lumi-

nous, they see all the less because they are blinded by that very light. *«Not from the beginning of the world has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.*» All these reasonings blind their already darkened reason because of their pride and arrogance: *«"Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" And they turned him out.*» The words of light from that soul are like an arrow that smites the wound directly. Just so does the truth smite the depths in those who shield themselves behind error and falsehood in order to carry out their ambitions for power and glory. Until now they had not gone against him directly because they had hopes of winning him over to a new blindness like their own, but once convinced of their failure, *«they turned him out,»* they hold him in contempt.

This man blind from birth whom the Gospel presents to us should be an example for every person who receives the light of truth and wants to be faithful by abiding in that truth. Just so should he maintain himself—firm in the truth he has come to know, because the smallest lie can take him to a new blindness, which would be worse than the first one and may not have a cure.

FAITH AND BLINDNESS

«Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Sir," the man replied, "tell me who he is so that I may believe in him" Jesus said, "You are looking

at him; he is speaking to you!' The man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped him. Jesus said, "It is for judgment that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind"» Jn 9:35-39).

After the soul has passed the "test," the Son of God reveals Himself to her. Until now, He has kept silent, waiting for the soul's liberty to decide between the "Light" and the "darkness"; He has given her the light without her asking for it, but now she must freely accept or reject it. If she accepts it, remaining firm in the truth, she will see the Son of God. But if she falls into falsehood for fear of men, she will have to deal with the "darkness," and not until she overcomes it will the Son of God be able to manifest Himself to her; and this struggle between the light and the darkness can last a very long time and can also be definitive.

«Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Sir, tell me who he is so that I may believe in him." "You are looking at him."» And when the soul has "seen" the Son of God and believed in Him, she should worship Him in gratefulness. *«"Lord, I believe," and worshiped him.*» Then Jesus will speak to the soul, revealing to her His path.

«It is for judgment that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind.» Jesus has come into the world to fulfill a merciful justice, so that those who, having followed the voice of their conscience, which is the spirit of light—for not believing themselves capable of discerning be-

tween good and evil — may receive the light of His Spirit: *«... so that those without sight may see,»* and those who, believing themselves to be knowers of good and evil, having judged according to their reasonings by disregarding the voice of their conscience, may be deprived of the little light they have and may receive the darkness they chose: *«and those with sight turn blind.»*

«Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, "We are not blind, surely?" Jesus replied, "Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains"» (Jn 9:40-41).

«Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him ... »: these are those souls who seemingly are with Jesus, but they do not partake of His Spirit; they are the "baptized" who do not live their baptismal grace, which would take them to an identification with Christ in His very Spirit.

Upon hearing or reading these "clarifications," each person can learn to what degree of darkness he partakes. If he feels himself alluded to and does not *recognize* his blindness, then there is no remedy for him because he is invaded by the darkness, having accepted it: *«We are not blind, surely? »* By this fact alone, they are confessing that they are *"incurable!'«Jesus replied, "Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty,"»* because here and now upon reading or listening to these things, he would recognize that he has truly been blind, and he would receive the light for seeing. *«But since you say, "We see, "your guilt remains,* because he lacks the humility for admit-

ting the truth. This means that pride and arrogance have blinded him totally.

VI

THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS

«There was a man named Lazarus who had fallen ill. His home was at Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus had fallen ill, was the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair.) So the sisters sent word to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill" But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it."Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus very much. Yet, after hearing that Lazarus was ill, he stayed on where he was for two days more. Finally he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea"» (Jn 11:1-7).

«"Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may he glorified by means of it."» Very often these "illnesses" of the soul — shortcomings and even sins — are permitted by God so that His Son may be glorified by means of them. Because these shortcomings and "sins" to which we refer stem from the "original guilt," this kind of sin does not come from a conscious acceptance by the soul, but through habit or custom due to a misguided upbringing, which results from the fact that the grace received in baptism is not *lived.* Parents or sponsors, who are the

ones responsible before God for the liberty of their children until they reach the age of reason, do not live this grace, nor do they teach those under their charge to live it, thus accepting the spirit of evil —the darkness. This is a very long chain, as long as are the generations, ever since the beginning of sin. This child grows up in an environment where more importance is placed on people and things than on God, and this is considered "good manners" and "proper social etiquette" but is nothing other than the "spirit of the world" that fosters love for the creature with forgetfulness of the Creator; and as a justification for their deeds they say: "God helps those who help themselves." This is how the person's "I" begins to reign, starting with a minimal degree of selfishness and ending up a complete egotist, and from this root, stem all his other shortcomings and sins. The soul is not responsible for the root but is indeed responsible for what sprouts from it later through conscious acceptance. These root-sins are the "illnesses" that are not unto death but which God *permits* (let it be perfectly understood: God permits them, He does not want them) so that His Son may be glorified by means of them: first of all for the glory of the Son of God, the Redeemer, and then for the glory of the soul who, cooperating with the Redemption, entering into the Redeemer, also comes to be glorified in the Son of God.

The soul often suffers from these "illnesses" without realizing where her "affliction" springs from; she does not know the "root" of her "ailment" because she has not consciously accepted it. But if she is faithful in not allowing shoots to grow out of this root, one fine day, in

the very moment that she recognizes her "illness," the Redeemer comes, pulls up the root, and lets the soul see it when He already has it in His hands; the soul then gives glory to God because she is being redeemed.

«Lord, he whom you love is ill.» This is how we should pray to the Lord concerning the illnesses of the souls of our brothers — those sins and faults that we see in them. God alone knows if this "illness" is unto death or "so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it" and thus, along with Him, the soul may be glorified. This root can remain in the soul a long time, the time that the Lord deems necessary, according to His Justice, in order to train the soul in humility; and perhaps she will not see herself liberated from the root in this life-time but in purgatory or at the moment of death.

«Yet after hearing that Lazarus was ill, Jesus stayed on where he was for two days more.» Let us not fret if the Lord does not immediately respond to our call to cure the "sick" whom we have entrusted to Him. He knows the moment when He should do this. Our part is only to pray and trust, and this is *sincere* only when love holds sway — love which, in addition to praying and trusting, offers itself for him whom the Lord loves: *«Lord, he whom you love is ill.»*

«The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?"» (Jn 11:8).

How often do we, out of ignorance or out of false zeal, seek to "defend" God from sinners, and we say: "Oh, those awful people who offend God!" And we set our-

selves against them in order to defend God, when what the Lord wants of us is that we trust in Him and entrust those souls to Him, offering ourselves up for them — as He did for us all — in order to save them, that He may thus be glorified by them. And we expect to give glory to God "by taking away from Him the glory" that these souls could give Him. It is not that we can "take away" glory from God, but we can indeed with our self-offering and surrender contribute to leading more souls to His glory, and when we do not do this, we are, in a way, "taking away" that glory from Him.

«Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him. These things he spoke, and after this he said to them, "Lazarus, our friend, sleeps. But I go that I may wake him from sleep." His disciples therefore said, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will be safe." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he was speaking of the repose of sleep. So then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I rejoice on your account that I was not there, that you may believe. But let us go to him"» (Jn 11:9-15).

«Are there not twelve hours in the day?» Are we not, by chance, living the time of God's Mercy, and do we not have Redemption open to us, Redemption which is light for the souls? Is not Christ, the Word of God, the light for illuminating in the darkness of those souls whom we judge to be "sinners"? Is He not the Resurrec-

tion and the Life? Why, then, do we not, while it lasts, make good use of the day — the time of the Light—to take, *through our faith and our unconditional surrender to God,* the redemption to these souls whom we see are still enslaved by the spirit of the world? Let us take full advantage while there is light and it is daytime, because when "the darkness" sets in, and with it the night, we will be unable to do anything for them or for ourselves, and we will be asked to render an account for what we could have done and failed to do.

Even though it may seem to us that the sins, "illnesses," of those sinners are unto death, we should not for this reason think that our sacrifice will have no effect. *«Lazarus is dead; and I rejoice on your account that I was not there, that you may believe.» «... I rejoice on your account that I was not there»:* it could even be the case of a person who blasphemes and says he does not believe in the Son of God. Only God Himself knows to what extent this person is responsible for his "unbelief." *«He whom you love is ill.»* God loves all souls, because they were created by Him to His image in order to receive also His likeness. The soul, misusing her liberty, ran through sin "cast out" her Redeemer, but He will always be willing to return in the moment the soul opens the door to Him. With our prayers and self-sacrifice we can knock on the soul's "door," so that her liberty may open to God: *«I rejoice on your account that I was not there, that you may believe»* — that we may believe in the power of prayer, for the door was not opened from within because Christ was not there but, rather, the "enemy," and we with our prayers caused it to open from

without, and Christ, Life of the soul, entered and drove out the enemy, "death." This is the best help that we can give to our neighbor: to pray and offer ourselves to God in the fulfillment of His Will, as our Redeemer did, so that the graces merited by Him may descend upon our neighbor and thus help him to enter into the Redemption. Everything else will come about as a consequence if we truly do this and it is not an illusionary theory — mere words.

«Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him"» (Jn 11:16).

By our attunement with Christ, through the fulfillment of the Father's Will, we will feel aglow in His very love for souls, and we will, like Thomas, say: *«Let us also go, that we may die with him.»* Jesus, in order to restore life to Lazarus, was risking his own life: *«Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?'» «No one has greater love than he who lays down his life for the one he loves.»* Just as Jesus Christ laid down his life for us in order to save us, so must we lay down our lives for Christ in order to contribute to the salvation of our brothers and to complete what is lacking in us of his Passion.

«Jesus therefore came and found him already four days in the tomb. Now Bethany was close to Jerusalem, some fifteen stadia distant. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to comfort them on account of their brother. As soon as she heard that Jesus was on his way, Martha went to meet him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been

here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you. Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again!' Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day!'Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who hast come into the world"» (Jn 11:17-27).

«As soon as she heard that Jesus was on his way, Martha went to meet him, while Mary stayed at home.» Here we see LOVE acting in a different way in each member of the Mystical Body. It makes no difference what the external attitude may be; what matters is one's union in LOVE. "God is LOVE!"

Martha is the soul who feels impelled from within to go out to meet the Lord: she goes to pray in a church, she goes out to do some kind of apostolic work for souls, etc. — she goes to the Lord to express her need, she considers this a hopeless case; nevertheless, she trusts: *«Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you.»* This is how our own faith in Christ should be, sincere and trusting, for whatever He asks the Father, the Father will grant him. But let us not forget that the Son will never ask the Father for anything that goes against His Will. So should it be with us; in order to be heard by Jesus, we must do in our

prayer as he did: «*Father, if it is possible ...; yet, not as I will, but as thou wiliest.*»

The Father also has need of our faith in His Son in order to grant us His grace: *«If you had been here, my brother would not have died.» «If you had been here»:* the soul knows, because she has faith, that Jesus can do all things. It is the faith of the intercessor that will get Jesus to work the miracle: *«I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live Do you believe this?» «Yes, Lord, I believe ...»*

«Mary stayed at home»: this is the soul who is impelled by LOVE to go "within." Therein she too finds the Lord, and then when He calls her, she, like her sister, will also go — all in its own time and ordained by LOVE, which is the Spirit of Jesus, for He alone knows the place that each member should occupy in the Mystical Body — and while some fulfill one mission, others carry out another.

«And when she had said this, she went away and quietly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Master is here and calls thee." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and came to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there» (Jn 11:28-31).

«And when she had said this, she went away and quietly called Mary her sister...» We see here what the souls' union in LOVE, the Holy Spirit, does: God com-

municates with His souls not only directly, but He also uses one soul to communicate His Will to another: *«The Master is here and calls thee.»*

Mary does not doubt because she was united in the same Spirit with her sister. «*As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and came to him.»* This is the way to respond to the Lord's call — *"quickly"*—for if we delay, we may not find Him there. And Mary could have offered a very human excuse for not going immediately, as is usually done: "I cannot go right now because I must see to these 'brethren' who have come to offer me their condolences; to do otherwise would be a lack of 'charity' and a bad example."

«When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her ... » This is what should be considered "good manners" and "good example": letting God have first place, attending to Him before attending to men. But this is very subtle; it is not a matter of seeing God by means of our faithless reasonings, but a matter of acting impelled by a living and active faith, ridding ourselves of reasonings devoid of faith in the living God, who acts at every moment and in a way pleasing to Him. This is the best example and the greatest good that a soul can do for those whom she esteems: provide them with the opportunity to cooperate in the fulfillment of God's Will, which would be to introduce them progressively into the Redemption, placing them in the presence of the Redeemer: *«When the Jews ... saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her »* and were witnesses to the

miracle: *«Many therefore of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen what he did, believed in Him.»*

«Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"»(Jn 11:32-37).

«Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet.» This soul has no human respect. She does what Love impels her to do. She is in the presence of the Son of God, how can she possibly care what men think? She makes her confession of faith and love bathed in tears, like a wellspring that sorrow opens up in her heart. How very sincere those tears must have been to have "troubled" the heart of the Son of God! *«When Jesus saw her weeping..., he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled^:* this is the wordless prayer that moves the heart of God, the prayer that springs from a deep and sincere love. Souls who, like Mary, give everything to LOVE, attain everything from God. In her deviations, this woman was not different; they were "deviations" indeed, but she was impelled by true love — love that had mixed with the flesh but which had not "corrupted" with the flesh.

«And the Jews said, "See how much he loved him!"» Mary, with faith as ardent as her love, brought to those who had come to console her the greatest consolation that a creature can receive: a peek into the Heart of Jesus, who is all love. *«See how he loved him!»* This was much more than they had expected of him who had opened the eyes of a man blind from birth: *«Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?»* Jesus' love for his friends had opened the eyes of the Jews who had come to Mary; others hardened their hearts and went to the Pharisees.

The Jews, friends of Mary's, went to console her over one who had died, and she placed them in the presence of the Resurrection and the Life. From this we can draw another example: We never know what means God will use for coming into contact with souls. *«This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God.*» The illnesses, death, and suffering of some souls can resurrect many others.

One who is "ill," a sinner, can also be an instrument for conveying Life to many who are "dead," who walk about and look like they "live" but are deader than the "sick one."

«Come and see,» they said to Jesus when he asked where they had laid the deceased. This is what we should do with our sins, even though God knows them. He wants us to show them to Him ourselves: *«"Where have you laid him?" They answered him, "Lord, come and see."»* He who knew where the soul of the deceased was, wouldn't he know where his body lay?

«Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench; for he has been dead four days." Jesus replied, "Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" And so they removed the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of the crowd who stands around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me." And when he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." He who had died came out, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go"» (Jn 11:38-44).

The tomb where the deceased lay was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. This is what has been done with Christ's Church: "a stone" has been laid upon it to cover many dead, and She, the Bride of the Lamb, is hound hand and foot with wrappings; and Her face is wrapped around with a cloth so that Her purity may not be revealed, and so that the dead who shield themselves behind Her may not be discovered. Is Jesus, who raised his friend, going to let his Bride die? *"Lord, by this time there will be a stench,»* for (he dead who shield themselves behind Her are many. The Bridegroom knows what He is doing: *«Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God,»* and also the glory of the Bride? When we least expect it, the Lord will

come and will say in a loud voice: *Remove the stone!»* And to the Bride: *«Come out!»* Many dead will resurrect, and many sick will be healed, but others will arise to serve Satan.

«Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of the crowd – that awaits me – so that they may believe it was you who sent me» and will send me again.

There are dead who are hidden in "tombs" that are very clean and bright on the outside, people who, having a dead soul because they lack faith in the Word of God, seem to have a great deal of spiritual life. Only God and the souls to whom He reveals it, *so that they may offer themselves* for the salvation of these souls, know of so many dead who walk the streets and live within the church, without partaking of its Spirit.

The tomb where the deceased lay was a cave covered with a stone. Christ came to give LIFE to the souls. He is the Resurrection, but He NEEDS souls like Martha and Mary who, loving "their dead brothers," and loving the Master even more, will "compel" him with their faith, love, and trust to go to the "sepulchre" where the deceased lies hidden. He also needs "someone" to carry out His order when He says, *«Remove the stone.»* But oftentimes when the Resurrection and the Life is at the soul's door and God gives the order to remove the stone, it is then that her sins are seen and those who have received the order realize that there is a "stench," and when they should remove the bandages of the deceased so that he may be left free to walk, everybody is terrified

of him, and they let him die again, smothered: *«He who had died came out, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."»* In the Mystical Body, there are those who should fulfill this mission of removing the stone — give an opportunity to the souls to confess their sins to God — and unbind the bandages of the deceased so that he can walk — give him absolution, and help the souls to go to God: «*Whatsoever you bind ..., and whatsoever you loose will be loosed in heaven.*» But very often this mission is not fully carried out for fear of being con-laminated by the deceased or through qualms about his "stench": *«By this time there will be a stench.»*

The Lord gives us an example of how we should give thanks to God, even without having yet seen the miracle take place: «*Father, I thank you for hearing me.»*

«Many of the Jews therefore, who had come to Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things that Jesus had done» (Jn 11:45-46).

Here we have another attitude that we are inclined to take when we believe that we already belong to Jesus Christ's Mystical Body: *«Many of the Jews therefore ... who had seen what he did believed in him.»* These individuals were looking for God and they found Him — they found the "stone" upon which to "build." If they work, they will belong to the Mystical Body. *«But some of them went away to the Pharisees, and told them the things that Jesus had done.»* These are those individuals

who are curious about the ways of God but go about seeking themselves, failing to "encounter" their souls because they are only interested in knowing: learning all they can in order to transmit it to others, so that those others can see that they are "informed" and are "knowledgeable." In seeking themselves they find in the Son of God a stumbling block. It is unlikely that they will truly belong to the Mystical Body; they have no foundation for "building"; instead of "building" with "the stone," they use it as a pedestal for themselves, and all they do is stumble over it.

«So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation"» (Jn 11:47-48).

These are those individuals who, holding "authority" — power — use that "power" that God has given them, for defending their own personal interests disguised as zeal for the nation or for the things of God: "our holy place," "our nation." They couldn't care less about the souls, but only about that from which a personal benefit is to be derived. *«What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him.*» They are not interested in what that person does, whether it is beneficial or detrimental to souls; their concern is that they could lose "their prestige"; *«Every one will believe in him,»* and along with their "prestige" lose also their interests: *«And the Ro-*

mans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.»

These are those men who are the "knowers of good and evil," who seek to be "like God," and not only do they pass judgment upon what is happening at the moment, but they also predict the consequences and the future: *«The Romans will come»* and they *«will destroy our holy place»;* and in order to avoid what they have predicted as "evident," they decree the death of the ONLY ONE who could save the nation and the holy place and their own souls from the hands of the "enemy." They themselves bring about what they were trying to "avoid."

This event gives us an example for gauging the extent to which our own rationalizations and predictions can take us.

«But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish"» (Jn 11:49-50).

«But one of them, Caiaphas, who was priest that year — » They are like those "high priests," "pontiffs" who, like Caiaphas, live more in the world than in God, and to whom, because they are "pontiff," head of all authority, God gives the knowledge of what will happen during "their office" or ministry; but interpreting matters according to the spirit of the world that dominates them, they carry out the will of the adversary, believing they are doing God's Will — just like Caiaphas who, having

received the knowledge of what was going to happen, made himself the author of that event, believing that he was lending a service to God by crucifying His Son. *«You know nothing at all....* » Herein lies the evil. This one thinks that because he is pontiff, he knows everything, and he does not have the humility to inquire of the Lord, or to wait for God to let him know His Will. This is the sin of Lucifer; when God revealed His Work of Creation to Lucifer, he wished to accomplish that which was God's to do. This is the "blindness" of power. Oh most perfect Justice of God! Those who, choosing "power": *«You will be like God, knowers of good and evil,»* have rejected the way of Love: *«Here am I.... I have come, O God, to do thy will,»* receive the knowledge of God's power, the knowledge of that which His Justice will carry out, and because they seek to be "like God," they become "instruments" of that justice, bringing about what God has revealed to them: *«You do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.»*

«He did not say this of his own accord, but - being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God, who are scattered abroad. So from that day they were determined to kill him» (Jn 11:51-53).

This is a very long history which had its beginning when the people of God asked Samuel for a king to rule over them, the same as other peoples, a history that ex-

tends even to our day and will come to an end with the "man of iniquity," the Antichrist. As for the responsibility of each of those men who have held in their hands the "authority" of the "people of God," only God Himself knows, and it is not for us to judge. There have been saints as well as devils among them; they are instruments of God's Justice, and they fulfill their mission within the church in order «*to gather into one the children of God, who are scattered abroad.»;* this ONE is the Spirit of Christ Jesus. But this does not mean that all those who have fulfilled a mission in the church are members of the Mystical Body. Only those who become identified with the Spirit of Christ, who is head of the Mystical Body, are, and will be, its members.

It falls to each soul only to "work," while there is time left, in order to come to an identification with Christ, fulfilling God's Will, and this will become a reality if the soul conducts herself *with righteousness of conscience and purity of heart in all her actions.*

Once these men, instruments of God's Justice, receive the knowledge of that which, for the sake of Justice, He will permit, God awaits their decision to *freely* choose between His Divine WILL and His PERMISSION, in keeping with the spirit to which they belong. If they have identified themselves with Christ, they will fulfill His Will; but if they are identified with the "spirit of the world," they will be instruments of God's PERMISSION, and He will give them the power to carry out the mission they have chosen, according to His Justice: «So *from that day they were determined to kill him.»*

And today we can say: “By their spirit, you shall know them.” If they are more in the world than in God, if their lives tend more “outward” than “inward,” we already know with which spirit they have become identified and what mission they are fulfilling. In contrast, being in God is to have the same attitude that Jesus Christ had.

«Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; there he stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?” Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if any one knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him » (Jn 11:54-57).

The soul who lives in this identification with Christ is not caught unawares by any persecution, for God Himself prepares her, strengthening her in retreat and prayer for the moment when, with her “life” or with her “death,” she is to give testimony as “son of God.” «*Jesus therefore no longer went about openly among the Jews, but went from there to the country near the wilderness .... »*

«*Many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.*» So that the soul may give true testimony as “son of God,” she has to be purified of all contact with the “spirit of the world,” and this

is attained in retreat and prayer in her inner temple. It is there, in silence and prayer, where the soul meets with her Redeemer, who will accompany her in the fulfillment of the Will of the Father, who is in heaven. Without Him, the soul will be unable to do anything, however much she strives.

«What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?» The "feast" that God prepares for the soul who fulfills His Will is her encounter with His Son on the cross. If she accepts the "invitation," she will see the Resurrection and the Life: this is the encounter of the bride, the soul, with Christ, the Bridegroom. *«I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me, shall never die. Do you believe this?»*

VII

THE SHEPHERD AND THE FLOCK

«Truly I assure you: Whoever does not enter the sheepfold through the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a marauder. The one who enters through the gate is shepherd of the sheep» (Jn 10:1-2).

The gate into the sheepfold is the soul; the sheepfold is the "world of the souls" — the spiritual life; the sheep are the individuals.

«Whoever does not enter the sheepfold through the gate» — whoever does not enter through the souls in order to save them, but remains with the individuals — *«is a thief and a marauder»* because he comes to steal what that person should give to God, for to God belongs his love as well as his liberty and the time he should dedicate to God and not to men; but he who enters through the souls in order to save them is shepherd of the sheep» because he will lead them to the Master, who is God, appropriating nothing of that soul's, leaving her free to walk toward the house of the Master of the sheep; he directs her only when he sees that she can go astray.

« To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out. When he has brought them all out, he goes ahead and the sheep follow, because they recognize his voice. They will not follow a stranger; such a one they will flee, be-

cause they do not recognize the voice of a stranger. Even though Jesus used this figure with them, they did not grasp what he was trying to tell them» (Jn 10:3-6).

To him who "enters" through the soul of the individuals whom he directs, to him the gatekeeper opens, gatekeeper who is the Holy Spirit—that participation by the spirit of good that there is in each soul — and « *the sheep hear his voice»* because the very Spirit puts them in contact with the soul of the shepherd, and *«he calls them by name»* because he knows what orientation each soul needs in order to follow the straight path. *«And he leads them out,»* because he leads them away from the "spirit of the world," *«and the sheep follow him»* because he, by his life, sets an example for them. This is why they know his voice and know that what he tells them is the truth, truth which he himself lives. But *«they will not follow a stranger* because they have not seen his example; this is why they will flee such a one, because they do not recognize the voice — the spirit of strangers.

«Even though Jesus used this figure with them, they did not grasp what he was trying to tell them.» The apostles did not understand the sense of these words because the Holy Spirit had not given them the light for understanding them. And even after Jesus was more explicit, they did not grasp its fullest meaning because these things were "reserved" for this age, which is the time of the plenitude of the spirit, and they were living in an age or a world that was more human than spiritual.

«1 am the sheepgate. All who came before me were thieves and marauders whom the sheep did not heed. I

am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it abundantly» (Jn 10:7-10).

Jesus is the sheepgate because He is the life of the soul, who was created to his image. All who came before Him were thieves and marauders because they were not seeking the salvation of souls, and this was so, not because they were all bad and wanted to "steal," but because the "gate" had not yet been opened; the souls were "closed" because Christ had not come to open them with the Redemption; this is why *«the sheep did not heed them.*» After the Redemption, the souls were left "open," and Christ Himself is the gate: *«I am the sheepgate.»* The gate now being open, the shepherd who does not enter the souls *through Christ* is also a "marauder" and a "thief but with a responsibility that those who came before the Redemption did not have.

«I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will go in and out, and find pasture.» The shepherd who enters through the gate, Christ, will save himself and will enter into the souls and go out and will find pasture, because in each soul whom he directs, he will find a lesson — "pasture" for nourishing his own spiritual life. This is the divine commerce of the souls in the Holy Spirit: no one gives who does not receive.

«The thief» —he who seeks to enter into the souls without his first entering into Christ—*«comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy,»* because those thieves, being into the "spirit of the world," are *unconscious* in-

struments of the "enemy" who will use them as bait for *stealing* the love of the souls who belong to God, *slaughtering* in them their faith by taking them down the path of their own reasonings, and *destroying* their conscience by getting them to guide themselves by the conscience of others and not give heed to their own conscience.

«I came that they might have life and have it abundantly.» Christ has come that the souls might have His very life and have it abundantly, eternal, and what sustains the life of souls in this world is love and faith guided by a righteous conscience, which is, to follow the "voice of God."

«I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand—who is no shepherd nor owner of the sheep—catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf. That is because he works for pay; he has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; for these sheep I lay down my life» (Jn 10:11-15).

Christ is the good shepherd and only model for those shepherds whom He places in his flock. The good shepherd is one who, identifying himself with Christ, lays down his life so that Christ Himself may live in him by fulfilling the Will of the Father, who is in heaven.

The "hired hand" cannot be a shepherd because such a one is only concerned about his wages — all temporal

things — and he does not become identified with God, who is the owner of the sheep; and so when he catches sight of the wolf coming—the enemy of the souls — he leaves the sheep and runs away, because he is concerned only about his own interests, and the "enemy" comes in any shape or form — it can be a persecution, or strong temptations for the soul that will place the shepherd himself in danger or in doubt—and the "enemy" snatches and scatters the sheep because the shepherd who works for wages is not concerned about the souls, and if he sees his interests (honor, fame, name, human glory, etc.) in jeopardy, he leaves the sheep in order to save "his interests." Those "wages" are being paid to these individuals by the "enemy" himself so that, ever-mindful of the "pay" they will abandon the souls, and they do not know that the "pay" is also the price of their own souls. What a surprise these individuals are in for when on judgment day they see that they belong to the "thief and not to the Lord! And the "enemy" works even more subtlely, convincing "shepherds" and "sheep" alike that they should see Christ *in the souls* and not the souls in Christ, so that by not entering through the "gate" but, rather, climbing in by another way, they may bring in the thief. The shepherd and the sheep who do this are "marauders and thieves" because by "marauding," they usher in the "thief," who is Satan.

«I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep .... » Christ alone knows which are the sheep that have not sold themselves to the thief, and the good shepherd, who, being identified with Christ, takes care of his flock, is not in danger of falling into "enemy" territory because

he knows Christ, as Christ knows the Father, and Christ knows him and lets him know which are His sheep, and His sheep know him also; for as Christ gave His life for the souls, so the "good shepherd" has surrendered his life to Christ for the souls: *«... in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father, for these sheep I will give my life.»*

«And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This command I received from my Father» (Jn 10:16-18).

«And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also.» The first fold were the Jews, and Christ had to gather his other sheep — the Gentiles; and the sheep that belong to Him will heed His voice and will follow Him; then there will be one flock, for he will gather them all into one fold, and He Himself will be their Shepherd.

«For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.» Jesus has laid down *His life* in order to open *with it* the "gate" and the "way" of the sheep toward the Father and then take it up again. This is why the Father loves Him: because He freely gave His life to save His Father's sheep. Not that men by sin, or the "enemy," spirit of evil, have defeated Him, for He had the liberty and the power to give it, as

He has the power to take it up again; and thus He will come again to gather His sheep in order to take them to the Father. This is the Will of the Father, and for love of the Father He does this, as well as for love of the souls whom the Father has given Him: *«This command I received from my Father.»*

«There shall be one flock then, one shepherd,» because He will gather them all into one fold, One "Body," and He Himself will be their Shepherd, for as the head leads the members of the body, so will Christ lead the souls.

«For this reason love me because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again.» Christ gave *His life* to the souls, who through sin had lost life. *«This is my body»;* each soul is like a particle of the Immaculate Host, soul who upon becoming "victim-host" returns to the Host, Christ. When all those particles — the souls who belong to Christ— return to the Host, then the end will come. It will be the Wedding of the Bridegroom, Christ, with His Bride, the Church.

«... because I lay down my life, that I may take it up again»: one Body, Christ; one Life, the life of the Father, because Christ and the Father are one and the same; one Spirit— the Holy Spirit. This is the Church and the Trinity on earth! *«I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; for these sheep I lay down my life.»*

«These words caused disagreement among the Jews. Many said, "He is possessed, he is raving; why bother to listen to him?" Others said, "These are not the words of

a man possessed by a devil: could a devil open the eyes of the blind?"» (Jn 10:19-21).

The spirit of evil causes disagreement among us souls in order to upset us with our reasonings and keep us from seeing the light of truth, and this disagreement is not only among ourselves, but within our very selves, disturbing our conscience, taking away the harmony that ought to exist between reason and conscience, in which event we must dispense with the reason in order to submit ourselves to the Supreme Reason: God.

«These words caused disagreement among the Jews.» This is work of the spirit of Evil: this he did when Jesus used to speak to the Jews, he has done it again with those who have preached the word of God *with purity*, and he will now do the same with these "clarifications" of His Gospel which the Lord is making. Those who are already identified with "Evil" through the "spirit of the world" will be unable to tolerate the purity of these "clarifications," and many of them will say of those who make them known the same thing they said of Jesus: *«He is possessed, he is raving!»* And they will tell the souls that they must not listen to them, and they will even say that this is not the true Gospel but, rather, the one they themselves preach in their own way, in conformity with the spirit of the world. It is not in their best interest for souls to listen to the purity of the doctrine because they fear that when the truth becomes known, the souls will see the light and will desert them.

Those who are still able to listen to the truth and have the humility to recognize the error in which "we have"

all lived will receive the light and will understand that these are not things of a man possessed by a devil, because the devil cannot give "LIGHT" to the souls, although he can present himself to people as an angel of light, but his is not light that illuminates the soul; he will, when God gives power to the "man of iniquity" be able to open the eyes of the body for seeing the things of the flesh and of the world, in order to astound those souls who have lost their faith, but he will never be able to open the "eyes" of the soul. *«By their fruits you will know them.»* The miracles Jesus performed were all directed toward the salvation of the soul, though they were accomplished in the body as well. We can verify this by the man born blind, whose eyes Jesus opened; the light of the spirit was more powerful than that of his eyes of the flesh. In the testimony that he gave before the Pharisees, he did not falter. In contrast, he did not notice the person of Him who had opened his eyes: *«That man they call Jesus»;* he gives no further details about the person. But when he has to give details about the spirit, he does so ardently: *«Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.»*

«It was the time when the feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the Temple, walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon. The Jews gathered around him and said,

"How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus replied: "I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness; but you do not believe because you are no sheep of mine"» (Jn 10:22-26).

This is what happens with those souls who do not make up their minds to govern their actions by the voice of their conscience. They are never sure if it is the voice of God. They desire to "dedicate themselves" to the life of the spirit, but they do not receive the fire of the Spirit and remain cold and undecided; *«It was the time when the feast of Dedication was being celebrated in Jerusalem»*. The temple of God was in Jerusalem; the body is the temple wherein lives the soul who desires to dedicate herself to God. *«It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple, walking up and down in the Portico of Solomon* »: the soul is cold — it was winter — and Jesus, in her, walks up and down in the "Portico" of her conscience to see if she recognizes Him as her Savior and follows Him, letting herself be led by Him, but those souls, like the Jews of that time, do not trust in Him because they lack faith and would like to see something tangible that will convince them: *«How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us so plainly.»* And they ask themselves, and also others and God: "Will I go wrong to follow that inner 'voice'? And what if it isn't God and I'm mistaken?" And they opt for this solution: "It's better to guide myself by others who 'know better than I,'" and they think that this is humility, when in fact what they lack is faith and trust in God.

«*Jesus replied: "I have told you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name are my witness ....* "» And Jesus replies, repeating the same thing in their conscience, and they do not believe. Can they not see that their conscience does not require them to do anything but good, and that it censures them if they do wrong? Doesn't this tell them that this cannot come from the devil but from God? The fact is that these souls are seeking to satisfy their egoism, and this is why they go around looking for someone to tell them what they should actually like to do and what their conscience reproaches them about: *«The works I do in my Father's name are my witness, but you do not believe because you are no sheep of mine»;* because these souls do not seek Christ but ever seek themselves, this is why they are not sheep of His and they go along other paths in the hands of the thief.

«My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life; and they shall never perish. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch anything out of the hand of my Father. I and the Father are one» (Jn 10:27-30).

«My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me .... » The souls who sincerely seek God hear the voice of Jesus in their conscience, and they follow Him with faith and trust. God alone knows each soul and knows how to lead her unto giving her everlasting life.

The soul who acts with righteousness of conscience, even if she makes mistakes and falls into error, "shall never perish" because no one can make her go against the voice of her conscience, which sustains her, and for her, it is greater than all, because it is the only thing that gives her true peace. This is why nothing and no one will be able to sidetrack these souls altogether because they are sustained by the hand of God, and no one can snatch anything out of His hand, for everyone who governs himself *by conscience* is following Christ, who is one with the Father, since the life of Christ and the life of the Father is one and the same, for the Father has given His Son His very Life: *«What the Father has given me is greater than all,»* and this is the life that Christ came to bring to His sheep.

«When some of the Jews again reached for rocks to stone him, Jesus protested to them, "Many good deeds have I shown you from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "It is not for any 'good deed' that we are stoning you," the Jews retorted, "but for blaspheming. You who are only a man are making yourself God"» (Jn 10:31-33)

«Many good deeds have I shown you from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?» "Stoning" the Lord by looking for reasons to justify their deeds whenever the Lord rebukes them in their conscience for the deeds they have done, prompted by their egoism, attributing these deeds to God Himself in order to reaffirm themselves in themselves, and saying that God wanted it so, is what is done by souls who seek themselves and not

God. And they think that it is pride to guide themselves by their own conscience, and that it is rather like a "blasphemy" to claim that God can guide us in this way: *«It is not for any "good deed" that we are stoning you, but for blaspheming. You who are only a man are making yourself God.*» And the "enemy," who is the one who steers the souls to "themselves" — for he indeed knows that, for the righteous soul, conscience is the voice of God and that whoever follows it cannot belong to him — places these souls in the presence of others who back them up, telling them that they must not trust that inner "voice," and that it is more perfect to govern themselves by the conscience of others "who know better." Each soul "knows" what God asks of her.

«Jesus answered: "Is it not written in your law, 'I have said, You are gods'? If it calls those men gods to whom God's word was addressed—and Scripture cannot lose its force—do you claim that I blasphemed when, as he whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, I said, 'I am God's Son'?"» (Jn 10:34-36).

It is written that the Law was given by God to men, as was "Revelation," before the Son of God came in the flesh. How did the Patriarchs and Prophets receive the word of God if not by means of their conscience? God being pure Spirit, and His Son not yet having come to this world with His body for His manifestation to men, how could men see and hear Him if they did not live with righteousness of conscience? And that God spoke to Adam, Moses, Abraham, and all the prophets is true, because Scripture cannot lose its force, for it is work of

the Holy Spirit. How much more so now — the Word of God having taken flesh in order to manifest Himself to men, and our receiving His body and blood — isn't the conscience sanctified by the grace received. And do men say that souls should not govern themselves by their own conscience? And if they can guide themselves by the conscience of others, cannot those others also be wrong? Or does God guide some, and not others?

«If I do not perform my Father's works, put no faith in me. But if I do perform them, even though you put no faith in me, put faith in these works, so as to realize what it means that the Father is in me and I in him. At these words they again tried to arrest him, but he eluded their grasp» (Jn 10:37-39).

Both the soul who guides herself by conscience and those who guide that soul should *observe her deeds.* If these are to the soul's benefit and increase her virtues, especially love, humility, and faith, there is no doubt that God is "performing works" there: *«If I do not perform my Father's works, put no faith in me. But if I do perform them, even though you put no faith in me, put faith in these works, so as to realize what it means that the Father is in me and I in him.»*

But if the soul, though seeing the effects that the guidance of her conscience brings about, continues to doubt and does not trust that it comes from God, then she will cease to hear that "voice," because God will not speak to her, and then when she wants to know what her conscience has to say, it will not answer: *«At these words*

they again tried to arrest him, but he eluded their grasp.»

This is what is happening today in the vast majority of souls and is why the world sails like a ship without a helm, and all humanity finds itself astray, like sheep without a shepherd. They have lived on the outside and have let their consciences "rust";the door has closed on them, and they themselves cannot enter their own souls in order to find themselves with God. *«Then he went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and while he stayed there many people came to him. "John may never have performed a sign," they commented, "but whatever John said about this man was true." In that place, many came to believe in him»* (Jn 10:40-42).

«Then he went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and ... stayed there .... » Christ passed over to the "Gentiles," but not all of them have received Him. He has been rejected by the vast majority, and many of them "baptized." He will go back again to the place where he came from — «*to the place where John had been baptizing earlier*»— and will remain there with the sheep who have heeded His voice and follow Him. And many of those who believed in "John" will believe in Him because of the testimony that the new apostles will give with *their lives. «"John may never have performed a sign but whatever John said about this man was true!'" In that place, many came to believe in Him.»*

And once again the Gospel will be preached in the world with these “clarifications,” and many souls will believe because of the purity of the message and of the messengers, and they will do penance (deny themselves), and Christ will make Himself felt in their consciences and will remain with them, and they will have no need of anyone to teach them. These people will not expect to see any miracles in order to believe, because they will be guided by a living and active faith.

The apostles of the end times and the good shepherds will be “Precursors” of God’s kingdom (its manifestation on earth). They will not convince anyone by the eloquence of their speech but by the example of their lives. *«Many came to believe,»* because they will see that these *live* what they preach.

VIII

THE UNFAITHFUL ADMINISTRATOR

«And he said also to his disciples, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, who was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear of thee? Make an accounting of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer'"» (Lk 16:1-2).

The rich man is Christ, His possessions are His Church, and the steward is "the Pope," beginning with St. Peter and ending with the last to exercise the "stewardship," administering this "power" — the authority that the Lord gave to Peter.

This "unfaithful administrator" represents those who have discharged their "stewardship" to their own benefit and not to the benefit of the souls, who are the "possessions" — the owner's interests. These

are those individuals who, as the Lord says, *«have used Peter's authority while living on the margin of Peter's life»*[1] and have not identified themselves with Christ, as did the apostle.

«And he called him and said to him, "What is this that I hear of thee?"» All souls who love Christ and His Church have come to the Lord with their complaints about this bad administration, just as the saints and martyrs have done: *«How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt*

Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?» (Apoc 6:10). He *«was reported to him as squandering his possessions.»*

The Lord has His own day and hour for putting an end to these transgressions, and He will call to account those who have "squandered his possessions" — the spirit of the Church: *«Make an accounting of thy stewardship, for thou canst be steward no longer,»* because the Lord Himself, owner of the possessions, the Holy Spirit, will come to rule the souls, and He will have no need of a steward.

«And the steward said within himself, "What shall I do, seeing that my master is taking away the stewardship from me. To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I shall do, that when I am removed from my stewardship they may receive me into their houses" And he summoned each of his master's debtors and said to the first, "How much dost thou owe my master'?" And he said, "A hundred jars of oil." He said to him, "Take thy bond and sit down at once and write fifty" Then he said to another, "How much dost thou owe?" He said, "A hundred kor of wheat!' He said to him "Take thy bond and write eighty"» (Lk 16:3-7).

Those men who represent the "unfaithful administrator" belong more to the darkness than to the light, and they have, little by Utile, squandered the true spirit in the Church by falling in with the "spirit of the world" so that the world will esteem them; and this they do with the pretext of "gaining souls," when what they really want is to gain the world; hence the church is actually

just one more power within the world, when in fact Jesus said: *«You are not of this world.»*

And this "worldly orientation" will reach its fullness in the "end times" — and we are even now seeing it— when under the pretext of "Christian unity," a relaxation so in conformity with the world will be reached that the cross, prayer, and the sacrifice of one's own personal identity will be a scandal to them. There will be talk of nothing but activity — doing many works in order to establish themselves in the world and reaffirm their personal identity.

«"I know what I shall do, that when I am removed from my stewardship they may receive me into their houses." And he summoned each of his master's debtors and said to the first, "How much dost thou owe my master?" And he said, "A hundred jars of oil." He said to him, "Take thy bond and sit down at once and write fifty!' Then he said to another, "How much dost thou owe?" He said, "A hundred kor of wheat." He said to him, "Take thy bond and write eighty."» The oil signifies prayer, which is love for God. The wheat signifies the sacrifice of one's self. *«And he summoned each of his master's debtors,»* from the bishops to the last soul in the church, and reduced their debt—*prayer* and *self-sacrifice*— which they must pay to Divine Justice in order to attain their own redemption. The spirit of "Evil," who is the *conscious* author of this, knows what he is doing: to do away with prayer, which is the soul's direct manifestation of her love for God, as well as the self-sacrifice, is to make the church worldly, thus put-

ting the souls within his reach, orienting them towards one another, under the deceit that they must see Christ in their neighbor.

«And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly, for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light» (Lk 16:8).

«And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly,» because such as these use the "power," which God has given them, to place souls under the *power* of him whom they serve — the "prince of this world." «*For the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light,»* for "the sons of light," who *out of necessity* are working within the world, do not know how to take advantage of this contact that they have with those souls who are in that milieu, in order to take them out of the "spirit of the world" and bring them to God by their example and their words. And on the contrary, with their human respect, they back them up----And those who within the church partake of that "prestige" in the world, which the unfaithful administrators have gained, could use it to take the light of truth to those souls who are in error within the world, thinking that the Church of Christ and the "world" are one and the same. And the "steward" —being a "son of the light" and not of the darkness like the "unfaithful steward" — who does not use this "prestige" and "power" that he has in the world in order to take the light to all souls, weeding out the "spirit of the world" from the church, is not administer-

ing the Master's property with fidelity, and the Master will severely reprimand him too because in being aware of the evil, he should cut out what is rotten so that the whole body might not become corrupt.

«And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much» (Lk 16:9-10).

«By means of the mammon of unrighteousness»—-by means of that "temporal power," prestige and worldly riches that have been taken into the church by those who have worked unrighteously — *«make friends for yourselves»* by using these for the sanctification of souls, making *truth* known and *living* what little is left of the spirit of the Gospel, for by losing the esteem of the world in so doing, you will gain the esteem of God: *«... that when it fails you, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.»* For if one is faithful in a very little thing, so will one be faithful in much.

«And he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.» For the Pope to say that he has found a church that has become "worldly" is no justification for leaving things as they are, for if he does not take advantage of the little bit of spirit left in the church, neither would he do this if there were a great deal. *«He who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. »*

«If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon» (Lk 16:11-13).

If while you have "unrighteous mammon" in your hands you do not make good use of it for doing righteous deeds, *«who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?»* For if in administering "that which is another's" — that which belongs to the "spirit of the world" —a person does not show his fidelity to God, how is God going to give him His own to administer? For *«no servant can serve two masters,»* and if he is serving the "opponent," which is the "spirit of the world," it is because he has gone over to his side and no longer belongs to God: *«No servant can serve two masters; or he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other.»* He who serves the "spirit of the world" will love the comforts and flattery of the world, seeking to be esteemed by the world, and he will hate the cross and sacrifice, which is "annihilation." One cannot serve Christ and partake of the "spirit of the world." «*You cannot serve God and mammon.»*

«Adulterers, do you not know that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever

wishes to be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God» (Jas 4:4).

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

«There was a certain rich man who used to clothe himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted every day in splendid fashion. And there was a certain poor man named Lazarus, who lay at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores» (Lk 16:19-21).

This rich man who used to clothe himself in purple and fine linen and feast every day in splendid fashion represents those who, following the example of the "unfaithful steward," live for the world, interacting with its spirit, and are not concerned about the salvation of souls.

The poor man, named Lazarus, represents all those sinners who, having no one to see about their souls, find themselves covered with the sores of their sins, while their souls, "hungering" after grace, await someone to nourish them with the sacraments.

But priests, bishops, and cardinals who follow the example of the "unfaithful steward" are rich in gifts from God by the power that He has given them; they have the grace for celebrating the splendid banquet of the Eucharist each day, officiating at the Holy Mass, but they do not identify themselves with this immense grace that was given to them for the salvation of souls but remain alienated from the Spirit of the Immaculate Victim and,

identifying themselves with the "spirit of the world," do not look after those poor sinners who, like Lazarus, "lie at their gate" —outside of the church — because of their being in "mortal sin," and their souls long to be filled with the "crumbs" of the graces that these rich disregard: «*... longing to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores»;* even the very sinners who have lost their "reason" — the discernment of good and evil — are more compassionate of that individual's person, than are these "rich" of his soul.

«And it came to pass that the poor man died and was borne away by the angels into Abraham's bosom; but the rich man also died and was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame"» (Lk 16:22-24).

God in His infinite mercy will grant health to those "sick" who are unconscious of evil, and He will call to account those who, having had the remedy in their hands, did nothing to cure them. And these will be greatly surprised when they see many of those sinners, freed of their sins, in the kingdom of God, while they themselves will be in hell, for from those to whom much has been given, much will be required. *«And lifting up his eyes, being in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, "Father Abraham, have pity on me, and send Lazarus to dip*

the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."»

They will feel the torment of the eternal flame on their tongues because of the words of absolution that they failed to pronounce in order to "unbind" — liberate — those who were bound to the "enemy" through sin.

«Father Abraham, have pity on me .... » The rich man thought that through the circumcision of the flesh he was already a son of Abraham and could enter into his bosom, just as men today think that because they have received baptism they belong to Christ, are sons of God, and are in the "bosom of the Church," although they do not fulfill God's Will.

«But Abraham said to him, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime hast received good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now here he is comforted, whereas thou art tormented. And besides all that, between us and you a great gulf is fixed, so that they who wish to pass over from this side to you cannot, and they cannot cross from your side to us"» (Lk 16:25-26).

Those souls who in this world have received so many graces from God and did not come to identify themselves with the sufferings of Christ—which means entering into the Redemption in order to be redeemed from their sins — will have to hear from God the words that Abraham spoke to the rich man: *«Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime hast received good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things.*» These "rich" in graces from God, disregarding the eternal riches, go through life enjoying their temporal possessions and are es-

teemed by the world, while those "poor" in graces suffer the consequences of their sins, and by virtue of their sufferings are doing penance, without being aware of it, and they find themselves free of guilt. It is God's infinite Mercy which goes forth to meet all souls, and only those souls who *consciously* reject Him do not receive redemption from their sins. In the kingdom of God, we will see many of those who go through life persecuted by justice and by society — not because what they do is correct, but because the suffering that they endure in this "persecution" leads them to redemption, even if they have to go through a long purgatory. These could be called "sick-from-birth"; they have never known health; for this reason they are not responsible for not having sought out the physician and the remedy for their "sicknesses." The Beatitude that applies to those who suffer persecution can also be applied to these. Their ignorance gives them entrance into God's Mercy: *«Lazarus in like manner received evil things; but now here he is comforted, whereas thou art tormented.»*

«And besides all that, between us and you a great gulf is fixed.» Like to the great gulf that lies between glory and hell is the great gulf that exists between the "spirit of the world" and the Spirit of Christ, so that those who being *in Christ*—identified with Him — might want to cross over from Christ to the world would be unable to do so because it is *impossible* to their spirit; and, in like manner, for those who are identified with the "spirit of the world," it will be impossible to partake of the Spirit of Christ.

«And he said, "Then, Father, I beseech thee to send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torments." And Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hearken to them." But he answered, "No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." But he said to him, "If they do not hearken to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe even if someone rises from the dead"» (Lk 16:27-31).

These "ministers of the Lord" who do not faithfully fulfill their ministry because they *disregard grace* and love temporal things above eternal life have no excuse before God, for they know the life of grace, but what they lack is faith: *«They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hearken to them.»*

If it were possible for a condemned soul to desire another's well-being and, as the parable says, one of those who are in hell would want to warn him, God would say even more to them than what Abraham said to the rich man: besides having Moses and the Prophets, they have the purity of the Scriptures in the Gospel; they have the example of the saints and the messages of the Son of God and His Mother, who for twenty centuries have been repeating the same thing over and over. Even if the Risen Christ were to come in person, He would not succeed in convincing them because their hearts have become hardened, and they have closed their eyes so as not to see or understand the ways of the Spirit because, in their high estimation of themselves, they have identified

themselves with the world and have become one and the same with its spirit.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

«He then spoke this parable also to some who trusted in themselves as being just and looked down on everyone else: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and began to pray thus within himself: 'O God, I thank thee that I am not like the rest of men, robbers, dishonest, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all that I possess.' But the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but kept striking his breast, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went back to his home justified but the other did not; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted!'» (Lk 18:9-14).

This Pharisee represents all those souls who are attached to themselves and who become overweeningly proud with the graces that God gives them and look down on those who have not yet received the same graces as they: *«O God, I thank thee that I am not like the rest of men, robbers, dishonest, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all that I possess.»*

How often have we seen religious people lake the same attitude as the Pharisee and express themselves in the same manner as he: "We have been chosen by God; we have left everything for Him; we are living a life of

sacrifice and have taken vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity — not like people who are in the world, living a life of ease, offending God. We go to confession each week and receive Holy Communion every day!" And by this they think that the kingdom of God is assured for them.

These souls have made of grace a "pedestal" for exalting themselves above others, and it is they who most wound the Heart of God by not having understood their "calling," a calling which means their "annihilation." On the contrary, by their pride they set a bad example for those souls who go looking for God among them, becoming a cause for scandal to the world. They are unconscious instruments of the "enemy," more attached to themselves than many souls who live in the world who, not having received the graces that the former have received, are more humble, and they cooperate with the least bit of grace that they do receive. And like the publican, they consider themselves unworthy and dare not even lift their eyes toward heaven, believing that they do not deserve the kingdom of God because they are sinners, even if they are in God's grace and receive communion frequently. They do not consider this grace a guarantee but a responsibility, and whatever they do, they never think they do enough.

«But the publican, standing afar off... »; in like manner these souls choose the back seats in church and dare not lift their eyes to the Lord: «O *God, be merciful to me a sinner!» «I tell you, this man went back to his home justified but the other did not; for everyone who exalts*

himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.»

IX

A WARNING TO THE DISCIPLES

«Now when immense crowds had gathered together, so that they were treading on one another, he began to say to his disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known"» (Lk 12:1-2).

The disciples of Christ must be very sincere above all with themselves as well as with others: «*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*» However much a person might want to feign godliness or a spiritual life, or virtues that he does not have, sooner or later the truth will be made known, for «*there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, and nothing hidden that will not be made known.*» Even though one can deceive men, one cannot deceive God, and God will make manifest the deeds of all, so that those deeds may be known by men, for God does not work in a hidden manner; rather, His works remain "hidden" to those whose eyes of the soul are not open, because God is spirit and cannot be seen by the "flesh," but once the "veils" are removed, He Himself will make known what is His and what men have done in His name — all things, from the

smallest matters to the greatest, will be disclosed in the light of truth.

«For what you have said in darkness will be heard in the light; and what you have whispered in the inner chambers will be proclaimed from the housetops» (Lk 12:3).

This is why all our words should be said and our deeds done in the light of the truth that we see and not in the darkness of falsehood, hypocrisy, and error, so that when they are manifested by God to the world, we will not feel ashamed of what we have done; for even if men do not now know the purity of our intentions, words, and actions, God knows it, and He will make it known to the whole world when that which is "hidden" is manifested. «*... and what you have whispered in the inner chambers will be proclaimed from the housetops.»* This will be the beginning of God's Justice. When He sends his angels and messengers proclaiming the truth, many counterfeits of the truth will be disclosed, and the "nakedness" of all things will be seen. Then we will come to know, as Scripture says, *«How different are the ways of men from the ways of God»* (cf. Is 55:8).

«I say to you who are my friends: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and can do no more. I will show you whom you ought to fear. Fear him who has power to cast into Gehenna after he has killed. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for a few pennies? Yet not one of them is neglected by God. In very truth, even the hairs of your head are counted! Fear nothing,

then. You are worth more than a flock of sparrows» (Lk 12:4-7).

«I say to you who are my friends: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and can do no more.» The souls who live for *God* alone have no reason to fear men, for men can do nothing to them; the most they can ever do, if God permits it, is to take the life of their body, but their souls will live for God eternally. One fear alone should they have — the fear of offending God. He alone, in addition to killing the body, can cast the soul into eternal fire: *«Yes, I tell you, fear him,»* for He is just, and if the soul, using her liberty wrongly, becomes deserving of the fire of Gehenna, which is hell, for the sake of justice He will cast her into it forever.

And I say that "the souls who live for God alone" have no reason to fear, for it is useless to say this to those who have not become decided for God, because they place more value on what is temporal than on what is eternal, and they live in fear of losing their temporal things, jeopardizing the only eternal thing they possess — their soul.

«Are not five sparrows sold for a few pennies? Yet not one of them is neglected by God.» If sparrows, which have no eternal value because God did not give them an immortal soul, are taken into account by God and not one of them goes unnoticed by Him, how much more mindful is God of men, who have an immortal soul created in His image — mindful even of the most insignificant of their actions; for He knows all their moves and intentions because He penetrates even to the deepest

recesses of their being, where man himself cannot reach, just as man could not count the hairs of his head, and, nevertheless, God knows them one by one. *«Even the hairs of your head are counted.»*

«I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men— the Son of Man will acknowledge him before the angels of God. But the man who has disowned me in the presence of men will be disowned in the presence of the angels of God» (Lk 12:8-9).

To acknowledge Christ before men is to act without any human respect, conducting ourselves with our sights and heart placed on God, which is to act with righteousness of conscience and purity of heart. Even if men are scandalized and should misjudge our deeds because they do not understand them, we must be faithful to God by following the voice of our conscience: *«Whoever acknowledges me before men— the Son of Man will acknowledge him before the angels of God.*» To the soul of him who conducts himself with righteousness of conscience and purity of heart—keeping his sights on God and not on men —nothing evil can happen because the angels of God will be his guardians, since Christ will let them know that this soul belongs to Him. But whoever forsakes his conscience in order to be in conformity with men's opinion jeopardizes his soul, because he will not be escorted by God's angels but, rather, by the spirits that roam throughout the world, for he acts according to the ways of the world, and for the sake of justice, he is placed under the "custody" of these spirits and not that of God's angels.

«Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. When they bring you before the synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. The Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment all that should be said» (Lk 12:10-12).

If a person, out of ignorance, should speak against Jesus, the Son of man, this will be forgiven him. But he who, knowing in the light of the Spirit what his conscience is asking of him, blasphemes against it by disobeying it, will not be forgiven, because he has resisted the Holy Spirit. Likewise, he who *knowing* that a person is speaking or acting moved by the Holy Spirit but because of *expediency* with the world goes against that person is against the Holy Spirit, and it will not be forgiven him, for this now is an offense, a blasphemy, against the Spirit. *«But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.»*

The person who acts with righteousness of conscience — conscience enlightened by the Spirit—cannot fear men, however great an authority and power these may have, for he is acting in the presence of God; neither should he request the counsel of men nor think ahead what he should say when he is questioned by men, for the Holy Spirit Himself will put into his mouth the words he is to say at each moment. *«When they bring you before the synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to*

say. The Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment all that should be said.»

BEWARE OF GREED

«And someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter over you?" And he said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions"» (Lk 12:13-15).

It is highly erroneous to think that Christ is involved in our material interests: *«Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter over you?»* Christ is interested *only in the soul and in that which can serve to benefit her.* He will always provide us with what is needed for sustaining the body which houses the soul, just as the jeweler takes care of the jewel box that holds the jewel because of the value of the jewel and not because of the jewel box. It does not matter to God whether we have *many* or *few* material possessions. What matters to Him is that we use these possessions and acquire them for the salvation of our soul: *«Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed; not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.* » The wrong comes in when we put our "life" in our possessions, and do not place our "possessions" at the service of our "life." There are very poor people who lack even the *"basic necessities";* this is because their hearts are full of greed, for if they were not greedy, they would have

what they need; if God permits even this lack, it is because in having more They would lose their soul; “not having” is a grace in this case.

There are others who having “too much” think they never have enough; these also lack “the basic necessities” because they are greedy and are never content with anything. Life does not consist of one’s possessions nor of the lack of them but, rather, of the *poverty of spirit,* which is self-detachment and brings as a consequence the detachment from all things. These individuals always have their “basic necessities” and never want for anything; they will never pray to the Lord to grant them material things because they always feel satisfied with what they have — be it little or be it much. If they have many possessions, it is because they have earned

Them, thinking that it was their duty to work hard, and in a righteous conscience they have acquired them. When God does finally ask them for these things, they will be ready to relinquish them. If they have little, it is because though they worked hard they only earned enough to live on, and to them it seems enough because their conscience asks nothing more of them. But this is not so for those who have gained many possessions through having acted out of “self-interest,” because by being greedy and acting unjustly they have saved up a tidy sum, setting their hearts on the goods of this world; and this also applies to those who by living a dissipated life, or by not wanting to work, find themselves without possessions. For as Scripture says: *«Wealth is good*

when there is no sin; and poverty evil—a punishment of pride» (Sir 13:24).

«He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man brought forth abundant crops. And he began to take thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, for I have no room to store my crops?' And he said, T will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store up all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night do they demand thy soul of thee, and the things that thou hast provided, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich as regards God"» (Lk 12:16-21).

This rich man is like those "greedy ones" who, as we have said before, are intent on accumulating wealth and never think they have enough. Some say it's to save up for Their old age: *«Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, he merry.»* Others say that they must "save" in order to provide for their children's "future." Both are greedy in their hearts; they trust in themselves and not in God: *«Thou fool, this night do they demand thy soul of thee, and the things that thou hast provided, whose will They be?» «Wealth ill becomes the mean man; and to the miser, of what use is gold?»* (Sir 14:3).

And those who have thought to provide a material "future" for their children and did not bother to set a good example for them, or to teach them to live in a Christian

way, will have a double purgatory upon seeing what their children do with the goods they have left them; then they will realize the wrong they have done to them, because by having these material goods, their children are even deprived of the suffering that the lack of these goods would provide them for the benefit of the salvation of their souls. If the dead could speak, we would see how different the things of this world are viewed from eternity.

«So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich as regards God.» There can be many who are rich in material possessions and are also "rich" in the sight of God, and many who are poor in material possessions and lack the eternal riches, because those rich, while they work for the riches of this world, do just deeds along the way. Acting with rectitude, they are instruments of God in this world, for God uses them to favor many souls — all those who in one way or another cross their path in life, be they their employees or employers, friends, and even enemies; in positions of public authority, in the church, in their own family, and in society. In their work, they identify themselves with God through their deeds, without even realizing it: *«By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread»;* this "sweat" of one's brow is nothing more than the "purification" that gradually takes place by means of the "work" one does in following the voice of one's conscience. The kind of work does not matter; what is important is the "purification of the spirit," and this is accomplished provided one acts guided by conscience — the fulfillment of one's duty. The same does not hold I rue of work accomplished for "self-

seeking motives," even if one's brow perspires profusely and one's body as well, in order to earn something more than one's daily bread. *«He who loves gold will not live in Righteousness, and he who goes after money will sin in order to acquire it»* (Sir 31:5).

In this regard, inasmuch as it is a question of *conscience,* no one can judge concerning another. Each one knows before God and his own conscience what his situation is and what amends he must make, for it is never too late to right a wrong, and if one has made a mistake through ignorance, he will have the humility to recognize it and undertake a new path, this act of humility being very meritorious before God.

TRUST IN PROVIDENCE

«But he said to his disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. The life is a greater thing than the food, and the body than the clothing" (Lk 12:22-23).

Not everyone can understand this but only those to whom God gives the grace for believing in the love of a Father who is capable of doing for men the same thing he does with the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field. For those who still worry about the life of the body, about health, food, a roof, and dress, it is preferable that they humbly confess that they have not yet received this grace, rather than start giving all kinds of explanations that are outside of the truth; for the Lord

will call them to account for this, which He would not do for their not having lived "a grace" that He has not given them, because no one can live this if he does not have the grace. This "living" is a consequence of grace, and God gives it to whomever He wants and whenever He wants.

«Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storeroom nor barn; yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than they! But which of you by being anxious about it can add to his stature a single cubit? Therefore if you are not able to do even a very little thing, why are you anxious concerning the rest? Consider how the lilies grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass which flourishes in the field today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, O you of little faith!» (Lk 12:24-28).

The words of the Son of God are carefully measured; there is not one too many or one too few; just as He said it, that's how it is and not as men attempt to accommodate it, changing the meaning of His words: *«Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storeroom nor barn.»* Men think that they can have "storerooms and barns" (accumulated food provisions), and because they neither "sow nor reap" (because they do not toil to acquire them) they think that they are living like the birds and the lilies of the field. Having "storeroom and barn" – provisions stored for tomorrow – means that they have not received the grace to *live* by

faith in the providence of the Father who feeds the birds of the sky and arrays the lilies of the field: *«Therefore if you are not able to do even a very little thing, why are you anxious concerning the rest?»* The first thing that "this grace" does is to bestow a "helplessness" for *doing,* as well as a "helplessness" for being concerned about food, clothing, and everything else; it is a *"non-living"* other than the actual minute. This is the grace; the rest is a consequence.

To presume that people who live this have chosen a more convenient path is not to have understood God's way of doing things. It would be easier for these people to work in order to assure themselves of their bread, roof, and clothing each day, than to live in the void, dangling by an invisible thread called Will of God. This does not mean that these people live in idleness and do not work. They sometimes work much harder than they did when they had to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. In those days they were subject to a work schedule and had their hours and days of rest. In this new "work," there are no hours off, least of all days. Their present Boss does not know what is "rest" – in the sense that men rest – for He Himself is "working" continuously, and they, along with Him, must also work; and in order to receive His orders, they must abide in constant vigilance, for any carelessness could cost them their life, for if they lose the "thread" that sustains them, they will end up in the void.

«But if God so clothes the grass which flourishes in the field today but tomorrow is thrown into the oven,

how much more you, O you of little faith!» It is faith – a living faith – that works the miracle for seeing the work achieved by the Father's hand, "clothing" and "feeding" those who have received the grace of a "helplessness" to feed and clothe themselves on their own.

«And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind. For all the nations of the world seek these things; and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also» (Lk 12:29-34).

«And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind.» As a person is faithful to grace by *abiding* in his helplessness, without forcing himself "to do," his soul gradually receives a new grace – which is like a security *in God alone* – for not going about seeking in *any way,* neither "working" nor "begging" nor expecting anything from any creature, because she knows that God will come through in the moment He wants to and however He wants. It falls to the person only to be faithful in the fulfillment of his Lord's Will; everything else shall be his as well: *«Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well.»* But we cannot expect "these things as well" if we are seeking other things that are alien to "His king-

dom." With this *security* in God, all anxiety of mind disappears, and the soul begins to live outside of "Time," participating, even now in this world, in the kingdom of God, "eternity," because it is from eternity that everything comes to her and towards which her life is directed: *«For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.»*

«Sell your possessions, and give alms.» Until now, these words of the Lord's have been interpreted literally, but this is not how it is; Jesus was not speaking of any kind of material "affairs" – buying or selling – not even for gaining the kingdom of heaven. Previously the Lord has said: *«Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,»* and then: *«Sell your possessions, and give alms....»* The Lord meant that we should *detach* ourselves from material possessions which, compared with the kingdom of God, are equivalent to a beggar's alms, something so paltry that it does not cover our needs: *«Provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail»* – that we place our hearts on eternal things, *«where no thief approaches and no moth destroys»*: where the devil cannot tempt, nor greed impair the good of the soul, because the "enemy" finds no cause by which to trip up the soul who has placed her heart in God alone; all temptations will always be to the benefit of the soul. *«For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.»* By having her heart in God, nothing can enter it that is not God.

Only God knows what "price" "our temporal possessions" have towards acquiring the "eternal possessions," the kingdom that our Father will give us. Let us, then, leave these temporal possessions in God's hands (in a total self-renunciation) and accept with love – to the extent that we possibly can – whatever He does with those temporal possessions, in humble trust that this, however absurd it may seem, is what is *needed* for obtaining the kingdom of heaven. *«Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.»*

THE SPIRIT OF BENEVOLENCE

«And he spoke a parable also to them, "Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is above his teacher, but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher. But why dost thou see the speck in thy brother's eye, and yet dost not consider the beam in thine own eye? And how canst thou say to thy brother, "Brother, let me cast out the speck from thine eye," while thou thyself dost not see the beam in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the speck from thy brother's eye"» (Lk 6:39-42).

«Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will not both fall into a pit?» The world is nothing more than this: a procession of blind men guiding one another. This is why the whole of humanity is headed toward the abyss and death. Men talk of peace, and each day hatred

among men is given more impetus, triggering war; they talk of unity, and there is ever-greater division among them; they talk of justice and love for their fellowmen, and one sees only cruelty and egoism.

«No disciple is above his teacher, but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher.» This humanity has forgotten the Teacher, attempting to bypass Him, forgetting that He is God, Creator of all things, visible and invisible. The Son of God came to give us an example of the true life so that each one might *live* it, and it was for this that the Gospel was written. The Gospel is not what men think: the narration of a past event, one more "historical account," the importance of which lies in the fact that its protagonist is the Son of God, and this is why we admire it and can imitate it if we wish, but which we have no *obligation* to live in order to save ourselves. The Evangelists were not just some men who wished to leave a record of an event known to them, as some writers who have taken it upon themselves to write about the Gospels would have us believe. Those men were "instruments" of the Holy Spirit and wrote what the Holy Spirit inspired them individually to write as a *norm of life for all generations: «But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name,»* Jesus said to his disciples, *«he will teach you all things, and bring to your mind whatever I have said to you»* (Jn 14:26), and this is how it was. They *remembered* the things that the Holy Spirit *brought to their minds,* because this was what all generations would need in order to be saved. So it is that in the Gospels there is not one word too many or one word too few; what one Evange-

list did not write, the other did, and what was lacking in one was completed by the other. The form of expression is according to the "instrument," and this expression can change with time and the customs of each nation, but the sense is one only for all the ages, races, or peoples. Any person who is so bold as to change the sense of the Gospel goes against the Holy Spirit, and by this time, he knows what the Lord says of one who speaks against the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, those men who have not bypassed the Teacher, ignoring or disregarding His teachings, have attempted to be "teachers" themselves. Supplanting Christ, they expect to teach without having "received" the lesson themselves, and those of us who receive the lesson do likewise: we learn the lesson by heart and make ourselves "teachers" of others. Only the saints have been "disciples" and have identified themselves with the Teacher: *«... but when perfected, everyone will be like his teacher,»* that is, like the Teacher, Christ, for no other is perfect.

Until we become "disciples" of the Teacher and live His teachings, we will not remove the "beam" that blinds us, and we will continue to stumble along, seeking to cast out the speck that is in the other's eye. If each one were to apply to himself the lessons he receives, the world would even now be a Paradise, because Christ would reign in all souls. If each person were to undertake to be a disciple of the Teacher and teach only his own soul, not even the children would need to be taught because they too would learn from the example.

«Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thine own eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the speck from thy brother's eye.» He who sincerely takes it upon himself to cast out the beam from his own eye will, when he goes to cast out the speck from his brother's eye, find that the speck no longer exists, for while he was casting out his own beam, by his example he also removed the speck from his brother's eye.

And there is an hypocrisy so subtle and blind as to make one believe that receiving in order to transmit to others and forgetting about oneself is "charity" and "selflessness." It is the "self" of sin that makes one forget the self of the soul, so that the soul may not be liberated from her yoke. It is the most subtle trick employed by the enemy of the souls for diverting their attention from their own shortcomings, enabling the enemy to continue working. Let us consider that each flaw that we see in our neighbor is a reflection of *"our own shortcomings,"* and that that person is, as it were, a magnifying mirror for us, a mirror that God places before us so that we may see what we cannot see directly. In this way we will correct ourselves and will correct our brother by our example.

«For there is no good tree that bears bad fruit, nor is there a bad tree that bears good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit. For from thorns men do not gather figs, neither from a bramble do they harvest grapes. The good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the evil man from the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil. For out of the

abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. But why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practice the things that I say?» (Lk 6:43-46).

Very often, in fact most of the time, the flaws that we see in our neighbor are triggered by our own defects, because we see things according to what we are and not according to what that person really is: *«For there is no good tree that bears bad fruit, nor is there a bad tree that bears good fruit.»* A good action can be seen as bad if the "tree," the person seeing, does not have a pure heart. In contrast, a person pure of heart, a good "tree," can see an apparently bad action and see it as good, because *«the good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the bad man from the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.»* Therefore, this can be a start for us to begin to know ourselves: according to how we judge the actions of our neighbor we can know what there is in our own hearts, and this should *immediately* take us to a sincere and humble examination before God so that He may purify us. This has to be *sincere:* it's not that we are going to *pretend* that we see nothing bad in what others do so that they may believe us to be pure of heart. This would mean making incurable the ill from which we suffer, and we would only be deceiving and harming ourselves. This would mean to cut off the branches so that they will not be seen from the outside – a pruning job that would only strengthen the roots which are within. It is preferable that we be sincere in our judgments, letting them be known by others so that those others will not take us for

something we are not, and they will then help us to intercede with the Divine Gardener to come and pull out the root. The more bothersome the "branches," for us as well as for those around us, the sooner those others will ask for divine help on our behalf, and we ourselves, if we have seen our ill, will also ask.

«But why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practice the things that I say?» Let us endeavor to *live* the teachings of the Lord each day. Then we will be heard in all that we ask of Him according to His Will, and we will be truly taught by Him, because He will consider us disciples when He sees that we desire to learn rather than to teach.

«Any man who desires to come to me will hear my words and put them into practice, I will show you with whom he is to be compared. He may be likened to the man who, in building a house, digging deeply, laid the foundation on a rock. When the flood came, the torrent rushed in on the house, but failed to shake it because of its solid foundation» (Lk 6:47-48).

Everyone who reads, hears, or perceives through his conscience the word of Christ and puts it into practice, "digging deeply," meditating on that which is communicated to him, is unshakable in his faith and in the truth because he is founded on his works and on the deep knowledge of this truth that he has meditated, not on words that are gone with the wind. Though many temptations and even persecutions should come his way, nothing will make him lose heart because his life is founded on the truth that he knows through practice and

not merely in theory. And not only will he be unshakable from without, but before himself he will not be disheartened when he discovers – or someone else points out to him – his shortcomings, which he thought he had overcome.

«On the other hand, anyone who has heard my words but does not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell, and the ruin of that house was great» (Lk 6:49).

He who hears or reads the Gospel and learns it by memory in order to let others know about it and does not put it into practice or meditate it in his heart is like the man who builds upon sand because he does not have a foundation of works, and any temptation, persecution, or threat from an authority makes him lose heart. The latter, the authority, may be fulfilling God's Will in testing the "foundation" of that soul. God almost always permits this in souls that belong to Him, so that their deeds may be seen, this being a testimony that the Son of God gives to the soul who has become identified with Him through her deeds. Those persons who learn things by memory fall into believing that they are already living this and have transcended what they have memorized; and when someone makes them see the truth, they feel offended, or else, when they are not so proud as to feel offended and have the humility to acknowledge that they still do not know or live what they preach, they become demoralized and discouraged, thinking that for them it is impossible to live this. *«Anyone who has heard my*

words but has not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell, and the ruin of that house was great.»

If we have the humility to recognize that we have erected many buildings on sand and we let God destroy them before "time" and "work" come to an end and the time of mercy is up, He Himself will build in us an unshakable and eternal structure that we will be able to present on the day of His justice, in order to be confirmed in the purity of Love and Truth.

THE SLANDER OF THE PHARISEES

«Then there was brought to him a possessed man who was blind and dumb; and he cured him so that he spoke and saw. And all the crowds were amazed, and they said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But the Pharisees, hearing this, said, "This man does not cast out devils except by Beelzebub, the prince of devils"» (Mt 12:22-24).

«Then there was brought to him a possessed man who was blind and dumb; and he cured him so that he spoke and saw.» If our "illnesses" — our impurity of heart for judging the deeds of our neighbor, and our "blindness" for seeing the truth — arise from original sin and not from our conscious acceptance of them, Christ at any moment will free us from the evil, as He did with the possessed man, for this sin stems from the spirit of evil, and we can say that, in a way, we are "demon-possessed." What Christ will definitely not be able to

cure is the “illness” from which those Pharisees suffered —willful blindness produced by their pride and arrogance. When the humility to recognize is unable to enter, it is because the evil has become incurable; the person’s liberty, accepting the evil, reaffirms itself in the “self of sin; and Then even the purest deeds are seen by these according to what is in their own hearts: *“This man does not cast out devils except by Beelzebub, the prince of devils.*» The devil that (hey themselves had in their hearts is seen by them in the deeds of Jesus. Here we have The magnifying mirror we mentioned before.

«And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if least out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you”» (Mt 12:25-28).

«And knowing their thoughts... »: Christ knows our thoughts and knows the most hidden desires and intentions of our soul. If a person desires to have good deeds and be of God, and at the same time his deeds are not in keeping with his heart’s desires, there is no unity between “desires” and “reality,” which means that “his house is divided”: *«Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.*» If he remains as he is — “divided” — when time comes to an end and he has to

present himself before God's Justice, no longer able to "work" in order to "atone," he will "be brought to desolation." But if at this time he recognizes this "division" that exists between his desires and his deeds and humbly presents it so to the Lord, the Lord will cast out the spirit of evil that keeps him from putting into practice his desires for good. But if the individual is self-willed, as were the Pharisees of that time, he will not see the light of the truth that is even now being made known to him, and he will think that these "clarifications" of the Gospel are "things" of the instrument who wrote them and not of God. If this is not of God then it has to be of the devil, since no person can render anything of himself, except to place his liberty at the disposal of Good or Evil, and if this is of the devil, we can answer as Jesus answered the Pharisees: If Satan unmasks Satan, it is because he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom subsist in souls? And if his kingdom does not subsist in those souls who have surrendered to him, how can we say that there are condemned in hell? And if these "clarifications" unmask Satan and his works and it is said of them that they be the work of falsehood, which is the kingdom of Satan, then whose work are the words of the very ones who say that this is not of God? For this reason, their very words will condemn them before God on the day of judgment, because every sin will be forgiven them, but the sin against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven them. And it is He who makes these "clarifications" — though the wording be the instrument's — so that the works of the devil may be revealed and the souls, seeing the light of truth, may become converted to

God and may enter into His kingdom: *«But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.»*

«Or how can anyone enter a strong man's home and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters» (Mt 12:29-30).

How will Christ be able to enter into a soul in order to plunder the enemy's "goods" if the soul does not surrender her liberty to Him? *«How can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?»* So that God may bind the "strong" man, who is the "enemy" who has placed his "goods and chattels" in the soul — his things that impede the soul's acting in good without a mixture of bad — He must count on the liberty of the soul, and the more genuine and unconditional is her surrender, the sooner will Christ be able to evict evil from the house. *«He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.»* He who is not *unconditionally* with Christ is already, in a way, against Him, and he who does not cooperate with Him in this work of the "eviction" of evil, hinders the work, *«and he who does not gather with me scatters.»*

THE THREAT AGAINST THIS GENERATION

«Then some of the Scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you!' But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks

for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"» (Mt 12:38-40).

«Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.» This is what will be said by many impatient souls who wish to see the clean-up job accomplished in them in a moment. But the Lord has a day and an hour for all things: the person has only to acknowledge the evil, turn it over to the Lord, and wait trustingly, ever alert to surrender his liberty to Him at every moment. Before he is totally liberated from in order for him to receive the fullness of the Spirit of Good, which will be the kingdom of God within him, he will be given the sign of Jonah: he will have to go through the "dark night," even to thinking that God has abandoned him. How long this "dark night" will last depends on his faith. When he senses his wretchedness most poignantly and is least able to see is when his redemption is near at hand, for *«no sign shall be given to him except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the bosom of the earth.»* The soul's path to the Father, who is in heaven, is Christ, and in order to reach "resurrection," it is necessary to pass through death as He did, and here, it is not a matter of corporeal death but, rather, of death to the old man, for the former without the latter does not partake of the resurrection.

«At the Judgement, when this generation is on trial, the men of Nineveh will appear against it and ensure its condemnation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and what is here is greater than Jonah. The Queen of the South will appear at the Judgement when this generation is on trial, and ensure its condemnation, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and what is here is greater than Solomon» (Mt 12:41-42).

Irresolute individuals who do not persevere in their faith and who want to see things accomplished at the wink of an eye without striving to change their lives, renouncing the spirit of the world, will probably not see themselves freed from evil here on earth, and there is no assurance that they will not wind up in hell: *«At the Judgement, when this generation is on trial, the men of Nineveh will appear against it and ensure its condemnation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and what is here is greater than Jonah.»*

If at the Judgment, the men of Nineveh will appear against "that generation," for they themselves repented, many of that generation will rise up against the present one because if that generation had received all the graces that we have received, they might have repented and become converted to Christ.

If those who read or listen to these "clarifications" do not resolve to improve their lives by sacrificing their egoistic "self" in order to let the Savior through, they are in for a great surprise when, on the day of Judgment, many sinners who were worse than they come to con-

demn their attitude before God, for these sinners having fewer graces repented and were freed from their sins because they persevered and did not let evil enter anew.

«But when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through dry places in search of rest, and finds none. Then he says, "I will return to my house which I left"; and when he has come to it, he finds the place unoccupied, swept clean, and decorated. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse that the first. So shall it be with this evil generation also» (Mt 12:43-45).

«But when the unclean spirit has come out of a man, he roams through dry places in search of rest, and finds none»; he goes in search of other souls who will accept him, and if he does not like it there, he returns to the place from which he had left, and if the soul is careless and not watchful in prayer — a life of union with God — the spirit *«finds the place unoccupied,»* he enters again and, since he finds it "swept clean" because all those sins and shortcomings have disappeared, and "decorated" because the soul now has virtues, he goes in search of seven other spirits worse than himself in order to "evict" the good from the soul — her virtues — and fill her with other sins and defects worse than the ones she had at first, *«and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.»* We often see this happen in people who, after having lived for a time in God's grace, have ended up in a worse state than the one they were in before coming to know grace.

This is why the person who resolves to follow Christ and wants to see himself freed from evil in this world, in order not to expose himself to a long purgatory, or end up I hell, has to live a life of *prayer* and *sacrifice*, which is to act at all times in the presence I if God, sacrificing his own will in order to fulfill God's Will. This is the best "prayer" the "sacrifice" pleasing to the Lord.

X

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

«Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like one who sowed good seed in his field, but while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away"» (Mt 13:24-25).

This "one," who sowed good seed in "his Held" is Jesus, his field is the church, and the seed is the word of God. *«But while everyone was sleeping,»* while his apostles and disciples were distracted, the "enemy" came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. This enemy introduced the "spirit of the world" that is today suffocating the "wheat," which is the spirit of the Gospel.

«When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" "An enemy did this," he replied. The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them"» (Mt 13:26-29).

«When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, the weeds also appeared.» The church in its beginnings was

hidden because of persecution. Its seed sprouted in the catacombs while it was being watered by the blood of the martyrs. But when the church "sprouted and formed heads" — with the conversion of kings and emperors to Christianity—it came out of the catacombs, and *«then the weeds also appeared,»* because the church began to mingle with the spirit of the world. But this "seed" had already been watered by the "enemy" long before this; the first apostles of the Lord themselves tell us so. St. John says, *«... so now many Antichrist have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us»* (1 Jn 2:18-19). And St. Paul says, *«For they are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light»* (2 Cor 11:13-14). And St. Peter in his second epistle says, «*And many will follow them in their wanton conduct, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned. And out of greed they will with deceitful words use you for their gain»* (2 Pet 2:2-3). The "seed" of the weeds comes with man ever since the sin in Paradise and has been "cultivated" by men throughout the generations.

«The owner's servants came to him and said, ' 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where I lien did the weeds come from?» Many are the souls who throughout the ages have become aware of the "weeds" that are suffocating the "wheat" in the field of the church, and they have presented their complaints to the Lord, and the Lord has disclosed to them the work dl the "enemy;' and He has also made known to them the re-

sponsibility of those who, because they did not "watch and pray," allowed the "enemy" to enter *His* field, where he had sown good seed, for the "enemy" would not have been able to work his way in if the liberty of the "administrators" of the field had not opened the doors to him: *«But while everyone was sleeping the enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.»*

The "enemy" "sowed the weeds, and went away," but if the "wheat" had been cared for, the "weeds" would not have overrun the field. For this reason, each one of the "administrators" is partly responsible for the growth of the weeds inside the field, and each one of the servants — who are all the souls who make up the church — who have taken better care of the "weeds" than of the "wheat," are also accountable.

«"An enemy did this!' The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up"?"» Many of those who have seen the weeds growing inside the "field" have offered the Lord to pull them up — some because the bad weeds they see *in the field* are very annoying to them, others because they thought to do a good work in this way, in order to please the Lord. Both have paid more attention to the "enemy's" work *"in the field"* and have taken no notice of what the "enemy" does in their own souls, which is the "little plot of land" that falls to each to tend. This is why they have not realized how they themselves have contributed to this evil; for if each one, instead of looking at "the field" and at the "Administrator's" responsibility, were to look at the Lord, without expecting "to do" or "to set anything aright," the

Lord would tell him what he should do in his own "little plot," which is his soul, in order not to let the weeds grow there; and with the wheat growing in each "little plot" of the field, few weeds would be left in the "field," for the visible church is the reflection of the invisible church made up of all the souls — this is the church in Time.

«"Do you want us to go and pull them up?" "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them."» And how many who, on their own, have attempted to pull up the weeds of the field have, along with the weeds, uprooted great quantities of wheat, thus doing great damage in the "field," and giving the "enemy" the opportunity to sow more weeds where before there was wheat! The "weeds" that are already overgrown "in the field" cannot be pulled up all at once because their roots are intertwined with the roots of the wheat—the spirit of the world with the Gospel — and in pulling up the weeds, part of the wheat would be uprooted. The only thing that can be done is to care for the "wheat" — *living* the part of the Gospel that still remains — so that the "weeds" may not continue to grow, that is, so that the "spirit of the world" may not continue to infiltrate the Church. This would be the main task of the Administrator of the Field and also of the servants in their own "little plots"; in this way, the "weeds" would die because "the wheat" would prevail.

«Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will say to the reapers: "Gather up the weeds

first and bind them in bundles to burn; but gather the wheat into my barn"» (Mt 13:30).

«Let both grow together until the harvest.» But woe unto him who in his "little plot," which is his soul, has let grow *only* the weeds, which is the spirit of the world, and when harvest time comes around he finds that in it there is no wheat, which is the spirit of the Gospel! This one will go to eternal fire. But he who has let the wheat *grow,* even if there should also be a few weeds, those weeds will be burned, and he, along with the wheat that he has, will be "gathered" into the barn so that the fire will not overtake him when the weeds of the "Field" are burned.

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED THAT GROWS

«He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the fruit is ripe, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come"» (Mk 4:26-29).

The kingdom of God is made up of all those souls who let God reign in them.

The person who acts with righteousness of conscience and purity of heart *«is like a man who throws seed on the land»;* the seed are his works directed by conscience and purity of heart and *«night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing;*

how, he does not know.» This person without realizing it is sowing good; and then he himself is surprised at the "fruits" because he was not acting with the intention of meriting anything but only obeying his conscience impelled by his heart, and before he knows it, God is reigning in him.

«Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot...»: the person's works are aimed at people; *«then the ear»:* then he becomes interested in their souls; *«and then the full grain in the ear»:* and then he finds himself with God, and in Him he sees the souls. *«And when the fruit is ripe, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come»:* and when he has ripened in this contact with God and the souls, God takes him totally, and the person lets God reign.

This, too, is how the *"manifestation" of the kingdom of God on earth* will be: when the number of the "elect" required by Divine Justice is complete, there will be on earth a number of persons in whom *God reigns,* and that will be the manifestation of His kingdom— the "Paradise of Eden." Not even the persons themselves — least of all the world — are aware of this; only God sees it, and the persons will see it when *God Himself* manifests Himself among them.

THE MUSTARD SEED

«And he said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God; or to what parable shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth; yet

once it is sown, it springs up to become the largest of shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade."» (Mk 4:30-32).

The kingdom of God in each soul sometimes depends upon a very small grace, but if the soul responds to it, it grows greatly and becomes larger than many graces put together, reaching even as far as the kingdom of God.

«It is like a grain of mustard seed ... ,it springs up to become the largest of shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.» In the "shade" of this grace, many other souls can take shelter. The *manifestation* of the kingdom of God on earth has perhaps depended upon a very small grace that has been given to a person, and if that person has not responded concretely to that very tiny grace, the "tree" has been unable to grow, tree which is the purified Church, the Church Triumphant on earth, for this is the "kingdom of God," its "manifestation" on earth, and the "birds of the air," the saints, who are waiting for this, have not been able to *"shelter in its shade" (let him who reads understand).*

«And in many such parables he spoke the word to them, according as they were able to understand it. Without a parable he did not speak to them. But privately he explained all things to his disciples» (Mk 4:33-34).

The deepest meaning of the word of God remains ever "hidden" for those who have not yet made up their minds *for God exclusively.* As the person *truly* surrenders himself to God, God progressively reveals to him the profound meaning of His words. This is why the

word of God is inexhaustible; it can always tell us something new, something that we had not understood in the many times we had read it. The word of God is LIFE! But we cannot receive the "life" of His word except to the degree of our "death." While we remain in ourselves — "our life"—we cannot receive the Life of God, which is given to us by means of His word; we will be left with the letter of the word, which means death for us because by remaining in our own life, which is sin and death, we renounce the life offered to us in that word.

«Without a parable he did not speak to them. But privately he explained all things to his disciples.» Here is the important thing for receiving this life: becoming *"disciples"* of the Lord; wanting to learn in order to *live* what we learn and not desiring to hear or read in order to know and teach others; to such as these He will not explain the meaning of His words, and they will be left with the "letter" because the only thing they place at the Lord's "disposal" is their brain. In justice, they receive the "letter" and not the Spirit of His teachings, and it is the Spirit that gives life.

THE PROMISE OF LIVING WATER

«Now on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'"» (Jn 7:37-38).

The person who *in earnest* becomes interested in receiving the teachings of the Master in order to *live* His doctrine, will see Jesus' promise fulfilled in him: *«He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, "Out of his heart there shall flow rivers of living water."»* A true spring will well up within him, but this cannot be attained except by those who are thirsty for something different from what they "drink" in the world. This "something" cannot be pinpointed until the person begins to drink the "living water"; then the soul comes to understand that what was wrong with him was that he was thirsty for God: *«If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.»* That is the great day – day of festivity for the person – when he has felt the living water welling up within him, water that takes him to "relish" eternal life, because he begins to know the action of the Holy Spirit.

«He said this, however, of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified» (Jn 7:39).

Even though Jesus has now been glorified and the Holy Spirit is acting in souls, this "action" has to be accepted by the liberty of the person for him to be able to "feel" its effects. The Holy Spirit cannot act if the person with his liberty is accepting the action of the "spirit of the world." It is a mistake to think that both can act jointly; they can, it's true, act alternatingly. In the moment that the person accepts the promptings of the Holy Spirit, He acts in him, but the very instant that he ac-

cepts the promptings of the "spirit of the world," the Holy Spirit will cease to act, in order for the "spirit of the world" to go into action. As the Book of Wisdom says: *«For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful, and will withdraw himself from thoughts that are without understanding; he shall not abide when iniquity cometh in»* (Wis 1:5). Of this we have a vivid example in St. Peter when he avows that Jesus is the Messiah and then tries to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem.

PETER'S CONFESSION, AND THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PASSION

«When Jesus came to the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples this question: "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" "And you," he said to them, "Who do you say that I am" "You are the Messiah" Simon Peter answered, "the Son of the living God'" Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven"» (Mt 16:13-17).

Today, too, people receive Christ according to the life they lead; or, according to their "interests," this is how they see the Lord: *«"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say, John the Baptizer"'»:* these are those souls who receive Him as "Precursor"; they listen to the word of God, become aware of the austerity of His doctrine, and think that it is a path

for others to live, but not for them. *«Others say, Elijah»:* they are those who are always expecting Jesus to work a miracle for them and improve their material life, as God increased for Elijah the widow's flour and oil. «*... Still others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets* »: they are those people who are ever-mindful of the future, and hope that Jesus will ensure it for them by revealing it to them. Others receive Him as only a Just man who is to be admired but not to be followed because His path is for "privileged" souls. Others receive Him as the Son of God and want to accompany Him in His apostolic life in order to witness His successes and miracles. But very few receive Him as Redeemer and go with Him as far as Calvary and the Sepulchre — the cross and "death." This is why souls who attain their personal "redemption" here on earth are few.

«You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God». Peter was impelled by the Spirit to make this confession. It was the sign that Jesus was awaiting from the Father in order to identify the one who had the primacy among the apostles, primacy that consisted in a higher degree of evolution that made him capable of receiving the revelation from the Father. «*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*»

The "flesh" represents the natural life, and the "blood" represents the spirit that man brings with him upon coming into this world (after the sin); this is why it was believed in the beginning of the world that man's life was in his blood. And Moses, upon recording the words that

God said to Cain, says: *«The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground»:* it was the spirit, the blood, that was crying out. The "flesh" and the "blood" are symbols of the natural life of man, the man who governs himself by his senses and reason only. What Jesus, then, is saying to Peter is that it is not his senses nor his reason that have revealed this to him, but His Father, who is in heaven.

«"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he strictly ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah» (Mt 16:18-20).

«And I tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.» Upon "living rock" the genuine Church of Christ will be built, and Peter is the first rock upon which He is going to build it, and this is so because of Peter's faith in the Son of God; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against these "living rocks" — those people who, like Peter, are unshakable in their faith. He who thinks that he belongs to the Church of Christ by reason of his baptism alone, and that by this he becomes worthy of the Lord's promise — *«The gates of hell shall not prevail against it»* — is making a great mistake; if these people do not have a living faith and do not become identified with Christ, as did all the apostles

and saints, they are in for a great surprise when they see their souls at the gates of hell.

«And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.» Here the Lord is promising Peter two things: the *administration* of the kingdom of heaven, the church, upon promising him the keys of the kingdom, and (he *spiritual power* for carrying out his apostleship in the church in Time. *«And whatever you bind on earth ...* »: What was it that Peter and also the other apostles were to bind in this world? —the Devil and all the rebel spirits, "unbinding" the souls from their evil influence, and this is what Peter and the other apostles of the Lord did: *«Then having summoned his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every kind of disease and infirmity»* (Mt 10:1).

Christ gives Peter the power to "allow" or "prohibit" that which he believes necessary for the salvation of the souls, according to the instructions received from Christ Himself, as well as power in things that have not already been decreed by God. This implies a grave responsibility for the apostle, who must be ever "immersed" in God in order to be able to know His Will in each instance and not "bind" what he should not bind, nor "loose" what should not be loosed. This *responsibility* ought to move those who enjoy this "power" to live a life detached from this world so that its spirit might not deceive them, and so that they might be totally directed by the Holy Spirit. For the Lord most certainly fulfills His promise,

and what they loose, loosed will it be in heaven; but they will have to render an account for the consequences of what they "bind" and "loose" according to the intention that so moved them.

But this does not mean that the Lord, in giving the keys to Peter, has "bound" His own hands and cannot Himself work directly in souls. That would be as if the master of a house were to give his administrator the keys, and he himself were to remain locked in or out. He will give the administrator a duplicate key and will have his own key for coming and going and for receiving his friends whenever he so desires. The master will not give orders to anyone regarding the *"administration"* except to the administrator, but this does not mean that he himself cannot resolve a special case among his servants without being obliged to communicate it to his administrator. So it is with the authority of the church; the one who represents St. Peter serves as "administrator," but Christ, who is the Master, can act personally in those souls who make up His Church, and he who receives an order from the Master is answerable to the Master. And this has been evident ever since the beginning of the Christian community: Christ chooses Paul but does not order him to submit himself to Peter; rather, he imparts His instructions to him directly; and when He sends a disciple to instruct him, He chooses Ananias and not Peter. St. Paul says in his epistle to the Galatians: *«But when it pleased him who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles, immediately, without taking counsel with flesh and blood, and*

without going up to Jerusalem to those who were appointed apostles before me, I retired into Arabia» (Gal 1:15-17); and then he says, *«But when Cephas came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was deserving of blame*» (Gal 2:11).

To say that Christ cannot act directly in souls without going through the "authority" is to deny Christ. What the "enemy" was unable to do with Peter— for after having denied Him he repented and was confirmed in the faith and in love — he does with Peter's representatives. It has been Peter's enemy, Satan, who has attempted to bind the hands of the Lord in Peter's name; Jesus had already announced this to the apostle: *«Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren»* (Lk 22:31-32). Peter, *«once he had turned again»* in the faith, *not before,* confirmed his brethren: *«Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd»* (Acts 2:14).

«From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and Scribes and chief priests, and be put to death, and on the third day rise again. And Peter taking him aside, began to chide him, saying "Far be it from you, O Lord; this will never happen to you." Jesus turned on Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a scandal to me; for you are not judging by God's standards but by men's"» (Mt 16:21-23).

The Lord always lets his disciples know the truth, painful though it may be. He does not act like men who "cover up" the unpleasant things with the pretext that it is for the good of souls — "so that they will not be scandalized," "so that they will not suffer," or "so that they will not have doubts about the church"; and this they say is "charity" or "prudence." How different is God's way from that of men who do not become identified with Him!

Peter is a living example for not trusting ourselves, even if we have received many graces, revelations, and even "power" from God. Just as at one moment Peter received through the Holy Spirit the revelation from the Father for confessing that Jesus was Messiah and Son of God, a little while later, it is Satan who prompts him to warn his Master not to go to Jerusalem: «*And Peter taking him aside, began to chide him, saying "Far be it from you, O Lord; this will never happen to you"*» And Jesus, with the same ardor with which he had announced to him that that revelation had come to him from His Father, who is in heaven, tells him that now he is being directed by Satan; what's more, He does not address Peter but, rather, Satan himself whom He recognizes in that spirit: «*Get behind me, Satan! You are a scandal to me; for you are not judging by God's standards but by men's.*»

From this we can draw a practical conclusion: every time we act *in such a way so as to be in accord with the power of men* and not with that of God, it is because Satan is acting in us. And this can happen to us at any

time while we are not yet “redeemed” from our sins, for while something of this spirit of evil still exists, we are in danger of being deceived by him. It is necessary to be very vigilant in prayer and very *detached from ourselves* in order to be able to live under the action of the Holy Spirit.

XI

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

«Take heed not to do your good before men, in order to be seen by them; otherwise you shall have no reward with your Father in heaven» (Mt 6:1).

We must take heed not to act according in what other men think in order to be in accord with them; rather, we must act according to our conscience, for even if men see it as wrong, that which should concern us is how God sees it and not how men see it: *«Take heed not to do your good before men, in older to be seen by them.»* We must, then, always act in the presence of God so that our Father, who is in heaven, may see and direct us according to His Will; we will then become worthy of His reward in His sight.

«Therefore when thou givest alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets, in order that they may be honored by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou givest alms, do not let thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing, so that thine alms may be given in secret; and thy Father, who sees in secret, will reward thee» (Mt 6:2-4).

When you give alms or do good to your neighbor, do not go spreading the word around, “as hypocrites do” in the church, letting all see that they are cooperating with

the needs of the church, in order to be honored by men and so that what they do may be printed in the newspapers and known by all; *«I say to you, they have received their reward.» «But when thou givest alms, do not let thy left hand know what thy right hand is doing.* » When you give alms, do not consider yourself better than others, for if God were not to give to you, you would have nothing to give, and even the *desire* to give is given to you by God. On your own you could do nothing. Therefore, let not your thoughts follow after the alms you give, thinking that you have done something good *on your own.* When you do a good deed, consider yourself indebted" to God, and do not consider yourself a "giver," because one who gives is actually the one who *receives from God* the reward for having passed on His "gift"; he who receives the "gift" becomes indebted, and he who gives becomes "worthy" through the generosity of the Giver who is God.

When you give alms, therefore, do so according to the Will of God, who is the owner, and not according to your will—you who are the administrator. With Him alone should you consult the matter, and when you have come to know His Will, endeavor to make the Giver known so that He may be thanked and not you, for otherwise you will he stealing from God that which belongs to Him: «*Let not thy left hand know what thy right band is doing so that thine alms may be given in secret; and thy Father, who sees in secret, will reward thee,»* for by being a good administrator of His goods, you will never be without them for yourself and for giving to others as well. And this holds true not only with respect to mate-

rial goods, but also with respect to graces — spiritual goods that He gives you. In both respects you should keep alert in order to know His Will and transmit it to the souls whom He designates: *«But which of you is there, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, who will say to him on his return from the field, "Come at once and recline at table!" But will he not say to him, "Prepare my supper, and gird thyself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk; and afterwards thou thyself shalt eat and drink"? Does he thank that servant for doing what he commanded him? I do not think so. Even so you also, when you have done everything that was commanded you, say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done what it was our duty to do"»* (Lk 17:7-10).

HOW WE SHOULD PRAY

«And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you» (Mt 6:5-6).

In our prayers let us be sincere before God, and let us not pray so that we may be seen by men, reciting aloud in church for people to hear us, letting everybody know that we are concerned about the needs of our fellowmen, for by this behavior we are already acting hypocritically, because what we are seeking is that we be regarded as just or pious: «*And when you pray, you must not be like*

the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.»

«But when you pray, go into your room,» go into your inner temple, *«shut the door»* (of your senses, so that nothing distracts you), and *«pray to your Father who is in secret»;* express to Him in a few words your spiritual needs and those of your fellowmen, offering yourself for them according to God's Will, in order to give to Divine Justice what they themselves do not give, *«and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.»* Only in this way is our prayer genuine — offering ourselves and being willing to give to Divine Justice that which it needs in order to be able to grant us what we request for ourselves, as well as for our brothers, and if we are not disposed to "give" for them, how can we expect to receive? Otherwise our prayer is not sincere, for if there is no spirit of sacrifice, it is because loves does not exist; and this is why many prayers do not reach God. Why is it that if there is so much praying for peace, the world — humanity—is constantly at war? Because those who make their petitions have not offered themselves up in order to give to Justice what is required for granting that which is being requested: we, indeed, have the merits of Christ, but in order to use those merits, we too must give our share, and how are we going to use Christ's merits if we are not united to Christ's intentions?

«And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for

their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him» (Mt 6:7-8).

Let us not heap up empty phrases in our praying, as do those persons who think that God hears when many words are said to Him. When a great deal is said and only material things are asked for, these prayers cannot reach God because they are weighed down with the world and matter, and they remain here below. The prayer that goes directly to God and is heard by Him is the one that comes forth from a contrite and humble heart, ablaze with love. The person who so prays does not think of asking for material things, because he knows that God knows his needs and will see to them according to His Will; he only asks, for himself and for others, the grace to not fall into temptation, and also faith, love, and perseverance in his fulfillment of the Divine Will. Our prayer, first and foremost, should be aimed at a sincere *"acknowledgement" of* our failings and shortcomings, asking for the grace to be better.

«In this manner therefore shall you pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their failings, so will your heavenly Father forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins» (Mt 6:9-15).

We have thought that with the Our Father the Lord wanted to give us a prayer to memorize and recite with

our lips many times over, even if our hearts did not partake of this prayer. In this, as in so many things, we are greatly mistaken. The Lord wished to give us the *"sense"* of the prayer, not the words. We can change the words; the important thing is that we conserve their meaning, for it is the spirit that will give life to the prayer.

Jesus is not having us ask for material bread for nourishing our bodies but for spiritual bread for nourishing our souls. And this we can verify by His own words, at the end of Chapter 6 of St. Matthew: *«Do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat, nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life a greater thing than food, and the body than the clothing?*» Jesus is referring to the bread of life come down from heaven, that bread that he himself gave us upon instituting the Eucharist.

«Our Father who art in heaven,» and we can also say if we are in God's grace: who art in heaven and also in my soul; *«hallowed be thy name,»* which means: that we truly hallow Your name with our life; *«thy kingdom come,»* that we let You reign in our souls. Of what good are words if with our hearts and our works we ourselves more than anything want to reign? Do we think that God talks for the sake of talking, as we do? *«Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,»* so that Your will may be fulfilled on earth as it is fulfilled in heaven, but we have to be willing to truly fulfill God's Will and not our own; for otherwise, our prayer cannot reach God. *«Give us this day our daily bread,»* give us, oh! Father, the Divine Bread that came down from heaven, Your Son

Jesus Christ, so that by our identifying ourselves with Him, You may forgive us our debts, as we, by following His example, truly forgive our debtors, *«and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,»* deliver us, oh! Father, from falling into the temptations that the enemy of our soul implants in us. And let us not by our deeds seek to fall into these temptations.

How many times do we recite the Our Father, and we do not even realize what we are asking of God: we tell Him to *«forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,»* and the truth is that we have not forgiven our neighbor's offenses. We ourselves with our behavior *are forcing* God *not* to forgive us: *«For if you forgive others their failings, so will your heavenly Father forgive you yours. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins»* (Mt 6:14-15). *«And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your sins»* (Mk 11:25-26).

We have memorized the Our Father and have forgotten the explanation that our Lord gave for understanding the meaning of the prayer. Why is it that if so many "Our Fathers" are recited daily in the world, the world is in the state it's in? Why doesn't God reign in all souls, if His kingdom is constantly prayed for? Why is it that God's Will is not done on earth? Why are we constantly falling into temptation, and why does the spirit of Evil continue to dominate in the world and in each one of us?

Is prayer perhaps worthless before God? Or has God perhaps become "powerless" to grant us what we ask? All these questions are answered by what we have said above: we cannot win God over with words devoid of spirit. God is Love; love is neither bought nor sold. Love is won over by love. If this is what we do with the human beings in order to win over a limited and temporal love, what ought we not do to win over God's infinite and eternal Love? God is not bought with words, nor with many coins thrown into money boxes, nor with lighted candles. God is won over with one's self-donation." This is Love! And this is faith. «*Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for him whom he loves.*» What was the manifestation of Christ's love for men like? —his total and unconditional self-offering to the Father's Will, in order to save men.

THE EFFICACIOUSNESS OF PRAYER – THE PARABLE OF THE IMPORTUNATE FRIEND

«And he said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend and shall go to him in the middle of the night and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has just come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he from within should answer and say, 'Do not disturb me; the door is now shut, and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give to thee'? I say to you, although he will not get up and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will get up and give him all he needs. And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to

you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. But if one of you asks his father for a loaf, will he hand him a stone? Or for a fish, will he for a fish hand him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will he hand him a scorpion? Therefore, if you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"» (Lk 11:5-13).

«I say to you, although he will not get up and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will get up and give him all he needs.» By what we are perceiving, it seems that these words of the Lord's are *completely* worthless with respect to our petitions to God. Let us suppose that the prayers of the church do not reach God because humanity has turned away from Him and has ceased to be "His friend," but the Lord says: *Yet because of his importunity he will get up and nor him all he needs.»* Has God not been sufficiently "importuned"? Do we not see how at all hours of the day, almost the whole world over, the Holy Mass is celebrated, and God is being asked "that His kingdom come," "that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven," "that He forgive us our debts, not let us fall into temptation, and that He deliver us from evil"? And can it be said that these petitions have been granted to the "Christian community," the church? The "Christian community" does not enjoy the intercession of a single one of these petitions. These are individually obtained by some souls within this "community," that's true. How

then can we say that there is *"unity"* in the church if the community prayer does not have the force necessary to attain from God what it prays for? In addition to everything we see there, this is a basic reason for thinking that things are going in quite the opposite direction to what God wants. If those prayers were reaching God, at least "because of our importunity, he would have gotten up and conceded all that he is asked for." The Lord's words have *eternal value.* What is worthless is our prayers because they do not have the power of faith to reach God.

We have to think that these prayers *have not reached God to annoy Him with our pleas.* God must be very annoyed, indeed, but not because of the *insistence* of our prayer but, rather, for very different reasons: it is as if sons and daughters, carrying on "commerce" with the enemies of their father— "drinking" and "eating" with them, doing just the opposite of what their father asks — were to set about imploring their father to grant them his gifts in order to continue their commerce with his enemy, against him. Can a father hear the petition of those children? Impossible! *«You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it upon your passions. Adulterers, do you not know that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God»* (Jas 4:3-4).

«But if one of you asks his father for a loaf, will he hand him a stone?» And who among you, if your son is carrying on commerce with your enemy and he asks for his inheritance in order to continue conspiring against

you, will give him what he asks for? Wouldn't you as his father say to him: First make your peace with me by ceasing to serve my enemy and then I will give you all that you ask of me? Which one of you, if a friend comes and says to you: give me what there is in your kingdom and come to terms with me for *upholding* the kingdom of your son's enemy, whom I am keeping as a guest in my house, will give him what he asks? Will he not tell him instead: Come to terms with my son, for otherwise you will be destroyed by me, you and your staff along with the enemy? Such are the petitions that by men's works are being made to God. While the kingdom of the "prince of this world" is being prolonged, and conspiracy is going on against Christ, the Son of God, God is being asked for His gifts for continuing to trade with His enemy. With words the kingdom of God is requested, and with works there is a collaboration for the reign of His opponent. With words the request is made that God's Will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and with works He is being told to "let it be done in heaven as men are doing on earth: the will of the 'enemy.'"

«And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you»: ask from your heart, conforming your works to your prayer, and it shall be given to you. *«Seek, and you shall find»:* seek God by your works and you shall find Him. *«Knock, and it shall be opened unto you»:* knock with the sincere intention of entering through the narrow door into the kingdom of God, and it shall be opened to you. *«For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks, finds and to him who knocks it shall be opened.»*

«Therefore, if you, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy spirit to those who ask Him!» How very seldom is the Father asked for the Holy Spirit. And if with words He is asked to send the Holy Spirit but with the works one is agreeing to collaborate with the spirit of the world in order to usher in His opponent, can such a prayer reach God? Here we have the reason why the "community prayer" of the church has not reached God. And I say "community prayer" because we cannot say the same for the individual prayer, for if it were not for this prayer that is *lived* by many members of the church, God would have exterminated this humanity by now. These souls are the "victim-hosts" that keep the Immaculate Victim-Host in the world, Victim-Host which sustains them and sustains the world, providing the souls of "good will" the opportunity to turn to God and enter the Redemption. It is the faith and love of these souls That works the miracle by which God's Mercy is prolonged.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE

«And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary!' For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow bothers me, I

will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"» (Lk 18:1-8).

These "elect" who cry out to God day and night for Him to bring justice upon the earth are the saints who are in heaven, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: *«And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and for the witness that they bore. And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord (holy and true), dost thou refrain from judging and from avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"»* (Apoc 6:9-10).

But on earth, will many souls be found who ask for God's Justice? Only those souls who fulfill God's Will and have a living faith have known His Justice, and "hungering" and "thirsting" after it, they cry out to God, saying: "Let your Justice come upon the earth, Lord!" But the vast majority of people — and among them, those who call themselves religious—do not want to hear about God's Justice, and they pray that His Mercy be prolonged, failing to unite with the Immaculate Victim, failing to become "victim-host" with the Immaculate Host. And these souls even dare say to God: "Do not deal with me according to your Justice but according to your Mercy." Such as these do not know God's Justice,

nor do they know His Mercy. How can they ask for His Mercy if they are not identified with Him who gave himself to Justice in order to bring Mercy to the world? And they compare God's Justice with man's "cruelty" — what they call justice." If God is Merciful, it is because He is Just; His Mercy, then, is a consequence of His Justice, and when men close themselves off to His Justice of Love, which is His Mercy, they receive the rigor of His Justice. While there are souls in the world who, in union with the Victim, are open to Love, the rigor of His Justice will not manifest itself in the world, and the unbelievers will go on believing that God is not going to punish them, but when all those souls have entered the plenitude of that LOVE, then those who closed themselves to His Mercy will receive The rigor of His Justice and will see their mistake: that God's patience did not mean "forgetfulness," as they had thought, but Justice in His Love: «*And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry out to him day and night"? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?*» Will He find those souls who are awaiting His Justice and rejoice with its coming? Because those who ask that His Mercy be prolonged, and that His "Justice" not come, will be unable to endure the coming of the Son of man, for He comes to judge, putting an end to the time of His Mercy.

THE CURSE OF THE FIG TREE

«Now in the morning, on his way back to the city, he felt hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the wayside, he came up to it, and found nothing on it but leaves; and he said to it, "May no fruit ever come from thee henceforward forever!" And immediately the fig tree withered up» (Mt 21:18-19).

The curse of the fig tree has a much deeper meaning than what men think. St. Mark, the Evangelist, says that Jesus, «*after he had left Bethany, felt hungry.*» In Bethany, where Jesus' best friends, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, lived, would they not have seen to feeding him? Martha, who "was anxious and troubled about many things," was she going to forget the material nourishment of her Master and Lord? Jesus' "hunger" also has a deeper meaning than what the word expresses. By this material hunger, Jesus wished to make known to us his "hunger" for souls, and to show us through the fig tree what a faithless soul is like; it is like a tree full of leaves that has no fruit for satisfying the "hunger" of the Son of God. And as often as Jesus approaches a soul and finds That she has no faith, the soul is exposing herself to receiving the curse of the fig tree: *«"May no fruit ever come from thee henceforward forever!" And immediately the fig tree withered up,» «for to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away,»* Jesus himself has said.

Those people, too hardened to believe in The ways of the spirit — that which they cannot see with their eyes

—are exposing themselves to receiving the curse of the fig tree and remaining "hardened" forever, so (hat seeing they may not see, and hearing (hey may not believe and be saved, as the Lord said of those Jews too hardened to believe in his words. And St. Mark says: *«And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to him, "Rabbi, behold, the fig tree that thou didst curse is withered up!' But Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God"»* (Mk 11:20-22).

«And upon seeing this the disciples marveled, saying "How did it come to wither up immediately?" But Jesus answered and said to them, "Amen I say to you, if you have faith and do not waver, not only will you do what I have done to the fig tree, but even if you shall say to this mountain, "Arise, and hurl thyself into the sea" it shall be done. And all things whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive"» (Mt 21:20-22).

Without faith there can be no supernatural life. The person who has no faith cannot "walk" toward God because his soul is blind. Faith is the eyes of the soul, and the darker faith is, that is, the less the person "sees" what he believes, the clearer his soul sees, and the sooner he goes toward God. He who has no faith *cannot have* "hope," nor can he have "charity" because if he does not believe in Him whom he does not see, how is he going to hope in Him, and how is he going to love Him? And if he does not love God, he has no charity because charity comes from God; it is the manifestation of His Love. Nor does he fulfill the commandments of God, because

he does his works in order to be seen by men, and he acts according to men's opinions and not God's. Believing in God is *living* under the action of Him whom he does not see — living from faith. Otherwise, even if he confesses God with his lips and strikes his breast over and over, he does not really believe in Him if he does not *live* from faith.

If man had a *living and active* faith, he would quickly reach the freedom of the sons of God and would have power over those creatures that God placed under his dominion when He created him: *«If you shall say in the mountain, "Arise, and hurl thyself into the sea," it shall be done. And all things whatever you ask for in prayer, believing, you shall receive.*» In order for man to have this dominion over creation, he must be "subject" to his Creator, for, otherwise, the creatures cannot be "subject" to him.

ON THE MANNER OF FASTING, AND PETITIONING FOR TEMPORAL THINGS

«And when you fast do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, who disfigure their faces in order to appear to men as fasting. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou dost fast, anoint thy head and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not be seen fasting by men, but by thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who sees in secret, will reward thee» (Mt 6:16-18).

As fasting is no longer practiced as in former times, we should take the sense of what the Lord says and ap-

ply it to our current way of life: this would be any time God gives us the opportunity to offer up a sacrifice, be it through bodily sickness or pain, partaking of His Passion (for we should accept every suffering and pain as a partaking of the sufferings of Christ). He Himself says this to a consecrated soul: *«.. .for after Calvary, there are no longer any plain crosses: the Crucified is always nailed to them. Any cross is now a Crucifix.»*

On a sleepless night, in our spiritual struggles, our conflicts with family members or with our marriage partner, in whatever kind of suffering, we should behave naturally, not hypocritically seeking to have others notice that we suffer so that they may take us for "martyrs," "souls tested by God," as is usually said, for with this human praise or human compassion, we are losing the "divine value" of our sacrifice. If we are really in God and are suffering, this should be a joyful suffering that does not seek the compassion of the spectators, but only union with the Immaculate Victim, in order to cooperate in the redemption of those "spectators," our brothers; and we should be for them an example that will lead them to desire this "joy" in suffering, which is the greatest grace a creature can receive on earth, because it is in suffering that he becomes identified with his Redeemer, is redeemed from his sins, and cooperates in the redemption of other souls.

We can profit from all kinds of sufferings for entering into the redemption, uniting ourselves to the Redeemer, because the Passion of the Lord — the Redemption — did not begin in Gethsemane or on the way to Calvary,

but from the very moment in which die Word of God became flesh in the Virgin's womb. And it is there that our "Way" begins, terminating in the Resurrection. We cannot expect to reach the end without having begun from the beginning. This is how little children ought to be taught to offer up their small sufferings so that they may progressively enter into the Way of the Redemption.

«Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, nor thieves break in and steal. For where thy treasure is, there also will thy heart be» (Mt 6:19-21).

One way of gradually "laying up treasures in heaven" is in this learning to suffer, and offering up those sufferings for uniting oneself with Christ. When people are very concerned over their bodies and their health, they gradually forget their souls, and they set their hearts on something that is subject to corruption, for however much they do for their body's health, sooner or later they will have to leave it in the earth, where it will decay. On the other hand, by setting one's heart on that which endures unto eternity – the soul – one can benefit from that "weakness" of the body for strengthening the life of the soul. This would he doing excellent "business" with the body, taking advantage of the temporal in order to fortify the eternal.

Also, when people are very concerned over temporal things and become overly eager to acquire them, they

place their souls in jeopardy, for the enemy distracts them by giving them these earthly concerns so that he can rob them of their souls, for in dedicating all their time to material work, they have no time left to dedicate to their spiritual life, and so little by little they lose the life of their soul – which is their true wealth – for the things of this world, which are fleeting: *«Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal.»* We must not, then, set our hearts on the things of this world but, rather, on eternity, which is the objective of our souls. Our life in eternity will be according to the use we have made of our time in this world. If we have worked only for the body, forgetting about the soul, we will find that the body we worked for became dust and ashes, and the soul, which is eternal, ended up in the hands of the "thief," the enemy, and we will suffer eternally the consequences of our materialism. Thus, for the sake of justice we will suffer eternally the consequences of sin, because we set our hearts on the body, which was subject to the consequences of sin. *«For where thy treasure is, there also will thy heart be.»*

XII

THE VISIT OF NICODEMUS

«Now there was a certain man among the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus at night, and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that thou hast come a teacher from God, for no one can work these signs that thou workest unless God be with him"» (Jn 3:1-2).

Because of human respect, many people, like Nicodemus, dare not openly confess their faith in the Lord. They meet with God at night when no one sees them. Others — and this is done by many people who consider themselves "consecrated" to God — speak of Him when they are in church or in the convent, but out on the street, when they come across people "of the world," they talk about the things of the world and not about God, and when one of these people of the world talks to them about God, they do not know what to make of it, and they lend no warmth to the conversation but, rather, at the first opportunity, they talk about other things in order to change the subject. Then the ones who "do not know what to make of it" are those of the world when they see that these religious persons are not interested in talking about God.

«Rabbi, we know that thou hast come a teacher from God, for no one can work these signs that thou workest

unless God be with him.» Nicodemus recognized that God was with Jesus because of the works he saw in him. This is what "consecrated" people should be like — a living testimony of God; but many, the majority, are not so because even if God is with them, they are not always with God; at times they are with themselves and other times they are with the world. This is why those in the world do not see God in them but only "another world," similar to their own, where "self-interest," not faith, holds sway.

«Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be horn when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again?"Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"» (Jn 3:3-5).

«Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be horn again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.» Here we have the reason why so many "consecrated" persons are not a living testimony of God, because God, even though He is in them, does not reign in them, for they have not been "born from above." *«Can a man be horn when he is old?»* Yes he can, by *living* the grace of his baptism, he is born into the life of the spirit. In his purity and simplicity he gradually becomes like unto a little child. Then he can receive the teachings of God, just as the little child receives the teachings of his parents or teachers, and he enters into the kingdom of heaven be-

cause he lets God reign in him. *«Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.»* So that a person may be able to enter the kingdom of heaven, first God has to reign in him. As the "self disappears in order to make way for God, this spiritual "birth" takes place.

«That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not wonder that I said to thee, "You must be born again" The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its sound but dost not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit» (Jn 3:6-8).

That which is born of the *will* of the flesh is flesh. This is how we have all been born, and this is why we must place our will in God, enabling us to be born of the Spirit; for that which is born of the *will of the Spirit* is spirit; it receives participation by the Spirit, participation by God — that which it lost through sin — and it emerges in the manner of a new creation in Christ: *«You must be born again.»*

«The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its sound but dost not know where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.» He who has been born of the Spirit "breaks loose" from all human reasonings; this individual cannot be confined by men of the flesh with their concepts, as neither can the wind be confined in one's fist nor can it be known from whence it came and whither it goes, though its voice is heard. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit; he himself does not know where he will end up or how he start-

ed to act differently from the way he used to act, for it is the Spirit of God who moves him; he listens to His voice and follows it, but he knows not where it comes from nor where it is going, and he cannot act otherwise. *«So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.»*

«Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can these things be?" Answering him, Jesus said, "Thou art a teacher in Israel and dost not know these things? Amen, amen, I say to thee, we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we have seen; and our witness you do not receive. If I have spoken of earthly things to you, and you do not believe, how will you believe if I speak to you of heavenly things?"» (Jn 3:9-12).

«Thou art a teacher in Israel and dost not know these things?» The ways of the Spirit are not learned in books, and even if one knows a great deal about the spiritual life through reading, and possesses a lot of knowledge and human wisdom, only he who has been "born" of the Spirit knows the Spirit, for he is not alone; rather, the Spirit accompanies him always and makes known to him all things. *«Amen, amen, I say to thee, we speak of what we know, and we bear witness to what we have seen.»* Jesus, in speaking in the plural, is referring to the Spirit of the Father who accompanies him.

People who have not been born of the Spirit cannot understand those born of the Spirit, but the latter do understand the former; and even when the latter speak to them of earthly things, those not born of the Spirit do not understand their way of expressing themselves, even less so if they were to speak to them of heavenly things

that the Spirit makes known to them. This is why those born of the Spirit are always regarded by the world as people incapable of understanding the things of the world, but they understand them better than those of the world. The fact is that those of the Spirit do not ascribe to these things the importance that others do because they know the limited and temporal value of these things, and the eternal value of the spirit. Those born of the Spirit have transcended both earth and space, for they see things *from the perspective of* God and *in* God. They are familiar with the action of the Creator in all His creatures, and this is why they cannot ascribe importance to the problems that men of the world create for themselves, as neither is a man concerned about the problems that ants have among themselves when they transport their food; ants see a grain of sand as an insurmountable mountain This is what all the problems of this world are like to those born of the Spirit.

«And no one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven: the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting» (Jn 3:13-15).

Only Christ descended from heaven and ascended into heaven, and no one will ascended into heaven or descend from heaven except *through* Him and *in* Him (Enoch and Elijah ascended into "Paradise"). The person who has become identified with Christ, even if he lives on earth, is in heaven, because heaven is God, and if he

is identified with the Son of God, he is already in heaven: *«No one has ascended into heaven except him who has descended from heaven: the Son of man who* ***is in heaven»;*** he "is in heaven" because he is in God. *«And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of man be lifted up ...* » The serpent is a symbol of sin. The children of Israel in the desert, because God sent poisonous snakes against them, recognized that they had sinned against God by grumbling about Him and His emissary, Moses. Repentant, they asked Moses to intercede on their behalf, and God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and to lift it up, and that everyone who looked at the serpent would be cured. And the Book of Wisdom says: *«But the wrath endured not forever, but they were troubled for a short time for their correction, having a sign of salvation to put them in remembrance of the commandment of thy law. For he that turned to it was not healed by that which he saw, but by thee the Savior of all*» (Wis 16:6-7). Jesus was lifted up on the cross because he took our sins upon himself, and he was lifted up like the serpent that Moses lifted up in the desert so that we might recognize ourselves as sinners and recognize Christ as our Savior, Redeemer of our sins, *«so that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.*» It is not possible to believe in Christ and reach life everlasting if we have not recognized our sins on the cross. Christ is not there for us to admire or have compassion on Him. If he who looks upon the crucified Christ, seeing the "sinners" and those who crucified Him, casting the blame on the Jews, does not see himself among them, it is because the light has

not reached him, or he has not reached the Light; he has remained in darkness and sees only the reflection of the light that illuminates others.

«For God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God did not send his Son into the world in order to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not judged, but he who does not believe is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the Only-Begotten of God. Now this is the judgment: The light has come into the world, yet men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light that his deeds may be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, for they have been performed in God» (Jn 3:16-21).

God so loved the souls that He sent His Only Begotten Son to the world to save them *«so that those who believe in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.»* The Son of God did not come to judge the world but, rather, He came before His Justice, bringing Mercy so that the souls may be saved through Him. The Word came as Light to this world that was in darkness, so that everyone who approaches the light may see his own sins, recognize them before God, and receive pardon through His Mercy before His Justice comes. «... *but thy sons were not conquered even by the teeth of venomous serpents, for thy mercy came to their help and healed*

them» (Wis 16:10). *«He who believes in him is not judged,»* for if he *"believes,"* it is because he has seen the light, and upon seeing the light, he recognizes his sins; upon recognizing his sins, he repents of them and receives God's Mercy, entering into the Redeemer. «*... but he who does not believe is already judged, because he does not believe in the name of the Only-Begotten of God. »* He is already judged, because, loving the darkness rather than the light, he did not come into the "Light" so that his deeds might not be exposed; he did not "believe" in the Son of God. *«Now this is the judgment: The light has come into the world, yet men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.»* The fact of "believing" in the son of God has a much deeper meaning than what we ascribe to it. The devils believe in die Son of God and tremble before Him; nevertheless, they are in hell. One can believe in the Son of God and "carry" Christ like one who carries a flashlight in his hand, illuminating others, while he himself remains in darkness. "To believe" is to open up to the light; if one "opens up," the light penetrates and one becomes aware of one's sins: one receives the Redeemer and is redeemed. The person who acts out of "personal interest" and who sins with *evil intent* can hardly come to the Light, for he knows his deeds are evil because he has *consciously* so acted: *«For everyone who does evil hates the light...»* The person who, following the voice of his conscience, falls into error and sin, or sins out of *ignorance* or *weakness,* comes to the Light because that person hates sin and error, and when in the light he sees *his error* and *sin,* he repents and feels great joy at hav-

ing come to know the truth. *«But he who carries out the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, for they have been performed in God,»* because these kinds of sinners do not hide from God; rather, they seek His presence; if they sin, they do so out of ignorance or weakness but never out of evil intent.

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

«Now there came at that very time some who brought him word about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered and said to them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they have suffered such things'? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same manner. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloe fell and killed them, do you think that they were more guilty than all the other dwellers in Jerusalem? I tell you no; but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same manner"» (Lk 13:1-5).

Do you think that the generation that perished in the universal flood were worse sinners than this generation because they all perished in the flood? Or that men who dwelt in Sodom and Gomorrah, who were punished for their impurity, were any more impure than the majority of men and women today? I tell you, no; and unless you repent, you will all perish in the same manner. Do you think that the Pharaoh and his army who perished in the Red Sea for having oppressed and persecuted the people of God, and Herod who beheaded the Precursor, and

Pilate who out of cowardice condemned the Son of God, "washing" his hands, were any worse than today's rulers? I tell you, no; and unless they repent and amend their ways, they will receive the same punishment as these others.

Do we think that Caiaphas, Annas, and all those doctors of the Law, Scribes and Pharisees, who condemned the Son of God, believing they were rendering a service to God, were any worse than many Pontiffs, Bishops, and priests of today? I tell you, no, and unless they repent, humbling themselves before God, they will make the same mistakes as the former and will meet the same fate as they.

And the traitor Judas who, though he was an apostle and disciple of the Lord, sold the Son of God because he was greedy and a thief, do we believe that he was more guilty than many Christians of today, and a greater thief than they? I tell you, no; and unless you repent, you will all perish in like manner.

«And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down'"» (Lk 13:6-9).

God's Mercy is allowing time for the souls to enter into themselves and begin to think about the eternal fruits

they should give to Their Creator: *«Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it hears fruit next year, well and good; if not you can cut it down.»*

Christ, who is God's Mercy, has prayed in the Father not to judge the world yet, to see the souls enter into the Redemption and bear the fruits of life. But if at the end of the time that the Son has requested, prolonging His Mercy, the souls do not turn to God, His Justice will come, and every "tree" that bears no fruits will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

«Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure.» Christ is calling the souls to repentance — "till I dig about it"; he is giving them His grace — "the manure" — so that they can enter into the Redemption and bear the fruits that the Father wants.

A HEALING ON THE SABBATH

«Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity'.' And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God» (Lk 13:10-13).

«There was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity.» There are infirmities of the body that can be produced by an impure spirit that takes possession of that body. This woman was suffering from one of these in-

firmities: *«She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.»* There also exists a spiritual "infirmity" in individuals who, although they would like to "straighten out"—would like to live a righteous life that leads to God — are held down by a greater power, and they constantly fall into sin. *«There was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity.* » This "infirmity," when the sin is not through willful acceptance on the part of the person, is caused by an impure spirit that has taken possession of him, and the person can at any moment be cured by Christ, being freed from his affliction in order to glorify God. *«And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.'»* People who recognize in themselves this kind of "infirmity" should not become disheartened, thereby losing faith. They should abide in their "temple" so that in passing by, the Lord may see them and cure them — that is, in their inner temple, ever reflecting on their behavior, desiring to improve, sincerely repenting in each fall, for if they live outwardly and do not reflect in order to avoid feeling uneasy with the reproach of their conscience, their cure is unlikely. They should have the humility to recognize their helplessness for lifting themselves: *«She could not fully straighten herself»* The seriousness of the sin does not matter; if it is due to "helplessness," they will have the humility to recognize themselves as helpless to straighten out their lives and will constantly seek Divine aid.

The only sinner that cannot be forgiven is the one that does not want to *acknowledge* his sin, for in failing to recognize the fact that he is "sick," the Physician cannot

intervene and he cannot receive the necessary medication because he is closed in himself.

«But the synagogue official was indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, and he addressed the people present, "There are six days," he said, "when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days, and not on the sabbath'' But the Lord answered him, "Hypocrites!" he said. "Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the sabbath and take it out for watering? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years, was it not right to untie her bonds on the sabbath day?" When he said this, all his adversaries were covered with confusion, and all the people were overjoyed at all the wonders he worked» (Lk 13:14-17).

«But the synagogue official was indignant because Jesus had healed on the sabbath ... »: today there also exist those "church officials" who become indignant when Jesus heals a soul and does not send her to submit herself to them — the authority. The "sabbath" of today is "obedience." Just as at that time the sabbath — a day sanctified by the Lord — was used to go against the works of the Lord, so today "obedience" — sanctified by the Lord—is used to go against the works of the Lord. *«"There are six days," he said, "when work is to be done. Come and be healed on one of those days, and not on the sabbath."»* And by this, they thought they were fulfilling a duty: defending God's Law. Unfamiliar with the spirit of the Law, they had remained with the

letter— the same thing that is done today if a person is freed from evil by Christ and begins to live a somewhat deeper spiritual life. If this person does not submit himself to the "authorities' — even if his works are very good — it is considered that that person is doing wrong because the "authority" was set up by God and he must obey it. Neither are these officials of today familiar with the spirit of obedience and have remained with the letter: *«Hypocrites! Is there one of you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the sabbath and take it out for watering? »*

And cannot Christ Himself "untie" and "water" His souls? Must He, too, submit Himself to the authority in order to save souls? How many souls who are submitted to the authority remain tied to sin for years and years because they cannot accept the direct intervention of the Lord! *«And this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has held bound these eighteen years—was it not right to untie her bonds on the sabbath day?»* How many of these men who hold the authority in their hands are not themselves bound to Satan and are nothing more than his instruments for continuing "to bind" other souls! And cannot Christ, who knows this, come to free these souls? They themselves would be freed if they were more humble and had a little faith in Him who has given them authority.

THE SALVATION OF THE GENTILES

«Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Some one

asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to"» (Lk 13:22-24).

«Lord, are only a few people going to be saved? » Only those are saved who enter by the narrow door, which is Christ Himself, the Redeemer. He who does not enter into the redemption in order to be redeemed of his sins will not be able to enter, even if he calls himself a Christian and has received many gifts from God: *«Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.*» Because, those who are still in the "self of sin "will find no room" in Christ—the "narrow door." These belong to the world which is the broad pathway.

«Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, "Sir, open for us." But he will answer, "I do not know you or where you come from." Then you will say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." But he will reply, "I do not know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!" There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last and will be first, and first who will be last» (Lk 13:25-30).

«Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside .... » Once the Redemption is closed, no one else will be able to enter, and those who do not enter will not be able to be redeemed from their sins, and no one will be able to enter into the kingdom of God who is not in *Christ: «You will stand outside knocking and pleading, "Sir, open for us." But he will answer, "I do not know you or where you come from ...." "We ate and drank with you."»* Even if they have received the body and blood of Christ, if they did not become *identified* with Him, they will not be admitted: *«I do not know you or where you come from.»*

«You taught in our streets.» Even if they have received His teachings, if they have not become *identified* with Christ, He will say: *«I repeat, I do not know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers,*» because despite all the graces they received from God, they placed their works at the service of iniquity, and for the sake of justice, they will be with the "evil one": *«There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*» because that will be the kingdom of hatred, falsehood, and cruelty. When many of those souls who call themselves children of St. Francis, of St. Theresa, St. Augustine, St. Ignatius, St. Benedict, and of other saints see these saints in the kingdom of God, while they themselves are cast out, they will realize that the life of those saints on earth was very different from the life they themselves led, and that they did many works in their name that were their own and not the saints' whom they called "founders," for there is only one Founder, Christ, and only one "foundation," the Gospel. And we will also see

in the kingdom of God many Jews who have been regarded as deprived of the kingdom, as well as many Mohammedans and others from different religions who became sincerely converted to Christ; while a great many who called themselves Christians will stand outside because they used the name of Christ for commercial gain and to become proud: *«People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.»*

THE SLYNESS OF HEROD

«It was then that certain Pharisees came to him. "Go on your way!" they said. "Leave this place! Herod is trying to kill you." His answer was: "Go tell that fox, 'Today and tomorrow I cast out devils and perform cures, and on the third day my purpose is accomplished.' For all that, I must proceed on course today, tomorrow, and the day after, since no prophet can be allowed to die anywhere except in Jerusalem"» (Lk 13:31-33).

«Leave this place! Herod is trying to kill you.» The hatred of the world and of those who have power in the world against Christ and His followers has not changed and will continue on until the end, for the world loves what is its own, and Christ and His true disciples are not of the world. The fact is that the "enemy" has changed his tactics, and many who call themselves "disciples" of Christ have sold themselves over to the "enemy," and

those of the world think that Christ and the world are one and the same.

«Go tell that fox, "Today and tomorrow I cast out devils and perform cures, and on the third day my purpose is accomplished"» Christ and His own are working in the world until the "third day" arrives, which is the coming of the Holy Spirit, the "breath" from the mouth of the Father, who will put an end to the time of His Mercy in order to make way for His Justice. Then the "prince of this world" will come to gather his own and to consummate his work of iniquity. At the time Christ was speaking, it was "today"; after His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, the following day, "tomorrow," began; and on the "third day He will accomplish His purpose" putting an end to the time of His Mercy for the coming of His Justice.

«For all that, I must proceed on course today, tomorrow, and the day after, since no prophet can be allowed to die anywhere except in Jerusalem.» In the eyes of God, the peoples are comprised of men and are classified according to the spirit that dominates them. This "Jerusalem" represents those persons who, though they receive many graces from God, are always against God in their works, even if they feel chosen and profess God by word of mouth. This "people" continues on in the world, and in the eyes of God they continue to be "Jerusalem," wherever they should find themselves. And just as at that time they persecuted the prophets and crucified the Son of God, they have also persecuted the saints and continue to crucify Christ by their sins of pride. These

are not “Jews” and “Gentiles” only: all those who receiving graces from God become proud with those graces, and harden their hearts by not responding to those graces, belong to or are of that “Jerusalem,” which is, in this case, the Jerusalem rebellious to God: *«A rebellious and stiff-necked people* » (Deut 9:13). And those who turn to God and identify themselves with Christ, responding to the graces received, belong to or are of the heavenly “Jerusalem,” the Church of Christ, the Zion in whom God is well-pleased because it is the “Body” of His Only Begotten Son, the Word.

A WARNING TO JERUSALEM

«O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”» (Lk 13:34-35).

As we have said before, the peoples are comprised of souls and are classified or grouped according to the spirit that dominates them. Jesus was speaking to that rebellious generation of stiff-necked men who became overweeningly proud with the graces that God gave them, considering themselves above other peoples, instead of humbling themselves and turning to God. The Lord today says the same thing to this generation, which is in no better condition than the former generation. What’s more, it is worse off than the former because in having

received more graces, they consider themselves above the former. The "Jerusalem" of today is none other than the Christian church, for just as the people of Israel was the depository of Revelation and God's Promise, the Christian church has received, in addition to this "Revelation," the *fulfillment* of the Promise: Christ and the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. *«O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left desolate.»* Let him who reads understand...

And "Jerusalem," the church that has become purified of its sins, those souls who by recognizing their error will *truly* turn to the Lord, will say: «*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*» For He will reside in them.

A WARNING TO THE UNFAITHFUL CITIES

«Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles were worked, because they had not repented. "Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and Sidon had been worked the miracles that have been worked in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you"» (Mt 11:20-22).

«Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles were worked ... »: this is how he would today reproach those cities or countries over which

many graces have been poured and whose inhabitants have not responded to those graces by repenting and turning to God with all their hearts, but in whom, instead, reigns the spirit of the world with all its sins: Woe to thee, France! Woe to thee, Spain! For if over Corozain and over Bethsaida had been poured the graces that were poured over thee, they would have repented long ago, turning to God. *«But I tell thee, it will be more tolerable for Corozain and Bethsaida on the day of judgment than for thee.»*

«And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hell! For if the miracles had been worked in Sodom that have been worked in thee, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for thee» (Mt 11:23-24).

«And thou, Capharnaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hell!» And thou, Rome, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hell! For if over Capharnaum had been poured the graces that have been poured over thee, they would have become converted, repenting. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Capharnaum on the day of judgment than for thee.

THE PARABLE
OF THE UNFAITHFUL VINE-DRESSERS

«Hear another parable. There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard, and put a hedge about

it, and dug a wine vat in it, and built a tower; then he let it out to vine-dressers, and went abroad» (Mt 21:33).

«There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard...»: the householder is God, the vineyard is His Promise to choose the "people of God"; *«and put a hedge about it»:* He put His gifts about it, giving it His commandments; *«and dug a wine vat in it, and built a tower»:* the wine vat and tower are the foundations for the Church — the circumcision and the Messianic promises for purifying and preparing the people of God to receive the Messiah; «*then He let it out to vine-dressers»:* these "vine-dressers" were the Jews.

«"But when the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the vine-dressers to receive his fruits. And the vine-dressers seized his servants, and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent another party of servants more numerous than the first; and they did the same to these. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son! But the vine-dressers, on seeing the son, said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and we shall have his inheritance! So they seized him, cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. When, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to him, "He will utterly destroy those evil men, and will let out the vineyard to other vine-dressers, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CORNER STONE; BY

THE LORD THIS HAS BEEN DONE, AND IT IS WONDERFUL TO OUR EYES?'"» (Mt 21:34-42).

When the season drew near in which the "chosen people," the Jews, were to render their fruits, God sent the prophets, first one party, then another, and another. *«But the vine-dressers, seizing the servants, beat some of them, killed others, and stoned others,»* and with all of them they did the same thing, failing to receive the word of God. Finally, God sent His Son, Christ, *«and seizing him, they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.» «They cast him out of the vineyard»:* they delivered him over to the Gentiles, the Romans, for them to kill him. *«When, therefore, the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? .... He will utterly destroy those evil men, and will let out the vineyard to other vine-dressers, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.»* Evil men, indeed, received and will receive their due punishment. The "vineyard," for the sake of justice, was let out to the Gentiles, since the "vine-dressers" themselves, the Jews, handed over to them the Heir of the vineyard, the Son of God.

«The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.» "The stone" is Christ (the Activity of the Divine in the human being), "stone" which was rejected by the builders (the Jews of that time who represented the Sanhedrin, the Law), stone which in Jesus Christ *«has become the corner stone,»* the support of the whole Building, and he who does not *believe* in Him, identifying himself with the Divine Will, is left out of the "Construction."

«”Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a people yielding its fruits. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but upon whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.” And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they knew that he was speaking about them. And though they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the people, because they regarded him as a prophet» (Mt 21:43-46).

«Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to a people yielding its fruits.» This does not mean that the kingdom of God has passed on to the “Gentiles,” as many think. For God there are neither “Gentiles” nor “Jews.” The Lord means to say that the kingdom of God would be taken away from that generation and will be given to a generation “yielding its fruits.” This kingdom will be comprised of all those souls who let God reign in them, whether they are Gentiles or Jews. Nor does this mean that because God at first chose the Jewish people they alone would have entered into the kingdom of God if they had received the Savior. The Gentiles — those souls who would receive the Savior — would also have entered, just as the Jews who have received Him and will receive Him, will enter. The “economy of salvation” would have been different, but the final outcome will be the same.

The vineyard was let out to the Gentiles, this is true, and these new “vine-dressers” will have to render to God an account of what they have done with His vine-

yard. And if the Householder is not satisfied, the kingdom of God will not *manifest* itself in the Gentile people but, rather, in the Hebrew people, for God will send his Gentile apostles to take the "good news" to the Jews, as He sent the Jewish apostles to bring it to the Gentiles. It is God's Justice that will be manifested to the world in the end times because, as St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans: *«For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that a partial hardening has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles should enter, and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written. The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins»* (Rom 11:25-27).

Everyone *«who falls on this stone — Christ — will be broken to pieces; but upon whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.»* Many are those who have fallen on "the stone"; this is why it will fall on them and will grind them to powder on the day of His Justice. Only those who have "adhered" to the Stone will be left standing. And they will see the redemption fulfilled. The "people of God" will see the fulfillment of the promise uttered through Moses before those who in the sight of God represented the people of God's own election — all just souls. Thus He said to Moses, according to what we read in Deuteronomy: *«And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord, your God, has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and*

obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and all your soul; then the Lord, your God, will change your lot; and taking pity on you, he will again gather you from all the nations wherein he has scattered you. Though you may have been driven to the farthest corner of the world, even from there will the Lord, your God, gather you; even from there will he bring you back. The Lord, your God, will then bring you into the land which your fathers once occupied, that you too may occupy it, and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. The Lord, your God, will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, that you may love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, and so may live» (Deut 30:1-6).

XIII

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

«On that day Jesus left the house and was sitting by the water's edge. And as great crowds gathered about him, he got into a boat and sat down. And all the crowd stood on the shore. And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying "Behold, the sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the birds came and ate them up. And other seeds fell upon rocky ground, where they had not much soil; and they sprang up at once, because they had no depth of soil; but when the sun rose they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And other seeds fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked them. And other seeds fell upon good ground, and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"» (Mt 13:1-9).

«And as great crowds gathered about him, he got into a boat and sat down.» The true apostle of Christ is one who fulfills his mission like the boat on the beach — one who has not "run aground," become settled in the world, but keeps vigilant in prayer, waiting for the Master to come and take him to teach the crowds. He "disappears" like the boat, and the "crowds" look only to the Lord; they do not stay with the apostle, because the

apostle lets the Master act and does not take unto himself what belongs to Him.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

«Hear then the parable of the sower. When any one, hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the Evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown by the wayside» (Mt 13:18-19).

He does not understand the parable because he has no faith, and upon listening to the word of God, he does not place his spirit at God's disposal in order to understand but, rather, uses his brain to gain knowledge and, injustice, does not understand the "parable" because he receives the letter and not the spirit of the word, and «*the Evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart.*» The Evil one becomes the *"proprietor"* of the word that he had received, and this is how the word of God is misinterpreted, because the enemy who has stolen that seed, which is the word of the kingdom of God, uses it to prolong his kingdom in the soul and also in the world, impeding the kingdom of God. And this is what has happened with the Gospel and why it is not *lived*, because men, applying their *brain* for understanding it, and not their *spirit*, have placed the word of God in the hands of the Evil one, something like what Judas did in selling the Son of God. The "Judases" of today, those who have loved the wages more than the Master, have placed God's word in the hands of the Evil one, "wrest-

ing" it from the Cross —like the garments from the body — stripping Christ. But the Spirit of that word cannot be confined by men nor by the Evil one, as neither could they crucify the Spirit of Jesus, even though they crucified his body; and in their crucifying his body, the Spirit resurrected him and gave life not only to Christ's human body but to His Mystical Body, the Church, as well. In this way by confining the word of God, the Gospel, they have confined the Bride of Christ, but the Spirit Himself will give the liberty to the souls who comprise the Church, and She, "the Bride," will then be able to join the Bridegroom.

«This is what was sown by the wayside.» This is what has happened with what was sown along the path of the Church toward Christ—something similar to what happened along the path of Christ toward the Father: He was crucified in the name of the Law because men clung to the letter of the Law. And in order to fulfill the Father's Will, Christ traveled the "path" that men gave him, dying on the Cross in order to become, He Himself, the "Way" for souls. So too, the Bride, in order to fulfill the Father's Justice, travels the path that men have given Her for entering into the "Way" that will take Her all the way to the Bridegroom; She, too, will be "crucified" in the name of the law, because men have clung to the "letter" of the Gospel and have become blind for "seeing" and dull-witted for "understanding."

«As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a

while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away» (Mt 13:20-21).

They are those individuals who, upon hearing the "word," understand that this is truth. They receive it with joy and are enthusiastic in the moment, but they have no perseverance because they are inconstant and they immediately begin to question here and there if this or that might be true, because they have neither faith nor trust in God; and as soon as someone tells them something contrary to this "word" that they have believed, they change their minds; or *«when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away»;* and they lose the truth that they had found.

«As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful» (Mt 13:22).

They are those individuals who are superficial and shallow and do not go deeply into things but remain on the surface. This is why they do not know the eternal value of what God's word is telling them, and they continue to fuss over the *«cares of this world and the delight in riches.»* And this "delight in riches" means not only material riches, but also the eagerness "to know" — delight in spiritual riches — but in a sense that is not pure, rather for boasting of their wisdom. And thus, with this superficiality they continue to live according to the "spirit of the world," busy in acquiring temporal things: name, glory, fame, comfort, and so on and so forth, and

thus they lose the possessions that God wanted them to have by means of the word.

«As *for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty*» (Mt 13:23).

They are those individuals who listen to the word of God and understand it because they have faith and they place their spirit at the Lord's disposal, for they desire to know truth in order to *live* it, and they live it, some to a greater degree than others, each one according to his faith and the grace he receives; and in this way they attain eternal life, the kingdom of God.

THE REASON FOR PARABLES

«Then the disciples came up and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away"» (Mt 13:10-12).

To those who, having faith in God and desiring to live His doctrine, dispose their spirit to be taught by Him, it is given them to know *«the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven»;* but to those who, because they have no faith, desire to listen and apply their brain in order to learn and be regarded as learned and do not bother about *living* what they learn, it is not given them to know the meaning of the word, so that they may not come to know «*the*

mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.»; For, to him who has faith will more be given and he will abound in the knowledge of God, but from him who has no faith, even the knowledge he has will be taken away.

«This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: "You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn for me to heal them"» (Mt 13:13-15).

«This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.» For the individuals who have lost their faith and whose hearts have grown dull for turning away from their sins, every word of God's is like a parable, because they only understand the letter, but the true meaning remains hidden from them: *«You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull.»* Let us not think that this "people" are the Jews of that time only; this "people" is comprised of all souls who have become pride-filled, and because they have no faith they seek to grasp the word of God with their brain, by dint of studying, in order to be teachers of others. *«And their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and*

understand with their hearts, and turn,» and thus God would heal them, but they do not recognize their blindness or their disease.

«But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it» (Mt 13:16-17).

Blessed are the souls who have faith and humility, because they "see" and "hear" what of the word of God is "hidden," for they receive the teaching from the Spirit. Many prophets and righteous people longed to "see" and "hear" these teachings, and they neither "saw" nor "heard" them because the Redeemer had not yet come, and the Holy Spirit had not been given.

THE LEAVEN

«He told them another parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." All this Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world"» (Mt 13:33-35).

The leaven in this case is the word of God. He who receives it in his heart, keeps and meditates it there until that word grows and takes "shape": «... *like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.*» Thus, the "word" that is medi-

tated in one's heart becomes "leavened"; it grows, and its spirit gradually penetrates the soul, and the word becomes works, turning into true nourishment for the soul, just as the "leaven" of flour becomes bread and turns into nourishment for the body.

«I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.» Thus, to the souls who surrender themselves totally to Him, God *«will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world,»* but He will not utter them to others, except to speak to them in parables.

THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL

«The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field; he who finds it hides it, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he finds a single pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it» (Mt 13:44-46).

The hidden treasure is the "mystery of the kingdom of heaven" which is hidden in the word of God, and whoever "finds" that "mystery" leaves everything in exchange for that treasure, *«and in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.»* He devotes himself to fathoming the "word of God" — the Sacred Scriptures: *«He buys that field»* because there, in the Scriptures, the treasure is "hidden," and for this reason he hides away from the world in order to shut himself up in that "field" and devote himself to fathoming this

"mystery" with God alone. Then God discloses it to him, "revealing" to him what of His word is "hidden."

«Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.» This "merchant in search of fine pearls" is the soul who seeks the truth, and finding that eternal truth, which is the pearl of great price, he *«goes and sells all that he has and buys it.*» He sacrifices everything just to obtain that pearl, which is God's kingdom and His justice.

THE DRAGNET

«Again the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea which gathers fish of every kind; and when it is filled, the fishermen haul it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in a basket and throw away those that are bad. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth » (Mt 13:47-50).

The "dragnet" is Christianity; the sea is the world, and the fish are the souls. The "net" has been cast and all kinds of "fish" have entered it, good and bad alike — good Christians and false Christians. *«At the end of time, the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the just to throw them into the blazing furnace »:* the false Christians will be thrown into hell, where «*there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*» and the true Christians will be in the kingdom of God.

« “Have you understood all this?” They said, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old”» (Mt 13:51-52).

Thus every person instructed *by God* in the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven brings out from his heart the knowledge for interpreting both the New Testament and the Old — *«the new and the old»*—because from the one and the other he brings out the things concerning the kingdom: he *«is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both new and old.»* He also brings out the lesson-filled consequences of his past life — *«the old»* — as well as those of his present life — «*the new*» — for attaining the kingdom of heaven.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

«When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from that district. Jesus next went to his native place and spent his time teaching them in their synagogue. They were filled with amazement and said to one another, “Where did this man get such wisdom and miraculous powers’? Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t Mary known to be his mother and James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers? Aren’t his sisters our neighbors? Where then did he get all this?” They found him altogether too much for them. Jesus said to them, “No prophet is without honor except in his native place, indeed in his own house.” And he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith» (Mt 13:53-58).

So, too, the world — those people who live without the Spirit of God — is scandalized upon seeing the wisdom that God communicates to those who allow themselves to be guided by His Spirit: *«Isn't this the carpenter's son? ... Where then did he get all this?»* They see nothing beyond the manifestations of the flesh. This is why they cannot understand the work of the Spirit in those people who, although they continue to be just ordinary men and women, are instruments of God. And thus they go against the Holy Spirit who acts in these people.

«No prophet is without honor except in his native place, indeed in his own house.» And the most pathetic thing about this is that those who are closest to these individuals are the first to become scandalized because they have lived close to their person but without their spirit, and they do not see the work of God because they themselves have lived oblivious of their own souls and do not know the ways of the spirit. *«And he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith.»* And these individuals, because of their lack of faith cannot benefit from the grace received by that person who is close to them.

THE RESURRECTION IN NAIN

«Soon afterward he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a large crowd from the city was

with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" And this report concerning him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country» (Lk 7:11-17).

The resurrection of this only son shows us God's infinite mercy and the power that a mother's love has to touch the heart of Jesus: *«And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." And he came and touched the bier .... And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."»*

God's Mercy continues to act today as it did then in souls who open up in some way. Only those who *consciously* close themselves cannot receive His Mercy.

This only son who was resurrected, without his mother's having requested it of Jesus, represents the case of those mothers who, loving their children with a pure love, free from egoism, desire the best for them and are willing to sacrifice themselves, but they do not give them that "best" — which is a true Christian upbringing that would enable them to respond to grace — because they themselves are ignorant of this "upbringing," and these children live in "mortal sin"; they are the living dead. The mother by her life of sacrifice and purity of heart, putting up with all the sufferings of this life with

patience and humility because of love for her children, gradually enters into the redemption without realizing it, because her sacrifice and love have opened the doors to God's Mercy, and in this manner she attains the grace for her children: «*And the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother.*» On earth or in heaven, this mother receives the great joy of the resurrection of her children, who will be given to her by the Lord.

THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN BARTIMEUS

«And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimeus, a blind man, the son of Timeus, was sitting by the wayside begging. And hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And many angrily tried to silence him. But he cried out all the louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him!' And they called the blind man and said to him, "Take heart. Get up, he is calling you." And throwing off his cloak, he leaped toward him. And Jesus addressed him saying, "What would you have me do for you?" And the blind man said to him "Rabboni, that I may see!' And Jesus said to him, "Go your way, your faith has saved you." And at once he received his sight, and followed him along the road» (Mk 10:46-52).

This blind man represents those "spiritually blind" who have not become blind through "disease" but are blind out of ignorance, and out of ignorance live in the

wrong and in the darkness of error and falsehood. They are unacquainted with the Light, and this is why they do not distinguish Right from Wrong, because no one has spoken to them about God.

«A blind man ... sitting by the wayside begging. » These men "blind" through ignorance go along the way of the world receiving what they are handed by those who pass by: «*And hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began* to *cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"»* It was for this that Jesus sent his disciples to preach the kingdom of God, so that the blind who are "sitting by the wayside" of the world, hearing Christ preached, might come to know Him and call out to Him: «*Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me,*» and so that His *Merciful Justice* might thus call them and give them the light of the kingdom of God: «*Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."»* Here we have the mission of the "disciple" who follows in the footsteps of his Master: to preach Christ and the kingdom of God so that He may be known by all souls who, being "blind," are "sitting" by the wayside; next, to call those who have heeded the word and have been called by the Master, and encourage them to take heart and get up: «*And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up, he is calling you."»* Then this "blind man," a sinner, comforted by the words of the apostle, will get up and, leaving everything that impedes his running to Christ, will reach Him, and he himself will ask for the light to see, and once he has received the light and has "seen" Christ, he will be one more apostle of the Lord's: *«And throwing off his cloak, he leaped toward him. And Jesus addressed him*

saying "What would you have me do to you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabboni, that I may see." And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." And at once he received his sight, and followed him along the road.» The blind man «*throwing off his cloak, leaped toward him.*» Unable to run, he leaped toward him. It does not matter whether those leaps are long or short. The important thing is for him to go in the direction of the Master, and it is here that the apostle must prove his patience and love for the souls and the Master, accompanying the blind man to the Master's side. But for the apostle to be able to fulfill this triple mission, he must *"abide"* beside the Master in order to hear His voice whenever He sends for these "blind men," for the Master alone heeds the voice of souls who call to Him.

If the Lord had a few of these "disciples" who would fulfill this triple mission, that of *preaching,* talking about God and His kingdom wherever they happen to be, whether it is in the bar, on the street doing business, at the market, or on the beach, with all the people they meet along the way; *abiding* with Christ in prayer, conserving His presence in order to be able to know which is the soul He wants summoned; and *calling them, encouraging them to take heart and get up, accompanying them* in their "leaps" toward God so that they will not lose their way, the world would not be in the state it is, and there would be a more than sufficient number of workers for harvesting the ripe wheat.

But the disciples at the service of Satan are more faithful and steadfast than the disciples of Christ, for the former indeed preach the kingdom of Evil everywhere. They call and encourage souls to follow them through advertising, movies, newspapers, television, and so on, and they even sacrifice themselves to attain the end they pursue. This is why the disciples of darkness are more numerous than the disciples of Light, and this is also why, for the *sake of Justice,* the kingdom of darkness will precede the kingdom of Light.

These "blind men" and "beggars" who, "sitting" by the wayside of the world, wait for someone to pass by and hand them whatever they have, gradually receive what is given them by these disciples of Evil, and thus they continue to be blind and beggarly, unconsciously contributing in increasing the number of Satan's followers. In this way the darkness — the kingdom of Evil — is prolonged, and the coming of the kingdom of God is impeded.

THE DISCIPLES' MISSION ON EARTH

«You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor?

Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works

and give glory to your Father who is in heaven» (Mt 5:13-16).

«You are the salt of the earth,» the Lord used to say to his apostles. *«But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor?»* The "salt," in fact, has gone flat because the "disciples" of today — the majority of them — have no "love" but only *"interests"*—interests in glory and the things of the world and its glory. They have turned the "salt" into sand, and this is why everything they preach is worthless and men disregard their words: *«It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*» How are men of the world going to believe and turn to God if those who preach God and call themselves "His disciples" are more interested in the world than in the kingdom of God? If God is not enough for them and they have to live *with the world* and *from the world,* seeking glory from one another and not the glory of God, seeing this example, how are those who are in the world going to turn to God?

«You are the light of the world.» Who can say this of those who today consider themselves "disciples" of Christ? Where is the living faith that has the power to smash the materialism that keeps the world submerged in darkness? Are not they themselves the first to promote this "darkness" with their deeds? Their faith is like a matchstick that they light at night when they go to bed in order to say a few words to God, worn out with drowsiness and fatigue from the work they have accomplished in the world, promoting the darkness of materialism with their deeds devoid of faith.

«A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.» The person who has a living faith is like a city set on a hill: he cannot conceal his faith, however much he might try, because it burns like a lighted torch. He is also like a lighted lantern that lights up not only his own life but also the life of all those who are near him. That light does not go out in the night of this world, and his works are seen by all because they are not works of men but works of God, and those who see these works do not take notice of the person, who is only a stand for the light but, rather, glorify God: *«Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.»*

THE HEALING OF A DEAF AND STUTTERING MAN

«And departing again from the district of Tyre, he came by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the district of Decapolis. And they brought to him one that was deaf and who stammered and entreated him to lay his hand upon him. And taking him aside from the crowd, he put his fingers into the man's ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, "Ephpheta," that is, "Be thou opened." And his ears were at once opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak correctly. And he charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, so much the more did they

continue to publish it. And so much the more did they wonder, saying, "He has done all things well. He has made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak"» (Mk 7:31-37).

«... And taking him aside from the crowd, he put his fingers into the man's ears, and spitting he touched his tongue. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, "Ephpheta," that is, "Be thou opened."» This action shows us that God has no single "method" for working in souls, as men suppose, and sometimes His manner of acting can be very bewildering, not only for the world, but also for the very soul who receives the grace: *«... he put his fingers into the man's ears, and spitting he touched his tongue.*» What was the "need" for Jesus to do all this when, by the simple imposition of his hands or by uttering a single word, he had on other occasions accomplished greater miracles than this one, as for example, the resurrection of the widow's son, the healing of the centurion's servant, the hemorrhaging woman, and so on?

And one often hears it said: "God has no need to do this or that." God has no need of anything, but He can do whatever He wants and however He wants to do it. And so men try to place a limit on God's way of working in souls by saying: "God cannot do this or that; therefore, that does not come from Him." What God "cannot" do is work in those individuals who think in this manner, because they themselves close themselves to this Divine intervention by their reasonings devoid of faith.

People who think and speak in this manner about God are “deaf to hearing His voice, and they stutter in their speech because their tongue is “tied” to those false human reasonings. But as for those individuals who out of *ignorance* and not out of *hardheartedness* think and speak in this manner, Christ can do with them what He did with the deaf and stuttering man: *«And taking him aside from the crowd, he put his fingers into his ears, and spitting, he touched his tongue ... And his ears were at once opened, and the bond of his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak correctly.»* These people can receive the gift of faith for “believing” and “coming to know” God’s Merciful Love. Then they will not dare judge with their reasonings, thereby placing a limit on the manner of working of Him who is Almighty. And even if they were to be charged not to speak of these marvelous things that God does in souls who believe all things possible to God, they would be unable to remain silent, because they themselves are full of wonder at what He has done with them, having made them see their error. He has opened their ears for listening and has released their tongue for speaking “correctly.” «*And he charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, so much the more did they continue to publish it. And so much the more did they wonder, saying, “He has done all things well. He has made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.”»*

XIV

RABBINICAL TRADITIONS

«The Pharisees and some scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him. They had observed a few of his disciples eating meals without having purified—that is to say, washed—their hands. The Pharisees, and in fact all the Jews, cling to the custom of their ancestors and never eat without scrupulously washing their hands; moreover they never eat anything from the market without first sprinkling themselves. There are many other traditions they observe— for example, the washing of cups and jugs and kettles» (Mk 7:1-4).

Today, too, many people are chained by their "traditions," and therefore in the things they do, they gradually lose the spirit. Just as at that time the Pharisees and scribes were scandalized because some of Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating, today there are those who are scandalized if a person receives communion every day without going to confession at least once a week, as is done by tradition: for the Lord Himself says: *«He who has bathed need not wash ... but he is clean all over,»* which means that he whose conscience does not accuse him of sin need not go to confession because in his heart he is free from sin. On the other hand, those who follow these "human traditions," which have led them to guide themselves by the conscience of others, do not trust their own conscience, and they them-

selves do not know when they are "unclean" or when they are "clean," and they judge everyone else by themselves.

«So the Pharisees and the scribes questioned him; "Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of our ancestors but instead take food without purifying their hands?" He said to them: "How accurately Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites when he wrote, 'This people pays me lip service but their heart is far from me. Empty is the reverence they do me because they teach as doctrine mere human precepts'"» (Mk 7:5-7).

«Why do your disciples not follow the tradition of our ancestors but instead take food without purifying their hands?» And today they say: Why does this or that person not go to confession each week, if many of the saints did so every day? Those saints who went to confession every day did so because their conscience probably asked this of them; they were doing right. But whoever goes to confession to comply with a "tradition," imitating others who did the same thing, or in order to conform with men's opinion, is falling short in the sight of God, for it is not a sincere confession if in it there are not the following conditions: a *consciousness of sin, heartfelt sorrow for having sinned,* and a *purpose of amendment.* And Jesus today would say to these people, as he said to those scribes and Pharisees, *«How accurately Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites when he wrote, "This people pays me lip service while their hearts are far from me. Empty is the reverence they do*

me because they teach as doctrine mere human precepts!'»

«"You disregard God's commandment and cling to what is human tradition." He went on to say: "You have made a fine art of setting aside God's commandment in the interest of keeping your traditions!"» (Mk 7:8-9).

St. John, the beloved apostle of the Lord, says: *«This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and are not practicing the truth, but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness»* (1 Jn 1:5-9). And then he says: *«No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him»* (1 Jn 3:6). *«And by this we can be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments»* (1 Jn 2:3). But he who, having been tempted, falls into the temptation, and sins should confess his sin *immediately*, for as the same apostle, St. John, says: «*... but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world»* (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Confession, then, should be made when there is consciousness of sin, and it should be sincere and above all

made with a firm purpose of amendment, keeping oneself vigilant in prayer in order not to fall into temptation. The sacrament should not become a routine, as when someone soils his hands every day and has the washbasin handy for washing himself. Therefore, one should flee from the world in order not to fall into temptation: *«For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world»* (1 Jn 2:16).

«Moses said, "Honor father and mother"; and, in another place, "Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death." Yet you declare, "If a person says to his father or his mother, 'Any support you might have had from me is Korban' (that is, dedicated to God), you allow him to do nothing more for his father or mother. That is the way you nullify God's word in favor of the traditions you have handed on. And you have many other such practices besides!'» (Mk 7:10-13).

In like manner today, by clinging to human traditions, the conscience — which is the voice of God in souls — is nullified. And they *«have many other such practices besides»* with regard to *"obedience" "prayer" "abstinence"* and so forth.

THE TRUE PURITY

«Then he called the crowd to him again, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things that come out of a man, these are what defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear let him

hear." And when he had entered the house, away from the crowds, his disciples began to ask him about the parable. And he said to them, "Are you also without understanding? Do you not realize that nothing from outside, by entering a man, can defile him? For it does not enter his heart, but his belly, and passes on to the drain." Thus he declared all foods clean» (Mk 7:14-19).

«Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a man that, entering into him, can defile him.» Jesus used to say this with reference to foods, according to the concepts held at that time, which was no more than a material figure of what we live in this age of the spirit: it is not what is outside of a man that makes him commit sin but, rather, the evil spirit that resides in him; that evil spirit is what makes him sin by utilizing man's senses for sin: «*...but the things which come out of a man are what defile him.*» A person who is purified of evil, whose mind and heart are pure, can live *within* the world, and nothing of what there is in the world can stain his heart, making him commit sin. But the person who desires to attain this "purification" must flee from the "world" so that the "evil" that is in him may not find a way to tempt him. It is like letting the "body-of-sin" beast starve to "death," nourishing the soul with prayer and self-denial so that, fortified, she may master the beast.

«And he said, "What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slan-

der, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man» (Mk 7:20-23).

All these evil things are in man as a consequence of original sin and when accepted by him, become his *"personal sins."* Man is not personally to blame for having these evils in himself, but if he consciously accepts them, he becomes guilty and accountable before Divine Justice. Therein lies the sin that he must confess and for which he must also atone by paying the debt.

Christ came to blot out original sin, paying the debt to Divine Justice in order to liberate man from his original guilt. But each one must cooperate with the grace merited by Christ in order to be liberated from the impurity of evil, for man is free to accept or reject his own redemption. This is why, in order to cooperate toward his redemption, he must renounce the works of the "world" so that he may gradually enter into the Work of Redemption, for he cannot belong to the world and to Christ at the same time. If he remains in the world, he cannot attain his own redemption, for he himself is "binding" himself to evil.

The main mission of the priest, besides *preaching* Christ and *administering* the Sacraments, is that of *forming* the sinner's conscience so that the sinner, guiding himself by his own conscience, may not sin.

THE EXPULSION OF THE VENDORS FROM THE TEMPLE PRECINCTS

«As the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple precincts he came upon people engaged in selling oxen, sheep and doves, and others seated changing coins. He made a kind of whip of cords and drove sheep and oxen alike out of the temple area, and knocked over the moneychangers' tables, spilling their coins. He told those who were selling doves: "Get them out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" His disciples recalled the words of Scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me"» (Jn 2:13-17).

«The Jewish Passover was near»: the Passover for the soul is her resurrection to the "new life," but in order that this resurrection may become a reality, the temple of the Lord, which is her body,[2] has first to be purified.

«Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple precincts he came upon people engaged in selling oxen, sheep and doves, and others seated changing coins.» Such is the state of the Lord's "temples" — full of "dealers" and all kinds of "animals." These "dealers" are the impure spirits that bring in all kinds of sins with which to do their business and appropriate the souls of those bodies. Each time man's liberty accepts this "commerce" with evil, he is placing in its hands his soul which he is selling in installments, and when he finally comes to realize this, it is because, by then, he belongs to the Dealer and not to the Lord. «*Get them out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a market-place!*»

Here we have the priest's mission with those who approach him to make their confession: to "enter" that temple that "opens up" to him, overturn the tables and, along with the animals, which are the sins, cast out the "dealers," which are the evil spirits that man has, and "whip," admonish him who with his liberty has made of the Lord's temple a marketplace. It does not matter if these individuals take offense and never return to confession because they are admonished. It means that they are already sold to the Dealer and are not interested in "clearing out" their "temple."

«His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, "Zeal for thy house consumes me."» The priest who has become identified with Christ makes these words his own: *«Zeal for thy house consumes me,»* and before the sinner's soul, he feels the same sorrow that Jesus felt when he saw the temple of Jerusalem full of dealers. And the soul who sincerely goes seeking God's forgiveness and his liberation from sin sees this priest *in* Christ and understands that he is right and that this priest who admonishes him and is concerned for his soul can truly help him to clear out his "temple," because his zeal is real, since it would be easier for him not to be bothered.

«At this the Jews responded, "What sign can you show us authorizing you to do these things?" "Destroy this temple," was Jesus' answer, "and in three days I will raise it up." They retorted, "This temple took forty-six years to build, and you are going to 'raise it up in three days'!" Actually he was talking about the temple of his body. Only after Jesus had been raised from the dead

did his disciples recall that he had said this and come to believe the Scripture and the word he had spoken» (Jn 2:18-22).

«What sign can you show us authorizing you to do these things?» The priest's "sign" for doing this should be his life of identification with Christ, free from sin, for in order to be able to clear out the "temples" of others, he must first have surrendered himself to Christ for his own temple to be cleared out of all merchandise as well as commerce with the "enemy," making of his temple a house of prayer where Christ can *abide,* gathering souls led astray by sin. *«Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*» This is what Christ Himself will answer whoever seeks to go against that priest, "living temple" wherein He dwells fulfilling the Father's Will, clearing out those other temples that open up to Him, expelling from them the animals, which are their sins; overturning their tables, purifying their conscience so that bad thoughts will not be accepted; ousting the dealers and money-changers, which are the impure spirits, so that man can use his liberty properly, guiding himself by a righteous conscience, thus attaining eternal life.

To those who live for years and years with their temple busy in commerce with evil, it will seem impossible that their lives can change from one day to the next. *«This temple took forty-six years to build, and you are going to "raise it up in three days"!»* The person who cooperates with grace for the destruction of all he has "built" in collaboration with the enemy will see how the Lord will accomplish in him the work of raising up His

"temple," the dwelling place of the living God, and he will find true happiness upon seeing himself free from the disorder of his passions that impelled him toward wrong.

«While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name, for they could see the signs he was performing For his part, Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all. He needed no one to give him testimony about human nature. He was well aware of what was in man's heart» (Jn 2:23-25).

«While he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival.... » While Christ is acting in the world, His priests are "acting," that is, "administering" His sacraments to those people who receive Him, but when the Father's Justice brings an end to the time of His Mercy, then Christ will no longer be able to "act" in the world, and neither will "His" priests act, for it will be the time of Justice, and the "prince of this world" will come with his own to consummate the work of iniquity, as Christ has "consummated" the Work of Mercy. Those who believed in the name of Christ and with a spirit of faith received the sacraments that His priests administered, will see all the promises of Jesus fulfilled in themselves and will delight in the kingdom of God. But those who, for not having had faith, abused those sacraments, receiving them without spirit, and had contempt for the ministers of the Lord, will receive from Him what they deserve. For Jesus knows what is in each soul, and even

if they have been able to deceive His priests, no one can deceive Him.

«For his part, Jesus would not trust himself to them because he knew them all. He needed no one to give him testimony about human nature. He was well aware of what was in man's heart.» There are people who think that, even if they have made a bad confession, they are free of their guilt because the priest has given them absolution, and that the priest will give an account of them to God. They are very badly mistaken, because the priest gives absolution according to the confession they have made, but as to what there is in their conscience, it is each individual himself who will have to render an account to God, and even though he may have deceived the priest, he will not have deceived God. The priest, absolving him in his confession, could be in heaven, while that individual, for that same confession made with *bad intention*, can end up in hell.

THE WASHING OF THE FEET

«Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began

to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded» (Jn 13:1-5).

«Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.» The life of the Son of God on earth is a "Way," the way of the souls, "the Church," toward the Father. "The feast of the Passover" for the souls, as we have said before, is their resurrection to the "new life." The Church has been traveling the course of this path ever since the Day of Pentecost, and the souls who have resurrected to this "new life," the saints, are waiting in Christ for those who are still on the way, so that all together they may be presented by Christ to the Father as a single Body: the body of the Bride. And just as "the hour" came for Jesus to pass from this world to the Father, so will "the hour" come for the Church to pass from this world to Christ in order to be presented by Him to the Father: *«Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end .... »*

Just as the Son of God is the Way toward the Father for the righteous, so too Judas became "way" toward Satan for the reprobates, becoming son of perdition — the Antichrists: *«And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him ....* »: it was to the interests of the devil, Satan, to take over one of the apostles of the Lord because he knew that Jesus had given them the "power" to administer the Sacraments, making them, as it were, partakers of the power that the Father had given Him:

«*... knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God.*» This is said of Jesus, but the devil, too, knew that Jesus would return to the Father, and that his apostles were to remain on earth to administer his power, and he thought that if he succeeded in taking over one of these apostles, he could seize that "power" and "draw" to himself the souls — the Church that Christ had just founded. This is why he tempted Peter to deny the Lord, but as Peter was righteous, Jesus was able to pray for him, and Peter did not fall into temptation. But Judas was not righteous and Jesus *could not,* injustice, pray to the Father to free him from evil, because Judas had accepted evil in his heart: *«When the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him* .... » This is when the *"church* of iniquity" began. These are the "weeds" that from the beginning were planted in the midst of the wheat. This is how the "Church of Christ" and the "church of the iniquitous one" have come along together, to all appearances one and the same, because the "Judases" and the "Peters" are mixed together, but their paths are completely opposite, and only God knows who are going along with Peter and who with Judas, and the souls who follow them.

Those who go along with Peter are the priests who, repenting of their sins, come to an identification with the Spirit of the Lord and are "living temples" where Christ acts, fulfilling the Will of the Father. They are those who have let the Lord clear out their temples, and there are no "dealers" or "money-changers" in them because they have become a "house of prayer." Those who go

along with Judas are the priests who, remaining in their sins, do not become identified with the Spirit of the Lord; they are temples of "dealers," where the spirit of evil carries on his business, and they are a "marketplace" for souls; they are very lenient and obliging toward the "spirit of the world," and they cannot "clear out" the temples of others because they have not cleared out their own, even though they forgive sins, for they have the power of Christ to absolve and can give absolution, forgiving the sins of those who go to confession, but in order to cast out impure spirits, they themselves need to be identified with the Spirit of Christ.

«He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What lam doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me."

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not everyone of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "You are not all clean"» (Jn 13:6-11).

The washing of the feet is also a symbol of confession, and just as all the apostles received the "washing," but not all of them were cleansed, and from among them a devil came forth because his *intention* was with the devil, so it is with confession. Not everyone who goes to

confession and receives absolution finds himself freed from evil, but only those who go with a righteous intention and true repentance for their sins: *«He who has bathed... is clean all over.»* He who acts in righteousness and sincerely repents of his sins, confessing them, *«does not need to wash»;* he does not need to confess the same sins again, and so long as his conscience does not accuse him of sin, he can receive communion because he is clean — he is in God's grace.

«You are clean, but not everyone of you.» By announcing that "not everyone of them" was clean, Jesus was giving Judas an opportunity to repent of his sin, but Judas remained hardhearted and did not repent.

«For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "You are not all clean."» Jesus knew what was in the heart of Judas, but he could not *"make him"* confess and repent of his sin because Judas had to do this freely. So too with the priest, though he may know a person's sin, he can suggest something to him, as Jesus did with Judas, to see if he opens up to the grace and repents, but he cannot tell him directly. And even if he gives him absolution for the sins for which he has repented, the one sin remains unabsolved if there has been no repentance and intention to atone.

«When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so lam. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an exam-

ple, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me! I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me"» (Jn 13:12-20).

«If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.» Just as Christ, the Teacher, washed the feet of His apostles — cleansed them of their sins — so too should they "wash" one another by means of the power that Christ has given them, forgiving one another's sins, as well as the sins of souls who are in need. The Lord was also giving them an example of humility — an example of how they should behave toward one another. *«For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*» The true disciples of the Lord should always behave as servants and never as "lords," for there is only one Lord who is above all — Christ. Whosoever should do this will be blessed and will receive the teachings

from his Teacher, because he abides in true humility, which is truth.

«I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen.» The Lord knew that among his apostles — not only at that time but *subsequently*, as well as *today*, there would be those who would seek to take the place of the Lord, putting themselves above the others: *«It is that the Scripture may be fulfilled: "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me."»* Many are they who eat the Lord's "Bread" every day and have lifted their heel against Him.

«Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.» Jesus has sent his apostles to administer his Sacraments, and he who receives the "one sent" receives Christ in these Sacraments. Not that the "one sent" is "another Christ" and should be received as if he were Christ Himself; Christ is one alone, and no one can take His place or represent Him. The priest is the "administrator" of His goods here on earth and must also be a supplementary humanity wherein Christ may continue His Passion, as every true Christian should be. Whoever disregards the priest and does not receive him cannot receive Christ in the Sacraments, because the priests are the "intermediaries" or administrators of those Sacraments.

The act of confessing is sacred, and the person who approaches the confessional should see the confessor in Christ, since it is Christ who forgives his sins. There, in confession, one need only speak of one's *doubts* of con-

science, that they may be clarified by the priest so that the person, sincerely repenting for having sinned and making a firm purpose of amendment, may receive the sacrament. The confession of one's sins is made to Christ Himself in one's heart, and those doubts that one may have are clarified with the confessor. This is how man's conscience will gradually form so that he may be led by it and not commit sin: *«If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.»*

«I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me."» Many of those who eat the Eucharistic Bread — the Body and Blood of Christ — have lifted their heel against Him, as Scripture says. They are all those people who do not sincerely repent of their sins, nor do they try to amend their ways, continuing a life of "commerce" with evil, accepting the "spirit of the world," placing an obstacle to the Spirit of the Lord. And the priests who have become "Antichrist," setting their hearts on the "wages" — the things of the world that they receive from the "enemy" — following the path of Judas, gradually "sell out" the Church of Christ, placing it in the hands of the Usurper, the "man of iniquity," the Antichrists.

And just as the Son of God, Christ, *delivered Himself up,* fulfilling the Father's Will in order to rescue the souls from sin, liberating them from the slavery of the body, so too will the "Bride" *deliver Herself up* so that iniquity may be consummated according to the Father's Justice and Her "Body" may be liberated from the slav-

ery of the earth. *«I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.»*

«Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.» He who receives the one whom Christ will send, receives Christ, and he who receives Christ receives the Father also: these three are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Three persons and one true God.*

XV

THE HEALING OF A PARALYTIC

«And when he returned to Capharnaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven"» (Mk 2:1-5).

Because of the faith of "those men" who brought the paralytic, as the Evangelist Matthew (Mt 9:2) says, the paralytic was cured. These men risked everything if only to obtain the health of him who could not help himself: *«And when they could not get near him because of the crowds, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay.»* Such should be the faith of the Lord's apostles, His priests, for leading to Him those souls who cannot help themselves because sin keeps them "paralyzed." No human respect, no attachment to

self... those men could have fallen off the roof of the house while making the opening to let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. But their faith exceeds all danger and is fixed only *on Christ and on the invalid.* The health of the paralytic is more important to them than their own life. *«And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."*‘» And I assure you that the sins of "those men" who got the paralytic through to Jesus were also forgiven. For if their faith has had the power to bring salvation to a third party, there is no doubt that this same faith has brought them salvation too.

In the same way, the apostle who has this living faith in Jesus and risks everything to get the souls through to Him, while he is making the "opening" for letting through to Christ those individuals who are sick because of sin, they will receive not only health of soul but possibly of body as well, in the manner of the paralytic.

Many people who are baptized and in God's grace do not *live* their *baptismal grace* because the "crowd" of worldly things and their attachment to self do not let them "see" Christ in their souls, and they live oblivious of Him. These people are in need of someone to "remove the roof above Him for them and make the "opening" that will enable them to find Him there and begin to live "within," cooperating in the increase of the Mystical Christ, which means cooperating with their baptismal grace.

«Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is

blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"» (Mk 2:6-12).

The "scribes" of today — those who live in the letter and from the "letter" live — will grumble about those "brazen" apostles who, identifying themselves with Christ, impelled by their faith, leap into any kind of danger in order to take the souls to God. But it will be Jesus, who knows everything there is in the interior of men, who will bear witness to his apostles when the moment comes to disclose what is false and what is true.

«Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise, take up your pallet and walk"?» Which is easier, to remain comfortably at home or in church waiting for sinners to come and make their confession so as not to expose one's self to the dangers of the world, or to go out in search of them, risking everything *for Christ* and the souls?

Which is easier, to do many works in order to be esteemed and recognized by the world, or to renounce

one's own personality, honor, and name before the world in order to let Christ do the work of saving the souls? Which is easier, to criticize the world, the sinners, and even the Church itself, judging according to one's own reasonings, or to make room for Christ by submitting one's self to the Supreme Reason, so that He Himself may remedy the evil, and to leap into the void impelled by a faith in Him who is not seen?

«"But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home'."» But that you may know that Christ continues to act in the world and has authority on earth and exercises it in his priests — not only to forgive sins but also to preserve them from evil —provided they abide in Him through a living and active faith, I say to you: Lift up your heart from the earth, identify yourself with the Lord, and believe in the authority that *He Himself* will exercise in you, and you will not only forgive sins, imparting health of soul, but possibly health of body as well, and you will be able to see with your own eyes what Christ does with you, liberating you from evil forever.

When the faith of the Lord's priests becomes so alive that it offers Christ the opportunity to act *in* them and *through* them, then the works of the Lord will be seen by all, so much so that everyone will be amazed and will glorify God, saying, *«We never saw anything like this.»* Then the "crowds" will truly become converted to God.

MATTHEW'S VOCATION

«Now as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's place, and said to him, "Follow me." And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass as he was at table in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came to the table with Jesus and his disciples» (Mt 9:9-10).

Jesus could have chosen children or young people as disciples in order to form them his way, but no, he chose men, knowers of the world, and among them "public sinners" like the publican Matthew, for this is what the Pharisees considered the publicans to be: public sinners.

«Now as Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's place, and said to him, "Follow me."» Jesus chooses *whomever* he wants and *whenever* he wants. He did so then, and he does so now. And whoever "hears his voice" follows him immediately, for one can do nothing else if one has "heard his voice": «*And he arose and followed him.*»

And Jesus does not take Matthew to his house to separate him from his own; rather, he himself goes to the house of the sinner whom he has called and sits at his table with his friends, publicans and sinners like Matthew: *«And it came to pass as he was at table in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. »*

This is the testimony that Jesus gives of those whom he has chosen to be his disciples. Jesus knows that "his call" has greater force than sin, and that he who has "heard his voice" will no longer be able to follow the

voice of evil but will, of his own accord, withdraw from the world and from sin because this "call" from God penetrates deeply, even to the marrow of soul and spirit, placing between the soul and the spirit of the world, which formerly dominated her, a barrier—the Spirit of Jesus, who will gradually take possession of her — to the point of expelling from her the "world" and evil, as the liberty of the soul surrenders her domain to him.

Possibly, Matthew, the publican, had never thought of following the Messiah. He was into his business in the world of sinners, but in all likelihood he acted in righteousness of conscience. This is why as the Lord "passed by," he approached the tax office where Matthew was seated at his business and called him. Matthew did not know the Son of God, but God knew him because he was already "following" Him in his conscience. Here we have the only condition that God requires in order to approach a man and call him: a righteous conscience. This too is why Paul of Tarsus was called when he was getting ready to persecute Christ Himself.

«And the Pharisees seeing it said to his disciples, "Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?" But Jesus heard it, and said, "It is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick. But go, and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice! For I have come to call sinners, not the just"» (Mt 9:11-13).

It was the Pharisees of that day who were scandalized that Jesus should call sinners and eat with them, and it is the "Pharisees" of today, those who think like the Phari-

sees of old, who, when the Lord calls a man out of the world, say that this is a "belated calling." These present-day "Pharisees" think they can improve on the way the Lord did things then and the way He does them now, taking it upon themselves to call little children who do not yet know what they are doing and forming them according to their consciences, not letting them form a conscience of their own. The Lord can draw out much good out of wrong, and thus from this wrong formation, He has drawn many and great saints; but it has been *in spite of this* erroneous "formation," and not because of it, that saints have been forthcoming. The "call" of the Lord has "formed" them: they have heard His voice and have reached an identification with the Master *despite the formation* given them by men.

«"Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners?" But Jesus heard it, and said, "It is not the healthy who need a physician, but they who are sick."» Those children who are brought up in a convent and have not known the world, come to believe that they are free from the sins of the world. They consider themselves "healthy" and come to conceive *in their subconscious* the idea that there is no need of a "physician" for them, because they have not seen their "sicknesses," but do consider *themselves* physicians for other "sick" people. Here we have the fine and subtle work of the "enemy." It is not that these children are expressly taught this in the convents. In theory they are made to see that they are sinners, but being set apart from the external

world, in practice they consider themselves more on the "healthy" side than on the "sick" side.

They do not know that the sin of the world is not outside but inside man; and when they begin to have contact with the world, the struggle begins against a "sickness" that, for not having been discovered on time, is already far advanced. It is like a cancer that was not attacked at the beginning, but because it was unsuspected, it was left to grow, and sometimes there is no remedy for the malady, for when it is discovered, it is because death is close at hand. There is a very long on-going history of this which only God knows.

«*But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I have not come to call the just but the sinners.*» Men have thought that God prefers their sacrifices to letting Him practice His Mercy upon them. No creature can make a "sacrifice" pleasing to God if he does not first resort to His Mercy. The only sacrifice pleasing to God is the one that comes forth from a contrite and humbled heart, says the Lord through the prophet Hosea: *«For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than holocausts »* (Hos 6:6). And in Isaiah, it says: *«This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed;*

your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: "Here I am!" If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech ...» (Is 58:6-9).

After a person, through a sincere sorrow for his sins, *recognizes that he is a sinner* and humbles himself before God imploring His Mercy, then sacrifice springs forth as a consequence of his love for God and not because of an imposition devoid of spirit, faith, and love. Sin is not in the exterior world but in the inner "world" which, ever since the sin of the angel, man brings with him when he is born. God cannot "build" upon this world of sin, the "self" that rebels against the Divine Will wanting to do man's will (which is why it is easier to submit oneself to the will of another person than to be submitted to God's Will) —"self" that has to be severely thrashed, not by another man but by one's own liberty, in order to be uprooted by God Himself through the free cooperation of the soul. This is a very arduous undertaking for the soul, one that the soul and God carry out and in which the devil and the flesh play a *principal* role. The devil has wished to take God's place, and the "flesh," the "self," has taken the soul's place. God will drive out the devil according as the soul with her liberty lets the "self," the "flesh," "starve" to death. The external world is the battlefield, for out towards it must these two enemies, the "devil" and the "flesh," exit so that the soul, free of them, may find her heaven in God. The soul, familiar with that exterior world, holds it in con-

tempt and receives nothing from it. This is how the "flesh," the "self," begins to weaken, because it is from the world that its nourishment comes, and upon the soul's rejecting the world in order to nourish herself from God's Will, the "self" "starves" to death. When led by a false obedience, one fulfills the will of other men and the "self" is fed another type of nourishment and cannot die of starvation because it is receiving the recognition of men, and when the "self" cannot die, God cannot enter and drive out the devil.

«At that time the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, whereas thy disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast"» (Mt 9:14-15).

Jesus is the bridegroom of the soul because he possesses the fullness of the Holy Spirit. His disciples could not fast, offer sacrifices, because they had Jesus with them. The soul could not but be joyful with the presence of the bridegroom, but it would not be long before Jesus, the bridegroom, would be snatched from them, and then his disciples would fast and do much penance in order to die to their old man and be able to receive the "bridegroom" from within their souls and not from without, in order to attain an identification with him — the wedding with the Bridegroom.

«And no one puts a patch of raw cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a

worse rent is made. Nor do people pour new wine into old wineskins, else the skins burst, the wine is spilt, and the skins are ruined. But they put new wine into fresh skins, and both are saved» (Mt 9:16-17).

Man has to do penance so that the "body of sin" — the human "I" which tends towards itself—can disappear in order to free the I (Self) of the soul, which tends towards its Creator, of whom it is "image," the "likeness" of whom it must also become. As the purification, the self-denial, progresses, God gives the soul ever more grace for her resurrection into a new life: *«No one puts a patch of raw cloth on an old garment.»* As long as the "old man" lasts, unless the soul cooperates with the graces God gives her for her purification, she cannot receive the "new graces" that would give her "resurrection," *«for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse rent is made,»* which means that the "new graces," like the initial ones, would be lost, and the soul's responsibility would be even greater.

«Nor do people pour new wine into old wine-skins,» nor can new graces be given to the "old man"; *«else the skins burst, the wine is spilt, and the skins are ruined»:* the grace would be ignored — *«the wine spilt»*— and the man would be lost, for he would never again receive that grace — *«and the skins are ruined. But they put new wine into fresh skins, and both are saved.»* The grace of "resurrection" is given to the purified soul, and thus the soul is ready to cooperate with it. Soul and body are purified, and through the soul's receiving eternal life

through grace, the body also partakes and resurrects in glory on the last day, «*and both are saved.*»

THE HEALING OF THE HEMORRHAGING WOMAN, AND THE RESURRECTION OF A YOUNG GIRL

«While he was thus speaking to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples» (Mt 9:18-19).

Jesus with his disciples is "celebrating" the "call" of the new apostle Matthew. He is still at table speaking to them, but this does not distract him from his mission — that of continuing to practice Mercy. *«While he was thus speaking to them, behold, a ruler came ...., saying, "My daughter has just died...." And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples.»* Jesus was there at table with his disciples and the publicans and sinners because that was his Father's Will, and that same "Will" makes him rise in order to go and restore life to a young girl who has just died. Here we have the *example* that every apostle of Christ's should follow —that of fulfilling the Will of Him who sent him. Jesus is identified with the Father; this is why he always knows His Will. So will the apostle who is identified with Christ do the same. Even if he is among sinners, he will be fulfilling His Will, and Christ through him will practice the Father's Mercy wherever he goes.

«And behold, a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well (Mt 9:20-22).

This woman was ashamed of her illness and did not dare confess it with her lips by asking to be cured, but in her heart her faith burned. The hands of the woman touched the fringe of Jesus' garment, but her faith touched Jesus' heart, causing power to come forth from him to heal her. And the Evangelist St. Luke says that *«Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you'" But Jesus said, "Some one touched me, for I perceive that power has gone forth from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace"»* (Lk 8:45-48). Likewise, there are people who are spiritually "ill" from shameful sins they dare not confess with words. But if they have faith and from the heart confess it to God, sincerely repenting of their sins and desirous of attaining "health," Jesus will be touched by the sick person's faith and, like the woman, that person will be healed. And then after receiving a "power" from the Lord, he will feel no shame in confessing his "illness" and its cure: «... *and*

falling down before him she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.» And that person will receive, besides the cure of his "illness," the forgiveness of his sins, and the peace to go on glorifying God: «*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.*»

«And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the flute players, and the crowd making a tumult, he said, "Depart; for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went through all that district» (Mt 9:23-26).

There are young people, adolescents, who it would seem have totally lost God's grace because they are continually committing "mortal sin." These children have need of their parent's faith to intercede to the Lord for them: *«My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.»*

«And when Jesus came to the ruler's house, and saw the flute players, and the crowds making a tumult, he said, "Depart; for the girl is not dead but sleeping."» In addition to their faith, it is also necessary that these parents allow Jesus the freedom to put out of "their home" those who "celebrate" the death of their children — those who live off the sin of others — obeying in *everything that the Lord may ask of them,* even if it makes those others laugh and ridicule their faith: *«And they laughed at him.»*

"But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.» After parents, obedient to the Lord, put out of their home and also out of themselves everything that may be an impediment to His entering in, He, "taking" their children "by the hand," will restore the life of grace to them, for these adolescents — most of them —like the daughter of Jairus, are not dead because of sin but, rather, are "asleep" upon sin because their parents or guardians have lost their faith, and they do nothing to "wake them up." Thus these adolescents grow up in this state of "sleep" and subsequently do indeed die because they *consciously* come to accept the sins they have unconsciously committed. And then the parents, together with them, will have to render an account to God for these souls who had been entrusted to them.

THE HEALING OF TWO BLIND MEN

«And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on, us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it!' But as soon as they had gone out they talked about him all over the countryside» (Mt 9:27-31).

These two blind men are not like the man born blind; these represent those who are blind through "illness";

they are those people who have become spiritually "blind" through their sins of pride, but in a moment of grace, coming to know the miracles the Lord does with other souls, they recognize their "blindness" and ask the Lord to have mercy on them: *«Have mercy on us, Son of David.*» They have faith in *their* being healed, but that faith has a limit; it goes no further than believing what is to their self-interest: that Jesus can open their eyes. They will see, according to their faith, only to fall later on into another evil — disobedience — because they lacked faith in him who was opening their eyes. Jesus knows this and this is why he says to them: *«"Do you believe that I am able to do this"?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord!' Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened.»*

Their eyes were opened, but their hearts remained closed to grace. Jesus was able to touch their eyes because they believed in the power of his hands, but he could not touch their hearts because in their faith there was no love, but only self-interest. This is why they did not obey their Master's charge: *«And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But as soon as they had gone out they talked about him all over the countryside.»*

These are the souls whose interest it is to "see" and to "know" so that others may know that they "see" and "know," but they do not know what it is *to obey* the Lord, and *«as soon as they had gone out»* — once they lose His presence — they do what they want and not

what God tells them. These would have been better off being born blind and dying without ever having received their "sight." Pride is like a cancer—the cancer of the spirit; if it is not attacked on time, the *root* invades the whole soul; if it is rooted out from one part, it flares up in another: these blind men, though "seeing" the "son of David," did not "see" the Son of God and did not obey him as God, and if they reaffirm their sin they die.

THE CURE OF A LEPER

«And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean" Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean" And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people" But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter» (Mk 1:40-45).

«And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."» This leper represents those sinners who, unable to carry the burden of their sins any longer, resort to the Lord beseeching him to cleanse them. Jesus, *«moved with pity»* by their prayers, grants them the grace; but once they see themselves "cleansed," they forget about *obedi-*

ence to the Lord and do not attain “purification” of those sins. Boasting of their “healing” they begin to «*talk freely about it, and spread the news* » — the grace they have received —and as they are not purified of their sins, what they do by their behavior is to impede the work of the Lord, not only in themselves but in other souls as well: *«Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.»*

These persons limit the direct intervention of the Lord in souls because they are a cause for scandal to those who have no faith, and thus “those in authority” take measures which, for *justice's sake,* limit the Lord’s *direct intervention,* and He *cannot act* except in a few souls and in those who go seeking after Him.

Many of those who write about the lives of saints also contribute to this “limiting” of the Lord’s intervention, because souls endeavoring to imitate the life of these saints have caused others to doubt the truth with their false “imitation” devoid of the Spirit that made those souls holy. Seeking to be “saints” on their own, these individuals impede the intervention of the Lord’s Spirit, who has a different process for each saint, and not as men claim when classifying them like prepackaged merchandise.

«See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people.» When Jesus sends a soul to submit herself to the authority, it is so that the soul may be a “proof to them” of the fact that

the Lord *can act directly* when He wants to grace a soul, and so that they themselves can get acquainted with His way of doing things, which is different in each soul. But these individuals begin to spread the news around about the grace received, overriding the authority—*disobeying the Lord's command* — and so do not give to the authority the proof that they should have given. For this reason, the authority has, in a way, "disregarded" the Lord's direct action in some souls, because of errors that have been made. This is why we should not judge the errors of the authority, because each one has his own share of the responsibility. As for the responsibility of those who by their behavior have *forced* the authority to take measures that have limited Christ's direct action in the souls, only the Lord knows where each one's responsibility begins and where it ends.

Jesus, by sending those he healed to present themselves to the priests, was giving those priests an opportunity to recognize the Messiah through the works he performed, enabling them to receive God's Mercy. In the same way today, Jesus has sent many souls to submit themselves to the authority so that the authority might recognize the *direct work of the Holy Spirit* in souls and cease to be opinionated like their predecessors, becoming prideful with power, and that they themselves might receive the *Holy Spirit,* who would lead them into His Mercy before His Justice comes. But isn't the same thing happening today that happened then?

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT

«Now when he had entered Capharnaum, there came to him a centurion who entreated him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying sick in the house, paralyzed, and grievously afflicted." Jesus said to him, "I will come and cure him!' But in answer the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man subject to authority, and have soldiers subject to me; and I say to one, 'Go! and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it"» (Mt 8:5-9).

This centurion, having authority over soldiers and slaves under his command, recognizes himself as "subordinate" before the Lord and does not consider himself worthy that Jesus should enter his house. His faith is such, that he is sure that with just one word from the Lord, his servant will be healed. This is the humble authority that lets God act and that can intercede for those he has under his command, with the assurance that God will listen to his prayer, because he himself is not an obstacle between the "servant" and the Lord but an "instrument" of faith through which the Lord can pass: *«Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. But only say the word, and my servant will be healed.»* How different from the authority of the doctors of the Law and also from many of those who exercise Peter's authority, who seek to supplant Christ, making themselves "another Christ"! Such as these do not trust

in the "word" that comes from the Lord's lips, but only in the word that they themselves utter.

«When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from the east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth!' And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment» (Mt 8:10-13).

«When Jesus heard this, he marveled, and said to those who followed him: "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."» Today, too, the Lord is "marveled," but not because He has found more faith than in Israel, but because of quite the opposite situation, and this is what He has made known to those who follow Him: Truly, I say to you, that *not even in Israel* did I find less faith than what I have found in my church today and in the majority of souls who consider themselves "consecrated" to my service. And this is why many of today's Jews will be at table with Christ, His apostles and His saints in the kingdom of heaven, while many baptized "Christians" *«will be thrown into the outer darkness»;* for in each soul, it will be done for him "as he has believed," and those who have believed in a Christ according to the world will be with the Antichrists, who is the "prince of this world." There in his kingdom is where «*there will be weeping and gnashing*

of teeth»; «And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; be it done for you as you have believed."»

XVI

THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH

«And again he entered the synagogue. And a man with a withered hand was there. And they were watching him, whether he cured on the Sabbath, that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Stand forth in the midst." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? to save a life, or to destroy it?" But they kept silent. And looking round upon them with anger, and being grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch forth thy hand." And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored. But the Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might do away with him» (Mk 3:1-6).

We have two examples to meditate in this healing carried out by the Lord. In the first place, there is the hardness of heart of those men, so obstinately anchored in the letter of the Law; and in the second place, the disabled man with the withered hand.

«Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do evil? to save a life, or to destroy it? But they kept silent.» The Pharisees were watching Jesus to see if he would cure on the Sabbath and so have something to accuse him of; and when he asks them if it is lawful on the Sabbath to

do good, or to do evil, they keep silent. This is the typical attitude of people who, like the Pharisees, do not act with good intention. They couldn't care less about truth or good; they seek only their personal interest—in this case, to reassert their authority; and in order to attain the end they purpose, they do not waver before the evidence of the facts but, rather, become even more hardened. *«But the Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him as to how they might do away with him.*» Neither love nor the marvels of God can crack the hardened crust that covers their hearts because their liberty is placed at the service of hatred personified: that one who has no heart for loving, but only "knowledge" for despising good — Satan.

«Jesus, looking round upon them with anger, and being grieved at their hardness of heart, said to the man, "Stretch forth thy hand!' And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored.» The Lord was giving them to understand that their hearts were more withered than the man's hand. The disabled man could be healed, for although his hand was withered he preserved a fresh heart.

This man with the withered hand represents those disabled in spirit who do not stretch forth their hand to do deeds of mercy for their neighbor. They too have a withered hand but not as a result of a hardness of heart but because it does not occur to them to do good, not having had the example at home, and they are oblivious of their neighbors' needs. These individuals can be cured by the Lord at any moment, for he does not let a person perish who *unconsciously* suffers from an evil that impedes his

receiving God's Mercy for being redeemed. Jesus will give that person the light to practice mercy with his fellowmen, he himself receiving God's Mercy for his own redemption from his sins, enabling him to attain eternal life.

THE MAN WITH THE DROPSY CURED ON THE SABBATH

"And it came to pass, when he entered the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to take food, that they watched him. And behold, there was a certain man before him who had the dropsy. And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to cure on the Sabbath?" But they remained silent. And he took and healed him and let him go. Then addressing them, he said, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him up on the Sabbath?" And they could give him no answer to these things» (Lk 14:1-6).

Jesus had been invited to take food at the house of «*one of the rulers of the Pharisees on the Sabbath.*» The doctors of the Law and other Pharisees were there; and «*they watched him*» to see if he cured on the forbidden day. The Lord knows this, but he is concerned about one thing only: to fulfill the Will of Him who sent him. A man with dropsy is there. That man was in need of health of body as well as of soul, which will mean "health" for many souls because the man with dropsy spiritually represents something more than a man afflicted with bodily dropsy. *«"Which of you shall have an ass*

or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him up on the Sabbath?" And they could give him no answer to these things.»

This man with the dropsy represents those individuals who suffer from "spiritual dropsy." They are puffed up with pride, full of vainglory, as is the man with dropsy swollen and full of water. But when the "disease" is involuntary, which means they are unconscious of the evil, the Lord can accomplish the miracle of their cure at any moment. These are individuals who, more through "inheritance" than through "contagion," suffer from the "disease" — the sin of pride and vainglory. Theirs is not a voluntary acceptance of that evil but, rather, is due to the fact that from the time they are very little, they are led to believe that they are "blue bloods," that they belong to a "superior race," or that their "noble family stock" sets them above others, looking down on those others because they themselves belong to a higher social class, since they have a better economic position, education, and so on.

From the time they are born, these people grow up in this environment of mistaken concepts, and it is from this that they contract their swelling—"spiritual dropsy" — until it becomes an incurable "disease" if the soul should reject the graces that the Lord will give her for curing her malady.

And sometimes God, in order to save these souls, subjects them to very humiliating trials so that they can reach their normal state; and, like the man with the

dropsy, they must submit themselves to many sacrifices in order to be able to attain health.

Just as the disease of dropsy is the abnormal buildup of fluid in the body, "spiritual dropsy" is another type of abnormal buildup— a buildup of vainglory in the spirit, in the person's spiritual concept of himself.

Here we are not dealing with "classification" as established in the world as a consequence of original sin and which is not opposed to God's laws, for each soul who comes into this world is born at a social level that corresponds to him according to the mission that he must fulfill on earth, and also according to what his soul *needs* for his redemption. We are referring here to the "superiority" that people ascribe to themselves when they feel that they are better than others. This is an abnormal state and for this reason produces the "disease" of spiritual dropsy. The other is a normal state and does not produce "swelling." For example, a soul who is born to fulfill the mission of governing a nation comes with his natural talents for accomplishing this mission, and this is not the same as a soul who comes to fulfill the mission of a laborer who must till the soil. The two differ because of the "natural talents" they develop and the environment in which they live for accomplishing their different missions and their purification; but there is no difference in their souls, which is why the one who has a higher mission should not feel superior and look down on the other whose mission is apparently inferior for his having been born at a lower social level — and we say "apparently" because in the eyes of God, it could be the opposite.

Therefore, both must fulfill their duties at the work "level" that corresponds to each, and he who is lower should not look with envy upon the one who is higher, nor should the one above look down on the one below. True humility lies in living in truth, embracing in one's mission the station in life that God has assigned to *each, feeling* equality of soul with all, seeing the souls in God through the image of Him which they all have, in the conviction that what one does to them one does to God. This is the true "communism of love" that Christ taught us by His example. He, though he was the Son of God, was born of a poor family—middle class, as they say today— and therein he fulfilled his mission. The fact that Jesus was born of a poor family does not mean that the rich — those who have a higher economic or social position — are not good. What is not good is attachment to self, which results in one's attachment to the goods of this world, to greed, pride, a superiority complex which is vainglory, and so forth. And this is true of all classes— from the highest to the lowest. One can live under a bridge or in a hovel and have a heart puffed up with greed and desires for human glory, just as one can also live in a palace and be very humble. Of the latter, we have the example of the kings who have been saints, living in a court and receiving a glory which they gave to God, and they neither appropriated it nor desired it for themselves. The Popes who have been saints have done the same thing. This does not mean that God has *wanted* that life of opulence for them but, rather, that *in spite of* their living in it, those saints abided in a humility of heart, a poverty in spirit, and that is why they are saints.

Poverty is not a condition for sainthood but, rather, a *consequence* of sanctity. When one begins to walk toward sanctity, one begins to love poverty and to set at naught the riches of this world, and for a logical reason: having become familiar with the eternal riches, everything else loses its value, and one relinquishes the latter in order to obtain the former. It is like someone who is traveling on a donkey and is offered an airplane for continuing on his way; he must let go of the donkey in order to take the airplane, for he cannot travel on both. Would he hesitate to make the change? One who is traveling the path on the donkey may one day reach the end of the road, but it will be a very long road and he could, together with his donkey, "die" along the way. The "donkey," which is the riches of this world, cannot pass through the gates of heaven; it must be left here below; so that, in any case, he will have to walk the last lap (in purgatory). "Poverty in spirit" is the wings offered to the soul for reaching the kingdom of God.

THE CANAANITE WOMAN

"And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid. But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came in and fell at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, "Let the children first be filled, for it is not right to take the chil-

dren's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And he said to her, "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone» (Mk 7:24-30).

"And he entered a house, and would not have any one know it; yet he could not be hid.» This happens in those souls who are ever-watchful in prayer and are not resigned to the situation of God's absence by living in a state of lukewarmness. When their moment of trial comes, even though Jesus is in their souls, He hides from them, *«and would not have anyone know it,»* because it is the soul's moment of darkness, but the soul does not know that it is her moment of "trial," and she thinks that the Lord has gone away because He has been offended by her for some fault committed, and she *incessantly entreats Him* to have pity on her, to punish her as she deserves, according to His Justice, but not to separate her from His presence nor fail her in His Love. To this insistent prayer of the soul who in this fashion shows Him her love, the Lord cannot remain indifferent, and though He would not have her know His presence in her, it is not possible for Him to hide Himself. And, thus, by submitting themselves to God's Justice for the sake of not losing the presence of the Beloved, these souls pass quickly and intermittently through this spiritual stage of "darkness," whereas others find this stage long and drawn out because of their failure to use the same tactics of love and trust in God's Justice. These generous souls also suffer much, for the purification is

painful and no one can free himself from it, but their suffering is different from that of the other less generous souls, for by consciously accepting the punishment they deserve and submitting themselves to Him for love of the Beloved's Will, they do not lose His presence.

«... But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him and came and fell at his feet.» This woman was a Gentile, *«Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.»* Jesus had, in the first place, come to the sons of the Promise, the Jews. He first was to exhaust all means for their receiving the word he was bringing them from the Father, that they might have the opportunity to enter into the Redemption as firstfruit of the People of God — and so it was with those who received the word. This is why Jesus could not perform his miracles with the Gentiles until all those "means" were exhausted, according to the Father's Justice with respect to the liberty of the souls.

«And he said to her, "Let the children first be filled, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."» This woman knows what she is doing; she embraces the station in life allotted her, according to the mission she must fulfill in this world. She is truly humble because she is on the side of truth and does not feel offended by the words of Jesus but, rather, recognizes that he speaks the truth. And she answers with the sincerity of one who is not unaware of her position, but she is also acquainted with God's infinite Mercy. *«But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under*

the table eat the children's crumbs."» She knows she is a "dog" and that her place is "under the table" upon which the children eat, and she is content with the crumbs because she knows that this is enough for her.

"And he said to her, "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter."» The woman's humility cast out the demon that tormented her daughter. The Lord tells her very clearly: *«"For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.»*

This is what a person needs for attaining the grace of his liberation from evil: the woman "came in" and "fell" at Jesus' feet—to "come into" his own soul and "fall" at the Lord's feet. *«And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter»* — to beg the Lord that He grant him the grace to liberate his soul from the spirit of evil, and have the humility to recognize the truth that God declares to him regarding his spiritual position. Humility will work the miracle that will free him from evil.

Because of the hardness of heart of those sons of the Promise who rejected the Redeemer— the Jews who were "at table" — the grace passed on to the "dogs" — the Gentiles, who were "under the table" eating the children's crumbs: *Grace* adopted the dogs as sons, grafting them onto the natural branches, making them sharers of the root, as St. Paul says. Now the sons *of grace* must first be "filled" with the grace, according to Divine Justice, so that this "grace" may pass on to the other children and make of the two a single family, as St. Paul

says in his Epistle to the Romans: *«Just as you changed from being disobedient to God and now enjoy mercy because of their disobedience, so those who are disobedient now—and only because of the mercy shown to you—will also enjoy mercy eventually. For God has imprisoned all men in their own disobedience only to show mercy to all mankind»* (Rom 11:30-32).

THE TEN LEPERS

«On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then said Jesus, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well"» (Lk 17:11-19).

The nine lepers who did not return to give thanks to Jesus for the grace they had received from him represent those people who, having been sent by the Lord to present themselves to the priests or to the authority, stay on with the priests, submitting themselves to men, and they forget about the Lord. These will again fall into evil and will not attain eternal life because they have no faith,

and what they seek in the priests is not God but their "convenience."

The "foreigner" who, in addition to fulfilling the command of the Lord by "presenting himself to the priests, returned glorifying God and thanking Him represents those grateful souls of genuine faith who *in obeying God* are obedient to the authority and do not cling to men but ever abide in God. Like the Samaritan leper, these receive absolution for their sins and life eternal: «*Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.*»

This fact also is representative of what will happen before the end comes. Many Christians who have received the Lord's grace and have clung to the "authority," remaining without the Spirit of Christ, and have not glorified God but have sought human and worldly glory, will remain with the "prince of this world" and will belong to the "body" of the Antichrists. Whereas many "foreigners" —non-Christians —who, in having received the grace of the Lord, have abided in God, glorifying Him and thanking Him, will enter into the Mystical Body of Christ and will receive life eternal.

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH

«At that time Jesus went through the grain-fields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him; how he en-

tered the house of God, and ate the loaves of proposition which neither he nor those with him could lawfully eat, but only the priests?"» (Mt 12:1-4).

The Pharisees were scandalized because Jesus' disciples, being hungry, plucked heads of grain to eat on the sabbath, something which was forbidden.

These men, the Pharisees, ascribed greater importance to the "letter" of the Law than to man's needs.

This is how people today act when, like the Pharisees, they have not let the Spirit of the Scripture penetrate them and they stubbornly cling to the "letter," people who, holding authority, prohibit "sinners" from receiving communion, the Body and Blood of the Redeemer, depriving those souls of the nourishment that would give them salvation and life eternal.

«Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him; how he entered the house of God, and ate the loaves of proposition which neither he nor those with him could lawfully eat, but only the priests?»

No person should prohibit another from receiving the Eucharistic nourishment, for if that soul "hungers" to receive the Son of God — her Redeemer — it is because she has not totally closed herself to God, and Christ can work the same miracles in her and even more than those He worked in sinners when He was physically present in this world, for He now penetrates within their souls sacramentally. and from there He can heal their "diseases," casting out of them the spirit of sin, provided they receive Communion with faith in Him whom they are re-

ceiving: *"Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace.»*

Men who have in their hands the power conferred by Christ for "binding" and "loosing" here on earth, though they can retain the sins of souls who do not fulfill the conditions necessary for receiving absolution for their sins (cf 1 Tim 1:20), may not and must not forbid these individuals to receive Communion, for they themselves, and not the priest, are responsible for their own actions before God, and no one can judge another's *conscience* (cf 1 Cor 11:28-30). To prohibit people from receiving Communion is to use the power that Christ has given priests for "binding" to deprive souls of Christ Himself, Christ who can "unbind them" from sin better than the priests themselves (cf 1 Cor 11:31-32).

This "punishment" that ecclesiastical authority inflicts upon souls is equal to, or worse than, the action of a man who lets another die of hunger. Isn't this considered a crime? And isn't it more serious by far to do this with the life of the soul?

Every person, however sinful he may be, can and ought to receive the Eucharist, provided he has faith in Him whom he receives and does so seeking in Him salvation and the forgiveness of his sins. Only he who receives Communion with bad intent, not believing that he is receiving the Body of Christ, seeks his own condemnation like Judas — *«For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself»* (1 Cor 11:29).

«Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you knew what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice," you would never have condemned the innocent; for the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath» (Mt 12:5-8).

If a priest gives Communion to a sinner and that sinner becomes condemned, the priest is not responsible for his condemnation but only the sinner himself who, like Judas, for having acted with bad intent, received Satan instead of receiving Christ, betraying Him in his heart, while with his lips he professed himself his disciple by attending the Supper. *«Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are guiltless?»*

«I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. » Also greater than the material temple that contains the Tabernacle which holds the consecrated Host is a body that contains the soul, which is "image of God," for receiving the Host. And if the Son of God can be Sacramentally present in that material temple that has neither life nor liberty to accept or reject Him, how are we going to prohibit His residing in a man who is a living temple of God? If this man, this "living temple," with his liberty rejects God and receives the devil, he, and no one else, will have to render an account to God for what he did with his liberty. But he who forbids that man to receive the Redeemer of his soul could be condemning an innocent man and will then have to render an account

to God for that soul because of the "consequences" of his prohibition.

«But if you knew what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice, "you would never have condemned the innocent. » Just as God prefers for men to let Him exercise His mercy upon them through a sincere repentance of their sins, recognizing their weaknesses and helplessness, to their offering and making sacrifices to Him, so too does He prefer for men to show mercy toward others to subjecting them to sacrifice (cf Is 58:5); because by being merciful to their fellowmen, they give God the opportunity to exercise His MERCY upon them and upon the others (cf Is 58:6-12) — upon both him who bestows mercy and him who receives it, for the Lord also says: *«Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours* » (Mt 6:14); and because the Lord can also have mercy upon whom He wills: (cf Rom 9:18) *«...* I *who grant mercy to whom I will»* (Ex 33:19), for He Himself is Mercy. *«For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath,»* and the law was made for man, not man for the law.

CONSPIRACY AGAINST JESUS

«When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified"» (Mt 26:1-2).

People who receive Christ in the Eucharist and persist in their sins because they do not identify with His Spirit, are like Judas. They are doing the same thing as the trai-

tor disciple. They share in the Lord's supper and in their hearts they accept Satan. In this way they are "delivering up the Son of man to be crucified."

«Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and took counsel together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him» (Mt 26:3-4).

Priests, and bishops also ("the elders of the people"), who do not live their ministry with purity of heart, who are «*lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a semblance indeed of piety but disowning its power»* (2 Tim 3:2-5), *«such men value religion only as a means of personal gain »* (1 Tim 6:5), and all they do is conspire against Jesus, for Satan uses them «to *arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him»* in the souls who trust them.

"But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be a tumult among the people"» (Mt 26:5).

These false apostles of the Lord commit their sins secretly—*«not during the feast»* — so that "the people," those who believe in them, will not get on to what they are: «*stain and defilement as they share your feasts in a spirit of seduction. Constantly on the lookout for a woman, theirs is a never-ending search for sin. They lure the weaker types. Their hearts are trained in greed. An accursed lot are they!»* (2 Pet 2:13-14).

THE PENITENT WOMAN

«One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment» (Lk 7:36-38).

This deed shows us what the presence of Christ in a soul can do. Jesus "went into" the Pharisee's house and took his place at table. This Pharisee was a sinner, less so perhaps than that woman who was publicly known as a sinner. The "sinful" woman has an opportunity to meet with Jesus in the Pharisee's house and to demonstrate to him her love, fruit of her repentance for her sins. In the same way, a sinful soul who is not acquainted with the Lord can come to know Him through another sinner who receives him in the Eucharist—"at table" — and receive the grace to draw near to Him also. The presence of the Lord in her soul will sooner or later lead her to receive the other sacraments, and she can then be an example for other sinners who are acquainted with her.

How many men fail to receive the Lord because they do not go to confession, and many of them not because they commit serious sins but because of human respect. If these men could receive the Body of Christ, He Himself would take away their "human respect" and would

lead them to confess their sins. To deny Communion (the Body of our Lord) to souls who *want to receive Him* is to close the doors to the Lord's converting these souls. Christ came to redeem sinners, and no one should oppose the Redeemer's reaching the souls. Was it not for this that He instituted the Eucharist, turning "his flesh" into bread so that He might enter not only into the house of those sinners, as he did when he was in the world, but also "sacramentally," which is to give them to eat of His flesh, which is life for the world and for the souls? Men, you have not understood Christ's inexhaustible love! You have not understood the Eucharist!

This sinful woman indeed came to know the love of Him who had redeemed her from her sins. This is why she has no human respect and makes her confession publicly, at a banquet, no less, placing at the service of her Redeemer all that which for her had been an instrument for sin: the perfumed ointment that she had used to attract men who sinned with her, she now places at Christ's feet, along with her soul and her body: She *"brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.»*

The tears of this sincere and ardent woman are the best confession of her sins and her repentance of them. Those lips that were previously offered as an incentive for sin, she now purifies by kissing the feet of humanity's Redeemer; her hair, in like manner, she uses to wipe

his feet. She has found LOVE and the Man she sought in men. This is why her love is immeasurable. Her heart, weary from her many disillusionments, has found its resting place in the Heart of Jesus.

«Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner"» (Lk 7:39).

How often do people, in similar situations, rationalize like this Pharisee when Christ, through a soul, approaches a public sinner or accepts what such a one offers Him!

Those who forbid a sinner to receive the Eucharist think likewise; they deem that they know better than Christ, and they impede His reaching souls who are in sin: *«If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.»* And since they think that Jesus does not know this, they take it upon themselves to close the doors to the "sinner," lest that sinner "deceive" Christ.

«And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "What is it, Teacher?" "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly"» (Lk 7:40-43).

Man, you who are also a sinner, a debtor to God, and have received from Him forgiveness for your sins

through the Body and Blood of Christ, which you cannot repay, how dare you deny that very thing to another sinner who is in greater need than you? Don't you see that by your own judgments you condemn yourself? If you judge that another is a greater sinner than you, and you yourself, though your own debt was small, could in no way pay it off, this is all the more reason why you should provide to him who owes more than you the means for receiving the One who can pay for him, as He paid for you. *«When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?»* Can it be that now, after your own debt has been pardoned, you are going to haggle with your Creditor over the souls' love for Him? Don't you think that your payment should be to take to your Redeemer souls who can offer Him more love than you can offer Him? For he who is forgiven much, loves much.

"And turning to the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house; you gave me no water for my feet; but she has bathed my feet with her tears and has wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she, from the moment she entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven her, for she has loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven"» (Lk 7:44-48).

«Do you see this woman? I came into your house; you gave me no water for my feet; but she has bathed my feet

with her tears ...; but she, from the moment she entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet» How often have we seen priests celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass like someone who has to finish some bothersome chore quickly! They recite the prayers mechanically without giving a thought to what they are saying, and much less do they elevate their hearts to Him to whom they are saying it, God. They give the impression of being there in body only and of wanting to leave with it also as fast as they can! And how often do they do this in order to get on with their worldly concerns and not to see about the souls! And when a soul needs some of their time, they then are very busy. And after having had Christ in their hands and in their souls, they leave without giving thanks, like someone who has eaten just a piece of bread and simply drunk a cup of water or wine.

On the other hand, we see men and women of the world who after receiving Communion seem to absent themselves from the world and never tire of giving thanks to God because the Redeemer has come to their souls. *«Therefore I tell you, her sins, many as they are, are forgiven her, for she has loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven loves little.»*

«And they who were at table with him began to say within themselves. "Who is this, that he can forgive sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace"» (Lk 7:49-50).

«Who is this, that he can forgive sins?» This is what men usually say when they see that a priest commits sins, or simply because he is a man like themselves.

The world cannot be a friend of Christ's, and men, when they share in the "spirit of the world," become an echo of the same attacks made against Jesus then, doing the same with His priests now. On the one hand, they consider priests (and rightfully so) their equals as regards their human frailty— sinners all — yet they demand of them what they themselves know the priests cannot give. On the other hand, they expect the priest to be very understanding and lenient concerning their own sins, but they do not think that they themselves should do the same with regard to the sins of the priests. Because priests are chosen by Christ and, like Christ, bear the sins of souls (for it is no small matter to have to hear the confession of sinners, wherein oftentimes they will see themselves mirrored), they are naturally tempted to a greater degree by the evil one.

«Who is this, that he can forgive sins?» Jesus, if he had been only "the son of man," would not have been able to forgive sins, but in him resided the Word of God, and this is why he could forgive sins. The priest is a man like any other, but he has the power that Christ has granted him to forgive sins. Can a priest who lives in sin forgive the sins of another, who is perhaps less of a sinner than he? Yes, indeed. He forgives the sins of those who with faith in the sacrament come seeking forgiveness. His own sin is no hindrance to his administering the sacraments. It does indeed impair his own receiving the grace of those sacraments if he is not disposed to receive it, but this fact will never be an impediment for those to whom he administers it.

«But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."» Just so will Christ say to those souls who have confessed, without judging regarding the priest, placing their faith in the Sacrament that they receive from him: *«Your faith has saved you; go in peace.»*

THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN

«But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple; all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them» (Jn 8:1-2).

Once again Jesus will teach "all the people" through these "meditations," opening the doors of His Mercy to souls who seek Him in order to identify with His Spirit. These souls will receive His teachings and the forgiveness of their sins directly, so that they may dispose themselves to enter by means of His Mercy, before the coming of the manifestation of His Justice.

«The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"» (Jn 8:3-7).

Just as Jesus came to impart the purity of the fulfillment of the Law, which men had deformed by their interpretations and traditions, likewise the Spirit of the Lord today is imparting the purity of the fulfillment of His Gospel so that we may *live it.* Because of our persistence in the "letter," we too have deformed it, attaching human traditions to Christ's Doctrine, which is the purity of the Law and the prophets, and which has been *lived,* here on earth, by the Son of God so that everyone who *lives it,* as He did, may have eternal life.

«Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her» Those men used the Law, given to Moses by God, in order to test the Son of God, that they might have some charge to bring against him. In the same way, the same devil who tempted the scribes and Pharisees to test Jesus, today tempts those men who have ecclesiastical authority in their hands so that, by leaning on the "letter" and their "traditions," they might place impediments to the soul's receiving God's Mercy and thus have some charge to bring against Christ before these souls, leading them to believe that He is unjust and that He places upon them "burdens too unbearable" for men, making them fall and, after their fall, closing the doors of His Mercy to them, not permitting them to receive His "flesh of life"; thus, at the same time, the devil also tempts these souls to turn aside from their Redeemer: «*they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him*» — that he might have some charge to bring before God against the souls.

These men who have ecclesiastical authority in their hands have unconsciously become instruments of this evil. Because they are unconscious of this "Evil," no one should accuse them of this, for those (priests and bishops) who have the humility and the sincere desire to be pure instruments at the service of Good and Truth will receive the light to come to know where their error lies; and they themselves will "loose" what they had "bound" by mistake, for theirs is the power to "loose" what they had previously "bound," and it will be loosed in heaven as it was bound in heaven, according to the Lord's word. And the Lord will pour His Spirit upon them abundantly, having mercy upon them and forgiving them their sins and errors, as they have mercy upon souls who go to them seeking forgiveness and the grace of the Sacraments that they administer. No one, then, can consider himself free from sin. We all have need of God's Mercy in order to save ourselves. *"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.»*

«And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they drifted away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again"» (Jn 8:8-11).

Jesus *«once more bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.»* He was waiting for someone to condemn "the woman" in order to write down his name,

which upon being written by him on the ground, would be written down in heaven — the "eternal books" — to condemn that one on the day of judgment for having condemned "the woman."

This woman was at that moment representing all souls in a struggle with sin: the "combating" or "militant" church. In her were represented the souls of those men who had brought her before the Lord to accuse her; he who would throw the stone condemning the woman would be condemning his own soul. Those men were representing the body of the "old man." And just as that "old man" ("body of sin," as St. Paul says) is the one who accuses God before the soul, making the soul see the Divine Law as hard and cruel so as to lead the soul to sin through her knowledge of the Law and thus have some charge to bring against the soul before God in order to go on dominating her, so too these men accused the woman before Jesus so as to have some charge to bring against him and alienate the souls from him in order to go on dominating them, for if Jesus told them to throw stones at her, according to the Law given by Moses, they would say that he was cruel, and if he told them not to, they would accuse him of not fulfilling the Law — exactly what the world (the devil's instrument) does with ecclesiastical authority: if it fulfills the Law, the world says that it is rigid, and if it does not fulfill the Law, it says that it is too lenient. The devil works from every angle and in different ways. Those men who have sought to take hold of Satan with their hands (using their own reasonings) have, themselves, been caught in his tentacles. Men have not yet understood that spirit cannot

be overcome except by Spirit, and that in order to know and overcome their "enemy" the devil, they need only fulfill the Will of God so that He can send His Holy Spirit to earth and put an end to the action of the spirit of iniquity.

Let us be very careful not to condemn anyone, and least of all Christ's Church, because of the sins and errors committed by the authority and its members, because by *condemning* the Church, we are condemning our own soul, since all souls make up the church militant, which are the souls in a struggle with evil, "Sin." We can recognize the errors of the church militant as recognition of our own sins and errors, but not accuse her before God, considering ourselves alien to her. Only Christ knows which are the souls that have triumphed in the battle, which are in combat, and which have given up fighting to go over to the "enemy'' the devil.

In view of the fact that they accepted the action of the spirit of evil, all souls are "adulterous" ever since original sin. Only Mary, the mother of Jesus, was faithful to her Creator, ever abiding in the fulfillment of His Will, and of course we do not refer to the "Son of man," Jesus, because this exception is taken for granted.

«This woman has been caught in the act of adultery.» Who can say that he has not sinned? *«Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her .... But when they heard it, they drifted away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.»*

This is how “repentant accusers,” having recognized their sin in the sin of “the WOMAN,” the church, will drift away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, beginning with the first, even to the last sinner, leaving “the Woman” standing alone before Christ to be judged by Him.

He who stays behind to cast the stone, condemning “the Woman,” will himself be condemned. And those who, repenting, drifted away one by one so as not to condemn “the Woman,” will receive in her the forgiveness of their sins. «*Jesus looked up and said to her, “Woman, where are they’? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”*»

This “woman,” repentant and absolved from her sins, will be the purified Church who will on earth await the end in order to join the “Church Triumphant” and receive the glory of the Bridegroom for the Wedding with the Lamb.

XVII

JESUS, BREAD OF LIFE FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM

«When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "I assure you, you are not looking for me because you have seen signs but because you have eaten your fill of the loaves. You should not be working for perishable food but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." They said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent"» (Jn 6:25-29).

«When they found him on the other side of the sea...» This is true of souls who find Christ when they cross over to the other side of the "sea" of this world. While one's heart and spirit are within the world, it is not possible to find Christ. Sometimes He is glimpsed from afar and souls believe they have found Him and they continue on in the world, not going out to meet Him. They remain with the "shadow" and think they are with Christ. And if they do cross over to the "other side," they do not stay with Him because they are looking for

Him to provide them with the goods of this world — the very things they must relinquish in order to find Him.

«"Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "I assure you, you are not looking for me because you have seen signs but because you have eaten your fill of the loaves."» Likewise, there are souls who seek out Christ in order to have their fill of a desire for that which can give them — in order to better reaffirm themselves in the world, to be esteemed by the world around them — not only the material things but also those spiritual goods that may be esteemed by a part of that world in which they live, such as the apostolic life of Jesus, his wisdom, and his power.

«You should not be working for perishable food but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal.» However great may be the wisdom, knowledge, and power of a person, that wisdom and that power do not endure to eternal life if it does not carry the seal of the Son of God, which means Love for the Father's Will even unto the annihilation and sacrifice of self.

«"What must we do to perform the works of God?"Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."» We human beings have a penchant for everything that is complicated. We want to do many works of our own, and we call them "works of God." That idea of "believing" only in Him whom God has sent seems very simplistic to us and much too easy for "intelligent men." That's fine for

children, but men are beyond all that; they can do God's works. Oh, Lord! how terribly grieved you are by this kind of blindness that purports to be "love for God" and is nothing less than untold pride and arrogance. Men have no use for faith because faith is dark, and their eyes are wide open for seeing; faith is all right for those ignoramuses who have not yet opened their eyes. Lord, this is why you said that whoever does not become like unto a child — simple and ignorant, like children — will not enter the kingdom of heaven. *«This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.*» For children and for those who become like unto them, it is so easy to "believe"! This is why they will enter the kingdom of heaven.

«So they said to him, "Then what sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? Our ancestors ate manna in the desert, as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" So Jesus said to them, "I solemnly assure you; it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world"» (Jn 6:30-33).

This is what men today seem to be saying to Christ: Then what sign can you do, that we may see and believe in you? What can you do? You're a helpless one nailed to a cross, hidden in a piece of bread. What can you do, that we may believe in you? Our "heroes" freed the slaves, defended entire countries from their enemies, discovered lands, decreed laws so that we might have a

better life in this world. And you, what do you do? Men of science have made great discoveries; thanks to them, we are powerful in weapons of all kinds — for destroying one another. We not only dominate the earth but also the sea, the air, and outer space. Look at all we men have done for our life. And you, what do you do? *«I solemnly assure you; it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.*» I solemnly assure you, none of those men could have done anything if God had not *permitted* it, giving them the "power" to do it. This does not mean that these works have all been *"will"* of God. His Justice permits these works, and in the end their consequences will be revealed, as well as each one's responsibility. But to these men's ears, The Lord's words sound like fairy tales for children's amusement. They are not children anymore to be falling for such "tales." It's all very well and good to preach so that bigger fools may believe, but this idea of "believing" is not for "intelligent men." This is the reason why the world is devoid of eternal life and why Jesus was unable to pray for the world, because it is made up of these kinds of men who have consciously closed themselves to the truth. Knowing Truth, they deny it with their works; and they do not all deny it with their words because they are after the "material bread" that God's name and word procures for them.

«They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always" Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me

shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day"» (Jn 6:34-39).

And men think that they have fooled God because, though empty of faith, they continue living all the same, enjoying the material bread they ask Him for or that His name procures for them. But Jesus continues to speak to those who believe in Him, and these go to Him and eat their fill of the bread of life. They neither hunger nor thirst after anything that is not He Himself: *«I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.»* It does not matter that others, seeing, do not believe. They are not of Christ. This is why they do not go to Him, but only to His gifts: *«But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me* ...,» because the will of the Father is that the Son should not lose one soul of those He has given Him, but that He should raise them up on the last day; and as long as there is still one of these souls left in the world, God's Mercy will be in action to gather them all, and then His Justice will come to those who have abused His Mercy.

«"Indeed, this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal

life. Him I will raise up on the last day." At this the Jews started to murmur in protest because he claimed, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." They kept saying: "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, I have come down from heaven'?"Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him; and I will raise him up on the last day"» (Jn 6:40-44).

«Indeed, this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life.» To attain eternal life, we are to nourish our *faith* with love and prayer so that faith may show us the Son and, "seeing Him" at work in souls and in the world, we may *"believe"* in Him. Otherwise, we will always be scandalized and murmuring in protest over what He says and does in souls *«Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?»* We will remain with the externals — what the eyes of the flesh see and what the senses, dominated by the "flesh," are familiar with. Without that *living faith,* we cannot come to know what is of the spirit, and God is spirit.

«Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him."» And how can the Father "draw" us, if not by means of our conscience? The person who does not listen to the voice of his conscience and does not obey it cannot be "drawn" by the Father; and if the Father does not draw him toward the Son, he cannot come

to know Him. Here is the reason why, after twenty centuries, the Son is not known and the Father is totally unknown because men have forsaken their *"conscience"* in order to follow the path of "self-interest" — their reason.

«It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Let me firmly assure you, he who believes has eternal life» (Jn 6:45-47).

«And they shall all be taught by God.» How are they going to be taught by God if they do not hear the voice of their conscience, which is the voice of God? *«Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to me.»* No one has seen the Father, except the Son, «*except him who is from God,»* and everyone who identifies with the Son will see the Father, who is in heaven, and will receive eternal life because he has believed in the Son.

«I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give is my flesh, life of the world» (Jn 6:48-51).

Jesus is true nourishment of the soul, the bread of life. Many who ate the manna in the desert died; Jesus is not referring to physical death but to the fact that many of

those remained in their sin and lost their souls because the manna nourished their bodies but did not give life to their souls. The same holds true for many of those heroes who have received "power" from God for triumphing in their undertakings and have died forever because they became prideful through this "power" and lost their souls.

«I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever.» This *"eating"* has a much deeper meaning than that of simply taking in food with one's mouth. Many can receive the Body and Blood of Christ and die because they *have not* "eaten." Just as material nourishment introduces its substance into the body and blood, so too should spiritual nourishment penetrate soul and spirit, through a living faith in Him who is received, up to becoming transformed into Him Himself, something similar to what happens to the bread which to us "disappears" into "nonexistence" in order to let Christ through, Christ whom we receive through faith. Faith tells us that this bread is the Flesh of Christ.

«And the bread I shall give is my flesh, life of the world.» The "world," in this case, is the "body of sin" that we bring with us when we are born. This "body of sin" partakes of death through sin, and when it *identifies* itself with the "flesh" of Christ, it receives Life because sin disappears.

«At this the Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" Thereupon Jesus said to them: "Let me solemnly assure you, if you do not

eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him"» (Jn 6:52-56).

These things cannot be grasped by those who are still clinging to material things: *«How can this man give us his flesh to eat?»* Neither can those who are satisfied with the "spirit of the world" "eat" the Flesh and "drink" the Blood of Christ. In order to "eat" the Flesh and "drink" the Blood of Christ, one needs to "hunger" and "thirst" after something other than what is "eaten" and "drunk" in this world. Only in this way does the life, which is the Spirit of Christ, gradually penetrate the soul, and redeeming herself from the spirit of evil, the soul truly resurrects to this Life on the last day. *«He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.»* The soul has eternal life, and her body resurrects on the last day.

«He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him,» because the very life of Jesus is the life of the soul, and he who "eats" His flesh and "drinks" His blood becomes one with the Son of God *in His Flesh* (His human nature) and *in His Blood* (His Divine Nature), *receiving His very Spirit* — one and the same with God!

«Just as the living Father sent me, and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread which

came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever. These things he said when teaching in the synagogue at Capharnaum» (Jn 6:57-59).

«Just as the living Father sent me»; Christ Jesus has the very life of the Father and thus with the Father's Life He lives, and He lives because of the Father, for the Father is the Life of Christ. And this Life, Christ, is the bread come down from heaven, and he who identifies himself with Him, "eating" His Flesh and "drinking" His Blood, will have the same life He has and will live because of Him, as He lives because of the Father: *«... and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.»* This cannot be better expressed with words; faith is needed in order to *believe* and *understand.* It is like an electrical power plant that transmits its energy to light up a city, but only those who are connected to the current can receive the light. Thus, only those souls who unite themselves to Christ receive this life from the Father and understand His words.

«After hearing his words, many of his disciples remarked, "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously'?" Jesus was fully aware that his disciples were murmuring in protest at what he had said. "Does this scandalize you?" he asked them. "What then if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?"» (Jn 6:60-62).

«This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?» To the *hardness* of the flesh, the things of the spirit seem hard, and the soul does not un-

derstand that the “hardness” is precisely in the “flesh,” which keeps her imprisoned, not letting her “taste” of the “gentleness” of the spirit. It is the “flesh” that causes the soul to become scandalized about everything that is not in conformity with it; the “flesh” is the “body of sin,” the blind “self” that cannot see beyond itself.[1] *The soul that is free from the “flesh” — sin — is not scandalized about anything, for she sees everything through the spirit that vivifies her, and she disregards that which is proper to death and remains with Life. This is why she finds something good and useful in everything, for in every work, in every creature, there is “something” of God’s, the important thing being one’s discovering what in the creatures or things there is of God, retaining this and discarding all the rest. Neither the devil nor man can do anything* on their own; they can only put forth their *bad will* and do wrong, when they could have done right.

«Does this scandalize you? What then if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?» Souls who have reached the liberty of the ‘children of God” do not dwell on “death” but, rather, view with expectation the “resurrection” of all things. Death is a consequence of sin, and in every sin there is death, but after the Son of God came *in the flesh* and conquered death and sin, in every sin there can also be a “resurrection.” This is why souls freed from sin see the “resurrection” that can come about in a sinner, rather than his death through sin. Death occurs when one fails to recognize

his sin, and only God knows when the soul has become hardened to that extent.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to "take our sins upon himself in order to present them to the Father's Justice and make himself propitiatory Victim for overcoming death. For this reason, and because men could not see his Divinity, Jesus' body had the "appearance" of death rather than the luminosity of Life. This is why the Jews were scandalized with his words when he said: *«I am the bread which came down from heaven.»* We would have done the same thing. His apostles Peter, John, and James saw in the Transfiguration what the body of the Son of God was like; this is what the bodies of those who become identified with Him will be like when He raises them up on the last day.

«"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Yet among you there are some who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples broke away and no longer went about with him» (Jn 6:63-66).

«It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.» This is why people who are attached to themselves do not profit from the things of the spirit, because they live from the flesh and for the flesh, "for themselves" and "in themselves." They see and feel everything according to their self-interest. *«The words that I have spoken to*

you are spirit and life. Yet among you there are some who do not believe.» Many people followed Jesus expecting from him a benefit for themselves; this is why they could not believe; the same thing happens today: since Jesus is not here in person to tell them what he told those others, they fashion for themselves a Christ to their liking, in accord with their interests, and they say that they are his disciples and that they follow him, because they once found him. But Jesus has continued on his way, fulfilling the Father's Will, and they have remained in their "self." *«This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.»* People who act out of "self-interest," heedless of their "conscience," cannot follow Jesus.

«Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him» (Jn 6:67-71).

«Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed ...» Peter has followed the voice of his conscience, and the Father has made known to him His Son, and the others who have done likewise believe that Jesus is "the Holy One of God." But Judas who, acting out of "self-interest," was seeking his own personal advantage in Jesus, becomes the dev-

il's vehicle for delivering up the Son of God: *«Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?»*

Every person who acts out of "self-interest," seeking his own personal gain, sooner or later falls into Satan's clutches, for it is Satan who is directing him toward *"himself* so that he can use him as an instrument and then take him over totally, as he did with Judas, because the soul then finds nothing to lean on and falls into despair. This does not happen to the soul who governs herself by conscience, for even if she errs, she will always find God's support— the "voice" by which she guided herself, and she never loses her trust.

THE LAST SUPPER, AND JUDAS' BETRAYAL

«On the first day of the feast of the Unleavened Bread, the disciples came up to Jesus, and said, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, my time is at hand; I am to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house!" And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples. In the course of the meal, he said, "I assure you, one of you is about to betray me"» (Mt 26:17-21).

«... the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?"» Being a "disciple" of Jesus', being able to "come up" to Him and speak to Him is not a guarantee for anyone to think that he already *belongs* to Jesus. One can be with

Jesus in some aspects of one's life and at the same time *against* Him in others. This is what those individuals do who act out of *"self-interest";* they are "with" Jesus only in that which suits them, but when their "interest" is gone, they are "against" Him. These individuals never come to *identify* themselves with the Spirit of Christ; for this reason they do not belong to Him, and at any moment they can, like Judas, turn traitor. For he who is not *totally* with Jesus is against Him: *«He who is not with me is against me»* (Lk 11:23).

«The Teacher says, my time is at hand; I am to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.» Jesus knows that among the "disciples" there is a traitor — he who a few hours later will deliver him into the hands of his enemies to be crucified. Nevertheless, he does not exclude him from the twelve but goes with him to celebrate the Passover. Jesus is surrendered to the Father's Will. He does not pause to look at the "abysses" that he finds along the path that is leading him toward the Will of his Father, in whom he is constantly engrossed. He disregards those "abysses," because his heart and his gaze are fixed on the Father, who is in heaven, and toward Him he goes. Judas' heart is an unfathomable "abyss" already occupied by the Devil, and Jesus is not unaware of this: *«When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples. In the course of the meal, he said, "I assure you, one of you is about to betray me."»* Judas can no longer penetrate his own heart, which is occupied by the darkness; he only knows that in Jesus he will no longer find anything that he was seeking. He had thought that his master would be king, and

by following him he sought only to ensure for himself a good position in his kingdom. Things were turning out very different from what he had expected; the situation grew more dangerous each day, and it was not expedient for him to continue on "with" Jesus. It was better for him to come forward and set himself "against" him before it was too late and he found himself in jeopardy as well, because of the fact that he was one of his "disciples"; this is why he had gone to the chief priests to negotiate handing him over: *«Then one of the twelve whose name was Judas Iscariot went off to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he kept looking for an opportunity to hand him over»* (Mt 26:14-16).

Just as the heart and gaze of Jesus were fixed on the Will of the Father, who is in heaven, so the heart and thoughts of Judas were fixed on himself, seeking what was *most expedient.* This is why he could not see the devil, who had already taken over his heart and was feeding his thoughts so that he would not be able to come out of himself. At another moment Satan would make him see, and then in Judas' despair he would seize him. This is how the devil works with individuals who let themselves be led along the path of "self-interest."

«"I assure you, one of you is about to betray me." Distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He replied: "The man who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will hand me over. The Son of Man indeed

goes his way as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Better for him if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said, "Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered him, "It is you who have said it"» (Mt 26:21-25).

«The man who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will hand me over.» When there is great friendship or familiarity between two people, the saying goes: "They eat out of the same dish." So it was with Judas. As one of the disciples of the Lord, he ate with him out of the same dish, not only because it was the custom then but because he was one of "the twelve," "his chosen." In a general sense, he was one of the Master's "bosom friends." Thus then, neither is having been "chosen" and being a "bosom friend" any *guarantee* for saying that one *belongs* to Him. Only the souls who *identify* themselves with the Spirit of Christ can say that they are of Christ. One can be "with" Christ, as we have said before, up to a certain point of the path and, in the most difficult or important moment, leave Him for the sake of one's self-interest. The Son of God indeed goes His way, and the "disciple" will be left in himself. *«The Son of Man indeed goes his way, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. Better for him if he had never been born.»*

It was already written in the Prophets, in Isaiah 53:1-12, that the Son of man would be *«pierced through for our offenses, crushed for our sins.»*

As the Lord says in a message regarding the true liberty: «*Coming into this world as Redeemer of humanity, I*

had already been rejected and my death decreed by those false followers of the Law .... For in man's having chosen the "form" of his redemption, the "instrument" was needed who would freely deliver up the Son of man into the hands of his executioners. Judas was called to be "son of God," but he freely chose Satan for his father, becoming "son of perdition," Scripture thus becoming fulfilled. »

«Then Judas, his betrayer said, "Surely, it is not I, Rabbi?" 'Jesus answered him, "It is you who have said it."» In his heart Judas has already betrayed his Master, and when Jesus is telling him so, he still does not realize what he is about to do. He does not "realize" because he is invaded by the darkness which keeps him from seeing the horror of his treachery. To him his betrayal seems like a "very reasonable" thing to do: Jesus has ceased to be what Judas had thought he was, and the *most expedient* thing to do now is to deliver him up, rather than expose himself to being persecuted on his account. This is how the devil works with those whom he uses as "instruments" for his aims: no doubts, no fears, the instrument acts sure of himself and thinks that "he knows very well what he is doing." The moment of doubt, fear, and despair comes later, after he has accomplished his mission as "instrument," and then it is to the devil's "interest" to awaken his "conscience" so that in his despair, he will surrender his soul to him. *«When Judas, who betrayed him, saw that he was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood!'... and he flung the pieces of silver*

into the temple, and withdrew; and went away and hanged himself with a halter» (Mt 27:3-5). In this way Judas surrendered his soul to the devil.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE EUCHARIST

«And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take and eat; this is my body." And taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "All of you, drink of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins"» (Mt 26:26-28).

«And while they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave it to his disciples .... » Just like the bread, the Heart of Jesus would break, that he might give himself to us: *«Take and eat; this is my body.»* And the Evangelist St. Luke added: *«... which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me»* (Lk 22:19). In giving us his Body, Jesus is asking us to surrender ours in like manner: *«This is my Body which is given for you.*» We should likewise give ourselves for Him, doing so in remembrance of Him: *«Do this in remembrance of me.*» It was easy for Jesus to pronounce these words. The words without the sacrifice that followed later would be lifeless. Likewise, it is easy for the priest to pronounce the words of the Consecration, or for us to receive the Eucharist in our mouth, but the Eucharist without the sacrifice of one's self will not give us Life.

The Evangelist St. John says that after the morsel, "at that instant," Satan entered Judas, and Jesus said, *«What you are going to do, do quickly.»* Judas, the first traitor priest and communicant, took the Body and Blood of Christ in Communion, but it was Satan whom he *"received": «At that instant, after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered him.»* Therefore, being a priest of Christ's or receiving daily Communion is no guarantee: IF WE DO NOT GIVE OUR BODY TO CHRIST AS HE GAVE HIS TO US, WE CAN BECOME INSTRUMENTS OF SATAN. *Only the sacrifice of self in order to identify ourselves with Christ's Spirit of Victim-Host* will be our guarantee that we are His, and we will receive eternal life.

«And taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, "All of you, drink of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins."» To drink the Blood of Christ and not be "willing" to give our own blood (its spirit), our life, for Christ is to make a mockery of the Lord's words, and we will be accountable for this on the day of His Justice, if we are doing this consciously.

«For this is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many ... »; and in like manner, the Blood of Christ was shed "by" His apostles, for the apostle and every Christian must identify himself with Christ *in order to receive His Blood,* blood which is equivalent to the Spirit, that it may be "shed for the remission of sins." All of the first apostles of Christ shed their blood, and with this, they surrendered their spirit; they became

"victim-hosts" in the bloody sacrifice, and St. John, having gone through martyrdom, did not shed the blood, becoming "victim-host" also in the *bloodless* sacrifice because that was the Lord's Will: *«Seeing him, Peter said to Jesus, "What about him, Lord?"Jesus answered, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You are to follow me"»* (Jn 21:21). Peter followed him, and the "beloved disciple" remained until, on the Island of Patmos, Jesus, through his angel, gave him the Apocalypse announcing His coming: *«The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ which God gave him in order to make known to his servants the things that must soon come to pass, and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John»* (Apoc 1:1). *«He who testifies to these things— Jesus himself—says: "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!»* (Apoc 22:20).

«I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom» (Mt 26:29).

Where will Jesus drink of the fruit of the vine? In heaven? No. Here on earth will Jesus drink of the fruit of the vine once more with His apostles in the kingdom of His Father, who will be reigning in all those souls who will form the kingdom of God on earth. All those will be there who will have identified themselves with the Body and Blood of Christ *through the sacrifice of self* becoming "victim-host" with the Immaculate Victim. These will receive the Holy Spirit, who will remain with them forever.

XVIII

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

«And on being asked by the Pharisees, "When is the kingdom of God coming?" he answered and said to them, "The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, 'Behold, here it is,' or 'Behold, there it is.' For behold, the kingdom of God is within you." But he said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one day of the Son of Man, and will not see it. And they will say to you, 'Behold, here he is'; 'behold, there he is.' Do not go, nor follow after them. For as the lightning when it lightens flashes from one end of the sky to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation"» (Lk 17:20-25).

«The kingdom of God comes unawares. Neither will they say, "Behold, here it is," or "Behold, there it is." For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.» The kingdom of God is in each soul who has let God reign in her. The "kingdom of God" in souls began since the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. All those souls who, having received redemption through Christ, were "prepared" according to Divine Justice to receive the Holy Spirit because, in having freely renounced themselves (the kingdom of the "self"), they had chosen God as their King, received the Holy Spirit and, with Him, the kingdom of God. This is how the church — the souls

who were in the Cenacle awaiting the Holy Spirit—received Him. And the Holy Spirit began to act "within" souls because Christ with the Redemption opened the way and opened the door in those souls, for by receiving Christ—their own redemption — Christ Himself is the Door by which the Holy Spirit enters.

«The days will come when you will long to see one day of the Son of Man, and will not see it.» While Christ—God's mercy in the world is "in action," we are seeing the days of the Son of man. But when Divine Justice brings to an end the time of His Mercy, then we will see the days of the "prince of this world," the Antichrists, for it is the moment of God's Justice, and it will be the consummation of iniquity, "so that all justice may be fulfilled." Only darkness will be seen where there was light, hatred where there was love, and cruelty where there was mercy, but all of this under the "appearance" of good. This is what will be reigning in those souls who did not let God reign in them. These will be veritable devils on earth, disguised as kindness, many of them passing themselves off as Christ Himself. *«And they will say to you, "Behold, here he is"; "behold, there he is." Do not go, nor follow after them.*» They will do this in order to confuse the few good souls that will be left in the world and who will be subjected to many trials, just as the first apostles of the Lord suffered before receiving the Holy Spirit. Doubt and fear can arise in these, and they may, at some moment, like Peter, deny Christ. But if these people have acted righteously and have not sold themselves to the devil like Judas, they will, like Peter and the other disciples, receive the grace to abide in

Truth and will receive the Holy Spirit Himself, who will clarify all things for them, confirming them in Truth and Love.

«For as the lightning when it lightens flashes from one end of the sky to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.» This is what the *manifestation* of the Son of man will be like when He comes in His kingdom. He will become present at the moment when He is least expected — to the joy of some and the terror of others: joy for those souls who have let Him reign in them, and terror for those who, reaffirming themselves in themselves, have not let Him reign in them. But before the kingdom of God "manifests" itself to His "elect," they will have to suffer greatly, as Christ suffered, and as all the saints have suffered, being censured by the world, persecuted, and held in contempt. *«But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.»*

«As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all» (Lk 17:26-27).

«As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man.» In the days of Noah, people lived placidly, eating, drinking, marrying, having children, celebrating their parties, and committing their sins. No one saw God's "action" in the world, nor did they even remember that God existed, because they did not see that He did either good or bad. Men were lords and masters of the world; they did and undid according to their rea-

sonings devoid of faith. Only Noah, the righteous man, heeded God and knew what God was preparing for that generation, but in vain did Noah try to let the others know what he knew. And only those souls to whom it has fallen to fulfill a mission similar to Noah's can understand the intense and heart-rending suffering that Noah went through upon seeing the unbelief of those whom he wanted to save from perdition. Noah was oppressed from within and from without: from within, he was oppressed by the knowledge he had of what was going to happen and the stubbornness of those who did not want to believe and amend the life they were leading in order to save themselves; and from without, he was oppressed by the work of constructing the ark entrusted to him and by the lack of cooperation that he found in those who should cooperate in the work, in accordance with the wishes of the Lord, causing a delay in the work that he should accomplish. This suffering at both ends was the *effective contribution* required by Justice for saving a remnant. The material work was a consequence of this spiritual contribution, and without the latter, the former would remain unfinished. The ark represented what the "Ark of the Covenant" (God's Covenant with men) was to be — a Covenant that would enable Christ to come and found His Church. Everything that entered into Noah's ark has a spiritual meaning in terms of what was fulfilled in the chosen people of Israel, and everything that was done with the Ark of the Covenant also has its spiritual significance, both of which facts are in relation to the Church founded by Christ. All this entered with Christ into Mary.[1] In Christ everything creat-

ed was purified, redeemed from sin; it was like a new creation in Christ and through Christ. The first man, Adam, had the earth for his mother, for from her he was taken. God wished to give us a woman, Mary, for our mother, in order to liberate us from the earth, taking from Mary's womb Him to whom the new Adam would become conformed — Christ. The Patriarchs contributed to Divine Justice what humanity ought to contribute toward this "new creation's" becoming accomplished in Christ. Humanity has to enter into Christ in order for this to become realized in it; each soul must attain her own redemption by entering *freely* into Christ. In the "end times," as in the time of the Patriarchs, there will also be souls "chosen" by God to contribute to Divine Justice what is "needed" for the kingdom of God to *"manifest"* itself on earth, all justice thus becoming fulfilled.

Just as only those souls who entered with Noah into the ark were saved from the flood, so too only those souls who enter with Christ and in Christ will be saved, because he is the Righteous Man and also, in a way, the new Adam, who opened his side to receive the souls in order to present them to the Father as His Bride, the New Eve, His Church, who has Mary as her mother.

«Likewise as it was in the days of Lot— they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed» (Lk 17:28-30).

The righteous Lot also represents Christ. Just as God was only waiting for Lot to leave Sodom in order to destroy it, He is only waiting for Christ, the Word, to consummate His Work of Mercy, and when God's Mercy ceases to act in the world, His Justice will come to carry out the punishment in all those who are found like the inhabitants of Sodom and who belong to the world and not to God. Only those souls will be saved who have come "out of the world" with Christ, as those who came out of Sodom with the righteous Lot were saved. *«So will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed.»*

When the righteous Lot and his own were leaving Sodom in order to leave that domain to the spirit of evil, so that Sodom might receive its punishment, the inhabitants of the city did not realize, least of all did they expect, what was to come upon them after that.

«On that day, let him who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away; and likewise let him who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it» (Lk 17:31-33).

On that day only those souls will be saved who have a living faith and who, for having "acted" in that faith, will be detached from everything and ever awaiting that moment when the Son of man will reveal Himself, so that they can follow Him; for whoever in that moment is still concerned about the things of this world, and is not vigilant, will, in the moment of confusion, try to save or gather up the things he has and will not be able to follow

Him, who, like a flash of lightning, will appear to gather the souls who belong to Him. («So *the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the Lord*» Gn 18:22). *«Let him who is in the field not turn back.*» Wherever one finds oneself in that moment, there he ought to stay, for it is there that he will be taken up by Him. *«Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it.*» Even if he sees the danger of dying, he should not move, for even if he dies, his soul will be taken up all the same, and he will be saved. *«But whoever loses his life will preserve it.» «Remember Lot's wife.*» Neither should he go "prying around" to see what is happening, lest he find himself in the plight of Lot's wife who turned into a statue of salt for having turned back to see what was happening in Sodom.

Lot's wife, the wife of the righteous man, represents those souls who belong to Christ's church through baptism but have not come to identify themselves with the Spirit of the Bridegroom, Christ, because in "prying" into the world, they do not part company with it altogether. These souls will be left along the way, in a petrified state, hardened for lack of the Spirit of Christ, and they will not be able to save themselves in that hour. They will be a testimony of God's Justice, similar to the damned in hell, as was the statue of Lot's wife for the world of that time. Lot's wife surely loved the things she was leaving behind, more than the husband she was following, as many souls do who leave the world to follow Christ but continue "prying" into the things of the world, seeking the world and the things it has to offer.

«”I tell you, on that night two will be in one bed: one will be taken, the other left; two women will be grinding corn together: one will be taken, the other left.” The disciples interrupted: “Where, Lord?” they asked. He said, “Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather”» (Lk 17:34-37).

«On that night... »: the Lord does not mean that this will necessarily happen at night, but that it will happen on the “night” of the world, when the spirit of darkness reigns — when evil dominates the world. On that night, those who have become identified with Christ will be taken, regardless of where they happen to be.

«Two will be in one bed: one will be taken, the other left» means that even if two people are together, the one who is identified with the Spirit of Christ will be taken, and the other left because he or she belongs to the world. Even if they are husband and wife and consider themselves “one body,” if the two are not identified with the same Spirit, one will be taken and the other left. It is God’s Justice in the free choice of the soul: he who “will be taken” will reign with God because God already reigns in his soul, and he who “is left” will remain in the world with the kingdom of iniquity because in rejecting God, he chose the world rather than Christ.

«”Where, Lord?” they asked. He said, “Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather.”» Where the body of the Antichrists, the man of iniquity, is, that is where the devils will be gathered, evil spirits that will take possession of all those bodies, the souls who have chosen the spirit of the world, and this is why they be-

long to the Antichrists, prince of this world, and not to God. Egypt's punishment, which is a figure of what is to happen in the end, will then be fulfilled, as the Book of Wisdom says in Chapter 17 and following:

«Therefore the unruly souls were wrong.
For when the lawless thought
to enslave the holy nation,
shackled with darkness,
fettered by the long night,
they lay confined beneath their own roofs
as exiles from the eternal providence.
For they who supposed their secret sins were hid
under the dark veil of oblivion
were scattered in fearful trembling,
terrified by apparitions.
For not even their inner chambers
kept them fearless,
for crashing sounds on all sides terrified them,
and mute phantoms with somber looks appeared.
No force, even of fire, was able to give light,
nor did the flaming brilliance of the stars
succeed in lighting up that gloomy night.
But only intermittent, fearful fires
flashed through upon them;
and in their terror
they thought beholding these was worse
than the times when that sight
was no longer to be seen.
And mockeries of the magic art were in readiness,
and a jeering reproof of their vaunted shrewdness.
For they who undertook

to banish fears and terrors from the sick soul
themselves sickened with a ridiculous fear.
For even though
no monstrous thing frightened them,
they shook at the passing of insects
and the hissing of reptiles,
and perished trembling,
reluctant to face even the air
that they could nowhere escape.
For wickedness, of its nature cowardly,
testifies in its own condemnation,
and because of a distressed conscience,
always magnifies misfortunes.
For fear is nought
but the surrender of the helps
that come from one's reflection;
and the more one's expectation
is of itself uncertain,
the more one makes of not knowing
the cause that brings on torment.
So they, during that night,
powerless though it was,
that had come upon them
from the recesses of a powerless nether world,
while all sleeping the same sleep,
were partly smitten by fearsome apparitions
and partly stricken by their soul's surrender,
for fear came upon them, sudden and unexpected.
Thus, then, whoever was there
fell into that unbarred prison
and was kept confined.

For whether one was a farmer, or a shepherd,
or a worker at tasks in the wasteland,
taken unawares,
he served out the inescapable sentence;
for all were bound by the one bond of darkness.
And were it only the whistling wind,
or the melodious song of birds
in the spreading branches,
or the steady sound of rushing water,
or the rude crash of overthrown rocks,
or the unseen gallop of bounding animals,
or the roaring cry of the fiercest beasts,
or an echo resounding from the hollow of the hills,
these sounds, inspiring terror, paralyzed them.
For the whole world shone with brilliant light
and continued its works without interruption;
over them alone was spread oppressive night,
an image of the darkness
that next should come upon them;
yet they were to themselves
more burdensome than the darkness.
«But your holy ones had very great light;
and those others, who heard their voices
but did not see their forms,
since now they themselves had suffered,
called them blest;
And because they who formerly had been wronged
did not harm them,
they thanked them,
and pleaded with them,
for the sake of the difference between them.

Instead of this, you furnished the flaming pillar
which was a guide on the unknown way,
and the mild sun for an honorable migration.
For those deserved to be deprived of light
and imprisoned by darkness,
who had kept your sons confined
through whom the imperishable light of the law
was to be given to the world.
When they determined to put to death
the infants of the holy ones,
and when a single boy
had been cast forth but saved,
as a reproof
you carried off their multitude of sons
and made them perish all at once in the mighty water.
That night was known beforehand to our fathers,
that, with sure knowledge of the oaths
in which they put their faith,
they might have courage.
Your people awaited
the salvation of the just
and the destruction of their foes.
For when you punished our adversaries,
in this you glorified us whom you had summoned.
For in secret the holy children of the good
were offering sacrifice
and putting into effect with one accord
the divine institution,
that your holy ones should share alike
the same good things and dangers,
having previously sung

the praises of the fathers.
But the discordant cry of their enemies responded,
and the piteous wail of mourning
for children was borne to them.
And the slave was smitten
with the same retribution as his master;
even the plebeian suffered the same as the king.
And all alike by a single death
had countless dead;
for the living were not even sufficient
for the burial,
Since at a single instant
their nobler offspring were destroyed.
For though they disbelieved at every turn
on account of sorceries,
at the destruction of the first-born
they acknowledged that the people was God's son.
For when peaceful stillness compassed everything
and the night in its swift course was half spent,
Your all-powerful word from heaven's royal throne
bounded, a fierce warrior, into the doomed land,
bearing the sharp sword of your inexorable decree.
And as he alighted,
he filled every place with death;
he still reached to heaven,
while he stood upon the earth.
Then, forthwith,
visions in horrible dreams perturbed them
and unexpected fears assailed them;
and cast half-dead, one here, another there,
each was revealing the reason for his dying.

For the dreams that disturbed them
had proclaimed this beforehand, lest they perish
unaware of why they suffered ill.
But the trial of death
touched at one time even the just,
and in the desert a plague struck the multitude;
yet not for long did the anger last.
For the blameless man
hastened to be their champion,
bearing the weapon of his special office,
prayer and the propitiation of incense;
he withstood the wrath
and put a stop to the calamity,
showing that he was your servant.
And he overcame the bitterness
not by bodily strength, not by force of arms;
but by word he overcame the smiter,
recalling the sworn covenants with their fathers.
For when corpses had already fallen
one on another in heaps,
he stood in the midst and checked the anger,
and cut off the way to the living.
For on his full-length robe was the whole world,
and the glories of the fathers were carved
in four rows upon the stones,
and your grandeur
was on the crown upon his head.
To these names the destroyer yielded,
and these he feared;
for the mere trial of anger was enough.
«But the wicked,

merciless wrath assailed until the end.
For he knew beforehand what they were yet to do:
That though they themselves
had agreed to the departure
and had anxiously sent them on their way,
they would regret it and pursue them.
For while they were still engaged in funeral rites
and were mourning at the burials of the dead,
they adopted another senseless plan;
and those whom they had sent away with entreaty,
they pursued as fugitives.
For a compulsion suited to this ending
drew them on,
and made them forgetful
of what had befallen them,
that they might fill out
the torments of their punishment,
and your people might experience
a glorious journey
while those others met an extraordinary death.
For all creation, in its several kinds,
was being made over anew, serving its natural laws,
that your children might be preserved unharmed.
The cloud overshadowed their camp;
and out of what had before been water,
dry land was seen emerging:
Out of the Red Sea an unimpeded road,
and a grassy plain out of the mighty flood.
Over this crossed the whole nation
sheltered by your hand,
after they beheld stupendous wonders.

For they ranged about like horses,
and bounded about like lambs,
praising you, O Lord! their deliverer.
For they were still mindful of
what had happened in their sojourn:
how instead of the young animals
the land brought forth gnats,
and instead of fishes
the river swarmed with countless frogs.
And later they saw also a new kind of bird
when, prompted by desire,
they asked for pleasant foods;
for to appease them quail came to them from the sea.
And the punishments came upon the sinners
only after forewarnings from the violence
of the thunderbolts.
For they justly suffered for their own misdeeds,
since indeed they treated their guests
with the more grievous hatred.
For those others did not receive unfamiliar visitors,
but these were enslaving beneficent guests.
And not that only;
but what punishment was to be theirs
since they received strangers unwillingly!
Yet these, after welcoming them with festivities,
oppressed with awful toils
those who now shared with them the same rights.
And they were struck with blindness,
as those others had been
at the portals of the just—
when, surrounded by yawning darkness,

each sought the entrance of his own gate.
For the elements,
in variable harmony among themselves,
like strings of the harp,
produce new melody,
while the flow of music steadily persists.
And this can be perceived exactly
from a review of what took place.
For land creatures
were changed into water creatures,
and those that swam went over on to the land.
Fire in water maintained its own strength,
and water forgot its quenching nature;
flames, by contrast, neither consumed the flesh
of the perishable animals that went about in them,
nor melted the icelike,
quick-melting kind of ambrosial food.
For every way, O Lord!
you magnified and glorified your people;
unfailing, you stood by them
in every time and circumstance.»

THE PROPHECY REGARDING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

«Jesus left the temple precincts then, and his disciples came up and pointed out to him the buildings of the temple area. His comment was: "Do you see all these buildings'? I assure you, not one stone will be left on another—it will all be torn down." While he was seated on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came up to him privately

and said: "Tell us, when will all this occur? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the world?"» (Mt 24:1-3).

As we have said before, the life of the Son of God on earth is a "Way," and everything he did and said has meaning in terms of what will be fulfilled in the souls and in the world through time.

The material temple which the disciples pointed out, admiring its structures, was the temple of Jerusalem, and just as Jesus foretold, it was destroyed, and there was not a single stone left on another. The same thing will happen in the church — the temple that stands in Rome in Vatican City and all the material temples that men have built. If these material temples have endured until now, it is because they are still necessary according to Divine Justice. But when those who are of Jesus come out "of the temple" — the figure—in order to live in the reality, and the time of God's Mercy comes to an end, that His Justice may come, giving rise to the spirit of evil, and the "man of iniquity" comes to consummate his iniquity in the world, as St. Paul says, *«"seating himself in the holy place,»* then there will not be a single stone left upon another. *«Do you see all these buildings? I assure you, not one stone will be left on another—it will all be torn down.*» The same thing will happen all over the world when in His Manifestation God's Justice comes; the whole earth will be devastated; all those great works of man — buildings and bold structures like the tower of Babel, built by them to protect themselves

in this world — will be destroyed and *«not one stone will be left on another.»*

«They come from a far-off country,
and from the end of the heavens,
the Lord and the instruments of his wrath,
to destroy all the land.
Howl, for the day of the Lord is near;
as destruction from the Almighty it comes.
Therefore all hands fall helpless,
the bows of the young men fall from their hands.
Every man's heart melts in terror.
Pangs and sorrows take hold of them,
like a woman in labor they writhe;
they look aghast at each other, their faces aflame.
Lo, the day of the Lord comes,
cruel, with wrath and burning anger;
to lay waste the land
and destroy the sinners within it!
The stars and constellations of the heavens
send forth no light;
the sun is dark when it rises,
and the light of the moon does not shine.
Thus I will punish the world for its evil
and the wicked for their guilt.
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,
the insolence of tyrants I will humble.
I will make mortals more rare than pure gold,
men, than gold of Ophir.
For this I will make the heavens tremble
and the earth shall be shaken from its place,
at the wrath of the Lord of hosts

on the day of his burning anger.
Like a hunted gazelle,
or a flock that no one gathers,
every man shall turn to his kindred
and flee to his own land.
Everyone who is caught shall be run through;
to a man, they shall fall by the sword.
Their infants shall be dashed to pieces
in their sight;
their houses shall be plundered
and their wives ravished.
I am stirring up against them the Medes,
who think nothing of silver
and take no delight in gold.
The fruit of the womb they shall not spare,
nor shall they have eyes of pity for children.
And Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,
the glory and pride of the Chaldeans,
shall be overthrown by God
like Sodom and like Gomorrah.
She shall never be inhabited,
nor dwelt in, from age to age;
the Arab shall not pitch his tent there,
nor shepherds couch their flocks.
But wildcats shall rest there
and owls shall fill the houses;
there ostriches shall dwell,
and satyrs shall dance.
Desert beasts shall howl in her castles,
and jackals in her luxurious palaces.
Her time is near at hand

and her days shall not be prolonged.»
(Is 13:5-22)

TIMES OF DISTRESS

«And Jesus began to say to them, "Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying 'I am he,' and they will lead many astray"» (Mk 13:5-6).

«Many will come in my name, saying, "I am he" and they will lead many astray.» The "Antichrist"— those men who have sought to pass themselves off as Christ because they have accepted the temptation of the evil spirit, becoming "Antichrist" — are in the world, ever since Judas, the first traitor disciple, received Satan into his heart, introducing the spirit of evil into the church that Christ had just founded, and all those individuals who have proceeded like Judas have likewise received the evil spirit. The Antichrist include those priests who, loving the things of the world — their "wages" — above Christ, have sold their souls to the spirit of evil for those "wages" and are seeking to take the place of Christ in souls, as the Lord tells us in one of His messages: *«I told you: "Many will come in my name; do not believe them'; for you have been "forewarned." Satan and his followers will pass themselves off as me, under a form in which you will not be able to recognize them as usurpers of my name .... All those who came before me were thieves, and upon my coming—I, the Shepherd—marauders seek to supplant me, induced by the "Thief who has seduced them with the "wages." There are*

*those who **know** what they are doing, and there are those who **do what they do unknowingly;** the latter are hereby warned; the former will continue on with the adversary, **they themselves** being the collateral for the wages they now receive from his hands, and this they will understand when it is too late.**

[*Words of the Lord from a message given on January 18, 1966 at San Giovanni Rolondo, Italy, to the "instrument" whom He uses for transmitting these writings to humanity. (E.N.)]

«And when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs » (Mk 13:7-8).

There have been wars and there are constant rumours of wars; nation has risen against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and the whole world is divided. There have been earthquakes in various places; there is famine in diverse parts of the world. All this leads us to understand that the "beginning of the birth-pangs" is well underway and that the end should not be long in coming.

THE PERSECUTION AGAINST THE GOSPEL

«Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because

iniquity will abound, the charity of many will grow cold. But whoever perseveres to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come» (Mt 24:9-14).

Christ, on speaking to His disciples in this way, was referring to all His "disciples" throughout time. Many of the Lord's apostles and disciples have been tormented, martyred, hated by all peoples because of His name. They have been a cause for scandal and have been betrayed by their own brothers. But a time is yet to come when the "apostles of the end times" will be tormented and martyred more cruelly than were the former ones, and they will be hated by all peoples because of the truth that they will *preach* and *live* for the sake of Christ's name; and they will be betrayed by their own blood brothers and their brothers in religion.

«And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.» All those who preach a present or future peace based on the balance of human interests are false prophets and are merely deceiving naive people into believing that God is reigning in the world and that the devil no longer exists, thus closing the way of Truth, promoting a worldly Christianity. These are the prophets of the Antichrists who are preparing his kingdom.

«And because iniquity will abound, the charity of many will grow cold.» Today, as never before, "charity" is discussed in the world, when the world is practically without it. This, too, is the mission of the "apostles" of the Antichrists: to preach a charity in their own way and

according to "their" interests so that souls will not realize that "iniquity abounds." This is the intention of the evil one. Men are blind instruments of the evil one's intention, but they are responsible by reason of their having placed their liberty at the service of the world and not at the service of God.

«And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations; and the end will come.» The Gospel has already been *"preached"* throughout the whole world, and the trip of the Pope, head of the Catholic Church, to the United Nations has been nothing less than this: "a testimony to all nations" that the Gospel has been preached throughout the world. Even if the Pope's trip officially has had some other purpose, this has been its purpose in God's plan. Men often fulfill a mission within the divine plan, without their being aware of what they are doing.

All these facts tell us that the end is approaching and that it is not long in coming.

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

«Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see all these things, know that he is near, at the very gates. I tell you solemnly, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away» (Mt 24:32-35).

All these things that Jesus announced are becoming fulfilled ever since His ascension into heaven, beginning with the persecution of His disciples, the wars, famine, and so forth. The first Christians were constantly vigilant in their expectation of Christ's return, and we who have Him even closer — "at the very gates" — live heedlessly, not even giving it a thought: *«So when you see all these things, know that he is near, at the very gates. »*This heedlessness will cost each one dearly, for in the moment least expected, he will have to present himself before the Supreme Judge who will ask for an accounting. And the saddest part of it all is that the hierarchy of the church founded by Christ— the Christians — are the most "heedless" in this regard, thus setting an example of a lack of faith for the faithful.

Just as Christ foretold it, so has it been, and that generation was able to see the beginning of all this; we are seeing its prolongation and are not so sure we will not be seeing the end of it.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE MOMENT OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

«But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of man.

Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left» (Mt 24:36-41).

«But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only,» because that "hour" depends not only on God but on how men use their freedom. When the righteous totally reject Satan, and the unfaithful have totally rejected God, according to His Justice, then the unfaithful will receive the spirit of evil whom they chose, and the righteous will receive the Holy Spirit, the Good; and the end will come, for the "impediment" in each soul will have been taken out of the way. Then the evil one will come, and the devils will invade the earth, taking possession of the souls that belong to them, and they will reign with the Antichrists until iniquity is consummated: *«For the mystery of iniquity is already at work,»* says St. Paul, *«provided only that he who is at present restraining it, does still restrain, until he is gotten out of the way»* (2 Thes 2:7). Restraining him, impeding his coming, is the Spirit of Jesus, the action of the Holy Spirit in the world and in souls. When the Holy Spirit is out of the way and the righteous along with Him, then the man of iniquity will manifest himself, and after that the end will come, at which time iniquity will be consummated.

As it was in the days of the flood, so it is today: people are living heedlessly and are not aware of the "action of God" among men or of the fact that time is passing and the end is near. And just as in the days of the flood people realized what was happening after Noah had en-

tered the ark and there was no longer any salvation for them because the flood came and swept them all away, so will it be on the day of the end, when God's Justice is manifested; the unbelievers will realize that they can no longer do anything about saving themselves, and that will be their torment and despair.

And let no one think that because he has a mother, a father, brothers, sons or daughters, a wife or husband among the righteous, that for this reason he is going to be saved. For in God's judgment one's flesh-and-blood ties do not count; nor do religious ties or political party ties count. The only thing that counts is one's union in the Holy Spirit. Those who are identified with Christ, in His very Spirit, will be taken up; and those who are not identified with Him will be left, even if they live in the same house, belong to the same religion or political party, work together and sleep in the same bed: *«Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left.»* Husband and wife, we repeat, even if they are "one" in the flesh, if they are not one in the spirit, one will be taken up and the other left.

«On that day the remnant of Israel,
the survivors of the house of Jacob,
will no more lean upon him who struck them;
but they will lean upon the Lord,
the Holy One of Israel, in truth.
A remnant will return,
the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.
For though your people, O Israel,

were like the sand of the sea,
only a remnant of them will return;
their destruction is decreed
as overwhelming justice demands.
Yes, the destruction he has decreed,
the Lord, the God of hosts,
will carry out within the whole land.

«Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts: O my people, who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian, though he strikes you with a rod, and raises his staff against you. For only a brief moment more, and my anger shall be over; but them I will destroy in wrath. Then the Lord of hosts will raise against them a scourge such as struck Midian at the rock of Oreb; and he will raise his staff over the sea as he did against Egypt.

«On that day, His burden shall be taken from your shoulder, and his yoke shattered from your neck.» (Is 10:20-27)

THE DESOLATION OF JUDEA

«Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place— let him who reads understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything from his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. But woe to those who are with child, or have infants at the breast in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on the Sabbath» (Mt 24:15-20).

«Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place—let him who reads understand.... » This prophecy was fulfilled with Jerusalem, but that is not all: for God, "Jerusalem" is something more than a nation, and the "holy place," the temple, something more than a place. This is understood by people who receive from God the knowledge of the meaning or the spirit of His words, and not just the "letter." *«Let him who reads understand,*» says the Evangelist, and the "understanding" of him who reads has its significance.

In St. Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians, we read: *«Let no one deceive you in any way, for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and is exalted above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God and gives himself out as if he were God ...* » (2 Thes 2:3-4). And St. Paul continues: *«And then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and will destroy with the brightness of his coming»* (2 Thes 2:8). And then the total fulfillment of this prophecy will be a fact.

THE SUPREME TRIBULATION

«For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor will be. And unless those days had been shortened, no living creature will be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says

to you, "Behold, here is the Christ" or, "There he is," do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise, and will show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand. If therefore they say to you, "Behold, he is in the desert," do not go forth; "Behold, he is in the inner chambers" do not believe it. For as the lightning comes forth from the east and shines even to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there will the vultures gather» (Mt 24:21-28).

So great will this tribulation be, that we will not even be able to compare it with the universal flood: *«For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, nor will be. And unless those days had been shortened, no living creature would be saved.»* Because of the confusion, the suffering, and the terror, many will lose their faith, and even the elect themselves will at times feel baffled, believing that they have made a mistake, seeing the miracles and marvels that the "false prophets" and false messiahs, the Antichrist, will work in order to lead souls astray, «*if possible, even the elect,»* and cause them to lose their faith. For, as St. Paul says to the Thessalonians, the "power" will be in the hands of the "man of iniquity" and his own. And this is so because of God's Justice in the free choice of men who, by their works devoid of faith, have placed this "power" in the hands of the Antichrists because they have wanted to do with Christ's name what is proper to the prince of this world. *«The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan*

will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness» (2 Thes 2:9-12).

The "elect" will suffer a great deal, and only their faith and love for the truth will shield them. And out of love for them, God will shorten those days.

False messiahs will arise, and everywhere it will be said, "Here he is, this is he." The elect who have the true Messiah, the Holy Spirit, in their hearts, will not fall into this deception because they will know wherein lies truth and wherein falsehood, and they will need no one to tell them: Here he is, because they will carry Him in their hearts, and they know that His "manifestation" will take place like *«the lightning that comes forth from the east shines even to the west,»* and that wherever they are, they will be taken up by Him.

«Wherever the corpse is, there will the vultures gather.» Wherever is that lifeless body, the Antichrists, "the corpse," there will the devils gather, the spirits that will take those other dead (because they have lost God's grace), who will accompany the Antichrists, and who have prepared his kingdom.

«When the Lord has pity on Jacob and again chooses Israel and settles them on their own soil, the aliens will join them and be counted with the house of Jacob. The house of Israel will take them and bring them along to

its place, and possess them as male and female slaves on the Lord's soil, making captives of its captors and ruling over its oppressors. On the day the Lord relieves you of sorrow and unrest and the hard service in which you have been enslaved, you will take up this taunt-song against the king of Babylon:

«How the oppressor has reach his end'
how the turmoil is stilled'
The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked,
the staff of the tyrants
that struck the peoples in wrath
relentless blows;
that beat down the nations in anger,
with oppression unchecked.
The whole earth rests peacefully,
song breaks forth;
the very cypresses rejoice over you,
and the cedars of Lebanon:
"Now that you are laid to rest,
there will be none to cut us down!'
The nether world below is all astir
preparing for your coming;
it awakens the shades to greet you,
all the leaders of the earth;
it has the kings of all nations
rise from their thrones.
All of them speak out and say to you,
"You too have become weak like us, you are the same as we. Down to the nether world your pomp is brought,
the music of your harps.
The couch beneath you is the maggot,

your covering, the worm."
«How have you fallen from the heavens,
O morning star, son of the dawn!
How are you cut down to the ground,
you who mowed down the nations!
You said in your heart:
"I will scale the heavens; above the stars of God
1 will set up my throne;
I will take my seat on the Mount of Assembly,
in the recesses of the North.
I will ascend above the tops of the clouds;
I will be like the Most High!"
Yet down to the nether world you go
to the recesses of the pit!
«When they see you they will stare, pondering over you:
"Is this the man who made the earth tremble,
and kingdoms quake"?
Who made the world a desert, razed its cities,
and gave his captives no release?
All the kings of the nations lie in glory,
each in his own tomb;
but you are cast forth without burial,
loathsome and corrupt,
clothed as those slain at sword-point,
a trampled corpse.
Going down to the pavement of the pit,
you will never be one with them in the grave."
For you have ruined your land,
you have slain your people!
«Let him not be named forever,
that scion of an evil race!

Make ready to slaughter his sons
for the guilt of their fathers;
lest they rise and possess the earth,
and fill the breadth of the world with tyrants.

«I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, progeny and offspring, says the Lord. I will make it a haunt of hoot owls and a marshland; I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the Lord of hosts» (Is 14:1-23).

«Lo, the Lord empties the land
and lays it waste;
he turns it upside down,
scattering its inhabitants:
layman and priest alike,
servant and master,
the maid as her mistress,
the buyer as the seller,
the lender as the borrower,
the creditor as the debtor.
The earth is utterly laid waste,
utterly stripped,
for the Lord has decreed this thing.
The earth mourns and fades,
the world languishes and fades;
both heaven and earth languish.
The earth is polluted
because of its inhabitants
who have transgressed laws,
violated statutes, broken the ancient covenant.
Therefore a curse devours the earth,

and its inhabitants pay for their guilt;
therefore they who dwell on earth turn pale,
and few men are left.
The wine mourns,
the vine languishes,
all the merry-hearted groan.
Stilled are the cheerful timbrels,
ended the shouts of the jubilant,
stilled is the cheerful harp.
They cannot sing and drink wine;
strong drink is bitter
to those who partake of it.
Broken down is the city of chaos,
shut against entry, every house.
In the streets they cry out for lack of wine;
all joy has disappeared
and cheer has left the land.
In the city nothing remains but ruin;
its gates are battered and desolate.
Thus it is within the land,
and among the peoples,
as with an olive tree after it is beaten,
as with a gleaning when the vintage is done.»
(Is 24:1-13)

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

«Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the power of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign

of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other» (Mt 24:29-31).

The foregoing comes before the final judgment, when all the elect, wherever they find themselves, be they in purgatory, in heaven, or on earth, will be assembled to receive the Son of God and His kingdom. *«Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*» This is the "manifestation" of the kingdom of God on earth.

«And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.» These "elect" are the souls who have let God reign in them and already have the kingdom of God with them. The rest of the peoples will see the Son of man coming with power and majesty, and they will mourn but will not be with Him, nor will they delight of His kingdom, because they have chosen the "kingdom of the world," reaffirming themselves in themselves, and they belong to Satan, the "prince of this world." To these, the kingdom of God will be something like a passing vision, and they will return to life-as-usual, reaffirming and hardening themselves all the more.

«But a shoot shall sprout
from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord,
and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord.
Not by appearance shall he judge,
nor by hearsay shall he decide,
but he shall judge the poor with justice,
and decide aright for the land's afflicted.
He shall strike the ruthless
with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips
he shall slay the wicked.
Justice shall be the band around his waist,
and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.
Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the young lion shall browse together,
with a little child to guide them.
The cow and the bear shall be neighbors,
together their young shall rest;
the lion shall eat hay like the ox.
The baby shall play by the cobra's den,
and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.
There shall be no harm or ruin
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be filled
with knowledge of the Lord,

as water covers the sea.

«On that day, the root of Jesse,
set up as a signal for the nations,
the Gentiles shall seek out,
for his dwelling shall be glorious.
On that day,
the Lord shall again take it in hand
to reclaim the remnant of his people
that is left from Assyria and Egypt,
Pathros, Ethiopia, and Elam,
Shinar, Hamath, and the isles of the sea.
He shall raise a signal to the nations
and gather the outcasts of Israel;
the dispersed of Judah he shall assemble
from the four corners of the earth.
The envy of Ephraim shall pass away,
and the rivalry of Judah be removed;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not be hostile to Ephraim;
but they shall swoop down on the foothills
of the Philistines to the west,
together they shall plunder the Kedemites;
Edom and Moab shall be their possessions,
and the Ammonites their subjects.
The Lord shall dry up
the tongue of the Sea of Egypt,
and wave his hand over the Euphrates
in his fierce anger
and shatter it into seven streamlets,
so that it can be crossed in sandals.

There shall be a highway
for the remnant of his people
that is left from Assyria,
as there was for Israel
when he came up from the land of Egypt.»
(Is 11:1-16)
«These lift up their voice in acclaim;
from the sea they proclaim
the majesty of the Lord:
'For this, in the coastlands,
give glory to the Lord!
In the coastlands of the sea,
to the name of the Lord, the God of Israel!"
From the end of the earth we hear songs:
"Splendor to the Just One!"
«But I said, "I am wasted, wasted away.
Woe is me! The traitors betray:
with treachery have the traitors betrayed!
Terror, pit, and trap
are upon you, inhabitant of the earth;
he who flees at the sound of terror
will fall into the pit;
he who climbs out of the pit
will be caught in the trap.
For the windows on high will be opened
and the foundations of the earth will shake.
The earth will burst asunder,
the earth will be shaken apart,
the earth will be convulsed.
The earth will reel like a drunkard,
and it will sway like a hut;

its rebellion will weigh it down,
until it falls, never to rise again."
«On that day the Lord will punish
the host of the heavens in the heavens,
and the kings of the earth on the earth.
They will be gathered together
like prisoners into a pit;
they will be shut up in a dungeon,
and after many days they will be punished.
Then the moon will blush
and the sun grow pale,
for the Lord of hosts will reign
on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
glorious in the sight of his elders.» (Is 24:14-23)

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

«When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"» (Mt 25:31-34).

After the gathering of "the elect," with the passing of time, the judgment will take place. Then all the peoples will gather in the presence of God, the "righteous" to His right and the "unfaithful" to His left, that they may receive their final sentencing.

«Then the King will say to those at his right hand, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."» It will be the culmination of Christ's Work, all things thus returning to the beginning as God had ordained it "from the foundation of the world," but which man, in collaboration with Satan, had changed, and which the perfect Justice of the Creator had left in the hands of men's liberty. And because of this very Justice, those souls who chose Christ will receive the kingdom, having placed their liberty at God's disposal, thus renouncing Satan's temptation: «You will he like God...» (Gn 3:5).

« "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, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?"

And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"» (Mt 25:35-40).

All those who, following the voice of their conscience, fulfilling the Will of God, performed works of mercy with their neighbor will see themselves at the right hand of the Son of God for having identified themselves with His Spirit. These works are a consequence of their fi-

delity to the Spirit of God that was leading them toward their "regeneration."

«And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?» These people did not know that Christ was in those individuals whom they helped or to whom they manifested their love — proof of the fact that their works were a "consequence" of their fidelity to God and not an end, nor even a "means," for attaining eternal life. It is not as they say today, that we must see Christ in our neighbor, exposing ourselves to the danger of remaining "in our neighbor" and never attaining to Christ, for not having become identified with His Spirit but, rather, with the spirit of the world. We should see Christ in our conscience, being faithful to that voice; and by our acting in accordance with it, we will find Christ in all our works, for even if we fall into error, He will come forward to meet us as He met Saul on the road to Damascus, and He is not going to let us remain in that error. In works directed by "conscience," there is no danger of remaining in the creatures, much less in one's self, seeking a false human glory for personal satisfaction, as it occurs on that horizontal path oriented to our neighbor.

«Then he will say to those at his left hand, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not

visit me." Then they will also answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me." And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life» (Mt 25:41-46).

Just as the kingdom of God was prepared for the souls—humanity—from the foundation of the world, so the eternal fire of hell was *prepared for the devil and his angels* from the beginning of the fall of the angel, Lucifer, and all those other angels who followed him in his rebellion. It is very sad that so many souls, who were created to God's "image and likeness" in order to enjoy His kingdom, have *of their own volition* chosen the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his rebel spirits, adhering to Satan through their works opposed to God's Will: *«Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.»*

It is God's most perfect Justice in the soul's free choice. Those people, upon accepting the inspirations of the Evil one, who directed them toward themselves — egoism and pride — accepted those rebel spirits, becoming "temples of devils" and not temples of God, as they were created; for *Justice'* sake they must go to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his followers, the rebel angels.

Thus the "righteous," fulfilling God's Will, and not their own or the will of others, adhered to Christ and received His Holy Spirit; they are temples of God and

will enter into the joy of His kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

«When did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?» These people probably did many works — and who knows how many of them on behalf of the poor, the "hungry," "pilgrims," the "sick," the "naked," and "prisoners." This is why they are surprised by the Lord's words of reproach, since they have perhaps done them even *thinking* that Christ was there; but this "thought," devoid of Spirit, is neither love of Christ nor love of neighbor; it is not charity because charity is the task of God's love, and these works are motivated by personal convenience, self-esteem, personal satisfaction, ambition for human glory, or some other "self-interest." This is why the King says to them: *«Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.»* Works "on behalf of one's neighbor that are not guided by love for him whom one intends to help remain here on earth and never reach God. It is *love* that touches the heart of Christ in the least of His brethren. If in one's works there has not been that true love toward one's "neighbor," those works were directed toward one's self and not to the "least of His brethren" where Christ is to be found: *«Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.»* A word, a tear sprung forth from the heart for the need of some poor soul has greater value in the eyes of God than the most gigantic work done without love for sustaining millions of the poor. And these great "benefactors" for the world could be among the goats at the left hand of

the Lord and have to hear His words of eternal condemnation: *«Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me.*» The need of the Almighty God is satisfied *only with love,* because God is Love, and only with Himself is He sated. The degree of love that He has placed in our hearts is all we have for satisfying His "need." Where there is love, there is God, like one who thirsts for a drop of water, one who hungers for a morsel of bread, like the traveler on foot under the shade of a tree or in a comfortable inn, etc. The purer our love, the richer the gift we present to the giver.

«First he degraded the land of Zebulum and the land of Naphtali; but in the end he has glorified the seaward road, the land west of the Jordan, the District of the Gentiles.

«The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shown.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as men make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster

you have smashed,
as on the day of Midian.
For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
will be burned as fuel for flames.
For a child is born to us,
a son is given us;
upon his shoulder dominion rests.
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.
His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,
from David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains
by judgment and justice,
both now and forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!»
(Is 8:23-9:1-6)

«On that day they will sing this song
in the land of Judah:
"A strong city have we;
he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us.
Open up the gates
to let in a nation that is just,
one that keeps faith.
A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace;
in peace, for its trust in you."
Trust in the Lord forever!
For the Lord is an eternal Rock.
He humbles those in high places,

and the lofty city he brings down;
He tumbles it to the ground,
levels it with the dust.
It is trampled underfoot by the needy,
by the footsteps of the poor.
The way of the just is smooth;
the path of the just you make level.
Yes, for your way and your judgments, O Lord,
we look to you;
your name and your title
are the desire of our souls,
my soul yearns for you in the night,
yes, my spirit within me keeps vigil for you;
when your judgment dawns upon the earth,
the worlds inhabitants learn justice.
The wicked man, spared, does not learn justice;
in an upright land he acts perversely,
and sees not the majesty of the Lord.
O Lord, your hand is uplifted,
but they behold it not;
let them be shamed when they see
your zeal for your people:
let the fire prepared for your enemies
consume them.
O Lord, you mete out peace to us,
for it is you who have accomplished all we have done.
O Lord, our God, other lords than you
have ruled us;
it is from you only
that we can call upon your name.
Dead they are, they have no life,

shades that cannot rise;
for you have punished and destroyed them,
and wiped out all memory of them.
You have increased the nation, O Lord,
increased the nation to your own glory,
and extended far all the borders of the land.
O Lord, oppressed by your punishment,
we cried out in anguish under your chastising.»
(Is 26:1-16)

«On *that day,*
the Lord will punish with his sword
that is cruel, great, and strong,
Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan the coiled serpent;
and he will slay the dragon
that is in the sea.
On that day —
the pleasant vineyard, sing about it!
I, the Lord, am its keeper,
1 water it every moment;
lest anyone harm it,
night and day I guard it.
I am not angry,
but if I were to find briers and thorns,
in battle I should march against them;
I should burn them all.
Expunging and expelling
I should strive against them,
carrying them off
with my cruel wind in time of storm.

days to come Jacob shall take root,
Israel shall sprout and blossom,
covering all the world with fruit.
Is he to be smitten
as his smiter was smitten?
or slain as his slayer was slain?
Or shall he cling to me for refuge?
He must make peace with me;
peace shall he make with me!
This, then, shall be the expiation of Jacob's guilt,
this the whole fruit of the removal of his sin:
He shall pulverize all the stones of the altars
like pieces of chalk;
no sacred poles or incense altars shall stand.»
(Is 27:1-9)

XIX

"THE PERIL FOR THE JEWS IN FAILING TO RECOGNIZE JESUS"

«Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come!' This made the Jews ask, "Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, 'Where I go, you cannot come'?" But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins"» (Jn 8:21-24).

The title that captions this section of the Gospel of St. John in the Bible that we are using[1] is not from the Gospel and reads as follows: "The peril for the Jews in failing to recognize Jesus." The fact is that this is a "peril" for all souls of all time. We commit a very serious error and run the risk of failing to recognize Christ if we see the "chosen people," the "Jews," as having nothing to do with us, casting the blame on that people and that generation, which at one time represented us all — the entire humanity — in the sight of the Son of God made Man. The negative as well as the positive side of that people belongs to all of us. In each one of us there is some of both. The important thing is to recognize our error, the negative side that we have, and to lend warmth

and life to the truth, the positive side that we possess. This is the spirit with which we ought to read the Word of the Son of God. For this the Gospel was written, not so that we might set ourselves up as judges, judging those men who did not recognize the Messiah-Redeemer in Jesus. If Jesus himself did not judge them then, much less can we do so now. If the Holy Spirit "reminded" the Lord's disciples of all these facts, it was so that we might have an example and might see ourselves in that people and in that generation that was chosen by God to receive the Person of His Son, that we might better dispose ourselves to receive His Spirit; for he who has not recognized the Son of God in Jesus can be forgiven, but whoever does not recognize His Spirit, going against It, will never be forgiven (cf. Mt 12:32; Mk 3:28-29).

Everyone who feels himself as not belonging to the "Jewish people, the chosen people," is taking his leave of the divine "election," setting himself apart from the "people of God" and is running the risk of failing to recognize the Savior of his soul. This one can ill attain redemption if he does not feel "guilty" before the Redeemer, recognizing "his own sin" in the sin of the Jews and, sincerely repenting, disposes himself to atone for it by recognizing in Jesus his Savior.

Who can say that he has not at some time in his works denied Christ... ? He should recognize himself in Peter and all those who denied him and then repented.

Who can say that he has not felt fear and been a coward before the demands of his own conscience ... ? This is how the Lord's apostles reacted in face of their Cruci-

fied Master, but repenting they received a grace enabling them to be strong and to persevere.

And who has not at some moment of his life felt impelled by love, disposed with Christ to arrive at his own sacrifice and death? This is the beloved disciple of the Lord.

And we have the example of total perseverance in Mary, who should be our model.

We have mentioned the "positive" side that is in each one of us; now let us pause a bit over the "negative" side.

Who has not, in a moment of weakness, sold out, betrayed the Lord ... ? This is Judas.

Who has not at some time "persecuted" and "judged" the Lord in order to give priority to his own interests? Who has not, along with Pilate, "washed his hands" upon delivering up Christ to be crucified by his passions driven by wrongdoing? In our very selves we can find Caiaphas, Annas, Pilate, Herod, and all of the Lord's enemies, if we are sincere in our self-judgment. The "Scribes" and "Pharisees" live on in us, and these are the most difficult to detect in the moment that we are making a judgment about our neighbor. In the adulterers, the thieves, the sick, the possessed, there also are we.

That this "negative" side of the "people of God" become converted to Christ, or, to our own perdition, that it refuse to recognize Him by crucifying Him, depends on us.

Of all these "enemies" of the Lord's, who cooperated in His crucifixion and death, only of Judas can we say that he was lost forever because he remained in his sin: having no trust in the Savior, he took his life, accepting Satan, placing his soul in his hands. And Jesus calls him "son of perdition." As for other souls, we do not know whether in the last moments of their lives they had the grace to recognize Jesus as their Savior.

Thus then, in each one of the personages of the Gospel, we should see something of ourselves and decide for Truth and Good if we want to be saved, redeemed from the evil that we own up to.

The Catholic church has awakened from a long sleep, upon recognizing as unjust the guilt of deicide that, for a long time, she had imputed to the Jewish people, liberating them from this guilt, unjustly attributed to a people. For us, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, this fact has a deep meaning. We, too, all of us, are represented in the church as "God's people," and this "awakening" of the authority, upon exonerating the Jews from guilt, summons us to recognize in our very selves those sins that until now we have seen in others. The negative or positive that exists in the church, as a human-divine institution, also exists in each one of us. The positive tends to the divine life, which is the goal of our soul, and the negative tends to the earthly life, which is the starting point of the human, but which must flow toward the soul's goal, the divine, so that it may be transformed from human to divine. Besides this, we possess the side that is of the spirit of evil, which is sin, and which, for

the sake of Divine Justice, through man's acceptance, also plays a part in the earthly church, as it does in each soul. The spirit of evil must disappear completely through the free acceptance of the souls, so that they may receive the Holy Spirit, resulting in the liberation of the church with all the souls who belong to it.

Just as the positive side of that former generation of Jewish people — the apostles and disciples who recognized their Savior in Christ—left Jerusalem, which represented the church, leaving behind the negative side, so too will souls do today, souls who in recognizing Christ identify with His life, leaving behind the "negative" side that impedes the true union. This applies to the soul, and it will also apply to the church, wherein will remain all that which must be purified. *«Come out, my people, away from her.»* Let him who reads understand ....

«Once more Jesus said to them, I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin.» Once more this is what Jesus is saying to those souls who have not repented, recognizing their sins, souls who, condemning "the woman," the Jerusalem of that time — the Jewish people — and the Jerusalem of today — the Catholic church, the Gentiles — consider themselves apart from her, failing to recognize their own sins in the sins of "the woman," and they continue on in their sin by consorting with the "spirit of the world."

«Where I go, you cannot come,» for Jesus, the Son of God, came to the world in order to redeem the souls and lead them to the Father, who is in heaven, and no one who is in any way bound to sin — the "spirit of the

world," which is man's sin (consequence of his adherence to Evil) — can go to the Father where Jesus goes and where He will take the souls who have identified themselves with His Holy Spirit. And those souls are the purified church whom He will present to the Father as His Bride: This is my Body.

«You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.» Those souls who live only for this earth and do not seek the things from above, from heaven, cannot identify themselves with Christ because they become one and the same with the world, and Christ is not of this world. Whoever has truly "believed" in Christ renounces the "spirit of the world" in order to become one and the same with Him. If a person does not, in *actual practice* and not simply by word, renounce the life that the world offers, it is because he has not believed in Christ, even if he professes Him by word; and he will die in his sin because he cannot be redeemed from Evil if he does not freely renounce the spirit of the world in order to identify himself with the Spirit of Christ. If he does not relinquish the world for Christ, it is because he has not believed in Him but believes in the spirit of the world which he serves: «I *told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.*» Only Christ can free the soul from original sin — her subjection to the spirit of evil — so that she may be able to receive the Holy Spirit and truly belong to His Mystical Body.

«They said to him, "Who are you?"Jesus said to them, "Even what I have told you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge; but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father» (Jn 8:25-27).

«They said to him, "Who are you?"» This is exactly what people, with their deeds, say to Christ, people who claim to be with Christ but never actually renounce the spirit of the world, for though they are acquainted with His word, the Gospel, they live in complete contradiction to it: *«Who are you?'»* And they continue to "investigate" the life and Person of Christ—an "investigation" devoid of spirit that allows them to live better off in this world and to prolong the kingdom of evil, making naive souls believe that they can live with Christ and at the same time share in the kingdom of this world. And Jesus, silently, answers their question: «*Who are you?» «Even what I have told you from the beginning»* in my Gospel, which you have not wished to hear. *«I have much to say about you and much to judge.*» And this is precisely what the Lord is doing by means of these "clarifications" of His Gospel so that many souls may wake up who find themselves confused through the error of those who have sought to make of Christ and the world one and the same thing, when in fact He has said that He is not of the world.

«But he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.» But the souls who do not make up their minds to renounce the spirit of the

world because they have not “believed” in the Son of God and His doctrine —and it seems to them that this doctrine cannot be lived in the world — do not know the Holy Spirit, who would lead them to the practice of this life, and so neither do they know the Father, who is in heaven, and despite all the clarifications that may be made to them, they will continue on in their sin. Those Jews did not understand that Jesus was talking to them of the Father.

Nor do these souls today understand the ways of the Spirit, seeing only the works of the flesh, condemning that which they cannot understand.

«So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.” As he spoke thus, many believed in him» (Jn 8:28-30).

When those souls, who have sought to be with Christ without renouncing the spirit of the world, consummate their sin, “crucifying” the Son of God in themselves in order to be in accord with the world, and they have to present themselves before Divine Justice, then they will realize who Christ is — a very different Christ from the one they had imagined: *«When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he.»*

«He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.» In the same way that the Father abided with the Son, Christ, because He did what was pleasing to Him, the soul who fulfills

God's Will is not alone, because Christ abides with her, for she does what is pleasing to Him. And His Holy Spirit lets her know all things, giving her the grace she needs to fulfill the Divine Will.

"THE JEWS ARE NOT CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM OR OF GOD, BUT CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL"

«Jesus therefore said to the Jews who had come to believe in him, "If you abide in my word, you shall be my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham, and have never been in bondage to any one. How is it that you say, 'You shall be made free"?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not continue in the house forever; the son continues forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed"». (Jn 8:31-36).

Accordingly, Jesus says to those souls who have believed in Him: If you abide in my word, *fulfilling it,* you shall be my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth — because my Spirit will clarify all things for you, as He is now doing in these "clarifications," and He will clarify them even more so in your souls — and the truth will free you from error and from sin because you will receive my Spirit and will be freed from the spirit of evil.

And if those, who out of ignorance have no knowledge of the "slavery" in which sin has subjected them, should say: "We are children of God" or of some 'founder"

saint, just as the Jews used to say: *«We are descendants of Abraham and have never been in bondage to any one,»* and should ask, «How is it that you say, "You shall be made free," if we don't feel that we are subjected to anyone?», Jesus will answer them: *«Truly, truly, I say to you, every one who commits sin is a slave to sin.»* That one is subjected to his disorderly passions, which dominate him because they, in turn, are subjected to the spirit of evil and not to God; this is why he commits sin and is a slave to sin.

«The slave does not abide in the house forever.» The slave, he who is dominated by his disorderly passions, does not abide forever in God's grace, in the house of the Father, because he commits sin, loses the grace, and moves away from God's presence. And we are not speaking here of mortal sin but of any disobedience to God, any action that goes against the Divine Will; this is all we need do to "depart from the Father's house," because in the very instant that we do a will that is not God's, it is because we have cast off the Holy Spirit in order to listen to the "spirit of the world," which leads us toward ourselves or toward another who is not God. "The son," he who identifies himself with the Son of God in the Father's Will, is free because Christ redeems him from sin, and he abides in the Father's house: he abides in God's Grace, fulfilling His Will and does not commit sin because he is directed by the Holy Spirit, and his passions are orderly and his liberty directs those passions toward God by his acting with righteousness

and purity of heart, thus attaining the true liberty of the sons of God.

«I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word takes no hold among you. I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But as it is, you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I have heard from God. That is not what Abraham did. You do what your father did"» (In 8:37-41).

And to those who, saying they believe in Christ, do not fulfill His word, and out of pride — not out of ignorance — consider themselves free from the slavery of sin and because they have received baptism deem themselves Christians, children of God, to those He will say: I know you are Christians because you have received baptism, *«but you seek to kill me because my word takes no hold among you,»* and you do not do what I tell you. *«*I *speak of what I have seen with my Father,»* and this is what I commanded you to do, but you do what you have heard from *your* father, the spirit of falsehood whom you follow.

«Abraham is our father.» And today they will say: Our father is St. Francis, St. Ignatius, St. Augustine, or some other saint, and Christ Himself. And He will say to them, as He said to those Jews: *«If you are the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham»;* if you are children of Francis, Augustine, or some other saint, do the

works they did. And if you are children of Christ, fulfill the word of Christ. But you seek not only to kill Christ's life in your own souls but also in all those souls who live and preach the truth of Christ's words; *«But as it is, you are seeking to kill me, a man who has spoken the truth to you which I have heard from God. That is not what Abraham did.»* Likewise, those who reject the word of God persecute, in one way or another, all those who speak the truth that they hear from God. That is not what the children of God do, because they know the Spirit of God, but this is done by those who become identified with the "spirit of the world" and heed the words of the spirit of Evil, becoming its children by their obedience to its instigations.

«They therefore said to him, "We have not been born of fornication; we have one Father, God." Jesus therefore said to them, "If God were your Father, you would surely love me. For from God I came forth and have come; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me. Why do you not understand my speech? Because you cannot listen to my word. The father from whom you are is the devil, and the desires of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the start; he was never grounded in the truth; there is no truth in him at all; when he lies he is drawing on his own store, because he is a liar and the father of lies. But as for me, I speak the truth; and for that very reason, you do not believe me"» (Jn 8:41-45).

«We have not been born of fornication; we have one Father, God,» these Jews who did not believe in Jesus

said to him. Frequently it is people who are furthest away from God through the sin of pride who feel most certain of their being "children of God."

«If God were your Father, you would surely love me ...,» Jesus answered. For just as the blood of our earthly parents "unites" us in kinship with our brothers of the flesh, the Love of the Father and of the Son — the Holy Spirit — unites us to Christ and to all those who are identified in the same Spirit and makes us "children" of the Father, granting us to belong to "God's family." We cannot feel that we are "children of God" if we are not animated by His very Spirit. As we are faithful to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling the Father's Will, we will become identified with Christ, the Word, the Only Begotten Son, and we will be able to "hear" His words and "understand" His speech. *«Why do you not understand my speech? Because you cannot listen to my word.»* To the person accustomed to the "speech" of the spirit of the world, Jesus' words seem hard; other times they seem too simple and lacking in practical meaning. This is because this person does not understand the speech of the God-made-man, nor does he understand His Spirit because he has not lent an ear to His inspirations. We come to know the Holy Spirit as we obey His inspirations, but if we always guide ourselves by our reason, we will never come to know Him and will not understand Jesus' speech, nor will we be able to hear His word, and least of all will we feel inclined to fulfill it. We cannot "savor" the Gospel if we have not first "savored" the action of the Holy Spirit by fulfilling His Will. For the Holy Spirit is the essence of the Gospel,

and it is impossible to come to live the Gospel if we are not identified with the Holy Spirit.

«The father from whom you are is the devil, and the desires of your father it is your will to do.» The devil — as the father of lies that he is — does not, as does God, act openly in the souls but, rather, acts disguised as an "angel of light" who, having been an "angel of light" before the fall, knows its workings well and thus can deceive the souls by presenting a "likeness" of light, when in fact his actions proceed from and are directed to the most dreadful darkness. The devil drives the souls, fueling their liveliest passions in order to ignite their motives, ever focused on a personal or collective "self-interest" reasoning perfectly what they must do because it is the *expedient* thing to do in such and such a case. In this way the soul never realizes that she is fulfilling the will of "another" and thinks that she is acting in full liberty when, in fact, she has placed her liberty at the disposal of him who enslaves her. This slavery is effected by the devil in such a way that the soul never discovers, in this world, that she is a slave to the devil: he subjects her to her disorderly passions. This is very subtle at first, and the soul is not aware of this disorder of her passions caused by the Evil one. Then she discovers sin and feels bound by an evil that she considers her own. From this stems her discouragement and helplessness to break with that which resides in herself, and she ends up in hard-heartedness. Thus then, this person does the desires of the devil, believing that he is satisfying his own desires. In this manner, he uses the liberty, which God gave him for choosing Good, to subject his soul to his enemy—the

Evil one. And this is how, like Judas, he is betraying and delivering up the Son of God, because the soul, "image of God," belongs to God and expressly to Christ, the Word, of whom she is image, for He ransomed her from slavery, paying the price of her ransom with His life. The devil keeps the person from becoming aware of this fact—though his soul groans deep-down because of this slavery to evil — for as the Lord says regarding the devil: *«He was a murderer from the start; he was never grounded in the truth; there is no truth in him at all.»* He achieves everything by availing himself of lies, and this is how he drives those who listen to him, making them believe that the truth *cannot* always be told, and that one must sometimes lie, and he even says that it is for the sake of "charity," and that those are *"merciful lies,"* as if one could mix charity and mercy, which proceed from God, with something proper to the devil, for *«when he lies he is drawing on his own store because he is a liar and the father of lies.»* This is why the soul who follows his instigations by practicing falsehood becomes a child of the devil.

When a person is prompted by his egoism, he is acting according to the promptings of the devil, for the devil leads him toward self so that he may not be able to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, who brings him out of himself in order to take him to God; therefore, every word coming forth from the Truth seems improbable to him, and he gives credence only to his own rationalizations because he lacks faith and does not believe in the word of God: *«But as for me, I speak the truth and for that very reason, you do not believe me.»* Christ does not

deceive. From the start, He makes the soul see that she must relinquish many things so that she can attain the true liberty of the "children of God"; the devil makes her believe the opposite so that she will let herself be enslaved by him.

«"Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God" The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I have not a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it and he will be the judge"» (Jn 8:46-50).

«Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you, not believe me?» The soul who has identified herself with Christ by fulfilling the Will of the Father — through her obedience to the inspirations of His Spirit— does not sin because she lives in the truth, for she does what she hears from God: *«He who is of God hears the words of God.»* But he who follows the instigations of the "spirit of the world" cannot identify himself with Christ because he does not fulfill the Will of God but that of men, and he lives according to the opinion of men and not the opinion of God: *«The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.»*

«The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"» When "spiritual" men become hardened, when they surrender themselves totally to the spirit of lies that offers them

the glory and goods of this world, they see the devil in God's works. It is the very devil himself who blinds them in such a way so as to render them incapable of detecting the hold he has on them and so to continue to surrender their soul, thinking that they are in the hands of God and not the devil's.

«Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it and he will be the judge.» Like Jesus, the soul who is of God does not seek her own glory but the glory of God in all her works. It is the Holy Spirit who will give glory to each soul who becomes identified with the Son of God and He, also, who will judge all those who have gone against Him.

«"Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets; and you say, 'If any one keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing; it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. But you have not known him; I know him. If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word"» (Jn 8:51-55).

Jesus' words were a scandal to those who were identified with the "spirit of the world" and could not understand the speech of the Son of God: «*If any one keep my word, he will never see death.*» The words of the Spirit of Jesus sound the same today to those who have not

"kept His word" by *fulfilling* it; and even though they believe in eternal life, they live for the life of the world as if this were the "eternal life" that they have "savored." These kinds of people do not differ in spirit from those Jews who said to Jesus: *«Now we know that you have a demon*» — even if they do not use this same word but label souls "apostates" or "illuminati" who, in following Christ, identify themselves with Him and speak the speech of His Spirit. *«Are you greater than our father Abraham* ... ?» And they seek to place a limit on God: Are you greater than such and such a saint? Like those other incredulous and hardened men, these today use the names of saints to reaffirm themselves in their own judgments but without ever coming to an identification with the spirit of those saints; they carry them in their minds but not in their hearts, so that they can cite the saints whenever it suits them and as long as this can give them some glory in this world, and since they judge according to what they have in their hearts, they ask: *«"Who do you claim to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing...."»* Everyone who glorifies himself, or in some way seeks his own glory, is doing so because he does not know God, and the Spirit of God is not in him, for the soul who comes to "delight in" His Spirit glories only in the cross of Christ, seeking annihilation, contempt from the world and men, for she wants only to "disappear" in Him whom she recognizes as her ALL. But she speaks the truth that she knows in God and does not disguise herself with a false humility. *«If I said, I do not know him, I should be a liar like you; but I do know him and I keep his word.»*

And because she "keeps His word," she speaks the truth and practices the truth that she knows from God.

«"Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad." The Jews then said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple (Jn 8:56-59).

Just as Abraham and the prophets rejoiced to think that they would see the day of the Son of man, so too have all the saints rejoiced to think that they will see the day of the kingdom of the Son of God in all souls and His "manifestation." The saints felt and feel an immense joy to think that in the end times there will be souls who will delight in greater graces, here on earth, than those they themselves enjoyed, because these souls will be living in the age of the plenitude of the Spirit and the consummation of time, and that because of the cooperation of all righteous souls, these latter souls will receive the graces for collaborating in the coming of the kingdom of God.

«You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?» Those men, "hardened" by the spirit of the world, were unable to recognize the "Son of man," the eternal "Son of God," in Jesus; they could not see the soul and the spirit kept in a body that they considered the same as all men's. So it is with all people who are to be found in the same state of spiritual hardening; they cannot see the works of the Son of God and His Holy

Spirit in souls who have identified themselves with God in the fulfillment of His Will, and they judge their words and their works according to their blind rationalizations that cause them to see only the flesh because they have lost the faith to discover the intangible which that body keeps: the soul, and the spirit that animates that soul.

«So they took up stones to throw at him.» And just as at that time they went against the Person of Jesus, in the same way these today go against His Spirit in the persons who possess Him; but they will not be able to do anything about it until the moment and the hour come for the soul to bear witness with her life or with her "death." *«But Jesus hid himself and left the temple.»* So too will that soul leave the temple of her body in order to receive the glory of the Son of God in eternity.

«Be irresolute, stupefied; blind yourselves and stay blind! Be drunk, but not from wine, stagger, but not from strong drink! For the Lord has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep.

He has shut your eyes [the prophets] and covered your heads [the seers].

«For you the revelation of all this has become like the words of a sealed scroll. When it is handed to one who can read, with the request, "Read this," he replies, "I cannot; it is sealed." When it is handed to one who cannot read, with the request, "Read this," he replies, "I cannot read."

«The Lord said:

Since this people draws near with words only

and honors me with their lips alone,
though their hearts are far from me,
and their reverence for me
has become routine observance
of the precepts of men,
therefore I will again deal with this people
in surprising and wondrous fashion:
the wisdom of its wise men shall perish
and the understanding of its prudent men be hid.
Woe to those who would hide their plans
too deep for the Lord!
Who work in the dark, saying,
"Who sees us, or who knows us?"
Your perversity is as though the potter
were taken to be the clay:
as though what is made should say of its maker,
"He made me not!"
Or the vessel should say of the potter,
"He does not understand."» (Is 29:9-16)

San Giovanni Rotondo (Foggia),
December of 1965 to April of 1966.

the slave of the Lord

The main Bibles from which the Scriptural texts used in this book were taken are the Confraternity Edition, the New American Bible, the Revised Standard Version, and the New American Standard. In a very few cases it became necessary to make a literal translation of the Spanish Scriptural text. The Spanish Bible used in the original work is the Nacar-Colunga translation, *Sagrada Biblia,* 7th ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1957).