

ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Blessed Antonio Rosmini

An Updated and Edited Translation
(J. Anthony Dewhirst)

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Dell' Educazione Cristiana (On Christian Education)

Antonio Rosmini

Foreword

This updated English translation of *Dell'educazione cristiana* is based on the late Father Edward Hoare's translation which exists in manuscript form in the English archives and which has been typed. Copies exist in the Rosminian library at St Mary's Derryswood. Using the Critical Edition of Rosmini's work, I have aimed at following the numbered paragraphs etc., as printed in this edition, together with any relevant references, footnotes and so on. In the long introduction to the work to the Critical Edition the principal editions and texts of this work are explained.¹

The first edition was published by Giuseppe Battaglia in 1823 in Venice. Rosmini intended to bring out a second edition and annotated three different copies of Battaglia's publication. From letters to Andrea Fenner in 1837 we find it was Rosmini's intention that this edition would be a small elegant one, a little smaller than the Venetian one and to be published by Pogliani or Marietti, but would not be part of the series of works which the Milanese publisher had undertaken to print. This project was not realised. The text of the first edition was reprinted at Milan in 1856, Libreria, Pirotti, under the editorship of Francesco Paoli. The latter included this work in the second volume of *Scritti vari di Metodo e di Pedagogia*, Torino, Unione Tipografico – Editrice, 1883. This text is revised by Paoli using Rosmini's corrections. Another edition appeared in 1900, published in Rome by Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato. In Paoli's edition paragraphs were numbered consecutively throughout and not just according to chapter; and chapter VI was subdivided into articles in accordance with Rosmini's directions. But the 1900 edition reverted to Rosmini's first ordering of the text with numbers pertaining to their respective chapters. This edition was followed also by one edited by Carla Caviglione, G. B. Paravia e C, Torino, 1931.

The three copies of the first edition, annotated by Rosmini are kept in the Archivio Storico dell Istituto della Carità di Stresa.² Prenna calls these A, B, and C. The corrections made in the three copies were finalised in the second edition as already mentioned. It is worth noting that Rosmini added in his own handwriting the words "Second Edition" after the title of books B and C.

¹ Antonio Rosmini, *Dell'educazione cristiana*, Città Nuova Editrice (31), 1994 Roma, Edited by Lino Prenna.

² = ASIC.

On Christian Education

Prenna's text is based on the first edition of Rosmini's work but taking into account his corrections, but not those of others. Prenna explains this in detail. Biblical quotations are taken from the Latin Vulgate. This version will also be used in the present translation, as this was the version used by Rosmini.

One of the tasks of this Critical Edition was the reconstruction of sources and accurately tracing them. This helps in understanding the cultural context in which the author worked and the texts which shaped his thought. This is necessary particularly in his youth when he was exhausted by many different interests passing through his mind. *Dell' educazione cristiana* is like a little summa of catechetical theology and liturgy of classical thought. Prenna says that, in regard to Rosmini's use of sources, interpretation has priority over the literal.³ He gives examples. This can create difficulties in a critical reconstruction of texts. Latin and Greek texts are translated into Italian. Sometimes Rosmini uses translations, but mostly he makes his own translation, certainly not a scientific and critical one but a didactic and popular one. Sometimes he uses second hand sources, i.e. anthologies and commentaries, so we can't always distinguish what is Rosmini's interpretation and that of the commentary which he uses. It is possible that he used inverted commas to make the distinction, using these for a direct quotation. But Battaglia does not show this distinction. In Prenna's edition he uses commas to indicate a faithful quotation and italics for personal elaboration of the Author or others.

Prenna's own footnotes are indicated by the concluding (Ed.). My comments are indicated by the concluding (Trans.).

To Janet Blackman, my customary thanks for kindly proof-reading the manuscript for this book.

J. Anthony Dewhirst
St Mary's Derryswood

25 March 2012

³ "How much more valuable is the mind of the author rather than his words", writes Rosmini, regarding the work of translating the classics in which he intended to translate the authors' "mind itself". (Letter to Pier Alessandro Paravia at Venice, 24 February 1824, *Epistolario completo* (= EC) vol. 1, p. 521.

To Gioseffa Margarita Rosmini¹

Preface

1. My dear sister, as soon as you took over the care and direction of poor orphans, I decided to make you a present to show the pleasure I felt at seeing your involvement in this holy work. I thought that you would like nothing better than a little book of holy guide lines which would shed light on your new task. I decided I would select these myself and assemble some opinions of the best authors which would be my gift to you; or better still, the labour in producing this would demonstrate my good will. This is the reason why, in gathering strands from here and there, this larger script has materialised almost without my noticing it and without my intending it.

2. I know well enough that if someone chances on this book they will perhaps charge me with excessive austerity, and will take the instruction which I propose as too profound and the Christian virtue which I recommend as too perfect. Now, they will not be disagreeing with me but with the authority of the people to which I refer. And if they consider that this book was written with private and not public instruction in mind, perhaps they will take back their criticism. I believe that criticisms made in this way bring profound disgrace on the time we live in, because it implies that the virtue of our fathers is impracticable now, and that the enlightened understanding of the first Christians has become darkened. Blatant symptoms of softness and laxity cry out all the time, or rather howl with fear, at the sight of perfection.

¹ Editor's note: Gioseffa Margherita Rosmini was born on 11 September 1794. She was educated by the Ursulines at Innsbruck and remained there a further two years. Later she began to look after the orphanage Vannetti at Rovereto. In February 1820 she entered the Daughters of Charity of Saint Maddalena di Canossa. In 1828 she founded the Convent of Daughters of Charity at Trent. She died at Verona on 15 June 1833.

Antonio Rosmini had the following eulogy printed on the back of the card which it was customary to give to friends in memory of the deceased person. 'The faith of Jesus Christ which she constantly and deeply meditated on made her superior and impregnable to the prejudices, vanities and the evil of the world. It made her so united to God that she became throughout her whole life, to those who knew her, a mirror of most heroic virtues, in her continuous exercise of the most humble and laborious charity, through which she ultimately died a victim, not so much one to be regretted but an enviable, blessed and saintly one'. (*Della vita di Antonio Rosmini-Serbatì memorie* da FRANCESCO PAOLI. Stamperia Reale della Ditta G. B. Paravia e C., Torino, vol. I [1880], p. 69 (Ed.).

Valle states that Margherita became a Canossian Sister in 1824. This seems more likely as this book was first published in 1823. This implies that Margherita was in charge of the orphanage at the time, or at least in the early 20s. (Trans.).

On Christian Education

3. Whoever holds that Christian recollection is contrary to social necessity and, being convinced of this, refrains from it, cuts himself off from the truth. Those early Christians who exemplify Christian living, in their Apologies to the Gentiles, protested that they did not abandon their skills, nor did they cut themselves off from the duties of life but, in their different professions, daily praised and celebrated the name of their God which each knew and experienced.²

4. This work has grown on account of the mass of thoughts piling up on top of each other, and so, to preserve some order, the work will be divided into three books. In the first book we shall deal with the *Tools of a Wise Educator*, in the second, *Of Christian Doctrine* which she must teach, and in the third, of the *Virtue* which she will get her children to practise. We shall speak straight away in the first book about the sources with which the wise educator becomes familiar, and her principal duties from which the other two books spring.

² Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, cap. XXXII; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromatum*, lib. VII, cap. V; Justin, *Apologia* I, n. 16; Origen, *Contra Celso*, lib. VIII.

Book I
On the Knowledge of a Wise Teacher
Chapter I
On General Reading

5. Gersen says 'Call often to mind that old saying — *eye looks on unsatisfied, ear listens ill content.*'¹ It is not what we read in itself that benefits us, but rather the disposition of mind which, in a certain way, digests it and assimilates it. So, being fastidious in our choice of books, being dissatisfied with them all, or wanting too many, or hoping to glean fresh light from the most recent ones, or in the ones we have not got, but hear recommended, reveals superficial thinking or bad training. It shows that we have not appreciated nor really grasped what we have read, not that we have understood the range and application of the teaching contained in them. We need to be convinced that, in our own time, it is not very difficult to find excellent principles which apply to all our needs. Has not the Gospel of Jesus Christ been accessible to everyone for ages? If we are not satisfied with this we are lacking in reflection and energy in understanding, loving and using it. Is not the law totally contained in the two commandments of love? St John never tires of telling us to love one another.² He understood the force and breadth of this decree. Those, on the contrary, who listened to him, did not penetrate the kernel of his teaching and so the repetition annoyed them and they looked for something new. And this generally happens. We ask for new things because we do not digest or savour the old and because of this we feel nothing but nausea for them.

6. The early Christians did not have as many books as we have, but they knew more about virtue than us. Prescinding from the ancient philosophers, many founders of religious orders and societies left no written rule for their disciples and people noticed that their oral tradition preserved the freshness and spirit of their teaching better. In the Old Testament God gave the Hebrews laws written on stone tablets, but in Jeremiah he promised that the Messiah would write it on their hearts.³ Therefore,

¹ First edition says Thomas à Kempis, and substituted in book C. Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, L. I, c. I. *The Imitation of Christ* has been attributed to Gersen.

², 'Blessed John the Evangelist lived in Ephesus until extreme old age. His disciples could hardly carry him to church and he could not muster the voice to speak many words. During individual gatherings he usually said nothing but "Little children, love one another".' St Jerome, *Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Galatas*, lib. III, cap, VI, v. 10.

³ *Jer. 24: 7.*

Jesus Christ left nothing in writing and instead was concerned to send the Holy Spirit from heaven on his Apostles.

7. Listen to what the great patriarch St John Chrysostom has to say about books. 'It would be good if we could do without any help from books, but live our lives in such a way that the grace of the Holy Spirit would take the place of books for us, and just as books are written in ink he would write on our hearts. But because we have rejected such a grace, we must use the second course as guide. Certainly God has shown us by word and deed that the first course was the more excellent one. For he did not speak by written signs to Noah, to Abraham, to his descendants and to Job and Moses, but he spoke to them directly, because he saw that they were upright in heart. But when the whole Hebrew people fell into the depth of iniquity, it was finally necessary for him to correct them, using words and stone tablets [...] I would like you to note how wrong it is that while we ought to live such pure lives that books should not be necessary, but be able to offer our hearts to be taught by the Holy Spirit; having lost so great an honour and being reduced to needing books, we do not even use this second remedy honestly.'⁴

8. St Augustine felt the same. In the first book of *De doctrina cristiana* he shows that those who are perfect and living in grace do not even need the Scriptures, because only charity, which does not cease even in heaven, is necessary and even finds a use for unnecessary things.⁵ It is indeed quite mad to boast, as do the wise of this world, in having many books as a remedy for our ignorance, just as it is mad to show off our clothes which remind us of man's nudity and his sin. However it is only right, that we use, this second remedy (good books) that the Lord has given us profitably as the just do, reading them spiritually, with delight, and especially with Christian charity, which reflects on them wisely and is edified by all of them.

Chapter II

On the Choice of Books and especially Sacred Scripture

9. Books, then, are useful in our present state if we know how to nourish our spirit with them. 'Reading', said St Francis of Sales, 'is the oil of the lamp of prayer.'⁶ To this end, avoid all luxury in books. Divide them all into two classes. Some that may form a small library for you as food for your soul. As regards the others, it will be all right for you to read some of the better ones, as long as you do not lose your love and taste for the first.

⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *Commentarius is S. Matthaem*, Proemium, Homilia I.

⁵ St Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, lib. I, cap XXXIX. This note added by Editor [= Ed. note].

⁶ Mons. Jean Pierre Camus, *The Spirit of St Francis of Sales*, p. VI, c. 9.

10. So what are these first books? They are the *Scriptures*, the *Roman Catechism*, certain works of the Fathers, all the books used in Church, the best authenticated lives of the saints, especially those of the early Church, such as the *Martyrology* and *Early Church practice*. And if you would like to have a good series of the *Lives of the Saints* I cannot suggest one which is written with better balance than that of Alban Butler, which is now translated into Italian from the French by Godesgard.⁷ Again, the ecclesiastical history of their diocese is part of every Christian's life because they should know who brought the light of the gospel, which holy people spread it and, following on this, who maintained and increased it.⁸ More particularly for one's own spiritual direction the works of Saint Francis of Sales, the *Combattimento Spirituale* [the Spiritual Combat] by P. Scupoli and the book of the *Imitation of Christ* are the most important. If you would like a few others, I would remind you, in choosing them, of the playful saying of a truly wise person, that the best authors begin with the letter S, meaning the saints.⁹

11. As far as the Scriptures are concerned the early Christians were insatiable for it, but the Fathers were never so eloquent as when they recommended this precious writing given by God to human beings. Women, such as Paula, Eustachium, Fabiola and some Roman women mentioned by St Jerome, were remarkably earnest in understanding and edifying each other with it.

12. Shall I accuse the present generation of not reading the Scriptures? I accuse them, rather, of reading them with little devotion. They read them coldly as they would read an ordinary book. It seems that they read them with the intention of judging them rather than being judged by them. You should read them constantly and have as a guide in your reading what Gersen teaches in the first book of the *Imitation of Christ*, which no one could put better.¹⁰

13. It is necessary to distinguish the books of Sacred Scripture individually because the same food is not suitable for all, nor for every age. The early Christians and the Hebrews themselves forbade the young to read certain parts of the *Bible*. In general keep to the *Gospels* of Jesus Christ and all the *New Testament*. This is the book pre-eminently given us who live in this time of grace. It is the key to and sheds light on all the ancient writings and is recommended in preference to the others by the early Fathers. St Basil says, 'if you wish to have real, heartfelt contrition, beware of

⁷ Printed by J. A. Lebel, the royal printer, at Versailles 1820. The Italian edition is printed by Battaglia at Venice. Alban Butler, an English writer on the saints (1710–1773), was a pupil and later a Professor of philosophy and theology at the college of Douay. He wrote various works but is especially known for *the Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints*, the fruit of 25 years of work, published in London during the years 1754–1759. [Editor].

⁸ For our diocese of Trent see, among other books, Girolamo Tartarotti's *Memorie intorno la vita e morte de' santi Sisinnio, Martirio, ed Alessandro, martirizzati nell' Anaunia*, now Val di Non. Verona 1745.

⁹ St Philip Neri. Suggestions by St Philip included St Gregory, St Augustine and St Bernard. [Editor's note].

¹⁰ Thomas à Kempis, *op. cit.*, lib I, cap. V. See above n. 5, [Editor's Note].

reading profane authors, either historians or orators, not even the Old Testament, but turn frequently to the New Testament, and also the acts of the martyrs, and the lives and examples of the early Fathers.' The holy Doctor adds, 'I would not want altogether to forbid you to read the Old Testament for we know that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it is especially necessary for the support of our faith and for upholding the orthodoxy of the Church; but it does not appear to me to be directly conducive for exciting heartfelt contrition.'¹¹

14. In so far as the Old Testament is concerned the *Psalms* and the book of *Proverbs* provide most fruitful instruction. And the holy Doctor Basil once said to those living in Caesarea: 'I exhort you to remember the admonitions which are in the Psalms. Examine carefully the precepts of *Proverbs*, the beauty of the stories and their examples and to these add the orders of the Apostles. And as the crown and perfection of all this add the words of the Gospel, so that, deriving benefit from all this, you will light on this or that as each is drawn by the grace received from the Holy Spirit. For such is the manifold face of the Church that there are as many maxims as there are people, and as many kinds of cure for sin as there are ages and types.'¹² So the various parts of scripture are especially adapted for various types of people, though certain parts are suitable for everyone as are the *Psalms* and the *New Testament*. What's more, it will be most helpful to have a spiritual director, in studying this.

Chapter III

On the Spiritual Director.

15. The Director of the human race is Jesus Christ, and the more we listen to this Director the wiser we become. He himself says, 'My sheep hear my voice.'¹³ In fact, a sincere disposition heart, a true love for the truth, and true indifference to everything else, makes it easy for us to listen to this director who speaks to us in a thousand ways.

16. Very often we cannot have a priest to direct us with the great gifts of learning, prudence and charity required by St Francis of Sales for a worthy director.¹⁴ But we never lack Jesus Christ, who fully embodies all these gifts. The chief thing, then, is to make ourselves capable of being instructed.

¹¹ St Basil, *epist. Ad Chilon. Nil. L. IV c. II.* [Ed. Note: It is difficult to establish Rosmini's source of these two passages. The first passage is contained in the above letter cf. Basil, *Epistola XLII*. The second passage is partly stated in the *Homily on Psalm I*].

¹² St Basil, *Homil. XXI in aliquot Script. Locos.* It is difficult to establish the source from which Rosmini draws these quotations. His *Letter to Chilo* contains that advice not to neglect reading especially the New Testament, since the Old Testament can harm the weak mind of the reader. As regard the second passage the thought is partly expressed in the *Homily on Psalm I*.

¹³ Cf., *Jn 10: 3.ff.*

¹⁴ St Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part I, c. IV.

17. Without this, not even a man endowed with all these gifts could direct us. For all virtue lies in obedience. And if a person does not obey the greater how will she obey the less? In virtue of the fact that not only all perfection but all goodness of life consists in obeying the superiors given us, you should learn the infinite value of obedience, and furthermore, that every benefit that a Director could possibly provide lies in the sincere readiness to obey him.

18. When the Lord said: *'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,'*¹⁵ he spoke of this disposition of soul through which we submit to those above us whether by nature, or office or our choice. We have to subject our will to that of God, and to the pastors established by him in his Church. And because there is nothing so noble as the will there is no sacrifice more pleasing to God than this, nor anything more that we owe him, than that the human will submit to him. This denial of self asked of us is a precept.

19. If we choose some suitable person, to whom we submit in all our actions and are directed by him instead of ourselves, this is an obedience of counsel. If, additionally, we oblige ourselves to this by vow, we enter into what is called the state of religious perfection.

20. The whole life of Jesus Christ was based on the counsel of obedience. For *'He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.'*¹⁶ And so true is it that it consisted in the denial and renunciation of his own will that Christ said in the garden: *'My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.'*¹⁷ And he said this openly when he said: *'Because I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me.'*¹⁸

21. The value of having someone to direct us, then, is two - fold. It consists in the subjection we have taken on and in the facility in leading a holy life led on by his advice.

22. Moreover, St Francis of Sales teaches us to be obedient to everyone and to hear the voice of the Lord everywhere.¹⁹ How happy you will be if you practise both these virtues and especially if you can find some expert counsellor, that faithful friend, the sure guide, that the saints speak of as one in a thousand and which the Holy Spirit calls: *'the medicine of life and immortality and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity.'*²⁰

¹⁵ *Mt*, 16: 24. 'If anyone want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' (NRSV).

¹⁶ *Phil* 2: 8. 'humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.' (NRSV).

¹⁷ *Mt* 26: 39. 'My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me. Yet not what I want but what you want.' (NRSV).

¹⁸ *Jn* 6: 38. 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.' (NRSV).

¹⁹ *The Spirit of St Francis de Sales*, Part I, chap. XIII.

²⁰ Cf., *Sir*, 6: 15 – 16. (Douay-Rheims).

Chapter IV

The Gravity of the Task

23. The education of others, where religion is concerned, is a very serious affair, since souls are confided to our care, whose value is in some sense, infinite. For, in taking charge of poor children, you are given a treasure on deposit, that should make you act, fear and watch so that you guard it faithfully. Besides, these young and innocent souls are those of whom our Lord spoke with great affection, and among other things he said: *'But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea.'*²¹ What a burden you bear! If these souls suffer harm through your neglect, you will be held responsible. And you know what the Holy Spirit says to those who have taken on the responsibility of the souls? He says: *'My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger. Thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words. Do, therefore, my son, what I say, and deliver thyself: because thou art fallen into the hand of thy neighbour. Run about, make haste, stir up thy friend: give not sleep to thy eyes, neither let thy eyelids slumber. Deliver thyself as a doe from the hand, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.'*²²

24. These things are not said to discourage us from undertaking the care of others, but to encourage us to undertake it with fervour. For we must have care for those in our charge, but not their emendment.²³ God spoke to Ezekiel, to whom he had given the task of reproving the Israelites: *'If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: thou declare it not to him, nor speak to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way, and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. But if thou give warning to the wicked, and he be not converted from his wickedness, and from his evil way: he indeed shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.'*²⁴ In the same way, the wise

²¹ Mt 18: 6. 'If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.' (NRSV).

²² Prov 6: 1 – 5. 'My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbour, if you have bound yourself to another, you are snared by the utterance of your lips, caught by the words of your mouth. So do this my child, and save yourself, for you have come into your neighbour's power: go, hurry, and plead with your neighbour. Give your eyelids no slumber; save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.' (NRSV).

²³ St Bernard, *De consid.* L. IV c. II.

²⁴ Ezek 3: 18 – 19. 'If I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die", and you give them no warning, or speak to warn the wicked from their wicked way, in order to save their life, those wicked persons shall die for their iniquity; but their blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life.' (NRSV).

man in the book of *Proverbs* teaches us *to save ourselves* by not neglecting anything we might do nor effort on our part to rouse our friend from sleep.²⁵

25. God who has given to each of us the commandment concerning our brother, calls us to fulfil such charges of charity in many places in Scripture. Before warning us against scandalising children in the above mentioned words, he encourages us to edify them, saying: '*And he that shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.*'²⁶ And he goes on to say, '*And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*'²⁷

26. You can see that if we are to trust these words, he will give us the available strength to sustain us in our task. It is God himself for whom we are caring. And when he sent Ezekiel to the Israelites, a mission which was hard and difficult, he said this to comfort him: '*Behold I have made thy face stronger than their faces: and thy forehead harder than their foreheads. I have made thy face like an adamant and like flint: fear them not, neither be thou dismayed at their presence: for they are a provoking house.*'²⁸ On the contrary a delightful and pleasant little family is destined for your instruction. So, take heart! The Lord, who urges you to take up the burden, will give you the necessary grace to carry it, and, according to the measure of grace, the glory. For in the book of *Daniel* we read: '*and they that instruct many to justice, [shall shine] as stars for all eternity.*'²⁹

Chapter V

That it is necessary to prepare to do this well, and how this should be done

27. At the present time, frankly speaking, religious matters are commonly treated indifferently and light-heartedly. Because God has made his mysteries, his teaching and his duties of perfection available frequently, ingratitude causes us to forget their value, and to treat them as something common. Familiarity weakens the impression they should make and the vivid conception of them. In contrast, in the early ages of the Church, Christians, full of the spirit of truth, appreciated things for what they are worth. Everything in the Church was holy, everything endued with vast grandeur, calling for the greatest fidelity and observance. If they had chosen a woman to entrust her with any education at all of some part of Christ's flock, they would have set about

²⁵ [Ed. note, *Prov* 6: 3].

²⁶ *Mt* 18: 5. 'Whoever welcomes one such child (present to them) in my name welcomes me.' (NRSV).

²⁷ *Mk* 9: 36. 'and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.' (NRSV).

²⁸ *Ezek* 3: 8 – 9. 'See I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. Like the hardest stone, harder than flint have I made your forehead; do not fear them or be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.' (NRSV).

²⁹ *Dan* 12: 3. '...those who lead many to righteousness [will shine] like the stars forever and ever.'

choosing her with great caution and care after praying to God. They would have demanded guaranteed testimony of her life, of flawless behaviour, of good reputation for virtue, frugality, work, charity, retirement, prayer and, in short, everything characteristic of a christian life. Such care is not used nowadays, with all the more reason, then, should one reflect and respond to one's vocation.

28. What St Paul thought and said to the Church of Corinth, you must say to your little group: '*For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*'³⁰

29. What is to be done, then? Prepare. Keeping with the above mentioned quotations from Scripture, listen to Ezekiel when God sent him to reprove the Israelites, '*And he said to me: Son of man, eat all that thou shalt find: eat this book, and go speak to the children of Israel. And I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that book: And he said to me: Son of man, thy belly shall eat, and thy bowels shall be filled with this book, which I give thee, and I did eat it: and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.*'³¹ This is the book of the law. He has given it to you as well and has ordered you to eat it. If you obey, you will enjoy the sweetness. But if you do not eat it, you cannot complete either a determinate and peculiar mission of which we speak or an ordinary and general one. From now on, then, meditate more deeply on the holy law.

30. Briefly, do what Jesus Christ said of himself, '*And for their sakes I sanctify myself...*'³² Jesus Christ was all - holy but this was not enough. He made himself priest and victim, which means in this sense *to sanctify himself*, that is, *to enter into the Holy Place, by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption*,³³ a redemption not his but ours. So he did everything he could for his sheep. Do all you can, then, with him as model. You are not as holy as he was. You have two means of *sanctifying yourself* for the children confided to your care. One is by increasing in virtue and fervour of spirit, the other is to put up with all the annoyance and trouble and even persecution which you might have the grace to encounter, offering yourself with everything in sacrifice with Christ, *so that they also may be sanctified in truth.*³⁴

31. St Augustine says that the obligation of exercising charity towards others merits our receiving it ourselves.³⁵ In so far as the first type of sanctification is concerned you will be helped by the task itself you have undertaken. So carry out everything that you can. '*Run about, make haste, stir up thy friend.*'³⁶

³⁰ 2 Cor 11: 2. 'I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.' NRSV.

³¹ Ezek 3 1-3. 'O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel'. So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. He said to me, "Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it". Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.' (NRSV).

³² Jn 17: 19.

³³ Cf. Heb 9: 12.

³⁴ Cf. Jn 7: 19.

³⁵ St Augustine, *Epistola*, CCLXI, 1.

³⁶ Prov 6: 3. 'Do this, and on the other hand hurry and plead with your neighbour.'

32. Undoubtedly you will meet with difficulties and weariness, but *Thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words*. If you confront them strongly *Deliver thyself as a doe from the hand, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.*³⁷

33. At times you will feel disheartened at your labours not turning out right and the difficulty in overcoming reluctant characters. In this regard remember that you will be given the gift of fortitude. *'...and I went away in the indignation of my spirit: for the hand of the Lord was with me, strengthening me.'*³⁸

34. You will be the subject of gossip, you will annoyed and, let us suppose, persecuted through malice or ignorance. As to the first cause, Christ comforts when he said: *'...and the world hath hated them: because they are not of the world, as I also am not of the world.'*³⁹ And in spite of the hatred of the world, Jesus had spoken earlier, saying to his Father: *'And now I come to thee: and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy filled in themselves,'*⁴⁰ that is, *'the joy of thy Lord'*⁴¹. As for well-meaning people, even Ezekiel, who was taken up by the Spirit, was bound by his servants who thought he was crazy. But God planned this to happen, as he said.⁴² But it was for a great end, (as all those of God are) that is, to prophesy by the foreshadowing of these chains, the slavery of Jerusalem. So hold fast to the fact that *'God ordereth all things sweetly.'*⁴³ So whatever may happen to us, instead of being burdened by sorrow, we shall experience great joy and *our joy will be full*.

Chapter VI

A Collection of Short Prayers

35. These things will turn out well if you ask this from the Lord. Our good Father can deny you nothing but you should have the pleasant duty of asking him for them. The Father said to Jesus Christ himself: *'Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession.'*⁴⁴

36. Besides continuous prayer, and those laid down for fixed times, gather together for yourself, a collection of short prayers to say often throughout the day,

³⁷ Cf. *Prov* 6: 2 – 5.

³⁸ *Ezek* 3: 14.

³⁹ *Jn* 17: 14. 'and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, even as I do not belong to the world.' (NRSV).

⁴⁰ *Jn*. 17: 13. 'But now I am coming to you; and I speak these things in the world, that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.' (NRSV).

⁴¹ *Mt* 25: 21, 23.

⁴² Cf. *Ezek* 3: 24 – 25.

⁴³ *Wis* 8: 1.

⁴⁴ *Ps* 2: 7 – 8. 'You are my son; today I have begotten you, Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.' (NRSV).

On Christian Education

adapted to your needs and which can be suitable as circumstances arise. Here are some by way of example drawn from Scripture and used by the Church:

1. The sign of the cross, which comes from the Apostles, and which was constantly used by the early Christians. Then there are the following:
2. *Create a clean heart in me, O God.*⁴⁵
3. *Cast me not away from thy face.*⁴⁶
4. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.*⁴⁷ This is precisely the joy mentioned above.
5. *O Lord thou wilt open my lips: and my mouth shall declare thy praise.*⁴⁸
6. *By what doth a young man correct his way? By observing thy words.*⁴⁹
7. *Blessed art thou O Lord: teach me thy justifications.*⁵⁰ That is, the sublime arguments with which we can repel all the rash judgements, which the wicked bring against divine providence.
8. *Open thou my eyes: and I will consider the wondrous things of thy law.*⁵¹
9. *My soul hath cleaved to the pavement; quicken thou me according to thy word.*⁵²
10. *My soul hath slumbered through heaviness; strengthen thou me in thy words.*⁵³
11. *Give me understanding, and I will search thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart.*⁵⁴
12. *Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity.*⁵⁵
13. *So shall I answer them that reproach me in any thing; that I have trusted in thy words.*⁵⁶
14. *And take not thou thy word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*⁵⁷
15. I thank you, O Lord, for I am a partaker with all them that fear thee.⁵⁸ in the communion of saints.
16. *Teach me goodness and discipline and knowledge.*⁵⁹
17. *I have greatly hoped in thy words.*⁶⁰
18. *Unless thy law had been my meditation, I had then perhaps perished in my abjection.*⁶¹
19. *Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear; for I am afraid of thy judgements.*⁶²

⁴⁵ Ps 50: 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 13.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 17.

⁴⁹ Ps 118: 9. Cf. Ps 119(NRSV).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 18.

⁵² *Ibid.* 25.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 37.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 42.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 63.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 66.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 74 and 81.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 92.

⁶² *Ibid.* 120.

20. *The Lord is my shepherd, he makes me lie down in green pastures*.⁶³ that is, in his Church.

21. *To thee is the poor man left; thou wilt be a helper to the orphans*.⁶⁴

And there are many other similar ones used by the saint, such as those of Saint Philip Neri.⁶⁵ I also recommend that you do not vary them too often, but say what the Spirit suggests simply and fervently, at different times.

Chapter VII

On the Duties of a School Mistress

37. A school mistress should be a mirror to her pupils, as Christ is to her, otherwise she will build with one hand and destroy with the other. Listen once more to the Apostle: *'Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest. For wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest.'*⁶⁶

38. *'In all thy works keep the pre-eminence.'* says, *Ecclesiasticus*, to those presiding in an assembly.⁶⁷ Lead the way in everything. Do not infringe any part of the rule which you have drawn up for yourself in the beginning on account of the coldness of the season, or boredom, or pain or pleasure which may seize you. Keep to the appointed times. If it is possible never let the children or your fellow teachers perceive that you are tired or worried. Do not complain. Always be *cheerful* with them, *strict* with yourself and *wise* with everyone. This is that *goodness, discipline* and *knowledge* which you ask for in the sixteenth ejaculation suggested above. The Wise Man unites all his praises of the perfect woman under the epithet *valiant*.⁶⁸ So if you are tired or troubled,⁶⁹ try to get a moment by yourself and pour out your troubles to the Lord without fear, complain and say how miserable you feel. He will reply to you in the depth of your heart with divine words which will restore your serenity, enthusiasm and give you greater strength than formerly. *'You shall faint, and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity. But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run*

⁶³ *Ps* 23: 1. NRSV. 'The Lord ruleth me: and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture' (*Ps* 22: 1–2, Douay-Rheims)

⁶⁴ *Ps* 9, Part 2: 14. (Cf. NRSV. *Ps* 10: 14).

⁶⁵ Ed. Note. *Vita di S. Filippo Neri* [Life of St Philip Neri] ed. Cit., Lib II, Cap V, nn. 13 – 15 pp. 97 – 99.

⁶⁶ *Rom* 2: 1. 'Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because, you, the judge, are doing the very same things.' (NRSV).

⁶⁷ *Ecccl.* 33: 23. 'Excel in all that you do.' (NRSV).

⁶⁸ *Prov* 31: 10. *Forte* means rising above the weakness of sex: hence the Septuagint renders the word as a virile woman. ['capable' in the NRSV. Trans.].

⁶⁹ *Prov* 31: 6–7.

and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'⁷⁰ Because you are not able to be by yourself for long in prayer, the third, fourth, ninth, tenth, thirteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth ejaculations will help you. These may be said in your heart in a very short time.

39. Having a constant determination to be strict with yourself in everything which pertains to your office, you will pay particular attention to certain duties. In my opinion, I think it would help if you reserved to yourself spiritual instruction, being especially careful that nothing is done without your anticipating it and approving it. The functions of spiritual instruction can be reduced to these: *reading, teaching, refuting, counselling exhorting, reproof and punishing.*

Chapter VIII

On Reading and Teaching

40. The profit drawn from reading depends a good deal on the way the reading is done. So it will be useful to say a little about this. It should be read in a pleasant and spontaneous voice and gesture in such a way so that, as far as possible, the sense is conveyed and stands out with appropriate emphasis, neither more nor less, in keeping with its particular character. If you read something amusing, your bearing should not lead them to see it as serious. If it is something serious you should not provoke them to laughter by the way you say it. Whatever is read should be done crisply with stress on the double consonants, observing the punctuation and giving weight to the ideas expressed. From this, you will see that instruction is not the easiest job to do well, but even spiritual reading. Let us see what its Masters thought. Saint Benedict desires that whoever reads in the refectory should prepare himself with an appropriate prayer,⁷¹ because he saw on the one hand that if he reads in an inspiring way he contributed greatly to the profit his hearers draw from it. He also saw that a little vanity might creep in surreptitiously.⁷² In the Church where everything is performed with gravity, decorum and perfection, a model of regulated life, there is an appropriate Order for reading, that is Lector, but he is not commissioned to read the Epistle; this is the office of the Subdeacon;⁷³ nor is the latter allowed to read the Gospel, this is entrusted to the Deacon to whom it belongs.

⁷⁰ *Isaiah* 40: 30–31. 'Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they walk and not faint.' (NRSV).

⁷¹ Rule XXXVIII.

⁷² 'Ne ostentes vocem tuam nisi in oratione praecepta'. [Do not display your voice except in prescribed prayer]. Rules of St Anthony the Abbot, n. XXVII.

⁷³ The office of subdeacon was discontinued after Vatican II.

41. As far as *instruction* is concerned, *Ecclesiasticus* says: 'He that cleareth up a question, shall prepare what to say, and so having prayed he shall be heard, and shall keep discipline, and then he shall answer.'⁷⁴ Note every word of this sentence. Who would have thought today that it was the office of instructor which caused Augustine to shed tears he was so discontented with himself when ordained priest, through the difficulty he felt of measuring up to and carrying out what he desired. He wrote to Bishop Valerian begging him to allow him some days in retreat before the following Easter in order to prepare with prayer and study. Among other things he said this: 'Perhaps your Holiness replies: I wish to know what is lacking to fit you for your office. The things which I lack are so many, that I could more easily enumerate the things which I have than those which I desire to have. I may venture to say that I know and unreservedly believe the doctrines pertaining to our salvation. But my difficulty is in the question how I am to use this truth in ministering to the salvation of others, seeking what is profitable not for myself alone, but for many, that they may be saved. And perhaps there may be, nay, beyond all question there are, written in the sacred books, counsels by the knowledge and acceptance of which the man of God may so discharge his duties to the Church in the things of God, or at least so keep a conscience void of offense in the midst of ungodly men, whether living or dying, as to secure that that life for which alone humble and meek Christian hearts sigh is not lost. But how can this be done, except, as the Lord Himself tells us, by asking, seeking, knocking, that is, by praying, reading, and weeping?'⁷⁵ If St Augustine spoke like this,⁷⁶ what are we to say? Do not pay attention to thoughtless people who treat such a thing as a joke. We shall not fail to stand with the early masters.

42. As to method you should come down to their level, and distribute to all, as each can stomach it, so to speak, milk to some, crumbs to others, solid food to others. Think about what you are going to say; be precise in what you say, and speak pleasantly, brightly and in a lively manner. Intersperse some story which young people love and some joke which will reasonably amuse them so that their minds will not be over – exerted. Ensure that some activity accompanies your instruction because it is difficult for young children to stay still without some movement, and if you do not direct their movement they will move about in their own way and become unruly. If something in your talk strikes them and they stop their activity and pay greater attention; so much the better; let them do it. For the rest I refer you to that precious book of St Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, which I have translated.⁷⁷ Although not everything in it can be adapted in our case, because the circumstances are different, nevertheless, you can draw wonderful knowledge from it with careful consideration.

⁷⁴ *Ecccl* 33: 4.

⁷⁵ St Augustine, *Ep.* XXI, 4. [The Fathers of the Church. New Advent Trans.].

⁷⁶ S. Augustine, *De catechizandis rudibus*, II, 4 He confesses how ardent, appropriate and fruitful his instructions were.

⁷⁷ St Augustine, *Del modo di catechizzare gl' idioti*, [The Method of Catechizing the Unlearned] Venezia Giuseppe Battaglia, 1821.

You will especially learn there what delight you should find in teaching, and how much such delight helps to make our learning spontaneous and earnest.

Chapter IX

On Confuting, Counselling, Exhorting, Reproving and Punishing

43. In your case confuting does not imply arguing against wicked and obstinate opinions, but will concern clearing up some difficulty put to you or some error arising from imperfect reasoning. The chief principle which should guide you in this matter is to select from many replies which you will sometimes give, the one which will most soothe and enlighten the person who proposed the difficulty. Often a fuller explanation of what you have said, for example a story or a parable will clear up the difficulty. Sometimes it will be better to avoid replying, or even to argue with them according to their principles, as circumstances demand. Christ himself has given us an example of both ways. Look in St Matthew chapters XX and XXII and in St John chapter X.⁷⁸

44. So far we have mentioned your duties as teacher. Now let us deal with *counselling*, which more than anything else is a job of a friend. You have accepted these little children; treat them as equals. Let them have complete, friendly confidence in you as if you were one of them. Then they will open their hearts to you and you will be able to respond with beneficial advice. You can indeed give advice spontaneously without being asked, but it would be better to let them come to you. If your advice is gentle, friendly and wise and they go away happy, they will come to you again. In this way you can do much good. Tell them often of this saying of the Holy Spirit, '*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsels.*'⁷⁹ And this one, '*Those who hate reproof walk in a sinner's steps.*'⁸⁰ Finally, I warn you about one thing: you can very well give advice in the case of a precept, but beware of making advice a precept. In this respect St Paul used great care, as you can see in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7 and in the second letter chapter 8.⁸¹

45. Exhortation has a great influence over souls. It strengthens, energises, and gets them to work. This is why St Paul recommends such an approach so often to Timothy and Titus.⁸² You must do it with warmth, persuasion and authority. When persons speak showing that they are full of conviction in what they say and full of zeal, it is difficult for their listeners to resist it and they more or less enter into the

⁷⁸ Mt 20: 13 – 15 and 22: 17 – 21; Jn 10: 31 – 38.

⁷⁹ Prov 12: 15. 'Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice.' (NRSV).

⁸⁰ Eccl 21: 7,

⁸¹ 1 Cor 7: 6, 25; 2 Cor 8: 8 – 10.

⁸² 1 Tim 4: 12; 5: 1; 2 Tim 4: 2; Tit 6: 15.

feelings of the speaker. Paul, therefore, says that exhortation should be united with *edification* and *consolation*.⁸³ Besides, since you are dealing with docile little girls you will never offend their self-love when you exhort them to be virtuous. So you can rest assured that the more you exhort them the more good you will do. So do it often and, indeed, continually.

46. I now come to the office of a sister which is that of *reproving* them for their failings. The spirit of gentleness must shine out and encompass everything. Gentleness will not exclude force. Reproof must be '*like a honeycomb in the mouth of a lion*.'⁸⁴ If you grieve over their failings, putting yourself in their shoes, you will do it with energy. Ezekiel who was sent to reprove the Israelites said, '*And I came to them of the captivity, to the heap of new corn, to them that dwelt by the river Chobar, and I sat where they sat: and I remained there seven days mourning in the midst of them.*'⁸⁵ Now, the failings may be tiny ones but it will help if you show the girls a true sisterly displeasure, not bitter and obstinate but gently and easily satisfied as soon as the cause of displeasure is removed. As far as the rules of correction are concerned follow the advice of St Augustine, that when dealing with private correction this should be done not in proportion to the evil committed but according to the disposition of the person who did it.⁸⁶ In the same way what we eat depends on the strength of the digestion not on the goodness of the food. The only consideration should be the benefit likely to be obtained. So aim at doing this in a helpful manner: and also seeking out the right times and places and look for the best and easiest way to their hearts and always with charity, gentleness and joy in the correction desired. For the rest it is difficult to carry out this task well, and if you wish to see how St Augustine was troubled by it, read the ninety-fifth letter to Paulinus and Therasia, '*What trembling in all this, my dear Paulinus, holy man of God! What trembling, what darkness!*'⁸⁷

47. As to *punishment* this is the mother's duty. Here also, it is necessary to study the various characteristics of young people, and take into account the benefit you gain from this, and moderate punishment accordingly. But never obtain through punishment what you can get through instruction, advice, exhortation or correction. Prefer a light correction over a heavy one, and a private one rather than a public one. Prefer a public correction over punishment. Equally, do not try to gain it with public and severe punishment if a light and private punishment suffices. Finally let everything be reasonable, careful and called for. Now you will *support with the staff, now strike with a rod* but like God you *will comfort with both*.⁸⁸

⁸³ 1 Cor 14: 3.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Judg* 14: 8.

⁸⁵ *Ezek* 3: 15. 'I came to the exiles at Tel-a bib, who lived by the river Chebar. And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days.' (NRSV).

⁸⁶ St Augustine, *Epistola XCV*, 3, *Ad Paulinum et Therasiam*. [CUA Press, Washington, 1966].

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Cf. *Ps* 22: 4.

Chapter X

Keeping an Eye on Everything

48. It remains for me to say something about the other part of your office which is to supervise the tasks which you do not perform personally. This supervision regards both your assistants and the children.

49. You will behave to your assistants as an affectionate sister. Never display authority. Keep them to their tasks with the tone of your voice, but still more by your example, by a serious and gentle manner, speaking in way that is neither superfluous nor trivial. Let all that you say be prompted by instruction or sincere love towards them without being tedious or affected. If your conversation is stimulating it will be the more appreciated. You should always be most friendly to all and full of respect. It is great, fine and very helpful to show genuine respect to all. This is how St Paul treated the faithful. Writing to the *Romans*, he says: '*To all that are at Rome, the beloved of God, called to be saints.*'⁸⁹ You will be surprised to see how encouraged they are when you show that you expect them to do well.

50. You must do roughly the same with the children. Keep an eye on everything, put right immediately any little upsets that you cannot foresee, by an indirect and gentle action rather than by a direct and tiresome one. The valiant woman of the Wise Man rules her house by her activity not by noise and compulsion, and everything goes smoothly. 'She hath girded her loins with strength, and hath strengthened her arm.'⁹⁰ And after the Wise Man had praised her for her work which she had apparently performed almost in silence, he says this of her speech, '*She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue.*'⁹¹ The inferences seems to be that from the practice of virtue she had learnt to speak virtuously. Thus you will direct your family well and it will run like a little machine. Once put in motion it will keep on turning over without needing any further stimulus, but there will be need of much vigilance to remove from the threads grit or tiny obstacles of any sort which might get among the wheels and either slow them down, or break them or stop them.

⁸⁹ *Rom* 1: 7. 'To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints.' (NRSV).

⁹⁰ *Prov* 31: 17. 'She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong.' (NRSV).

⁹¹ *Prov* 31: 26. 'She opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.' (NRSV).

Chapter XI

On the Qualities and Parts of Christian Education in General

51. *'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field. Which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.'*⁹² Now if this holds good for Christians they are faced with a serious question: if the man sells everything for the sake of heaven alone, how is he going to live? How does he hold on to the necessities of life? How does he perform the actions of civil life? How is he to eat, drink, sleep, walk or speak? Yes, all must be sold for the treasure hidden in the field. But listen, he can buy, rather he is constrained to buy the field because of the treasure. He can, indeed he must, do things which are not of their nature spiritual, but which are suitable because of the spiritual reason for which he does them.

52. Indeed in the light of our unique Teacher I will go further and tell you with complete confidence that you must not only search for the spiritual in everything, but the perfection of spirituality. *'At that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus, calling unto him a little child, set him in the midst of them. And said: amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.'*⁹³ Let us finish with this argument and say: no one will enter the kingdom of heaven unless they make themselves the least and seeks that perfect simplicity, humility and innocence which nature itself has given to children.

53. It is enough, then, to be a Christian to know that the true value of any of our actions lies in its being offered to God and so invested in the heavenly treasury.

54. Let us, then, be convinced of the truth of this supreme and immutable maxim of our Lord's teaching that all must devote themselves to this sublime state and to being like God. And yet this is not opposed to the upright condition of human nature. Do not be ashamed to state that in educating these little girls you intend to make them holy and perfect in so far as it is in your power. In this lies the grandeur and nobility of Christian thought.

Now you know the nature of the edifice you have taken upon yourself to build, you must think of the plan. There should be, as it were, two storeys: Christian truths and virtues. In the following pages we shall briefly review the truths to be taught and the virtues to be inculcated.

⁹² *Mt 13: 44* "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." (NRSV).

⁹³ *Mt 18: 1-4*. "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said. "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (NRSV).

Book II

On Teaching Christian Truths

Chapter I

On the Importance of Instruction, and the Division of this Book

55. Intelligence is that wonderful gift of God which, in an infinite way, distinguishes human beings from all animals, and through which they are made in the image and likeness of the divinity.¹ The great Doctor, Saint Augustine, writes, 'Not all things, but only the rational substance, was made "to the likeness". Hence all things were made through it, but only the soul was made to it. Thus the rational soul was made through and to the likeness. For there is no nature that comes between.'² And elsewhere he says, 'There is nothing more powerful than that creature which is called a rational mind, nothing more sublime. For what is above it is the Creator himself.'³

56. How wonderful is this human nobility! You can study its transcendent source by following in the footsteps of this great Doctor, in our likeness with God formed by the intelligence which he communicates to us, above which there is nothing apart from God and beneath which there are only things which are at an immeasurable distance from it. How much, then we must educate this eminent faculty and cultivate it with love.

57. Looking at human disorders and excesses, it is only too easy to see that they nearly always spring from ignorance or combined with ignorance. If people were more learned they would be better. The very death of Christ was brought about through woeful ignorance, and it would not have happened if they had understood what they were doing.⁴ And it seems sufficient that we know God to be gently impelled to love him!

58. Furthermore, these words support what we say: '*Now this is eternal life: That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*'⁵ This lively knowledge is almost identified with love and enjoyment of God. What greater recommendation can we find for devout instruction? Many saints full of zeal and experience held teaching in such high esteem that they wished preaching to be full of homely instruction and were only too aware of the advantage to be gained from it.

¹ *Gen* 1: 27.

² St Augustine, *Lib. Imper. de Gen. ad litt*, Cap XVI, nn. 59 – 60.

³ St Augustine, *In Ioannis evangelium tractatus*, 23, n. 6.

⁴ Cf. *Lk* 23: 34.

⁵ *Jn* 17: 3. 'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' (NRSV).

59. Aim, then, at having your children well taught and informed. Start in such a way that those who know how can continue this valuable instruction. Only by this means can one obtain what St Paul said to the Colossians, '*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*'⁶ In my opinion spiritual instruction can be divided into three parts: *On Civil Life; On Christian Doctrine; and More advanced Instruction.*

Chapter II

Spiritual Instruction on Civil Life

60. St Paul, writing to the Colossians, says: '*All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*'⁷ For, as St Peter explains, '*Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.*'⁸

61. Teach this to your little girls. Make them understand how this comes about; how our actions, if they are not done in the name of Jesus, have only natural merit, which is of no value regarding eternal life. Show them that an action done in the name of Jesus Christ means being done to give him pleasure, through doing his will, a task received from him, as it were, that they are done together with him or 'clothed' with him and stripped of the old Adam, that is, the sinful man, and therefore performed in virtue of his grace, in short, done through Christ, '*Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.*'⁹

62. When you have impressed this explanation of the common life on them, explain the consequences. Firstly, no upright action performed by Christians in this world can be revolting and disgusting. But everything should be utterly great and noble, because everything can and ought to be holy, and worthy of eternal life and because the disciple of Christ does them, as we have said, together with him. You will add that no one should complain about her position in life or refuse any office because it seems contemptible, for it is so only in appearance in the eyes of those who have not learnt our holy law well. When Jesus Christ laboured in the workshop or his father's house people thought he plied a humble trade, but, in fact, he was doing infinitely more noble work before the truth of God than the Roman Emperor. Nothing is squalid which can be holy and from which Jesus Christ did not make himself exempt. Only worldly ostentation and whatever offends God is despicable, dishonourable and merits scorn.

⁶ *Col 3: 16.*

⁷ *Col 3: 17.* 'And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.' (NRSV).

⁸ *Acts 4: 12.* 'there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.' (NRSV).

⁹ Cf. *Eph 5: 20; Col 3: 17.*

63. Such principles, taken to heart, cannot fail to bear great fruit. But for this general teaching to be really absorbed it is necessary to show them how they are applied to all the circumstances of life. It often happens that virtue and perfection are indicated to us, but we are not shown the way to reach them. You must take the children by the hand and show them the road.

64. For example, as regards eating, show them how to nourish their soul at the same time as their body.¹⁰ In the first place convince them that eating in itself is not an action which adds any dignity to human beings, for even the animals eat like us. Note, that eating reveals our weakness. All our needs reveal our limitations and sorry state. When hunger reminds us to take food it also reminds us that we have sinned. Because, though, even if we had not sinned, we would have eaten, we would not have had the pain and death which comes from not eating. We have become slaves of food, because man with food tried to dodge being God's servant. You can jokingly refer to that old definition: eating is *the art of converting things into excrement*. Moreover, you can add to all this, that if we do not use eating as rightly intended, eating will not only demean us but also be a fault. We eat to supply for our needs. As far as pleasure of taste is concerned get them to understand that there is nothing very noble in this but that God has given it to us in order to help us in the miserable necessity of taking food; but much more to get us to practise virtue by offering or sacrificing it to him so that we might delight in God rather than in something else.

65. Then gradually get down to details, describing the five vices into which eating can fall which are distinguished in St Gregory's *Moralia*. He says, 'At times gluttony anticipates the time when eating is necessary, sometimes it looks for delicious food; sometimes it insists that whatever is to be eaten should be carefully prepared; sometimes it takes more than a moderate amount, and sometimes it is not what is desired that is wrong but the immoderate eagerness for it.'¹¹ All these modes are well illustrated by examples taken from the Scriptures, which the Saint himself supplies. After this you can mention the general and particular means of overcoming similar failings. Finally you can show in a beautiful way how our Lord brought to us, so to speak, the philosopher's stone (explaining what this means) with which we can make the most despised and indifferent things into gold. Hence the different kinds of virtues opposed to these vices. Finally you will persuade them to have a wholesome indifference to all kinds of food, love of moderation and those virtues. You will be sorry for the sad state of humanity which makes little use of this most valuable art of Christ. You will tell them about the Christian agapes and explain how this Greek name came about which signifies spiritual fellowship meals. Finally you will put before them Jesus Christ himself as their model. When his disciples begged him to take a little repose after a long journey, '*Jesus saith to them: My meat is to do the will of him that sent*

¹⁰ See St Basil, *In Regula Interrogatio LVII*.

This is not correct: it is found in the *Interrogatio XIX* of the *Regulae fusius tractatae* and in *Interrogatio CXCVI* of the *Regulae brevius tractatae* (Ed.).

¹¹ St Gregory the Great, *Moralium in expositionem Beati Job*, lib. XXX, cap. XVIII, n. 60.

On Teaching Christian Truths

*me, that I may perfect his work.*¹² The children should imagine themselves to be at table with him: remind them of those early Christians: '*And continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart: Praising God...*'¹³ And you will show them how this gladness and generosity is beneficial to bodily health so much more than the dire effects which follow on guzzling and intemperance.

66. You will make all these things and others similar to them your pleasant study. This will result in a treasury of examples, facts, similes and any other inspiration which may affect your instruction. You will not mention all these things in one breath in such a way as to overwhelm them, but one or another at a suitable time and place. On other occasions you can impress them on their minds with quick-witted phrases or, where it seems a good thing, even with some attack on the vices; sometimes you can explain them at greater length, according as opportunity offers and you see a willingness in them to listen to you speaking. For you should be careful to dispose them so that they want to listen, and not to speak to them (at least for long) if they are not begging you to do so. If you examine the Gospel you will see that our Master almost always did this.

67. All the activities of life should be explained to them in the same way. As a result it will be wholly true that: '*Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.*'¹⁴ They will derive merit from all this and their life will become wholly *prayerful* from which they will derive fresh graces. With this need in view they should meditate individually on the letters of Paul and Peter which overflow not only with sublime concepts with regard to the Christian state and life but also with the most lively and suitable images, and symbols to help the understanding of the Christian to distinguish and to keep its beauty and precepts outlined and fresh in the memory. Add also the study of the wisdom books and *Psalms*, a wonderful book which helps everyone and to which the *New Testament* often refers.

68. For your further guidance and example, let us take another sample of friendly instruction on the things of common life and this regards sleep. We can start by describing the state of a person overtaken by sleep. She no longer has the use of reason, she lies inert like a person overtaken by death. Indeed poets are wont to call sleep the brother of death. Sleep is a thing we have in common with the beasts. So we should not be humanly attached to it, taking it only when necessary, and not sleeping more than necessary, for we are less alive when we sleep.

69. So, when we go to bed we should recall death, the effect of sin, of which it is so lively an image. When we wake up we should remind ourselves of our future resurrection, the effect of the merits of Christ. Before Christ, sleep seemed like death;

¹² *Jn* 4: 34. 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.' (NRSV).

¹³ *Acts* 2: 46 – 47. 'breaking bread in their homes and eating food with glad and generous hearts, praising God.' (NRSV).

¹⁴ *Ps* 118 (119): 105. 'The law of God is a lamp for their feet.' (NRSV).

after Christ, death should now resemble sleep. With regard to this, Jesus speaking of the little daughter of Jairus, head of the synagogue, said: '*the girl is not dead, but sleepeth.*'¹⁵ And our divine Saviour sweetens death with this image in lots of places. Therefore we Christians also use the Greek name of *cemetery* which means *dormitory*. But woe betide us if, when Christ changes death to sleep, we change sleep to death, and the death of the soul! This could happen if we were to become late risers and use sleep to indulge our indolence and laziness contrary to Christ's precept: '*Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times.*'¹⁶ '*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*'¹⁷ It is good that the flesh sleep as much as is necessary, but the spirit should keep watch. The Christian should be like the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, who sang: '*I sleep, and my heart watcheth.*'¹⁸ You will teach the girls that if, during the day, they keep their hearts closed against all evil influences, if they say their prayers before they go to bed, if they go to sleep in the arms of Christ, he, who should be their heart and their spirit will keep watch over them against the enemy, who, '*as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*'¹⁹ You will say, furthermore, that those prophets and saints, to whom God revealed future things and his secrets while they slept, watched in their hearts: that the Son of God kept watched in his heart when sailing on the Lake of Gennesareth: '*And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but he was asleep*' and his disciples woke him up. Jesus said to them: '*Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?*' and at his command the turbulence ceased.²⁰ Finally you will tell them how little the valiant woman slept, as described in the book of Proverbs;²¹ of the vigils of the early Christians; and how the Church in its division of night and day hours portrays the life of the Christian who keeps vigil and prays at all times. I will speak about this later when opportune. And finally you will tell them, that the stillness of the body in the peace of the Lord here below prefigures that quietness of soul which in heaven will be experienced in divine joy. Such quietness is truly holy, truly a prayer because it is done with the end of restoring the body and placing it in a state of praising and serving God here and now and therefore it begs for this meritoriously. Also by sleeping moderately it can observe the command of continual watchfulness, and of continual prayer. Moderate living also greatly helps, and to need less sleep and to sleep in a more holy way, according to words of Peter: '*Be sober and watch.*'²² You will also impress on them other suitable sayings; you will find plenty in the Scriptures, Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical writers.

¹⁵ *Mt* 9: 24. 'The girl is not dead but sleeping.' (NRSV).

¹⁶ *Lk* 21: 36. 'Watch at all times, praying...' (NRSV).

¹⁷ *Mt* 26: 41. 'The spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak.' (NRSV).

¹⁸ *Song* 5: 2. 'I slept but my heart was awake.' (NRSV).

¹⁹ *1 Pet* 5: 8. 'prowls around like a roaring lion seeking some one to devour.' (NRSV).

²⁰ *Mt* 8 : 24–26. 'he slept in the boat and there arose a great storm on the sea such that the boat was covered by the waves...Why are you afraid, O men of little faith.' (NRSV).

²¹ *Prov* 31: 15.

²² *1 Pet* 5: 8. 'Be sober, be watchful.' (NRSV).

70. To sum up: whether they are dressing or undressing, walking or standing, speaking or keeping quiet, whether alone or in the company of others, whether they do dignified or ordinary jobs, whether they are playing, or working or studying, whatever they are doing in life, they should know by what you say how necessary it is to turn all this to their spiritual advantage, how to love doing this for this end alone. With a memory enriched by a collection, of maxims, examples, and facts, dealing with their daily life, that they have heard you recount and repeated many times, they will have a continual supply of subject-matter for meditation, and will have on *the armour of God*, ... *against the deceits of the devil.*²³ as Paul expresses it.²³

71. This was how the fervent Christians acted in the early Church. *Everyday is a feast day for us*, says Clement of Alexandria, *knowing that God is everywhere. We praise and adore him everywhere, and we honour his holy name. We ply the seas and we carry on our skills and tasks referring our upright use of all things to the Giver of every good; at the same time we thank his infinite goodness, being certain that he knows and feels all things.*²⁴ Note the text of Ecclesiasticus, *Love God all thy life: and call upon him for thy salvation.*²⁵

Chapter III

Instruction in Christian Doctrine

72. In the previous chapter I have spoken about the doctrine which can be the subject of informal conversation. Besides this, it is necessary to have fixed times, to which you carefully adhere, in which you give formal instruction on *Christian doctrine* or on the *Catechism*.

73. Generally speaking be aware that this doctrine is not yours but Christ's. Next, consider how, by sinning, man was flooded with ignorance, and for this reason in death because 'eternal life is knowing God';²⁶ but by means of the Gospel you have stripped yourselves of the old man with his deeds, putting on the new, that is, '[he] who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him.'²⁷ This knowledge alone is man's salvation. Jesus Christ, the heir of the eternal kingdom, has made us his co-heirs through the Gospel. Describe this inheritance by means of suitable arguments and comparisons, enchanting them with paradise, weaning them away from other things, and instilling them with a salutary fear of hell. Such doctrine takes away from them everlasting punishment and, and ensures their eternal and unlimited happiness. In short, portray in glowing colours the necessity, the beauty, the

²³ *Eph* 6 11. 'The whole armour of God...against the wiles of the devil.' (NRSV).

²⁴ The Rosminian text does not translate that of Clement, but is a 'free' translation [Ed. Note].

²⁵ *Eccles* 13: 18. 'During all your life, love the Lord, and call on him for your salvation.' (NRSV. note regarding v. 14 omitted in main text. Trans.)

²⁶ Cf. *Jn* 17: 3.

²⁷ Cf. *Col* 3: 9–10.

perfection and the goodness of this doctrine. And when the chance comes, liken the deformity of the world before Christ to *night time* during which Christ sent his Apostles to preach, and as it were, shine like lightning, through the splendour and swiftness of their work.²⁸ He reformed it and brought back the daylight 'casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light'²⁹ and the doctrine, about which we speak, is part of this armour, 'gathering into one the children of God by most wonderful ingenuity.'³⁰ For this reason Paul says to the Colossians, that in the renewal of man, '*there is neither Gentile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. But Christ is all and in all.*'³¹ These are sublime things and it is your task to bring them down to the children's level and to make them available when and in the way they can receive them; not all of them at the beginning, but divided into parts and given piecemeal.

74. Knowing that this is not your doctrine, taken from earth, but Christ's which has come down from heaven, you should be very precise in what you say, making the Catholic faith clear to them without too many subtle digressions of your own, and in regard to moral precepts not to exaggerate these neither more nor less, so as not to produce false ideas on the gravity of sin. Next, omit all that is controversial because you will not be able to state with certainty that it is from Christ. Thus St Paul writes to Timothy who was then governing the church at Smyrna: '*Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me: in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us.*'³² The Holy Spirit alone can guard in us this precious deposit of faith with complete certainty. The Christian teacher should call on him, by her life and zeal, with her heart and her lips, to dwell within her.

75. After you have shown to those, whom I shall call your daughters in Christ, the greatest value of this doctrine, its unique beauty and its infinite goodness, you should arouse in them a sense of gratitude towards so good a God: good not only for having revealed and brought to mankind such great riches, but also for having taken special care of them, because they are without father and mother, and he has gathered them together in this place, where they can, at their own leisure, often listen to and practise such precious truths, being saved from the enemy of souls. Therefore you will get them to see the house where they live as the house of God, where he, the Father as it

²⁸ Cf. *Ps* 97: 2–4.

²⁹ Cf. *Rom* 13: 12.

³⁰ Cf. *Jn* 11: 52. The context is Pauline and the thought of the piece is present in other Pauline letters. But the quotation completed by us, from St John's Gospel, is closer textually speaking to the Rosminian passage.(Ed.)

³¹ *Col* 3: 11. 'There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all.' (NRSV).

³² 2 *Tim* 1: 13–14. 'Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.' (NRSV).

were of his family, opens a school of paternal instruction and a pleasant ambience of saintly virtues, and if they are able to hear the word of God and keep it, it is a more blessed thing than being the mother of God as Jesus taught;³³ and if they have received the immense benefit of hearing it, let them beware, in spite of this, of not keeping it lest they incur a greater condemnation. Return often to the divine goodness which has brought them together and provided for them, and give them the verse of psalm 26: '*For my father and my mother have left me: but the Lord hath taken me up.*'³⁴

76. Finally, I know that you will have to come down to the level of their tiny minds, which are still tender, and for whom it is naturally necessary to soften and mince up their food, beginning with the very first rudiments and getting them first to learn them off by heart rather than aiming at a clear understanding of them: and I do know that is tiring and troublesome. But the love of Christ makes this humbling task most joyful and delightful. Indeed, is not the example of the Lord who humbled himself so much with all of us or, as the apostle expresses it, *emptied himself*, enough for the Christian? Gerson wrote: 'Most pious Jesus who, after you, could be ashamed of being humble to little ones? Who could be so puffed up by his greatness or learning as to dare to despise the pettiness, ignorance or silliness of these little ones, whilst you, who are God, are blessed through the ages and in whom repose all the treasures of wisdom, meekly put yourself on a level with little children and accepted their embraces, enfolding them in your arms?'³⁵ And St Augustine, in his above-mentioned golden book entitled, *Catechism for the Unlearned*, writes wonderful words of encouragement in chapter X. But those who love Christ and have him before them as model have no need of any other comfort.

77. You might want to ask about the nature of my commentary so that you can map out the shape and order of the doctrine that you should give to your little girls. But since the value of this form and order consists, as I have mentioned, in following in the footsteps of the saints '*to whom the faith was given only once,*'³⁶ you already have the

³³ Cf. *Lk* 11: 28.

³⁴ *Ps* 26 (27): 10. 'For my father and mother have forsaken me but the Lord will take me up.' (NRSV).

³⁵ *Tract. De Parvul. trah. Ad Christ. cons. 4.* J. Gerson, *De Parvulis ad Christum trahendis. Consideratio quarta*, in *Oeuvres completes*, vol. IX, Introduction, texte et notes par Mgr. Glorieux, Desclée et C. ie, Paris 1973, p. 680; vid. also Giovanni Gerson, *Del dovere di attrarre i fanciulli a Gesu?*, a cura di L. Locatelli-G. Allegranza, Ancora, Milano 1945, pp. 135 (Latin text) and 74–75 (Italian translation).

Jean Le Charlier, called Gerson from the name of the hamlet (Gerson in the village of Barby, in the diocese of Rheims) in which he was born on 14 December 1363, was a theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris. Born of a working family he made himself a spokesman for the aspirations of humble folk. He lived in the period of the great Western schism, and called for the return of peace and unity through his teachings on reconciliation. His numerous writings are of a theological, moral and ascetical nature. The little treatise *De parvulis ad Christum trahendis* is a pedagogical and pastoral work. He died in Lyons on 12 June 1429. Ed. Note].

³⁶ Cf. *Jude* 1: 3. 'The faith once delivered to the saints.' (DOUAI). 'That was once for all entrusted to the saints.' (NRSV).

four headings to hand, namely *the Apostles Creed, the Sacraments, the Decalogue, and the Lord's Prayer*, to which our Fathers reduced Catholic teaching. These therefore lay down the thread of the reasoning, the limits, the references and the recapitulation of everything you teach. For whatever else you teach you should always return to these. As far as the development of such teaching is concerned we are provided with the *Roman Catechism*, a work compiled by various learned people in the 16th century by decree of the Council of Trent and approved by the Sovereign Pontiffs.

78. Such a work, compiled for parish priests, obviously cannot be put in the hands of little girls. So if you ask how you should make this food palatable for them, I reply that you should prepare by meditating on the subject. You need to know the intellectual capacity of your disciples, their temperament, what keeps them recollected, what makes the most impression on them, how things should be considered so that they be accepted in the best way. To sum up, study the various characteristics of souls with care which *the Roman Catechism for Parish Priests* also teaches.³⁷ Next, recollect yourself and invoke the Holy Spirit, purify your intention, protesting to God that you do not wish to teach error and that you reject any words which may fall from your lips unawares, nor think of your own honour but on the benefit to those who listen to you. By mulling over these doctrines among yourselves, I would also say, ruminating on them, you will make them simpler and prepare suitable expressions and words, which will be natural and suitable for them to absorb. As for books, you have those approved by your diocesan bishop and which he gives to his catechists; also to help you, there are the oral statements of your parish priest which you can carefully follow.

79. I will only add two further things to this chapter. The first is that instruction both in dogma and morals should be interwoven with sacred scripture, and about this, to take an example from domestic work, the dogmas and precepts of life should stand out like the embroidery on a cloth. All that we must believe consists principally in two men, Adam and Jesus Christ, and in this way we see the great unity and continuity of our Christian religion as in a marvellous picture shining in the Church, invincible and immaculate, from Adam up to the present time. The revealed truths are fixed more firmly in the minds of the children by means of these sacred stories. They sink more gently into their hearts and form not just a rule but also a spur and incitement to virtuous actions. It was by means of stories that dogma and morals were handed down from the first fathers to their sons even before the law was written down. So when the Lord determined to burn up the cities of Pentapolis, he decided that Abraham should know about it. And the Lord said: '*Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do: Seeing he shall become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed? For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice: that for Abraham's sake, the Lord may bring to effect all the*

³⁷ Page 6 of the Roman Edition 1761 [*Catechismus Ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini ad Parochos, Pii V Pont. Max. primum, nunc Sanctiss. D. N. Clementis XIII iussu editus. Ex officina Joan. Bapt. Bernabò, et Josephi Lazarini, Romae MDCCLXI, p. 6*].

things he hath spoken unto him.' ³⁸ How many times and how often are these stories and these traditions recommended to the fathers in the *Psalms* and in *Proverbs*! When, later, God wished to give his people a written law did he not inspire Moses to compose the Pentateuch, where law and history are united? The early saints of the Church and even God himself left 'footprints' through his command and the first teachers of the law of grace walked in them guided by his instructions, as is easily seen both in the four *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, in the *Apostolic Letters*, in the *Sermons* and *Homilies* of the holy Fathers, in the *Catechisms* some of which were for catechumens and in the five *Catecheses* of St Cyril *to the baptised*,³⁹ and especially in the above mentioned work of St Augustine.

80. The other matter is the end of all teaching, the spirit and the fruit, which you must direct your effort to grasping. We find it expressed in these words: '*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*'⁴⁰ Your teaching, then, should continually be directed and lead to this twofold charity, the end and completion of all the Scriptures.⁴¹ What, then, is this charity? St John says: '*For this is the charity of God: That we keep his commandments.*'⁴² '*And by this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments.*'⁴³ So everything comes down to this, to get them to love the word of God and to improve their lives, '*Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone: In whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into an holy temple in the Lord.*'⁴⁴

³⁸ *Gen* 18: 17–19. 'The Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him".' (NRSV).

³⁹ St Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem *Catecheses mystagogicae quinque*, in S. Cyril Arch. Jerusalem. *Opera omnia*, cura et studio Antonii Augustini Toutée, Presbyteri et Monachi Benedictini e Congregatione S. Mauri, Venetiis MDCCLXIII, Ex Typografia Sansoniana, pp. 303-332. (Ed.).

⁴⁰ *1 Cor* 13: 1–2. 'If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.' (NRSV).

⁴¹ See St Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, Lib. I, 35 [ed. cit p. 66. Ed note]

⁴² *1 Jn* 5: 3. 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' (NRSV).

⁴³ *1 Jn* 2: 3. 'And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments.' (NRSV).

⁴⁴ *Eph* 2: 20–21. 'built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord...' (NRSV).

Chapter IV

The Measure and Method of a More Advanced Instruction

81. The Apostle, Paul, in chapter 12 of his wonderful *Letter to the Romans* also teaches the great importance we must give to knowledge. First, with a deft but masterly touch he portrays the Christian life, calling it a *sacrifice of our bodies* and after listing its characteristics of *living, holiness, pleasing to God* he finally also calls it a *reasonable service*: summarising, it seems to me, and as it were recapitulating in this one sole expression everything that he has said or could say. For the Apostle recognises in the word *reasonableness* the source from which the whole value of this sacrifice is derived, as clearly appears in the following: '*And be not conformed to this world: but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God.*'⁴⁵ Those, then, who have *renewed* their minds by grace have renewed themselves. In the *mind*, in the seat of understanding, is the living fountain of the Christian life. From this we can see how St Paul immediately suggests rules regarding knowledge: '*For I say, by the grace that is given me, to all that are among you, not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety...*'⁴⁶

The use of the word translated by *sobriety* has great significance, the virtue which determines our use of food. He compares knowledge to food and shows its excellence. For just as food preserves life, health, strength and every good quality of the body, so, in a similar way knowledge does this for the soul.

82. But at the same time as I intend to guide your soul in dealing with more sublime Christian instruction, I must keep watch over my work and so to speak keep it within bounds, so that there might not enter in any error, or even danger of error, lest with your good disposition you might take this on board or run the risk of doing so. The apt words of St Paul come to mind, '*not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety...*'

83. Sobriety teaches us to take food in so far as the body needs it. With this in view we need to have regard for its quality, then to chew it and finally to digest it so that it becomes healthy fluid.

84. As to choosing and preparing it, not every kind of animal eats the same food nor wishes it to be prepared in the same way. So, again, you should be aware to whom you are giving and preparing it. Now the nature of your little girls is to be Christians, members of the learning Church and not yet teachers, to be women for whom silent

⁴⁵ *Rom* 12: 2. 'Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.' (NRSV).

⁴⁶ *Rom* 12: 3. 'For by the grace he has given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement...' (NRSV).

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thoughtfulness, after the example of Mary is fitting, little girls of low degree, people who perhaps will later go into service in some noble household, or take the veil in some convent or to become mothers of poor families. As Christians, tell them that '*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.*'⁴⁷ Let them do all they can to relish that wisdom and nourish themselves on it. In time they should not wish to do anything else, and especially to despise all that is contrary to it. As regards the first of these points, the virtue to be instilled is that of *docility*, through which people are open to all that is true, good, of beauty seen or heard. With the second point they should rid themselves of destructive vice of curiosity about those things which are not edifying. Christians should ignore what has no connection with faith or charity. St Cyprian said this in a *Letter to Antonianus*. (As you know, Novatian was an innovator, out of communion from Pope St Cornelius.) 'In reference, however, to the character of Novatian, dearest brother, of whom you desired that intelligence should be written you what heresy he had introduced; know that, in the first place, we ought not even to be inquisitive as to what he teaches, so long as he teaches out of the pale of unity.'⁴⁸ I can assure you that our first Fathers gripped by the new precept of Christ⁴⁹ and of the Apostles⁵⁰ did not only make little of a theory that was not of Christ nor did they take the trouble to understand it, on the contrary they took a great deal of trouble not to take hold of it and to avoid those who taught errors by word of mouth or professed them by the way they lived. Let the sublime prayer of the royal prophet be frequently on your lips: '*Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity.*'⁵¹ He did not wish even to look at it. This is the great virtue of *simplicity* that keeps its eyes fixed only on good without giving evil even a glance.

85. Just as they must not want to know anything which is foreign to faith and charity, so what they do not understand within it must not disturb them. But if they put aside disquiet regarding understanding difficult things they might be able to think on the matter better, and if they do not reach clear knowledge about it they can lay aside their desire for it with equal contentment, making a sacrifice of this to Christ, to whom all reasoning must be subject and making this an occasion of humiliating themselves and acknowledging their limitation: '*Seek not the things that are too high for thee,* as Ecclesiasticus says.⁵²

86. So you must choose your food and arrange it so as to suit them best. The rule is in St Paul immediately after the words quoted above: '*according as God hath divided to everyone the measure of faith.*'⁵³ And indeed if you teach them something beyond the light

⁴⁷ *Mt* 5: 6. 'if they hunger and thirst after righteousness they shall be satisfied.'

⁴⁸ St Cyprian, *Letter to Antonianus*, in S. Caecilii Cypriani *Opera omnia*, p. LII, st. ac lab. Stephani Baluzii, ed. Sec., Venetiis MDCCLVIII (Ex Typ. Hier. Dorigoni), col. 179.

⁴⁹ *Mt* 17.

⁵⁰ *Eph* 5.

⁵¹ *Ps* 118(9): 37. 'Turn my eyes from looking at vanities.' (NRSV).

⁵² *Ecc* 3: 22.

⁵³ *Rom* 12: 3. 'each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned.' (NRSV).

of their faith either they will draw no profit from it not taking in your instruction, or they will not benefit, or perhaps know it with the light of reason only, and therefore understanding it badly or becoming upset because they don't understand it.

87. Furthermore Paul goes on to show how each Christian occupies a different place and office in the Church, the various members having different functions. God gives the faith according to these functions and instruction needs to be accommodated to them. Now, you know what they are, what their temperaments are, and for what you are preparing these young girls. So you know how to choose their spiritual nourishment.

88. It is true that sometimes we do not take uncooked food but what is cooked, well prepared and suitable for eating. The most suitable preparation depends on you: but enough of this.

89. As for chewing food, the food of the intellect is like food for the body. The first digestion takes place in the mouth. This means, as we saw in Ezekiel, that the book tasted sweet after he had eaten it,⁵⁴ as if the sweetness returned to his mouth, so the children should be accustomed to reflect on all that you have explained to them in sacred instruction without flitting all over the place with their intellect, not settling in any one place. Imbue them with a solid and reflective spirit, not a tenuous and frivolous one: *'in my meditation a fire shall flame out.'*⁵⁵ and by fire is meant the love of God. I do not mean that you should make them meditate for a long time at fixed times. This would be heavy, arid and intolerable; for their age and sex do not provide them sufficient energy to concentrate or work hard on the assigned points. So let the prescribed meditation be brief. What I desire is the habit of reflecting naturally on everything and therefore meditating without any strain.

90. Finally, food should be really digestible. This is the most important thing and gives food its true value. We should eat what we have the power of converting into nourishment. Now, what is this power? It is the charity of which we spoke at the end of the preceding chapter. It ensures that the food which we eat does not go bad, but is the food which Christ talked about: *'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting...'*⁵⁶ I am talking about the love of God and our neighbour. As regards the first, St Paul, that chosen one, snatched to the third heaven, the hearer of things that cannot be told and which man may not utter, said to the *Corinthians*: *'For I judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ: and him crucified.'*⁵⁷ He himself said these words, who had said to others: *'For the rest, brethren,*

⁵⁴ *Ezek* 13: 3

⁵⁵ *Ps* 38: 4.

⁵⁶ *Jn* 6: 27. 'Do not labour for the food which perishes, but the food which endures to eternal life.' (NRSV).

⁵⁷ *1 Cor* 2: 2. 'For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.' (NRSV).

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*whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline: think on these things.'*⁵⁸

These things, then, should lead us to Christ and him crucified; in these we think of him. All those things, therefore, in which we do not find Christ are among those of which we read in *Ecclesiasticus*: '*In unnecessary things be not over curious.*'⁵⁹ Now read the passage of the Apostle and you will see what humility the love of God works in a person, thanks to which knowledge: '*does not puff up but edifies.*'⁶⁰

91. As regards love of our neighbour, the Apostle of the Gentiles speaks again: '*Rejoice with them that rejoice: weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble.*'⁶¹ And in this entire chapter Paul lays down knowledge as the source of all virtues which are, as it were, her retinue. When, then, he gave us earlier, *faith* as the measure of knowledge, he spoke of a faith that '*worketh by Charity.*'⁶² But in this passage, which I have just cited from chapter 12 of the *Letter to the Romans*, you will see clearly that charity to our neighbour is based on humility, and therefore how this twofold charity not only makes knowledge fruitful to the glory of God and for man's benefit, but also contains the antidote against the poison which knowledge secretly emits to our harm; and hence how knowledge which is devoid of any pernicious element becomes most fruitful only through charity. So, give as much knowledge to your young girls as you think fit and not more; that which is able to be well digested and to be changed into the most beneficial food for the soul.

Chapter V

Of a more advanced Instruction and how it consists in making known the Christian State

92. Having dwelt on the rules moderating teaching, we should speak a little more about those things which go beyond what is strictly necessary. We shall keep to generalities so that you may draw out, as from a store of various things, those which fit your particular needs.

⁵⁸ *Phil* 4: 8. 'Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.' (NRSV).

⁵⁹ *Ecc* 3: 24.

⁶⁰ Cf. 1 *Cor* 8: 1. 'Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.' (NRSV).

⁶¹ *Rom* 12: 15–16. 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly.' (NRSV).

⁶² *Gal* 5: 6. 'works through love.' (NRSV).

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93. And as a thread to guide us securely and discern for us in such vast doctrine and its different paths, let us take some passage from Scripture, the book for all our needs, and an inexhaustible fountain of saving water.

94. And let us choose the beginning of the fourth chapter of the *Letter* which Paul wrote from his Roman prison to the *Church at Ephesus*, capital of Asia Minor, starting from the beginning to verse sixteen.

95. This place seems suitable to me, because it is that in which we are given the clear and well founded concept of the Church of Christ, of which we are members. And I am firmly of the opinion that the core of all Christian instruction is to know well what our state is. How little we feel the dignity and true sweetness of our profession. We Christians are, at present, scattered, so to speak, detached from one other. For this reason we do not feel sufficiently that force which binds us and unites us together and which can and should form one thing through mutual love. When the faithful in those early, happy, days were fewer and more fervent in number, united in a solid body they felt strongly connected and bound together in one body, harmonious in its members, having only one head and one and the same spirit. What an admirable consensus of wills there was, what an incredible harmony of functions! What charity and enviable peace of mind!

96. For this reason we must keep our eyes firmly on this early image of the Church of Jesus Christ and work on it within ourselves. With this end in view we must constantly draw the attention of the faithful, as did the Apostles and the great Fathers to consider continually what has been effected through the redemption of Jesus Christ and by what door we have entered into the city or kingdom of Christ, or his mystical body.

97. So I will state first the words of the Apostle and then I will give a little commentary on them, so that you have an example so that you can nicely introduce your disciples to the noble teachings of the faith, by reading to them and suitably explaining, following in the footsteps of the great masters, the more apposite passages in the divine scriptures. This study has almost been abandoned by our Christians, but in the most flourishing centuries women read the divine oracles with explanations which the bishops had given and who were accustomed to publish in books the explanations given to the people so that these could help them more widely. Now, being skilled in the Latin language and being well educated, you are in an excellent position to imitate the Eustochias and Paulas, and would to heaven that all would follow them that the holy people of God might come away, as of old, enlightened and fervent.

Chapter VI

Instruction on the Christian State taken from a passage of Saint Paul (Eph 4: 1–16)

98. The words of the Apostle are as follows: *'I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, With all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ. Wherefore he saith: Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men. Now that he ascended, what is it, but because he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ; That henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity.'*⁶³

⁶³ This passage of the letter of Paul, in the autograph manuscript A being inserted afterwards in the text of the first edition, presents some difference with that cited and commented upon in the following articles and chapters. We have used this version for the verses out at the beginning of the articles and chapters and we have left unaltered that given and commented upon in the course of the exposition. (Ed.) 'I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.' (When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended* into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together

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99. Having read this, you can comment on it. Here, I will run through only some of the things that you could suitably draw on in similar instructions and for greater clarity I will divide them into several articles.

Article I

Vocation to Christianity

'I therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called' (v. 1).

100. If you really consider the word *calling*, it sums up in a certain sense the whole mystery of human salvation, explained by Paul in the second chapter of this letter to which this refers. He gives us an idea of the Church of Christ and states how it began with the repentant Adam and came down to us, becoming divided little by little into three parts, that is, the Church militant, the Church suffering and the Church triumphant. Having displayed this wonderful body composed of the three parts taken together, we fix chiefly on the Church militant, as the beginning from which the other two detach themselves, growing into perfect stature.

101. With regard to this you should say that its value and beauty does not lie so much in the number of its members but in the dignity which comes from Christ; and how, whether it is numerous or not, nevertheless Christ her most loving spouse lovingly disposes, all the other things of this world for her good and out of love of her. This beautiful truth is revealed in the small number of the just from the creation to the flood, when only the family of Noah, which possibly formed the Church of Jesus Christ, was saved from the waters: yet the wicked served the just by exercising their patience, and proving their virtue which, in this way, developed and increased in merit. Again men grew corrupt as they increased, until the Word called Abraham from Chaldea. He chose his family from the whole world, who were worshippers of idols and slaves to demons, to be his Church and his own domain and, as if he were another man (see here already the image of Christ to come), made a pact and called it *the lot of his inheritance*.⁶⁴ This generation experienced in singular fashion marvels of his omnipotence and mercy. Prophets were continually sent to them, and received the promises of a Redeemer. But the children of those patriarchs were also human and inherently wicked. They proved to be blind, ungrateful and stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, as Scripture puts it, nor did they yield to the infinite benefits of God, in fact they were only shaken by miracles for a time. They acknowledged the prophets with ill-grace, beating them, stoning, them and killing them; and finally they disowned the very Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, treating him with contempt and crucifying him on the cross.

by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.' (NRSV).

⁶⁴ *Deut 32: 9.*

102. Hence the great rejection of the Jewish nation in fulfilment of the prophetic oracles and the great VOCATION of the Gentiles to the salvation of the Gospel. This is the vocation of which St Paul speaks. For this reason (which he had mentioned previously): *'be mindful that you, being heretofore Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called circumcision in the flesh, in contempt; by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands, the pledge of the divine predeliction — That you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel, that is, the chosen people and strangers to the testament, having no hope of the promise, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, for it was only as strangers that they could be received into the Jewish Church, as the Covenant was made with the race of Abraham alone, having no hope this being given to the Patriarchs and without God in this world, having lost their way. But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, that is, the Gentiles and the Jewish converts to the Gospel, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the division, which between the Jews, God's chosen ones, his people in a special sense, and the Gentiles left to themselves represented by the wall which in the days of the Temple kept the laity away from the Holy of Holies, and so destroying the enmities and the divisions between people assumed in his flesh which he gave over as a prey to death.'*⁶⁵

103. These words are full of profound meaning. But it is only in this sense that one can explain adequately the *vocation* of which Paul is speaking in this passage, showing us primarily its infinite benefit and doubly gratuitous if one may say so, seeing that we all belonged not to the chosen people but to the lost.

104. *Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*:⁶⁶ our vocation is that of building ourselves up on this foundation stone in the holy temple of the Lord and not to detach ourselves and break away from this most noble and divine building.

⁶⁵ *Eph 2: 11–16.* 'So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.' ((NRSV).

⁶⁶ *Eph. 20.* 'Built on the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.' (NRSV).

Article II

On the Virtues by which we should respond to our Vocation

*With all humility and mildness, with patience, supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*⁶⁷

105. Having told us that we should follow our vocation which calls us to be living temples of God, St Paul teaches us the how to do this with the above words. In the first place he tells us to rid ourselves of all pride since the book of Proverbs tell us that : *'Among the proud there are always contentions'*⁶⁸ and he enjoins total humility internal and external. Then he drives away anger, about which Proverbs says: *'A passionate man stirreth up strifes'*⁶⁹ and adds in the same verse the calming effect of gentleness on quarrels, the keeper of peace. He distances himself from impatience which, though it does not seek vengeance as anger does, suffers annoyances of others poorly and he calls in patience which, according to the apostle James: *'hath a perfect work,'*⁷⁰ Lastly he casts out inordinate zeal because, as well as pride, anger and impatience, inconsiderate fervour and zeal can disrupt peace. Because of this he adds: *'supporting one another in charity,'* which waits for the appropriate time and place to inform one's brother or sister of their defects; as for those tiny faults which are not corrected (for who can rid themselves of all these?) putting up with one another with all charity and indulgence.

106. With these four vices removed and the opposite virtues taking their place, and with an eye on the unity of all people, which is its aim, being careful *'to maintain the unity of the Spirit'* as the Apostle says, there will ensue that blessed peace which like a pleasant link binds all hearts into a single bond since it is the same in everyone who share in the peace of Jesus which surpasses all understanding.⁷¹

107. This single bond of peace is the realisation of the one vocation to which all are called by God, although down here it can only be a foretaste and it is in heaven that we shall be nourished to overflowing. Now Christ asked for this UNIQUE VOCATION, this PEACE from the eternal Father when he said: *'And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.'*⁷²

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4: 2–3. 'with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' (NRSV).

⁶⁸ *Prov* 13: 10 'By insolence the heedless make strife.' (NRSV).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 15: 18. 'Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife.' (NRSV).

⁷⁰ *Jas* 1: 4. 'and let endurance have its full effect.' (NRSV).

⁷¹ Cf. *Phil* 4: 7.

⁷² *Jn* 17: 20–21. 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (NRSV).

Article III

The Nature of the Union of Christians with one another and with God

*One body and one Spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all!*⁷³

108. The union of the members with one another and the one Spirit which enlivens it, is maintained through these virtues listed by the Apostle and this peace which, as it were, oozes from them like honey and like a sweet-smelling oil spreading its fragrance over everyone. So the Apostle immediately goes on to describe this twofold union with the above words.

109. But these acts of virtue cannot be practised correctly among the members nor can they be directed to the abundance of life or the union of the Spirit, if one does not know how these members differ from one another and how they are in agreement. But it is natural for unions formed of different parts, that these have some things in common among themselves and some which are proper to them. For this reason the Apostle goes on to describe what is common to this body of the Church and what is proper to its members.

110. As regards what they have in common among themselves he says this: '*There is ... One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.*'⁷⁴ Actually, three things are necessary for unity and perfect harmony in a body. Firstly that it should have one *head*; then that all the members be *incorporated* into the one head; finally, that the activities of this body be not at variance among one another but that they be directed to one *sole end*, the perfection of the body itself. Now the unity of the head is expressed by the Apostle when he says *one Lord*. And as he explains in the First letter to the Corinthians this is Jesus: '*and one Lord, Jesus Christ*'⁷⁵ and who is truly the *head* as is said below in verse 15.⁷⁶

111. We come, then, to Christ though whom we are incorporated and united through the habit of faith which is the same in each member and we receive this together with the habit of the other virtues in Christian Baptism: This baptism is also one because there is one sole valid institution, conferred in the name of the one sole God. If we were to have faith without baptism, where this was united with the promise to be baptized we would be incorporated into Christ mentally, so to speak, or better we would draw near and dispose ourselves for the true incorporation which occurs through baptism. Actual baptism or, in extreme cases, baptism of desire, regenerates us, and gives us spiritual life, and St Paul spoke about this new life: to the

⁷³ *Eph. 4: 4-6.* 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.' (NRSV).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁷⁵ 1 *Cor* 8: 6.

⁷⁶ *Eph* 4: 15.

Galatians: '*And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered himself for me.*'⁷⁷ So, both faith and baptism are necessary for us to be united with this head. For the adult, faith before baptism, for the baby, *baptism* before faith. For the adult also an act of faith, for the baby the habit only. Without the act of faith adults do not draw from baptism the benefit of salvation, because they do not practise living works. By means of faith received with the grace of baptism we begin *eternal life*, as St Thomas says,⁷⁸ that eternal life which terminates and comes to perfection with the great enjoyment of God.

112. Such is the ultimate perfection of the mystical body which we are speaking about, such is the effect of its actions, the third thing which gives unity to this body. Therefore Paul adds, '*There is ...one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in us all.*' These words clearly imply the Trinity, because *to be above all* is proper to the Father, the principal source of the other two persons, *to be through all* (among things) is proper to the Son, that is, wisdom which '*reacheth therefore from end to end mightily.*'⁷⁹ and *to be in all* is proper to the Holy Spirit, of whom we are *temples.*⁸⁰ And earlier he says *God* to indicate the end, our infinite and sole happiness to which we cling on our journey following the voice that calls to it; and then *father*, to comfort us, and inform us that he who pacifies our desires with his blessed joy, is he who loves us with fatherly affection and attracts us to himself; also he says *father of all*, that is, both of Christ, the head and of us, the members, in order that we recognise the love which he shows us thanks to our head and the gifts we should expect to receive from Christ, his only begotten Son as God, and his first born as man. You should dwell, as is necessary, on these three bonds of the Catholic Church which show the infinite nobility which comes to you from its source, from the aim to which it tends, and from the abundant life which results from this.

⁷⁷ Gal 2: 20. 'and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.' (NRSV).

⁷⁸ St Thomas II II, q. 4, art. 1.

⁷⁹ Wis 8: 1. 'reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other' (NRSV).

⁸⁰ 1 Cor 3: 16 and 6: 19.

Article IV

The Unity of Christians in one Body does not take away the Diversity of the Members. The Variety of Grace.

*'But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ. Wherefore he saith: Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men. Now that he ascended, what is it, but because he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.'*⁸¹

113. After the Apostle has listed the joints which unite the members into one whole and shown how this unity is close-fitting and intimate, he enumerates the characteristics which distinguish the members from one another.

114. They are constituted by the varieties of grace which take their origin, as we have seen, from the one source, Christ. It enters firstly within us with baptism and faith and terminates with our union with God in heaven. It is always the same grace; but formally varied in its measure, and also materially in the actions it has for its object. Therefore Paul continues: *'But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ.'* He shows here the variety of the members from the different amount of life which they receive from the head. At this point we see how it helps to set before us what is common to all the members, in order to clarify how each member is different.

115. The Apostle wishes us to consider carefully the way in which all the members are united in one body and whence each one is distinct. Since everything comes from Christ as a gratuitous gift, so no one has any reason to boast if they possess a lot, nor should anyone complain or be envious of others if they themselves possess little. This is a great reason for remaining humble, mild, patient and bearing with the defects of others, which are the four virtues recommended earlier.

116. And he goes on all the more to clarify the motives which should encourage us. He adds: *'according to the measure of the giving of Christ'*. And then: *'Wherefore he saith: Ascending on high, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men.'*⁸² *Now that he ascended, what is it, but because he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.'*

117. With these words referring to a text of David, he explains from where Christ draws such gifts for us. You know, says the Apostle, that you could only be given spiritual gifts from God. Christ, therefore, who has given you these gifts is God.

⁸¹ *Eph 4: 7–10.* 'But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended", what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)' (NRSV).

⁸² *Ps 67: 19,* 'Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts in men.'

How, then, does David say he ascended, if he is God? This must mean that he descended first otherwise he could not have ascended. How could God descend? Apparently, or, to put it better, by intimately uniting humanity to his external majesty, he descended for a short time '*a little less than the angels*.'⁸³ This Man, as well as being God because of his permanent union with the Word, is really and truly he who humbled himself. Infinite glory and infinite holiness belonged to this nature which possessed infinite moral good because united with the Word. I reiterate that it was not a place on earth that belonged to him, but the highest place in heaven, above that of all the angels. We can say, then, that this Man-God, by being born on earth, infinitely humbled himself, but more than this, he wished to take on the form and appearance in the world of '*the most abject of men*.'⁸⁴ Not content with being humiliated before everyone through the scaffold of the cross, he went down into the sepulchre and down into Hades where he freed the just of the Old Testament held prisoner there. In this way, says David, according to the Hebrew text, *he received gifts for men*. From whom did he receive them? From him who is God and Father of all, and primarily from him who is God as Man and Father as God. But Paul, instead of quoting the Hebrew text, translated it as '*gave gifts to men*'⁸⁵ as other versions have. And it was more fitting for the Apostle to refer to it like this in that very well-known passage because the sense is not changed but opportunely explained, showing in one sole passage the prophecy and its fulfilment. Because, in fact, by Paul's time the Word had already distributed these gifts received to people.

118. But why should the Word have needed to receive gifts? He did not need them for himself, for as God he had everything from the Father by necessity of nature, and as man by necessity of merit, or rather by perfection of his will through the (hypostatic)⁸⁶ union; even if the union itself is not counted among these gifts. The need to receive gifts or graces was for human beings who had not merited anything and this means receiving the faculty of distributing the gifts.

119. But why did he not have such a faculty? It would have been contrary to divine justice for human beings to receive happiness when they deserved eternal unhappiness. Men and women were at enmity with God, slaves of the devil; how could they give it? So what did the Word do? *He ascended on high* replies the Prophet; *he led captivity captive*. His triumph is told, according to Paul, in order that he can make us understand his battle. Therefore the Apostle argues as follows: 'Who is he who ascended, if not he who first descended into the lower depths of the earth?'

⁸³ Ps 8: 6 The NRSV says, 'what are human beings that you are mindful of them... *Yet you have made them a little lower than God*.' Ps 8: 4-5. 9.

⁸⁴ Isa 53: 3.

⁸⁵ RSV. '*to his People*' in NSRV above. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary says: 'The author cites Ps 68: 19 (18 in NSRV, trans) in a form that does not correspond to any Hebrew or Greek biblical manuscript (which read "you received" in place of "he gave".) The author of Ephesians interprets it in a related fashion as a reference to Christ's ascension and subsequent bestowal of gifts on the church.' (Trans.)

⁸⁶ Word in brackets is my addition. (Trans.)

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120. Through his humiliation, then, Christ earned his triumph, that is, his ascension above all the heavens and led captivity captive. Where you will observe that he does not say the *captives* but *captivity*, showing in this way, that he did even more than he needed to do, and overcame more than he needed to do on earth. Because to have led *captivity* captive signifies that not only are there now no prisons to liberate, but there could never be any from now on. So this word *captivity* means an infinite value and conquest for no matter how many were the sins and crimes, let us suppose an infinite number, still no one could of necessity be in prison since Christ led it out of the world.

121. But consider another effect which follows, that is, even if all men were damned, Christ would still have led *captivity* captive, that is to say, he would have accomplished an infinite work; for we say *captivity* not *captive*. Captivity means the same as people being in the hands of the devil, in such a way that not only did they not escape but they could not do so. Christ could not distribute gifts to those in such a state. So Christ ordained that all could be saved. The work of Christ, then, is infinite, and the salvation of individuals is another work which does not affect the infinity of the first and with respect to this it is accidental.

122. Having led captivity captive, that is, having given to people the possibility of being saved with God's friendship, Christ possessed the faculty of distributing his gifts, that is salvation, in varying abundance. Having been set free, then, from this infernal slavery, from this necessary damnation, through the infinite and gratuitous love of Christ, and through his triumph over hell, the hearts of men and women came into his hands. It is left to his will alone to elect them to salvation. Christ can distribute these gifts as he wills, having gained this faculty through what he has done. It is therefore certain that he distributes them in abundance according to the merciful and eternal decree of His Father. In fact the Apostle clearly says, '*gave gifts to men.*' You, Ephesians, see this constantly. Whereas David at an earlier time did not say more than that, '*he received gifts for men*' or rather the power of distributing them, he, then, distributes them according to the greatness of his love for men, according to the goodness and tenderness of his heart. Surely the one who longs to be saved could not distrust him?

123. Moreover, consider that these are always *gifts*, they are not owed; in the first place these gifts are precisely merits. In this way *he has filled all things*. From the highest heavens to the lowest regions of the earth he has filled everything with his glory in accordance with his triumph. Concerning human salvation, then, we can rightly say that, '*the earth was void and empty,*'⁸⁷ and he illuminated it, put order into it, adorned it and filled it with himself. In conclusion, he triumphed by leading captivity captive, saving humanity and distributing his gifts.

⁸⁷ Gen 1: 2. '*a formless void*'. (NRSV).

Article V

The Formation of the Heavenly and Earthly Hierarchy

124. All these gifts substantially consist in the one grace of which Paul speaks. Some people have more, some people have less, '*according to the measure of the giving of Christ.*'⁸⁸ Besides distinguishing in the Church grades of grace, which are known rather to God than to us, we also distinguish various offices and dignities to which these grades are ordained. The grace pertaining to the office and exterior dignity which each holds in the Church is ordered in a two fold manner, that is to say, either giving to each Christian the possibility of occupying their position in an appropriate way, or more lavishly in actually doing it. The first type of grace can be called *sufficient*. Christ gives it to everyone for, as the Apostle says elsewhere, '*will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.*'⁸⁹ But the very fact of carrying out an action is a grace which is not given to everyone. For Paul mentions to the Corinthians a diversity of gifts, of ministers and actions, '*Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; And there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all.*'⁹⁰ Gifts means the ability to carry out well one's particular ministry; by services, the tasks entrusted to each person; and by activities, the good use of these gifts, ordained, thanks to the love of God, to the correct fulfilment of these ministries.

125. Only the latter grace, which we shall call *efficacious*, sanctifies the persons themselves, other graces are given rather for the sanctification of others, and for the adornment of the Church. As for the different degrees of efficacious grace, we are made more or less pleasing to God, and just as in this way a wonderful but invisible hierarchy in the Church is set up the best part of which is in heaven, so through those different abilities and offices which engender respect among people, a most beautiful and visible hierarchy is set up down here on earth.

⁸⁸ *Eph* 4: 7.

⁸⁹ *1 Cor* 10: 13. 'but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.' (NRSV).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12: 4–6. 'Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.' (NRSV).

Article VI

On the Earthly Hierarchy and the first of the Grades in the Church.
The Extraordinary and Transitory Grades of the Apostolate

*'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors.'*⁹¹

126. Paul mentions the principle grades of this visible hierarchy saying: "*And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors.'*"

127. To whom did he give them? He gave these gifts to men and in speaking like this he reveals what we have noticed just now, that such ministries are not personal gifts, but gifts for others; of benefit to those who derive their salvation from them.

128. Now, regarding such ministries and following in the footsteps of the Apostles, we should consider in the Church on earth two orders of dignity, one transitory and the other permanent. As regards the transitory order, St Paul lists the three grades of Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists. Looking at the origins of these words they mean, *those sent*, the *announcers of future things* and the *announcers of the good news*.

§ 1

On the Apostolate

129. But where the dignity of the Church is concerned we are to understand 'sent by God'. Hence Christ says, *'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send labourers into his harvest.'*⁹² By the word 'sent', we are not stating that authority is limited, therefore this word 'sent' often means, *par excellence*, those who have received greater authority: among these the first is Christ. He is called in scripture *'that is to be sent.'*⁹³

130. In the Old Testament the Angels, Moses and Aaron were sent to give the law. Paul, in the sublime letter to the Hebrews⁹⁴ emphasises that Christ is superior to these three ministers of the Old Testament. As far as Moses and Aaron are concerned (for the angels do not belong to the Church militant here on earth), both were *sent*. *'And I sent Moses and Aaron.'*⁹⁵ But how were they sent? This great mission or apostolate comprises three offices or dignities, that is, the priestly, the legislative and the pastoral dignity. They were priests: hence in Psalm 118 it says, *'Moses and Aaron*

⁹¹ *Eph 4: 11*. The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.' (NRSV).

⁹² *Lk 10: 2*. 'ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.' (NRSV).

⁹³ *Gen 49: 10*.

⁹⁴ In Rosmini's time it was accepted that Paul was the author of the letter to the Hebrews. Nowadays Scripture scholars do not hold this and state that the author is unknown. (Trans.).

⁹⁵ *Josh 24: 5*.

among his priests.⁹⁶ And when Paul, writing to the Hebrews, calls Christ, ‘*the apostle and high priest of our confession*,⁹⁷ he compares Christ to Moses under the title of apostle and Christ to Aaron under the title of priest, but this is done taking ‘apostle’ not in the common sense in which the same could be said of Aaron, as we shall see, but in a sense of greater excellence and dignity. For it is certain that the title of apostle given to Moses comprises also that of high priest: the author distinguishes this with greater clarity and takes away all doubt as to the transcendent dignity of Christ. For he brings forward the three ministers of the Old Law, that is, the Angels, Moses, the apostle, and finally Aaron the high priest. First he demonstrates that Christ without comparison is superior to the angels, and although the angels are superior to Moses he wishes to show that Christ is superior to Moses. In the same way he shows finally that he is superior to Aaron, though Aaron is less than Moses. In fact he says of Moses ‘*with my servant Moses who is most faithful in all my house*, depicting him as the major domo or the administrator over the whole house with this very great witness taken from the book of Numbers.⁹⁸ Moses, then, is considered under this general aspect. But when later Christ is compared with Aaron, Christ is simply considered as superior to him in his particular office of high priest. What Paul, then, himself adds, ‘*of our confession*’⁹⁹ according to St Thomas¹⁰⁰ can be understood as that *first spiritual sacrifice* of which we have spoken above. Actually, Christ did not offer things apart from himself. He himself was the sacrifice. He alone was of infinite value, a sacrifice worthy of God, whereas this was not true of any other person. Therefore he abolished the priesthood of Aaron. He was the one and only priest ‘*for ever according to the order of Melchisedech*.’¹⁰¹

131. Moses’ mission and apostolate also included the office of prophet or interpreter in regard to God and of lawgiver or representative of God with respect to men and women, whereas Aaron was only prophet with respect to Moses and the

⁹⁶ Ps 98. We should not doubt that Moses was a priest. For it is proper to a priest to offer sacrifices, both the sacrifice of the heart of which in Psalm 49: 23 we read, ‘*The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me*,’, or the sacrifice of something external to the heart of which Isaiah says, ‘*I desire not holocausts of rams, and fat of fatlings, and blood of calves, and lambs, and buck goats*.’ (Isa 1: 11). Now Moses offered not only the first type of sacrifice but also the second. Firstly, on the election and consecration of Aaron he exercised the functions of the lawful priesthood and also in the seven days at the time of Aaron’s consecration. Hence St Gregory Nazianzen does not hesitate to call him the priests of priests. (S Gregory the Theologian *Oratio XI ad Gregorium Nyssenum*) and also St Jerome (S. Eusebii Hieronymi *adversis Jovinianum*, lib. II, 4). Indeed Moses was called the first of God and Aaron to substitute for him. For there could not be united in one man, even as a figure, what was found truly united only in Christ.

⁹⁷ Heb 3: 1. Cf. note 190.

⁹⁸ Num 12: 7.

⁹⁹ Heb 3: 1.

¹⁰⁰ St Thomas, *Comment. In questa lettera gli Ebr.* c. 1, lez.1. The editor of this Critical Edition says, ‘The place cited does not seem apposite. There is a more explicit reference to Rosmini’s text in cap. IV, lectio III and in cap. V, lectio I. Cf. S. Thomas Aquinatis, *Expositio in omnes S. Pauli Epistolas, in Epist. ad Hebraeos*, cap. IV, 1, III and cap. V, 1, I.

¹⁰¹ Ps 109: 4.

representative of Moses with regard to the people. God told this to Moses in the book of Exodus: 'Speak to him, and put my words in his mouth: and I will be in thy mouth, and in his mouth, and will shew you what you must do. He shall speak in thy stead to the people, and shall be thy mouth: but thou shalt be to him in those things that pertain to God.'¹⁰² And a little later, 'Behold I have appointed thee the God of Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet. Thou shalt speak to him all that I command thee; and he shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.'¹⁰³ Finally Moses is also said to be pastor in the book of Psalms, 'Thou hast conducted thy people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.'¹⁰⁴ But it was properly speaking the wonderful staff of Moses with which, accompanied by miracles, that he led his flock. It was this rod which he used as shepherd of his real sheep, and which Aaron used as his minister. It was to Moses alone that God had commanded to take it¹⁰⁵ in order to carry out his decrees. And if it is called often in scripture the rod of God, it is because both Moses and Aaron were servants for a greater shepherd, the father of the flock to whom David refers saying, 'Thou hast conducted thy people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.'¹⁰⁶ And this is said of Christ who said of himself, 'I am the good shepherd.'¹⁰⁷ a truly good shepherd who among the dangers of this life leads us into the promised land of heaven with the rod of his grace, which only because of his power is called a rod of iron in the book of Psalms.¹⁰⁸ In the apostolate of Moses, then, there were three offices, *Priest of Priests*, *Lawgiver* and *Pastor*. Christ possesses the same, but in an eminent degree and as the source from which all the gifts for people are derived.

132. How the High Priest was predicted by Moses with the mysterious story of Melchizedek was explained in a divine way by Paul in chapter 7 of the *Letter to the Hebrews*; as Lawgiver in chapter 18 of Deuteronomy where we read: 'The Lord thy God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy nation and of thy brethren like unto me: HIM THOU SHALT HEAR.'¹⁰⁹ finally as Pastor in the book of Numbers: 'May the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh provide a man, that may be over this multitude: And may go out and in before them, and

¹⁰² Ex 4: 15–16. 'You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him.' (NRSV).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 7: 1–2. 'See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land.' (NRSV).

¹⁰⁴ Ps 76: 20. 'You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.' (NRSV).

¹⁰⁵ Ex 4: 17. (NRSV).

¹⁰⁶ Ex 4: 17.

¹⁰⁷ Ps 76: 20.

¹⁰⁸ Jn 10: 11.

¹⁰⁹ Ps 2: 9.

¹⁰⁹ Deut 18: 15. 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.' (NRSV).

may lead them out, or bring them in: lest the people of the Lord be as sheep without a shepherd.'¹¹⁰ A prayer which God answered at that time making Joshua head of the people both in name and in office, a beautiful figure of Christ. Again, when the Lord sent Moses he was not pacified, though he heard, '*Go therefore and I will be in thy mouth: and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak.*'¹¹¹ For, yearning for another apostle greater than him, of whom he knew nothing, he begged God and said again: '*I beseech thee, Lord, send whom thou wilt send*'¹¹² In which title of 'sent', or apostle par excellence, Moses included all the merits and offices of Christ. See how excellent the Apostolate of Christ is!

133. Now Christ chose twelve of his disciples and bestowed on them the great title of Apostle. After his resurrection he said: '*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.*'¹¹³ So the apostolate of the twelve Apostles is completely similar to that of Christ: it is a sharing in it and a participation on which Christ puts no limits. Apart, then, from this general mission through which the Apostles became Christ's assistants, he gave them in particular the three offices or dignities mentioned above.

134. Firstly he made them priests, that is, sharers in his one priesthood, conferring upon them the power of consecrating the bread and wine, a clean oblation, an acceptable and infinite one, worthy of God. He conferred this at the last supper when, through the power of his words over the bread and wine, he converted them into his body and blood. He divided it among them and uttered those memorable words, '*Do this for a commemoration of me.*'¹¹⁴ And since this was not a merely legal oblation and deprived of power, but one of infinite efficacy, he added for those he was sending another divine faculty unknown to the Apostles of former times when he said to them: '*As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*'¹¹⁵ He gave them the faculty of lawgivers when he said: '*He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.*'¹¹⁶ Elsewhere he said: '*Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy*

¹¹⁰ *Num* 27: 16–17. 'Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint someone over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd.' (NRSV).

¹¹¹ *Ex* 4: 12. 'Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what to speak.' (NRSV).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹¹³ *Jn* 20: 21.

¹¹⁴ *Lk* 22: 19. 'Do this in remembrance of me.' (NRSV).

¹¹⁵ *Jn* 20: 21–23. 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (NRSV).

¹¹⁶ *Lk* 10: 16. Cf. *Mt* 10: 40 and *Jn* 13: 20. 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.' (NRSV).

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*Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*¹¹⁷ He said finally to the Apostles as pastors: *'But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'*¹¹⁸ giving them a mission similar to his own.¹¹⁹

135. But he entrusted all the flock only to Peter. For he asked him tenderly three times, *whether he loved him*, and also, as if to reward him for his sincere reply, he said three times that he should feed his flock, the first two times with the words 'feed my lambs' and the third time (as Peter showed himself a more ardent lover the third time) with the words, 'feed my sheep'¹²⁰, indicating by this that he had to feed the lambs born to the sheep, that is, the faithful; but other pastors with respect to Christ and here to Peter might well be called 'sheep'.

136. From all these things we can see how Christ gave to the Apostles of the New Testament the greatest dignity possible without limits, for Christ did not impose any, and he describes their ministry to be like his in glory.¹²¹ But the Apostles who had from Christ the faculty of sending others as Christ had it from his Father because sent in the same way as Christ was sent, put limits on their successors. The successors of the Apostles were not put in charge of the whole house of God, like Christ as his son, like Moses as servant in the Old Testament, and the Apostles in the New Testament as his friends, holding this position and representing the person of God's Son. The successors of the Apostles had this limitation, they had the sole charge of ruling and enlarging the Church on the apostolic foundation,¹²² not that of founding it which Christ had given to the Apostles. Now those who are entrusted with the building of a house design it as seems best to them and the whole plan of the building is left to their judgement. On the contrary the other helpers have to labour according to the plan of the architect and must accept all the tasks which he imposes. The Apostles were commissioned to build the whole house of the new Church, having their instructions from Christ for this. So they were given full authority and according to the wisdom which guided them, arranged the whole design from the beginning. On the contrary, their successors agreed to work according to the blueprint left by the Apostles, and that each would exercise his own particular task given to them, to some masons, others manual work, to others something else. It is true that the only wise architect is Christ.¹²³ But as Moses made everything according to the pattern seen on the mountain,¹²⁴ so the Apostles as we said, made everything according to what they

¹¹⁷ *Mt* 28: 19–20. . 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' (NRSV).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10: 6. 'but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' (NRSV).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15: 24.

¹²⁰ *Jn* 21: 15–17. So in the Douay-Rheims. But modern versions say 'lambs' the first time and 'sheep' for the second and third times. (Trans.).

¹²¹ *Mt* 19: 28.

¹²² *Eph* 2: 20.

¹²³ 1 *Cor* 3: 11.a.

¹²⁴ *Ex* 25: 40.

saw in Christ and which the Spirit he sent suggested to them. They did not work according to caprice, but followed Christ until death, as he prophesied to Peter.¹²⁵ The Apostles, then, were limited, so to speak, by that wisdom which dwelt in them. But this is not to speak accurately. For the wisdom which has no limits does not limit, whereas ignorance which *per se* is nothing, restrains and lessens the human will. The apostolic dignity, then, is the epitome. The Apostle *par excellence* is Christ and the twelve through their sharing in the apostolate of Christ. Moses and the others who were sent, in the Old Testament represented this apostolate rather than shared in it, just as the external Church entrusted to them was more a figure of the great Church, than the Church itself, though the internal spirit and the essence were the same.

§ 2

On the Office of Prophet

137. As regards the dignity of *Prophet* we have already said that it signifies foretelling whereas *Evangelist* signifies the bringer of good news. It appears from this that the office of prophet belonged to the Old Testament, when the world had not been given salvation, and that the office of preacher belongs to the New Testament in which the healer of human infirmity and the restorer of lost happiness is proclaimed.

138. And when in the Old Testament we read that a Prophet evangelizes we notice his likeness to the Evangelists of the New Testament.

139. Before the coming of Christ, the world was divided into the Gentiles and the Hebrews. The peoples lay in darkness, restless, distressed and unhappy, *without God in this world*, and they searched in the future for some comfort because no one saw any in the present. So people who could not be satisfied by present goods were driven by their longing to hope for and expect future ones. Considering this, it is not surprising, for one who examines the matter closely, that we see the Gentiles so prone to lend an ear to prophecies in thousands of ways, to oracles and to all their superstitions, which to the careful observer, are based to a large extent on this hope. Thus the Messiah was the expectation, not only of the Saints who, scattered through the nations and instructed by God with particular care, knew about him; not only of those wise people, who, meditating on their condition drew as the ultimate fruit of their speculations, ignorance and misery and the evident need for someone sent from heaven; but there was also of the expectation of the nations in general who unwittingly distressed by that boundless need which human nature, empty of goods experienced, desired him and waited for him without knowing him. I believe that this is the principle reason for false prophets among people outside of Israel, who prior to Christ turned out to be extremely desirous and enthusiastic to discover the future. But with the Hebrews, prophecy was not make-believe but true and of divine origin.

¹²⁵ *Jn* 21: 18–19.

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140. By segregating this people from other idolatrous nations God gathered his Church into a visible body. Formerly it had been spread and dispersed throughout the world and outwardly did not seem to form a particular society, but by gathering this people together a twofold advantage ensued. Firstly, the dignity of the Messiah and the proofs of his truth were assured by separating out the generation from which he wished to descend. Secondly, it provided for the salvation of the world by establishing and preparing with his divine wisdom a people, who should receive this Messiah and preserve with the utmost effectiveness and care the proofs of his truths and display these to the whole world. In what manner then did God prepare this people? *'Now all these things happened to them in figure.'*¹²⁶

141. This people also had a great curiosity about future things to which the superstitious pagans were always inclined, because it was a proportion of the corrupt mass of people and therefore was greatly dissatisfied with its present situation. On the one hand its inclination and love of the future was harmful to it because it made it easy to fall into error. On the other hand it was an advantage because God always self-guarded it and always kept it separate from the Gentiles and as often as they sinned he reprimanded them with harsh punishments and made them experience the error into which they had fallen. Furthermore, divine wisdom sent them true prophets and so turned that inclination to good which would not have happened without so great a preordained end.

142. Furthermore, every person had to be saved through Christ, the only name on earth through which lay the hope of salvation, so anything which God revealed for humanity's benefit had to connect with Christ, had to be Prophecy. In regard to this Paul says, *'Now all these things happened to them in figure.'* And when any person obtained the grace of some divine explanation or teaching the people they were called by the Hebrews sometimes a seer, sometimes a prophet.¹²⁷

143. But among the inspired men of the Old Testament, or rather the true prophets, we can distinguish those who gave a teaching and those who made prophecies, or those who explained teaching, but did not give it. The teaching or the law in the Old Covenant was given only by Moses as prophet and speaker of the word. In the New Covenant this was given by the incarnate Word himself as Prophet and Wisdom of God. Moses had ordered that nothing should be added or taken away

¹²⁶ 1 *Cor* 10: 11. Modern versions say *'as an example'*. (Trans).

¹²⁷ From the First Book of the Kings (1 *Sam* 9: 9) it appears that before Samuel one said *'seer'*, that is, a person to whom God revealed things hidden from the human mind. After Samuel he was called a *'prophet'*. And in an age even more remote it seems from the books of Moses that the opposite was used. Perhaps Moses adopted the name of prophet after the fashion of the Philistines and Egyptians (Calmet in chapter 20 of Genesis) at any rate he used it with common sense, for at that time every inspired person, every useful *seer*, must have been, as we saw, a prophet.

Augustine Calmet was a Benedictine monk and abbot who was born at Commercy in the diocese of Toul in Lorraine on 26 February 1672. He was a writer, a profound scholar and commentator on the Bible, and a Church historian. Between 1707 and 1716 he published *La Sainte Bible* at Paris in Latin and French, with a *Commentaire littéral et critique*, translated into Latin by Giovanni Domenico Mansi. He died aged 86 after a life devoted to study and prayer. (Ed.)

from the law.¹²⁸ The reason given to the Hebrews in *Deuteronomy*, the clue for recognising a false prophet of the second type, was if he detracted from the law and so removed them from God.¹²⁹ But when in chapter 18 of this book he foretells the great prophet similar to him, and says expressly '*you will listen to him*', he no longer gives the Hebrews any sign for recognising the deceiver removing them from lawful ceremonies, adding to or detracting from the law, taking them away from God, but only the verification of the prophecies, of which he is the author.¹³⁰ Christ, then, was the great Prophet and Lawgiver like Moses, but as distinct from Moses as God is from man. In this Prophet all the gifts of the Holy Spirit rested and terminated as Isaiah says,¹³¹ as rivers merge and rest in the sea from which they come.

144. Christ, then, is the supreme prophet, the Prophet *par excellence*, the one by whom all the other prophets were inspired, the fixed object and term of their predictions. Christ alone is the proof of their truth because they are seen to be verified in him. On the other hand they formed the proof of the truth of Christ, not only because what was said by the prophet, whose coming to pass confirmed their prophecies, was true, but also because Christ having prophesied through their ministry, the verification of their prophecies proves clearly the gift of the true and supreme Prophet in Christ. From all that has been said, the fact that Christ, then, has spoken through the prophets makes clear his divinity.

145. But let us see what difference there is between the dignity of the Prophet and the Apostle. If Moses, according to the thought of St Paul, can be called the Apostle of the Old Covenant, see how God distinguishes him from all the other prophets: '*He said to them: Hear my words: if there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream. But it is not so with my servant Moses who is most faithful in all my house: For I speak to him mouth to mouth: and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord.*'¹³² This expression seems to show this and with utter clarity, shows very appropriately the living similarity of Moses with the Apostles of the New Testament who heard teaching from the very mouth of God. '*For I speak to him mouth to mouth: and plainly, and not by riddles and figures doth he see the Lord.*'¹³³ And in *Deuteronomy* a similar eulogy is given to Moses.¹³⁴

146. It would seem, then, that the Apostolate of which we are speaking consists in having instruction and mission from the mouth of God. The words which Christ addressed to the twelve is in keeping with this: '*And he said to them: To you it is given to*

¹²⁸ *Deut* 4: 2; 12: 32.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13: 5, 10.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15; cf. *Isa* 41: 21

¹³¹ *Isa* 11: 2–3.

¹³² *Num* 12: 6–8. 'Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord.' (NRSV).

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 12: 8.

¹³⁴ *Deut* 34, 10–12.

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*know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables.*¹³⁵ In the Letter to the Galatians when Paul wishes to show that he is an Apostle equal to the twelve, he begins by saying he has not been elected to this dignity by men, '*Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.*'¹³⁶ And later, he goes on, '*For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*'¹³⁷ He confirms this by showing that he had just been called to be an Apostle of the Gentiles when he did not go to Jerusalem to learn from the Apostles, but he went immediately to Arabia, thence to Damascus and only after three years had passed was he at Jerusalem, visiting Peter, with whom he remained fifteen days, and apart from James, he did not see any of the other Apostles apart from Peter. Then he went into the countries of Syria and Cilicia and after fourteen years had passed, he was again in Jerusalem in response to a revelation to meet with the apostolic college, having preached the Gospel to the nations, not with the purpose of verifying it but to authorize it with his listeners through an admirable agreement with that of the others.¹³⁸

147. Now, although prophecy, as we have said was peculiar to the Old Testament, nonetheless it appeared also in the New Testament. This occurred for edification's sake and no longer was it a substantial matter for the Church as it was before Christ. We read in St Matthew: '*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*'¹³⁹ Hence, when Christ said: '*Therefore behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes,*'¹⁴⁰ this should be understood according to the manner of the Hebrews, who as was right in the Old Covenant took any kind of seer as a prophet. Now Christ sent them Apostles who were pre-eminently prophets, like Moses among the prophets of the Old Testament and they took the place of the old prophets with great benefit. This is the reason why Christ sent them not only prophets but more than prophets. They prophesied the future glory and also the vicissitudes of the Church, as they had heard this from Christ and as the Holy Spirit suggested it. There now came a new kind of prophecy into the Church, that is, the spirit of interpreting the ancient prophecies. Understanding this first, that no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. '*No prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man*

¹³⁵ *Mk* 4: 11. 'And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables.' (NRSV).

¹³⁶ *Gal* 1: 1. 'Sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.' (NRSV).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11–12. 'For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.' (NRSV).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 15–21; 2: 1–2.

¹³⁹ *Mt* 11: 13. 'For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came.' (NRSV).

¹⁴⁰ *Mt* 23: 34. 'Therefore I send you prophets sages, and scribes.' (NRSV).

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*at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost.*¹⁴¹ The Holy Spirit, then, who in the Old Covenant inspired predictions concerning the Messiah, interpreted them in the New Covenant. And both the men of old who used these correctly appeared to be called prophets as also those of the New Covenant, because both confirm Christ with prophecy, the first uttering them, the second make them clear.

§ 3

On the Office of Evangelist

148. But the chief office of the prophets sent by Christ is to announce to the whole world the good news which once was only prophesied. Just as the Apostles occupy the place of Moses but with greater dignity, the Evangelists hold the place of the prophets and they can be called prophets because they do not differ in the message of which they speak, but only in time. They announce that the Messiah has come whereas those of former time predicted his future coming. Substantially speaking they are persons inspired by the same Spirit for the good of humanity. That there is no substantial need of predictions in the Church is clear from this fact, that Christ is the source of all truth and the touchstone of the comparison with which every truth is gauged. To prove the teachings which have come to us we do not need to have recourse to the future but only to compare them with the exemplar already given. Therefore Paul says to the Galatians: *'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema.'*¹⁴²

149. For the same reason, we see in the Book of Isaiah God argues with the Gentiles, showing them that, as their gods do not know how to respond to their requests, they cannot with their predictions show the great designs of providence in the events of the nations and justify them by prophesying a Christ to whom these events are referred.¹⁴³ Neither the Gentiles nor their gods have anything to oppose to the truth in this dispute so he adds, *'I first have declared it to Zion, and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good fortune.'*¹⁴⁴ He says, then, that the nations are without prophets and therefore live in sadness without hope for the future. In the end he promises that it is not from their gods that will they have the prophets they need for the conditions of the time, but that he will be the *first*, who with his power will make them sharers in Sion. Also he does not tell them that he will give them a Prophet in their time but an *Evangelist* which means that the Gentiles are not to be called to him in the age of

¹⁴¹ 2 *Pet* 1: 20–21. 'First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.' (NRSV).

¹⁴² *Gal* 1: 8. 'As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!' (NRSV).

¹⁴³ *Isa* 41: 21 ff.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

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prophesying, but when the good news is announced. He says that he will give this *Evangelist* to Jerusalem, but he has said before that they will turn to him there or rather they will be gathered round Mount Sion over which Jesus Christ the king is appointed, as is written in the psalms: '*But I am appointed king by him over Sion, his holy mountain, preaching his commandment.*'¹⁴⁵

150. Under the New Covenant, then, the Evangelists hold the place which the Prophets had under the Old, but they have a more joyful and splendid office. The *Evangelist*, of whose excellence Isaiah speaks, is Christ who is both the good news and the bearer of it. He is the one in whose mouth the same prophet put these words, '*he has sent me to bring good news to the poor*'¹⁴⁶ a passage which Christ read in the synagogue applying it to himself.¹⁴⁷ He is the one of whom the same Prophet had said in a preceding chapter, '*Get thee up upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good tidings to Sion: lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem: lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Juda: Behold your God.*'¹⁴⁸ So, from the heights of Sion Christ evangelizes Sion and Jerusalem, and revealing himself to the cities of Juda, says nobly, '*Behold your God*' in which the great and fortunate good tidings consist. And the announcement is made in a loud and resounding voice in order that it can also be understood from afar, that is, by the Gentiles who are said by Paul to be '*afar off*,'¹⁴⁹ who seem to be portrayed as in the cities of Judah and who, although outside the Holy City, have access to it and a closeness to it through the unity of their descent which makes them all one tribe. Not only did his voice need to be loud and resonant but used with *strength*, that is accompanied by grace, the strength never given to the Prophets because they had not led captivity captive and received gifts to be shared; but they are proper to Christ and bestowed on the voice of those who shared in the task of evangelization. This voice, similar to the sound of trumpets that herald the coming of a large army, is mentioned in a sublime psalm: '*The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power.*'¹⁵⁰

151. Again, Evangelists in a stricter sense of the term are called the four saints who were destined to write the Good news. And there are others who in the early years of the Church were very spiritual and possessed the gift of miracles and who were chosen by the apostles to evangelize with full power as the Spirit prompted them, for example, the deacon Philip, who is given the name of Evangelist in the Acts

¹⁴⁵ *Ps* 2: 6. In the NRSV, vv. 6-7: 'I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decrees of the Lord.' (Trans.)

¹⁴⁶ *Isa* 61: 1. NIV. Douay-Rheims has 'to the meek'. (Trans.)

¹⁴⁷ *Lk* 4: 18. See also the end of the same chapter.

¹⁴⁸ *Isa* 40: 9. 'Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" ' (NRSV).

¹⁴⁹ *Eph* 2: 13.

¹⁵⁰ *Ps* 67: 12. 'The Lord gives the command; great is the company of those who bore the tidings.' (NRSV).

of Apostles.¹⁵¹ The reason why St Paul, writing to the Corinthians, mentions the Apostles and prophets but does not number the Evangelists among them is possibly, as we have said, because the Evangelists were complementary to the Apostles, who could not do everything and for whose help deacons were chosen. However we are to understand 'Apostles' as including their *companions*, as Silas and Barnabas were to Paul. In fact, as Paul explains, it was the Prophets' task to build up the believing Church, whereas it was proper to the Apostles and Evangelists to call people to the faith and so to found the Church.¹⁵²

152. So when Christ tells the Hebrews that he will send Prophets instead of saying that he will send Evangelists to them, he speaks diplomatically to his own people and shows that he does not wish to found a new Church nor a new religion but only to complete and to perfect the old one.

Article VII

Of the Ordinary and Permanent Hierarchy of the Church: and firstly of the Ordinary Offices of the Old Testament

153. Having explained broadly and generally the offices of the early Church, we must now speak of those which have been constituted for its preservation and embellish it more and more for religious devotion and which will remain permanently. These are not specified by Paul but only touched on by speaking of *pastors* and *teachers*, which express in general the whole of the permanent ecclesiastical ministry.

154. In speaking a little about this we need to know how ancient Israel also had two periods or, as it were, epochs like the new. Although, leaving aside the more remote period and starting with Moses from which point the Hebrew people took the form of a complete and regulated society, we find from this lawgiver and principal prophet until Esdras, that is, for a thousand years, God sent his prophets, who by their extraordinary mission, with prophecies and enjoining the law, ruled the Hebrew Church. With the passage of time there were only ordinary and permanent rulers. In the same way in the Church from the beginning there were *Apostles, Prophets* and *Evangelists* and later when these offices ceased here remained *pastors* and *teachers*.

155. The reason why there was an extraordinary mission for so long, in the ancient Church and such a brief one in the new is manifold. Firstly, the one and only object for instruction of the world at all times was the coming of Christ, this object was then in the future, whereas now it has taken place. They could not have spoken about this object in ancient times without an extraordinary gift exercised by extraordinary missionaries, until everything had been predicted which had to be predicted. But these things to be predicted about the Messiah were many and his dignity required that it be explained by a long series of inspired men, and necessity

¹⁵¹ *Acts* 21: 8.

¹⁵² *1 Cor* 14: 4, 22.

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demanded that Christ be demonstrated in many, repeated and evident ways. Human obtuseness also needed this appropriate, teaching to be slow and gradual and so that an object which was so difficult and spiritual would, as it were, gradually dawn on it. On the contrary in the New Testament Christ was no longer foretold but spoken about and if extraordinary missionaries were needed from the beginning to found a wholly spiritual Church, as was that of Jesus among people whose spirit was wedded to the flesh and as it were absorbed in it, there was no need of extraordinary power to govern it. Being founded, then, with such a rapid and wonderful development it pleased the divine power that on the one hand it demanded men out of the ordinary with authority and power, and the gifts of the spirit, and on the other that the time for such a need should be shortened. And in this way the long mission of the Prophets confirmed religion better, and the shortness of the mission of the Apostles showed how much better was this religion and the power of its head.

156. But there is a more important reason. In ancient Israel there could be an extraordinary man to whom God gave supernatural power but not so with the new. For in the new Israel even ordinary dignity is endowed with supernatural power. There are ordinary ministers who succeed each other in an established order and remain as long as the Church lasts whether they are sent by God or ordained by the Church itself. There were priests in ancient Israel of the first kind and the wise men and scribes who would begin with Esdras were of the second kind. But neither the wise men nor the scribes did anything which was more than natural nor did the actions of the priests have any supernatural effect. That is why our priests surpass them exceedingly, through the consecration of the bread and wine and through the effects of this divine sacrifice which are dispensed to the faithful with divine power.

157. It is for scholars to fix the time of origin of the *Wise men* and the *Scribes*. As regards the Scribes (we are not talking about *profane* writers but those whom we call *sacred* or *ecclesiastical*). Perhaps, as some would have it,¹⁵³ they originated firstly with Moses, and were only restored by Esdras: and perhaps the fixing of the time depends on the breadth of opinion which others form about them. We speak of those who appear in Sacred Scripture after Esdras. This illustrious man is called by the Hebrews

¹⁵³ 'And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the ancients of Israel. And he commanded them, saying: After seven years, in the year of remission, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel come together, to appear in the sight of the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose, thou shalt read the words of this law before all Israel, in their hearing, and the people being all assembled together, both men and women, children and strangers, that are within thy gates: that hearing they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and keep, and fulfill all the words of this law.' (Deut 31: 9–12).

'When Moses was close to death he consigned the written law to the Levites: 'who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. Moses commanded them: "Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing... so that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law". '(NRSV).

The Prince of the Doctors of the Law and the Rabbis state that he established the school of interpreters in Jerusalem in order that the law should never be falsified through erroneous understanding. Such scribes became like the law experts, and perhaps differed little from them not in the quality of office but in degree of dignity.

158. The *Wise Men* became identified with the Pharisees who were ambitious for such titles which the people gave them, though later they wished rather to be called with the more covert title *disciples of the Wise*. They laid great stress on their traditions, the value of which they put before the Law: whereas the Scribes rather devoted themselves to its interpretation. With respect to this, we see in chapter 9 of St Matthew that the Pharisees reprov'd Christ for eating and conversing with publicans and sinners,¹⁵⁴ a thing which clashed with their customs, whereas the Scribes accused him of blaspheming,¹⁵⁵ a sin against the law. But in the time of Christ both were equally flawed, strict with others, lenient with themselves, imposing heavy burdens, while as the Gospel says: '*but with a finger of their own they will not move them.*'¹⁵⁶

159. The offices of both were good. Both lawful traditions and customs had to be cared for like the written teaching was. Christ said that the latter had to be cherished and the former not to be treated shabbily. Later on Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians¹⁵⁷ names a third type of teachers which the Hebrews called '*debaters*', and they interpreted the Scriptures with learned allegories and calculated subtlety. This method of explaining it was condemned by Paul in his letter to Timothy¹⁵⁸ as producing discussions and endless wrangling. Christ did not mention a word about such people when he said: '*Therefore behold I send to you prophets, and wise men, and scribes.*'¹⁵⁹

160. But to whom was Christ speaking?: to the Pharisees and Lawgivers, to the wise men and the scribes. We can see clearly from this how the Wise Men of Christ surpass them. For just as those sent to the people were called by them *wise men* and *scribes*, so those sent by Christ to the wise men and scribes also deserved to be called such.

161. The word *teachers* was used generally among the Hebrews, this included the wise men, the lawgivers and the scribes. So Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians¹⁶⁰ mentions simply the office of *teachers* and in the passage which we have singled out in the letter to the Ephesians, he mentions both *teachers* and *pastors*.

¹⁵⁴ *Mt* 9: 11.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, v.3.

¹⁵⁶ *Mt* 23: 4. Cf. *Lk* 11: 46. 'but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.' (NRSV).

¹⁵⁷ *1 Cor* 1: 20.

¹⁵⁸ *1 Tim* 1: 3-7.

¹⁵⁹ *Mt* 23: 34. 'therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes.' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁰ *1 Cor* 12: 28.

Article VIII

The Nature of the Governance of the Church of Jesus Christ and its Aims

*'And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.'*¹⁶¹

162 With these two words, then, he expresses every kind of governance of the Church and explains its nature. For the ecclesiastical governing of the Church is as gentle as the shepherd who guides his flock. He cares only that it increase and prosper. But he does not hurt it. He is unwilling to punish it too severely and if a sheep is led astray he seeks it with great skill, grabs it without harming it, places it on his shoulders and returns it to the flock. But the rule of the kings of this world, who *'lord it over them'*¹⁶² is totally different. They govern the body not the soul, they also use physical force, not only that of persuasion and love. On the contrary, the only weapon pastors of the Good News hold, their only staff, is their voice; with this they unveil the truth, they bind and condemn. To sum up, Church rulers are *pastors* not monarchs, they are not *kings*, but they are *teachers of men*.

163. Christ, says our teacher, has sent them *'for the perfecting of the saints.'*¹⁶³ This is the purpose of everything, the sanctification of humanity. How good God is to have done all this for his chosen ones! St Paul says: *'And we know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as, according to his purpose... He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how hath he not also, with him, given us all things?'*¹⁶⁴

164. But if he has done all this for his elect in order that they may be sanctified, what is the purpose of it all? All the holiness of the elect is from Christ; they receive it from him, so to speak, on loan, it does not belong to them. Everything, then, must return to Christ because everything is Christ's and when Paul says that we have been given all things, he adds, *in Christ* because nothing is given to us apart from him, but he himself is given to us and so gives us everything, because he possesses everything in himself. Christ truly is: *'the brightness of his glory, and the figure of his substance.'*¹⁶⁵ And *'the glory and power of God.'*¹⁶⁶ God, then, is the ultimate end of all things and all things have

¹⁶¹ *Eph 4: 11–12.* 'The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.' (NRSV).

¹⁶² *Mt 20: 25.* 'Lord it over their subjects.' (NRSV).

¹⁶³ *Eph 4: 12 9,* cf. NRSV above. (Trans.)

¹⁶⁴ *Rom 8: 28, 32.* 'We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose... He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁵ *Heb 1: 3.* 'He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being.' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁶ *1 Pet 4: 14.* 'The Spirit of Glory which is the Spirit of God' (NRSV).

been made for him.¹⁶⁷ This, therefore is: '*That he might make known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in him. In the dispensation of the fulness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and on earth, in him... That we may be unto the praise of his glory, we who before hoped in Christ.*'¹⁶⁸

Article IX

The Twofold Power of Ordination and Jurisdiction

165. Christ, then, is the one whom God wishes to be glorified through us. Our holiness must yield glory to Christ as head of the faithful and the glory of this head to the glory of God. Everything here below, then, must be referred to Christ in two ways just as he is with us in a twofold way: in his real body, that is, in the Eucharist, and in his mystical body, that is, in the faithful who make up the Church. So the whole Church is directed with its government with a twofold aim in view: Christ under the bread and wine and to Christ in himself.

166. It has therefore two powers, one corresponding to the first of these bodies, the other corresponding to the second one. The first is that of *Holy Orders*, the other is *ecclesiastical jurisdiction*. As regards the first, Paul says: '*for the work of the ministry*': as regards the second '*for the edifying of the body of Christ.*' Christ conferred one of these powers on the Church a little time before his passion, when he consecrated and distributed the bread and did the same with the chalice and added: '*Do this for a commemoration of me.*'¹⁶⁹ The other power was promised by Christ before his death,¹⁷⁰ but he conferred it on the Apostles after he rose, saying: '*All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*'¹⁷¹

167. And with good reason he said these words only after he had risen. For the whole Church must be conformed to Christ. He has the first fruits, in everything; he leads the way. He is the first to rise. It is in his resurrection alone that the Church rises to eternal life. Rising from the sepulchre, he draws her with him and with this act he

¹⁶⁷ 'The Lord has made all things for himself'. *Prov* 16: 4. 'The Lord has made everything for its purpose.' (NRSV), and others.

¹⁶⁸ *Eph* 1: 9–10. 12. 'The mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth...so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁹ *Lk* 22: 19; *1 Cor* 11: 24. 'Do this in remembrance of me.' (NRSV).

¹⁷⁰ *Mt* 16: 19 and 18: 18.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 28: 18–20; *Jn* 20: 21–23. 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (NRSV).

acquired all power over her. Therefore it is only fitting that the Apostles share in his power over his mystical body, whereas it was right that he conferred the power over his real body when he had not yet died, but was able to die, the holy supper being none else than the immolation of the divine lamb. And since it was necessary that divine light be added to the power of governing the Church, in the act of giving it to the Apostles he added: '*Receive the Holy Spirit*',¹⁷² and '*I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*'¹⁷³ I do not die any more; this power has never been taken from me which, as man, I gained by my death: for this reason it will never be lacking to my spouse, my Church, you my ministers will have no fear in governing it for I have given you my unailing power, my divine authority and strength.

168. As regards the first of these two powers which has the *office of ministry*, it constitutes the nature of the priesthood. The priest is the one who offers to God '*gifts and sacrifices*,'¹⁷⁴ and anyone who had the sole faculty of consecrating would be the perfect priest.

169. Christ is the unique gift and acceptable sacrificial victim, and therefore the unique and true priesthood belongs to him, so all other priests cannot be mediators between God and humanity. The other power of '*building up the mystical body of Christ*' belongs properly to the bishop. These were constituted to '*rule the Church of God.*'¹⁷⁵ They are *pastors* and *teachers*, these spouses of the Church and complete exemplars of Jesus Christ. For this reason there can be no bishop without the Church, just as there can be no husband without a wife, for a bishop means one who possesses the Church just as a husband means one who has a wife.

170. But if the bishop presides over the mystical body of Christ, if the head of this body is none other than Christ himself, if, for this reason, Christ as man is also the member of this body, the most noble member, who gives to other members life and union in one body, it is clear that episcopal power presupposes that of the priesthood, the power over the body presupposes that of the head, for without the head there is no body. One does not command the body, that which obeys except through the head. The body is sanctified only with the sacrifice of the head. This alone is the noble victim of salvation; no power or grace descends to the members except by way of the head. They have everything from him, so that they breathe and live in him in a wonderful and hidden way. It is fitting that the priest should be able to exercise power over the body as he alone has the power of sacrificing Christ, appeasing God in this way, and so can give salvation to humanity and, as it were, gain for them a semblance to Christ with this great sacrifice. For this reason pastors are always obliged to pray and offer sacrifice for their flock.

171. Now this power over the real body of Christ, the source and root of episcopal power, contains all the offices necessary for bringing the Sacrament into

¹⁷² *Jn* 20: 22.

¹⁷³ *Mt* 28: 20.

¹⁷⁴ *Heb* 5: 1.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *Acts* 20: 28.

being. St Thomas says: 'For the power of Order is directed either to the consecration of the Eucharist itself, or to some ministry in connection with this sacrament of the Eucharist. If in the former way, then it is the Order of priests; hence when they are ordained, they receive the chalice with wine, and the paten with the bread, because they are receiving the power to consecrate the body and blood of Christ. The co-operation of the ministers is directed either to the sacrament itself, or to the recipients. If the former, this happens in three ways. For in the first place, there is the ministry whereby the minister co-operates with the priest in the sacrament itself, by dispensing, but not by consecrating, for this is done by the priest alone; and this belongs to the deacon. Secondly, there is the ministry directed to the disposal of the sacramental matter in the sacred vessels of the sacrament and this belongs to subdeacons. Wherefore it is stated in the text (Sent. iv, D, 24) that they carry the vessels of our Lord's body and blood, and place the oblation on the altar; hence, when they are ordained, they receive the chalice, empty however, from the bishop's hands. Thirdly, there is the ministry directed to the proffering of the sacramental matter, and this belongs to the acolyte wherefore he receives an empty cruet. The ministry directed to the preparation of the recipients can be exercised only over the unclean, since those who are clean are already apt for receiving the sacraments. Now the unclean are of three kinds, according to Dionysius (Eccl. Hier. iii). For some are absolute unbelievers and unwilling to believe; and these must be altogether debarred from beholding Divine things and from the assembly of the faithful; this belongs to the doorkeepers. Some, however, are willing to believe, but are not as yet instructed, namely catechumens, and to the instruction of such persons the Order of readers is directed, who are therefore entrusted with the reading of the first rudiments of the doctrine of faith, namely the Old Testament. But some are believers and instructed, yet lie under an impediment through the power of the devil, namely those who are possessed: and to this ministry the order of exorcists is directed. Thus the reason and number of the degrees of Orders is made clear.¹⁷⁶ All these offices are needed by the Sacrament of the Eucharist. They were all bestowed on the Apostles by Christ when he gave them power over his real body.

172. Because the faithful form the completion and fulness of the body of Christ, as the members that of the head, and clothing that of the body,¹⁷⁷ the order of bishop is called the *completion of the priesthood*. It is true enough that Jesus Christ is so perfect in himself that he draws no perfection from the members but communicates it to them unlike the case of the head with the human body which does not live without the other members. However, he wishes to unite himself to human beings, and extends and, so to speak, stretches his holiness over them, thus communicating it to them. And it is always the same holiness which is transfused and shines in many individuals. Christ, then, receives his completion from his saints desired and pre-ordained by him, not because he lacks utmost perfection, but because, through his

¹⁷⁶ St Thomas ST III supplementum, XXXVII, art. II.

¹⁷⁷ Eph 1: 22–23.

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goodness, he wished to suffer for the redemption of many. And how the faithful receive every perfection from Christ and Christ nothing from the faithful is shown in the Gospel itself, where the Church was represented, as the Fathers say, in the clothing of Christ, which became white as snow on Mt Tabor through being in contact. On his part, then, Christ is a truly a body perfect in all its parts, and the clothing does not add anything to it, except for exterior adornment which has nothing to do with the substance of the body itself.

Article X

The Object of the Power of Bishops and Priests

*'Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ; That henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ.'*¹⁷⁸

173. But to return to the simile of the members and the head, in what does this fulness of episcopal power consist? What is the purpose of this authority over the members of Jesus Christ? Humanity is united and reconciled with divinity, or at least it establishes the source and the possibility of this reconciliation, with the authority of the head, that is with sacrifice. Moreover, Paul carries on explaining this episcopal power as follows: He constituted this power: *'Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.'*

174. So the purpose of that power with regard to the mystical body of Jesus is to make the members not only united to their head but in proportion to their head. The body has many parts.¹⁷⁹ These different parts in the Church of God are the different gifts and different ministries:¹⁸⁰ each is necessary, each is of benefit to the others, each is noble because it co-operates in forming the harmony of the whole.¹⁸¹ But the members of the body do not just compose it but it is necessary that they are proportioned to their head, so that just as the head is adult the legs and arms should not be childlike. The body of the Church is perfect. Its head is Christ, complete in everything. In the world he grew with years to complete maturity so that his real body

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 4: 13–15. 'until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.' (NRSV).

¹⁷⁹ 1 *Cor* 12: 12–14.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15–25.

might be the exemplar for the mystical body. Since the head is perfectly mature the members must also grow until they become completely mature.

175. This happens through charity, that is with the perfect carrying out of the divine precepts, as Paul teaches in his first letter to the Corinthians. For in chapter 12 he describes the members of this body, its gifts and ministries and in going on to speak of the actions, or rather of the *spiritual things*,¹⁸² a *more excellent way*,¹⁸³ of charity: he shows, that the gifts and ministries are nothing without this which enlives them: they form only dead members.

176. But who in this world grows through charity to perfection? This perfection, which makes the members measure up to their head, consists in the absence of every fault, although there are different degrees of merit as varied as the qualities and vigour of the members. Whoever dies not yet perfect (but without grave fault), whoever dies as a living member, but not yet fully mature, has not yet attained the pure charity of God and they will be purified by fire until they have grown in charity to the correct degree and are united with the other saints in glory.

177. Unfortunately the body of Christ is only mature in heaven! Here below we are always surrounded by imperfection, it seems almost necessary to our fragile human nature: down here, we are still adolescents destined to grow in stature. This time ends with our death when we leave the Church Militant: those with shortcomings which are not grave are purged with fire in the next life. Paul says: '*Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known.*'¹⁸⁴

178. When we are cleansed from every fault and imperfection and when our time of growth is over our members will be of that correct proportion which God has destined for us from eternity, and united with the head, no longer children but fully mature individuals. So that this should happen to us Christ placed governors over his Church. This is the purpose of the power of jurisdiction, to make us suitable members for heaven.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 12: 1 and 14: 1.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 12: 31.

¹⁸⁴ 1 *Cor* 13: 8–12. 'Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly,* but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.' (NRSV).

Article XI

The Sacraments of Jesus Christ

*'From whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity.'*¹⁸⁵

179. Just as the real body of Christ grew in this way during his life,¹⁸⁶ so likewise does his mystical body on earth. A person becomes an adult and as perfect as he/she may be, through *their firmness in the same faith; and later in heaven through their knowledge of the Word*, no longer in a mirror or enigma but face to face.

180. This faith is what helps us: *'That henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, even Christ.'*¹⁸⁷ So as the members grow, they grow through faithful charity which incorporates us into Christ and makes us sharers in his completed stature.

181. We cannot say enough about this charity based on faith which shields believers from error, makes them mature and after death reveals God to them himself unveiled. Paul goes on: *'From whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in charity.'* Again we see how every development and nourishment of this body comes from the head, that is, Christ. The joints, then, through which this nourishment is supplied are the Sacraments of the Church, the vehicles of grace, which communicate to the members *by means of charity a proportionate* increase in growth.

182. We say *by means of charity* because without this the sacraments are worth nothing. This is the greatest precept, the root of the others. Those who do not love Jesus are accursed:¹⁸⁸ they do not have the articulation which connects them to the body, since it cannot exist.

183. He says *proportionately* both regarding the quantity of love, and the quality of the members since each has need of grace for their state and this is given to them in proportion to their love.

184. This is not the place for me to deal any further with the Sacraments. It is

¹⁸⁵ Eph 4: 16. 'from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.' (NRSV).

¹⁸⁶ Lk 2: 52.

¹⁸⁷ Eph 4: 14–15. 'We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.' (NRSV).

¹⁸⁸ 1 Cor 16: 22.

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enough to have here what Paul teaches about how they are the joints connecting the members with the head, the channels of grace, of life and of perfection.

185. The administration of the Sacraments is subject to the bishops because it has as its purpose the building up of the mystical body of Jesus Christ: to this end the bishop intends necessarily to act as priest, since, among the Sacraments, is that of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, a priestly function.

Book III

On the Practice of Virtue

Chapter I

On Devotion

186. In this last part of the work we shall say something about the practice of virtue. It is exercised towards God, towards oneself and towards others. Firstly we shall speak about what concerns the first two and then of the third.

187. Every act of virtue towards God can be easily comprised under the heading of devotion, since everything is contained in the dedication which we make of ourselves to God, which is expressed in the origin of the word.

Chapter II

On Habitual Devotion

188. Every part of us should be devoted or dedicated to God, nor can there be any time when we are not united with God. This is the precept of divine love; this is the end and desire of human nature which longs for happiness and union with God.

189. But this union can be completed only in heaven. Down here the infirmity of our nature prevents us being in a continual state of pure contemplation. The union of the soul with the body's heavy and infirm bulk makes it incapable of the most perfect contemplation. The flesh suffers¹ and external and corporeal objects tear away the soul from recollection and sublime meditation.

190. Jesus, however, putting before us the perfection of the Law and of Life, taught that we must, in spite of this, keep the image of heavenly life before us during our own life. Even if we cannot measure up to this completely, we must nevertheless strive to attain it as much as is possible. He stresses that we should, '*Be alert at all times, praying...*'² '*Stay awake and pray...*'³ '*Pray without ceasing*,'⁴ which to be honest, is what the blessed do in heaven.

¹ *Wis* 9: 15.

² *Lk* 21: 36

³ *Mt* 26: 41.

⁴ *1 Thess* 5: 17.

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191. This precept of Christian vigilance, of continual prayer, is in keeping with that of walking in the divine presence. God taught Abraham to follow perfection: '*Walk before me and be perfect.*'⁵ Truly, the one who considers that God is everywhere and watches every act is always conscious of his companion and his dignity, his authority, his justice, his goodness, and would never sin. Ultimately everything comes down to this innocence and in it lies habitual devotion. St Philip used to say to the young people: '*It is enough for me that you do not sin;*'⁶ since those who have a clear conscience also have a serene spirit, a tranquil mind, peacefulness and God with them. Require and commend this abstinence from sin more than anything else, even the greatest practice of virtue. In this way, having a heart free from disordered attachments and the unease of remorse, we can actually turn to God with greater gentleness, praying more frequently and habitually, that is, in the spirit of prayer. Those who abide in a spirit of prayer, abide in God and always pray.

192. There are many meditations which are helpful in achieving the habit of having the Lord always present to us and I will touch on some here. The person who considers that all things depend on him, that he fills the heavens and the earth,⁷ that he is present both to the wicked and the just and in the heights and depths,⁸ finally, that he has created everything out of nothing,⁹ will find in external things, the omnipotence of God, the first Being, the God of truth and strength, whose greatness humbles all his insignificant creatures.

193. The person who meditates on his providence which is '*playing in the world*',¹⁰ and '*reacheth therefore from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly,*'¹¹ although with plans remote from human gaze, will always be aware of God's infinite wisdom and goodness and that he preserves and consoles good people.

194. The person who becomes aware that the few values that creatures have are imperfect and limited, gathers these together and mentally perfecting them, finds a scale in visible things and thus arrives at the most perfect exemplar of everything to which his rational nature aspires and tends.¹²

195. Those who converse with persons and contemplate the divinity within them and which, either with justice or mercy will be glorified in them one day, showing compassion for their defects that God permits, congratulating them for their merits which God produces with his grace, will never be distracted from their Lord by these persons, but drawn always towards him.

⁵ *Gen* 17: 1. 'Walk before me and be blameless.' (NRSV).

⁶ *The Life of St Philip Neri*. Book II, Chapter VII.

⁷ *Jer* 23: 24.

⁸ *Pss* 139: 8.

⁹ *Jn* 1: 3.

¹⁰ *Prov* 8: 31. 'rejoicing in his inhabited world.' (NRSV).

¹¹ *Wis* 8: 1. 'reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well.' (NRSV).

¹² *Rom* 1: 20.

196. The voice of our master Jesus can be heard in everything in the universe. *'Wisdom preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets.'*¹³ *'For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, and she showeth herself to them cheerfully in the ways, and meeteth them with all providence.'*¹⁴ When nature becomes beautiful in spring, with the grass starting to grow again, the trees bearing their foliage, clear waters flowing, and birds breaking into song, we intelligent creatures know that our Lord invites us also to renew ourselves and to join our voices in harmony with that which inanimate and unthinking creatures are contributing for their Creator. When the summer causes the harvest to ripen and the new strength of the sun causes fruits to mature, and the bodies of animals have more vitality, let us also think of our own growth ready for that time when the heavenly farmer gathers us into his barn. And when autumn comes, the time of gathering fruit and harvesting, we are stirred with holy desires for our own end, and sigh for our heavenly mansion preserved for us for eternity without falling back into disfigurement or corruption. Finally, in the season of winter, what is more obvious than meditating on the perishability of all human things, of the instability of all human appearances, the end of those who put their trust in these and to decide and put into action an entire detachment from all fleeting and deceptive goods? So wisdom speaks to us everywhere, on the passing of visible and external things when we pay attention to it and understand its solemn message.

197. How much we are instructed by moral appearances, of passions and evil-doing of human beings with the vicissitudes and undertakings of life with good and evil, events which depend on and are contrary to our blind and reckless will! This is a field where you can make for yourself and others innumerable considerations which are so many paths to God.

198. One can equally walk in the presence of the Lord making it a habit to consult and question the eternal Truth in every action, desiring to do the best in everything, not, however, losing time by debating with oneself over minutiae as to what is best, because many get entangled by this and they make things worse by lingering over finding what is best.

199. God is present to those who have not done this and who have not previously confronted their actions with the divine law. There is no doubt that this is a duty of every Christian, a habit as difficult to form as it is fine and perfect.

¹³ *Prov 1: 20. 'Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.'* (NRSV).

¹⁴ *Wis 6: 17. 'She goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought.'* (NRSV).

Chapter III

Other Ways with which one can exercise the Precept of Constant Vigilance and Continual Prayer

200. Again, if we consider what John says, that: '*all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life,*'¹⁵ and if one is convinced that the world is perpetually at war with Christ and that they are always at odds with each other and can never understand each other, we shall live and behave like soldiers in their camp and on guard against the enemy. We shall be vigilant and fulfil the divine precept: '*Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*'¹⁶

201. Our enemies are both outside and within. The former consist in the allurements of things external to us, the latter are ourselves. The former are overcome by exterior mortification, the latter by interior mortification. Overcoming the former is perhaps not so wearisome, but overcoming oneself is the most arduous of all. The following of Christ consists in this: '*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*'¹⁷ This denial of self and interior mortification which results in the beautiful conformity of our will with the divine will without ever anticipating this, but pursuing it like a shadow following its body, and as a ray its star, this unadulterated art of the Christian life, continually demands all one's strength. Exterior mortification is only subsidiary, a servant of interior mortification.

202. In this you have a guide in the great St Francis de Sales. In this matter it follows that if you always have enemies you will always have as many victories; if the adversary pursues us with a thousand machinations, with Jesus as our common defender we shall have unlimited help.

203. The Christians of the early Church had recent images of Jesus Christ still present to them. His mysterious life, his divine conversation, his sorrowful death, his glorious resurrection, his teaching during those forty days were etched vividly on their minds and made Jesus always present to them, always on their lips. He was the object of their entertainments, consolation in their difficulties, the theme of their songs, and the aim and nourishment of all their recreation. The miserable state of the world in those times, flooded as it was with the blind mire of paganism, made the beauty, the light, and the perfection of the new heavenly teacher shine out even more. The persecutions necessitated a more continuous and strict union with that first martyr, the companion and example in their suffering, and source of their strength. The proximity of the Apostles who preached Jesus whom they had seen and touched with

¹⁵ 1 *Jn* 2: 16. 'All that is in the world, [is] the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches.' (NRSV).

¹⁶ *Mt* 26: 41. 'Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' (NRSV).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16: 24. 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' (NRSV).

their hands, from whom they had divinely received so many tokens of love and so many proofs of most gentle friendship in those marvellous times, greatly impressed on them the presence of their Saviour in everything. Their sermons, letters and lives were full of Christ. Paul writes: '*before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been set forth, crucified among you?*'¹⁸ He was publicly revealed by my preaching and *crucified among you* in the persecution you suffered and which he suffered with you. How familiar they were with our Lord! What holy intimacy and true brotherhood with this loving God, in whom the teacher, the father, the friend were present in everything, and apart from whom they wished to find nothing else.

204. Nowadays Jesus Christ is a distant figure to most Christians and many good people see him rather as God than man, and it seems that they fear to approach him. They do not talk about him frequently or fervently when they meet. They almost shy away from opening up to one another candidly, and to express lovingly what many feel for him in their hearts. To meet casually outside Church, or outside fixed times, to propose to sing some hymn to our Lord, or say some prayers or to spend some time talking about him would not seem customary, and if they were averse to this or if they overcame it and suggested it, this would be accepted coldly or hesitatingly even if one could find someone who didn't laugh at it.

205. Generally, it is true that our Christians have particular devotions and those in honour of the saints and set prayers to some particular object. These are to be commended if they are approved by the Church; but who can deny that, not through any defect of theirs but sometimes through the imperfect way in which they are performed, many refrain from being involved in these pious usages, and are almost held back or hesitate from going to the source of devotion, of knowledge and longing directly for Jesus, to whose honour these refer. How beautiful and how useful it is to think always of Jesus! to see him in all things like the apostles! and not only to remember that he is God, which dumbfounds us and is beyond us, but to have him present as man, as one of us, clothed with the same body, a man truly subject to human infirmities, apart from sin, who rejoices and suffers with us, who sympathises with us, who comforts us, who makes merry with us, who encourages us, who helps us, who reproves us, who warns us; one who is faithful in everything, a friend at all times, present in all things, a companion and participant.

206. Yes, many have a feeble devotion to Jesus. I wish that Christians would do everything to restore it and rekindle it. Speak often to your little girls about this gentle Master, that they become familiar with the name of Jesus, that he may be present to them in all that they do, that he might take part in all their amusements. If you can inculcate this habit of imagining Jesus as their companion in all places, at all times, in all their occupations, they will already have attained an excellent practice of the divine presence, in Christian vigilance, in unceasing prayer, and gentle, habitual recollection. This is the best method of all.

¹⁸ Gal 3: 1. 'It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified.' (NRSV).

207. A well-ordered use of every moment of our time, frequent short prayers and brief moments of affection for God will help in maintaining a spirit of prayer as we have been told to do. If there are some short intervals between external works these could be occupied in prayer, not idleness. Brief prayers, which I mentioned above, were used a lot by the ancient solitaries of Egypt, as St Augustine mentions. This holy Doctor also recommends them because they stimulate a lively, frequent attention whereas our feeling cools frequently in long prayers.

Chapter IV

On Actual Devotion

208. There is no doubt that innocence of life, a careful watch over ourselves and walking in the presence of God with denial of our own will and conformity to his is the most excellent and beautiful preparation for actual adoration. Christians who maintain this spirit of prayer always speak in a way pleasing to the Lord.

209. Jesus teaches this to the Samaritan woman when he says: *'true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth.'*¹⁹ All the characteristics of true adoration are outlined here. *Spirit* refers to internal feeling, *truth* the external form of the prayer. If in their internal conversation with God worshippers say something disagreeable to his majesty, or out of proportion to human lowliness, something not in keeping with his infinite mercy and not lively trust in him, or something which offends justice or faith, or something which supposes a fruitless belief which is not from God, in these cases truth is diminished, a principle characteristic of true adoration is lacking. But those who pray to God *in the spirit*, that is, with their hearts wholly and well disposed, pray in God who is spirit, and therefore the form of their prayer is also appropriate and true. This is the spirit of which Christ said: *'It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing.'*²⁰ It supposes that the spirit renounces what is not spirit, what is not God, because this is useless; this is the world; this is sin. Paul spoke of these things to the Romans when he wrote: *'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service.'*²¹ The victim and sacrifice supposes something which is destroyed in honour of the divinity. Before Christ, bulls, sheep and other animals were immolated. After Christ has come, what does man sacrifice? Himself. Ought he to sacrifice what is good in himself? No: but what is evil in him, excluded by charity, the corporeal, the carnal. The flames of charity should burn away everything else, these alone are burnt. In this way we are purified and become spiritual, we pray in the spirit and much better the more we are

¹⁹ *Jn* 4: 23. 'true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.' (NRSV).

²⁰ *Ibid.* 6: 63. 'It is the spirit that gives life: the flesh is useless.' (NRSV).

²¹ *Rom* 12: 1. 'I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.' (NRSV).

purified. Such a sacrifice shines out most vividly in the martyrs who followed the encouragement of the apostle literally, offering their own bodies and with them every worldly possession. But the interior mortification with which we renounce everything and ourselves and finally that preparation for death through which we see only the loss of our body as a victim to justice, embracing it freely, all helps us to sacrifice the useless things which enchain us, making us pure and spiritual in emulation of the martyrs.

210. The movement of our lips and our bodily attitude in prayer are not sufficient, nor the choice of place or external appearance, the affection of the soul is required which is all the more lively as our life is pure, even if in the act of praying divine grace does not work any of its wonders.

211. But God has not left us without a guide, even with regard to the form of our prayer so that, just as the best spirit produces the best forms of prayer, the spirit which is not wholly perfect is stimulated and helped by good forms of prayer. The guide given to us is the Church: she teaches us to pray in all *truth*. In the Church Christians have such abundant food that they are nourished on this and need no other. Why then, do they look for other new devotions or put private ones before public ones, if in those of the Church we have everything which is appropriate for God, everything which is suitable for our sanctification? I am not denying your heart freedom to give vent to spontaneous prayers which it suggests, these are very often the fruit of the Spirit of God and therefore conform to the Spirit and to the Truth, but I am speaking of many external practices, which even were they correct and true will be always false when they are given precedence over public ones, or if these have to give way to the former. They disturb good order which demands that the more precious should be given preference. For leaving aside other considerations, public prayers help more, as the prayers of many are of greater help than the prayers of one individual.²² Besides, the fact that the Church being holy, those who are united with it in prayer sanctify their own prayer, and their own defects are repaired by the common virtue and fervour of many, thus the effectiveness of their prayer is immeasurably strengthened. We speak, then, to the Lord with the mouth of the Church, and we pray according to the TRUTH.

212. But it is indeed true that making use of public functions and reciting ecclesiastical prayers is of no worth when they are not heartfelt. For we would say true and correct words, but not in a way that is altogether profitable. We would adore God in truth but not in spirit. We would sin like those to whom it was said: '*This people honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me.*'²³

213. Augustine disapproves of many pious inventions: 'even though they are not contrary to the faith because they saddle the Church with heavy burdens from which God's mercy wished it to be free' (unlike the Synagogue) 'and which has been provided only with very few, plain exterior signs of devotion.' Those who do

²² *Mt* 18: 20; *Acts* 1: 13–14; *Eph* 5: 19; *Col* 3: 16.

²³ *Mt* 15:8. 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.' (NRSV).

otherwise should realise, 'that the state of the Jews was more tolerable, who though they had no knowledge of freedom at the time were at least not submitted to human prejudices but only to the burdens of the law.'²⁴ And who does not know how the multiplication of certain practices among us provides occasion for the malice and vulgarity of heretics to make themselves hoarse, in shouting, accusing and calumniating the Church? In order to shut their mouth as far as possible Paul orders the faithful not only to refrain from evil but: '*from all appearance of evil refrain yourselves.*'²⁵

214. Nor should we infer that the Church or the Sovereign Pontiff deserve blame, who according to the precept of the Apostle should: '*prove all things (and) hold fast that which is good,*'²⁶ and who do not reject any of the practices invented by Christian piety, which they have discovered after careful examination to be good: rather they commend with their apostolic authority any aids and sundries which the holy Spirit adds to feeble devotion and to charity weakened by difficult times.

215. Here we are talking simply about unapproved devotions coming from particular initiatives which the Church either tolerates if it knows about them, or would even condemn them if it knew about them. The first practices are venerable and if they are calumniated by heretics the loss is theirs. As regards the second type, although the Spirit breathes where he will,²⁷ they are of doubtful value for the general faithful and should be put on hold, and if the good Christian examines them before practising them, this is praiseworthy and healthy. But even when the Apostolic See approved new forms of prayer it always leaves the discreet and reasonable use of them in an appropriate way to the good judgement of the faithful. It leaves them to have a greater esteem for those, which because of their age, soundness, dignity and institution, are more excellent; but it is so wise that while it loves and imposes on the faithful that it should approach the great springs of water, it does not shut off anyone from the little streams and rivulets, when these are pure and wholesome.

216. However these devotions are not necessary just as the stream is not necessary for those who have the river but they are helpful to those who, because of their imperfection, do not know how to drink fully from what is greater. St Augustine says that the Church is not going to be overburdened by being laden with servile works, as the Synagogue was with its ceremonies. She is free; she is her own mistress. Her sacraments, that is, the essential functions, are *very few* and *very clear*. But what great fruit Christians draw in focussing on those simple words of the Church, full of solemn

²⁴ Augustine, *Epistola 55*, cap. 19. 'For even although nothing be found, perhaps, in which they are against the true faith; yet the Christian religion, which God in His mercy made free, appointing to her sacraments very few in number, and very easily observed, is by these burdensome ceremonies so oppressed, that the condition of the Jewish Church itself is preferable: for although they have not known the time of their freedom, they are subjected to burdens imposed by the law of God, not by the vain conceits of men. The Church of God, however, being meanwhile so constituted as to enclose much chaff and many tares, bears with many things; yet if anything be contrary to faith or to holy life, she does not approve of it either by silence or by practice.' (Trans.).

²⁵ 1 *Thess* 5: 22 (Douay-Rheims). 'abstain from every form of evil.' (NRSV).

²⁶ *Ibid.* 21. 'test everything; hold fast to what is good.' (NRSV).

²⁷ *Jn* 3: 8.

meaning, and the ceremonies, symbols, and expressions with which they are clothed. The Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Hail Holy Queen are *very short* yet *very clear*. How simple, how easy, how short! And for those who penetrate their inner meaning, what abundance enters the mind and heart! The Sacrifice of the Mass, the public Offices of the Church and the Sacraments, these are very few, very clear and very fruitful institutions. There is no soul too arid to be satisfied by these; but there is not one so loving and fervent, as to be able to embrace and nourish itself fully on the divine love they contain in becoming close to and intimate through Christ with God.

Chapter V

On the Lord's Prayer

217. I will not deal with the most beautiful and simple prayers that the Church puts in the mouths of the faithful. I will only touch on the Lord's Prayer as the most excellent of all. I will take my outline from an ancient and public explanation. It is preserved in the Sacramentary of Pope Gelasius published by the excellent Cardinal Tommasi in 1680 and reproduced by Muratori in *Antica Liturgia Romana*.²⁸

218. It was customary to read such an explanation to the Catechumens in the Mass as a Preface to the Lord's Prayer. It is recommended because of its age, of the book from which it is taken and because it is full of beautiful thoughts.

Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

'Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, among his other salutary precepts, gave to his disciples who asked him how to pray, this form of prayer, which you, with your present reading have come to know more fully. Let your love listen now to the manner in which he teaches his disciples to pray to God our Almighty Father. "*But thou when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret.*"²⁹ The room to which he refers does not mean any hidden place in the house; but reminds us that the secrets of our heart lie open to him alone. And to pray with our door shut means that with our mystical key we should shut off our hearts from evil thoughts, and speak to God with closed lips and with a pure mind. Our God

²⁸ Cardinal Giuseppe Maria Tomasi, was a Theatine (born at Licata 12 September 1649 and died in Rome 1 January 1713). He was a theologian, liturgist and historian and was canonized by Blessed Pope John Paul II 12 October 1986 He published for the first time this collection of prayers for the celebration of the Eucharist and administration of the Sacraments entitled *Libri tres sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae* in Rome 1680...Ludovico A. Muratori gave them the name of *Sacramentarium Gelasianum* and included it in his *Liturgia Romana vetus* (Venice 1748). (Ed.)

²⁹ *Mt 6: 6*. 'But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father.' (NRSV).

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listens to faith not our voice. So, with the key of faith we shut off our hearts in face of the snares of the adversary and open it only to God whose temple we are, so that he will abide in our hearts and that he will be the Advocate in our prayers. So the Word and the wisdom of God, Christ our Lord, taught us to pray like this:

Our Father who art in heaven

'This is an expression of freedom and full of confidence. You understand by this that you are to live in such a way, according to your regulations, so as to become children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. Since how can a person who deliberately causes discord dare to say that God is their Father? Hence, dearly beloved, make yourselves worthy of divine adoption, since it is written: "he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name."³⁰

Hallowed by thy name

'This means not that God is sanctified by our sanctification for he is always holy but we pray that his name be sanctified in us, that we who are sanctified in Baptism, shall persevere in what we have begun.

Thy kingdom come

'Now God whose reign is immortal always reigns to the utmost degree. When we say "*thy kingdom come*", we pray that our kingdom will come which is promised by God and acquired for us by the blood and passion of Christ.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

'That is to say, as your will is done in heaven, may we do this on earth without fault.

Give us this day our daily bread

'We should understand this as spiritual food. For it is Christ our bread who said: '*I am the living bread which came down from heaven.*'³¹ We say 'daily bread' because we always need to ask for immunity from sin, so that we may be worthy of this heavenly food.

³⁰ *Jn* 1: 12. '[to those] who believed in his name he gave power to become children of God.' (NRSV).

³¹ *Ibid.* 6: 51. 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven.' (NRSV).

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us

'We are taught here that we cannot deserve pardon for our sins if we do not ourselves first pardon those who sin against us as the Lord says in the Gospel: "*But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences.*"³²

And lead us not into temptation

By this we mean that we be not seduced by the one who tempts us, the author of wickedness. For Scripture says: "*God does not tempt us to evil things.*" It is the devil who tempts us and in order to overcome him the Lord says: "*Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation.*"³³

But deliver us from evil

He says this because the Apostle says: "*we do not know what is right for us to do.*" We must pray to him who alone is powerful that he might deign in his mercy to give us the power to avoid that to which our human frailty might be exposed, that Jesus Christ may deign to give us this, who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.'

Chapter VI

The Holy Sacrifice and its Incomparable Excellence over other Religious Practices

219. We shall deal now only with the principal exercises of Christian devotion, that is, as we have already indicated above, the Holy Sacrifice, then the Offices of the Church, and lastly a little on the Sacraments.

220. As regards the divine Sacrifice the Council of Trent says: 'that no other work can be performed by the faithful so holy and divine as this tremendous mystery itself, wherein that life-giving victim, by which we were reconciled to the Father, is daily immolated on the altar by priests.'³⁴ If we consider the excellence and sublimity of this divine sacrifice, there is not a more lofty act of worship even in heaven. The heavenly and earthly Jerusalem compete for it, for how can the choirs of angels regret coming down from the highest heaven to earth in order to assist the priest performing the divine mysteries? They are around the altar, adoring the host which he takes in his hands and which he eats and drinks.

³² *Mt 6: 15.* 'if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' (NRSV).

³³ *Mt 26: 40* 'Stay awake and pray that you may not come into temptation.' (NRSV).

³⁴ *De Concilio Tridentum, sess. XXII, De observandi et evitandi, celeb. Missae.*

221. Here is the abundant fountain of living water at which all piety can be quenched! Here is the bread of Angels! All devotion even a superhuman one can be fully and abundantly nourished by it.

Can there be anything lacking here in greatness, holiness, sweetness, kindness, mercy and tenderness? Can anything religious, pious, useful, good, beautiful, rich, and exalted be found or sought that is not already eminently present in this the source of all holiness, grace, love, beauty and grandeur?

Jean Gersen says, 'There are many people who run off to various places to see relics of Saints; filled with wonder on hearing of their deeds, they look over vast churches enshrining them and kiss the holy bones in their setting of silk and gold; and here you are before me on the altar, my God, the Saint of Saints, the maker of men, the Lord of the Angels. When men go to see such things it is often out of curiosity... It is not frivolity that draws us there, not curiosity, not a desire for sensual pleasure, but firm faith, devout hope and love unfeigned.'³⁵

222. How can people search with much study and wracking their brains for new devotions, for strange forms of devotion, when they know that there is in this single act, instituted by Jesus, such abundant nourishment which is overflowing and more than enough, not simply for their poor and limited hearts, but also for the hearts of all the Angels in heaven? They do not understand the fruitfulness and richness of these very *few*, and very *plain* practices instituted by Jesus Christ and handed down by the holy bishops of the Church. To put it better: because these devotions are so pure and heavenly, trying one's faith, putting hope to the test and demanding spiritual love purged of alien affections, they are not understood by the earthly and imperfect person. Gersen says that they do not satisfy such people's curiosity, nor do they nourish their frivolity, nor do they satisfy their earthly and limited senses because they seek only visible and corporeal things, and find and see nothing beyond these. Because of such limitations, they neglect and care little for these holy institutions of Christ, or at least do not do justice to them. People often try to make up more materialistic devotions believing that they are involved in divine worship, whereas they are pandering to their own sensuality.

223. I would like to remind such people of the most wise and holy intentions of our common mother, the holy Catholic Church. She condescends to appeal to imperfect Christians with external helps to their spiritual devotion. Nevertheless she reproves false ones or those which are not worthy of the divine majesty, and she regulates those which are not principal ones and which curb the object of devotion, and orders and refers them to those which include the end of all worship. In the saints it adores the author of all holiness, and in images it venerates the holy object

³⁵ Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Trans. Ronald Knox and Michael Oakley, London Burns and Oates, 1960, pp. 183–4. It is commonly accepted, after a lot of controversy, that Gersen was not the author of the Imitation. (Trans.).

illustrated or depicted by them. And with regard to the sacred relics it honours their remains, which, though fleshly, were once the temple of God, and which one day will be re-enlivened and wonderfully rebuilt into a new house in which the divine glory will abide eternally, and in all these holy things and pious memories it exalts and glorifies the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings to which honour and glory are due, and from whom it is not lawful to take away one scintilla or any degree of love without injustice and punishment.

224. Those who wish to be perfect in devotion should consider hearing Mass well, and of relishing the divine sacrifice worthily. If they prepare for it carefully, it will appear to be new to them everyday, because in frequenting it they will learn something new, they will experience new affections, it will seem ever more delightful to them, every day they will know the distance between this and other devotions which are serve it; they will pity those who assist at Mass in an undevotional manner, who see it as a trivial thing because they are frequent recipients of the Lord's generosity. To sum up, everyone should nourish the desire to penetrate this act of worship better, the better to incorporate themselves with the victim who is being immolated, to unite themselves with the communion of saints better, so that through the hands of the priest they at least make a gift to the Infinite which is worthy of him: finally they will learn ever more the truth that the *devotion pleasing to God does not consist in many varied practices, but in SPIRIT and in TRUTH.*

Chapter VII

The Offertory and Consecration

225. We are not to believe that those who assist at Mass have no part in the action of the priest. Christ offers himself and sacrifices himself in the Mass and is offered and sacrificed by the priest in the person of Christ. The whole Church, too, each of the faithful and especially those present are united to the priest in Christ. So those who attend Mass should think of the act, which they themselves take part in, and not imagine that they are only witnesses, but ministers in this offering with the priest, with the Church and with Christ. If they have this attitude they will hear Mass in the very best way. With this spirit even those who do not know how to follow the priest in the different prayers, and who say their own prayers will hear Mass in the best way for them, as uneducated people do.

226. There are then two principle actions in the Mass, that is, the offering of the host which is made to God, the supreme Lord of all things and the Consecration or immolation of the same host. This is the act proper to the priest in the person of Christ, the former is the act of every Christian present at the Mass. This is clear from the words of the Priest, since he utters the words of Consecration in the singular as if Christ alone spoke, on the contrary he offers the host in the plural as we see in the Canon of the Mass. Also in the first offering of the chalice: 'We offer You, O Lord,

the chalice of salvation, (*that is the chalice of Christ, our salvation, which soon will contain the Blood of the New and Eternal Testament*) humbly begging of Your mercy that it may arise before Your divine Majesty, with a pleasing fragrance, for our salvation and for that of the whole world. Amen.³⁶

227. This offering made in the plural number recalls the time when the deacon distributed the Precious Blood to the people after the priest had given them the Body. And the deacon and the priest said these words together (which still happens when there is a *Missa Cantata*) in order that, as the priest had a minister and companion in the distribution he also had a companion in the offertory. If, in offering the bread, the priest says the words in the singular, he does it alone for those assisting and truly offers it first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.³⁷ For this reason these words or at least this sentiment should be offered and expressed by those assisting together with the priest. The words that follow are in the plural: 'In a humble spirit and with a contrite heart, may we be accepted by You, O Lord, and may our sacrifice so be offered in Your sight this day as to please You, O Lord God.'³⁸ These words are not only said with the deacon but certainly intended to be said with all present. They mean that having offered the bread and wine for the sacrifice we show and present ourselves to God as victims together with Christ. For only by being united with Christ can we make of ourselves a worthy gift and a worthy oblation to God. This is the meaning of the prayer which we recall in the book of Daniel from which these words and concept are taken. In it the three brave young Hebrews in Babylonia are saved from the fiery furnace, from the flames, where they offered themselves; this is what they sang: '*As in holocausts of rams, and bullocks, and as in thousands of fat lambs: so let our sacrifice be made in thy sight this day, that it may please thee.*'³⁹

228. After he has washed his hands, he bows in the middle of the altar and says: 'Accept, most Holy Trinity, this offering which we are making to You in remembrance of the passion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, Our Lord; and in honour of blessed Mary, ever Virgin, Blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of (name of the Saints whose relics are in the Altar) and of all the Saints; that it may add to their honour and aid our salvation; and may they deign to intercede in heaven for us who honour their memory here on earth. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.'⁴⁰ After this he turns to the people and says: 'Pray brethren, that my Sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.'⁴¹ The priest has a twofold reason for saying 'his' sacrifice and that of 'those present'. Firstly, all offer it, and then both priests and those assisting offer themselves

³⁶ *Ordo Missae, in Missale Romanum* from the decree of the Tridentine Council, St Pius V. Rosmini's reflections are in keeping with the Extraordinary Form of the Mass which was the only form in use in his time. (Trans.)

³⁷ Cf. *Heb* 7: 27.

³⁸ *Ordo Missae*. See note 35, above.

³⁹ *Dan* 3: 39-40.

⁴⁰ *Ordo Missae*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

in sacrifice with Christ. Both of these things mentioned in the said prayers, are more clearly expressed in the Canon, the most ancient and august part of the Mass, compiled from the words of Christ, from the Apostolic traditions and the pious institutions of the Popes. For in this prayer, apart from the words of consecration, all the prayers offered are in the plural. Here is how it begins: 'Therefore, most gracious Father, we humbly beg of you and entreat you through Jesus Christ Your Son, Our Lord, hold acceptable and bless these gifts, (*which we have received from you, they are none other than your things, which we present to you as gift*) these offerings, these holy and unspotted oblations which, in the first place, we (*all*) offer you for your Holy Catholic Church. Grant her peace and protection, unity and guidance throughout the world, together with your servant (name), our Pope, and (name), our Bishop; and all Orthodox believers who cherish the Catholic and Apostolic Faith.'⁴² In this prayer all those present make this offering; and the *holy and unspotted sacrifices* refer not only to the bread and wine but their hearts offered to the Lord. Innocent III explains that they are called *holy* and *unspotted* because each person must offer themselves with body and soul unstained: the heart needs to be freed from evil and the body from uncleanness.⁴³ So this addition applies chiefly to the interior sacrifice of the soul.

229. Then we beg our Lord that he bear in mind all those for whom we offer the sacrifice of praise and propitiation, and again those who offer it. And having recalled our communion with the saints in heaven, with whom we are united in praying to and adoring God, the priest extends his hands over the chalice and bread, in the same way as the priest in the Old Testament placed his hands on the victim⁴⁴ intending to indicate that, by being united to it and with it, he desires to dedicate and offer himself to God. Afterwards these words follow: 'Graciously accept, then, we beseech you, O Lord, this service of our worship and that of all your household. Provide that our days be spent in your peace, save us from everlasting damnation, and cause us to be numbered in the flock you have chosen. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.'⁴⁵

230. We should meditate on and appreciate such a beautiful offering of our service which we make with the whole Catholic family, because this is the sacrifice which gives it salvation, whereas this death of Christ avails nothing for us, except to condemn us if we do not share in it by drinking the chalice, following in his footsteps, with the cross on our shoulders, ready to give our blood for his law and sacrifice our disorderly bodily desires in its honour. After the consecration speaking of the consecrated bread and wine we pray that God should look with a favourable and gracious countenance on those divine gifts, and accept them as he did the gifts of Abel, and the sacrifice of Abraham and Melchizedek, because the sacrifice of Christ or

⁴² Canon of the Mass, in the *Missale Romanum* see above notes. (Trans.)

⁴³ Innocent III, *Mysterium Evangelicae Legis et Sacramenti Eucharistiae*, lib. III, cap. III.

⁴⁴ *Lev* 4: 4, 24, 33. This action accompanies the *Hanc igitur* (Father accept this offering...) in the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. (Trans.)

⁴⁵ *Canon. Missae*.

those of old will be of no avail if we do not unite the sacrifice of ourselves, as those saints did, with a spiritual heart, conformed to Christ in everything.

231. We begged God, for this grace, previously,⁴⁶ for the same reason, where, having mentioned the offering of our service, we said: '*O God, deign to bless what we offer, (we ourselves are blessed in it), approved (with the number of things approved we are welcomed in heaven), effective, (qualified to obtain glory, with this we are numbered among the brothers and sisters of Christ, for whom he suffered for many of whom he shed his blood) right (so that in such a way our inferior faculties may be made subject to the rule of reason), and wholly pleasing, (in such a way that the body and blood of Christ may come not only here on the altar) but to us (for our benefit so that we, being incorporated into it, our heavenly Father may see nothing displeasing or loathsome, but may see Christ, this most agreeable and acceptable victim).*'⁴⁷

232. Our offerings and the renunciations of life and whatever life holds, for the love of Christ are what makes every Catholic Christian a priest in the most genuine sense of the word, as Tertullian says⁴⁸ following the teaching of the Apostles. For the priest is the one who sacrifices to God. And although Christ alone, by his pre-eminence is the eternal priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and alone by immolating himself has made a sacrifice agreeable to the most High, nevertheless every priest, as minister of Christ, personally renews the sacrifice of the cross and moreover, all Christians incorporated into Christ through Baptism, share in his priesthood, in as much as they can offer and immolate themselves with sorrow, self-detachment of self and humility. For this reason there is a distinction between Christ, the Priest, and the laity, in that Christ is per se, the eternal priest; the others share in his priesthood; furthermore the priest, shares in it in so eminent a fashion that he can offer not just himself but Christ, the laity on the contrary can neither immolate nor consecrate, but can offer Jesus Christ and immolate and sacrifice themselves by ridding themselves of what is not according to the pure love of Jesus Christ.

233. The greatest fruit of the Mass lies in our union with the sacred victim. Christ told us this when he said: '*I am the vine: you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. . . If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will: and it shall be done unto you.*'⁴⁹ Now what are the

⁴⁶ Before the consecration. (Trans.)

⁴⁷ See Pascasius Radbertus, *De Corpore et Sanguine Domini*, c. XII. Radbertus was a Benedictine monk (born near Soissons about 790 and died in 860). He was Abbot of Corbie. He was a theologian and author of numerous treatises, and made his name especially in eucharistic theology of which the above work was the first systematic treatment. (Ed.)

The Latin text reads: *Quam oblationem tu, Deus, in omnibus, quaesumus, benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, rationabilem, acceptabilemque facere digneris, ut nobis Corpus, et Sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui Domini nostri Jesu Christi.* (Trans.)

⁴⁸ Tertullian, *De exhort. Cast.* c. VII.

⁴⁹ *Jn* 15: 5, 7. 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. . . If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.' (NRSV).

fruits of the vine if not the heavenly wine, the chalice offered to God for us? *'You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit; and your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.'*⁵⁰ Also the disciple of Christ must be a branch, which bears grapes to offer to the Lord: *'Abide in me: and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me.'*⁵¹ Notice how Paul says that all the faithful who share in *'the cup of blessing'* become the blood of Christ. He goes on to say: *'The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body: all that partake of one bread.'*⁵² Hence disciples of Christ offer themselves and conform themselves wholly to him, *'observing his commandments and abiding in his love.'*⁵³ United in this sacrifice, and praying to the Father, they inevitably obtain what they desire, nor do they desire anything else but good things from the Lord.

Chapter VIII

On Communion and the wish of the Church that the Faithful communicate frequently

234. Such a union arises not only from sacrifice with which we give ourselves to God, but also by means of the sacrament, with which God and Christ in his flesh and blood gives himself to us to eat. He says: *'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them.'*⁵⁴ Now this communion with Christ forms the third principal part of the Mass. It is, as it were, an ineffable exchange of divine love, that after we have offered Christ to God in sacrifice and with Christ ourselves (what's more all things are his), God restores everything to us and gives himself into our nature and into our power: uniting himself to us under the species of food, identifying himself with us, for which reason this banquet is called: *'The source of divine substance in us.'*⁵⁵ What great love!

⁵⁰ *Jn* 15: 16. 'You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.' (NRSV).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* v.4. 'Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.' (NRSV).

⁵² 1 *Cor* 10: 16–17. 'The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.' (NRSV).

⁵³ Cf. *Jn* 15: 9–10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 6: 56.

⁵⁵ Gueric of Igny., *De Resurrectione Domini*, Sermo II, 4–5. Gueric was an ascetical writer who was beatified. He was a Canon and Professor of Theology at Tournai, where he was born between the years 1070–1080. He left the Cathedral for the monastic life. He arrived at Clairvaux about 1125 and was overcome by the sanctity and learning of the Abbot Bernard

What immeasurable charity of God! An exchange, an event, a rivalry of divine goodness, in which human beings who have nothing, are first enabled to purchase riches from another, riches in order to present to God, a treasure worthy of him, and then this treasure is returned; not that God might benefit, but he plays, so to speak, a game with his liberality. He pays for the gift and becomes a recipient and beneficiary, then gives it back and benefits them again, winning not through the excellence of the gift, but through the excellence of the exchange. Humanity is utterly confused by this which is expressed by the priest when, having received the bread lost, and bewildered by the greatness of the divine gift asks the Lord, *'What return shall I make to the Lord for all He has given me? And not knowing what to give, he adds: 'I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the Name of the Lord.'*⁵⁶ That is, 'I will not give because I have nothing to give, but I will continue to receive your benefits; and to be freshly immersed and engulfed by new waves of divine mercy.'

235. Our most loving host invites and calls all of us to this most holy banquet, to this most holy table prepared for us by the Lord with his body and blood 'against those who afflict us.'⁵⁷ *'Come to me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.'*⁵⁸ *'and the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.'*⁵⁹ *'Take ye and eat. This is my body ... And taking the chalice, he gave thanks and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.'*⁶⁰ *'He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed.'*⁶¹ *'And he said to them: With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer.'*⁶²

236. The most ardent desire of Jesus that his disciples be nourished at this supper and be satiated with him has continued in the Church, which has always manifested, so to speak, a ravenous and insatiable hunger for this angelic food. The Church often calls it, its delight, its life, its strength, its treasure, the mystery of its peace, its regal clothing, its purple stained in the blood of its Lord, its utmost good, its greatest beauty, the dear remains of Christ, the shadow of Christ under which sit those desirous of him, the source of the divine substance in man, the host of salvation for

and asked to enter the noviciate. He later became Abbot of Igny. He died on 19 August 1157. He left some sermons influenced by the works of St Bernard. (Ed.)

⁵⁶ *Canon Missae.*

⁵⁷ Cf. *Ps* 23: 5.

⁵⁸ *Mt* 11: 28. Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.' (NRSV).

⁵⁹ *Jn* 6: 51. 'and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' (NRSV).

⁶⁰ *Mt* 26: 26–28. 'Take, eat; this is my body.' ... 'this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' (NRSV). Rosmini says '*new and eternal covenant.*'

⁶¹ *Jn* 6: 55–56. 'Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.' (NRSV).

⁶² *Lk* 22: 15. 'He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' (NRSV).

the whole world, the divine riches, the unique comfort of the beloved in the absence of her spouse, the dearest foretaste of the divine mercy and of eternal reward.

237. It is sufficient to recall the saints of every age to admire both their incredible avidity for this heavenly food, the sweetness they experienced, and the graces which they derived from it. It is enough to read the prayers of the Mass which refer to communion, to understand that the Church has the greatest desire that all who assist at Mass, if it be possible, should share daily at the sacred table together with the priest as was done in early times which were, with good reason greatly blessed. So great was the fervour of the Christians at that time that they could say truthfully that the body and blood of Christ was their daily food And so great was their reverence for the ineffable sacrifice, that they did not count persons worthy to be present if they were not worthy to share in this divine nourishment. Canon 9 of the Apostolic Canons decrees that all the faithful who, after hearing the scriptures, do not continue in prayer and communion, are to be separated.⁶³ This is also found in other documents concerned with ancient discipline. If we cannot follow the letter we should however observe the spirit, assisting at Mass in so pure, recollected and fervent a manner as to be worthy to receive communion daily; and we should receive communion as often as we long to receive the most desirable and beneficial of all things. With regard to the frequency of receiving communion, Saint Bonaventure, in stating how much it helps us, says appropriately enough that, 'if anyone experiences that their state is that of the early Church, they are to be praised if they go to daily communion (and if they did not they would deserve those reproaches of Saint John Chrysostom⁶⁴ and other ancient Fathers, for how one can call daily that bread which is not eaten daily). If they see that they are like the modern Church, that is, cold and sluggish, it is commendable that they communicate rarely. If they are midway between these two states, they should hold to a middle course; and sometimes refrain because of reverence owed to the Sacrament, and at other times approach it that they may enfire with love'.⁶⁵ To sum up, it is helpful to us according to how well we are disposed; just as food is most excellent in itself, but to someone who overloads their indisposed and sick stomach it is far from useful and can cause death. What we have experienced in our times is very sad, namely, that the Council of Trent, when proposing the Church's desire that all who assist at Mass should communicate, did not say, the Holy Synod *desires* but *would desire*, as if it did not dare to express such a desire at such a time. At one time, to our shame, it was not decreed as a wish or a hope but as a precept, or at least a universal custom.

⁶³ *Canones Apostolorum*, IX.

⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam ad Ephesios*, Hom III, 4-5; *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, VII, 4. The reference to Chrysostom is Rosmini's.

⁶⁵ Bonaventure, *Commentaria in quartum librum Sententiarum Magistri Ptri Lombardi*, Dist. XII. P. II, art II, quaest II.

Chapter IX

Unworthy Communion

238. Holy things are for the holy, pure things for the pure.⁶⁶ When speaking about the unworthy, Paul states an awesome truth when he says: '*For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.*'⁶⁷ This means that whoever receives the most sacred body witnesses to his sacrifice. Although Christ is present entirely under each species, he is unable to be divided now because, having risen from the dead, he can no longer die but reigns eternally in heaven at the right hand of the Father. Nevertheless we consider only the body under the appearance of bread, and only his blood under the appearance of wine, so that we imitate the violent death of the Lord by representing his body and blood in a separated manner. So when people presume to receive the eucharistic bread, they receive the sacrificed Christ, and for their support invoke and use the death of Christ. Thus they witness to it and proclaim it and wish that it be for their salvation and that of the world as Christ wishes it; for they perform this act laid down by Christ so that they might apply his merits to themselves. Those, then, who carry out this act with a guilty and unworthy conscience, betray their master like Judas did, but more wickedly than a kiss because they sell him to their passions and wish his death solely for this. They do not desire the sacrifice that will save them, but the blood of the Just One, which cries out to heaven for vengeance. So they are guilty of the body and blood of the Saviour by abusing his death and of such a sacrilege one can say of the Saviour what the sons of Jacob said about their brother: '*Some evil beast hath devoured him.*'⁶⁸

239. For this reason, such Christians, not thinking what they are doing and not appreciating the food which they take, eat and drink their condemnation.⁶⁹ This is not to share in the divine supper, for (as Paul said about those who sacrificed to idols) one cannot take part at the table of the Lord and at that of demons.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Cf. *Lev* 22: 1–16.

⁶⁷ *1 Cor* 11: 26–27. 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.' (NRSV).

⁶⁸ *Gen* 37: 20. 'A wild animal has devoured him.' (NRSV).

⁶⁹ *1 Cor* 11: 29.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 10: 21.

Chapter X

Spiritual Communion

240. There are two ways of eating the body of Christ, with the mouth and with the spirit. The divine body can be eaten with the mouth without the spirit being nourished. It is not correct to say that such people are nourished by Christ but that they 'eat their own condemnation'. It is not correct to say that they share at the divine table, but at a human table, and that the fruit they incur is diabolical. Here is the prayer with which the priest and those who receive communion with him in the Mass thank the Lord: 'What has passed our lips as food, Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what is given to us in time, be our healing for eternity.' With our body we saw and touched the species of Christ, which is a temporal gift: Christ himself is received with the soul and with a pure and devout mind. Christ speaking of this food said: '*It is the spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing.*'⁷¹ You will understand now why Christ said: '*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you.... For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world.*'⁷² '*I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall not hunger: and he that believeth in me shall never thirst*'⁷³. . . '*Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert: and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die.*'⁷⁴. . . '*I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.*'⁷⁵ Then Jesus said to them: '*Amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me: and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me. This is the bread*

⁷¹ *Jn* 6: 64. 'It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless.' (NRSV).

⁷² *Ibid.* 27, 33. "Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.' 'For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' (NRSV).

⁷³ *Ibid.* 35. 'Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.' (NRSV).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 47–50. 'Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.' (NRSV).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 51–52. 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.' (NRSV).

*that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.*⁷⁶

241. So those have eternal life who believe in him and believe that this bread is Christ sacrificed for our salvation and not some other food; those who eat not with the body but with the spirit have eternal life. To nourish the soul with Christ is essential for salvation. With this Jesus promises everything, but without it he declares that we cannot have life in us.

242. This spiritual food is the same as that which will be enjoyed in the next life and of which Jesus said at the Last Supper, '*And I say to you, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.*'⁷⁷ And elsewhere, '*Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Amen I say to you that he will gird himself and make them sit down to meat and passing will minister unto them.*'⁷⁸ Surely he is speaking of himself. Elsewhere he compares the beatitude of heaven to a supper and a marriage feast. '*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink: but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*'⁷⁹

243. So the eucharistic food is renewal, figure, and foretaste: and the sign of things past, present and to come. It recalls and renews the passion of Jesus, it symbolises grace and its author is given to us as food; and it foreshadows our future reward, eternal life. It is true food with all its effects. It maintains life in virtue of the blood of Christ; it increases and strengthens it in virtue of grace which grows in us, and it sweetly delights us through the image of heavenly pleasures as through a partial foretaste of them. We say with St Augustine, then, 'O sacrament of piety! O sign of unity! O bond of charity! Those who wish to live have where to live and whence to live. Let them approach, believe, be incorporated, be enlivened. Let them not shrink from union with its members, let them not be a rotten member that deserves to be cut off, let them not be a deformed member to be ashamed of. Let them be beautiful, proper, healthy, and attached to the body. Let them live to God and of God. Let them now work on earth in order to reign in heaven.'⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 53–59. So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' (NRSV).

⁷⁷ *Mt* 26: 29. 'I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' (NRSV).

⁷⁸ *Lk* 12: 37. 'Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them.' (NRSV).

⁷⁹ *Rom* 14: 17. 'For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.' (NRSV).

⁸⁰ Augustine, *In Johannis evangelium*, cap.VI, tract XXVI. n. 13.

244. So when the body eats the sacramental species, well-disposed souls receive Christ within themselves and are incorporated into Christ. Therefore, although this bodily feeding is not worth anything without this spiritual feeding both are connected. For it has been arranged by the infinite wisdom of the divine inventor of this banquet, that as intelligent nature, which is so essential and valuable to humanity, is not deprived of bodily clothing, so the food which is given to the soul is surrounded by bodily form.

245. When we take part in the Mass and do not share in the Sacrifice together with the priest, nothing prevents us from experiencing holy desires and affections for this divine food and from being united in spirit with the communion of the priest. This we call *spiritual communion*. And although this is not a sacrament it can produce abundant fruit of grace depending on the merit of this act.

Chapter XI

On Preparation for Holy Communion

246. St Paul says that we should '*prove ourselves*'⁸¹ on how to approach the Eucharist worthily. We remarked on the ardent frequenting of the Eucharist in the early Church; let us now examine the reverence and strict care taken lest anyone approach unworthily. Those who research the ancient discipline of the Church are absolutely certain that it was always the firm opinion of the Church that the bread of angels should not be received by those who either had not preserved their baptismal innocence, or who had lost it through mortal sin, and had not regained it through virtue and the sacrament of penance. And this has been stated and declared in the Council of Trent.⁸²

247. The mode of ancient penance might have been changed in letter it but has never been revoked in spirit. The gravity of the fault of those who eat the holy bread unworthily, and the fact that the Sacrament demands our purity and reverence, can be seen from the venerable severity of the Canons on penance. For this reason public sins, and sometimes occult ones, were expiated by public acts of penitence before such sinners could be admitted to communion. And they were separated from the divine mysteries for many years and sometimes for their entire life. They had to undergo certain degrees of penance as is proper to human beings who are not converted immediately. There was the grade of *weepers*, who were not allowed to enter the Church and stood at the door, throwing themselves at the feet of the faithful who entered to assist at the Sacrifice, imploring the help of their charitable prayers. The next step was that of *listeners*, so-called because they stood at the last places of the Church listening to the explanation of the Church's teaching, after which they went

⁸¹ 1 Cor 11: 28. 'examine ourselves'. (NRSV).

⁸² De Concilio Tridentum, *sess. XIII*, cap. VII.

out in procession with the Catechumens. It was considered that they had understood little of their duties contracted in baptism which they had violated and therefore they needed fresh instruction regarding how to live as baptized people. After some time they passed on to the grade of the *prostrate*, who, on entering the Church when the deacon called them, prostrated themselves before the Bishop who prayed over them together with the assembled faithful, but before the prayers of the Sacrifice began they were sent out. Finally they reached the grade of *consistentes* so-called because they were finally allowed to assist at the sacred mysteries, but not yet to take part in them.⁸³

248. It is difficult to believe today that the most illustrious, rich and powerful people in those happy times were humbled under this external and public penance laid down by apostolic tradition. Among others I note that Saint Ambrose refused communion publicly to Theodosius, a most powerful and Christian emperor, simply because he had imposed on Thessalonica, an ungrateful city and one which was guilty of grave insults to the imperial authority, an inconsiderate and too universal punishment. The holy emperor greater in self-humiliation than in the victories with which he had checked the enemies of the Empire, was seen weeping among the public penitents. In his Oration written on his death Ambrose wrote: 'I loved a man who preferred to be reprov'd rather than flattered. He laid all his regal insignia which he used on the floor, he wept for his sins publicly in the church. With sighs and tears he begged pardon for what had occurred through his deceiving others. Private people are ashamed to do public penance but he was not; nor did a day pass by when he did not regret his mistake.'⁸⁴ There are also many other similar examples of very notable people.

249. This discipline has changed in the Church without its spirit being altered. This spirit of penitence finds its source in the work of our redemption; nor can it change. It comes from Christ who, St Jerome calls, 'the prince of penance and the head of those who save themselves through penance.'⁸⁵ So he wished the Church always to have penitents, and this has always been the case. We see how much wisdom there is in the way in which the Lord provides his Church in every age with public penitents. He made the penance of the martyrs appear in the early centuries. When this ceased we have the penance of the solitaries, who flourished in the Asian and African deserts during the peace of the Church, a new type of martyr through their incredible austerity and mortification. In those peaceful times all the penitential Canons held good and they did not fail until the barbarians upset everything and brought on the Church and the saints new, very grave and harmful tribulations. But the penitential Canons were not forgotten or discarded without the Lord taking care to compensate his Justice. In the 12th and 13th centuries, when the laity had grown hard hearted and the clerics ignorant, he raised up wonderful people, Francis, Dominic, Bruno, Bernard, Stephen of Grammont, Norbert, Albert and other similar

⁸³ They were not allowed to receive Communion but had to remain in their places.

⁸⁴ Ambrose, *De obitu Theodosii Oratio*, 34.

⁸⁵ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam*, Lib. II, III, 3.

saints who opened public houses of penance, and attracted a great number of people to a life of mortification and a public profession of suffering and austerity. So, in that time of indifference, mercy redressed justice by causing numerous monasteries to be set up and very strict religious orders to be founded. And these still endure and God has changed them, reformed them and increased them as necessary.

250. With regard to the discipline of common penance, if the Church has diminished its rigour, it also has done this with the same wisdom with which at one time it established it; and its spirit does not change. Does it not still recommend that its ministers study the ancient Canons in order to regulate the administration of penance precisely in this spirit? It wishes, moreover, that all the faithful take note of them in order to realise the enormity of sin and the purity desired in those who communicate. Nothing is lost by this change of discipline because the same spirit of penance is maintained. But for evil people today a scandal or stumbling block is removed, because owing to their lack of fervour they would have neglected those severe rules and would have fallen into new faults.

Chapter XII

On Frequent Communion

251. For this reason, no one should encourage frequent communion among those who are not well disposed just because of the frequency of communion among the early Christians; and no one, because of that early austerity, should intimidate and deter those who are well disposed from receiving it. Frequent communion is not enjoined as a priority for an upright life. Live in such a way as to be able to receive communion every day. St Francis of Sales teaches that to receive communion every week one should not fall into grave sins nor bear any attachment to venial ones, and one should especially have a great desire to receive it. But to communicate daily, it is necessary for the most part to have overcome evil inclinations and seek the advice of one's director.⁸⁶ The same saint says: "Now to be attached and inclined to venial sin is a very different thing from actual venial sins themselves, for it is not in our power to avoid venial sins altogether for any length of time but it is in our power to avoid being attached to them."⁸⁷ The desire and the hunger for this divine food is also an essential requirement for those who feed on it. There is nothing more detestable than to be satisfied with it.

252. Bearing these things in mind, you will find that all the saints encourage you to communicate frequently. St Philip and other very holy persons following his example, rekindled the love of frequent communion in Rome, and improved attitudes

⁸⁶ Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part II, chapter 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Trans. Michael Day, Burns and Oates, London 1961, Part I, Chapter 22, p. 44. In chapter 24 he speaks appropriately of evil inclinations.

in many places. Monsignor Cacciaguerra, companion of St Philip, supported this by writing a devout book at that time on communion.⁸⁸ I will conclude with the words of St Francis of Sales, 'if worldly people ask you why you go to communion so often, tell them: "In order to learn to love God, to purify yourself from imperfections, to free yourself from troubles, to console yourself in afflictions, to be strengthened in weakness." Say that there are two types of people who should communicate often: in the case of those who are perfect because they are well disposed it would be wrong if they did not approach the source of perfection, and the imperfect in order to become perfect: the strong in order not to become weak, the weak in order to become strong, the sick in order to get better, and the healthy so as not to become sick.'⁸⁹

253. I have spoken at length about the Sacrament of Communion here where the treatment was about the Mass because they are united. To receive communion at Mass is in accordance with the intention of the Church, which, as we have said, draws up the prayers of the priest in the plural, on the understanding that the people receive communion with him. This is in conformity with the nature of the sacrifice which the priest offers for himself and for the people and it is reasonable that both he and the people take part in it. Finally, the communicants benefit since in communicating at the Mass they enjoy the fruits of the Sacrament together with those of the sacrifice, offering to God the great victim of expiation and praise and of receiving from God an exchange so ineffable and precious.

Chapter XIII

Concerning the Sacred Functions and firstly of their Origin

254. To sing the praises of God, not only on one's own but united with many others, and with the choir alternating; to celebrate with more or less solemnity, and with music, ornaments, celebrating the perfections of God and benefits received from him, is something not only in keeping with our duty but also with our inclination and is natural to humanity. Antiquity and the whole world was always full of religious customs, though only in the 'family of the upright', through the Lord's special care was worship free from superstition and impiety, and pleasing to God. In the offices of the Church some things, such as the music of the hymns, the feasts, the sacred ceremonies, the prayers, the sacrifices, are not entirely new, although ancient peoples used such things imperfectly. However we know that in substance these practices

⁸⁸ Bonsignore Cacciaguerra, *Trattato della S.S. Comunione*, G. Comino, Padova 1734.

Bonsignore Cacciaguerra was born in Siena, in June 1495 and died at Rome aged 72. He was a priest of the church of S. Girolamo della Carità in Rome (the first residence of the Oratory of St Philip), he was the spiritual son and companion of St Philip Neri. In the spiritual direction of his penitents and with his *Treatise* on Communion (published in Rome in 1557) he inculcated the practice of communicating more frequently, two or three times a week and even daily (a very rare and controversial matter). (Ed.)

⁸⁹ Francis of Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part II, chapter 21.

originated in the nature of things, while others who abandoned the true God and confused all the truths of religion, had similar rites, made clear to them by the little light of nature and reason which remained to them.

255. But although external worship originated in nature and reason, nevertheless revelation alone purges, ennobles and perfects it, and declares it ratified and acceptable to the Lord.

256. There is a closer similarity not only in externals but in spirit between our offices and those of the Old Testament. The division of day and night prayers;⁹⁰ the psalmody which has come down to all of us from the ancients;⁹¹ the canticles and hymns;⁹² the lessons from Scripture; the holy water, the balsam, the oil, the musical instruments, the lighted candles, the censers, the altars and the orders of priests; and very many other ceremonies are like ours.

257. The ceremonies of Moses were very many in number and very strict and mere figures of that seen by Moses on the Mount and, as regards the letter, pertains only to Jerusalem, which is in bondage and the mother of slaves, not to the heavenly Jerusalem which is free.⁹³ However, anyone who penetrates their spirit, as the Saints at all times have done, will easily hear in those rites one voice only, and one sole usage identical with ours. For there has always been only one spirit in the assembly of the just which began in the penitent Adam and will come to an end with the world. Therefore, when Christ established the New Israel he selected some things which were suitable and passed on their use to the Apostles, though he left even these as his, and not borrowed. Augustine says that, as regards the hymns and psalms, we have the documents, examples and precepts of Christ himself and the Apostles.⁹⁴ In fact we hear that after the Last Supper: '*And a hymn being said, they went out unto mount Olivet.*'⁹⁵ And Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be full of the spirit in their assemblies: '*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord: Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.*'⁹⁶ He also recommends this to the Colossians, and wishes that they sing psalms in their hearts, that these issue from the interior joy of the Holy Spirit, from the fulness of the peace of Christ, from the abundance of his word, like foam, so to speak, overflowing from a heart brimming over. This is the result of prayer and psalmody well made.

⁹⁰ 2 Esdras (*Neh*) 1: 6.

⁹¹ Cf. *Ps* 119.

⁹² 1 Esdras (*Ezra*) 3: 11.; *Ps* 96. See Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, cap. IV, : *De Canticis* e cap. VI: *de Hymnis*.

⁹³ *Gal* 4: 25–26.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Epist.* LV, *De ritibus ecclesiam* cap. XVIII, n. 34.

⁹⁵ *Mt* 26: 30. 'When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.' (NRSV).

⁹⁶ *Eph.* 5: 19–20. 'as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (NRSV).

259⁹⁷. He writes again to the Corinthians: '*How is it then, brethren? When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation: let all things be done to edification.*'⁹⁸ The eminent historian, Baronius, recognises that our Divine Office is portrayed in these words.⁹⁹ For in the Office we have the *psalms*, then *lessons* which correspond to *teaching*, the *responsories* take the place of *revelation*, for with these the Church desires the possession of heavenly goods by doing what is prescribed in the lessons, at least this is their accustomed use.¹⁰⁰ Instead of *speech*, then, we have the Gospel, for the manifestation of which we had the gift of tongues in the early Church; and for their interpretation those brethren who experienced an interior illumination and fervour to speak; and now we have the homilies of the Fathers of the Church, in which the Gospel is explained. And since in those early times there were many who ardently and lovingly desired to speak in the assembly what they felt regarding the Gospel, Paul moderated and restrained this fervour, teaching that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.¹⁰¹ Do we not see a trace of this in the office of Matins where the one who reads the lessons first asks the Superior for his blessing, showing that if his zeal and exultation of spirit is from God, it is also calm, reasonable, orderly and submissive to those in charge?

260. Our Office still keeps to the outlines set down by the Apostles. The prayers, which were passed on hand to hand, were regulated and completed according as needs arose and their number, order, and type were made constant and uniform in accordance with the laws and rubrics, and everything was established with precision.

Chapter XIV

How Christians should study the Sacred Functions in so far as they can

261. When Christians come to church for public prayer they form part of the assembly of priests and faithful praying together. It is, therefore, necessary and fitting that they know how to pray with others and to understand what the assembly is saying.

262. Furthermore the Church is their mother and many beautiful things and sentiments are vocally expressed to them. It is not just words that express ideas but the actions of people express their interior feelings. Human beings speak through

⁹⁷ There is no n. 258 in the Critical Edition. (Trans.)

⁹⁸ 1 *Cor* 14: 26. 'When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.' (NRSV).

⁹⁹ Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, Jesu Christi 57, cap. CLXI.

¹⁰⁰ Amalarii Liber, *De ordine Antiphonarii*, cap. IV. Amalarius was Bishop of Metz c 780–850. He was a liturgist and this was one of his most important works. Ed.

¹⁰¹ 1 *Cor* 14: 32.

external things which become symbols and images of what is within their mind. The Church does not cease communicating in these three ways. She speaks to God through supplications, she speaks to her children by instruction and by delighting them with Christian truths.

263. In the Church, as in a perfect person, everything is orderly and seemly, words, ceremony and ornamentation. She communicates through all of them. What her words say to the hearing, her rituals make manifest to the sight. Just as a serious married woman manifests an attitude of propriety and sensible conversation and whose serious words and noble gestures are in keeping with her rich and stately clothes, so that she conveys to all who see and hear her that she is a great lady from her speech, actions and appearance, so in the Church of Christ her prayers, rites and eternal appearances work together in harmony displaying her greatness, both in her conduct towards God or when she deal with us. It is unworthy of Christians not to understand, in so far as they can, the language of a Mother so full of wisdom and gentleness. She devotes herself to training her inarticulate children in such a language, and they must learn it if they want to be members of her family.

264. Let us learn, then, the language of the Church, our mother. Let us try to penetrate the meaning of her public prayers well. This prayer is most dear to God, and bringing our private prayer into line with the public prayer of the Church is of great advantage to us, because our private prayer is correct when it resembles this public prayer. I will say something on the exterior objects of the Church, about its ceremonies and vocal prayers in order that there may be some understanding about the triple language in which the Church expresses her lofty ideas.

Chapter XV

On the External Objects of the Church and firstly its Adornments

265. In the beginning of Christian Society in the time of the Apostles it appears that the churches were in the houses of the faithful. From the letter of Paul to Philemon we see that the church took place in his house. They held sacred assemblies there. Then the persecutions arose; often they could not have the same places nor were the circumstances easy ones. These devout people assembled in catacombs, in caverns and they particularly gathered at the tombs of the martyrs. There they made their Stations, and received the Sacraments. The perfection of these early fathers of ours truly made them less in need of churches for divine worship. They themselves were temples of God. And the martyr Justin, when asked by the Prefect of Rome where the Christians gathered, replied that they were accustomed to congregate wherever it appeared best, because the ineffable God is not restricted by Christians or

place but is invisible filling heaven and earth and is adored everywhere by the faithful.¹⁰²

266. The congregations of such worshippers formed true churches, built by living stones, works of art of the divine craftsman, and consecrated by the eternal high priest. Material churches were only emblems of these and it is for this reason that the Bishop consecrates the temple walls with beautiful and symbolic ceremonies which refer to the living temples.

267. The places, then, used by these Christians in their sacred assemblies were either in private houses or in underground places and catacombs or sometimes in separate buildings suitably built. These were arranged in the form of chapels or very simple little churches, usually roughly made, but full of dignity and holiness. In them were the altar, the relics of martyrs, and rough drawings or carvings of sacred teaching, stories, symbols and inscriptions, on the walls or on tombs, as we do more sumptuously in ours.

268. When God was pleased to convert the Emperor Constantine, and so bring peace to the Church, oppressed and beaten for more than 300 years by ferocious earthly masters, majestic churches were built to the true God and the sacred wooden vessels came to be made of gold and silver and the roofs, and walls, building material and vestments of the priests shone with gold. Outstanding statues and valuable pictures adorned the house of the Lord. Nothing could have given the good people a more moving and consoling spectacle. For, after distressing times and injustice towards God, more pious days followed in which things created by him and valued by the people were dedicated to the Lord of the universe in his honour, which previously had been taken to encourage either human pride or diabolical superstition. From now on, the happy Church honoured God throughout the world with great churches and riches, as we see to this day by the grace of God.

269. Some people observed that simplicity and cleanliness excited sincere devotion more, showing that God does not love human greatness and splendour but rather interior affection, purity and sincerity in everything and not falsity, and even poverty in worldly things just as Christ lived a poor life. We observe, however that the ornamentation of the Church is considered in respect to God or to human beings. With respect to the divine majesty no honour is too much and it would be reasonable to use all the riches of the world in his honour. The dignity of the church is maintained by what human beings believe to be noble. So those riches are placed in the church not to give them a price they do not have but to serve that which is worthy of all honour. These actions show the goodness of those devout people who give such vanities up, making a sacrifice of them to the Lord. The riches of the Church are trophies which Jesus has gained over the world, just as under the Old Covenant the Egyptians made over their riches at the Lord's command to the true religion of the Hebrews. As far as human beings are concerned, the more weak they are and subject to the senses the more need they have of being treated by God through external

¹⁰² Acts of St Justin in *Acta Martyrum*.

objects, as if they must raise themselves to God by degrees. Therefore the pomp of the Church, the sweetness of its music and other ecclesiastical externals are more necessary and appropriate in that state of the church in which people show coolness and are attached to worldly things, as might be said of us compared with the early Church. The more perfect we are, the more we love solitude free from external objects, cutting them off from penetrating the innermost recesses of our soul where it keeps itself in joyful hidden peace; but if we are dissipated, some external objects can give us a motive for being recollected. Therefore the rule of Saint Augustine is this: 'the use of human things is good when we do not stumble over things which are inferior to them, but simply delight in higher things.'¹⁰³ This rule is recommended both for its simplicity and the justification for present pomp.

270. Moreover, the Fathers complain a lot at seeing the churches richly adorned with human things, and despoiled and deprived of divine things, of the spirit and of Christian virtues. The former are good but the latter are better, nor are the former dear to God without the latter. So when you come into a comfortable and affluent church rejoice in the divine glory among men, that the Lord has taken the riches of this world and made them serve in the worship of him; rejoice that weak human beings value these things and from esteeming them, come little by little to value God whom these things honour. If you then go into simple and poor churches, such as those of the Capuchins, you should think of the early times and rejoice in finding God immediately in them, without seeing any encumbrance or experiencing worldly things and you will hold this place equally worthy of veneration and rich because of its true wealth, the Lord. With these ornaments, then, Mother Church teaches you to turn to the majesty of God. With this simple poverty she teaches you to despise worldly vanities.

Chapter XVI

On the Objects in Churches which are figures of Spiritual Things

271. There are other things in churches apart from ornaments. And I will mention a little bit about the chief ones, making the point here that they can appropriately be called figures or signs. The altar is the table on which the holy sacrifice is offered. It represents the table on which Christ consecrated the bread and wine. And as this foreshadowed the cross, so our altar is also the image of the cross on which he suffered. Because of this the altars in Apostolic times were made of wood. More appropriately the altar stands for Christ although the merit of his sacrifice was a spiritual work, Christ was truly both, altar, victim and priest. Hence John says

¹⁰³ Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, Lib. I, III, 3.

that the altar is Christ.¹⁰⁴ And because Christ in ancient writings is called the corner stone, the base of the building uniting the two walls of the temple, that is, the Hebrews and the Gentiles¹⁰⁵ and also the rock, because being struck by his sufferings it gushed forth the waters of salvation, and also because it shattered and broke those who collided with it. Under the old Covenant, the altars were made of marble. They were also consecrated with oil because Christ is the Anointed One of whom the stone is an image, on this Jacob poured oil, and erected it as a monument, on which he slept, as Christ did on the cross, seeing the ladder of the angels which joined together heaven and earth.¹⁰⁶ The relics of the saints are inserted in the altar, especially those of the martyrs, because they are associated with Christ through being made one with him through their sacrifice. The three blessed cloths on the altar represent the clothes of Christ which are his saints. The lighted candles and the crucifix in the middle represent the believing peoples united from two opposite parts, Jews and Gentiles. He drew them to himself when he was lifted up. There are three steps at the foot of the altar which are the virtues by which we go to Christ. Before going up them in the Mass, the priest confesses his sins alternating with the server and together with all the people he recites the appropriate psalm, *Judica me Deus*,¹⁰⁷ with which he prays that, having cast down his enemies, he send forth his light and his truth so that these might lead him to the holy mountain, his beloved shrine. Similarly he says when he washes his hands: '*I wash my hands in innocence and I go round your altar, O Lord.*'¹⁰⁸

272. The use of the things necessary for the Mass and in other functions is easily apparent. I will speak about their mystical meanings as they are prone to nourish devotion, according to the intention of the Church, desirous as it is that all these things breathe edification and devotion. In the chalice we imagine seeing the new sepulchre of the Lord, in the paten the stone removed from the mouth of the tomb, the corporal is the new winding cloth in which Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body of Jesus. The vestments of the priest have spiritual allusions. The white cotta signifies innocence of priestly life; the amice, the helmet of salvation which protects the head from the adversary; it also protects the neck and the voice box with which it is easy to sin. The alb denotes the white clothing of sanctity, the girdle, the virtue of purity especially; the maniple,¹⁰⁹ with which at one time tears were wiped away, signifies penance which sows in tears and reaps in joy.¹¹⁰ The stole, which hangs from the neck and is crossed on the breast¹¹¹ signifies strength, or the robe of immortality gained through the cross of Christ, and finally the chasuble represents the gentle yoke

¹⁰⁴ *Rev* 6: 9; 8: 3–5.

¹⁰⁵ *1 Cor* 10: 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Gen* 28: 12.

¹⁰⁷ *Ps* 43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ps* 26: 6. See *Ordo Missae*. A lot of these references refer to the Extraordinary Rite of the Mass and the traditional altar and its furnishings. (Trans.)

¹⁰⁹ Rarely worn nowadays. Except in Extraordinary Rite. (Trans.)

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Ps* 126: 5. (Trans.)

¹¹¹ Crossed in the Extraordinary Rite. (Trans.)

of the law, that is charity, which the Bishop during ordination calls the priestly habit, and in the Gospel, the wedding garment covering the others, giving them all completion and perfection. The tunic of the subdeacon¹¹² is the image of the interior virtues, and the dalmatic of the deacon of the external ones, for the care of the poor belongs to them and they must be helped by the subdeacons, that is, by upright ministers full of interior holiness. Finally the cope demonstrates the serious and holy conversation of ecclesiastical superiors which should be redolent with the charity of God and neighbour.

273. Now there are the different colours of vestments appropriate to the feasts we celebrate. White indicates joy, glory and gladness; red, the blood of the martyrs and the fire of the Holy Spirit; purple, sadness and suffering; black; death. Green is an intermediate colour which is used on less solemn Sundays perhaps indicating hope.

274. The holy water fonts, which in old times used to be urns with a fountain placed in the middle of the atrium of the church, where the faithful washed their hands and face before entering the church, represents interior washing and cleansing from venial sins for those who are contrite in virtue of the blessing which the priest confers on this water. Regarding other things which are in the church, we shall touch on these in the chapter following.

Chapter XVII

On Ecclesiastical Ceremonies

275. Christians are taught many things by meditating on the rites and ceremonies which the Church uses. They are engrossed by the reverent attitude of the Church towards God and they respond by really genuine and perfect acts of worship. These ceremonies are a help to them and they see, it hardly needs saying, a most attractive form of Christian living according to the rules of the perfect life. Wherever we find Christians they are in the temple of their God, ministers, as it were, performing religious acts with their fellow Christians and with all the creatures of the universe. Nonetheless, the Church's ceremonies are not considered sufficient from this point of view alone. It is certainly true that in the Church there is this mutual interaction which is appropriate among perfect Christians and the Church. Ceremonies are organised in such a way that they are in keeping with the Church herself, with the character of her ministers and with the grandeur of divine things. Now let us delve a little further into their spirit.

276. The ceremonies of the Church and of the world are so different. Certain distinctions between the ceremonies of the Church and the corresponding ceremonies of the world will show how dissimilar they are. The first trait of Church ceremonies is SINCERITY. Since the Church is holy, the acts, which demonstrate this holiness are

¹¹² The order of subdeacon has now been abolished. (Trans.)

sincere. Furthermore such acts are addressed to God, with whom one does not deal light-heartedly for he knows our heart. And if in the world self interest spurs people to external deception, here it spurs them on to external sincerity because this alone gains grace from God. For this reason ecclesiastical ceremonies are *simple* and *natural*. For example, we stand for the Gospel, having been seated for the reading[s], to show our readiness to defend it as valiant soldiers of Jesus. We stand on Sunday when we recite the Anthem of our Lady in memory of our risen Lord. We use the same posture when we wish to signify solemnity and rejoicing. Genuflection is a sign of sadness and mourning, as if with the drooping of the body we signify our downcast soul, or our human pitiable state before God. We bow our head as a sign of reverence; we beat our breast as an act of penitence. We vary our tone of voice as is done in the Mass, adopting sometimes a higher tone, sometimes a subdued one, at other times a completely secret one according as the mysteries we utter are intended to be, for either the Sacred Ministers alone, or the whole people, or the priest alone in his profound recollection with God, in conformity with the intimate, sacred and mysterious matters which they express.¹¹³ These and other such attitudes, ceremonies and rites, spring into being, so to speak, together with the sentiments which they express, unforced and displaying no affectation. Their own sincerity and truthfulness is obvious.

The acts of us Christians in dealing with civil life should also be as simple, easy going, sincere, appropriate and adapted to the works which we carry out, and at the same time they should be straightforward and dignified. The dealings of the world are totally different — they are affected, artificial and silly.

277. Another characteristic of this external feature of the Church is the GOOD ORDER, the *peacefulness* and the *serenity* with which everything is performed. Everything is well disposed and regulated. Movements and the smallest acts are laid down for the priests because each small defect becomes grave by reason of its context. The distribution of ministries from the Pontiff to thethurifers, from the doorkeepers to the readers, the tasks assigned to each, harmonious and varied, and a succession of new actions linked together, make what is holy, delightful and admirable to the senses. So these sacred functions express the fervour of the Christian which arises from a serene mind that is quiet and peaceful; they edify by their reverence, they do not disturb with passion. They are far removed from the din, the fracas and the disorderly confusion of worldly festivities, which confuse and disturb people both externally and internally.

278. When we admire the *dignified* and *majestic* demeanour of the priests, chiefly on solemn feasts, we readily admit that such a sacred sight, the solemn bearing, the

¹¹³ Among the various reasons for modulating the voice during Mass, Suarez tells us that this is done to imitate Jesus Christ on the Cross who sometimes prayed with a loud voice: '*Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*' (Lk 23: 34); '*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*' (Lk 23: 46); '*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*' (Mt 27: 46; Mk 15: 34). At times he spoke to the bystanders, his mother, the disciple, the thief, and at times he kept quiet and prayed within himself.' *Theologiae* R. P. Francisci Suarez, *Summa*, Pars secunda, *De Sacramentis*, Pars I, Disp. LXXXIII, Sectio I, 2. (The Gospel passages are Rosmini's. Ed.)

extensive finery of the priests and the ornaments of the Church, speak to us of God. And while all these things give glory to him, they teach Christians to know themselves and the Lord they serve and the type of service required by him. They are taught that at any time it is most unbecoming for them to yield to the scurrility of the world, but that they should always comport themselves in a dignified and serious manner. Worldly people, accustomed to certain affectations and mannerisms and the relatively trivial ideas that these represent, are not used to understanding grave and important truths or to valuing ecclesiastical ceremonies. So they cannot even stretch out with heart and mind to these great things nor deem them beautiful and delightful, but judge them (as they do other things of God) to be austere, difficult and boring. They are like someone who listens to an illustrious person speaking but does not understand the language in which he speaks. On the contrary, we understand and savour these imposing rites and see in the priest who goes up to the altar humanity going up into the *Holy of Holies*, to Christ. When he kisses the altar, it means for us that he kisses Christ, a salutation reserved for kings in ancient times. When he incenses the oblations, the relics, the altar, we know that by this act he adores God in all these things, and when we see the clouds of incense rising up these remind us of our prayers which ascend to God through Christ, and through Christ who is the only pleasing odour in heaven smelt by the Father, as Scripture points out. The display of lighted candles, torches and candelabra (where the fire burns which Christ brought to earth), the throne of the Bishop, the ranks of ministers and the order of priests, the crowd of singers, the sounds of the organ and the whole lengthy and varied procedure of the ceremonies, easily fixes our minds on heaven, on the heavenly court, on the temple of the High Priest, around which the angels celebrate their eternal festive day with their divine rites.

279. The fourth characteristic of ecclesiastical ceremonies is that of REVERENCE which they fully display towards all the members of the Church, that is the faithful who assist at them and take a major part in them. St Paul exhorts us: '*with honour preventing one another*'¹¹⁴ and the ceremonies teach us how we should behave. The sacred ministers in church do not simply deal with God but also with one another and with the people. Just as gravity and dignity are required towards God, so Christians should observe the law of mutual reverence. Respect and reverence can be shown by inferiors to superiors and by superiors to inferiors and also among equals. This respect is shown by the bows, which the priests and clerics make. It is shown to the celebrant by asking a blessing from him before the reading, by the minister kissing his hand, by the fact that everyone in the sanctuary follows the example of the celebrant in not sitting down before him nor getting up before him, and by similar signs of honour. The priests themselves take their place in the sanctuary according to dignity or age. But if Christians venerate divine authority in the celebrant, the latter sees in those inferior to him simply his brothers and sisters, members of the same Christian family. For all his magnificence the bishop himself shows humility and gentleness to those

¹¹⁴ *Rom 12: 10*. "outdo one another in showing honour." (NRSV).

assisting. He comes to celebrate Mass and first takes his place at the foot of the altar, makes a public confession of his sins and hears the people say '*God have mercy on you.*'¹¹⁵ After offering the bread and wine he turns to those assisting, calls them brothers and sisters and asks them to pray that the Lord may accept their Sacrifice. He also asks for a blessing from a priest before he reads the lessons of Matins. And he humbles himself before others from the human point of view, though as a symbol of God he is highly honoured in the celebration itself. The ceremony which shows vividly the honour which the Church accords to Christians is the incensation which is given not simply to the celebrant and the clergy but to the people, because they are considered to be totally filled with God and living temples of the Holy Spirit, as in fact they should be. Do we cease to be such outside church? No; so if we are Christians we should honour one another. How courteous, considerate and reverent our treatment of one another should be. We should shun disdain, carelessness and coldness, and also arrogance, haughtiness, and insults, which are indeed worldly traits.

280. But the chief, the most gentle and most beautiful characteristic of ecclesiastical ceremonies is the fifth one, that *they are full of LOVE*. The functions of the Church inspire the finest union of hearts. Concord and charity embellish the sacred rites. In the Church all distinctions and worldly differences are absent. It forms one body in union with its common head, Jesus, the king with his lowliest subject. We pray and sing by turn. And lest the two choirs singing the psalms should appear to be divided they join together in the antiphon at the end of the psalm to display perfect agreement of minds. In the Mass the priest uses kindly words each time he speaks to those present. When he greets them he turns to them extending his hands in an attitude of embrace and says to them 'The Lord be with you'. They respond: 'And with your spirit'. Such a greeting is a preparation for prayer because prayer is acceptable when God is with those who pray, and when they are united in the Lord. The '*Dominus vobiscum*' [The Lord be with you] is followed by '*Oremus*' [Let us pray], that is, the invitation to pray together. At another time he exhorts them to raise their minds to heaven because the sacrifice is close at hand, to give thanks, to sing together with him and the angels, '*Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts*' and to bless him 'who comes in the name of the Lord.' This reverent union increases as the sacrifice is completed. And when the priest divides the host in two and breaks off a fragment which he places in the chalice with three signs of the cross he says to everyone, '*The peace of the Lord be with you always.*' When he has put the piece into the chalice he adds: 'May this mingling and consecration of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ help us who receive it to eternal life. Amen.' With this ceremony, representing the union of the body and blood of Christ, that is, the new and eternal life which he has regained through the resurrection, we pray that we, his members, will share this immortal life of our glorified Head as well. At such an instant the priest, almost oblivious to the fact that we are on earth where only the beginning of eternal life exists, and almost transported to heaven, looks to that time when the work of our

¹¹⁵ *Ordo Missae.*

salvation will be completed and perfected, and asks God for peace for the Church of God and peace from the Lord for all the faithful.¹¹⁶ He kisses the altar receiving that peace from Christ represented by the altar. He embraces the deacon, passing it on to him: the deacon then gives it to the clergy who embrace one another. In earlier times the clergy passed it on to the people. After this rite, full of kindness and holy friendship, there no rancour of soul should remain, nor any earthly disagreement between the baptised, but only love, concord and the peace of Christ.

281. So, if the sacred ceremonies are considered according to the mind of the Church, they are *candid* and *sincere*; if they are considered in themselves they are *beautiful* and *ordered*; with respect to God they are *grave* and *dignified*; finally with regard to the faithful, they are full of *respect* and *love*. If we bore all this in mind in dealing with one another in this life we would become almost perfect in Christian and loving behaviour.

Chapter XVIII

On the Prayers of the Church

282. Whoever takes a look at the prayers which the Church uses can rightly say with the Song of Songs that the Lord: '*set in order charity in me.*'¹¹⁷ Let us consider the subject briefly.

§ 1

The Day

283. As we have mentioned above, from the earliest times the Church arranged its prayers according to the different hours of day and night. It divided day and night into twelve hours each and prayer was allotted to every third hour. Moreover the more solemn hours of the day were *Terce* counting from sunrise, *Sext*, *None* and *Vespers*, or the twelfth hour. Later the custom was introduced of praying also at the beginning of the day and night so there came to be *Prime* and *Compline*. These hours were sanctified by the events of the Passion of Christ. At *Prime* he was led to Pilate; at *Terce* he was crucified by the clamour of the Jews, scourged and crowned with thorns, at *Sext* he was nailed to the cross, he died at *None* and descended into Hades, at *Vespers* he was taken down from the cross, and at *Compline* he was placed in the sepulchre. Those who do not say the psalms of the canonical hours can easily sanctify them by the association with these events.

¹¹⁶ Was this a personal experience of Blessed Antonio? (Trans.)

¹¹⁷ *Cant* 2: 4. *Song* 'And his intention toward me was love.' (NRSV).

On Christian Education

284. The Divine Office, as we have it at present, can be divided further into three parts: into Matins,¹¹⁸ with which we begin the day; into the daytime Hours, with which we pray during the day, and into Compline with which we conclude the day. Each of these parts has its appropriate beginning. Matins, *Lord, open our lips; And we shall praise your name.* The daytime hours, *O God, come to our aid; O Lord make haste to help us.* Compline, *Convert us O God our Saviour; and turn away your anger from us.*¹¹⁹ When we begin the day we are not yet distracted by earthly occupations, and free from the attacks of temptations of the day, we open our lips more worthily to praise God. During the day, amid many cares and dangers we need special divine support at every step we take and we ask for this in the second prayer. In the evening after we have passed the whole of the day immersed in the affairs of this life, where it has been very difficult not to fall sometimes, we cannot do better than to turn to God in the quiet of the night and pray to him as we do at the beginning of Compline,¹²⁰ to lead us back to himself and to hold back his anger.

§ 2

The Week

285. The Fathers have divided the Psalter into the seven days of the week in such a way so that the whole book is recited during the week. Leaving aside the pagan word *day*, they called them all *ferias*, or *holidays* intending to show by using this word how Christians ought always to take time off from earthly things and rest while contemplating divine things and singing about them. Just as the Hebrews numbered the days from their Sabbath, so Christians numbered their *Ferias* from Sunday. And as Friday was also called by the Hebrews, Passover Eve, or the preparation for the Sabbath, so the Christians retained for their last *feria*, the Hebrew name of *Sabbath*.¹²¹ They wished to show in this way, that the Hebrew feast was a foreshadowing of the Christian one.

286. And so on Sunday, which means the day of the Lord,¹²² they celebrated and celebrate the resurrection, on which a new heaven and a new earth appeared, and on this day they sang the more solemn canticle, that of the three young men of Babylon. On Saturday they recalled and still recall the end of the old world, and say the canticle which Moses said when he was dying. The sixth *Feria* is always reserved for the great memorial of the blood of the Lord being shed on that day, and on it the Canticle of Habakkuk is recited, in which the Cross is mentioned. The fifth day is the proper

¹¹⁸ Now called the Office of Readings. (Trans.)

¹¹⁹ *Breviarium Romanum*. This opening is not said now. The opening of Compline follows that of the daytime hours. (Trans.)

¹²⁰ See above. (Trans.)

¹²¹ *Sabbato* in Italian, *Saturday* in English. (Trans.)

¹²² *Domenica* in Italian. (Trans.)

On The Practice of Virtue

prerogative of the Last Supper which was instituted on it and on this day on which we honour the greatest of the Sacraments we can also remember the others. In fact the Canticle of Moses composed after the passage through the Red Sea, which is set down for this day¹²³ is suitable for Baptism as we shall mention below. On the other days we recall and honour other truths, such as creation and the great plan of redemption, the human impossibility of rising from its first sin, and its penalty, namely, death, the consolation of the Holy Spirit, and his grace. On these days we recite the Canticles of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Hannah. Anybody familiar with these truths can find spiritual nourishment through devotedly meditating on them on different days of the week and so be united with the praying Church though they may not say the Breviary and do not know Latin.

§ 3

The Month

287. On the first day of each month the Hebrews celebrated a solemn feast called *Neomenia* or *New Moon*. In place of this we have, scattered throughout the year, feasts of our Lady who is likened to the moon by the Church because of her spiritual beauty. On the first day of every month, when not prevented by a major feast, we pray for the dead. As well as this, during each month certain feasts occur about which we shall soon briefly speak.

§ 4

The Year

288. During the time when our Church was first developing, there were few saints of the New Testament and therefore there were few feasts. As we said, during the week the Psalter was recited, that is, the ferial offices, penitential ones leading up to Sunday, the great day of the Lord. But little by little the Church became enriched more and more with celebrities and heroes and especially from the beginning martyrs and confessors, and because of these new acquisitions there were continual new reasons for rejoicing. Feast was added to feast and solemnity to solemnity so Holy Church was continually exulting; every day there were new triumphs, new thanksgivings, new commemorations of her valiant ones. What joy this perpetual succession of glorious deeds should produce in the faithful, admiring the inexhaustible riches of God in his saints and the inexpressible variety and preciousness of the embellishments with which the Spouse of Jesus was, as it were, newly clothed each day! Each day, then, our Church exults and this will increase until the end of time. Now, does not all this joy here on earth portray an image of heaven?

¹²³ In the old Latin breviary (Trans.)

289. St Bernard says: 'in fact the number of feasts is due to the citizens, not the exiles.'¹²⁴ There have been holy men, who more desirous to see this place of pilgrimage as one of sorrow rather than the joy proper to the joy of heaven, have desired if it were possible to diminish the great number of the offices of the Saints and replace them with ferias. In the feasts of the saints we admire the magnificence of the kingdom of Christ, which gives us down here such evidence of heavenly glory, and we love the spirit of these virtuous souls who prefer rather than consolation the weariness and grief proper to us, the Church, who wages warfare on so many adversaries.

290. It is of the greatest benefit to us to have new and wonderful examples of virtue before us each day. If we can do this in the course of a year, following the order of the Church we should have material for meditation with so many lofty things that we see in all the truths, stories, motives, ways which lead to God. I will tell you a little about the method the Church uses in meditating on and celebrating the various times of the year. The Church begins the year with the four Sundays of Advent. Just as the world prepared for four thousand years before the coming of her guest, Christ, in like manner our Church prepares for the birth of the Lord. This divine Sun when it rises, regulates the ecclesiastical year, so to speak, as the material sun regulates the earthly year. What better time than this to meditate on the fall of our first parents, the impotence of nature and the law to raise itself up again, the prophecies and promises of a Restorer, and above all the work of the divine incarnation.

291. Having prepared ourselves in this way our Saviour is born for us, he is circumcised, given the name of Jesus, and reveals himself to the shepherds and the Magi; meanwhile the Synagogue trembles, the power of darkness desires the blood of the Innocents while the infant they seek flees into Egypt. Such are the things to recall in the feasts of Christmas, the Circumcision, Epiphany, and the Holy Innocents. What food for thought we have in considering the humble crib of the Lord, of the fulfilment of the Mosaic Law, of the power of Jesus' name, of the announcing of his coming given to the Hebrews, of the calling of the Gentiles, of the poor welcome and repudiation by the holy nation, with whom there remains the prospect of reunion at the end of the world, and finally of the endless war that darkness wages with light, the world with Jesus Christ. In the feast of St Joseph we have before us the duties of the chaste spouse, the watchful father, and the whole of the private life of the Lord. In the six Sundays which follow after the Epiphany we experience the blindness of the Jews and the mysteries of predestination and grace. So far we have considered what pertains to Christ and his gifts. The consideration of ourselves follows, the penalties of original sin, the manifold corruption of the body and the human soul, the strife between the spirit and the flesh, the ignorance, and the necessity of penance, all of which come as a preparation for Lent falling in the weeks of Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima which precede it.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Bernard, *Epistola CLXXIV*, 6 in *Opera*.

¹²⁵ The reader is reminded that we are dealing with arrangement of the Church's year before Vatican II. Septuagesima Sunday was the 7th Sunday before Passiontide, Sexagesima, the 6th

292. The fruits of this sacred time are: the nature and the remedies for temptation, the laborious baptism, which eradicates the stains contracted by the soul, that is, the Sacrament and the power of Penance,¹²⁶ the detestation of our past life, the choice of a confessor, the satisfaction owed to God, our various resolutions, and the means to be taken to avoid relapsing.¹²⁷ We begin on Passion Sunday to recall the last gestures of the Saviour.¹²⁸ What an example given by the great Penitent! His obedience unto death on the Cross and the whole spectacle of his suffering occurs in the following week.

293. Then Christ rises from the dead, the first of those who have fallen asleep. What a change of scene! What consoling fruits are promised us for our sufferings offered to the Lord. We have already experienced the first resurrection of our dead soul in Baptism; in the Sacrament of Penance we have experienced another; the last one in which the body rises like that of Christ will complete our life in heaven. After Easter we have the baptismal waters, the gateway to the other sacraments, where the Catechumens are made white.¹²⁹ Our spirit can henceforth be nourished with the truths regarding the Church militant, suffering and triumphant, which have their place during the weeks between Easter, and the Ascension prior to which Christ conversed on earth with his disciples. The feast of Pentecost announces the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the sublime object which Christians long for, through which the Gospel was written on the hearts of all throughout the world. After such a solemnity, then, the time is given over to considering the wonderful increase of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, the blood of the Martyrs, the writings of the Doctors, the life of its Confessors, by which it has been made fruitful, enlightened and holy.

294. The Sunday of the Most Holy Trinity and the Solemnity of Corpus Christi give us much to think about. The latter calls on us to reflect on the dignity of the priesthood and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

295. The remainder of the year after Pentecost is appropriately occupied with the means by which the Holy Spirit gives us gifts and accomplished his work down through the ages. There are the inspired Scriptures, the virtues of faith, hope and charity infused in the souls of the faithful, ardent prayer, and especially, on the feast days, of the Cross, of Mary, of the Angels and Saints we have the wherewithal to learn about the various branches of our devotion. On the day on which we commemorate

and Quinquagesima the 5th. Passion Sunday is now termed the Fifth Sunday of Lent, Palm Sunday is now also named Passion Sunday which begins Holy Week. (Trans.)

¹²⁶ Or as we might say nowadays, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. (Trans.)

¹²⁷ Literally 'of not returning to the vomit' cf. 2 *Pet* 2: 22. 'For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment that was passed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "the dog turns back to its own vomit".' Cf. also *Prov* 26: 11. (Trans.)

¹²⁸ The present 5th Sunday of Lent. (Trans.)

¹²⁹ Hoare's translation says 'dressed in white'. This reflects the early Church liturgy and (also often nowadays) but the Italian reads simply *s'imbiancano*. Cf. *Ps* 51 (50), 'wash me and I shall be whiter than snow'. So 'purified' is surely Rosmini's thought here. (Trans.)

the souls who have departed in the peace of God, our hearts and minds are taken up with the Church suffering. In the readings taken from the books of Job, Tobias, Judith, Esther, the Maccabees and the Prophets which the Church subsequently provides, we learn about all the moral virtues, patience, wisdom in looking after our families, heroic and holy courage, prudence, faithfulness to the law with its insight into the purpose of life, the Lord's providence with which he rules his Church and watches over it until the day of judgement, about which the Office treats on the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year.¹³⁰

296. There is nothing finer than to follow in the wake of the Church. We accompany it throughout the year in all its dogmas, the system of its faith, all the wealth of its virtues, all the means it gives to practise them, and all the fruits and rewards promised by the Lord.

Chapter XIX

On the Sacraments in general and of Baptism in particular

297. Our spiritual life is somewhat similar to our bodily life and I would say that we need as much in the former as we do in the latter. In our spiritual life we must first be born and Christ has given us this in Baptism, we must grow for which he has instituted Confirmation and because we need nourishment he has given us the Eucharist. When our soul falls sick he provides us with the Sacrament of Penance and Extreme Unction.¹³¹ He has established the former to take away the sickness, and the latter to take away the remnants of sickness, or the weakness of convalescence. And as humans in their bodily life are part of a society, so in our spiritual life we are part of a spiritual one, this being the Church. But in order that we might be united in the spiritual one we need first the bodily one. The Sacraments of Matrimony and of Orders are directed to these two ends.

298. It is not my intention here to expound the teaching on the Sacraments which can easily be found in really good books. But I will take a quick look at Baptism with which we begin eternal life, in order to give an example of the way with which we can be helped to study this subject. And for this it will be sufficient to give, as it were, little more than an index of matters in order not to increase the length of this book unnecessarily. It will be a good and useful thing if you get to know the history of the Sacraments, and especially Baptism and research the figures and predictions scattered throughout the Old Testament. This is necessary in order that you may see clearly the difference between all the other baptisms, and that of John himself, from that of Christ; finally to pause at this life-giving font of souls which consists in penetrating its

¹³⁰ There was no Feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday in Rosmini's time. (Trans.)

¹³¹ This sacrament is now known as 'the Anointing of the Sick'. See also note 122 above. (Trans.)

spirit, knowing its effects and considering the gravity of the promises made on our behalf. These promises are called by St Augustine, not merely a vow but *the greatest of our vows*.¹³² For the early Christians they were barriers against sin; the breaking of them was held to be the greatest misfortune because after baptism the fall was greater and to rise up again was more difficult and the penance to be undertaken was more severe.¹³³ For this reason the catechumenate was prolonged; this enabled the baptismal candidates to be strengthened in virtue before solemnly promising to God that they would lead a Christian life.

299. Baptism then is the source of the whole of our Christian salvation and all the duties that go with it. If we understand it, we understand our state of life, our natural infirmity, the dignity we have acquired to which all things should be subjected, both on earth and in hell.

Chapter XX

On the Renewal of our Baptismal Promises

300. But as regards the promises which Christians make in Baptism, it is a very ancient custom to renew them from time to time.¹³⁴ The most opportune times for this are, on coming to the use of reason, and if children are not willing to do this, the educators are to blame; the anniversary of our baptism, the feast of the Dedication of the Church, this being our feast since with baptism we are made living stones of God's temple;¹³⁵ the Vigils of Easter and Pentecost, on which the Church baptizes catechumens.

301. Now with regard to this, one thing seems to me to be very appropriate and useful which I do not wish to leave out. In order to commemorate prominent acts of divine goodness which have been given to her with regard to her foundation or glory, the Church establishes public feasts. Every Christian has, in a similar fashion, experienced private acts of divine goodness which in a special way bring to their soul either salvation or an increase of grace. They would benefit by imitating the Church, as she celebrates public gifts with public solemnity, so they should celebrate private ones with private solemnity. The principal of these ought to be the anniversary of their own Baptism. It seems to me that it would be beneficial and excellent if parents or teachers were to celebrate for their young people on this anniversary a family feast day to sanctify it with resolutions and renewed promises with the sacraments of

¹³² Augustine, *Epistola Ad Paulinum coepiscopum*, CXLIX, n. 16.

¹³³ Cf. *Heb* 6: 4–6.

¹³⁴ Charles Borromeo, Provincial Council, VI. Constitutions and Decrees, VIII, *De Baptismo*

¹³⁵ St Bernard in a sermon before the Dedication of the Church said: 'today's feast, therefore, dearest brethren belongs to you. You have been dedicated to the Lord, you have been chosen and received as his own...wherefore in you is completed spiritually what has already been achieved in this building.' *In Dedicatione Ecclesiae*, Sermo I, nn. 3 and 4.

Penance and the Eucharist as a time on which they would renew their lives and set the tone for the entire year adding some external signs of joy and some unaccustomed recreation.

302. As regards the form of such a family solemnity it could vary with different circumstances provided it were devout, orderly and joyful but I will refrain from giving a description. I would simply say that it would be helpful to remember on such a day the rites with which baptism is conferred. These ceremonies contain many fine things. Being washed in water in the name of the Most Holy Trinity portrays the chief effect of baptism, the washing away of sin. But what are these waters which have such a power, that they touch the body and cleanse the soul? Paul replies: . *'Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death.'*¹³⁶ Those waters, then, draw their power from the blood of Jesus. When he died and was placed in the sepulchre the 'old man' died and was buried. As Paul says the 'old man' was crucified with Christ, because the sinful body is destroyed and we are no longer slaves to sin.¹³⁷ And this primary effect of baptism was represented especially through baptism conferred through immersion, showing the child of sinful man, being submerged and buried. Being drawn up out of the water indicates the birth of the 'new man'. Paul says: *'For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.'*¹³⁸ So that this might be effected, after his resurrection Christ sent the Apostles throughout the world baptizing the human race.

303. Before the resurrection it had not yet emerged with him from the sepulchre. For we obtain graces together with Christ and no one precedes him, because he is the first fruits of all things. And since in baptism the Holy Spirit gives himself to us and applies the merits of Christ, the Apostles waited to receive the Spirit himself before they baptized with water and the Holy Spirit. So if the Church baptizes on the Vigils of Easter and Pentecost, it teaches by this how baptism has its power from the death and resurrection of Christ and how this power is used by the Holy Spirit for our sanctification.

304. But let us see what this 'new man' is who arises when the 'old man' dies. As the old man shares in evil and inherits the sin of Adam, so the new man shares in the power and inheritance of Christ. Jesus Christ, having assumed the priesthood, made himself the victim. The fruit of his sacrifice was that he was crowned king over the enemy powers. Every Christian is called to share his priesthood and his kingdom. So the Church anoints the forehead of the one who is baptised according to the ancient usage of anointing kings and priests. Before the actual baptism persons are anointed

¹³⁶ *Rom 6: 3–4.* 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death.' (NRSV).

¹³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.* 6.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 4. 'Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.' (NRSV).

on the breast, [and between the shoulders in the figure of the Cross¹³⁹] as the old athletes were anointed, as a sign of that fight in which they will conquer with the weapon of the Cross and through which they will be crowned. They are handed the lighted candle indicating that they must burn with the fire of charity, as a continual sacrifice to their God. The white garment with which they are covered symbolises resurrection and glory, the beauty and purity of this priesthood and kingdom. This priesthood which we receive dedicates us to divine worship, impressing on us the indelible character of being people destined to serve the glory of God forever. This kingdom provides us with his grace with which we overcome our adversaries, sanctify ourselves and merit glory. This destiny or character which consecrates us to the worship of God can never be lost. We can, however, lose grace which entitles us to glory and its crown. Every Christian will always be a priest, because they are consecrated to divine worship once for always, but they will lose the kingly crown receive in baptism, if they do not fight strenuously. Whatever we have, we have in Christ, that is, as a part of his body, because his priesthood is unique and the kingdom he possesses, in which he calls us to share, is unique. The Church expresses this by the ceremony which the priest performs of putting the strip of his stole over the child he is going to baptise¹⁴⁰ showing that he is being covered with the immortal clothing of the priesthood and of the kingship which Christ possesses. In this kingly and priestly mantle lies all the possible dignity of humanity which eternal evils cannot lessen. The Lord in baptism does not take away human sufferings, for the absence of these would not have added to our greatness or nobility.

305. Having considered the sacred rites with which the Church accompanies baptism, you might desire, perhaps, to have some canticle or hymn with which to thank our Lord and praise his mercy on the anniversary of your Baptisms. Paul gives us an example. Writing to the Corinthians he points out that everything that happened to the Hebrews foreshadowed what has happened to us.¹⁴¹ Now he wants us to see a living representation of baptism in the passage through the Red Sea. In baptism we are baptized in Jesus Christ, and through his merits, while the water washes the body the Holy Spirit cleanses our soul. Christ, then, was in that passing, represented by Moses, the water by the sea, the Spirit by the cloud. So the Apostle says: '*And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea.*'¹⁴² How suitable is the title of the Red Sea applied to the baptismal waters, which faith sees reddened by the blood of Christ, and how the great sea brings salvation to all the chosen people all over the world. Through those waters, in which proud Pharaoh was submerged, the travelling people of Israel, fleeing slavery in Egypt towards the promised land, made their escape, just as we come up alive out of the waters in which the devil and sin have been buried. For this reason what canticle is more suitable than to sing on the anniversary of our baptism

¹³⁹ The anointing between the shoulders is omitted in the present rite. (Trans.)

¹⁴⁰ The placing of the strip of the stole over the child is omitted in the present rite. (Trans.)

¹⁴¹ 1 *Cor* 10: 6.

¹⁴² 1 *Cor* 10: 2. 'and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.' (NRSV).

that of Moses, which the whole of Israel sang on the opposite bank from the Egyptians, having been saved from their proud enemies by the sea which engulfed them? Yes, yes! On the anniversary of our baptism let us be united in spirit with all the baptized on earth: *'Then Moses and the children of Israel sung this canticle to the Lord, and said: Let us sing to the Lord: for he is gloriously magnified, the horse and the rider he hath thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my praise, and he is become SALVATION to me: he is my God, and I will glorify him: the God of my father, and I will exalt him. The Lord is as a man of war, Almighty is his name. PHARAO'S (the squanderer) chariots and his army he hath cast into the sea: his chosen captains are drowned in the RED SEA. The depths have covered them, they are sunk to the bottom like a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is magnified in strength: thy right hand, O Lord, hath slain the enemy. And in the multitude of thy glory thou hast put down thy adversaries: thou hast sent thy wrath, which hath devoured them like stubble. And with the blast of thy anger the waters were gathered together: the flowing water stood, the depths were gathered together in the midst of the sea. The enemy said: I will pursue and overtake, I will divide the spoils, my soul shall have its fill: I will draw my sword, my hand shall slay them. Thy wind blew and the sea covered them: they sunk as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like to thee, among the strong, O Lord? who is like to thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praise-worthy, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst forth thy hand, and the earth swallowed them.'*¹⁴³

And at this point the inspired prophet speaks tenderly as he mentions that, after having been rescued in the waters, they would have to travel through the desert before they reached the promised land. How suitable this is for us who have been rescued from death in Baptism and must still contend with so many hazards, as we drag ourselves through the desert of this world until we come to our homeland. After this Moses turns to God again and continues: *'In thy mercy thou hast been A LEADER to the people which thou hast REDEEMED: and in thy strength thou hast carried them to thy HOLY HABITATION (to your Church). Nations (the spiritual enemies) rose up, and were angry: sorrows took hold on the inhabitants of Philisthiim. Then were the princes of Edom troubled, trembling seized on the stout men of Moab: all the inhabitants of Chanaan became stiff. Let fear and dread fall upon them, in the greatness of thy arm: let them become immoveable as a stone, until thy*

¹⁴³ Ex 15: 1–12. 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my SALVATION; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. 'Pharaoh's (the squanderer) chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power— your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. 'Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.' (NRSV).

*people, O Lord, PASS BY: UNTIL THIS THY PEOPLE PASS BY, WHICH THOU HAST POSSESSED. (Christ possessed them by adding them to his kingdom through Baptism) Thou shalt bring them IN, (in heaven, the Church triumphant) AND PLANT THEM IN THE MOUNTAIN OF THY INHERITANCE, IN THY MOST FIRM HABITATION, (because in heaven there is no further fear of enemies) which thou hast made, O Lord; thy SANCTUARY, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall REIGN for ever and ever. For Pharaoh went in on horseback with his chariots and horsemen into the sea: and the Lord brought back upon them the waters of the sea: but the children of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst thereof.'*¹⁴⁴

306. Just as Moses, after the escape from that first danger, swiftly asked for help for the last stage which would see them enter a safe and happy land, so we, in baptism, having initially escaped from the teeth of our adversaries, take the opportunity of that first mercy to ask for the final one which gives value to the first. Now if we sing worthily this noble canticle on earth, we shall sing it also in heaven, in thankful remembrance of the divine graces we have received.¹⁴⁵

Chapter XXI

On the Behaviour of Virgins

307. After dealing at some length with the virtues which relate to God, the source and foundation of all Christian virtues, it remains to mention those virtues which you personally and others should practise. I shall deal with the first named in this chapter and of the second in the chapter following.

308. Now it seems to me that we can group the virtues which refer to oneself under the title given above. *On the behaviour of virgins*, for beautiful Virginité, the first of all the virtues, draws the others behind it in its train.

309. St Augustine says that, because of this, virginal purity is commended by the Scriptures as of the highest value because it is devoted to God; it is given life by the Spirit; it springs from the love of the friend and his spouse; and so, although a virtue

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 13–19. 'In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples (the spiritual enemies) heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by. you brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, o lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, o lord, that your hands have established. the Lord will reign for ever and ever. When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.' (NRSV).

¹⁴⁵ *Rev* 15: 3–4.

of bodies, it is raised to the rank of a spiritual virtue. The heart of the virgin desires to be free from every earthly affection, a hater of sin and indifferent to everything apart from God whom she treasures within her. I am not speaking simply of vowed virginity, but that consecrated by affection which should be common to all Christian maidens.¹⁴⁶ Keeping in mind the origin of the richness of virginity, the beautiful customs of the Christian virgin will be understood.

310. The virtues and customs of this state which are illustrious and honoured by the Church are modesty of action, a prudent and dignified bashfulness which is able to blush and be ashamed not only in the presence of others but on its own, custody of the eyes, of the tongue, of the ears, of the hands, of all the senses sealed with the cross of Christ from all impurity. The spouse of the Song of Songs is a beautiful example: 'The hands of the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles drip with myrrh which preserves from corruption; *her lips are as scarlet lace*, indicating the modesty of her speech; *her eyes soft as dove's eyes*, on account of their clarity; her ears adorned with *golden ear-rings*, as tokens of her purity; her nose likened to the incorruptible *cedars of Lebanon*.'¹⁴⁷ Any liberty tarnishes the lustre of such a gem, darkens the beauty of virginal purity, and among the human amusements, where, even if it is not lost, it is made difficult; and according to St Francis, the fragrance of chastity loses its freshness and bloom.¹⁴⁸

311. So the virgin loves retirement and avoids human conversation. She fears and trembles at any suspicion of danger and this virginal anxiety produces *vigilance*. Like the Gospel parable she stays awake, belt fastened, with a lamp held in her hand waiting for the spouse. Having one's '*loins girt*'¹⁴⁹ indicates *temperance*, which lessens the stimulus of bodily concupiscence; the burning lamp indicates *charity* which increases the vigour of the spirit against the allurements of sensible things. How much fasting rejoices to stand besides charity like a father who nourishes her! How mortification stands diligently besides her as a sister lending her support. The virgin does not care to see nor to be seen, she does not take pleasure in any earthly things, her clothes are neat, but completely simple, humble, in keeping with sincerity, gravity, and modesty; she does not have exclusive friendships, she knows nothing of billets doux, of airs and graces; she is detached from all things, serious about everything, and fulfils wholly the Apostle's recommendation that they '*use this world, as if they used it not*.'¹⁵⁰

312. However, she is not deprived of pleasures but she draws these from a noble source; they come to her from her heavenly friend. She is often found in her room absorbed in prayer, and often in spiritual reading and in profound meditation. She imitates the angels in her earthly body and lives in heaven with her spirit. *Humility* which is wont to be alongside virginity is the keeper or, as I were, the guard of this treasure so that it will not be lost or diminish: '*The greater thou art, the more humble thyself*

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *Della santa verginità*, n. 8.

¹⁴⁷ *Song* 5: 5; 4: 3, 1; 1: 10; 7:4. (Cf. NRSV). Francis of Sales: *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, c. XIII.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Lk* 12: 35. (Trans.)

¹⁵⁰ *1 Cor* 7: 31. 'deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.' (NRSV).

*in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.*¹⁵¹ The Lord's virgin experiences her weakness; she know that what she possesses is a gift and that the rarer the gifts greater reason recipients have to be bewildered and overwhelmed by the one who gives them, and so it is with gift the of purity for which the virgin humbles herself before God. She has before her the example of Mary in whom virginity and humility contested in such a beautiful way that the prize was left in doubt. She has the virginity par excellence of Christ, who calls all to himself that they may learn *meekness* and *humility*.¹⁵² You are not sent, devout and modest soul, to learn humility from the sinful publican; you are sent to one who is more holy than you, to him through whom you are made holy. This is the exemplar of all virgins whose humility does not issue in injustice but charity which: '*Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil.*'¹⁵³ The holy virgin should not feel any repugnance to go to learn from him how to be humble. It is school in keeping with her dignity. Here she will find the author of purity humiliated, not by the burden of sin, but through the weight of charity. Before him she will find herself rid of everything, if she gives back to him what she has received from him, possessing only the sad seed of corruption and from him she will learn to clothe herself in the stains of her brothers and sisters and to love confusion, contempt and distress of the flesh which begins to be good only when it begins to be mortified through charity or faith, because then the light of *fortitude* will shine in her which makes the virgin of Christ invincible over her enemies and undefeated in all her conflicts. This illustrious virginity united with humility similar to Christ's flourishes and is that of which, according to the Fathers, martyrs are made, and through which Agnes and other such heroines who had hardly attained life at such a tender age, extravagantly gave it up through their sufferings.¹⁵⁴

Chapter XXII

On Charity towards one's Neighbour

313. So holy virginity is encompassed by virtue. It is accompanied by temperance, prayer, holy fear, devout retirement, incorruptible fasting, a loathing for earthly things, a taste for heavenly things, it is protected especially by humility, equipped with strength, exercised by charity. We do not speak of strict justice to someone who believes that it would be unworthy of them to be lacking in mercy. But we can say a little about the love of neighbour which can be called the art or

¹⁵¹ *Ecc* 3: 20. 'the greater you are, the more you must humble yourself ; so you will find favour in the sight of the Lord.' (*Sir* 3: 18) (NRSV).

¹⁵² Cf. *Mt* 11: 28-29.

¹⁵³ 1 *Cor* 13: 5. 'not boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way.' (NRSV).

¹⁵⁴ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, Lib I, cap. II, 5 ff.

profession of the virgin of Christ, dwelling chiefly on the consideration of the *prudence* of charity because the virgin who exercises it is not foolish but wise.

314. Consequently I will not speak at length of the charity towards one's neighbour, there is an abundance of books which have dealt frequently with this subject. Everyone knows that this is Christ's own commandment.¹⁵⁵ Everyone knows the opinion of the apostle that bearing one another's burdens is the fulfilment of the law.¹⁵⁶ With regard to the first commandment of Christ we have been given examples, precepts and promises of Christ. The sacred writings are full of it and I especially recommend these to you. Drink at this fountain of charity, be filled, be inebriated with it. Have John and Paul as your teachers. Their type of writing is an incitement to love.

315. Therefore I would have you consider only one thing which is that of Paul himself, that *charity becomes all things to all people*, that it should not just extend to heroic actions and great deeds but rejoice and be involved even in the tiniest and trivial things, in those which are most unnoticed and neglected, it is sometimes greater where it appears to be the least, more secure where it is more hidden. It is wiser and does not act by chance, it is genuinely generous, it does not act on its whims or for its own pleasure. You can see that with this magnanimous virtue at your side, I led you outside your own little room where in the previous chapter you were led for prayer, and made you go into the midst of people, into society. Yes, if the Christian young lady loves retirement, she knows how to choose what she likes less, at the urging of charity. Charity does not consist in just feeding the hungry or clothing the naked; charity is not to displease anyone without necessity.

316. The prudence of charity does not permit one to infringe the relationships of the state in which it finds itself. Is the Christian girl living in a large family? Charity is not living according to one's whim through following an imaginary perfection. Perfection consists in living in harmony with others, in displeasing none but pleasing everyone. Charity is to adapt oneself willingly to innocent usages and customs of those with whom one lives, and even to their tastes, if duty does not forbid this, and even to anticipate them with loving ingenuity.

317. But if I lead the common life it is necessary to omit much prayer and mortification.

—Prayer is more beautiful and pleasing to God if it is lessened in order not to displease others. The most meritorious mortification is that of the will, which, in living the common life is practised by her, who loves her room more, but chooses virtuous conversation. I am not saying she looks for this, but chooses it when, in making this choice, she does it to avoid giving offence to others and not harming the duties of the state in which she is placed, and not provoking gossip. If these concerns of charity are not demanded of her, she follows the life dictated by her own fervour.

—But I get dissipated in the common life. I come across scandals and the occasions of falling, nor can I correct myself.

¹⁵⁵ *Jn* 15: 12.

¹⁵⁶ *Gal* 6: 2.

—Such a young girl should realise that this is not the love for a more perfect life which is drawing her away from exercising stronger, more virile, more meritorious virtue which is that of the common life, where charity towards one's neighbour is continually practised which is beyond her capacity, to a more partial and secluded life. She is not, therefore, searching for perfection in fearing firmer and more perfect virtue. She wants a life which is perfect in name and leaves aside the practice of more perfect virtue. Furthermore, if the girl's home is upright and devout, this fragility which leads her into solitude is blameworthy. It is necessary to eradicate this and not just put it safe and sound to sleep because it will soon wake up. If the family is a bit worldly and liberal then reserve is a duty. But in each case the Christian girl must strengthen herself; the dispositions of soul, and not so much the external occasions, are harmful to her life. Also, if this strength is late in coming along what other rule can she give herself than that of Christ: '*And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.*'¹⁵⁷ Well, let the girls be deprived of whatever is a dangerous obstacle to them. If in their common and upright life they are ruled by charity, the Lord will not abandon them, while, on the other hand he has given ties that bind them to one another so that they have duties to perform and merits to gain.

—But I feel myself called to the religious state.

—Well, if the vocation is proved let the devout girl listen to it and embrace it. Let us not place an obstacle to choosing one state before another one; but let us desire that she keep the laws of whatever state she lives in. The choice of a better state, however, cannot be from God, if in it some duty to society is to be omitted, or others must suffer by this. The young devout girl should not hold back from her happy choice through a worldly or false sorrow which she sees in others regarding her happy choice, it is when her intention might cause true and serious harm to those with whom she is joined through natural ties. But if she is not called to the cloister, let her show the world the conversation of the chaste Christian. Let her study how in a beautiful branch of charity the grandeur of its acts of magnificent charity emulates the density of the tree's numerous leafy fronds. The relations and mutual offices of civil life are ennobled and sanctified by this study of religion. Since others often pass it by, I am happy to dwell a little at this point on the rules with which Christian law sanctifies the special customs and social mores and the whole of our behaviour with one another.

318. I hold that the offices of civil life which nature suggests to human beings, can have two sources, that is, their own pleasure or that of others. Company is naturally pleasing to us. We are formed by nature for the companionship of others. We experience pleasure in those fine traits, elegant behaviour, and those graceful manners which are used in worldly society. I am not speaking, as you see, of anything sinful in itself. I always intend here to talk about the indifferent acts of life and those which are per se innocent. Now I grant that the Christian could in theory refer to God

¹⁵⁷ *Mt* 18: 9. 'And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away.' (NRSV).

the use of companionship. However, I confidentially maintain that when civil relationships are motivated simply by the personal pleasure which they experience, then they must be at least suspect. We must see where this pleasure comes from within ourselves, for it can arise either from a certain sensible friendship which is experienced through our affable ways, or by self-love flattered by the politeness and good manners of others, or finally by that ambition, through which we desire to please others through our exterior gifts or through our bodily attraction, elegance of clothing, or vivacity of speech. All such sources of delight are corrupt, or hardly without stain, and at least do not go beyond our natural inclinations. Yes, I grant that nothing of this moves Christians to be sociable. They are dead to the world, they do not want pleasure, still less sin, nor that which is not superior to nature, that is God. No matter how much they make subtle excuses for similar pleasures, and place limits to them, it will always be true that the heart of the person who welcomes them is not yet sufficiently crucified with Christ, dead to himself; they still expect something from human beings. In short, they have lingered here below on love which is hardly pure nor have they exchanged their natural inclinations for those of Christ. If I look at the consequences of this human pleasure, whence human beings are drawn to affable behaviour, I see them altogether insupportable and wicked. So I would like the devout Christian not to be moved by the pleasure of living with others by their own human liking like others, but rather that they should remove from themselves all sensible love, every habit of self-love, all vestige of ambition for John says: '*For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.*'¹⁵⁸ Nothing of this, then should be the aim of the Christian, they should love nothing worldly, and live in the world without sharing in the world.

319. Having destroyed all sensible human affection, in their detachment from everything worldly thy should graft into themselves true charity, I say again '*seeketh not her own.*'¹⁵⁹ Christians should not converse with others for their own pleasure but to give good and upright pleasure to others. Now when is this pleasure decent and right? There are various means by which we can give pleasure to others; now it is good and upright if it comes from being virtuous. Christ also teaches us to be kind to others: '*So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*'¹⁶⁰ Virtue is seen to be so loveable, that provided they see it, everyone cannot but appreciate and admire it. It is the *fair love, the daughter of wisdom*, of which Scripture speaks, which is so much more lovely and graceful than that of the world.¹⁶¹ Such is the ornament with which one Christian pleases another. Peter and Paul teach this to Christian women. Peter says: '*Whose adorning, let it not be the outward plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel: But the hidden man of the heart, in the*

¹⁵⁸ 1 *Jn* 2: 16. 'all that is in the world, [is] the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches.'

¹⁵⁹ 1 *Cor* 13: 5. 'charity does not insist on its own way.' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁰ *Mt* 5: 16. 'In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.' (NRSV).

¹⁶¹ Cf. *Ecc* 24: 24. This verse is omitted in modern versions of the Bible. (Trans.)

*incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit which is rich in the sight of God. and he goes on to say For after this manner heretofore, the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, doing well and not fearing any disturbance.*¹⁶² And Paul writes: '*In like manner, women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety, not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire: But, as it becometh women professing godliness, with good works.*'¹⁶³ St Ambrose says: 'You, too, have indeed your own beauty, furnished by the comeliness of virtue, not of the body, to which age puts not an end, which death cannot take away, nor any sickness injure.'¹⁶⁴

320. It will perhaps be said that this inner beauty of soul receives praise and reward from God who sees it and who esteems it more than we deserve but we do not appreciate it. Yet the totally pure soul who loves God in everything reveals this externally. Hence the virtue of Christian behaviour. And what is this most loveable and holy virtue? A virtue, I say, that all, even the wicked will be forced to commend; a virtue that is solid, sincere, and consistent, which does not make a show of itself but through its own modesty shines with a most pleasant light. It is a virtue which does not exaggerate anything, is not arrogant, it does not judge, it is tolerant, which knows how to give an account of itself, which is intent on studying to keep within the bounds of human living through compassion for the weak, which spends itself on others and neglects itself with dignity in order to satisfy the desires of others. It serves everyone, it is moderate, serious, sparing in words, not curious, cheerful but not frivolous, intent on making those with whom it lives, happy even in the small comforts of life, a virtue that is human, gentle, compassionate, which avoids giving scandal to others, or gossiping about them for their own good, and not through timidity, that bears with the weakness of others without difficulty but gladly. To sum up, it is a virtue that being fixed wholly on God, and, united with him, lives with its neighbours in godly wisdom after the example of the loving behaviour of Jesus; and while it is ready for any heroic act of charity, it grasps like a busy bee, even from the tiny, daily circumstances of life, the sweet nectar of charity, and makes of them the sweetest honey for others and itself. Oh, how friendly and kind is the charity of Christians who, while strict with themselves, think of others with gentleness and kindness, who even ignore the defects of others and draw consolation and edification from their virtues, are ready to learn from everybody, to listen to all, to avoid

¹⁶² 1 *Pet* 3: 3–6. 'Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight;' 'It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.' (NRSV).

¹⁶³ 1 *Tim* 2: 9–10. 'also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God.' (NRSV).

¹⁶⁴ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, lib I, c. VI, 30.

prejudice, they easily see the truth wherever it is and seem more pleased to find it in others rather than in themselves. They are shrewd in foreseeing the troubles of others, quick to remove them, sympathising with them in their sorrows and congratulating happiness, sometimes putting up without the slightest annoyance boring stories. The weaknesses and wrongs of others would not take away their customary smile! They are completely simple, serious, sincere, of frank and noble bearing, attuned to the laws we have described elsewhere.¹⁶⁵ Such true Christians make virtue loved by everyone. And what act is greater than charity? What finer object of prudence, than charity? ¹⁶⁶ Hence I say that Christians should please others by their virtue, not with worldly embellishments and skills. Since then they will really please others.

321. Someone will insist that if a Christian girl does not add some human attractions and ornaments to her clothing she will not be popular in worldly eyes. I can make two points in reply: the first is that, as I said, she should not desire to be pleasing except through virtue and by means of charity. If she acts in such a manner she will please God and those who are of God. She should loathe to please those who only delight in fleshly attractions. In as much as she pleases evil people she will displease good ones. She should not exercise her charity towards those people but rather to displease them, providing she displeases them because of her virtue, that is, through the richer and more beautiful necklace of feminine holiness. She should have plenty of things which even the worldly must like and praise in the ways described above regarding Christian conversation, not only through that insuperable secret witness which the force of eternal justice constrains the human soul to give to virtue, but because that gentle and wholly human charity satisfies many natural affections and desires, seeking to make people happy as far as it can; and extending its captivating and loving attention even to the most minute things, provided that they are not contrary to virtue. Yet there are three ways by which one may give pleasure to others, that is, by virtue; with things *per se* indifferent, as are attractive clothes; and again by sins. Sinful ways give pleasure to evil people; giving pleasure through virtues is a great good. As for indifferent things, there is room for special wisdom in which these are used, not because they are loved but because they are used simply as a help to edification, like ropes with which the weak can cling as they climb hand by hand to relish better things. But in order that one should not err in so difficult a matter, this rule is firmly to be held that in such cases that vainly please people *one avoids indecency; one does not seek refinement*. The Saints followed this rule and it is pleasant to read how

¹⁶⁵ See chapter XVII.

¹⁶⁶ P. Roberti has written a little treatise in which, with his accustomed elegance, he speaks of these *virtues which are small* in appearance but are truly great and necessary at every moment in life. (*Trattatello sopra le virtù piccole*, in *Opere dell'Abate Giambattista Roberti*.)

He was a Jesuit, born at Bassano in 1719. He was a polygraph. Among his numerous works, his moral works should be mentioned; these were instructive in nature. The *Trattatello* was one of these and was published in 1778. After the suppression of the Society, Roberti returned to his father's home in Bassano where he died in 1786. (Ed.).

On The Practice of Virtue

Saint Hedwig, Duchess of Poland, who also belongs to us,¹⁶⁷ used a worn out dress for love of poverty, and hearing how a sister of the monastery to which she had retired was displeased at this, immediately replied: 'if this dress displeases you I am ready to amend my fault', and changed it immediately for a better one.¹⁶⁸ It is charitable to avoid what is unpleasant in the eyes not only of evil people but in natural people, in order not to give them unnecessary annoyance or criticism. It is also charitable to shun that stylish and affected adornment that delights vain people because in the first instance one avoids giving offence, as charity is wont to do, and in the second, one removes vain stylishness which is still more excellent charity. Finally, in such cases we should neither displease or please anyone as both are evils. So prudence of charity unites people together as far as it can, and loving them all, has regard for all, even their weaknesses, trying not to offend them nor to encourage them, rather removing both when it is opportune to do so.

¹⁶⁷ This saint was the daughter of Bertoldo d'Andechs, Marquis of Marano and Count of Tyrol.

¹⁶⁸ See Alban Butler in the Lives of the Saints for October, vol. XV, October 17th, pp. 442 ff.

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