

The spiritual combat - P. Lorenzo Scúpoli



## O COMBATE ESPIRITUAL

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The book that Saint Francis de Sales carried with him and read for 19 years

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## 1 PREFACE

### THE PRAISE THAT A GREAT SAINT MADE ABOUT THIS BOOK

Monsignor Pedro Camus in his beautiful book entitled: "The spirit of Saint Francis de Sales" (which we recommend reading because it does a lot of good) tells the following: "I asked Saint Francis who his spiritual director or teacher was, and he answered me by taking from I pocket the booklet "THE SPIRITUAL COMBAT". he is the one who with divine help has governed and guided me since my youth; This is my teacher and director of things of the spirit and the inner life. Since, when I was a student at the University of Padua, a Theatine priest recommended it to me and advised me to read it frequently, I have followed his advice and found it extremely useful. It was composed by a very holy priest from that community."

Monsignor Camus himself says that although Saint Francis de Sales highly valued and recommended the beautiful book "Imitation of Christ", he recommended even more the reading of "The Spiritual Combat".

And he adds: "Among the spiritual reading books that our saint recommended, the one he most valued was The Spiritual Combat. seventeen continuous years, reading a chapter every day, and always receiving celestial lights every time I read there.

Many of the teachings that Saint Francis de Sales brings in his famous book "Filotea, or Introduction to the Devout Life" are taken from The Spiritual Combat.

Among the books he recommends to progress in the life of perfection, Spiritual Combat is in the first line.

### IN YOUR LETTERS

They are gathered in several volumes, more than a thousand letters from the great doctor of the Church, Saint Francis de Sales, and in several of them he praises his beloved little book "The Spiritual Combat", let's look at some examples.

In Letter 32 he says: "This other book you are reading is good, but it is somewhat confusing and difficult. On the other hand, The Spiritual Combat is much more orderly, clearer, and it will do you more good to read it. ."

In Letter 55 he states: "Spiritual Combat" is an extremely useful book. I always carried it with me for 15 years and never read it without enjoying it.

In Letter 48, he advises an abbess: "Read the little book Spiritual Combat and you will see that you acquire a lot of inner peace".

In his letter 16, he recommends to a married lady: "Among the exercises of devotion, what I advise you most is to read The Spiritual Combat frequently. I highly recommend this book because reading it does a lot of good."

In his Letter 94 to the widow he writes: "To overcome temptations, read SPIRITUAL COMBAT. To benefit the soul". July 24, 1607 (This Letter appears in the documents of the cause of canonization).

He wrote his Letter 75 to a person who suffered great pain, in which he says: "To obtain the grace to accept in peace the pain that comes to us, it helps a lot to read The Spiritual Combat, which I have recommended so many times. This little book contains very useful doctrines that give much peace to the soul."

Let's listen to this great saint and start reading such a beautiful book.

## CHAPTER 1

“NO ATHLETE RECEIVES A CHAMPION MEDAL IF THEY HAVE NOT COMPETED ACCORDING TO THE REGULATIONS” (2Tm 2,5)

WHAT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION CONSISTS OF, AND THAT TO ACHIEVE IT, STRUGGLE AND EFFORT IS NECESSARY, AND FOUR THINGS THAT ARE NECESSARY FOR THIS STRUGGLE.

If you want, O soul much loved by Jesus Christ, to reach the highest degree of holiness and Christian perfection, and to live in perpetual friendship with God Our Lord, which is the highest and most glorious undertaking that can be undertaken and imagined, what is what we must first know is: in what Christian perfection, true spiritual life, consists.

Many people have deceived themselves and believed that Christian perfection and holiness consist of other things that in reality they are not. Thus, for example, there are those who imagine that to reach perfection or holiness it is enough to dedicate themselves to many fasts and great penances. Other people, especially women, believe that the important thing is to dedicate yourself to many prayers, listen to masses, visit temples and read devotions.

There is no shortage of people belonging to religious communities who imagine that to achieve holiness it is enough to comply exactly with the regulations of their community and attend all the meetings and religious acts of their congregation.

There is no doubt that all these are powerful means to acquire true perfection and great holiness, if they are used with prudence and they help a lot to acquire strength against our own passions and the fragility of our nature, they serve to defend ourselves from the assaults and temptations of enemies of our salvation; Furthermore, they are very effective in obtaining from divine mercy the heavenly help we need to progress in virtue. They are useful and necessary, and even more so for beginners.

### MEANS TO BE SANCTIFIED

The Holy Spirit is illuminating to spiritual people the means to achieve holiness. He teaches them to fulfill what Saint Paul said: "I punish my body and reduce it to servitude, so that, teaching others the way of holiness, I will not be left without achieving it" (cf. 1Co 9, 27). This serves to punish the body for the rebellions it had in the past against the spirit, and to dominate it and keep it obedient to the Creator's laws.

The Divine Spirit also inspires many souls to dedicate themselves to living as Saint Paul desired: "As citizens of heaven" (Phil3,20) and therefore invites them to dedicate themselves to prayer, meditation and reflection on the Passion and Death of Our Lord, and not out of curiosity, nor to achieve sensible joys, but to better appreciate how great is the goodness and mercy of Our Lord, and how frightening is our ingratitude and our wickedness.

To souls who wish to reach holiness, the Divine Spirit often reminds them of those words of Jesus: "If anyone wants to come with me, let him deny himself, accept his daily cross of suffering and follow me" (Mt16,24 ). And he invites them to follow Christ, imitating his holy examples, defeating himself and patiently accepting adversity. To achieve this, it will be extremely useful to attend the sacraments, especially those of penance and the Eucharist. This will allow them to gain new vigor and acquire strength and energy to fight against the enemies of holiness.

### THE DANGER OF IMPERFECT SOULS

There are reckless souls who consider dedicating themselves to external works as the most important thing to acquire perfection and holiness.

## Something disastrous and harmful

For many souls, dedicating themselves completely to external works does more harm than good to their spirit, not because these works are not good and commendable, but because they dedicate themselves so completely to them that they forget what is essential and most necessary: your thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Don't let your evil inclinations run wild; they expose you to many traps and temptations from the enemies of the soul. (In this case, the phrase that Saint Bernard wrote to his former disciple Eugene, then Supreme Pontiff, could be repeated: "Damn occupations" those that can separate you from the spiritual life and the sanctification of the soul).

### A trap

The enemies of our salvation, seeing that the number of occupations that attract us and separate us from the true path that leads to holiness, not only encourage us to continue practicing them, but also fill our imagination with chimerical and false ideas, trying to convince us that by dedicating ourselves to so many external actions, we are already conquering a wonderful eternal paradise (forgetting what a saint said: "I would like those who are so busy and concerned with so many external works to be convinced that they would gain much more for their own holiness and for the good of others, if they dedicated themselves a little more to what is spiritual and supernatural; otherwise, everything will mean accomplishing little, or nothing, or less than nothing, because without spiritual life one can still do more harm than good").

### Another scam

There is another trap against our spiritual life, which is that during prayer, grandiose and even curious thoughts come to mind, pleasant conversations about future apostolates and work for souls, and instead of dedicating this precious time to loving God, adoring him, thinking about his perfections, giving thanks and asking forgiveness for our sins, we dedicate ourselves to flying like various butterflies on many topics that are not prayer, and even like bluebottle flies that fly with imagination, to the trash cans of this world.

## SIGN THAT SHOWS THE DEGREE OF PERFECTION

Although a person dedicates himself to many external works and spends time in fantasies and imaginations, the sign to know to what degree of perfection his spirituality has reached is to discover what change and transformation in his life he has achieved with his behavior and customs. Because if, despite so many works and projects, they always want to be preferred over others, they are full of whims and rebels, obstinate in their own opinion, without wanting to accept the opinion of others, without worrying about accepting the opinion of others, and without Concerned with observing their own miseries and weaknesses, they dedicate themselves to observing with eyes wide open the faults and miseries of others (repeating what Jesus criticized so much: "they look at the speck that is in the eyes of others and not at the beam they carry in your own eyes"). This is a sign that the degree of his holiness is still very low. And if anyone dares to utter anything in his own opinion with criticisms, comments or denials of special demonstrations of appreciation, he explodes in anger and indignation. And when they are told that the important thing is not so much the number of prayers and devotions they have, but the quality and love for God and neighbor that exists in these pious practices, they get irritated; they get upset and restless and don't accept it from anyone.

With this they show that their holiness is still very small. And even more so if when Our Lord, to lead them to greater perfection, allows illnesses, setbacks, trials and

persecutions to affect them, then they manifest that their holiness is false because they explode in complaints, protests and they accept to conform their will with the Most Holy Will of God.

### A VERY DIFFICULT SINNER TO CONVERT

Everyday experience teaches that a manifest sinner is more easily converted than one who hides and covers himself with the cloak of many external works of virtue. Because these souls are dazzled and blinded by their pride to such an extent that an extraordinary grace from heaven is needed to convert them and free them from their deception. They are always in harmful danger of remaining in their state of spiritual lukewarmness and prostration because they have the eyes of their spirit clouded by an enormous self-love and by an insatiable desire for people to value and appreciate them when they do their external works, which in themselves they are good, they seek to satisfy their vanity and attribute to themselves many degrees of perfection, in their presumption and pride, they live censoring and condemning others.

Perfection does not consist, then, in dedicating oneself to a lot of external work. For as Saint Paul says: "Even if I do the most wonderful works in the world, if I do not have love for God and neighbor, I am nothing" (1Co13).

### WHAT IS THE BASIS, THEN, FOR OBTAINING PERFECTION?

The basis of perfection and holiness consists of five things:

1 a In knowing and meditating on the greatness and infinite goodness of God, on our weakness and strong inclination towards evil. It is the grace that Saint Francis of Assisi asked for in his prayers for entire nights, until he managed to obtain it: "Lord: know yourself; get to know me."

two a Accepting being humiliated and submitting our will not only to the Divine Majesty, but to the person that God has placed to direct, advise and govern us.

3 a In doing and suffering everything solely for the love of God and the salvation of souls; achieve the glory of God and always be able to please Him. In this way we fulfill the first commandment that says: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and above all things".

4 a Fulfill what Jesus demands: Deny yourself, accept the cross of suffering that God allows us to reach, follow Jesus by imitating his examples; accept his yoke, which is easy and light, and learn from him who is gentle and humble in heart (cf. Mt 11:22).

5 a Follow what Saint Paul advises: imitate the example of Jesus who did not take advantage of his dignity as God, but humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death and death on the cross (cf. Phil2).

### GREAT INITIAL FEE FOR A HUGE PURCHASE

Someone will say: "Many conditions are necessary." The reason is this: what will be obtained is not just any perfection, or second-rate, but true holiness. Therefore, because what they aspire to achieve is of immense value, the quotas required are also high. But they are not impossible.

Here we must repeat what Moses said in Deuteronomy: "The commandments that are given are not beyond your strength, nor are they something strange that you cannot practice" (Dt30).

### HARD FIGHT, BUT BIG PRIZE

We write for those who are not content to lead a mediocre life, but who aspire to spiritual perfection and holiness. To do this, it is necessary to continually fight against the bad inclinations that each person feels towards vice and sin; dominate and mortify the senses, seek to eliminate from our lives the bad habits we have

acquired, which is not possible without tireless and continuous dedication to the task of achieving perfection and holiness, always have a ready, enthusiastic and courageous spirit that does not stop to fight to try to be better. But the prize that awaits us is very great, says Saint Paul: "A crown of glory awaits me, which the Divine Judge will give me, and not only to me, but to all those who waited with love for his manifestation" (cf. 2Tm 4:8). "But no one will receive the crown if he has not fought according to the regulations" (2Tm2,5).

## SOMETHING THAT THANKS GOD VERY MUCH

The war that we have to fight to reach holiness is the most difficult of all wars, because we have to fight against ourselves, or as Saint Peter says: "We have to fight against the evil inclinations of our bodies that fight against the soul" (cf. 1P2,11). But precisely because the combat is more difficult and longer, for this very reason the victory achieved is much more pleasing to God and more glorious for whoever manages to win; because here what the Holy Book says is fulfilled: "He who governs himself is worth more than he who governs a city" (Pr 16:32). Controlling one's passions, curbing evil inclinations, repressing evil desires and evil movements that assail us, is a work that can be more pleasing before God than if we performed brilliant works that would give us fame and popularity.

And on the contrary, it can happen that although we do many admirable external works in front of people, instead, we do not please God because we accept in our hearts to follow the evil inclinations of our nature and we allow ourselves to be carried away and dominated by disordered passions.

That is why we must be careful not to be content with dedicating ourselves to doing work that earns us fame and prestige among others, in the meantime we let our senses go astray, sensuality dominate us and bad habits take over our path to success. work. It would be a fatal mistake.

### Four conditions

We have seen what spiritual perfection or sanctity consists of and what advantages it presents. Now let us deal with the four conditions necessary to achieve this perfection, obtain the palm of victory and be victors in the battle to save the soul and obtain a high position in heaven. These four conditions are: Distrust ourselves, trust in God, exercise the qualities we have and dedicate ourselves to prayer. We will explain them in the following chapters.

THE PRIZE CROWN WILL NOT BE RECEIVED IF YOU DO NOT FIGHT ACCORDING TO THE RULES AND REGULATIONS (2Tm2,25)

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DISTRUST THAT WAS STOPPED IN YOURSELF

Distrust in oneself is extremely necessary in spiritual combat, without this quality or condition, not only will we not be able to triumph against the enemies of our holiness, but we will also not be able to overcome the weakest of our passions. What the prophetess Anna said in the Bible will always be fulfilled: "Human beings do not triumph by their own strength" (cf. 1S2,9). And what the prophet announced: "My people said, 'I am strong.' I can only resist the enemy. And they were handed over to the power of their oppressors."

It is necessary to deeply engrave this truth in our minds, because unfortunately it happens that although in truth we are nothing but nothing and misery, we still have a false assessment of ourselves, believing without any foundation that we are something, that we can do something, that we will be able to overcome alone and with our own strength.



This error is disastrous and brings fatal consequences and is the effect of a harmful pride that is very unpleasant in the eyes of God. And if we accept it, what the psalmist narrates will be fulfilled in each one: "I thought I was very calm; I will never fail.

But you took away your help from me, O God, and I fell into defeat and oppression" (Ps 30).

We have to convince ourselves that there is no virtue, quality or good behavior in us that does not come from the goodness and mercy of God, because we ourselves, as Saint Paul says, cannot even say for ourselves that Jesus is God. "All our ability comes from God. For God is the one who works the will and the work in us" (Phil2:13). By our own strength, what we are capable of producing is: evil, imperfection and sin. Distrust in oneself is a gift from heaven and God grants it to a greater degree to the souls he has destined for a superior dignity, until they can repeat what that famous woman of antiquity, Saint Ildegarde, said: "The only thing I can be absolutely sure of myself, is my terrible weakness for sin and my terrible inclination towards evil."

One way:

God leads the soul to doubt, allowing almost insurmountable temptations to come upon it, humiliating falls, unexpected reactions, indescribable inclinations to appear in its nature, and leaving it for certain moments in a night so dark of the soul that even praying the Our Father feels if tired and apathetic. In such a way that one acquires the conviction of total impotence and inability to walk towards perfection and holiness, if the power of God does not come to the rescue.

The medicines.

The main remedy, of the four that we are going to advise, is to think and meditate until we are convinced that by our own natural forces we are not capable of dedicating ourselves to doing good and avoiding evil, nor of behaving in such a way that we deserve to enter the Kingdom. from the heavens. These words of Jesus must always be in our memory: "Without me you can do nothing".

The second remedy is to ask God with fervor and humility, often for the grace to trust Him and distrust ourselves. Because this is a gift from heaven and to achieve it it is necessary first of all to recognize that we do not have the necessary distrust, then to convince ourselves that we will not achieve distrust in ourselves alone, but that it is necessary to humbly prostrate ourselves before of the Lord and ask him that infinite goodness would deign to grant it to us. And we can be sure that if we persevere in asking, he will eventually give it to us.

There is a third remedy for acquiring doubts (as to attaining holiness on one's own) and it consists in accustoming ourselves little by little to not trusting in one's own strength to keep the soul without sin, and to feeling a real fear of it. traps that will present us with our evil inclinations that always tend towards sin; remember that there are countless enemies who oppose us to achieve perfection, who are incomparably more cunning and stronger than us and can even do what Saint Paul already feared: "They become angels of light, to deceive us" (1Co11 ,14) and with the appearance that they are taking us to heaven, they set traps against our salvation. With the psalmist we can repeat: "How many are the enemies of my soul, Lord! And they hate her with cruel hatred." And we can only repeat the appeal of Psalm 12: "Lord: how long will the enemies of my soul triumph? May my enemy not be able to say: I defeated him: "Do not let my adversaries rejoice in my failure".

The fourth remedy is that when we fall into some failure, we reflect on how great our weakness and inclination towards evil is, and we think that God probably allows failures and falls to better enlighten us about the impressive inability that we have to achieve on our own. sanctification and thus we learn to be humble and to recognize limitations and to accept being looked down upon by others.

## CONDITION WITHOUT WHICH IT IS NOT POSSIBLE

If we do not accept being despised and humiliated, we will never achieve distrust in ourselves, because this is based on true humility that is never achieved without receiving humiliation and is also based on the sincere recognition that for ourselves we deserve nothing but contempt and humiliation. .

Don't wait until it's too late

It is better to accept the small humiliations that come to us due to weaknesses and miseries every day, and that this does not happen to us as very proud and confident people who only open their eyes to recognize their weaknesses and bad inclinations when big and embarrassing falls happen to them. What St. Augustine said happens to them: "I fear that you will fall into mistakes that will greatly humiliate you, because I notice that you are very proud."

When God sees that the easiest and mildest remedies do not work to make the person recognize their inability to resist with their own strength the attacks of evil and achieve their sanctification, then he allows falls into sin to occur, which will be more or less frequent and more or less serious, depending on the degree of pride and presumption that soul has. And if there were a person as exempt and free from this vain confidence in one's own strengths, as the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most certain thing is that she would never fall into any guilt.

Good consequence.

From all this you must draw the following conclusion: that every time you make a mistake, humbly recognize that alone, without God's help, you are not capable of even fabricating a good thought or resisting a single temptation and ask for it. May the Lord grant you his light and illumination to convince you of your own nothingness and of the absolute and indispensable need you have for divine help; and you purpose not to vainly presume or think that of your own accord you will attain to holiness or virtue. Because if you believe in what you are not and imagine that you will be able to do what you cannot do, you will certainly continue to make the same mistakes as before and perhaps even make even worse mistakes.

## CHAPTER 3

### TRUST IN GOD

Although distrust in ourselves is so important and necessary in this fight, if the only thing we have is this distrust, we will certainly be disarmed and defeated by spiritual enemies.

It is absolutely necessary that we have great trust in God, who is the author of all the good that happens to us and the only one from whom we can expect victories in the spiritual field. Because just as what we will achieve alone will be frequent failures and dangerous falls, which must lead us to always live in distrust of our own strengths, we can also be sure that with God's help and his great kindness we can hope for victory against the enemies of our salvation, progress in virtue and growth in perfection, being suspicious of our own weaknesses and evil inclinations that we have and trusting greatly in the divine power and in the desire that Our Lord has to help us, we pray with all our heart that He will come Help us.

### THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE TRUST IN GOD

There are four ways to achieve progress in trusting God.

The first: ask often and with humility, in our prayer. Jesus promised: "Everyone who asks receives. My Father will give a good spirit to anyone who asks" (Luke 11:11).



The second way is: thinking about the great power of God and his infinite kindness, which moves him to always grant much more than is asked.

Remember what the angel said to the Virgin Mary: "nothing is impossible with God" (Lc1,38).

It is very useful to think from time to time that God, through his immense kindness and the excess of love with which he loves us, is always willing and ready to give us, every hour and every day, everything we need for life. spiritual and to achieve victory against selfishness and evil inclinations, if we ask with filial confidence. Psalm 145 says: "God satisfies the good wishes of his faithful ones".

### SOMETHING TO BE REMEMBERED

To increase confidence in Our Lord, let us think that for 33 years he lived on this earth in the midst of sacrifices and suffering, to save our souls.

Let us remember that each of us is the lost sheep who, through our carelessness, strayed from the Lord's flock, and He has called us night and day so that we can once again be part of the group of those who will accompany Him in the heaven forever. He had to shed sweat, blood and tears for us to become one of his faithful sheep again. If he risked going so far in search of a lost sheep, how much more will he help those of us who seek him and cry out and beg for his help? Upon hearing that the sheep screams from the cliff where it fell, afraid of the wolves' howls that can already be heard in the distance, the good Shepherd runs to protect and defend it. And He does not humiliate her, nor beat her, nor blame her for her imprudence, but carries her lovingly on his shoulders to where the group of sheep that remained faithful is. Let us consider that our soul is represented in that poor sheep, which Jesus is immensely interested in saving from the dangers of the world, the devil and the flesh, trying every day to lead to holiness.

#### The lost coin

Jesus narrated the case of that woman who lost a silver coin, which was equivalent to a day's market for her family and she dedicates herself to sweeping the house and shaking carpets and furniture until she can find it, very happy she invites the neighbors to congratulate her for the great joy she feels at having recovered the lost coin. And Jesus, in that beautiful chapter 15 of the Gospel of Saint Luke in which he narrates these parables, tells us that in heaven, God and his angels feel great joy for a soul that was already lost and that is recovering again for the Kingdom of God. God also feels the joy of finding what was lost. And each of us can provide that joy by returning again from our lives of sin to the lives of grace and holiness. And the person most interested in this happening is our Divine Savior.

I'm at the door and I knock.

In the book of Revelation Jesus says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens the door of his soul to me, we will come in and have dinner together" (Ap3,21). With this, Our Lord demonstrates the great desire He has to live in our soul, to dialogue with us and to give us His gifts and graces. And if he comes so willingly, will he not grant us the favors we desire?

The third remedy for achieving great trust in God is to review from time to time what Holy Scripture says about the importance of trusting in Our Lord. For example, Psalm 2 says, "Blessed are those who trust in God." And Psalm 19 states: "Some trust in their riches.

Others rely on their defensive weapons.

Instead, we trust in God and beg for his help, while others fall to the ground, we manage to remain standing." Whoever trusts in God will not be rejected by Him (cf.

Ps33). Whœver trusts in God will see that He will act in their favor. I'm old and I've never seen anyone who trusted in God and failed (cf. Ps36). Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, they will not be moved or overthrown by attacks or contradictions (cf. Ps124).

Whœver trusts in God will be blessed, prosper and be happy (cf. Pr28).

77 times the Holy Scripture says that blessings, happiness, peace, progress and blessings will come to those who place their trust in God. If he said it 77 times, it means this is too important for us to forget.

Therefore the prophet exclaimed: "Do you know who the Lord prefers? Those who trust in his mercy." No one has ever trusted in God and been abandoned by Him (cf. Eccl2,11).

The fourth and final remedy for achieving, at the same time, distrust in our own strengths and great trust in God, is that when we propose to do some good work or achieve some virtue or quality, we fix our attention first on our own misery, weakness and then in the enormous power of God and in the infinite desire that he has to help us and in this way we will balance the fear that comes from our inability and inclination towards evil, with the security that the powerful help that the good God wants for us send inspire us and we will be determined to act and fight bravely. "Me, plus my strengths and my abilities, the same: nothing. But me, my strengths, my abilities, plus God's help, the same: countless successes. "It's not that we ourselves can do anything , says Saint Paul: all our sufficiency comes from God".

Proud self-sufficiency leads to failure.

Humble trust in Our Lord achieves formidable successes.

The three forces: with distrust in ourselves and trust in God, together with constant prayer, we can accomplish great works and achieve wonderful victories. Let's do the test and see unexpected effects.

But if we do not suspect our misery and do not place all our trust in God's help, and if we neglect prayer, we will end up in sad spiritual defeats. The more we trust in God, the more favors we will receive from him.

Let us always remember what the Lord said to a great saint: "Do not forget that I have the power and goodness to give you much more than you dare ask or desire." This is what Saint Paul had already taught so many centuries ago (Eph 3:20).

LORD: BLESSED THOSE WHO TRUST IN YOU (Ps 83)

## CHAPTER 4

### HOW CAN WE KNOW IF WE ACT WITH DISTRUST IN OURSELVES AND WITH TRUST IN GOD

Often, souls who believe they are what they are not, imagine that they have already done so. they have achieved distrust in themselves and sufficient trust in God, but it is an error and a mistake that is not well known except when one falls into some sin, because then the soul becomes restless, discouraged, afflicted and loses hope of being able to progress in life , virtue; and all this is a sign that she did not trust in God, but in herself, if her despair and her sadness are very great, this is a clear argument that she trusted too much in herself and little in God.

Difference :

whœver is very suspicious of himself, of his weakness and inclination towards evil and places all his trust in God, when he makes a mistake he does not get discouraged, nor does he worry too much, nor does he despair, because he knows that his faults are a natural effect of his weakness and the little care he took to increase his trust in God; rather, with this bitter experience he learns to distrust his

own strengths more and to trust with greater humility in the goodness of Our Lord, hating with all his soul the faults committed and the disordered passions that lead to making these mistakes; but his grief and his repentance are gentle, peaceful, humble, full of confidence that divine mercy will have compassion on him and forgive him; he returns again to his practices of piety and intends to face the enemies of his salvation with greater courage, more strength and sacrifice than before.

A misleading cause:

In this regard, it is important for some spiritual people to think and consider that when they fall into some fault they become excessively distressed and discouraged, often they want more to get rid of the restlessness and pain that their sin gives them, than to recover full friendship with them again. God; and if they quickly seek a confessor, it is not so much to please Our Lord, but to recover the peace and tranquility of their spirit (for this reason, a certain confessor told a nun who told him that he had shouted to his superior that afternoon: "For today, don't go to confession yet. Wait for three days to pass and when you have apologized to your superior, come and ask for forgiveness through your confessor." instead of first trying to make peace and friendship with God and with the offended person ).

Very important questions:

Everyone should ask themselves from time to time: what is the cause of the sadness I feel for having sinned? Having displeased the good Lord? Having hurt other people? Having horribly ugly my soul that is being watched over by God and his angels? Having lost a certain degree of shine and glory for eternity? Having brought me yet another punishment for the day when the Just Judge will pay each one according to his works and according to his conduct? Or is it just that my self-respect and pride have been hurt? Or that my appearance of holiness has diminished? It's important to ask yourself this often.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE MISTAKE OF SOME PEOPLE WHO CONFUSE FEAR AND PESSIMISM WITH A QUALITY OR VIRTUE

There is a very common mistake that consists of believing that it is a virtue, a good quality to be discouraged, discouraged, to let yourself be overcome by sadness and pessimism when you make a mistake Well, in these cases it almost always happens that the bitterness for having sinned does not come from mainly from the pain of having offended and displeased God, but rather that pride was hurt by the awareness of one's own misery and weakness, the confidence one had in one's own strengths and abilities to resist evil, they totally failed.

Danger from proud people.

Normally, presumptuous souls who believe they are more capable of being good than they really are, do not give due importance to the dangers that will befall them and the temptations that may befall them, so when they fall into one and recognize as a bitter experience how great they are their misery and weakness, they marvel and worry at their fall as if it were something new and strange, because they see the idol of self-love and false self-confidence crumble to the ground on which they have recklessly placed hope and, proving that they are souls Those who trust more in their own strength than in God's help, allow themselves to be carried away by sadness, discouragement and can even reach despair.

## SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN TO HUMBLE PEOPLE

This does not happen with truly humble souls who do not trust in their own strength or ability to resist evil, but only in the help and goodness of God, because when they fall into some fault, although they feel a lot of pain for having offended the good God, for having stained their soul and having done harm to others, they are not surprised, nor worried, nor discouraged, for they know very well that their fall is a natural effect of their terrible weakness and the impressive inclination that their nature feels towards evil.

These souls repeat what that ancient saint said: "I fear everything from my malice, my weakness and my inclination towards evil. I hope everything for the goodness and mercy of God." Every day we see the battle between human weakness and God's omnipotence.

In fact, what the saints say is fulfilled: "Humility produces tranquility". The only thing the humble man is sure of is his weakness. But he remains happy if at the same time he lives assured that God's goodness will never abandon him. "I will never abandon you", says the Lord several times in Holy Scripture.

No wonder a spiritual director told someone asking him for advice, "You are no longer holy because you are no longer humble."

Like the three young men in the oven (about whom the prophet Daniel speaks), we must say: "Lord: we have sinned. That is why so many humiliations have befallen us in all justice."

Saint Augustine, when remembering the terrible and numerous sins of his life, did not dedicate himself to lamenting or becoming discouraged, but to proclaiming the wonderful goodness of God who knew how to forgive him.

## CHAPTER 6

### IMPORTANT NOTICES TO ACQUIRE DISTRUST AND TRUST IN GOD

As much of the strength we need to overcome the attacks of the enemies of our salvation depends on self-distrust and trust in God, let us remember some warnings that are very useful in achieving these two qualities.

#### A CONDITION WITHOUT WHICH NOTHING CAN BE OBTAINED

First of all, we must take into account as a truth that does not admit of discussion or doubt, that even if we have all the talents and qualities, whether natural or acquired through our own effort, even if we have a prodigious intelligence, even if we know the Holy Scripture by heart, we have served the Lord for many years, we are used to serving Him and behaving well, we will always be absolutely incapable of duly obeying the Creator and fully fulfilling our obligations, if God's powerful force with Special protection does not fortify our hearts on every occasion that arises in our path to do good and avoid evil, to do some good works or to overcome some temptation, to escape from danger or to be able to bear the cross of tribulation.

It is necessary to deeply engrave this truth in our memory, not let a day pass without meditating on it, considering it, and in this way we will gradually avoid the defect called presumption, which consists of believing ourselves more capable of being good and ceasing to be bad, than we actually are, and thus we will avoid trusting recklessly and recklessly in our own strength.

Something easy for God.

Regarding trust in God, let us remember what the Holy Book says: "It is very easy for God to give us victory against all the enemies of our soul, whether they are few or many, whether strong or weak, whether old and experienced. or young and

exalted" (1S 14,6).

From this fundamental principle we will draw the conclusion that although the soul is attacked by all sins and vices, full of imperfections, bad habits and horrendous inclinations, even after having made every effort to reform customs, no progress is noticed in virtue. , one feels and recognizes in oneself a greater inclination towards evil and greater ease in sinning, this is not why one should lose courage and trust in God, nor stop fighting, nor abandon the practices of piety, but rather dedicate oneself with greater enthusiasm trying to do good and avoid evil, because in this spiritual combat those who never stop fighting and trusting in God, who never stops helping those who love Him with His help and relief, are not declared defeated. They emerge victorious, although he often allows them to be defeated. If you have God's help you may lose battles, but you will never lose the war.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOW TO MAKE WELL USE OF THE TWO POWERS WE RECEIVE: UNDERSTANDING AND WILL

If in spiritual combat we had only two weapons: trust in God and distrust in ourselves, we would most likely not be able to overcome our passions and would fall into many serious mistakes. That is why it is necessary to add two other very important qualities to these two qualities: making good use of our understanding and strengthening our will.

#### THE TWO ADDICTIONS THAT ATTACK UNDERSTANDING

There are two great vices that pervert and cause much harm to the understanding, and they are ignorance and vain curiosity. (Understanding is the faculty or aptitude or ability we have to compare, judge, reason or draw conclusions).

The first defect: ignorance. This consists of not knowing what we should know, what we should know. Ignorance prevents the understanding from possessing and knowing the truth, which is the object for which intelligence was made. It is extremely necessary that the soul that wishes to achieve perfection strives to acquire more spiritual knowledge every day and seeks to know better and better what it must do to achieve perfection and acquire virtues, and what must be avoided. to overcome passions.

#### HOW ARE THE LIGHTS THAT DISPOSE OF IGNORANCE OBTAINED?

The darkness of ignorance recedes with two very special lights. The first of these lights is prayer, frequently asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us about what we should do, say and avoid. Jesus said: "My Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to anyone who asks him" (cf. Lk 11:15). And then he adds: "The Holy Spirit will guide you into the full truth and will remind you of everything I told you" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit will speak to us many times through the Holy Scriptures (if we read them), especially the Holy Gospels. He will also speak to us through the reading of pious books (if we are willing to set aside some time to dedicate ourselves to reading) and often through the preachers and religious superiors that God has placed to guide us. Jesus said about them: "He who hears them hears me" (cf. Lk 10:16). This is why it is so important to maintain our judgment and look like our superiors and spiritual guides.

The removal of our ignorance depends greatly on the intervention of the Holy Spirit. We need to let ourselves be programmed by the Holy Spirit. We must investigate what the Divine Spirit wants from us. One cannot speak well, think rightly, or act as God truly desires without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is necessary to say to him many times and every day "Come Holy Spirit". He is the inexhaustible source of imagination and good ideas. It gives us a new way of looking



at and appreciating people, the world, history and ourselves. He is the great pedagogue or teacher who teaches us to love, to make good use of our freedom, time, the gifts and qualities that God has given us and to know in each case what pleases God most and what Our Lord do not like.

The second light to ward off ignorance is to continually dedicate ourselves to considering, analyzing the situations that arise and the things we want to say or do, to examine whether they are good and good for us or bad and can harm us, qualifying what they are worth, not by appearances or according to the opinion of the world, as the Scripture says: "God does not look at what appears on the outside, but on the holiness of the heart and the inner worth" (1S 16,7) and values them according to the inspired idea by the Holy Spirit. This way of analyzing and valuing things and situations will make us know clearly that what the world loves and seeks with so much ardor is illusion and a lie; that the honors and pleasures of the earth are nothing more than afflictions and smoke that the wind carries away, as Ecclesiastes says: "Vanity of vanities, all emptiness and affliction of spirit" (Eccl 1).

The light of the Holy Spirit will make us see that the humiliations, offenses and contempt they give us are occasions for us to achieve true glory in heaven; that forgiving and doing good to those who have offended us is a sign that we too will be forgiven by God and that we will not be punished with all the severity that our sins deserve; that being good to everyone, even to the bad and ungrateful, is to make us similar to the good God who makes it rain on the good and the bad and makes the sun shine even on the most ungrateful.

The Holy Spirit, if we invoke Him with faith, will convince us that it is better to give up the pleasures of the world than to live enjoying everything we want.

This reward is much greater for humbly obeying than for giving orders to many. That knowing and humbly recognizing what we are is a science that benefits us more than all the other sciences that can fill us with pride. That winning, controlling bad desires and bad inclinations and going against many small desires that were not so necessary, can give us a great personality, and what the Holy Book said will be fulfilled in us: "He who dominates himself is worth more than than he who rules a city" (Pr 16:32).

## CHAPTER 8

### THE CAUSES THAT PREVENT US FROM ADEQUATELY JUDGING AND QUALIFYING SITUATIONS AND THE RULES THAT MUST BE OBSERVED TO KNOW THEM WELL

A very important reason why we do not adequately judge or qualify situations and things is because as soon as they are presented to us our imagination is immediately carried away by sympathy or antipathy for them, sympathy and antipathy by blind reason and thus disfigures people, situations and things. that seem different to us than they really are.

A medicine.

If we want to be free from this serious danger, we must be alert not to give our opinions without further ado, hastily, letting ourselves be carried away simply because we like it or don't like it.

When a situation, a person, an object, an action is presented to the mind, it is necessary to give oneself time to judge and examine it slowly, without passion, without much sympathy or antipathy, before the will determines to love or hate, accept it or reject it, declare it pleasant or unpleasant.

If the will, before analyzing and knowing the object well, is inclined to love or hate it, then the understanding is no longer free to know it as it truly is in itself, because passion disfigures it in such a way. which forces him to form a false idea and then he is inclined to love or hate it vehemently and fails to comply with rules or measures or to listen to what reason advises.



And allowing itself to be carried away by natural inclination, the understanding darkens more and more and represents to the will the object either more hateful or more lovable than before, in such a way that if the person does not make an effort not to be carried away by prejudices and inclinations, her understanding and her will will make her walk in a vicious circle that goes from error to error, from abyss to abyss and from darkness to darkness. This is why, even though we are passionate about something, it is best to refrain from judging about it until the passion calms down.

Prudence.

It is necessary to be very careful not to have an inordinate affection for things before examining or knowing what they really are in themselves, with the light of reason, especially with the supernatural light that the Holy Spirit sends to those who pray with faith. obtain the light of prudence that can be obtained by consulting those who know the subject.

Also which is good.

Let us note that this prudence, not to be carried away by mere inclination before judging, is necessary not only in what can be dangerous, but also in what is good in itself, because in these works, as they are worthy of admiration and appreciation, there may be the danger of being carried away more by one's own taste than by convenience. Well, it is enough for there to be a circumstance of time, or a location that is not convenient for these works for it to not be convenient to carry out them at that time.

That's why you need to know how to always consult those who know.

Not everything can be said everywhere and you can't always do everything, even if they are very good things, because everything has its time and its place, if the rules of prudence are not followed, even when dedicating oneself to works very good, absurd things can often be done. That is why it is so necessary to ask the Holy Spirit for the Gift of Counsel through which we know when, where and how we should do and say what we should do and say.

Daily order.

A saint said that every day we must ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the virtue of prudence, which is what teaches us when, how and where we should say and do each thing. Do we ask the Divine Spirit from time to time to grant us the virtue of prudence? If we don't ask, start asking today.

## CHAPTER 9

### ANOTHER VICE FROM WHICH WE MUST FREE UNDERSTANDING SO THAT IT KNOWS AND JUDGES WELL WHAT IS USEFUL

The second vice or defect that can cause much harm to our understanding is vain curiosity, filling our mind with a series of useless thoughts and knowledge that does us more harm than good.

There are many things and many events that because we don't know anything we miss, but discovering fills our mind with useless distractions. We should be dead to knowledge that is not helpful to our holiness and spiritual perfection. The old proverb said: "With curious and new news you will not worry, it will become old and you will already know it".

It is necessary to collect our understanding so as not to let it spread in vain through

a pile of profane and worldly news and knowledge that will only serve to disperse our minds and will not allow us to collect or meditate calmly. Why dwell on what does not serve me for my sanctification?

### THE BEST SCIENCE

Each of us must repeat with Saint Paul: "I desire nothing more than to know Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ crucified" (1Co 2:2). Know his life, his death, resurrection, ascension and glorification; understand his messages, imitate his good examples, remember how much he did and continues to do for his followers, what he asks and wants from each one of us.

### CLOUDS WITHOUT WATER

Of other things, especially those that are not necessary to achieve our sanctification and salvation, that will not help us to be useful to others and to grow in virtue, why live wanting to know them? There are so many things that nothing is lost by ignoring them and, on the contrary, knowing them fills the heart with restlessness. This fulfills what the wise Seneca said in the first century: "The more curiously I dedicated myself to knowing the details of the lives of human beings, the less of a good human being I became". Saint Jude Thaddeus calls this knowledge: "Clouds without water, trees without fruit, waves that only bring foam" (Jude 12).

When we want to know something, let us ask ourselves: will this be beneficial for my sanctification or for the good I can do for others? If it is not, dedicating myself to investigating it and wanting to know it could be a harmful curiosity, or even a trap for the enemies of my salvation, who want to fill my brain with cockroaches that do not allow the manna of heavenly wisdom to be well preserved there.

If we follow this rule, we will free ourselves from many useless worries, because when the enemy of the soul sees that he cannot force us to commit serious mistakes, he intends to fill us with worries in order to take away our peace. And so, if he cannot get us to stop praying, at least he intends to fill us with thoughts and imaginations during prayer, so that we do not focus our attention on God, on his glory, on his power and on his goodness in the graces and blessings that we want to achieve, but in the infinity of fantastic projects and memories of facts that we know. And so he manages that, instead of repenting of our wickedness and hating sin and making firm resolutions to correct our own lives, instead of filling ourselves with acts of love for God and desires to persevere in his holy friendship until death, let's dedicate ourselves to distracting ourselves in vaporous thoughts that can even fill us with pride and presumption, believing that we are already what we plan to be and that we no longer need a spiritual director or corrections. And it makes us make the big mistake of convincing ourselves that we are already good, just because we plan to be. (And from thinking about being to becoming one, there is an immense gulf).

Incurable disease.

This disease is very dangerous and almost incurable, because when thoughts are full of new theories, fantastic ideas and crazy plans, the person becomes convinced that they are better than others (just because they planned to be, without actually being, even remotely yet).

Who will be able to disabuse him? How can you admit your mistake? How can you allow yourself to be guided by a prudent spiritual director if you already imagine yourself as a spiritual authority? It's the blind leading the blind; blind pride leading blind understanding through vanity. On the other hand, we should repeat with the ancient sage: "In matters of the spirit I only know that I know nothing", although pride wants to convince us that we are wiser than Solomon.

## CHAPTER 10

### HOW TO EXERCISE YOUR WILL. AND THE END TO WHICH WE MUST DO ALL THINGS

We have already seen how to avoid defects that can harm the understanding, and now we will study how to avoid what can harm the will, so that we can reach such a degree of perfection that, renouncing our own inclinations, what we seek is to always fulfill the holy God's will.

A condition.

It is necessary to emphasize that it is not enough to always want and try to do what God commands and desires, but it is also necessary to want and do these works to please Our Lord.

A trap.

It is necessary to master your own inclinations. Because nature, since original sin, is so inclined to indulge itself, that in all things, even in the most spiritual and holy things, the first thing it seeks is its own satisfaction and delight. And then there is a danger, and that is that when we are presented with the opportunity to do good work, we may dedicate ourselves to doing it and love it, but not because it is God's will or to please Him, but to please our desires, inclinations and obtain the satisfactions that we find when we do what God commands.

And even in the most holy, for example in the desire to live in continuous communication with God, it may be that we seek our own interests more than achieving his glory and fulfilling his holy Will, and the latter must be the only object that must be proposed to those who love him, seek him and want to fulfill his divine Law.

Remedy.

To avoid this danger, which is very harmful to those who wish to achieve perfection and holiness, it is necessary to resolve, with the help of the Holy Spirit, not to want or perform any action, except with the sole purpose of pleasing God. and fulfilling His Most Holy Will, so that He is the beginning and end of all our actions. It is necessary to imitate what Pope Saint Gregory the Great did, who while writing his admirable works, from time to time suspended his work and said: "Lord, it is for You, it is for Your glory. It is for the salvation of souls May nothing I do be to please my inclinations and affections, but so that your holy Will may always be fulfilled in me."

Technique.

It is very convenient that when the opportunity arises to do a good work, we first raise a prayer to God to ask him to enlighten us if it is his will for us to do it, and then we examine ourselves to see if what we are going to do is for us. , please our Lord. In this way, the will becomes accustomed to wanting what God wants, and to acting with the sole motive of pleasing Him and achieving His greatest glory. It is convenient to proceed in the same way when we want to reject and stop doing something. First lift your spirit to God to ask Him to enlighten you as to whether He really wants us not to do this, and whether by failing to do so we are pleasing Him. It is convenient to say from time to time: "Lord: enlighten us what we should say, do, avoid and oblige ourselves to do, say and avoid".

Secret deceptions.

It is important to remember that the mistakes that corrupted nature makes us are

great and very little known, which with hypocritical pretexts makes us believe that what we seek with our works has no other purpose than to please God. And here it comes from that we become excited about some things and repulsed by others just to please and satisfy ourselves, but in the meantime we remain convinced that this enthusiasm or repulsion is due only to our desire to please God or our fear of offending Him. . There is a remedy for this; continually rectify the intention and seriously propose to master our old condition inclined to sin and replace it with a new condition dedicated exclusively to pleasing God; or as Saint Paul said: "Renounce the old man with his vices and lusts and put on the new man, conformed in everything to Jesus Christ" (cf. Col 3:9).

A method.

Saint Bernard said from time to time to his pride, sensuality, vanity and self-love: "It was not because of you that I started this work nor is it because of you that I will continue to do it". And another saint repeated: "On the day of the eternal reward, only the works that I have done for Him and for the good of others will serve me to receive God's congratulations. Whatever I have done to please my vanity or my sensuality, I will have lost forever. My end would be very sad if the Lord had to say to me as he did to the Pharisees: "Did he do everything to be congratulated and esteemed by the people, or to please their tastes? Well, he has already received his reward on earth. Don't expect anything from heaven. "

The rudder.

Whoever steers a ship needs to be continually steering it in the direction it intends to go, because the first carelessness they make, the waves and wind will throw the ship in a completely different direction. So it is with our actions. We need to continually rekindle and reaffirm the intention of doing everything for God and only for Him, because self-love is so treacherous that the slightest oversight makes us change our intention, and what we begin to do for God we can easily stop doing, doing just what we like. And it would be a great loss.

A symptom or warning sign.

It often happens that when a person dedicates himself to doing a good work, not only to please God, but above all to satisfy his tastes and inclinations, when God prevents him from progressing in his work due to some illness, accident or financial lack, for opposition from superiors or neighbors, he becomes angry, irritated, restless, begins to murmur, complain and goes so far as to say that Our Lord should be more compassionate and generous with his work. And it follows that what moved him was not just to please the Creator, but to satisfy his own interests. Well, if it were only for God, I would calmly allow Him to bring His work to a happy ending when He pleased, if it were for His greatest glory, and if it were not, He would let it disappear, because then it does not deserve to continue to exist.

Exam.

That's why everyone should ask themselves this question from time to time: do I get really worried if the jobs I do don't go quickly or don't go according to my plans? I get upset if the Lord, with the events He allows to happen to me, says to me: "It's not time yet... do we have to wait a little longer?" I have to remember that the important thing is not that my works are very successful on earth, but that God is happy with what I do. That it is not the action that has value, but the intention with which it is carried out.

Something that greatly increases the value.

The intention to do everything for the love of God and for his greater glory increases the value of our works so much that, although they have very little value in themselves, if they are done purely for God, they become more valuable and rewarding than other works, although they have greater value in themselves, if they are carried out for other purposes. For example, a small alms given to a poor person (small, but it costs us. Because what doesn't cost is rubbish and has no reward) if that small alms is given out of love for God, because the neighbor represents Jesus Christ, it can have a higher price and obtain a greater prize, than the enormous expenses that are made on brilliant works, but to appear and to gain the admiration of others.

Something that is not easy.

Let us not deceive ourselves or deceive ourselves. This thing of always doing everything out of pure love for God will not be easy at first, but it will seem very difficult. But in time this will become not only easy, but even pleasant, and we will gradually get into the habit of doing everything for the love of the good God, from whom we receive all the good things we have.

Like the philosopher's stone.

The ancients believed in the legend that there was a stone that turned everything it touched into gold. They called it the "philosopher's stone" and looked for it everywhere and, as can be assumed, they never found it because such a stone does not exist. But in the spiritual it exists, and it consists of what we have recommended: offering everything we do solely for the love of God and to please Him. The action we offer to God automatically becomes gold for eternal life. With a very high price for eternity. That is why it is consensual that from today onwards we begin to try to acquire the very good habit of directing all of the above towards a single end: the love and glory of God.

#### SOMETHING THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED BY ASKING

It is necessary to remember that this formidable habit of doing everything for God and only for Him is not something that human beings will be able to achieve only through their efforts and purposes. This is something imported from heaven, and if Our Lord does not grant it to us by his special grace, we will not obtain it. This is why we must ask for a lot in our prayers. And to encourage us to fulfill it, we must frequently meditate on the countless benefits and favors that God has done to us and continues to do to us continually, considering that all of this is done out of pure love and without any interest on his part.

"THEY CANNOT BELIEVE IF WHAT THEY SEEK IS THE GLORY AND PRAISE THAT COMES FROM OTHERS, AND NOT THE GLORY THAT COMES FROM THE ONLY GOD".  
(John 5, 44) 31

#### CHAPTER 11

##### SOME THINGS WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT TO MOVE THE WILL TO SEEK, IN ALL THINGS, THANK GOD

There are some truths that, if we meditate and remember, will move the will to want in all our actions and in all our behaviors, seek that God is pleased with what we do, what we say and think. They are the following:

1° Consider how much God's love has done for us. For example: he created us out of nothing. He gave us a soul made in His image and likeness. He gave us dominion over irrational creatures so that they would serve us. When we were in danger of being lost forever, he did not send an angel to save us, but his own Son. And he did not redeem us or pay the price of our liberation with gold and silver, but with the precious blood of his Most Holy Son. And so that we could struggle successfully in life, he left us the Body and Blood of Christ as food.

2° Think that God lives defending us at all times. The Psalm says: "Your guardian does not sleep." He who cares for the chosen people does not sleep or stop watching for a moment. "The Lord keeps you in his shadow, he is at your right protecting you, ready to defend you from all evil" (cf. Ps120). And another psalmist exclaims: "Even if my father and my mother abandon me, the Lord God will never abandon me" (cf. Ps27). What better proof or demonstration of love could the good God give us? This is why we must love him intensely.

3rd Remember how much our Creator esteems us. He can repeat to us what he said through the Prophet: "What more could I have done for you that I did not?" His esteem for each one of us is so great and his desire to save us and make us holy is so great that he sent us from heaven the best treasure he had: his own Son. And he allowed him to die on the cross with the most ignominious of deaths so that he could pay our debts to Divine Justice and obtain for us a place in eternal glory. And this Jesus became like us in everything except sin. And he learned through suffering to understand those of us who suffer.

We must honor those who honor us. This is what the great ones of the earth try to do. And who has honored us more in all of existence than Our Lord? He made us his children, brothers of his Son Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit and heirs of heaven. We hope that we remember from time to time these demonstrations of appreciation and affection that He has given us, so that we also offer love and gratitude instead.

WE LOVE GOD BECAUSE HE LOVED US FIRST (Saint John)

## CHAPTER 12

### THE FORCES THAT WAGE WAR, EACH OTHER, WITHIN US

In each of us there are two great forces that wage war without ceasing. One is the superior will, the spiritual force, which, guided by reason and faith, wants to elevate us to behaviors typical of a rational being, of someone who is the Son of God, and whose destiny is eternal life in heaven. The other great force, which is called inferior, is a material force, guided by passions, by the inclinations of the carnal nature, and often by the attractions of the worldly, sensual and the temptations of the devil. This second force called "sensitive appetite" will not be able to lead us to evil if the will guided by reason and illuminated by the Holy Spirit stops, dominates and guides it.

A war continues.

Saint Job said that the life of the human person on this earth is like military service in times of war, or like the worker's day in times of great work. The spiritual war between the superior will guided by reason and the inferior will guided by passions will last a lifetime. From the moment we remember until our last breath, this war will be total and without letup. There will be moments of greater peace and others of greater combat, but the struggle will never cease on this earth. What Jesus announced is fulfilled here: "I did not come to bring peace, but war" (cf. Mt10:34).



### The four horses.

An ancient author said that the human person travels through this world in a carriage drawn by four horses. Two white and two black.

The two targets are reason and will. And the two blacks are passions and evil inclinations. And to know where each one will end up, we have to discover who we leave in charge, God or the devil, or selfishness. If it is God who directs us with his holy inspirations, the end will be eternal glory and holiness.

But if we let the devil and his temptations guide us, the end will be evil and even eternal damnation. Who's driving my float today?

### The worst misfortune.

Just as having received from God the pleasure of praying and thinking about the heavenly and the supernatural is a wonderful gift for which we can never be adequately grateful, in the same way, the worst spiritual misfortune that can happen to a person is perhaps contracting a disease, a habit, acquire a bad habit. There is nothing that enslaves you like a bad habit. No wonder Jesus said: "Whoever commits sin becomes a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Those who in their youth acquired some bad habit, a facility for doing some bad action, acquired through repetition, suffer an indescribable pain when they try to correct their bad life and break the chains that enslave them to the world and the flesh, change their lives and begin to consecrate yourself entirely to the service of God. Because their will is so powerfully opposed by their bad habits and so weakened by their frequent repetition of bad acts, that they now feel as if they had a second nature and the blows they receive from their bad inclinations are so strong and violent that without a special grace or help from God will not be able to resist without continually falling. This fulfills what Saint Paul said: "I do the evil that I do not want to do and, on the other hand, the good that I would like to do, I cannot do. inclination that goes against the law of my reason and enslaves me. It is the law of sin. The inclination to do evil" (cf. Rom 7:18).

### A happiness and a failure.

This struggle that we have just described is not so much suffered by two classes of people:

1st those who have become accustomed to living in God's grace and without bad habits, and 2nd those who have become accustomed to living in sin and in slavery to their vices. The first are happy because they live doing God's will and enjoy his friendship and peace; the second have an apparent peace: the peace of cemeteries, where there is only death and decay.

### Another necessary condition.

Let no one have the illusion that they will be able to acquire virtue and perfection to serve God as they should, if they do not dedicate themselves to denying themselves, to contradicting many of their inclinations and desires for an easy and comfortable life, if they do not do so, they will not. They will have the firm resolve to suffer and overcome the antipathy they feel in their own person for giving up many small pleasures that come their way.

Jesus said: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those who do violence to themselves conquer it" (Mt 11:12). In the climb to perfection we find many who were halfway and could not move forward and progress because they did not have one condition: to deny themselves, to go against their will. And they kept running after deceptive butterflies of apparent joys, and plucking perfumeless flowers of small tastes that do not fully satisfy; and they could not climb to the summit of holiness. They lacked the first condition that Jesus demanded of those who said they wanted to follow him: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself" (cf. Mt 16:24).

How many small earthly affections and tastes have I given up to be faithful to Jesus? If on this day I tied a small knot in a thread for every time I refused and offered a small sacrifice, how many knots could I tie? On Judgment Day this account will seem very clear and the more times I have refused and gone against it, the greater will be my reward in heaven.

### THE CAUSE WHY THERE ARE SO FEW WHO TRIUMPH

Why, with so many people embarking on the path of holiness, so few achieve perfection? The cause is very simple: they did not deny themselves. It is true that many of them may have escaped great falls and contracting terrible vices, but then, on the way to perfection, they lost heart and became discouraged because they saw that denying oneself is a job every day and in every way. hours and did not dedicate themselves to combating the residues of their own will and the evil inclinations that still remained in their nature, to controlling the passions that were increasingly inflamed and renewed in their hearts, they allowed all of this to take over their spirit and prevented his rise to holiness. They lacked that quality that Jesus demands when he says: "Whoever endures to the end will be saved" (Mt 10:22). They lacked perseverance in the struggle to obtain holiness.

It's not enough to not be bad.

There are people who imagine that they will only achieve holiness by avoiding doing evil. And that's not enough. Thus, for example, there are people who are content not to steal, but at the same time they are very attached to their wealth, they do not distribute alms and help in the measure that God wants them to distribute. Others expressly devote themselves to seeking honor and praise, but feel great joy when it is offered to them and never reject it or do anything to avoid it. There are believers who do not eat greedily, but always prefer the tastiest foods and leave aside foods that seem less pleasant to them. There are believers who do not speak ill of anyone or lie, and in this they are admirable, but they never manage to silence the useless words they like to say. They were content to be good, but they did not strive to be perfect.

### CONVERSATIONS THAT STOP MIDWAY

When Jesus sent his disciples to preach, he told them: "Do not stop to talk on the way" (Luke 10:4) because Easterners used to stop to talk for long periods on the way with the travelers they meet and precious time is wasted in these conversations. It is necessary for me to ask myself from time to time: "Is what I say better than silence? Because we will have to give an account for every useless word on the Day of Judgment" (cf. Mt 12:36). May they never have to say about us what someone they followed in their conversations said about some pious person: "He missed many occasions when he had to remain silent". Or what they say that saint exclaimed when he was asked what he thought of a certain very pious but very talkative person: "He is a good person, but unfortunately he was unable to put a door in his tongue to keep it a little tighter."

What was it that made you like this? In the life of a saint, it is narrated that one day, when she stood before the image of a Christ weeping blood, she asked him: "Lord, who left you like this?" "You talk useless things" - what does this example teach me?

Danger.

Anyone who does not master their language runs the risk of not being able to master their other passions. What the Imitation of Christ says will be fulfilled: "However libertine and little mortified your tongue may be, so too are your passions and evil inclinations". On the contrary: the exercise of will that we do to try to

prevent our tongue from saying what it should say, and to always say what is most appropriate, will strengthen our character in such a way that, without us realizing it, we will gradually acquire the strength to dominate also passions and evil inclinations.

An illusion.

Many souls who dedicate themselves to spiritual life fall into an illusion that is not easy to discover at first glance (an illusion is imagining that it exists and is, which in reality does not exist and is not as it is imagined). And your illusion consists in thinking that you are really progressing in holiness and perfection, when what you are doing is following your own tastes and inclinations. Many believe that they act out of love for God, when what they are doing is loving themselves (if following one's whims can truly be called "loving oneself"). And that's why they choose the exercises and practices of piety that best suit their tastes, rejecting and leaving aside those that cause them some discomfort or that they don't like very much.

The medicine.

The solution to not fall into this illusion is to willingly accept the pain and difficulties that are presented to us every day in the exercise of perfection, because the greater the efforts we have to make, the greater the victories and prizes we will achieve, we will receive, God will grant it to us and with greater security we will obtain the virtues we need. This is why a famous saint, to someone who asked him for a favor but then told him that it was better not to do it because doing so would cost him a serious sacrifice, replied: "And if it didn't cost me a sacrifice, what would I do? reward would I receive?" Our Lord will give? The good thing about the favors we do is that they cost us sacrifices."

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN REQUIRES VIOLENCE AGAINST ITSELF, AND THOSE WHO DOMINATE THEMSELVES CAN. (Mt 11, 12)

## CHAPTER 13

### HOW TO COMBAT SENSUALITY AND WHAT ACTS THE WILL MUST DO TO ACQUIRE THE GOOD HABIT OF WORKING WELL

Let us remember what Saint Paul said: "We have a continuous struggle, because the spiritual part of our personality invites us to do good, but the material and sensitive part inclines us to do evil".

To emerge victorious in this battle that takes place every day and in all our lives, it is necessary to use some techniques that we will list immediately:

The first.

When the movements and excitements of our sensuality appear trying to go against what reason advises, it is necessary to resolutely reject them from the beginning, without stopping to accept them in any way. If we consent to them, they will begin to grow and enslave us.

The second.

We have to perform acts contrary to those that passions and evil inclinations propose to us. For example, if anger wants to invite us to revenge, we must pray for the good of the person who offended us. If sadness tries to lead us to discouragement, we must cultivate thoughts of joy and hope. If pride encourages us to believe in something and desire praise, we must remember that we are nothing and that human praise is smoke that the wind blows. If it is impurity that moves us,

it is worth remembering the internal tearing that each impure sin produces in the soul and the loss of good reputation and peace that each impurity brings to the soul, etc.

A trap.

The enemies of the soul, when they see that we react strongly against their snares or desires to harm us, then stop for a while to bring us temptations so that we, believing ourselves already strong, stop running away from occasions and think with crazy pride that we have already we are able to resist evil. In this it is important to fulfill what Saint Paul advises: "Work on your own sanctification with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12) "And whoever is standing must be careful not to fall" (1Co 10:12). Because as soon as we start to believe that we are capable of being saints in our own strength, we will begin to have very humiliating falls. God resists the proud (James 4:6). This is why the prophet Isaiah says, "What God wants is for you to remain humble before him."

Third act.

Hate what is bad. It often happens that after having made great efforts to resist and reject the attacks of the enemies of salvation, after having thought and reflected that this resistance is something very pleasing to God, from one moment to the next we realize that we are neither safe nor free from the danger of being defeated in a new battle; Therefore, it is advisable that we exercise ourselves in feeling great hatred and disgust for the addiction that we want to overcome, and that we try to acquire in relation to it, not only aversion, disgust, but disgust and horror. What should disgust us most is the ugliness of sin.

Middle room. To strengthen the soul against vices, bad habits and perverse inclinations, it is necessary to practice many interior acts that are directly contrary to our disordered passions.

For example.

If we want to acquire the good habit of being patient, when someone does or says something that makes us impatient, fills us with bad mood and anger, we need to love, accept that bad treatment and even want them to give us that harsh treatment. again, to have the opportunity to exercise patience. And this is for a reason: because we will not be able to perfect ourselves and exercise ourselves in a virtue without carrying out acts contrary to the vice we wish to correct. So, as much as we want to be patient, if we don't act against impatience, we won't be able to get rid of the addiction of being impatient and disgusted with something, which comes from not doing it. wanting to be contradicted or hurting our pride and self-love. And as long as this root of pride is preserved in the soul, of the desire for our own whims to be fulfilled and for nothing to happen contrary to our desires and tastes, we will always be in constant danger of falling into the defect of impatience.

A medicine that cannot be missed.

No one imagines that he will achieve any virtue if he does not destroy the opposite vice by carrying out continuous and repeated acts against that vice. A thousand times you may wish to get rid of a bad friendship, but if you do not act contrary to this sinful affection, the bad friendship will continue to hurt you. And we already know what Saint Paul said: "Bad friendships corrupt good morals".

Some acts are not enough.

We already know that to acquire a bad habit or an addiction many repeated sins are necessary, and in the same way, to achieve a virtue contrary to this vice, repeated and frequent good acts are necessary until reaching the good habit that is capable of facing the addiction. and push him away.

And even more: it takes more good acts of virtue to form a good habit than sinful acts to form a vice, because passions and bad inclinations collaborate with vice and, on the other hand, virtue is opposed by our nature. corrupt and imperfect by sin.

Do it even if it costs you.

Everything worth having costs. Let's not believe that practicing acts of virtue contrary to vices is something easy and pleasurable. None of that!

For example, treating someone who humiliates and offends us with kindness and patience. This helps a lot to gain patience, but it is not easy. Let's look at another example: being cold, even disdainful, showing antipathy and horror and even being "rude" in the face of a friendship that hurts the soul; This goes against our will and is very expensive. But for this very reason the prize that God will give us will be much greater. Therefore, let us not stop practicing acts contrary to vices, even if it seems that our hearts bleed and our souls die of suffering. The crown of glory that awaits us is very great.

Beware of small enemies.

The Book of the Song of Songs says: "We must hunt small rodents, because they can destroy our crops" (cf. Song 2:15). In spiritual life we must comply with this advice. We are not content with just attacking and pushing away the strongest and most violent movements of passion, but also the lightest and smallest ones. Because these small movements help others to attack and defeat us, just as boys help great thieves to break into houses, the youngest entering through the windows first to open the door for the older ones to enter. And this is how bad habits and addictions are formed, starting by allowing small imperfections into everyday life and these opening the doors to bigger ones.

A dangerous oversight.

Many people were careless and did not mortify themselves to avoid small faults, allowing themselves to be carried away by passions and bad inclinations in easy and apparently unimportant things and believing that they should only mortify themselves in the most difficult and serious passions, when they least imagined it they felt the powerful attack from the enemies of their salvation and suffered enormous spiritual damage. So, for example, having taken a vow of chastity, imagine someone who can live hand in hand, giving small caresses, casting frequent affectionate glances at the face, saying words of flattery and unnecessary affection, looking at materialistic and even sensual scenes or representations, accepting a lot of familiarity when dealing with young or sentimental people, etc. At the moment they seem small. But when you least expect it, you may find yourself in the most terrible depths of sin and sensuality, and be unable to react to your perverse inclinations. And what Jesus said is fulfilled: "Whoever is not faithful in small things will not be faithful in large things" (Luke 16:10).

It is necessary to mortify oneself in what is lawful.

In spiritual life there is a very old saying that always comes true. And he says: "Whoever does not mortify himself in what is lawful will not mortify himself in what is unlawful." What is permitted is called lawful, what can be done or said without committing sin. It is necessary to distinguish between what is simply lawful and what is necessary. What is necessary must be done and always said. But what is only

lawful is not necessary, if it is prevented from being done or said, it will produce great spiritual benefits because the person becomes more easily accustomed to controlling themselves, and when the attractions of passions and evil arrive, the instincts already have willpower and you will be able to overcome many temptations. How many and how many there are, who stopped saying a vivid thing that occurred to them, and silenced it out of mortification. And then, when, in a moment of anger, the desire came to them to say some hurtful words, they said them no more, because they had practiced keeping silent about what they wanted to say.

Helpful review.

We hope that we can review these remedies that we have advised from time to time, because if we follow them we will obtain a true reform in our inner life and by practicing them we will achieve glorious spiritual victories and in a short time we will make great progress in virtue and we will grow in virtue and holiness almost without us realizing it. Why not try them too?

The opposite is very harmful.

Experience has shown that if we fail to comply with these tips that we have just mentioned, even if we make beautiful plans to progress spiritually, we will be left without real progress in virtue, because spiritual progress does not consist in making fantastic plans for holiness, but in fulfilling every day, which can lead us to achieve virtues, avoid vices and please the Redeemer and Crucified Savior with our behavior.

With small acts, virtues are acquired.

The experience of millions of people has shown that, like bad habits and bad customs, they are formed in us from frequently repeated acts, with which sensual appetites and evil inclinations oppose the good intentions of our will and good customs are acquired with frequent and repeated acts of the will with which it seeks to conform to what God desires, orders and exercises itself in the practice of one virtue or another.

Just as a person cannot be definitively vicious and corrupt no matter how much his evil inclinations try to corrupt him and lead him to evil, if his will persists in wanting to behave in such a way that God likes his behavior, in the same way, Someone will never make you achieve virtue and holiness, no matter how many inspirations divine grace sends you, if your will is not seriously determined to dedicate yourself to doing good and avoiding evil.

## CHAPTER 14

### WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN OUR WILL SEEM TO BE DEFEATED BY PASSIONS AND EVIL INSTINCTS

It often happens to us that our will is very weak and does not have enough strength to be able to resist the attacks and assaults of passions and perverse desires that invite us to do evil. In these cases, we must not become discouraged or stop fighting, and although the attractions of evil are extremely strong, although we have fallen many times, it is necessary to always remember this encouraging principle: "In the fight for holiness, what counts is not just the number of victories or defeats we obtain, but the effort we make to always remain faithful to God's will." Losing one or ten battles is not losing the war. Those who keep fighting may end up triumphing.

A question.



The soul must frequently ask itself: Do I really want to overcome this passion? Do I wish to triumph over this evil inclination? Do I seriously intend to try to act in such a way that my good Lord will be pleased with my behavior? Do I make efforts not to let myself be overcome by this addiction or bad habit? Do I want to prefer some other evil before sin? If the answer is yes, there is already great hope of success. Maccabeus in the Holy Bible said: "It is no more important for God to grant victory with many forces than with few". Although his strength is very small, our own weakness will provide yet another occasion for God's Omnipotence and mercy to grant victories.

What if the situation becomes desperate?

It can often happen that the enemies of our holiness attack us with such violence that the already weakened and tired will feel powerless to resist. Well, in this case we shouldn't give up either. You have to say to yourself, "I don't give up. I don't consent.

I do not give up my weapons." "I know very well in whom I have placed my hope and I am sure that He is able to defend my treasures" (2 Tim 1:12). The worst defeated is the one who easily declares himself defeated. repeat with the psalmist : "My God, come to my aid. Lord, hurry to help me" (Ps 69).

"Look, Lord, how they attack. Do not abandon me. God of my salvation."

"Remember, Lord, that on the path where I am walking, they hid a trap for me." And if we persevere in trusting God and imploring His help, we will be able to repeat the words of the Psalm: "If the Lord had not helped us, the foamy waters would have risen up to our necks, but He did not allow us to be swept away by the current."

A very effective help.

To help the will not be completely defeated in the attacks it receives from the passions and inclinations towards evil, a very good effect is produced by thinking and meditating on how useful and profitable it is to resist these temptations and achieve victory. . Thinking that the rewards we will receive from God if we are victorious will be very great and that the evils from which we will be free if we do not accept bad insinuations are immense.

An example.

Let's suppose that the enemy that attacks us is impatience. That some unjust persecution afflicts us, or that a job is uncomfortable and tiring, or that suffering is very painful, or that a situation is unpleasant and repugnant to us and we want to burst into acts of impatience and bad humor and start complaining and protesting. In this case, it is convenient to think about the following:

1 O Consider that we deserve this evil because of our sins, and if it happened to us through our own fault, even more so, since we must bear the wound that we inflicted with our own hands.

2º If evil did not come to us through our fault, consider that it serves us to pay for the sins committed, those for which Divine Justice has not yet punished us and for which we have not done due penance. It is much better to pay here where we gain merit and glory through suffering, than to have to pay them in purgatory where perhaps the penalties are more rigorous and with less merit. With this in mind, we must receive suffering and setbacks not only with patience, but with joy and thanking God for them.

3 O Let us remember when we have something that makes us suffer and that

invites us to be impatient, that if we accept the pain and annoyances of each day we are fulfilling the condition that Jesus demands in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, which is to enter through the narrow gate of the suffering and mortification, and what Saint Paul so recommended: "It is necessary to go through many tribulations to be able to enter the Kingdom of God" (Ach 14, 21).

4th Let us not forget that the more we suffer and the more we are humiliated on this earth, the more we will resemble Jesus whose life was full of suffering and humiliation. And the more similar we are here in this world to Jesus Christ, the higher our position in heaven will be.

5th But what else must be thought of on every occasion in which we have to suffer, is that by patiently receiving our sufferings we are fulfilling God's will, because He, who could very well have prevented such sufferings from reaching us, made them permitted, and if he allows them, it is certainly for our good, since the only thing he wants for us is our highest good. Here we do not understand why he allows such contradictions, because in this life we see what God allows like someone looking at a carpet from the inside out and only observing a group of rags in disarray. But in the next life we will see the carpet on the right side and then we will be convinced that everything God allowed to happen to us was a true work of art dedicated to sanctifying us and making us worthy of great prizes and much glory in paradise. The more patiently we accept what God allows to happen to us, the happier our Lord will be.

## CHAPTER 15

### SOME IMPORTANT NOTICES ABOUT HOW SPIRITUAL COMBAT SHOULD BE PRESENTED. WHAT ENEMIES DO YOU HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST. AND WHY MEANS CAN BE DEFEATED

First of all, we must remember that spiritual combat must be carried out every day and throughout our existence on earth. In this we cannot stop fighting even when we barely have a few minutes left to live. This combat must be fought with constancy and perseverance with the absolute conviction that no matter how great and powerful the enemies of our holiness are, and no matter how deadly their attacks are, much more powerful is the God who protects us and the more effective they are, the defenses He wants to provide us. Each of us can repeat what Saint Jude Thaddeus says in his letter in the Holy Bible: "To Almighty God, who is able to keep us victorious in the fight for salvation and to free our soul from every stain, be to Him glory, and honor forever" (Jude 24-25).

The main enemy that must be fought is self-love, pride, the desire to satisfy one's own undue inclinations and to please our passions. And this is to the point that the humiliation and contempt that people want to cause us, and the setbacks that go against our tastes and inclinations already seem pleasant to us.

We must not forget that victories in this field are difficult, imperfect, few and short-lived. And do not be discouraged if you realize that your own strength is no longer enough to achieve victory, because the energy we lack will be given by the good God if we ask him with faith. We can always say with Saint Paul: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).

We must not be discouraged when we consider how great is the multitude and fury of the enemies of salvation, because far greater than them is the power of God and His goodness, and the love He has for us, and far more numerous than the spiritual adversaries are the angels of heaven and the prayers of the saints who are interested in us and accompany us in combat. These considerations have encouraged so many very weak and ill-inclined people who, despite their evil inclinations and the attack of their passions, managed to emerge triumphant in the struggle to remain faithful to the commandments of the Lord God.

Nor should we be discouraged when we realize that the enemies of the soul are so difficult to defeat and that spiritual warfare is daily and hourly, that it will not end until our life on earth ends, and that we find ourselves threatened on all sides, and spiritual ruin often seems almost inevitable, because, as Saint Augustine says: "It happens to the enemies of salvation as to a fierce dog tied to a chain: He cannot bite us if we do not get very close to him." We can be sure that our Divine Captain will not so loosen the chains of these enemies as to allow them to destroy us, if we do not approach them recklessly. Our Savior's enemies will never be able to say, "We defeated him." God fights with us, and when he sees fit he will grant us victories if they are for our good and for his greater glory, even if we often end up injured. If we decide to never stop fighting, we will eventually receive the crown that God has reserved for the victors.

## CHAPTER 16

### THE WAY WE FIGHTERS FOR CHRIST MUST PLAN FOR FIGHTS EVERY MORNING

Every morning, after we commend ourselves to God and give thanks for having kept us alive until today, and offer him what we are going to do this day and entrust ourselves to his Divine Mercy to accompany us in every hour of the new day, We must immediately consider that we will be on a battlefield, in the presence of numerous enemies of our salvation and with the absolute need to fight and defeat them if necessary, that we do not want to be dominated and filled with unhappiness.

The prediction test.

Every morning, for a few minutes, we must take the prediction test, which consists of anticipating or seeing in advance which enemies will attack us today. What is the addiction or bad habit that we want to master and avoid on this day. What is the ruling passion or evil inclination that we must reject and restrain; what dangers will be presented today against our virtue. What occasions may arise and put us at risk of losing or diminishing our friendship with God. Let us imagine now that on this day we will be accompanied by a Great Captain, who is Jesus Christ, the Friend who never fails, and by some companions who will help us fight, such as the guardian angel and the saints of our devotion to whom we often implore and who never cease to intercede for us. If we are afraid of being attacked by the devil, who is our fiercest enemy, let us invoke the glorious Archangel Saint Michæel, who defeated Lucifer in the battle that took place in heaven (Revelation 12).

Let us not forget that "we are temples of the Holy Spirit" (1Co 3,16) and may the Divine Spirit grant us courage and strength to emerge victorious in spiritual battles, if we invoke Him to our aid. The battle cry should be the words of Psalm 69 that the ancient desert monks so often repeated: "My God, come to my aid. Lord, hurry to help me."

The more times we repeat them, the more help from heaven will reach us.

Every morning we should hear the words of Psalm 94 spoken to each of us: "I hope that today you hear the voice of God who says to you: "Do not harden your heart like the former rebels in the desert, who disgusted me and did not I let them enter into my rest."

Let us begin the day by invoking the Holy Family: "Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and soul", and to our guardian angel: "My guardian angel, my sweet companion, do not abandon me day or night. night".

Every morning you need to remember: "What is my dominant defect?" What is this defect that makes me make the most mistakes and that causes me the most spiritual defeats? Every person has a dominant flaw. It is almost always one of the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, anger, envy, impurity, gluttony or laziness.

What is the defect I intend to combat this year? How will I face this today? If I defeat him I will obtain great rewards from God, but if he defeats me he will fill me with

sadness and bitterness. I have to remember the wonderful prizes that Jesus Christ promised to the winners. He says in Revelation: "I come and bring my wages with me, and I will give to everyone according to his works. I will make those who overcome heirs of my Kingdom" (Rev 22). But I must also remember that if I allow myself to be dominated by my dominant defect, I will receive the terrible internal tearing that sin produces, and the humiliating feeling of defeat and the endless bitterness that every spiritual defeat brings and the desire to go back on what Life clock so that the bad thing I thought, said or did, I would never have said, thought or done. This bitter memory leads to avoiding further falls.

TO THE VICTOR WILL BE GIVEN THE CROWN OF GLORY THAT NEVER FAILS

## CHAPTER 17

### HOW SUDDEN MOVEMENTS OF PASSIONS SHOULD BE SUPPRESSED

There are unforeseen and treacherous attacks of passion that, if the soul is not prevented and prepared, can bring very bitter defeats. They are like those ambushes that bandits set up for the forces of order and that cause them very painful casualties, because they surprise them in places where they least imagined and in a way that the military did not think they would attack them. So it is with the soul. An offense could occur that was not expected, a humiliation that was not suspected, an impure temptation that was unexpected, violent and dangerous, a deep depression after certain successes and some intense joy, etc. What to do in these cases?

1st We have already said that the forecast exam helps a lot, that is, thinking about who we are going to deal with, where we will be, what occasions we will present ourselves, conjecturing and making calculations of what could happen to us in these cases. Thus, in any unforeseen attack from the enemies of the soul, we will be prepared with caution or prudence so as not to let ourselves be defeated so easily. "A well-informed soldier does not die in war" or if he dies, it costs more for the enemies to eliminate him.

2nd In these cases of surprise attacks it is very convenient to raise your heart to God and ask for his help. Many succumbed to temptation because at that precise moment they forgot to trust in Our Lord. There is no other time when it is so necessary, we would say so obligatory, to pray, as in moments of sudden and unforeseen temptation.

3rd If the attack is impatience and anger: wanting to resort violently to defend one's rights when someone opposes us or tries to impede our plans, and at that moment we need to be able to resist evil without allowing ourselves to be carried away by impatience, then We must think that this disappointment that comes to us was certainly allowed by God because with it we will obtain some good that for now we do not understand what it is. Then you have to say to yourself: "But why not accept this cross that the Lord sends me? It is not this or that person who brings me this disappointment, it is the Heavenly Father who allowed and allows everything to happen to me for my greatest good. The more I suffer, the more I will resemble my Crucified Redeemer, and the more I will resemble Jesus, the higher will be my position in heavenly glory. And keep thinking: the Divine Master said that Whoever suffers patiently will possess the earth. Anger seems to achieve victories, but what it achieves are spiritual defeats. On the other hand, patience has the infinite effectiveness of winning hearts. Anger leaves a seed of hatred in the other person's soul.

Meekness strengthens one's personality. The anger at first seems justified. Meekness does not accept the false excuses of bad mood. If I plead with Jesus, He

will send me the Holy Spirit who will grant me the ability to master my impatience.

4th A great medicine. In order not to succumb to unforeseen attacks, we must gradually move away and try to reduce our affection for what makes us sin. So, for example, if it is a harmful friendship, remember what Saint Paul said: "Bad friendships corrupt good morals" (1Co 15:33) and say to yourself: "This friendship does me a lot of harm in any way." If the attack of anger is because they want to take away something that belongs to us, we must convince ourselves that the less attached our hearts are to the goods of the earth, the freer we will be and the more our spirit will rise towards God.

## CHAPTER 18

### VERY IMPORTANT WAYS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE ADDICTION OF IMPURITY

We can all repeat the words of Saint Paul: "I feel within me a law of the flesh that continually fights against the spirit that has inclinations contrary to the flesh" (Gal 5:17).

We must fight against the vice of impurity more strongly than against all the others because it is the most insidious and the one that never stops waging war on us. Wherever we go, we will take our body, and it will always have sinful inclinations that, if neglected, can lead us to fall into sin at the least expected moment. In the fight against impurities it is necessary to use certain techniques that produce very good results. For example:

#### BEFORE TEMPTATION.

We must fight against the causes that incline us towards impurity and avoid dealing with people who may be the occasion of sinful temptations. Let us remember that in this matter of chastity, those who know how to escape in time are winners, because if we expose ourselves to the occasion, that warning repeated by ancient spiritual masters will always be fulfilled: "When the opportunity comes, and when you want, you will fall every time."

It is useless to take a piece of paper to the fire and say: "I don't want it to burn". No matter how much purpose we have for it not to burn, it will burn.

If out of obligation we have to treat certain human specimens that attract us very strongly, it is necessary to make the sacrifice of showing ourselves to be cold and almost indifferent in our treatment, because whatever freedom we give to our sentimentality, it will explode like the waters of a dam. When the floodgates open, it will drag and take all our good intentions to preserve holy purity into the abyss.

You can never trust yourself.

Although we have been serving God for 25 years or more, let us remember that the spirit of impurity often does in one hour what it has not been able to do in many years. And when we least suspect it, it can take treacherous action and defeat us. Even if we had the strength of Samson, the courage of David and the wisdom of Solomon, it may happen that, if we rise to the occasion, we fall as miserably into impure sins as those famous characters did. In this, there is no one who can say: "I will not drink this water". And it is the most rotten and poisonous sewage there is.

Beware of certain spiritual friendships.

Experience shows every day that danger is never so treacherous as when we contract certain friendships that are not feared because they seem so harmless that we cannot suspect that the enemy of salvation is there seeking our ruin. For example friendships between cousins, between uncles and nieces, between



brothers-in-law; or friends for reasons of gratitude, because that person did us a favor (or intends to do so) or because their qualities are greatly appreciated or the wisdom and good advice they know how to give, or need to receive, etc. Frequent visits begin. The long conversations, the small gifts, and meanwhile the poison of the delight of sentimentalism and the joy of the senses infiltrates these friendships, and the soul is sensitively excited, reason blinds, little by little the name of uncle, cousin, brother-in-law disappears, benefactor, friend, advisor, etc., leaving only the name "person of the other sex", "person whose presence pleases sensitivity and sentimentality". And now instead of being able to say: "I love you" what you can say is "I like you", "I'm attracted to you"... and serious falls are getting dangerously close.

We must not trust in the resolutions and good intentions that have been made, because even if we have proposed to die before offending God, if we kindle sensual love with sweet, sweet and frequent conversations, the passion will take such a form that our heart, which does not It will matter more whether the other person is a relative, family member or spiritually directed or aspiring to a special degree of holiness and as long as the sinful inclination is satisfied, all duties will be forgotten and even the holy law of God, we are interested in cause a scandal and lose a good reputation among others. And in these cases, all the exhortations of friends, the purposes and plans that were made to preserve the holy virtue will be useless and vain, we will forget the fear of offending and displeasing God, and even if we were faced with the fire of hell we would not stop the impulses to which the impure flames of our sensual passion lead us. So we only have one solution left: run away, run away, like you run away from a poisonous snake or someone with a highly contagious infection or a mad dog, or a madman who attacks with a sharp machete or a ferocious bull that attacks everything that you find. Let us flee, if we do not want to lose the life of our soul, the peace of our heart and the blessings of God.

## CHAPTER 19

### OTHER EFFECTIVE METHODS TO AVOID FALLING INTO IMPURITY

1 O We must avoid idleness. In stagnant water, all harmful insects and deadly infections multiply. It is necessary to always be so busy that we can respond to what that disciple said to his holy spiritual director who advised him that to avoid impure temptations he should always be dedicated to occupations that occupy all of his time. When the Priest asked him if he had been tempted in those days, he replied: "And at what time?" A great spiritual master exclaimed: "It can do more harm to a soul to do nothing than to suffer temptations from the devil." Which is really worth pondering.

two O Don't judge others badly. Casiano says that a monk dedicated himself to judging others with such severity that the Lord allowed almost maddening temptations to reach him and when he consulted the Father Abbot, he told him: "It is the consequence of having dedicated himself to condemning others in the court of your brain. Do not condemn anyone and you will see that the fire of your passions will go out." He did so and rested from such terrible attacks.

When we know that someone has fallen into scandalous sins, we think: "If I had been in that case with the feelings and weaknesses that dominate me, perhaps I would have sinned the same way or even worse." And let us repeat what Saint Augustine said: "There is no sin that another human being has committed that I cannot commit". And instead of despising others or gossiping or criticizing or publishing their faults, let us pray for their conversion, let us ask God to grant them the willpower not to continue falling, and let us walk with greater prudence so that the next victim will be those enemies of the soul can defeat, let us not.

Let us remember that if we find it easy to judge and condemn others and to despise them, God will correct us at our own expense, allowing us to fall into the same faults



that we condemn, so that we recognize our pride and, thus, be filled with humility, correct ourselves from the bad habit of going around condemning and belittling others. Because what Saint Paul said can be fulfilled: "Why do you condemn others, if you do the same things you condemn?" (Rm 2).

If we live condemning and despising others, we will always be in danger of falling into the same faults that we condemn and publish.

### AND BE VERY CAREFUL WITH THOUGHTS OF PRIDE

A very experienced spiritual director stated: "When I see that someone willingly accepts thoughts of pride, I am sure that terrible temptations to impurity and humiliating falls will come upon him. Because "God resists the proud" (James 4:6). If someone is convinced that he has already reached such perfection that the enemies of his purity are not in a position to wage war and defeat him, and he looks at them with contempt, under the illusion that he already has enough dislike for them out of disgust and horror for not accepting your suggestions, it may happen that he falls more easily.

### AND WHAT TO DO WHEN TEMPTATION ARRIVES?

The first thing to do in these cases is to find out where the temptation comes from, whether from outside or inside. It comes from the outside through the eyes, the ears, the dangerous friendships, the shameful ideas that spread among people, or the unseemly fashions. Or if, instead, it comes from within: from our imagination, from the sensual desires that assault us, from bad thoughts or undue memories, or from bad habits that we have acquired.

If it comes from outside, it is absolutely necessary to stop your senses in order to control them. "Eyes that don't see, hearts that don't feel", goes the saying.

But eyes that see, a heart that feels and probably also consents. It is necessary to make the pact that Saint Job made with his eyes. He says: "We agree not to look at attractive bodies" (Jb 31:1). Certain songs do not have "lyrics", but rather "latrine", and if we listen to them with pleasure we get excited about evil. Impure talk sometimes causes more excitement than groping, and this is a disaster for the soul. There are certain human "examples" whose proximity makes us so prone to sin, that if we do not avoid their treatment and friendship and do not remove ourselves from their presence in time, we will go directly to our spiritual ruin. Later we will regret the falls, but it will be too late. We have to repeat them with courage (even if only in thought). "Your friendship is harmful to my soul. Your company brings me much more harm than good." If the attack comes from within, due to our bad desires or impure thoughts or acquired bad habits, it is absolutely necessary to make some small mortifications from time to time. Stop eating something, stop drinking every now and then when we feel like it, etc., because mortification strengthens the will. And fill the mind with good thoughts through pious readings and memories of edifying facts such as those narrated in the Holy Bible or those read in the Lives of the Saints or in formative books. Two ideas cannot exist in the brain at the same time. Therefore, if, with good memories and useful readings, we fill our brains with holy ideas, they will take up the space of sinful ideas and these will have to go away. But if they discover that the brain is empty of useful ideas, they will take the opportunity to nest there and cause terrible damage to the soul and personality.

How to pray in temptation.

In the Gospel there is a warning from Jesus that we must never forget or fail to comply with. He says this: "Pray, so that you do not fall into temptation. For the spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 27,41) and the Divine Master adds a warning of enormous importance: "Certain unclean spirits cannot be removed except by

prayer" (Mk 9,29). When temptation comes to us, it is necessary to raise many small requests to God so that he may come to our aid. What would we say about a captain who, upon seeing his battalion attacked by forces that surpass him in number and weight, did not send messages to the command? superior asking for reinforcements? And we, feeling the attack of the world, the devil and the flesh, will we be left without asking the Lord God of Hosts for help?

It is necessary to say to him with the Psalm: "Look, Lord, they attack me and I have nowhere to flee. Fight, Lord, against those who war against me, and say to my soul: "I am your victory" (Ps 34). "Do not give over to the fury of the murderous hawks this defenseless dove that is my poor soul" "Do not abandon me, God of my Salvation" "Do not abandon the work of your hands" etc.

A very useful remedy.

Many people have experienced with great benefit achieving victory against temptations, looking fixedly and affectionately at the crucifix, and thinking about each of Jesus' wounds, those on his hands, feet and side, saying to him with Saint Bernard: " Lord: when the treacherous hawk of my temptations attacks me to take my life away from the grace and friendship with God, I, like a shy little bird, fly with my thoughts to hide in those saving crevices of my Rock, in those five wounds of His, and There I can free myself from the treacherous enemy." "Jesus: you died for me, and I, what sacrifice will I make to preserve your holy friendship? I beg you to impress upon my soul the most vivid feelings of faith, hope and charity, sorrow for my sins and resolution never to offend you again, while with the greatest possible love I am considering your five wounds, remembering those Your words, my God, said the holy prophet David: "They pierced my hands, my feet and all my bones can be numbered."

"Something not to think about."

There is an error in many people that can cause them great harm, it is believing that to escape temptation, especially the temptation of impurity, they must dedicate themselves to thinking about how bad and ugly this sin is. This is extremely harmful because it produces the "fixation" of the mind on what is impure, which increases and further excites sinful temptations and inclinations, and puts the will in danger of delighting in these memories and then consenting to that which delights it. The opposite of this is true. The appropriate thing in these cases is to completely separate the imagination, thought or memory from impure objects and dedicate oneself to thinking about other things. Because if you stop thinking about wanting to repel them and consider them harmful and dangerous, what you achieve is becoming more obsessed with these issues and registering them in your mind. And as the brain is what directs all human sexuality, if it is infected and poisoned with these memories and fixed ideas, the entire organism becomes perverted and goes directly towards evil.

Remembering these things is a trick of the devil who disguises himself as an angel of light.

On the other hand, if we dedicate ourselves to thinking about the Passion and Death of Jesus, this beneficial memory will be able to ward off harmful thoughts. Let us not take the time to remember the impurities we have had, not even to repent and reject them, but considering them as works of the devil, let us try never to think about them. And in these difficult situations, let us show that we know how to turn to the Blessed Virgin. She always helps admirably.

## CHAPTER 20

### THE WAY TO FIGHT AGAINST THE ADDICTION OF LAZINESS

The Book of Proverbs says: "I passed through the field of the lazy: all weeds, all carelessness, and poverty will arrive like correspondence, without the wrong recipient" (Pr 24:30). It is necessary to try to combat the vice of laziness because this defect not only prevents us from achieving holiness, but also gradually delivers us into the hands of the enemies of our salvation.

The bee.

Solomon in Proverbs says: "Look at the bee how it works continually. It is an example worthy of imitation." (Pr 6,6). And the fabulist Æsop said that the cicada that spends the good weather singing, when the bad weather arrives, goes to the ant to ask for some food and the ant responds: "While I worked, you rested and sang. Now while I take advantage of my provisions, you starve and suffer." It is a portrait of what awaits so many people who dedicate themselves to laziness.

An enemy.

First of all, we must flee from vain curiosity. Wanting to stay up to date with the latest news that happened near or far. We have already said that the ancients repeated the proverb: "To learn new things, don't worry, because when they get older they will be easily known."

How many things and new things there are that by not knowing we won't miss anything and we will have more peace.

Fulfill duty.

The Romans said that the best medicine to overcome laziness is to "always do what needs to be done, and do it well". And a saint recommended to those she guided: "May God, when he sees us work, say: 'Very well'".

Beware of a bad habit.

We also said previously that those who direct souls say that the worst thing that can happen to a person in this world is to acquire a bad habit, a bad habit. This becomes a new nature and completely enslaves the soul. Thus, if we acquire the bad habit or habit of allowing ourselves to be carried away by laziness, this will make our personality atrophied and paralyze our will.

Let the funeral continue. Ancient legends say that a young girl became so lazy that she no longer wanted to do any housework.

"Will you give me them already kneaded and turned into toasted bread?" "No, it's not like that anymore without kneading or toasting." And the very calm lazy woman lay down on the coffin again and exclaimed: "So: let the burial continue." How many poor victims of laziness say the same thing in today's world. As long as you don't have to work or exert yourself, let the funeral go on! And they continue to walk towards failure and final misery. What a fatality!

Be careful with precipitation.

One of the specialties in which laziness manifests itself is that things are done in a hurry, at full speed, carelessly and poorly done. It is better to do little and do it well and carefully than to do many things lightly and carelessly. What God will reward will not only be the number of works we have done, but above all the care and

dedication with which we have done them. It is better to do fewer works, but to do them well, than to dedicate yourself to many things and leave them haphazardly half done.

A frightening warning.

God says in Revelation: "I have something against some, and that is that they have lost the enthusiasm they had at the beginning. they are lukewarm, indifferent, I will vomit them out of my "mouth" (Rev 3:16).

### GOD TAKES OUT WHAT IS NOT USED

It is necessary to remember that God gradually takes away his gifts from those who allow themselves to be overcome by laziness and lukewarmness, and grants them in abundance to those who dedicate themselves with diligence and fervor to doing what they do well. They have to. There are charismas or celestial gifts that are lost because they were not used. Why will the Creator give special help to those who make no effort to use it and take advantage of it?

Divide them and you will conquer them.

The ancient Roman warriors, when they sent a new leader to fight the enemies, gave him this tactical advice: "divide them and you will defeat them. Do not attack them all when they are in a single group, but in sectors and in this way you will be able to defeat them more easily." Something similar should be advised in spiritual warfare. Let us not say: "I will overcome all my defects once and for all". This is the same as saying nothing. On the other hand, if we say: "This year I will combat this defect that I have", then we will concentrate all our combat energies on a single point, we will achieve good victories and what the Imitation of Christ says will be fulfilled: "Any year that Fight hard against one of your defects, you will achieve a very special perfection.

Just one day every day.

Something similar to the above should be warned regarding time. Don't say: "I'm going to spend my whole life fighting these defects." A statement like this can discourage us because the struggle seems very long. But if we say: "Today, even if it is just for today, during these 12 hours I will fight against my dominant defect", then the fight will seem more bearable, because one day we will be able to fight. Tomorrow we will try to say the same and in this way we will fulfill what Jesus advised: "Do not worry about tomorrow. For your worries are enough each day" (Mt 6.3.4). A great saint was asked why she did not lose heart in her struggle to achieve holiness and to overcome her defects and overcome the difficulties she encountered and she replied: "It turns out that I only live one day a day. For 12 or 24 hours I dare yes to fight, trusting in the powerful help of God, but if I thought about the struggle of all 365 days of the year and the days that I have left of my existence on earth, I would be filled with discouragement. and laziness. But just one day a day, who Are you not able to resist and fight?"

Pray for small installments.

This same technique must be used in prayer, to prevent laziness from taking over us. Don't try to pay close attention for a whole hour, or even half an hour. But instead, tell yourself, "I am going to pray lovingly and fervently for the next five minutes."

Later, if laziness and disappointment come to me, I suspend prayer. And so on for the next five minutes. And so after 20 minutes or half an hour you already feel tired

and discouraged from praying, so suspend prayer so as not to increase discontent and disgust, as this interruption, instead of causing us harm, can serve as a rest and then return to pray with greater fervor. The ancient desert monks, when they felt laziness and reluctance to pray coming on, dedicated themselves to saying only small prayers that were like an arrow that was sent with a message. And the little prayer is a little spiritual arrow that we send to the sky with a message asking for help or giving thanks). How many little prayers do I send to heaven every day? There were saints who said up to a thousand a day. How many will I say? And with how much love for the good God, or for the Blessed Virgin, or for my angel, or for the saints?

A very beneficial list.

Experience has shown that when you have a lot of things to do, it is of great benefit and utility to make a list of the top ten things to do, list them in order of importance, and try to do them in that order. And if we have several occupations, they seem many and even difficult, this can cause us restlessness, anxiety, nervous exhaustion and even bad mood. But if we set out to do just the ten most important ones and make a list according to the order of importance they have, and do them one by one, as if each one were the only thing we have to do in life, without dedicating ourselves thinking about one job while doing another, our performance will be admirable, peace and tranquility will accompany us and nervous exhaustion will be much less. Each job must be done as if it were the only one we have to do in life, and with all the care possible. This is a great secret to acquiring perfection and holiness.

Notice.

If we do not comply with the advice above, it may happen that laziness dominates us and that by leaving many duties unfulfilled, obligations and commissions accumulate until we end up with great disturbance or restlessness in the soul, nervousness and haste in what we do, and neglecting daily tasks. And what Christ narrated about the five foolish virgins who left until the last minute to get the oil for their lamps can happen to us and when they wanted to enter the banquet of holiness the doors were already closed and they remained outside (cf. Mt. 25:1-13).

Let us remember every day that whoever gave us the morning does not promise us that he will give us the afternoon and that whoever gave us today did not promise to give us tomorrow.

Let us enjoy this day as if it were the last of our lives and let us not forget that at the time of death we will have to give an account to God for the way we spent every moment of our lives.

Finally, let us convince ourselves that we can consider lost the day when we did not fulfill our duties well and did not do what we were supposed to do that day, or did it carelessly and poorly. To the day in which we did not obtain victories against our laziness and the reluctance we felt towards work, we can give it this title: "Lost day". Let not a day of our lives go by without overcoming our evil inclinations, without giving thanks and praise to God for his benefits and goodness, and without remembering the wonderful work that Jesus Christ did by offering his life, passion and death to achieve the salvation of our lives. our soul To Him be the glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit for infinite centuries. Amen.

**AND THE LORD WILL SAY: 'BECAUSE YOU WERE FAITHFUL IN A LITTLE, IT WILL CONSTITUTE YOU ABOVE MUCH' (Luke 19:17)**

## CHAPTER 21

### HOW WE SHOULD GOVERN OUR SENSES AND USE THEM TO CONTEMPLATE DIVINE REALITIES

One of the most delicate precautions that we must always take is to know how to govern our senses well, because corrupt nature inclines and incites them uncontrollably to dedicate themselves to delights and excesses, and to try to obtain excessive sensual enjoyment and thus harm the will, deceive the understanding and stain the soul.

#### THE MEDICINES

Spiritual authors have experimented with some remedies that have produced very good effects to be able to govern the senses well and keep them focused on the supernatural. They are the following:

The first thing to do is not give your senses too much freedom and know how to control them in such a way that they only dedicate themselves to what is necessary and not to false delights, or exaggerated tastes, because if we give them too much freedom, they will cause very serious damage to the soul and will greatly hinder it on the path to perfection. Every person who dedicates themselves to trying to achieve holiness should be able to repeat what that saint said: "I have never granted my senses a delight that Our Lord did not like".

The five goats.

Saint Augustine said that we have to travel the paths of this life guiding five extremely restless goats, which at the same time helps us a lot to make our journey towards eternity more pleasant and pleasurable. They go wherever they want, they can plunge us into very dangerous abysses. And that these 5 goats are the five senses. The saints were always very careful not to lengthen the bond with which they maintained their senses too much and thus managed to keep them disciplined, this helped them a lot to achieve perfection.

How to sublimate your view.

We call sublimation that effort we make to elevate our thoughts to higher spheres. From time to time we must think that our eyes were made to see God and that "we will see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). When Nathanael was amazed at the wonders he saw, Jesus told him something that he now says to each of his followers: "You will later see greater wonders" (John 1:50) and in his priestly prayer at the Last Supper he asked the Father heavenly for all those we love, an immense favor: "May one day they may contemplate the glory you gave me" (John 17:24).

Let us think from time to time: "My eyes were made so that I could see God and celestial beings, and I do not want to cloud or tarnish my vision by stopping to spend it to see what could harm me here on earth." The ancients repeated a Latin motto that says: "Ad maiora nati sumus": "We were born for much higher actions." Why remain like chickens rummaging through the earth's trash cans, when we can look to the sky like eagles?

A comparison that was very impressive.

A saint who wrote beautiful books about mysticism, that is, the art of elevating the soul to God and the heavenly, narrates what happened to her when she began her life of spiritual ascension. Her main defect was that she felt too sensitive affection for people who possessed special physical beauty, and this hindered her in a detrimental way on her path to holiness. Then she dedicated herself to asking Our



Lord with special faith to cure her of these harmful passions and was granted, for a brief moment, a glimpse of the glorious face of Jesus Christ in heaven. And she says that since then the beauties of the human creatures of the earth seemed to her as unattractive as if they were cheap and instead of feeling sensitive passions for the beautiful beings of this world, what she began to have was a "holy indifference". "before all beauty must die and turn to pus and worms. If the Lord would grant us such a favor, we would obtain an impressive spiritual freedom that would allow us to climb very high in our spiritual life.

Let us think that all the beauty that exists on this earth was created by God. And if these beautiful creatures are so pleasing to our sight, how much more should the Creator of all beauty attract us? Therefore a saint exclaimed: "O God, if in this world that passes and dies there is so much beauty, how much greater will be your infinite beauty, if the Creator of all beauty in the world is You? "If I can rather lift up my mind and my heart to God, the author of all beauty, whose beauty and goodness will be my holy delight to all eternity?"

### THE TASTE

When we eat some pleasant food, let us think about the heavenly banquet where we will taste the most delicious delicacies forever, and let us make our own the words of the gospel: "Blessed are those who manage to reach the banquet of the Kingdom of God". (Luke 14:15). When we feel a strong thirst, let us remember that burning thirst that Jesus suffered on the cross. It is said of a saint that in the hottest part of the summer, when she was tormented by thirst, she dedicated herself to thinking about the terrible dryness of the throat that Jesus suffered when he was crucified, so strong and terrible that it forced him to shout "I thirst" and meditate. in this torment of the Redeemer she was encouraged to also suffer the martyrdom of thirst, for the salvation of souls. May the memory of Jesus' thirst on Calvary lead us to never drink more than necessary.

### THE SMELL

When we smell a soft and pleasant smell, and savor the aroma of flowers and refined perfumes, which according to the Book of Proverbs, "rejoice the heart" (Pr 27:9), let us remember that the Book of Revelation announces that all days "the heavenly beings bring before the Throne of Our Lord some very sweet and aromatic chalices, full of perfumes and this incense are the prayers of the faithful on earth" (cf. Ap 5,8). And when we have to experience the disgust of some unpleasant stench, especially that which comes from some seriously ill people or certain decomposing bodies, let us not forget that it is like this and much worse, the stench of a soul in sin, which is truly unpleasant before the presence of God and his saints. And that soul in such a serious state of decomposition can be ours if we live in peace with some sin, because then the words of the Holy Book can be repeated to us: "You seem to be alive, but you are dead" (Rev3,1). Let us say to Our Lord: "I hope that in our lives we can repeat what Saint Paul said to some of his faithful:" His sacrifice ascends to God like a sweet aroma that He accepts with pleasure "(Phil 4:18).

### THE EAR

When we hear very pleasant music, let us remember that every truly beautiful melody is inspired by the Holy Spirit. When artists compose some famous musical pieces, they can say what a universally famous author said: "while I compose my music, all I can do is write it, because it reaches my brain and my ears, as if it came from heaven. . And when listening to some musical pieces that move us and bring joy to our soul, we say: "If this is here in exile, what will it be like there in the true homeland where inspiration will be total?" In a cathedral, while orchestras and choirs sang beautiful compositions musicals, a famous archbishop, trembling with emotion,

said to the person next to him: 'My brother: if this is how it is here, How will it be in heaven?' "This is what is called sublimating what enters through the senses."

## CHAPTER 22

### HOW CAN WE USE VISIBLE BEINGS TO RAISE OUR HEARTS TO GOD

Certain saints such as Saint Francis, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Dominic de Guzmán, Saint Gertrude and many more, received from the Holy Spirit the gift of piety which consists of feeling for God an affection like that which the most grateful children in the world feel for their parents kindest there are. And this gift of piety made them turn to the most diverse sensitive beings to elevate their hearts to the good God.

Thus, Saint Francis heard the birds singing and exclaimed: "Little birds of the forest, with your song you teach me to never stop praising my God and singing in his honor". And I saw the beautiful flowers of the field and I said to them: "Please: keep reminding me that I too must always live facing the sky, towards my sun which is Jesus Christ and continually exhale the perfume of my prayers". Saint Anthony of Padua walked through the fields singing happily and saying: "I want to join the voice of the birds and the perfume of the flowers and the resounding of the water currents, to praise and bless my Creator". São Domingos did something similar.

It is said that a saint, in the midst of the most terrible storms, while others hid in fear of the lightning, looked at the porch of her house and exclaimed smiling: "How powerful is my Father God. How wonderful to have as a Father and friend I'm the most powerful being there is!"

A boy who in a very short time achieved great holiness said to his father one starry night looking at the sky: "Father, if the sky is so beautiful on this side, what will it be like on the other side?" And he got emotional thinking about the Paradise that awaits us.

Psalm 8 says: "O Lord, when I look at the sky, the work of your hands, at the moon and the stars that you created, I ask myself: What is man that you are mindful of him?"

Saint Francis of Assisi, when he saw a little white lamb in the field, beautiful, innocent, gentle and peaceful, took it in his arms and said with enthusiasm: "O immaculate little lamb, who allows himself to be taken to the slaughterhouse without offering the slightest resistance; how much "you remind me of the dear Lamb of God who was taken to Calvary without offering the slightest opposition, and who died without causing harm to anyone and demonstrating the most admirable meekness and the most perfect innocence".

When we feel a heavy downpour or a continuous drizzle, let us think that these are the graces and help that God sends us from heaven, sometimes large and showy like the waters of a heavy downpour, and other times small but continuous like those of a heavy downpour. a gentle drizzle.

When we see some fruit trees, let us ask ourselves: "Will I be producing fruits of eternal life in my life? Or will I be a tree that bears no fruit or bears bad fruit and the ax of divine justice will come to tear me into pieces and throw me into the fire?"

Sometimes, when we hear a rooster crow, we think: "What is this crowing rooster telling me? Will you say to me like Saint Peter: "You denied your Lord. Do you ask for forgiveness?"

If we approach the bank of a river, we think: "Our lives are the waters that flow towards the sea, which is death. There we will find the infinite ocean which is the Power and Goodness of God..."

When we see an image of the Blessed Virgin, let us remember that this good Mother awaits us in heaven and is ready to come and help us on earth whenever we ask for her powerful protection. Let us think the same when we see the image of an angel or a saint.

When we see a dove fly, let us think of the Holy Spirit, and when we contemplate a mother hugging her child, let us remember what God says in the Holy Scripture: "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort my believers." (Is 66 ,13).

MAY OUR MIND BE DIRECTED TO WHERE TRUE JOY AWAITS Cf. "PRAY" at a Holy Mass.

## CHAPTER 23

### ON THE WAY TO GOVERN THE LANGUAGE

Psalms 18 makes an important request to God: "O Lord, may the words of my mouth be pleasing to you, and therefore the thoughts of my heart may be pleasing to you." So that human language may be contained within the limits of prudence, must be governed with care, because we are all inclined to speak more than we should and to say what is inappropriate. Or as the apostle James says: "Human beings are even capable of taming wild animals themselves. The only thing we cannot completely master is our own language" (cf. James 3).

Talking too much almost always results from a lack of self-control. And just as one cannot control one's own tongue, one cannot control other undue inclinations of nature. Talking a lot also comes from the pleasure we feel in listening to ourselves, forgetting that others do not feel the same satisfaction when listening to us that we feel when we speak.

You shouldn't trust these bags full of words too much, psychologists say. Talking too much can come from the fact that we are too passionate about our own opinion and want to impose it on others, trying to dominate the conversation and make everyone listen to us as teachers.

Loquacity or the habit of talking too much has harmful consequences.

This leads to laziness (A loquacious person has a tongue longer than his hand, the saying goes, which means that his works are not equivalent to his words). In much conversation there will be no lack of sin, states the book of Proverbs. It turns out that chatter leads to lying, to murmuring, to saying what should not be said, to uttering useless and even harmful words. Saint Bernard rightly recommended: "We must purchase from God with prayer the grace to speak to do much good and never evil".

Let's not have very long conversations with people who show that they get tired of us talking a lot. And even with those people who are very polite and listen to us with apparent attention, let's try not to tire them with exaggerated words. I hope that everyone who deals with us will feel like listening to us again and that no one will have to leave our presence with intellectual indigestion from listening to us talk so much.

Be careful with emphasis.

We need to emphasize, give a lot of strength to the expressions we say. This speaking in a very loud voice produces displeasure in those who listen to us because it shows that we have an exaggerated confidence in what we say and that we want to impose what we say. And that is vanity.

You should never talk about yourself, or about your belongings or family, except when there is a real need to do so, and in these cases you should proceed with great moderation and be as brief as possible, because here pride easily leads to exaggeration and to the increase of one's own vanity. If we hear that someone likes

to talk about themselves, their family and their actions, we do not despise them, but we are careful not to imitate them in this. And let's not even talk about ourselves to despise and diminish ourselves, because self-love is so treacherous, that to make us talk about ourselves we don't care if it is with the pretext of despising ourselves, because in the end what we are looking for is show up and be a protagonist, even if you have to use the disguise of your own contempt.

Either you speak well of your neighbor or you don't.

In this, as in all our conversations, we must practice this rule or norm that ancient spiritual directors advised: "If we speak, let it be to say something that is better than silence". A saint seemed to hear in a vision that her guardian angel gave her this advice: "Never pronounce a negative judgment against anyone", which is equivalent to this order from Jesus: "Do not condemn and you will not be condemned by God" (cf. Mt7 ,1).

And when we hear bad things about other people, let us do what the ancient sage recommended: "Make a face so sad that it looks like we are going to cry." Whoever speaks against others will see in our faces that their conversation displeases us and perhaps they will no longer dare to continue it. A priest who had a reputation for being a true man of God, upon hearing one day a colleague speak ill of another, said to him: "And what do you gain by saying that?"

The other understood and remained silent. Let's ask ourselves this question when we feel like speaking out against someone. "And what do I gain from saying that?"

Let us speak with pleasure about God and his works and favors, and let us fulfill what the angel Raphaël said to Tobias: "We should never be ashamed to count the favors that have been received from God". But as we are quite ignorant people in these matters, we prefer to listen to others who speak better than us, when there are those who want to proclaim the wonders of our Creator.

In this way we will fulfill what the Book of Ecclesiasticus advises: "Let us listen with pleasure to all good talk about God".

The mundane and harmful themes, we won't even name them.

In this it is necessary to fulfill what the Apostle Saint Paul commanded: "Impurities, evils, matters that lead to greed, do not let them be named among us", because we want to achieve holiness. Rudeness, harsh jokes and lies are not acceptable on our lips, but thanksgiving is (cf. Eph5:4). Immodest words, even if they are said without bad intentions, can hurt the weak people who listen to us. Lips dedicated to praising and blessing God should not be dedicated to speaking evil or harmful things. This is why the apostle James exclaims: "It must never happen that the tongue with which we bless God should turn to cursing others.

Caution: Before you speak: wire your brain. Sages have always recommended that those who wish to achieve perfection become accustomed to having every word that reaches their lips pass through the brain first, so that they can judge whether it should be uttered or whether it should be silenced. Many things that in the heat of conversation seem at first glance likely to be said, if you reason calmly you will come to the conclusion that it would be better to bury them in silence and, instead of saying them, suppress them. It is often necessary to keep quiet about those vivid things that happen to us, because impulsiveness is not always the best and is often the least convenient. Spiritual directors often ask the people they lead: "How many abstinences of words have you made these days for the salvation of souls and as penance for your sins?" Because they know very well that if someone masters the language, it will be easier to master their impulses as well. Unfortunately, many of us would often have to hear, "Today you missed the opportunity to stay silent about something you shouldn't have said."

## THE SILENCE

One of the most beneficial remedies for forming a true personality is to get used to keeping quiet what is not necessary to say: "Speak less and you will be happier", said a spiritual master to his disciples. Those who get used to disciplining and restraining their tongue so as not to say what is not appropriate, acquire with this exercise of will the ability to later achieve great spiritual victories. His first biographer says of Saint Dominic de Guzmán: "He spoke few words when he spoke of worldly topics. But when they spoke about God, about religious and spiritual topics, he spoke with enthusiasm."

Remedies to achieve it.

To get used to remaining silent, it is very useful to think and meditate on the great benefits of remaining silent and the harm that comes from speaking more than necessary. Silence helps a lot to obtain meditation in prayer. The apostle James said, "He who knows how to bridle his tongue will also know how to bridle the other inclinations of his body" (James 3:2). But he immediately adds: "The unmortified tongue is like a spark that sets an entire cane field on fire, or like a poison that contaminates the entire existence of whoever possesses it."

If the sins they committed with their tongue were removed from some people's lives, the number of failures and the amount of problems they had and caused others would greatly decrease.

He learns to shut up by being silent.

Some college students asked a famous monk to advise them on a method for learning to control their own inclinations, and his only response was to make a cross on his lips. He wanted to tell them that if they could master their language, they would also be able to master their other inclinations later on. It is necessary to keep something quiet every day. Something not saying doesn't hurt us or others. Let us fulfill what the book of Ecclesiastes recommends: "Let your words be few" (Ec 5,1-2). But let them be few and kind; few and pleasant; few and happy. Few and useful. So that what happens to us does not happen to certain little ones who speak little, but when they open their lips it is to reprimand, to criticize, to embitter the lives of others. They give a bad impression with this way of speaking.

## BEWARE OF MUTISM

There are individuals who confuse being of few words with having an unpleasant muteness when dealing with others. A polite, artificial and exaggerated mutism that makes them seem very informed about everything that others say, or as if they are not at all interested in the conversation that the people around them are having. But fortunately there are also people who say very little, but give so much importance to what others say that their treatment becomes truly pleasant and friendly. Whoever turns what others say into gold gains their sympathy. But someone who behaves in conversation like a statue who neither speaks nor appears to pay attention to what others say becomes undesirable. One question in time. Support what the other person says. Show interest in the topic they are discussing, etc.

At the foot of an image on a road there was this beautiful inscription: "Lord: teach us to pray and listen. Speaking and remaining silent." Beautiful prayer, worthy of being repeated many times throughout our lives.

MAY OUR CONVERSATION BE FILLED WITH THE SALT OF PLEASURE AND KINDNESS  
(Mc 9,50)



## CHAPTER 24

### HOW TO GET AWAY FROM WORRY AND AVOID THE WORRIES OF THE HEART

When the enemies of the soul cannot make a person live by committing serious sins, they at least try to make him live full of worries and worried about a thousand things. And it is necessary to remember that when the peace of the heart is lost, we must make every possible effort to recover it and try to ensure that nothing in the world can make us live full of desires or worries. We must consider as spoken to us those words that were spoken in the time of the prophet Elijah: "The Lord is not in commotion and agitation" (1 Kings 19,9) and give our soul the reproof that Martha received from Jesus: "You are You worry about many things, but only one is necessary."

Regret, but not remorse.

When we make mistakes, we should feel a slight sadness for having offended a God who is so good and who was so generous to us. Feeling for our stained and defeated soul the same commiseration that we would have for a person we greatly esteem and whom we see has fallen into faults and sins. But repentance must be calm, without exaggerated worries or lack of courage. Because the latter would no longer be true repentance or contrition for having offended God, but rather remorse or disgust because he did us harm by sinning.

### PATIENCE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Patience, according to Saint Thomas, is the virtue by which, when faced with evil, we do not allow ourselves to be overcome by sadness or displeasure. Jesus made it a condition for following him to patiently bear the cross of daily suffering. And these will never fail anyone. Sometimes it will be an illness, other times a serious economic situation, or an accident, or the death of a loved one, or a person who treats us uncharitably or with severity or humiliation, or a job that is tiring and thankless, or travel boring situations, or unforeseen situations that put an end to all our plans, etc.

### THREE ATTITUDES

Faced with these setbacks, we can take one of three actions:

1 a . That of Jesus in the Garden of Olives: crying out: "Father, if it is not possible for this cup of bitterness to depart from me, may your holy will be done". This attitude brings peace on earth and immense rewards in heaven. And like Jesus, the Father will send us an angel to comfort us.

two a . Attitude: That of the ancient Stoics. Endure evil without wavering, for the sole pleasure of showing that evil cannot move or disturb you. This attitude admires people, but because they lack the detail of offering everything for the love of God, they may be left without much reward for heaven.

3 a . Attitude: That of the renegades. They suffer by cursing and denying. The Apocalypse says about them that the sufferings that befall them do not help them to become better and pay for their sins, but rather make them worse and more cursed. A classic example is that of the bad thief who, despite suffering on the cross, still mocked Jesus instead of asking for forgiveness and offering him his sufferings (quite the opposite of what his companion did, who took advantage of those torments to offer them to Christ and make him take him that same afternoon to Paradise).

Why will God allow us to suffer?

The suffering that comes to us is not God's revenge. He's too big to dedicate himself to taking revenge on weevils as small as us. For every offense he imposes a penalty, but not in revenge, but out of strict justice. The sufferings that come to us do not mean that God is not listening to us or that He is displeased with us. No. He allows suffering so that we can pay him the debts we owe him for so many mistakes we have committed and so that with them we can earn great rewards for heaven.

Anticipate what will happen.

To avoid becoming impatient when setbacks arrive, it is advisable to get used to anticipating the difficulties that will arise during the day. That on a trip we are going to take there will be very annoying delays? Well, if we anticipate them, when they arrive they won't irritate us as much because we've prepared ourselves to withstand them. And so we will have less anxiety.

Remember that everything ends up working out.

Let us convince ourselves that the setbacks and difficulties that come our way are not really evil, but rather an opportunity to achieve good things for the soul and for eternity. The purposes for which God allows these sufferings to come to us may remain hidden and unknown to us, but we can be sure that at the end of our lives, when we reach eternity, we will be able to repeat what Joseph told them in Egypt. to the brothers who sold him into slavery: "It was God who allowed this, which seemed like a great evil. And he allowed it because great good would result from it" (Gen 45). Remembering this frees you from many worries.

Let's try to always be happy.

Sadness does great harm to the heart and brings no benefit to the soul, and almost always comes from remembering the few unpleasant things that have happened to us and forgetting the many pleasant and beneficial things that God has allowed us to do. It suits the enemies of our holiness that we live sad because sadness extinguishes enthusiasm and discourages us from doing good. But living sad (if it's not because you suffer from some illness that produces sadness, and then you have to try to cure that illness with medication because it can lead to other very serious and harmful illnesses) living sad is ingratitude towards God, because for every unpleasant or harmful event that happens to us, ten or more pleasant and beneficial events come to us.

#### BE CAREFUL WITH EXAGGERATED OR INSTANT DESIRES

Another trap that causes restlessness in the soul is filling yourself with exaggerated desires and plans and dedicating yourself to trying to put them into practice quickly. Easterners say that a person has greater peace the more they know how to moderate their desires. When a desire occurs to us or a plan occurs to us, let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as to whether it is from God and is for our highest good.

We hope that we can also consult some prudent and spiritual person. And then let us try to mortify our excessive vivacity, which wants to lead us to immediately try to put into practice what happened to us. This mortification makes our work more perfect and more pleasing to God than if we had done it hastily and too quickly. Prudent people let ideas ferment little by little in their brains, cooking them with the fire of prayer and the fuel called "asking advice from those who know". Jesus said that if you start a work without making calculations about whether you will be able to finish it, and then you fail to finish it, people will mock us and say, "He started it

and couldn't finish it." Let's go slowly and go further.

Be careful with bitter memories.

To avoid the harmful evil that is restlessness, it is advisable to remove from our minds those bitter and sad memories that want to nest there like harmful rodents. Living thinking about it, what you achieve is that they become engraved in the mind in such a way that later we will not be able to get out of there. And they are memories that, instead of helping us improve, what they do is fill the soul with vain worries and useless bitterness. That someone humiliated us and unfairly attacked us? Well, with this he increased our humility and exercised our patience. That we have committed many serious sins in the past? But have we confessed them and asked God for forgiveness many times? Why keep remembering them?

Rather, let us immerse them in the immense ocean of God's goodness and mercy and thus what the prophet Micah promised will be fulfilled: "You, O God, will cast all our sins into the bottom of the sea, so that we will never remember them again." (Mt 7:19).

Why continue to torment ourselves with these memories of a past that, no matter how distressed we are, we cannot change or stop being that way?

Let us trust the past in God's hands and dedicate ourselves to living the present with joy and optimism, striving to please Him with our good behavior.

That we had tremendous recklessness that caused us enormous losses? Let us take advantage of this bitter experience to learn lessons for the future, but let us not become bitter by crying over spilled milk, because by crying we will not be able to collect anything. Let's start again with courage, because there are many people who, recklessly, lost their entire life savings and then, with God's help, managed to recover and get back on their feet. But if we allow ourselves to be carried away by worry and depression, we will destroy our nervous health, we will shorten our life, and with these worries we will not be able to remedy anything, says Saint Peter: "Let us place our worries in the hands of God, who is interested in us." (1P 5.7).

Let's analyze our regrets.

If they lead us to trust more in God's divine mercy, to ask for forgiveness and begin a more virtuous life, to be more humble and more understanding of others, then they are beneficial.

But if they only fill us with bitterness and discouragement, let us reject them as coming from an evil spirit, because they could be suggestions from the enemy to make us live full of useless concerns.

When we remember painful events, let's analyze whether remembering these events helps us attack our pride and self-love, which is the most fearsome enemy we have. If his memory leads us to have more gratitude to God and less confidence in our own strengths. If, when we remember these events, we are moved to ask more for God's help and forgiveness. In these cases, they are useful memories. But if, on the contrary, when we remember these bitter events we become restless, we become discouraged, we become more afraid of doing good and more pessimistic, and we are filled with resentment and desire for revenge, impatience, bitterness and angry rejection come to us. us for what he made us suffer, so yes, be very careful, That there walks the angel of darkness who is sad every day and minute of his life and wants to infect us with his sadness and bitterness. God is peace, and his thoughts are of peace and not of bitterness.

Let us repeat the words that a saint said: "Sadness and melancholy, leave my soul".

Living remembering the past with disgust is a useless sadness.

Not a millimeter will change anymore. On the other hand, how comforting it is to remember what the book of Revelation says, that at the end of our time the Book of

Life will be opened where everything we have suffered is written and each one will be paid according to their merits. What a comfort to think that none of our sufferings will have been forgotten by God. He allowed them to come to us, he will know how to reward them very well and his reward will be eternal and wonderful. A memory like this benefits the soul and fills it with enthusiasm.

LET US PLACE OUR WORRIES IN THE HANDS OF GOD, WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF PROVIDING US SOLUTIONS (Psalm 55)

## CHAPTER 25

### WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE SUFFER A DEFEAT IN SPIRITUAL COMBAT

"Seven times the righteous falls, but how often he rises." The Book of Proverbs says and since the most serious thing is not to fall into weakness and misery, but to remain fallen and not get up in time, it adds: "On the other hand, the imprudent remains sunk in his spiritual misery" (Pr 24,16 ).

When we make a mistake, whether through imprudence or surprise, or through malice and premeditation, the important thing is not to be discouraged, to not stop fighting to regain friendship with God, peace and purity of the soul. When we happen to do, say or think something that goes against the law of God, we must humbly say to Our Lord: "Oh my God: I have just shown what I am: misery, weakness, evil inclination. What else could you expect from a creature as miserable and weak as me, other than falls, infidelities and sins?"

So let us spend a few moments considering how weak and evil-inclined we are and how vile and wretched our sinful nature is, and without becoming discouraged, let us become angry saints with passions and evil customs, and exclaim, "I would not have stopped if If your infinite kindness, my God, had not helped me, I would have committed even more serious offenses."

And let us give thanks to God for having forgiven us so many times so that what Jesus said would be fulfilled: "To whom much is forgiven, much is loved" (Luke 7:47).

Let us admire his infinite kindness that has supported us with such admirable patience until today and let us ask him to never let us go from his holy hand, because if he lets us go we will sink into the abyss of all vices.

Let us often pray the prayer of the publican in the Gospel: "Mercy, Lord, for I am a sinner" (Luke 18:13). And let us add: "O Lord: do not allow me to ever depart from You. We sin and commit iniquities, but Your mercy is greater than our misery, and Your power is much greater than our weakness in unfaithfulness, and in the desire we have to recover your divine friendship."

Something that is not convenient.

Let us not stop to think whether God has forgiven us or not. This can cause us worry and waste of time. If we regret. If we have the firm intention of not continuing to commit these faults, if we humbly ask the Lord for forgiveness and confess in due time, let us not continue to doubt whether God has forgiven us or not. He continues to repeat to us the words he spoke through King David: "A humbled and repentant heart, God never despises" (Ps 51:19).

Let us place ourselves with confidence in the hands of divine goodness and, although we have committed many faults, let us remember what the Lord said through the prophet: "Although because of your faults your soul is as red as the reddest cloth, I I will make her as white as snow" (cf. Is 1:18). Let us cultivate a true fear of our total weakness, inclination to evil, a holy horror and disgust for everything that is sinful and offensive to God, let us strive to behave from now on with greater prudence and more care. And if we do what we can, God will take care of granting us what we cannot achieve with our own strength.

Let's not forget about falls, as their memory can be useful to walk more carefully in

the future. And let us always remember how great God's goodness is that despite so many infidelities we have had, he continues to love us with such an immense love. He continues to repeat to us: "I have loved you with an everlasting love" and "I will give you once again the spiritual beauty you once had" (Jer 31:3).

## CHAPTER 26

### THE FOUR TYPES OF WRONG ACTIONS THAT EXIST IN PEOPLE IN RELATION TO SIN

In the fight against sin, many people can and do have some of these four actions, which are extremely wrong and dangerous:

1 a There are those who have enslaved themselves to sin and do not think about leaving this slavery.

two a Others want to get out of this slavery, but never seriously begin to try to free themselves from this oppression.

3 a Many people imagine that they have already made a lot of progress on the path to perfection and do not realize that their weakness and laziness in the face of sin has kept them enormously far from holiness and perfection.

4 a Other people, after having attained a high degree of virtue, become careless and fall into terrible spiritual ruin and great danger of being lost. Let's study these four wrong actions to see if we are in any of them and try to get out of there.

#### FIRST WRONG ACTION: TO BE SLAVES TO SIN AND NOT THINK ABOUT LEAVING THIS SLAVERY.

The enemies of our salvation want nothing more than to leave us in peace and tranquility regarding our sins. Any thoughts or desires for conversion that come to us will try to shut them down and push them away, and if someone wants to advise that it would be better to change their lives and start behaving more in accordance with God's law, they immediately change the subject and try not talk about the topic.

And the three enemies of sanctification: the world, the devil and the flesh or carnal passions, strive to continually provide us with new opportunities to sin, they set traps and treacherous snares for us so that we continue again in old faults; and they try to harden our conscience in such a way that we are no longer moved by the goodness that God has towards us, nor by the sanctions that His Divine Justice will send against our evils, nor by the losses and damages that will come to us by sinning. And so the sinful soul continually runs towards its perdition, falls from abyss to abyss, and moves further and further away from perfection and holiness, and if God does not intervene with a miracle of His grace, it will be totally ruined.

There are two remedies to stop this race towards the abyss of sin.

The first is to pay attention to the inspirations and remorse that we feel in our conscience. The poet said: "Conscience corrects the culprit so quickly and well that there are few who are not hanged in the soul", said Saint Augustine: "The worst danger for an injured foot is that it no longer hurts, because then there is no circulation blood and gangrene will set in. The terrible and frightening evil for a sinful soul is that he no longer feels remorse for having sinned. If you don't feel it, you will be irretrievably lost. But if her conscience hurts her and she listens to her conscience, she still has hope of amendment and salvation.



The second remedy is to cry out to God a lot, asking for his help and forgiveness. Let us look at the crucifix and ask Him to give us true contrition for our wickedness. Let us raise our gaze to the painting of the Virgin Mary and to Her, who is the refuge of sinners, let us say: "Come, my Mother, to my aid, for they are defeating me". And God will fulfill what he promised in Revelation: "He will pour healing drops into the eyes of your soul so that you will see the ugliness of your faults and hate them and be able to avoid them."

I HAVE AGAINST YOU, THAT YOU HAVE LOST YOUR FERVOR FROM BEFORE.  
REALIZE WHERE YOU FALL. REPENT AND RETURN TO GOOD BEHAVIOR. IF YOU DO NOT REPENT, I WILL COME AND REMOVE YOU FROM THE IMPORTANT PLACE WHERE YOU ARE (Rev 2:4)

## CHAPTER 27

### THE SECOND WRONG ACTION. DON'T START SERIOUSLY TRYING TO GET RID OF THE SLAVERY OF SIN

Many are aware of the bad state of their conscience and even want to improve their behavior, but they allow themselves to be deceived by an extremely dangerous trap: leaving it until later to start seriously reforming themselves. They forget that those who always say: "Later", end up saying: "Never again". They need to decide not to put off until tomorrow the efforts they didn't want to make yesterday. Because the complicated excuse is to say: "I'm going to focus first on some issues at hand and then I'll see how I can try to improve my behavior". And "after" becomes "never" for them.

"Mr. Later".

They called Antigonus, king of Macedonia, "the lord later", because whenever they asked him for a favor he responded with that little phrase: "later" and then did not grant the favors that had been requested of him. The world is full of men and women who could adopt a second surname, after the one with which people know them and their second surname could be: "Later", because that is what they always say that a voice in the soul proposes to them: "Start behaving better, convert, begin a life of virtue, fervor and holiness." Peasants repeat a saying that goes: "He who saves for later, saves for the dog", which is like saying: "Leaving for later is giving up what must be done now".

Today is my day.

Psychologists recommend creating a very useful motto: "Today is my day". If I'm going to start treating people kindly, why not start today? Why leave it for later? Will I start keeping quiet about what I shouldn't say? Since when? Since morning? And why not from today? Do I want to control my eyes so that they do not pursue what does not suit my soul? Starting next week? And wouldn't it be better from now on? Who guarantees that tomorrow will come for me? The apostle James says: "Do not say, 'Tomorrow I will do this and that', because we do not know whether tomorrow will come for us." Do I wish to do some small penance for my sins and for the salvation of souls? Very good. But the best thing would be to start today, so that tomorrow you no longer have the desire or desire to do it. Each of us should repeat what a sinner responded to a holy preacher who asked him: And when do you want to convert? -and the other replied: "I want to convert today". Lord, let me see. When a blind man wanted Jesus to end his terrible blindness, he cried out, "Lord, let me see." We should also often beg Him something similar: "Lord, may I see what is in me that I must correct and how to correct it." And remembering our terrible weakness and laziness to be able to attack evil, we repeat to God the words that

the hero Balak said in the Holy Bible: "If you come with me, I will go to battle; If you don't come, I won't dare."

Now I begin.

Spiritual masters recommend that their disciples say to themselves from time to time: "Now I begin", "from today onwards I want to change", "I will not put off the efforts that I have not wanted to make until now. "

Hell is full of good purposes.

The holy fathers of ancient times repeated a saying: "Hell is full of good intentions", to mean that many were lost because, although they set out to make peace, they never seriously risked starting to do so. Today we could exclaim: "The number of failures is full of people who made decisions to be better, but never started to follow through on them." Is my soul not among those who did not risk starting right now to fight decisively against the slavery of sin? If so, I have to scream my cry for independence from now on and start fighting against such a terrible oppressor.

TODAY: IF WE LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF GOD (WHICH CALLS US TO CONVERSION)  
LET US NOT HARDEN OUR HEARTS (NOR LEAVE CONVERSION FOR LATER) (Psalm 94)

## CHAPTER 28

### THE THIRD WRONG ACTION IS TO IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE ALREADY CLOSE TO SANCTITY, WHEN YOU ARE ENORMOUSLY FAR FROM IT

There is another serious error in relation to sin: forgetting the passions, addictions, bad habits and perverse inclinations that we have and dedicating ourselves to making chimerical and fantastic plans about a holiness that we no longer imagine we have, just because we imagine it and desire it. And what the poet said is fulfilled: "While the orchard dries, the river flows down." While we live thinking about an idealistic and imaginary holiness, we stop fighting against the evil inclinations that lead us to sin and following beautiful butterflies flying through the air, we forget to hunt the mice that devour the products from our garden.

### GIVING OF WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

And it happens that we make fantastic projects about what we don't own or have at hand and, on the other hand, about what we have to do and respond to, we neglect that. It happens to us like the one who said: "If I had two luxurious carriages I would give one to the poor". And a friend asked him: "And if I had two wheelbarrows, would I also give one to the poor?" -No. No, no That! - It's because? Because I have both wheelbarrows. How easy it is to propose heroism with what you don't have, but how difficult it is to be generous with what you have.

### BRAVE IN WHAT IS FAR, AND LAZY IN WHAT IS NEAR,

Those who know them say about certain people: "In the face of danger, a lot of courage.

When the time comes: very afraid." Something similar happens to so many people in their spiritual and holiness projects; They imagine that if persecution comes they will give their lives in the midst of terrible torments to defend the holy religion, and with this imagination, They already consider themselves holy people. But if the slightest offense is imposed on them, they burst into protests, and at the slightest pain of illness they start complaining. They easily desire brilliant and distant holiness, but reject the humble holiness that is offered to them day after day.

Medicines.

To avoid these deceptions of our imagination, we need to think concretely about which spiritual enemies attack us and who we should fight. Instead of living imagining fantastic situations for the future, situations that will certainly never happen to us, let us calmly analyze what are the dangers and opportunities that can make us fail now in the present: those outbursts of bad mood, those thoughts of pride, that desire to appear and gain the esteem of others; that friendship that steals from our hearts the love that we should direct only to God and souls; that desire to possess more and more, that sadness that so much shyness brings us... etc.

#### BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONFUSE THE DREAM WITH REALITY

The mistake of so many people is to imagine that because they have already made the decision or resolution to behave very well, this means that in reality they are already close to sainthood. Nothing more wrong. Someone may know very well what he should do and what good he wants to achieve and how he should behave, but if he remembers his passions, his evil inclinations, the weakness of his will and the fierce attacks that the enemies of his soul, instead of imagining that you are already close to holiness, what you will feel will be a great fear of your own weakness and a tremendous desire to implore the help of Almighty God and ask him for the grace not to fall into temptation and to persevere in good until death.

BE ALERT, VIGILANT AND PRAY, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS READY, BUT THE FLESH IS WEAK (Mc 14,38)

#### CHAPTER 29

##### THE LAST AND MOST DANGEROUS ACTION IN RELATION TO SIN: STOP FIGHTING, AND FALL INTO SPIRITUAL RUIN

The fourth trap presented to us by the enemies of our holiness is to cause us to stop fighting sin and remain calm in our bad habits, vices, and defective conduct.

A mistake: if someone suffers from impatience and bad temper because of illnesses that befall him, there is a danger that he will spend his time thinking about how many more good works he would do if he were in perfect health, and how much better he could serve to God and to others if these illnesses disappeared. And so, instead of fighting against impatience and bad mood, what you are doing is supporting your inner rebellion and fostering your disgust at what you suffer. And he becomes restless, distressed and impatient because his health is not perfect. And instead of fighting against impatience, what he does is feed and strengthen it, considering his illness as an impediment to performing good works (as if God had such a need for the good works that we are going to perform) and he imagines that because of illness his progress in virtue stops (although what happens is the opposite, if he suffers his illnesses with patience and for the love of God). And instead of fighting against the addiction of bad mood and impatience, what happens is that he imperceptibly falls into these two great defects and lets himself be overcome by them.

A medicine.

When these imaginations come to us that if we are cured of the illnesses we suffer, we will serve Our Lord better, let us think that it will probably not be so, because when our health is complete, our feelings of piety and fervor will disappear and will

probably be much less stronger than those we had while we suffered. This is why a saint said to a sick woman who was begging for a blessing to be cured of a long and painful illness: "If she is cured, she will never be a saint. But if she continues to suffer, she will be able to reach a high degree of perfection on earth and a wonderful degree of glory in heaven."

She willingly accepted continued suffering and, in fact, achieved admirable holiness. There are people who do not sanctify themselves in full health, but in illnesses and diseases they acquire a remarkable degree of fervor.

And if we still worry that with perfect health we would do more good works, let us think that God in his wisdom probably determined that we are not the ones who do these good works and instead with our sufferings we achieve the conversion of many sinners and salvation of numerous souls, and we obtain forgiveness for our own sins.

Beware of sadness.

There is a sin that if we are careless and stop fighting it, it will take root in our hearts and cause us enormous harm. It's sadness. The Holy Book says: "Sadness is useless and only brings harm to a person." It is necessary that we never stop fighting against the evil inclination that we have to regret that which is neither a sin nor offends God. For example, when someone gets sick they start to feel sad about the inconvenience they cause to those who care for them, but when they get better they no longer remember the charity they did for them. What saddened him was his pride.

Others allow themselves to be carried away by sadness, saying that these sufferings come to them as punishment for their sins, but when they recover their health they will see how little regret they feel for the evils in their lives. His sadness came not from regret, but from impatience. How many are there who sigh with sadness because they do not have greater wealth to dedicate themselves to doing many works of charity, but if they did, they would not do such works either. Therefore, it is very dangerous to stop fighting sadness and let yourself be dominated by that terrible inclination to live sad. And the same must be said of any other vice or sin.

IF WE ACCEPT THE GOODS FROM GOD, WHY NOT ALSO ACCEPT THE EVIL? (Jb 2)

## CHAPTER 30

A DEATH TRAP THAT MUST BE AVOIDED: THAT OUR VIRTUES THEMSELVES ARE THE CAUSE OF LETTING US OVERCOME THROUGH PRIDE

One of the most treacherous traps that can be presented to us on the path to holiness is that when we consider the virtues and qualities we possess, we dedicate ourselves to feeling a complacent and exaggerated self-esteem and, thus, we allow ourselves to be dominated by pride, vanity and boast.

The saints advise: "We must remember the miseries and weaknesses of the past to avoid present and future pride." We have to say with Saint Augustine: "Everything good I have is a totally free gift from God. The only thing I possess are my weaknesses and what I created are my evils."

It is necessary to keep in mind a truth said by Saint Paul, which can free us from many prides and boasting. It goes something like this: "What do you have that you didn't receive? And if you received it, why are you full of pride as if you had not received it?" (cf. 1Co4,7).

Evaluate yourself appropriately.

Each person must value themselves, clearly separating what is theirs and what they received freely from God. And accordingly, take into consideration how many

reasons you may have to be proud. If you qualify in this way, instead of living with a soul full of pride and vanity, what you will do is live humbly giving thanks to the good God.

A look into the past.

I have to think about what I was a hundred years ago.

Pure nothing. And there was nothing I could do on my own to become anything. I need to ask myself: what would have become of me if God's mercy and power had not preserved my life? If Our Lord abandons me for a moment, I will immediately return to nothingness. The apostle James says: "We are smoke that appears for a moment and then disappears" (SM, 14). And the holy Job said: "The human being is like a flower: it blooms and then withers and disappears like a shadow that disappears" (Job 14:2). If this is what I am, how can I get caught up in pride and vanity?

And regarding spiritual works, I must think about the following: What good works could I do without God's help? São Paulo stated: The memory of the mistakes made. If I begin to remember the multitude of sins I have committed, and even those I might have committed if the goodness of God had not defended and helped me, I will find in myself nothing but weakness, infidelity, bad habits, and perfidious inclinations. And this memory should lead me and keep me humble and give infinite thanks to God who forgave me so much and freed me from so many other evils.

The truth and only the truth.

But in these judgments that we make about ourselves, it is necessary not to exaggerate or assert anything that is not in accordance with the truth.

It doesn't mean that we did the evil that we didn't really do, nor that we committed what we didn't really commit. But if we are content with the truth, we will have enough to humble ourselves and not be filled with vain pride. And not believing that we are superior to others, well, we are not.

Beware of slavery.

As we really do not deserve praise, but rather humiliation, it is necessary to be very alert so as not to allow ourselves to be dominated by an extremely harmful slavery that consists of living thinking "what will others say about me? What good name do I have in the eyes of others?" "What will they think of my behavior? All of this can be pride and vanity, and the desire to look good.

But don't appear humble out of pride.

It is necessary to accept humiliations and not want to appear in front of others, but it is not so that they consider us humble people, because then it would seem to us that we are demonstrating humility, but out of pure pride. "Whitewashed tombs," Jesus called this class of individuals, and added that their appearance is beautiful like shining cemetery tombstones, but their interior is horrible like the rot of a tomb.

What if they grant us honors?

Sometimes it may happen that people congratulate us and praise us on our behalf. In these cases we must repeat the psalmist's phrase: "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory" (Ps 115,1). Or what the prophet Daniel repeated: "The Lord God deserves all honor, and we deserve confusion and humiliation". And turning our thoughts to those who praise and congratulate us, let us internally repeat what Jesus said: "Only God is good" (Luke 18:19) and think: "These people praise me because they only know externally my appearances of goodness", but If



they knew me as I really am, they certainly wouldn't speak like that in my favor. I can repeat with Saint Bernard: "I'm an expert at disguising myself as a good person, and that's why people praise me.

What if the memory of the good works we did comes to us?

Sometimes, when we remember the good deeds we were able to perform, thoughts of vanity may arise. So we must make this reasoning: "Everything good I have been able to do is a gift from the good God, a generosity of his infinite kindness. I do not understand how from this abyss of corruption and iniquity that is my person, these good works could have arisen. I can only repeat the phrase from the Holy Book: "It was the Lord who did this." And with humility and with a language of praise let us repeat the beautiful phrases of the Virgin Mary in her Song: "The Lord has done wonders for me. Glory to the Lord" (Luke 1:49). Furthermore, we must think that the good works that we have done throughout our lives, not only do not correspond to the immense amount of light and help that we have received from Our Lord, but they have been accompanied by great defects and imperfections, and perhaps in numerous cases there was a lack of give them that purity of intention to do them only for the glory of God and the good of souls. And if we examine them closely, perhaps instead of being proud, they will confuse us as we see how we could have done them better and how we have marred them with so many imperfections.

A useful comparison.

When someone believes they have reached a high degree of perfection in an art, for example music, all they need to do is go to a concert where a great teacher gives demonstrations of his highest artistic qualities. Hearing it greatly diminishes the beginner's belief that he has reached a very high level in this art. This can happen to us if we compare our good deeds with those of the saints. We will then have to repeat what that great preacher said: "Compared in holiness and good works with the great saints, we are nothing more than wet chickens and dead donkeys." And what will we say if we compare our virtue and our good works with those of Jesus Christ? It would be like comparing an insignificant weevil to a very tall mountain. What if we compare ourselves to God? With your infinite holiness. With your wonderful works and your continuous work on behalf of everyone and your unlimited generosity and your inexhaustible ability to forgive and your total purity? Who can feel pride comparing themselves to God?

Do not expose the treasures.

The Holy Scripture tells that once King Hezekiah showed the Babylonian ambassadors all the treasures that were in Jerusalem, and the prophet Isaiah warned him that the Babylonians, upon knowing so many treasures, would be filled with greed, would come and steal them all and they would take them to Babylon. And so it happened (cf. 2R 13,20). Something similar can happen to those who live revealing to others the graces and gifts they received from God, but flaunt this not to do good to souls, but to inflate their own pride. The enemies of the soul come and steal all its merits and gains which it could have saved for heaven.

The basis of everything.

Saint Augustine repeated: "If anyone wants to achieve holiness, they must begin to cultivate humility. Not because it is the main virtue (since the number one virtue is charity), but because humility is the surest foundation on which to build the edifice of perfection." And the more we dig, remembering our miseries and weaknesses, and the more The more we discover the depths of our own nothingness, the more the Divine Architect will place in our lives the most solid stones to build the edifice of

perfection. Never believe that we already know perfectly our own misery and weakness. For if infinity could occur in anything in human creature, it would be in our fragility and weakness.

A secret.

For God to come and grant many triumphs it is necessary to remain very humble, because He distances himself from those who elevate themselves more than they should and approaches those who lower themselves by humiliating themselves. His favors and graces are like rainwater that does not remain on the high peaks, but descends to rest in the deep valleys. What Jesus said will always be fulfilled, that whoever is placed in the last place at the banquet, the Lord comes and takes him up to one of the main places (cf. Lk 14:10).

A favor that should be appreciated.

If God, in his infinite goodness, grants us the grace to get used to always remaining in a good degree of humility, let us not fail to thank him for his great favor, as in this way we resemble Jesus Christ, who, being Son of the Most High, and Lord of the Lords, became humble until he washed the feet of his apostles and until death and a death on the cross. And that is why God granted him immense glory and a name before which the heavens, the earth and the abysses bow their knees. And everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.

## CHAPTER 31

### SMALL FIGHTS THAT MUST BE DONE EVERY DAY

Whoever wishes to achieve holiness can never stop fighting against everything that opposes perfection. The first and most frequent battle you will have to fight on a daily basis will be to attack your passions, especially those that most attack your soul, and try to achieve, little by little, but without getting tired or discouraged, the virtues that are contrary to your dreams, bad improper habits, passions and inclinations. And don't forget that virtues and passions are so linked to each other that when you advance in one virtue, the others also grow, and when you combat a vice, the others also decrease.

Don't set deadlines.

Something that can fill you with worries and dreams is setting deadlines to acquire a virtue or to overcome an addiction or bad habit. In this case, the important thing is not how long it takes to achieve victory, but rather not stopping fighting, even if the successes achieved are not very quick or noticeable. God not only rewards the victories achieved, but above all the efforts made to obtain them. Our duty is not to achieve perfection, but to continually strive for it.

Do not stop.

In the fight against bad tendencies it is necessary not to leave a single day without doing something to progress in virtue, because in this it happens like someone rowing against the current: if they let go of the oars for a moment, the current takes them away.

Never believe that we have already arrived.

If anyone imagines that they have already reached the degree of perfection and holiness that God desires from each person, they are totally mistaken. This would

lead to not taking advantage of the new opportunities that arise every day to practice virtue and reject evil, as one imagines that this is already what one should do.

An ideal figure.

A very spiritual person saw in a dream a wonderful character, practicing the most excellent virtues and fighting bravely against everything that opposed holiness, and with a truly beautiful and admirable soul. And with great emotion he asked: "Who is it? Who is it?" And a heavenly voice said to him: "This is what God wanted you to become. It is a shame that you are still so far from what Our Lord wants you to be." He woke up sighing with disappointment, but resolved not to stop working day after day to achieve his perfection, because he realized how far he was still from true holiness. And me personally, how far away will I be? He would be terrified if he knew.

Don't miss any opportunity.

Of someone who, upon suffering an offense, burst into screams and complaints, his spiritual director said: "What a shame. You missed the opportunity to remain silent and win a great prize for eternity!" Let this not be said about us on any occasion. On the contrary, let us make the most of every opportunity that presents itself to us to practice any of the virtues, be it patience, silence, humility, charity, joy, mercy, forgiveness, etc.

And let us flee in fear of any opportunity to sin. Run away, always run away, because seduction or attraction to evil is what drags all forces the most, and even the strongest people are carried away like a leaf by the wind.

Practice small virtues.

There are some virtues or customs of doing good that are not great in appearance, but if they are practiced every day they progress admirably in holiness, their practice and exercise do not harm the body. For example, being kind and treating others kindly, speaking well of everyone and never bad of anyone, doing small favors, providing humble services; punctuality in waking up in the morning and arriving everywhere on time and trying not to be late for any of our obligations; dedicate a few minutes every day to reading a few pages of a spiritual book, even if it costs us some small sacrifice (a sacrifice that God will be able to reward very well in this life and in eternity) knowing how to be silent at times when it is better to remain silent than to speak; always showing a happy face, even if there is suffering in the soul or body; pray for God to bless those who have offended us; frequently remember the favors of Our Lord and thank Him; stop eating something that attracts us and that we really like, etc. They are small virtues perhaps, but they can happen to them like the sands of the sea that are so small but united that they all form a wall that does not let the destructive waves that try to flood the land pass. And these waves can be our passions and temptations.

Focus all efforts on the same point.

An ancient sage said: "I expect much from those who concentrate all their efforts on the achievement of a single virtue or the defeat of a single vice. You will obtain admirable results."

Let us concentrate all our thoughts, all the desires, efforts and prayers we make, in an attempt to combat a certain defect and achieve the opposite virtue or quality. This is extremely profitable and very pleasing to God.

Just as Saint Paul said: "Whether you eat or drink, or do anything else, do everything for the greater glory of God" (1Co 10:31), let us say this about what we are recommending: whether we work, whether we rest, whether we let us pray, whether

we meditate, whether we are at home or abroad, let us always have an end before our eyes and our intentions, so that we can move our will: fight against some defect that dominates us and achieve the opposite virtue or quality.

### SACRIFICING UNDUE WISHES

That oriental philosopher called Buddha, who had so much influence on the peoples of Asia, always repeated to his disciples: "If you want to have peace in the soul and progress in the spirit, you must fight without compassion against all improper or moderate desires." and against that is just seeking pleasure. (Pleasure is what produces satisfaction to the senses. On the other hand, joy is what produces satisfaction to the spirit.) Vices receive their strength and vigor from everything that produces pleasure and delight. Therefore, by avoiding the latter, vices necessarily weaken and lose power over the will and spirit.

### BEWARE OF LITTLE DELICIES

A principle that never fails in spirituality is that those who do not mortify themselves in small delights will not be able to control themselves when the most impressive attractions of pleasure arrive. What Jesus said is fulfilled here: "Whoever is not capable of being faithful in small things will not be able to be faithful in large things" (Luke 19:17). Although small pleasures are not serious faults nor do they offend God, it is clear, however, that not being able to make the sacrifice of abstaining from them weakens the will and prepares it negatively so that, when the big battles come, it will no longer be capable of to resist. For example, certain very sensitive displays of affection: excessively affectionate looks, handshakes, small caresses on the face, eating sweets frequently during the day, walking around looking curiously at the surroundings, living with curiosity listening to world news and gossip about others, not being able to silence certain vivid things that come to mind, etc. All this will not be a great offense to God, but it will do much to weaken the will. Let us never forget Saint Paul's warning: "If we live giving ourselves over to the inclinations of the flesh, we will end up very badly. But if, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we restrain the desires of the body, we will end up living a full life." (Romans 8:13)

Very useful advice.

If someone has not made a general confession in their entire life, know that it will be of great benefit for their spiritual advancement and for the peace of their spirit to acquire a little book that talks about how to make a good confession and read it slowly. ...two or three times, and then find an understanding and very spiritual priest and make a confession of all the sins you remember in your life.

You will see what deep joy you will feel.

It's starting a new stage of your life with zero sins. It is a "blank slate". And ask the confessor to also grant you absolution from all the sins that you have forgotten or failed to confess. Then what Jesus said will be fulfilled: "He whose sins are forgiven is forgiven" (John 20:23).

Asking this is like repeating what the psalmist begged the Lord: "O God, forgive me my hidden sins" (Ps 18). And Christ will tell us what he said to the paralytic and the sinner: "Your sins are forgiven." What better can you tell us? It will be the most consoling of all your news.

HE WHO IS FAITHFUL IN A LITTLE WILL ALSO BE FAITHFUL IN MUCH (LC 16,10)

## CHAPTER 32

### WE MUST BE CONTENT WITH ACQUIRING VIRTUES LITTLE BY LITTLE AND EXERCISE FIRST ONE VIRTUE AND THEN ON ANOTHER

A rookie mistake.

When many people begin their efforts to acquire holiness and fight against the enemies of their perfection, they fall into a mistake that can cause them much harm, and consists of setting out with an indiscreet and exaggerated fervor of spirit to acquire all the virtues at once. For all and forever abandon all defects and vices. And since this is not possible for them, then discouragement sets in and they become discouraged. They forgot what the wise Solomon repeated so often: "He who encompasses much, achieves little".

Little by little.

The peasants say: "From grain to grain the chicken fills its crop" and something similar happens when feeding the soul to obtain holiness. You have to be content with growing little by little towards perfection. This is how plants, animals and human beings grow: almost without anyone noticing, but if this growth is continuous, very satisfactory results can be achieved.

For example: someone wants to be patient.

It's not like today you go to bed grumpy and tomorrow you wake up already possessing the patience of Saint Job. No. No. Pretending to do so would be like picking apples from an onion bush. There was a man who was so angry that he even killed an enemy. And it is said of this individual that after 40 years of intense work to obtain patience, he became the meekest and most humble man of his time. His name was: Moses, the liberator of Israel. But he hadn't been patient for a week or a month. What Jesus said continues to be fulfilled here: "By your perseverance you will be saved". Those who persevere will be the winners (Mt 24:13).

A single virtue at a time.

Many tried to dedicate themselves to cultivating all the virtues at the same time and ended up without strength or courage. They did not remember that principle of combat that the famous Roman warriors had: "Divide them and you will conquer them". One by one, the enemies of holiness can be defeated. One by one the virtues are achieved. But all of them together are too much weight on our weak shoulders.

Repeat, repeat, something remains.

We have to propose each month and each year to cultivate some special and specific virtue that we need. The Holy Spirit, if we ask Him, will enlighten us as to which virtue we intend to acquire with greater care than the others. And on this virtue or quality we have to repeat and repeat good actions until they become a habit. Because this is a virtue: the habit of doing certain good actions. Just as a ditch is created in the brain by repeating so many teachings and what has been learned through repetition is forever recorded, so in the desire to repeat so many good acts the taste and ease of repeating those same acts is formed. And let's say again: this is what possessing a virtue consists of: acquiring the habit of doing certain good actions.



Stay motivated.

The saints say not to say that people don't want to do certain good works, but rather to say that what happens to these people is that they were not motivated enough to engage in those good works. This is what happens with our will. It may be necessary to motivate her more about how much we will gain if we dedicate ourselves to the virtue we want to practice. We will see that if we motivate the will it will be more actively inclined to acquire this virtue.

## CHAPTER 33

TO BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE A VIRTUE IT IS NECESSARY TO LOVE AND ESTEEM A LOT.

In philosophy this principle is taught: "No one loves what they don't know. No one gets excited about what they don't appreciate." Therefore, if we want to have some virtue or excellent way of acting, it is necessary that we foster a great love for that virtue in our hearts and that we try to form a true admiration for that quality in our brain. If we achieve this, the will will move and resolutely try to achieve it, and will strive to overcome the difficulties that arise and courageously endure the pains and setbacks that the realization of this virtue requires.

Double profit.

It turns out that if we are enthusiastic about a virtue and work to achieve it, together with it we will achieve other virtues, as they are extremely linked to each other and what is done in favor of one results in favor of another, and the work that is done serves to achieve a virtue, it serves as a preparation to acquire several other qualities. Thus, for example, whoever strives to obtain patience will also obtain goodness, and whoever exercises humility will at the same time obtain meekness. And by practicing mortification one acquires the virtue of chastity in an admirable way. Each virtue that grows and perfects itself, in turn perfects other virtues. And therefore, we gain enormously every time we try to grow and progress in some virtue.

## CULTIVATE AFFECTION AND ADMIRATION

It is especially important that we seek to increase our affection and inclination towards the virtue we wish to achieve or increase. This affection and admiration is achieved by frequently thinking about how pleasing this virtue is to God, how beautiful and excellent it is in itself, and how useful and profitable it is to those who practice it. To do this, it helps a lot to read some writings that praise this virtue. Thus, Saint Bernard became very excited about the virtue of generosity in giving alms when he read the wonderful sermons of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil about the enormous fruits that can be achieved by helping those in need. Thousands, and we would even say, millions, of people have managed to preserve the holy virtue of purity, or recover it if they had lost it, by hearing the greatness and wonders of this virtue explained, or by reading writings that praise it and present its great value.

Make a combat plan.

Every morning you must ask yourself: what am I going to do today to grow in this virtue that I set out to achieve this year? What dangers could be presented to me today? How can I defeat or avoid them? It is necessary to concentrate all forces (physical, emotional and spiritual) and direct them towards achieving this virtue. This produces an irresistible force. It is very convenient to put our entire heart, that is, our entire personality, at the service of realizing the virtue we wish to obtain. It

becomes impossible for people to acquire certain virtues, not because they do not have the capacity to obtain them, but because they lack total and persevering dedication in the effort to possess them.

What we desire intensely, if it is for our good, sooner or later we will be able to obtain it from the goodness of God. The wise say: "Be careful what you want, because if it suits you, you will get it", if you don't get tired of trying to get it.

Search templates.

To acquire a virtue, it is very convenient to look for examples of people who practiced it. Anyone who wants to succeed in a profession benefits from reading biographies and studying the lives of people who have successfully pursued that profession. And the same thing happens with virtues. And what better models than the lives of Jesus and the saints? Therefore, if the virtue you want to achieve is purity or chastity,

And if it is a question of achieving the virtue of patience, let us think of the examples of Saint Job who, when he lost all his possessions and his health, did not sin with his tongue and said: "God gave it to me", God took it from me, blessed be God". And above all in the admirable example of Our Lord Jesus Christ in his Holy Passion and Death, who accepts all suffering, offering it for the salvation of souls, and remains silent when they invent the most terrible slander against him, and when they commit the most terrible affronts against him, more terrible injustices. Who wouldn't be surprised to suffer patiently in silence, after meditating on such sublime examples?

### A PRODIGIOUS REMEDY

The experience of many centuries has taught that one of the most beneficial ways to fall in love with a virtue and be enthusiastic about practicing it is to remember the phrases in the Holy Bible that speak in favor of that virtue. Great spiritual teachers advise copying several of these phrases and, hopefully, learning some by heart and reciting them frequently until they become part of our intellectual possessions.

For example: if the virtue we wish to possess is faith, we can remember phrases like these: "As your faith is, so things will be and will happen to you" (Mt 15:28). If they had faith like a mustard seed, they would tell this mountain to leave here and go to the sea, and it would obey them (Mt 17:20). Have faith in God.

Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have already obtained it and you will obtain it (Mk 10, 24). Everything is possible for those who have faith (Mk 9, 23). Why be afraid, people of little faith? (Mt 8,26). It is a truly fruitful and enjoyable exercise to continue searching the Holy Scriptures for other phrases that speak of faith or other virtues. We will find treasures and progress spiritually.

If what we are looking for is patience, let us remember, for example, these phrases: "He who has patience is worth more than he who can dominate a city" (Pr 16:32). With their patience they will be able to save their soul (cf. Lk 21:19). One of the signs of being a good apostle is having a lot of patience (cf. 2Co12,12): Charity is patient. (cf. 1Co13).

### SMALL PRAYERS

In ancient wars they were called "jaculas" or some flaming arrows that were launched to spread fires or carry messages in the middle of combat. I hope that these little phrases from Holy Scripture serve as flaming arrows that we send to the sky to carry our messages to God, asking for His help and protection to ensure that a true fire of love and enthusiasm for Him is lit in our souls, the virtues that we want to reach.

## CHAPTER 34

THAT IN SPIRITUAL COMBAT NOT TO ADVANCE IS TO GO BACK, AND NOT TO GROW IS TO DECLINE.

In the struggle for the acquisition of virtues we must always keep in mind the motto of the great personality trainers: "In the spiritual world, not advancing is going back." and those that do not grow become dwarfs."

Pope Saint Gregory the Great repeated: "Let us remember that in the struggle to be better, if we do not move forward, we retreat into the abyss, and if we stop along the way, it happens to us like Lot's wife: "we become statues that cannot grow more."

Be careful not to be mummies.

The mummies or dried corpses found in Egypt and elsewhere have not grown an inch for centuries and centuries. As they left them when they were embalmed, so they are now after so long. Something similar can happen to those who stop fighting to progress in virtue and to reduce their defects and sins. There are people who seem to have thrown away their virtues, their defects, their qualities and their bad inclinations, and after years and years they remain as they were at the beginning of their spiritual life. What a shame! It happened to them like it did to the mummies. It's true that they didn't rot, but they didn't grow either. And spiritually, not growing is decreasing.

### THE EMPLOYEE WHO DIDN'T USE HIS TALENT

What Jesus said happened to the lazy employee who was given a talent can happen to people who stop fighting and don't strive to be better and grow in virtue. That parable of the lazy employee is an invitation to activity, to boldness. When Jesus says that the employee who did not work on his talent was punished, he does not announce any injustice on God's part, but rather seriously warns that each person will be required according to their ability to act. Even if someone believes that the skills he has received are very few (just one talent), remember that the employee of the talent would also have heard like the employee of the 5 talents: "Come and enter the Kingdom of your Lord", if he had worked hard to produce what he received. But he made excuses. He loved his own comfort more than the good he could have done and achieved. He showed very little interest in producing what he had received from the Lord, and Jesus called him: "A bad and lazy official." And this same Jesus will be our Judge.

That you don't need to tell us something like that.

Anyone who stops working to be better will stop receiving many graces and spiritual help that would come from heaven if they made an effort to fight enthusiastically to improve their way of working.

Anyone who stops cools down.

When we are climbing a steep mountain and begin to settle down on the side of the road to rest, the guide tells us: "Be careful, if you stop, you will get cold and lose your enthusiasm." The same thing happens on the spiritual path. Stopping ascending brings a lot of loss of spirit and a very harmful cooling of the spirit.

Practice produces happiness.

A great actor said that if he stopped rehearsing for a few days his listeners would

notice or at least he himself would notice, and on the other hand many artists declare that working every day to progress in their own art gives them pleasure or, an ease and a progress that admires them. The same thing happens in virtue. If we work day by day to do something in favor of the virtue we seek to achieve and against the vice we want to avoid, we will achieve a very consoling facility to grow in good and be able to do it with greater pleasure, and benefit. Many pains and difficulties that were encountered at the beginning of this arduous spiritual work will gradually diminish until they disappear, through practice. Will we really do this from now on?

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN SOMEONE WHO STRIVES TO DO WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO WELL? YOU WILL NOT BE AMONG THE LAST.  
YOU WILL BE AMONG THE FIRST (Proverbs)

## CHAPTER 35

### YOU MUST EXPOSE YOURSELF TO COMBAT TO ACQUIRE COURAGE, AGILITY AND WILLPOWER

No quality grows without exercise, and many qualities diminish and weaken through lack of exercise. That is why it is necessary not to miss any opportunity that arises to exercise any virtue. And let us be careful not to run away from those occasions that are contrary to our bad inclinations, because through these occasions we can achieve great growth and perfection in the qualities and virtues that we want to cultivate and achieve.

An exception.

The only thing we cannot and should never expose ourselves to is what concerns the holy virtue of purity or chastity. This is what inevitably falls to those who expose themselves. It is useless to hold a piece of paper near a burning flame and say, "I don't want it to burn." No matter how much willpower we have, the paper lights up. Impure passions are so enslaving and blinding that they defeat us whenever we expose ourselves to the opportunity to sin. In this field there is only one solution: run away, run away, run away from danger. But in other virtues we can expose ourselves to attack. For example.

With patience.

They tell of a very famous saint who, when she went to hospitals to care for the sick, asked permission to care for the most ungrateful, disgusting, rude and ill-tempered, because that way she could exercise more in the virtue of patience. And no one will grow in patience if there is no one to offend and contradict him. Those who insulted him, slapped him, spat on him, whipped him and crucified him made Jesus grow more in holiness than those who sang the "Hosanna" to him. Because those who offended him allowed him to practice the holy virtue of patience to a heroic degree. If we do not accept dealing with people who treat us badly, how will we acquire the virtue of patience?

The tiring jobs.

One of the most practical ways to grow in patience is to accept tiring and monotonous work, uncomfortable occupations, with superiors or colleagues who treat us badly, and dedicate ourselves to these tasks with joy and perseverance. Having to do the same exhausting work every day, at the same unattractive times, is what the Gospel calls: "The daily cross" (Luke 9:23). And if we don't resign ourselves to accepting these jobs, we will never learn to suffer with patience.

### The humiliations.

No one achieves humility unless they have someone to humiliate them. That's why a great mystic said that she had compassion for people who were treated extremely well by everyone and no one treated them badly, because how can they be humble if they don't receive humiliation from anyone? Oh, how much our Redeemer grew in humility when he was compared to the murderer Barabbas and the people preferred this criminal to Jesus, and when he was crowned king of mockery, and paraded through the streets dressed as a madman, and crucified between two thieves, slapped, spat on and despised with the worst mockery. Saint Ignatius of Loyola rightly said: "If in the place where I live no one humiliates me, I will dress like a madman and go out into the streets so that people can humiliate and insult me and so that I can practice the virtue of humility." Let us not run away of those who humiliate us, their treatment sanctifies us.

### The rookie fighter.

When a soldier starts training for war or an Olympic fighter starts preparing for their future fights in the stadiums, they are placed to train with other fighters older than them and with more techniques and skills. They suffer falls, defeats, blows and even injuries and sometimes it seems to them that they will never be able to emerge victorious: but they train and train and acquire so much ease in the fight that when they least think they become winners. So by virtue: if we don't get tired and stop training, one day we will be part of the group of winners.

NEITHER HE WHO SOWS IS NOTHING, NOR HE WHO CULTIVATES.  
IT IS CHRIST WHO GIVES THE FRUITS AND THE HARVEST (São Paulo)

## CHAPTER 36

THAT TO LEARN TO TRIUMPH WE MUST ACCEPT THE OCCASIONS THAT COME TO  
FIGHT AND NOT BE DISGUSTED BY THINGS THAT GO AGAINST OUR INCLINATIONS

Learning to triumph in terms of Virtue is not enough to expose ourselves to combat, but we must also accept and even with joy those things that oppose our inclinations, knowing that the more difficult and painful they are for us, the more beneficial they will become for our spiritual advancement.

And if we constantly implore God's grace and help, nothing will seem impossible to bear and everything will contribute to our perfection.

### Double effect of prayer.

When we ask God to grant us a virtue we are also asking him to grant us the means to obtain it, if we are upset because he sends us these means then we are already making prayer useless, because on the one hand we ask for a virtue and on the other we don't want it. May we be given the way to put it into practice. So, for example, when we ask for the virtue of patience, the most likely, perhaps (or perhaps not), will be that God will send us suffering, setbacks, offenses from people, harshness in the way they treat us, disappointments and other means that greatly increase our patience. And if we ask Our Lord to grant us the virtue of humility, He will certainly allow humiliation and harsh treatment and even weaknesses that discredit us a little. It turns out that without humiliations we will never be humble and without setbacks we will never acquire patience. Many of the most admirable virtues are the fruits of adversities that God allows to reach us, which, if suffered accepting the Lord's will, contribute wonderfully to forming in us the virtues that we need most.



Master yourself in the small.

Every truly wise spiritual director insists that great virtues are achieved by mortifying the will on small occasions in almost insignificant details, because the victories we obtain against ourselves on great occasions are more glorious, but those we achieve on small occasions are incomparably more frequent.

Accept what happens.

We must start from a principle taught by Saint Paul and which we will never tire of repeating: "Everything happens for the good of those who love God" (Rm 8:28). All things that happen in this world are permitted by God for our benefit, usefulness and benefit. At the end of our existence we will see how God wrote correctly with crooked lines, and what seemed to us to be for our harm ended up being for our good.

Accept what God allows.

Someone will say: but how can what is evil and sinful come from God, if He hates iniquity and evil? Of course this does not come from God, but God allows it. He could very well make sure that didn't happen. But he allowed this to happen to us and he loves us immensely, there is a reason he allowed this to happen to us. Those who took Job's goods were thieves and those who killed his servants were murderers, but he did not blame them, but exclaimed: "God gave them to me, God took them from me, blessed be He." Those who crucified and scourged Jesus were wicked, but He said, "Father, otherwise it is possible that these sufferings may be removed from me, that not what I want, but what you want, may be done." He does not say, "What Pilate wants, or what Caiaphas wants, but "what You want." Because it was God the Father who allowed this to happen, and it was for the glory of Jesus and for our salvation.

#### WHAT IF THE ATTACKS COME FROM THOSE WE FAVOR?

Some say: "I would patiently accept being offended and treated harshly by people to whom I have done no favors. But what I cannot tolerate is that offenses and slights are made to me by people whom I have favored and helped." In this situation we must remember who some of those who offended Jesus were. For example, Judas, who for three years saw him make the lame man jump, the mute sing, the blind see and the demon-possessed be freed. He had heard from Jesus the most beautiful and moving sermons that were ever delivered in the world, and he witnessed day after day and hour after hour what is the life and behavior of an utterly holy being. And what did this man do who received the greatest honor on earth from the Redeemer: being one of his 12 apostles? Well, he sold it for 30 coins and handed it over with a traitorous kiss.

And Peter? He denied it three times with oath. And when was that? The night he received First Communion from the hands of Jesus himself; the same night he was ordained a priest. He, who received the immense honor of being named head of the Church and visible substitute for Christ himself, when he was no longer visible to the people. And what did Jesus say in the face of such ingratitude? Well, nothing less than this sublime: "Peter: I prayed for you... If you love me... Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs."

In these two cases Jesus could repeat what Psalm 55 says: "If an enemy attacked me, I would try to hide from him. But you are my companion, my friend and confidant, to whom I unite in sweet intimacy." "Together we walk in the midst of the turmoil through the house of God." If it happened to the Son of God that his closest friends failed him, the What will we, miserable sinners say? We deserve much more,

for our evils!

What disturbs me is that the offenses are committed against me by very sinful people.

There are people who protest because suffering comes to them from people who are very enemies of God, and they exclaim that this cannot come from the Will of Our Lord, as He hates those who live doing evil. But we remember who were the ones who attacked Jesus: the same Satan who took him to the highest part of the temple to propose that he jump from there out of pride and vanity.

Herod, impure and scandalous, who dressed him as a madman and mocked him. Caiaphas and Annas who were envious and greedy, who hated with all their soul. If Jesus accepted the suffering that came to him from such evil people, won't we also accept the suffering that comes to us from people who are weaker than evil?

And the temptations? Something that we certainly wouldn't want to have in any way and never are temptations, especially those that humiliate us the most. Those indescribable feelings that we can't stop from reaching us. In this case, it takes courage, patience and resignation not to protest what happens to us. And remember what God answered you. And remember what God responded to Saint Paul when this apostle begged him so insistently that he remove that "thorn in the flesh that buffeted him." The Lord said to him: "My grace and my help are sufficient for you. For in weakness my power shines best" (cf. 2Co12,9).

Certain temptations make us progress more in humility and patience than many sermons, and convince us to the point of satiation of what Jesus said: "Apart from me you can do nothing". Temptation does not make us weaker, but it reveals how miserable and weak we are... And if God does not arrive with his very special help, we will have to repeat with the psalmist: "Before suffering the temptations I said: 'I will not hesitate, Never.' But you withdrew your hand, Lord, and I fell into the deepest abyss." Parodying what the saint Job exclaimed, let us repeat in moments of temptation: "If we receive from God the goods that comfort us, why not also accept the humiliating temptations that He allows to reach us". God knows how to bring good even from evils themselves.

Everything happens for the good of those who love God (Rom 8)

## CHAPTER 37

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OCCASION TO GROW IN EACH VIRTUE

Adult traders take advantage of even the smallest opportunities presented to them to make profits and thus increase their capital. We should do something similar in relation to virtues: not let any opportunity that arises pass without achieving some gain in some virtue, and thus increase our sanctity and reward for eternity.

One main and many secondary ones.

We have insisted that in each period of life we must aim to achieve some virtue, putting greater effort into its achievement than that dedicated to others, because we need this virtue more than the others. But that doesn't mean we stop trying to grow in all the other virtues. It is necessary to act like good students who intend to specialize in a specific science, which is the one that will best serve them in their future profession, but this does not mean that they stop studying various other sciences as well.

Some examples.

Suppose we are criticized for a good deed that we did with good intentions. This is a good opportunity to practice the virtue of righteousness of intention, which consists of worrying only about what God thinks, not what people think. Either they correct us with harsh and even offensive words, or they coldly and harshly deny us a favor

we asked for. What a good opportunity to practice the virtue of humility! And if a food is tasteless or unpleasant and not to our liking and is scarce and poorly prepared, or served reluctantly... wonderful opportunity to practice the virtue of temperance or mortification. And when pain or illness strikes us, what better opportunity to cultivate and grow the virtue of patience?

And what should we think then? Suppose we are mistreated or something unpleasant happens to us. Let us then think: "There is no punishment that can compare to my faults. Much more is what I deserve for so many evils we have committed." When a poor person asks us for alms and we don't feel much like giving it, let's remember what the Book of Proverbs says: "He who gives to the poor lends to God, and God will repay", and think: I'm going to give to this poor man. poor thing, and the good Lord will know how to give me back everything multiplied. If setbacks befall us and things happen in a way very different from what we wanted, let us think: "On Our Lord who allowed these evils to happen to me. He loves me and if He allows them to happen it is certainly because He will obtain a benefit from them ." very good."

The fly and the milk.

The peasants say that two flies fell into a glass of milk. One became discouraged and let herself drown, but the other kicked and moved her legs so much that she managed to form cream and sat in the cream and managed to survive. So we: when difficult and bitter times arrive we can have two ways of acting: one: become discouraged and let ourselves be defeated. The other is to try to make the most of that painful situation, to "kick in", that is, to make an effort to overcome that difficult situation, and thus achieve victories on earth and a reward in heaven.

The one who was attacked with lemons.

They say that a beginning actor did not know how to act in the theater in a way that would please the public, and the public, full of disgust, went out into the street, bought lemons, and returned to the stage, attacked him with lemons.

And the patient actor collected all the lemons, put them in a wheelbarrow, went out into the street, sold them and thus earned his good pennies. Isn't this a picture of what we can do when life attacks us with misunderstandings, bitterness and bad moments? Put all this together and make good lemonade, offering everything to God with as much patience as possible?

## CHAPTER 38

THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO MAKE A LIFE PLAN. TRY TO COMPLY EVERY DAY AND NEVER IMAGINE THAT WE ARE ALREADY COMPLYING EXACTLY

Many people who have dedicated themselves to educating themselves have confirmed that one of the ways that most helps to progress in virtue is to make a life plan and make an effort day after day. to fulfill it in the best way possible.

It is necessary to decide to place great importance on becoming "a virtuous person, someone who is dedicated to doing good and trying to please God," and to value this more than any title of honor or glory. From now on you have to decide to work on your own personality and make the decision not to give up a single day of struggle to achieve your perfection.

Something that is not easy.

Beginners imagine that growing into perfection will not be difficult for them, because since they think they know what they should do and avoid, they do not see why they should not be able to do one thing and avoid the other. But very soon they will

realize that this task undertaken is much more difficult than they imagined and than their deceptive optimism told them. While they direct all their attention to avoiding one mistake, another surprises them; Their old bad habits take advantage of their carelessness and play very harmful tricks on them; your evil inclinations are sometimes stronger than your will and more cunning than your intelligence; and they convince themselves that it is not enough to have a good will and desire to be better, but that a special grace or help from God is necessary, from time to time, And He will answer us very often what He said so many times to those He was going to heal: "Yes, I want to. You are healed."

An important list: we must make a list of the virtues that seem most important to us and that we most need to achieve, and dedicate ourselves to repeating and repeating acts of these virtues until we form the habit of acting in accordance with them.

But don't strive to get them all at once, but one after another. The acquisition of the previous virtue facilitates the acquisition of the next. Art teachers always advise making a plan of what you are going to do or achieve. This is what you should do spiritually: make a plan: what do I want to get? What virtues do I want to practice? How am I practicing them? What successes and failures am I having in achieving them?

Remove weeds.

Anyone who works on a large farm does not set out to eliminate all the weeds on their farm at once, but rather to pull them out little by little, until the field is free of weeds. This is what we must do in our soul: propose to gradually eliminate the faults we commit against the virtues we try to practice and begin to eliminate those that appear again.

And to do this, say small, frequent prayers, trusting the Lord to help and enlighten us.

Impressive discoveries.

If we frequently examine ourselves about how we are fulfilling our Life Plan, we will be surprised to find many more flaws in ourselves than we expected, but we will also have the satisfaction of finding that little by little the number of our flaws is increasing. decreasing. .

Never believe that we have already arrived.

We must never convince ourselves that we have acquired an eminent degree of virtue or that we have entirely triumphed over any passion. This would lead us to allow ourselves to be carried away by pride, to neglect our defenses and then to suffer the most humiliating falls. Let us follow the Apostle's advice: "Whoever gets up must be very careful not to fall" (1Co10,12).

## CHAPTER 39

THOSE WHO WANT TO OBTAIN VICTORIES IN SPIRITUAL COMBAT HAVE TO ACCEPT RECEIVING WOUNDS, SUFFERING PAIN, HAVING FALLS AND SUFFERING DISAPPOINTMENTS

The two paths of Hercules.

The ancient legend said that when the future champion Hercules was still very young, he once dreamed that two paths were presented to him: a wide one, easy and gently descending, full of thornless roses, restaurants and dance halls, games and delicacies. there was a sign that said: "This is the path of ease and

effortlessness. Through it you reach ruin and failure." Then he saw another narrow path, going up, full of rough rocks and thorny bushes, with no easy drinks at hand, no very refreshing rests, and a sign said: "This is the path of difficulty and effort, of struggles to keep well. .

The two paths of Jesus.

500 years after Hercules' dream, Christ came and left us this extremely important warning: "Take care that you always walk on the narrow path of hardship, for wide is the path and broad is the path that leads to destruction and there are many who walk there, but how difficult is the way and how narrow is the way that leads to Eternal Life, and how few there are who walk that way" (Mt 7, 13).

That is why we must be careful not to listen to the voices of the enemies of our holiness who want us to avoid everything that is difficult or makes us suffer. That would be a very damaging mistake.

Small sufferings prepare for big ones.

They tell the story of an ancient king who, to prevent someone from poisoning him one day, got into the habit of taking a small dose of "antivenom" every day. And later, when in a moment of despair and discouragement he wanted to commit suicide by taking poison, he was no longer able to poison himself because his body was trained to resist. Something similar happens to those who get used to suffering with patience and for the love of God the small difficulties and setbacks they face every day. When enormous sadness and catastrophes come to you, your will will already be so strengthened that you will be able to resist without becoming discouraged or giving up.

A very useful rule.

Something that produces a lot of peace and serenity is getting used to willingly accepting everything that God allows to happen. It never rains a lot nor is it very hot, but the rain that God saw fit to fall falls and it is as hot as Our Lord intended it to be. Not a hair falls from our head without God giving the order for it to fall. And what this merciful Father allows to happen to his children, whom he loves so much, is certainly for their good.

Good deal.

A saint said, "What I want to happen to me always happens to me." And someone said to him: "That's impossible, because things happen to all of us in life that we wouldn't want to happen to us." "And she replied, 'I always want what God wants and allows.' And since only what God allows happens, what I want always happens." How we should often have on our lips that beautiful prayer of Jesus in the Garden: "Heavenly Father, let not what my human nature desires be done, but what You will" (Mk 14:36).

What about sins and temptations?

Our sins are not of God's will, but of our own making. But even Our Lord can bring good from them, because they make us more humble, more understanding of the weak and make us feel more in need of God's forgiveness and help. But we must always hate and abhor them.

And the temptations? It is, in fact, a heavy, tiring and difficult cross to bear.

They attack us like mad dogs in all walks of life. They bark and howl at the door of our souls like wolves looking for prey to destroy.

Like tired and untimely flies, they buzz frequently in our ears.



We wish we didn't have them and they come to us.

We would like to defeat them and they defeat us. Like dark bats, they flutter constantly before our eyes. When the fire of lust burns, the flesh rebels like a raging madwoman. Even the greatest saints like Saint Paul had to beg God to remove this thorn in the flesh that buffeted them. Fortunately also for all of us who suffer, Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). And to each of us he repeats what he said to Saint Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you. For in weakness my power shines brightest" (cf. 2Co12,9).

Total weakness.

How many times do we think we will have a perfect day. There are no clouds on the horizon. And an opportunity presents itself and we don't stop, and we don't offer resistance and we don't think about the consequences of our evil... In a few moments we are out of combat... out of maximum desire, not by sinning we immediately start sinning. We cannot remember the bitterness that past guilt brought us... we are defenseless in the face of the first excitement... the tremendous consequences that our guilt will have do not come to mind. We believe that now we will be able to control ourselves and we failed once again... We only have one solution left: to launch ourselves like a rocket to the heights in search of God's help.

What a saint said.

A soul of the highest spirituality said: "I saw that a large number of spiritual enemies surrounded me with all kinds of deadly weapons and I had nowhere to run without being seriously injured, and so I cried out to the Lord and He stretched out His hand and He took me out of there and said to me, "Trust me and I will deliver you." Let us do something similar in moments of temptation and offer to the Lord this annoying and humiliating suffering of suffering continuous spiritual attacks and let us remember that the advantage of suffering temptations is that they remain understanding of others.

#### WHAT ABOUT BITTER MEMORIES AND DISILUSIONS?

Another of the sufferings that our Creator allows us to suffer is remembering the sad, humiliating and painful things that happened to us in the past. We would like to forget it and erase it from our memory, but it all remains there. Like a perpetual ringing in the ear, like a cloud that never leaves your eyes. By accepting all of this patiently and for God's sake, we are winning more rewards for eternity than perhaps we can imagine.

The regrets.

In life we can forget many things: people's names, places we've been, words we've heard, etc. But something we can never forget: are the serious sins we commit. These remain indelible like a tattoo, in memory. When a lover goes to the beach he asks a coastal person to write his beloved's name as a tattoo on her arm. But this happens after he fights with that woman and stops loving her, and even so he will have to carry that name on the skin of her arm forever, because it remained there indelibly. The same happens with our sins: we no longer love them, now we hate them, but their memory will forever be engraved in our memory. May this torment serve as penance for all the evil we have done. And let's say the same about so many sad memories from the past that we can't avoid. A psychologist rightly said: "If people did not remember the sad things that happened to them in life, but rather

the happy and joyful things that happened to them, there would be no neurotics." May the Lord have mercy and erase these painful memories from our minds, but until He allows them to disappear, let us offer them as penance for our sins.

JESUS SAYS: "COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO ARE TIRED AND FATIGUE, AND I WILL GIVE YOU RELIEF" (Mt11,28)

## CHAPTER 40

### THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO AVOID EXAGGERATIONS, BECAUSE THEY BRING MORE HARM THAN GOOD

There is a serious danger in the struggle to acquire virtues and it consists in exaggerating the good acts we perform and the penances we impose on ourselves. Saint Paul says that: "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light to deceive us" (cf. 2Co11,14) and he often does this by inciting us to commit exaggerations in piety, and thus we quickly become weak and tired and have to abandon the path of holiness. He wants us to convince ourselves that we are doing great things and thus fill ourselves with boasting.

#### Readings.

Some beginners develop such fervor for reading (realizing that good readings lift their spirits and transform their soul) that they dedicate themselves too voraciously to reading and reading until they become mentally tired.

When the governor of Judea wanted to discredit Saint Paul, he told him: "Paul is crazy. Excessive reading made him go crazy" (Acts 26:24).

This was not true, and so the Apostle replied: "I am not crazy, and the words I spoke are true and come from a balanced mind and good judgment." But in some people it happens that they develop an inordinate appetite for reading and reading, for everything, and almost without digesting what they read, and with greed and haste and wanting to achieve the maximum amount of wisdom in a very short time, and what they get is fatigue. mental. Just as not reading or reading little leads to mental rickets and spiritual dwarfism, reading too much and with haste and enthusiasm leads to tiredness and exhaustion. The Book of Proverbs rightly says: "Honey is tasty and beneficial, but if you eat too much of it, you will get sick.

You should only eat enough, because if you overdo it, you will feel full and even vomit" (Pr2,16). And good readings are a very beneficial honey for the soul. Of course, for the vast majority of Catholics, more than warning them not to read too much, what we should advise them is to read a little more, because they read very little, and perhaps 90% of what they read is more food for animals than delicacy for the spirit, like scandals and other things worldly, but readings that lead the soul to holiness, how few are actually read! A great spiritual director always advises: "Read, read religious books, and always prefer those by authors who have an S. behind their name, that is, books written by saints."

#### The penances.

One of the most harmful mistakes for those who begin a life of holiness is to dedicate themselves to imitating the great saints by carrying out exaggerated penances, disproportionate to their strength. The peasants repeat a saying: "A live donkey that helps us carry the loads is more useful for our work than a wise man who is dead in the cemetery". We should say something similar in the spiritual life: "He who preserves his health by taking care not to exaggerate in penances can work more than whoever loses his health by exaggerating in mortifications". We can imitate the saints in their love of silence, in their appreciation of humility, in their immense charity towards others and in their intense love for God in patiently

suffering the offenses committed against us and the setbacks and illnesses that affect us. , in not eating or drinking out of gluttony, in fighting to avoid sin and correcting one's own defects. But as for their terrible penances, if we do not receive a very special grace like the one they received, it would be better not to try to imitate them, because we could irreparably damage our health and become discouraged on the path to holiness.

## CHAPTER 41

### THE DANGER OF LIVING JUDGING AND CONDEMNING OTHERS

São Paulo wrote some phrases that became famous. It says: "You have no excuses, whœver you are, you who dedicate yourself to judging and condemning others, because by judging others you condemn yourself, because you do the same thing that you constantly condemn in others" (Rm2,1) .

Our pride and the contempt we feel for our neighbors make us have a negative idea of other people. And the greater the opinion that pride makes us form of ourselves, the lower the opinion that our contempt forms of others, and we convince ourselves that we are free from the imperfections that we criticize so much in others. And that is a lie and a deception.

Æsop's fable.

This pœt who lived 500 years before Christ painted those who criticize and despise others, with two backpacks hanging around their necks. He who has the defects of others right before his eyes to continually look at them and condemn them. And the other with his own defects, behind his back, so he doesn't see or know them. This is our portrait when we condemn and judge.

Remedies for this ailment.

When we begin to think about the defects or vices of others, let us immediately try to put that thought aside and refuse to form negative judgments about them. At these moments you must say to yourself: "I have no authority to judge or condemn others; I do not have sufficient data to form a judgment about his passions, defects and evil inclinations. I have to examine those words of the Apostle: "You who are dedicated to judging and condemning, who commit the same thing that you condemn, who will escape the judgment of God?" (Rom2). And other similar comforting promises made by Jesus himself who will be our judge: "Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned" (Lc6,37).

Look in.

In order not to dedicate ourselves to judging and condemning others, it is necessary to focus all our attention on our own miseries and weaknesses. If we do this, we will find so many things to correct and reform within ourselves that we will no longer have time or pleasure to devote to judging others, and we will learn to look upon the faults of others with good charity. We have to think that if we live judging that others have some vice, it may be that we have it too, because according to the old saying: "A thief judges by his condition". Just as someone who suffered corruption from an adult as a child, when they reach adulthood they continually judge that adults are corrupting minors, in the same way attributing certain miseries and bad inclinations to others,

An impressive average.

If we coldly analyze the times we condemn in our understanding or with words

addressed to others, we will see that most of the times we condemn, we are wrong. So, why dedicate yourself to an activity that has so many possibilities for error? When we feel the inclination to do so, say to ourselves: "How can I dare judge and condemn others if I have the same defects and worse inclinations as them? If I have a plank in my eyes, why criticize others? Who has a plank? little rubbish inside them?"

What if the offense is true and public?

In these cases, we will think that this person must have many hidden qualities and virtues and has probably done many good works that we are unaware of. And let us consider that if God allowed him to fall into this fault, it was probably to heal his pride and increase his humility and so that he would become more understanding of others. And therefore, his gain in making this error public will be greater than the loss he suffered from the discredit attributed to him.

What if the shortage is huge?

What if the sinner is unrepentant, hardened and shows no inclination towards conversion? In these cases, after making the decision to pray every day for the conversion of sinners (which will perhaps be the greatest favor we can do them and only in heaven will we know how much good we have done for them by praying for their conversion). Let us lift our spirits to heaven and think of how many are up there enjoying Eternal Paradise after having led for many years a life of sin that seemed impenitent and without hope of conversion, and suddenly, perhaps because of the prayers and sacrifices that someone offered for sinners, received one of those graces that mystics call "tumbative" and changed his life and later managed to achieve holiness, like the thief on the right on the cross or like the sinner in the Gospel, they exchanged a horrible life of sin for a conversion situation and were saved. On the other hand, how many men and women who were already high on the path of holiness became filled with pride and presumption, and with vainglory and contempt for others, and then fell into an abyss of misery and weakness. This is why the wise man says in the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Let us not judge anyone before they reach the end of their lives, because there are people who began well and ended badly, and others can begin very badly and end very well." Another boasted and contempt for others, and then fell into an abyss of misery and weakness.

Ask for this quality.

One of the favors that we should most ask of the Holy Spirit is that gift that, according to Saint Paul, the Holy Spirit usually grants to those who ask Him: kindness, that is, the quality of thinking well and kindly towards everyone (Gal.5 ). If He grants us this happy inclination, we will be sure that on the day of judgment we will not receive a condemning sentence, because Jesus promised: "With the judgment with which you judge, you will be judged, and with the measure with which you measure, you will be measured" (Mt7 ,1).

More often than not, we should have on our lips that little prayer that so many people have repeated thousands of times and that has transformed so many hard and inflexible hearts into understanding and kind hearts. It says: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts equal to Yours".

Then what the Lord promised through the prophet Ezekiel will be fulfilled in us: "I will exchange your heart of stone for a heart of flesh" (Ez36,26) the hard and condemning heart for an understanding and forgiving heart.

Many tried to ask for this grace and obtained it. Why don't we rehearse too?

If we are going to be judged by the measure we use to judge others, it is best to use a broad and generous measure, so that this measure can be used to our advantage. This is how Jesus' promise will be fulfilled: "A large, good, generous and abundant measure will be given to you" (Lc6,38).

## CHAPTER 42

### THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON TO WIN IN SPIRITUAL COMBAT

We have remembered that to be victorious in the battles of the spirit three conditions are necessary: to suspect that through our own strength we will be able to defeat the enemies of salvation; trust immensely in God and use the qualities received in the best way possible. Now let's remember the fourth weapon, and the most powerful and effective, which is prayer. From prayer we can repeat the words that the Holy Scripture says about wisdom: "All other good things came to me along with it". Prayer is the channel through which all the help we receive from heaven is sent to us. It is the sword that God has placed in our hands so that we can fight the enemies of our salvation and defeat them.

Prayer has its conditions.

Praying is talking to a God who loves us and listens to us with infinite kindness and with great interest in helping and defending us. But when praying we must be careful to fulfill certain conditions so that the prayer pleases Our Lord. The saints say that when praying we must do four actions: worship, give thanks, ask for forgiveness and beg favors. There may be a danger: we pray only to ask for favors and forget to worship, give thanks to the good God and beg His forgiveness for the offenses we have done to Him. When you ask someone for a favor, it is very important to gain the friendship and goodwill of the person who will grant that favor. Do we do this with God? Do we apologize for the offenses we caused you? Do we thank Him for so many favors He has bestowed upon us? Do we tell Him often that we love Him? Or do we just ask, ask and nothing more?

When asking, it is important that what is asked pleases the giver.

A saint said that heaven must be tired of hearing that some only ask for material goods for this earth, they forget to ask for conversion, the salvation of the soul, to grow in holiness and obtain eternal life. These are things that truly please Our Lord very much and He grants them with immense pleasure. Is this what we most ask for? Let us not forget that of the seven petitions in the Our Father, only one is material.

The other six are spiritual.

Advantages of prayer.

One of the greatest qualities God has given some of us is that we love to pray. Because prayer will help us to cross without fail the treacherous places where temptation is found. In the morning, prayer is the key that opens God's treasures for us and at night it is the cloak that places us under His Divine Protection. The most wonderful miracles and the most portentous changes have been prepared by many prayers. What fails in some apostolates is that too much time is dedicated to making plans and too little time to praying. Thus the apostolate becomes sterile.

Every fervent person should dedicate ten percent of their day to prayer.

The defect of not trusting God with all faith will disappear and diminish significantly.

A condition without which we cannot progress.

For prayer to be effective, we need to do it with great trust in the power and goodness of Our Lord. Saint Paul says: "God has the power and kindness to give us much more than we dare ask or desire" (Eph3,20).

We can be sure that if we ask him with faith and without getting tired, he will not



deny us the help we need materially and spiritually. The holy prophet repeated: "Do you know who the Lord prefers? Those who trust in his mercy." Let us try to belong to that number of God's favorites.

The more we trust in Him, the more we will be helped by His infinite goodness and power.

Another condition.

For our prayer to be answered favorably by the Creator, it is necessary that our desire is to fulfill God's Will, what God wants, and not our will or our own whims. Because our own will can be wrong and can make us ask for things that do not suit us, and on the other hand, the Divine Will is never wrong and what it wants for us is what is best for us. This is why we tell our Lord from time to time that if what we ask of him does not serve our highest good, please do not grant it to us. Even in virtues and spiritual progress, which are goods that always benefit us greatly, let us ask the Lord for all of this, but not to give ourselves the pleasure of being better and more esteemed, but to please Him more and achieve better. your most holy Will.

### ACT SO THAT WE DESERVE WHAT WE ASK FOR

In Prayer, experts recommend that to do more safely what we ask from heaven when we pray, it is very convenient that we try to act in such a way that with our good behavior we gain the sympathy of the Holy God from whom we ask these favors. This is what children do when they try to get their father to grant them some very special favor that they want: then they try to behave so well that their father, very pleased with their good behavior, is more inclined to grant it to them. what they ask for.

Unfortunately, we often do the opposite: we ask God for some favor or grace that we need or desire, but in the meantime we continue to behave in such a bad way that instead of deserving divine sympathy, what we are receiving is aversion and antipathy. for our harm. Proceed. And then what a great mystic said is fulfilled: "With God, in good times, we get everything we want and much more. But in bad times, we only have failures."

Before placing the order, thank you.

It is extremely convenient that before asking Our Lord for favors we thank Him for so many kindnesses that He has shown us so far. This is what the people of the world know how to do when they ask the powerful for help. Before reminding them how grateful they are for previous gifts. This is how they gain goodwill to grant them new aid. Remembering with gratitude the favors received is a sign that you have a noble and grateful heart. Therefore, let us not let any day pass without thanking God for certain favors he has bestowed upon us. We thus fulfill the commandment of the Holy Book: "We must always be grateful. Let us give thanks to God in everything, because this is his holy will" (1Thess5,18).

### ALWAYS HIRE A LAWYER, AN INTERCESSOR

When speaking to a very high authority, it is extremely advisable to be accompanied by someone who enjoys great esteem and a good name among the high government, for example a senator, a family member highly esteemed by the ruler, a friend, etc. Something similar is what we must do when addressing the Most High God. We present ourselves to Him through the being He loves and cherishes most, His beloved Son Jesus Christ. That is why the Redeemer left us this beautiful promise: "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it (John14,13). Whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will grant it" (John15,16). Let us always beseech any favor

we wish to obtain from our Heavenly Father, telling Him that we ask it in the name of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. And let us say to Jesus that we beg him in the name of his beloved Mother and the saints. Thus, supported by such powerful lawyers and intercessors, we will be heard with greater security.

The irresistible prayer.

It is a persevering prayer, the prayer of someone who never tires of imploring divine help. Jesus tells us in the Gospel (cf. Lc18) that a widow, never tiring of begging and begging, obtained justice from an evil and cold judge and freed her from an enemy who wanted to leave her in poverty. And she adds to the Lord: "If an evil and cold man did this, how much more will my Heavenly Father do if you do not get tired of begging him?"

The one who didn't wait.

A lady went to a rich family to ask for a dress for her little daughter who was very poor. Those people started looking in the closets for the best dress they had, but when they went down to the first floor the woman had already left, believing they weren't going to give her anything. He didn't know how to wait.

But what if it takes too long? One of the dangers for our prayer is that if God takes too long to grant us what we ask for, we will become discouraged and stop praying to Him. We need to repeat to ourselves until we get sick of the beautiful news that Saint Paul told us: "God has power and goodness to give us much more than we dared to ask or desire" (Eph 3:20). If He wants and can help, why stop asking Him for help?

We always start from one principle: "The one we ask is the Almighty". "God hears us, says Saint John, and if he hears us, he helps us" (1 John 5:14).

What if the grace we ask for is not right for us? In this case, God, who is infinitely wise and kind, will then grant us other more useful and profitable graces and assistance. But the truth is that He will always fulfill what He promised through His prophet: "They have not yet finished speaking in their prayer and I am already sending them an answer in their favor" (Is 65:24).

What if we don't deserve to be heard? When God seems not to want to hear our requests, we must humble ourselves and recognize that we are unworthy for Him to hear us and help us, but let us not dwell on the memory of our miseries and evils, but rather think about how great His mercy and admiration are. generosity and that He helps us not because we are good, but because He is good; and let us be certain that the greater our trust in divine mercy, the greater the favors we will obtain from Our Lord. From someone who has more wealth and more generosity, one can get more help than from someone who is poor and stingy.

But who is richer, more generous and our best friend than God himself?

Our Creator does not need us to "inform" Him about what we need because "the Heavenly Father knows everything you need" (Luke 12:30), but He wants us to come to Him to fully trust Him with what we have. lack and let the solution be in your hands, accepting your holy will.

Saint John Chrysostom says: "There is no creature more powerful than one who prays with faith, because he has in his favor an infallible promise that says: "Ask and it will be given to you". will grant us... It is our turn not to be afraid to ask, even if what we ask for is as strange as asking for a tree or a mountain to be uprooted from where they stand and thrown into the sea (Mc 11,23).

Pray without so much effort.

We need not to delve too deeply into the problems. By scratching a wound so much, it becomes more and more inflamed. Let God act.

Let's end so much fear. Fear is not good for those who trust in the goodness of the Lord. Let's not dedicate ourselves so much to analyzing problems or trying to solve them alone. Let God resolve them.

Don't just ask for material things.

People say, "They pray for this or that problem to be solved." Very good! But why don't you also ask: pray for me to convert? If this happens, what Jesus announced will be fulfilled: "All other things will be added to us." The best prayer is one that starts from the desire to please God, from the desire to save souls, from the desire to achieve one's own conversion and that of many others. There is nothing that pleases Our Savior more than this. And if we ask him for these graces, he will always be ready to answer our prayer.

"Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and you will receive it" (MC 11,24)

## CHAPTER 43

### THE TWO TYPES OF PRAYER AND HOW TO DO THEM

Prayer is raising your mind to God to worship Him, give Him grace, Prayer can be done in two ways: with words or just with the mind. The first is called vocal prayer. The second: mental prayer.

#### VOCAL PRAYER.

It is the one in which we speak with words to God. So, for example, we say: "Lord and my God, if it pleases you, if it is for my greatest good, grant me this or that favor... Forgive me this or that fault... Thank you for this or other benefit of yours."

When we experience dangerous temptations and are in danger of falling into sin, it is appropriate to say, "Lord, look, they are defeating me.

Oh my God, come help me. Lord, hurry to help me... Look, Lord, on the way where I am going they set a trap for me... Do not abandon me, God of my salvation... Do not lead me into temptation... Holy God, Strong God, immortal God, deliver us Lord from all evil... etc.

When we feel weak and unable to be victorious in spiritual struggles we can say the words of the beautiful Psalm 86: "Incline your ears, Lord; listen to me, I am poor and helpless; the day of danger "I call and you hear me. Great are You and do wonders. Give me a favorable sign. Let the enemies of my soul see You and turn away, for You, Lord, help me and comfort me. "

#### MENTAL PRAYER.

It consists of elevating the mind to God, but without saying anything to Him in words. For example, when we begin to think that alone we are not capable of defending ourselves from evil and doing good, and filled with love for God we increase our trust in Him with the certainty that His help will never fail us. This distrust in ourselves and this act of faith in the power and goodness of God is a true prayer, even though no words are spoken.

A mental prayer is also made when we represent to God our poverty, misery and absolute weakness, and remembering the kindness with which he helped us on other occasions we think that he will also help us and help us in the present and in the future. This mental prayer is extremely useful for the soul and always beneficial.

### SOME RULES FOR PRAYING WITH SIMPLICITY

1st First of all, let us set aside a few minutes every day to be alone, in peace and

talk to God.

2° Let us speak to Our Lord with simplicity and nature like a much loved son, like the most good and loving of parents. Let's tell him what worries us. We don't need to use strange formulas. Let us speak to Him with our own words, for He understands them very well.

3° Let us also enter into dialogue with God when we are at work. Let's tell him that we love him, that we thank him. That we offer you what we are doing.

4th Let us convince ourselves of this great truth "God is with us". Travel with us. It accompanies us like air and light at all hours of the day. He is by our side 24 hours and 60 minutes of every hour. And he wants to help us. You want to help us. Take the opportunity to help us. But wait for our request for help.

5th Let us pray with the absolute certainty that our prayer is heard and answered by God always and always. And let us praise the sinners who wish to convert and all those who have dealt or will deal with us.

6° When we pray, we have positive ideas and not negative ones. "If God is with us, who can be against us?"

7th We must always declare or think when we begin to pray that we accept what God allows to happen to us, because even if he does not grant us what we ask for, he will always grant us what is for our greatest good. He loves us so much and that's why he gives us what's best for us.

8° When we pray, let us leave all problems in God's hands. Let's remember what Psalm 55 says: "Put your problems in the hands of the Lord, and He will act". Let us ask Him to grant us the strength to do what we have to do and leave the rest in His Almighty hands.

9° Every day we will say a prayer for our city, for our country. This is what the prophet Jeremiah advises, saying: "Pray for the city and country where you live, because their good will be your good" (Jeremiah 39,17).

## CHAPTER 44

### HOW TO PRAY THROUGH MEDITATION

We understand meditation as the mindful application of thought to consider some religious topic. Meditating is elevating yourself to God through reflection.

Meditation is one of the best ways to progress in spiritual life.

Anyone who wants to reach a good degree of perfection and holiness must dedicate at least half an hour a day to this prayer exercise called meditation. And one of the themes that most helps to obtain a true love for God and a total rejection of all sin is the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ.

### HOW TO MEDITATE ON PASSION?

Suppose we wish to attain the virtue of patience. To achieve this, it will be of enormous benefit to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus in the Passion. For example in

The Prayer in the Garden: like after asking the Father several times to take away that cup of bitterness (because we have every right to ask God to take away certain sufferings from us, if it seems good to take away) seeing that the Heavenly Father did not intend to free us from those torments that awaited him, he said with the most admirable patience: "Father, if it is not possible for this cup to depart from me, do not do as I want, but as You want. Let it be done." "do your holy will." Never in history has anyone seen such horrible agony as that of Jesus that night (which made him sweat drops of blood), but neither has anyone heard a prayer that demonstrated such admirable patience. This is what we must repeat when the bitter hours of life come to us: "Father, your Holy Will be done". And as a reward for his admirable renunciation, Jesus received a visit from an angel who consoled him, and

throughout his admirable Passion and Death he never had another moment of discouragement. The Lord gives pain, but he also gives courage, if we turn to his goodness.

And in the flagellation: we can meditate how acute and atrocious those pains must have been in which his body was literally destroyed with blows, leaving no space without wounds from head to toe. And there, in such unbearable torments, we do not hear him scream or protest, but with impressive patience he offers to God the Father all his tortures for our sins and for the salvation of our soul. Blessed be the Lord Jesus.

In the crowning of thorns: they spit on him, blindfold him, punch him, dress him in a cloak of mockery, put a reed on him as a command staff and drive some very sharp and devastating thorns into his head. .. And all this time it is silent. "Like a sheep being shorn without protesting" (said the prophet). Quite the opposite of us who are not capable of receiving the slightest offense or the slightest contempt without showing displeasure and without protesting. Jesus: teach us to suffer as you suffered.

The Trial of Pilate. Absolutely unfair, without a single piece of evidence against him. The same judge will declare that Jesus is righteous and that he finds no fault in him. And yet he sentences him to death for fear of losing his job. How much meekness Jesus demonstrated during this trial and how much patience. What a tremendous lesson for us!

The ascent to Calvary. The prophet had said that he would be led "like a lamb to the slaughter, offering no resistance." The saint of sinners. The just for the unjust. Oh, how Jesus teaches us to accept the cross of our daily suffering and to bear it patiently for our own sins and for the conversion of sinners.

And his agony on the cross. Let us meditate on how He rejected wine mixed with gall because it could make him drowsy, numb and He wanted to suffer all living torments to save our soul. Let us think that at those times, when he was not in holy silence, he was praying. To teach us to suffer by praying. And he prayed for those who did not want him to forgive them and for them he asked for forgiveness and sought the excuse that they did not know what they were doing. What a painful position in those three hours that seemed like centuries. If he rested standing up, he would feel extreme pain. If he were hung by his hands, they would be torn apart by the nails. If he looked ahead, he saw his enemies taunting him. If he turned to the right, he would contemplate his Holy Mother dying of anguish and love for Him. If he turned his gaze to the left, he would see the evil thief mocking Him. If he looked up to the sky, the Heavenly Father would also hide and let him suffer the worst martyrdom a human being can suffer, seeing himself abandoned by God, and he cried out with excitement, "My God, my God, why are you have you abandoned me?" Thirst tormented him greatly because of so much blood he had shed and he had to exclaim: "I am thirsty" and they gave him vinegar to drink and he drank it. And with his admirable patience he opened the doors to Eternal Paradise for us. Blessed be forever Lord.

Who to whom? As we meditate on these important questions, let us ask the question that St. Thomas Aquinas asked: "Who suffered? How did he suffer? For whom did he suffer? And let us think of the Son of God himself.

That Jesus who could challenge all his enemies by telling them: "If anyone knows that I have committed a sin, let him say so" (John 8:46) and no one could say anything against Him because in His life there was never the slightest fault. but being so pure and holy, he allowed God to suffer so much. And from this we deduce that Our Lord allows suffering not because He wants to punish us or because He has



forgotten us, but so that we can grow in holiness and be able to save many souls. This consideration helps us. It will help a lot to suffer with greater patience.

And how did he suffer? With the most impressive patience and full of love for God the Father and for us poor sinners. And this has to serve as an example for us to learn to suffer in the same way, without denying, without cursing, without protesting, for the love of God and souls.

Conclusion: let us frequently ask Jesus, as he knew how to suffer with so much patience, in such an impressive silence and with such great love for God the Father and for souls, to also grant us the grace of knowing how to suffer with Him: without showing impatience, prayerful and full of silence; out of love for God and others and with the greatest dose of patience possible. If we ask him for this grace many times, he will grant it to us in admirable quantities.

Purpose .

Let us decide to ask for the virtue of patience often because we need it every day and if we don't ask for it we won't have it. Let us thank the Heavenly Father for having given us in his beloved Son such sublime examples of the most holy patience. And let us look at the crucifix from time to time and repeat what Saint Bernard said: "It would be a shame if, following a Leader crowned with thorns, whipped, spat on, insulted and nailed to the cross, silent and full of patience, we live in disgust at having to suffer some small sufferings." If Christ suffered so much for us, it is right that we too suffer the pains that God allows to happen to us, and that we offer them for his kingdom and for the salvation of souls, especially those most in need of his mercy. Many souls are lost, because there is no one who suffers patiently for the salvation of sinners. Suffering is a great weapon for winning souls if it is accepted patiently, in silence and for the love of God.

## CHAPTER 45

### HOW CAN WE MEDITATE ON THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN

Nobody loves what they don't know. No one values someone who doesn't know the qualities they possess. Therefore, if we truly wish to love and appreciate the Blessed Virgin, we must meditate from time to time on her wonderful qualities and admirable greatness.

The most blessed of all women.

Let us raise the Spirit to God and let us think that among all the billions that existed in the world, the woman that God blessed more than all the others is Holy Mary. Saint Elizabeth, upon greeting her, said to her, enlightened by the Holy Spirit: "You are the most blessed of all women" (Luke 1:42). God blesses women a lot.

(To bless is to consecrate something to the service of God. It is also to wish that favors, help and graces come from heaven to those who receive the blessing.) Some women are extremely blessed by God because they lead a very pious life full of good works, but among all the holy and virtuous women who have existed and will exist on earth, the one who has received the most blessings and help and graces and will always receive them: is the Virgin Mary. Therefore, we must feel admiration, veneration and enormous esteem for Her.

Full of grace, Archangel Gabriel called her "full of grace" and told her: "Do not be afraid because you have found favor with God." Grace is friendship with God. Our Lord's good will and preference towards a person. And no other creature in all of history pleased the Creator so much and received so many preferences from Him, as Mary Most Holy. It can truly provide us with that wonderful gift called "Grace of

God", friendship with Our Lord.

That is: that He "likes" us, that we are to His liking and we are among His favorites. It is a favor that we must ask many times through Our Lady. (The opposite of the "Grace of God" is sin. Mary was preserved from all sin and can intercede before her Divine Son so that He frees us from the slavery of sin, which is the worst of all slavery, and forgives all our faults and thus live in divine friendship here on earth and forever in heaven. Let us ask him often for this great favor).

### MARY HAS ALL THE VIRTUES

If we meditate on the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, we will love her more and perhaps we will even be able to imitate her in some of them. Therefore, let us meditate on her faith: she believed despite all appearances to the contrary. In a little boy who cried, who felt hungry, who needed all the help of a mother, She had to believe that he was God. Before being a simple city worker, who was called "the carpenter's son", Maria believed he was the savior of the world. Before her son was nailed to the cross as an evildoer, She continued to believe that he was the Universal Redeemer and that his kingdom would have no end. No wonder her cousin Elizabeth said to her: "Blessed are you who believed. Everything that the Lord has said to you will be fulfilled in you" (Luke 1:45). Let us admire Mary's faith and ask her for a special favor:

### YOUR CHARITY AND SPIRIT OF SERVICE

He ran to Isabel's help because she was always in a hurry to help anyone who asked for it or needed it urgently. In Cana he insists before his Divine Son and makes Jesus advance his time to perform miracles and transform water into wine and continues to do this same favor before so many people who need Jesus to change the insipid water of a life without good works, into that generous wine called charity, kindness, conversion and holiness.

Mary, Sorrowful Mother. It can be very beneficial for us to meditate from time to time on the pain or suffering that the Mother of God suffered, because this encourages us to suffer our pains with greater patience and to offer them for the love of God and for the salvation of our neighbor.

His first pain: seeing his beloved son born in a manger, in a canoe feeding the animals and in absolute poverty.

Her second pain: hearing from Simeon's lips that many people would go against Jesus and that because of Him a sword of pain would pierce his mother's heart.

The third pain: fleeing to Egypt with the newborn.

The fourth pain: at the age of 12, suffering for three very painful days due to the absence of his lost son, later found in the temple.

The fifth pain: hearing the death sentence that Pilate pronounced against Jesus on Good Friday, around noon, and then meeting him on the road to Calvary and seeing him broken, humiliated and bleeding.

The sixth pain: seeing Jesus die minute by minute on Calvary without being able to help him.

The seventh pain: attending his holy burial, which was one of the poorest funerals with the least attendance of friends that ever existed in the world. This separation from her Son was extremely painful for her. Maria Sorrowful Mother learned through suffering to understand those who suffer in this life and that is why she comes to

console us and give us courage in times of pain, if we ask for her intercession.

### MARY: THE ONE WHO GETS FAVORS

The great saints repeated many times that they had never heard of anyone who entrusted themselves to the Blessed Virgin and that She had abandoned them and did not grant them her protection. After her Divine Son we have no more powerful and effective help than Our Lady. If we were no longer helped by Her, it is because we no longer had faith in Her intercession.

Mary can do a lot before Our Lord because her prayers are Mother's prayers and Jesus is the best Son that ever existed and He will never deny His Most Holy Mother what she asks for us. That's why we never tire of begging for her valuable protection.

### MARY: THE ONE WHO LOVES JESUS MOST

The degree of our happiness in heaven will depend greatly on the degree of love we have for Jesus Christ on this earth. Mary, because of her immense love for Jesus, was elevated to the high position she occupies in heaven. For 33 years she was with Him and began to love Him with an immense love, as great as no creature on earth ever had or will have. Devotion to Mary should lead us to love Jesus more. She said to Saint Bridget: "What I want most is for people to love my Son Jesus Christ." Let us ask her many times: "O Mary: make us love Jesus as you love him". She, even more than Saint Paul, could say: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me".

### MARY'S OWN THING IS TO MAKE US LOVE JESUS CHRIST

Mary is not a rival of Christ who takes away the love we owe him, but the more we love her, the more we will love her Son, because it is because of him that we love her. That is why we say from time to time: "O Jesus: may we love your Holy Mother as you loved her. O Mary: may Jesus always be the center and end of everything we do, say, think and suffer.

May He let us love like You, with all our hearts in this life and let us continue to love Him forever in heaven."

## CHAPTER 46

### LET'S MEDITATE ON A DEVOTION THAT DOES US VERY GOOD: DEVOTION TO SAINT JOSEPH

Experience teaches that anyone who lives near an oven that has a very high temperature is necessarily hotter than someone who is removed from the heat, and that a fabric that adheres to a very fine perfume also acquires its mild aroma. Saint Joseph lived for many years next to the highest furnace of charity that ever existed on earth, which is Jesus Christ, and next to the Mother of God who always burned with love for Our Lord and charity for others. And no one like them both exuded such an exquisite perfume of holiness. This is why Saint Joseph necessarily had a very high degree of love for God and charity towards others and was infected by the holiness of Jesus and Mary. It is impossible for anyone approaching a large fire not to participate in the heat of its flames. And what greater flame of supernatural love could there be than the one that burned in the hearts of Jesus and Mary? And José was there with them for a long time.

When God confers a special responsibility on a person, he grants him, out of justice, the qualities he needs to carry out the role entrusted to him. And Saint Joseph was entrusted by Our Lord with the greatest responsibility of being the guardian of the two greatest treasures that the Creator sent to this world: The Son of God and the Mother of the Redeemer. Therefore, without a doubt, he granted the Holy Patriarch

all the excellent qualities he needed for such a delicate and immense responsibility.

Admirable interventions.

There are many wonders that are told about the interventions that this great saint has made in favor of those who entrust themselves to him with faith. Subsidies help spiritually and materially; He obtains lights and illuminations from heaven to be able to solve problems and difficulties, and becomes a magnificent invisible director to teach prayer and meditation. If someone does not have anyone to teach them how to pray and meditate, they should entrust themselves to this powerful saint and they will see results that surpass everything they expected.

Christ shows his gratitude.

If our Lord grants so many favors to the devotees through the intercession of the other saints, because they were so faithful to him on this earth and showed him so much love, how many more favors will he grant through the intercession of the one who for 30 years dedicated himself day and night to caring for protect, help, love and make Jesus Christ and his Holy Mother happy? Can Jesus, who is the best of all children, stop eternally rewarding this adoptive father of his who did nothing but love him and take an interest in him on this earth? Christ has the same qualities in heaven that he had on earth. And here he loved and appreciated Saint Joseph immensely. Therefore, in heaven he continues to love him and grant him everything he asks of us.

A special favor.

Saint Bridget and Saint Bernardino of Siena greatly propagated devotion to Saint Joseph, and these two saints recommended that we ask such a kind patron saint for a very special grace: to teach us to love Jesus as he loved him.

Something worth envying.

Saint John the Evangelist placed his head on the heart of Christ at the Last Supper. This is something that deserves holy envy. But Saint Joseph had the baby Jesus in his heart many times, in his arms for a long time and in his home until he was 30 years old. What happiness worthy of holy envy.

Pleasurable experience.

When dealing with fervent people, it is possible to verify that there is no one who has devotion to Saint Joseph and shows him that they love and trust him, and who does not take advantage and grow in virtue. The favors you receive by entrusting yourself to him and the dangers you manage to avoid are surprising. Just have the experience of praying to him with devotion, and you will soon realize how beneficial this devotion is. Other saints have a specialty to help with certain matters, but God gave Saint Joseph the specialty to help with all types of problems. The saints are great because they obeyed Christ. Saint Joseph is great because Christ obeyed him.

Great holiness.

The Gospel says that Saint Joseph was already righteous before he got married. How much more holy would I become living next to the most holy of women and the most holy Christ Jesus? Saint Joseph: ask Jesus and Mary to grant us the grace to love them as you loved them and to become saints. Amen.

## SAINT JOSEPH: PATRON OF THE INNER LIFE: TEACHES US TO PRAY, TO SUFFER AND TO BE SILENT

### CHAPTER 47

#### SOME AFFECTIVE FEELINGS THAT WE CAN GET FROM MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

The place where you learn best.

It is said of the great sage of Saint Bonaventure that someone, amazed at the wisdom of this admirable doctor, asked him: where did he learn so much science? And that the saint took him to a Crucified Christ before whom he spent many hours praying and meditating, and said to him: "Here I was able to learn the good things I know." And they say that the Crucifix of Saint Bonaventure had his feet and hands worn out from so many kisses that he received from the saint's lips. In fact, meditation on the Passion of Christ would produce very good feelings of affection for Our Lord.

Something that managed to move.

One day, a tremendously vengeful man entered a temple and saw an image of Jesus tied to the pillar and a sign below that said: "He did not return insult for insult." Then he saw another painting where Jesus was whipped and this inscription: "When they made him suffer, he did not threaten" (1P 2,23) and a painting of Christ crucified with this caption: "Father, forgive them because they do not know what they do." He began looking at those images and meditating on their signs and from that day on he never took revenge on anyone again. Meditation on the Holy Passion is full of good feelings.

#### THE FIVE TORMENTS

Five wounds were inflicted on Jesus on his hands, feet and side on the cross, but first he also had to suffer five painful torments that should be meditated on from time to time.

1° The torment of anguish.

This martyrdom of Jesus in the Garden of Olives lasted three hours. He wanted to personally suffer how terrible the suffering of depression, sadness and worry is. As He was supposed to be the comforter of all those who had to go through these terrible torments of the soul, He suffered them first, so that there is no pain or anguish that we suffer that He did not suffer first. Holy Scripture says that through suffering he learned to understand those of us who suffer. There are very few people in history who have experienced anguish so terrible that it makes them sweat blood. And Jesus suffered this. In moments of sadness and depression, let us think that Our Savior also went through these sufferings and instead of despairing, let us do what He did: Let us pray with confidence to the Father and we will be comforted by His great kindness. Saint Ignatius says: "let us remember that Jesus in the Garden, the greater his sufferings, the more and more he prayed. Let us imitate him in this too."

2° The torment of humiliations.

When, at midnight on Maundy Thursday, Judas betrayed him by giving him a kiss, the most humiliating hours of his entire life began for Jesus. A soldier of Caiaphas gave him a terrible punch in the face for giving a frank answer. Then senators, soldiers and mobs of all kinds appeared to punch him and spit in his face. In the morning, Herod made him dress like a madman and paraded him through the

streets.

The soldiers crowned him king of mockery and, blindfolding him, punched him and said: "Guess who hit you?" Pilate made the people choose who they preferred, Jesus or the bandit Barabbas, and the population led by the scribes and Pharisees preferred Barabbas. And when they crucified him, they placed him between two thieves... Jesus wanted to suffer all the bitterness of the most horrible humiliations. As we contemplate these admirable facts, let us feel the desire to accept, like Him, and for the love of God and souls, the humiliations that God allows to befall us.

3° The martyrdom of injustices.

Jesus endured the greatest injustices in his Holy Passion. Caiaphas and the other senators brought many false witnesses who invented lies and contradicted themselves and, without allowing any defense, condemned Jesus to death. Pilate declared that he found no reason to condemn him and yet sentenced him to death on the cross. He said that Jesus was righteous and holy, but he had him flogged as if he were a criminal. They released Barabbas, who had committed murder, and Jesus, who had committed no wrongdoing, was taken to be crucified. And all this for our sins. Because we judge and condemn others unfairly. And to teach us to suffer patiently when others are unfair in judging us.

4° The martyrdom of cruelty.

They slapped him. And the Gospel uses a word for this that means "blows as if trying to tear off the skin". They whipped him with sharp thongs that had pieces of lead or bone on the ends. They stuck a crown of very sharp thorns into his very sensitive head which painfully pierced his skin. His entire body was destroyed in his most painful Passion, and all this, to ask forgiveness from God the Father for the sins we committed by giving ourselves over to the disordered passions of our body, and to teach us that we must make some sacrifice from time to time to dominate the evil inclinations of our flesh.

5° The martyrdom of the cross.

Let us think of the pain he suffered when, upon arriving at Calvary, they ripped off his tunic, which was stuck to the blood he had spilled during the flagellation, and thus tore off parts of his skin, with great pain.

Let us think of those hammer blows that hit the nails of His hands and feet, and how He "with a loud cry and many tears cried out to God the Father" (Heb 5:7). They pierced his hands and feet and could count his bones (Psalm 21). Meditating on the intense pain he suffered in those hours on the cross in the wounds on his hands and feet, let us encourage our hearts to love more and more this good Redeemer who shed every last drop of his blood to save us. . Let us ask Him: "For whom do you suffer, good Jesus?", and He will answer us: "For your sins, for saving you, for taking you to heaven". And let us tell him that we love him, that we thank him, that we want to die rather than offend him with sin again. Meditating on the crucified Jesus, let us practice acts of repentance for having offended him, and resolutions to change our lives from now on. A repentance that does not come from meditation on the Passion and Death of Christ is a repentance that will do little to obtain conversion.

Let us feel comfort and hope when we think that Christ Jesus paid for our sins with his death, appeased the righteous wrath of God (Eph 6) and opened the doors of Eternal Paradise for us. Let us think that the best consequence we can obtain from meditating on the sacred Passion of Jesus Christ is to acquire a total hatred of sin, an absolute repugnance for everything that is an offense to God and an intense desire to fight against all these passions. and bad inclinations that lead us to commit mistakes and displease our Savior.

Let's think:



Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Creator and owner of all that exists, patiently accepted this ignominious death at the hands of his creatures, and I will not accept that people offend me, humiliate me and treat me badly? Jesus suffered such anguish to save us, and I will not accept the pain of each day to help him save souls? What will I do to show my gratitude to this great friend who made enormous sacrifices to achieve my salvation?

## CHAPTER 48

### THE FRUITS WE CAN OBTAIN FROM MEDITATION ON THE CROSS AND THE VIRTUES OF JESUS CHRIST

The first thing we can obtain by meditating on the cross and the virtues of our Savior is a deep repentance for our sins that caused his Passion and his death, a great desire to repair the offenses we have committed against him, and a continuous effort to achieve the conversion of those sinners.

The second thing we must do when meditating on the Redeemer's passion and cross is to confidently ask forgiveness for all our faults, convinced that it was to obtain forgiveness from us that He suffered such atrocious torments. As we remember them, we should feel a true hatred and disgust for our evils, and a great love for those who suffered so much to save us.

The third thing must be to strive with all our will to remove from our hearts and suppress in our lives the undue inclinations that lead us to sin.

The fourth thing is that we intend to imitate the admirable virtues of Jesus, who, according to Saint Peter, "suffered for us, leaving us an example so that we could follow in his footsteps" (1P 2,21).

### A PRACTICAL WAY TO DO THIS MEDITATION WITH FRUITS

Let's remember a method that produces good results when meditating on this very important topic. It consists of four points:

1st Think about what Jesus Christ did looking at God the Father while he suffered.

2nd Meditate on what God the Father did while his Son suffered on the cross.

3rd Think about what Jesus felt for us while he suffered his Holy Passion.

4th Meditate on what we should do for the one who suffered so much to save us.

1st Jesus, while suffering on the cross, raised his mind to his Father, to the infinite Divinity of whom the prophet Isaiah said: "All nations are before him like a drop of water, and the largest islands are like a speck of dust, and the whole earth is as nothing before him" (Is 40:17) and offered to the holiness of God all his sufferings in reparation for the infidelities, insults and contempt of all human creatures and thanked him for his infinite favors and asked that humans were granted the grace to please the Creator and obey him.

2° God the Father in heaven looked with great satisfaction at the immense love of his Son, who offered himself with such enormous generosity to pay before Divine Justice for the sins of all Adam's descendants. The book of Genesis says that God, upon contemplating the great evil of men from heaven, "regretted having created man" (Gen 6:6). But after seeing Him on the cross offering Himself with such infinite affection to pay for the evils of all humanity, God the Father felt true joy for having created the human creature, because in this His Favorite Son found all His pleasures and God opened the Gates of Eternal Paradise that have been closed since Adam and Eve rebelled against their Creator.

We just need to want to go and fulfill his holy law, because in turn, with the sacrifice of Christ, Divine Justice and the friendship between the Creator and his weak and rebellious creatures were completely appeased.

3 O Let us imagine what Jesus felt for us as he suffered his martyrdom in the Holy Passion. He saw us so weak, so evil inclined, so atrociously attacked by the world, by the devil and by the passions of the flesh, so frighteningly inclined to evil since our first parents lost the friendship of God in the Earthly Paradise. I saw the great dangers of condemning ourselves, which we always would have. He clearly observed the horrible ugliness of our sins and the gravity of our faults. He knew perfectly well that "God forgives, but leaves no guilt unpunished" (Ex 34:7) and that, therefore, the consequences of each sin are painful and harmful. And I also understood that without the help of divine power we are totally incapable of converting and maintaining friendship with God. That is why during his Holy Passion he prayed for us. He asked forgiveness for all the sins of sinners and erased with his Holy Blood the sentence of condemnation that we should have received for our sins.

Saint Paul says in a beautiful comparison that: "Jesus took account of our sins and our debts to God, washed it with his blood and hung it on the cross as something already canceled" (Col 2:14). During his Passion he prayed for us sinners. Blessed be!

4th Let us now think about what we should do for the one who suffered so much to save us. Love is paid with love. What does Jesus Christ want us to offer in response to all he suffered to redeem us? Do we accept with joy and patience the cross of suffering that God allows to come to us every day and thus help him to save sinners and reduce the punishments that await us in purgatory? Do we fight a little more to avoid those sins that are so displeasing to the Divinity? Do we sacrifice more generously for others, imitating the Savior who gave His life to redeem us? Let us consider the cross of Jesus as an open book that we must read and learn from every day of our lives. In the life of Saint Francis of Assisi it is said that when he was dying he said: "Bring me my book". They brought him several other books, but he, now blind, rejected them. Finally they brought him his crucifix and then, showering him with kisses on his hands, feet, the wounds in his side and the crown of thorns, he repeated with joy: "In this book I learned to love my Redeemer." And he died telling the Savior that he loved him with all his heart. Let us look at Christ nailed to the cross and remember how much He loved us and, instead, say to Him often: "I love you, Jesus. Lord, you know that I love you.

O good Jesus: may I love you much more. May we all always love you more and more."

Danger.

It may happen that we occupy ourselves for a long time meditating on what Jesus suffered on the cross and the way in which he suffered, but that later, when sadness, suffering and contradictions come to us, we dedicate ourselves to denying and cursing, as if we had never thought of the Savior's cross. Then it would happen to us like those soldiers who swear before their commanders and promise to defend the country's flag, but as soon as the enemy appears to attack them, they flee and abandon the battlefield. How sad it would be if after having contemplated the cross of Christ, as in a mirror, the way we must suffer, when the opportunity to suffer something presents itself, we forget everything and instead of imitating the Savior we allow ourselves to be dominated by impatience and discouragement. .

## CHAPTER 49

### DETAILS ABOUT THE SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

So far we have learned to use certain extremely useful spiritual means to progress in virtue and emerge victorious against the enemies of our sanctification. Now we will see the most excellent means that exist to progress in perfection.

It is the Holy Eucharist.

Of all spiritual weapons, it is the most effective in defeating the enemies of our virtue and sanctification.

Difference .

The other sacraments receive all their strength from the merits of Christ, from the grace He obtained for us and from His powerful intercession on our behalf. But the Eucharist contains Jesus Christ himself, with his Body and Blood, his Soul and his Divinity. With the other sacraments we fight the enemies of the soul with the means that Jesus Christ provides us. With this we fight supported and accompanied by the Redeemer himself, for He said: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (John 6:56).

#### WHAT WE SHOULD DO BEFORE COMMUNION

If we have a serious fault in our soul, it is necessary that we confess it before taking communion, as Saint Paul said: "Whoever eats this bread unworthily will be guilty or guilty against the body of the Lord" (1Co 11,27). If we only have venial sins, it is opportune, however, to ask the Lord for forgiveness for so many small infidelities of thought, word and action that we commit daily: "A humble heart that repents, God does not despise" (Ps. 51). We must think "Who comes to whom". The Creator of heaven and earth to a poor and miserable creature. The pure and holy for a sinful and stained soul. Jesus Christ comes to us with great love, but we receive him with coldness, indifference and even ingratitude. Let us ask Him to help us prepare well for His coming into our souls. Let us invoke the Blessed Virgin, the Guardian Angel and some saint of our devotion to grant us the grace to prepare well for Holy Communion. Let us not immediately go from daily tasks to receiving Jesus in the Eucharist without taking a few minutes to prepare. The better the preparation, the greater the fruits of communion.

Let's put some intention into every communion.

This will give more interest and emotion to such a holy sacrament. So, for example, one day we will offer communion to ask the Lord to grant us victory over our dominant defect.

Another day we will take communion to ask him to increase our faith or charity, or to grant us the patience we so desperately need, or to preserve for us the holy virtue of purity, or to convert some sinner, etc. When you commune with the special intention of receiving some special help from heaven, you feel a greater fervor. May Jesus not have to continue telling us these words of his: "Until now you have asked nothing in my name". He continues to repeat to us his great promise: "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13).

Something that must be remembered and not forgotten.

Before receiving Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, it is convenient to remember how great aversion He has to sin and how total disgust He feels in His infinite purity for everything that is evil and stains the soul. And so ask for forgiveness and declare that we hate our sins and that we want to declare total and constant war on our perverse inclinations and the bad habits we have acquired. Our Lord hates nothing so much as sin.

We have been rebellious and ungrateful to the Redeemer, but he comes to visit us. Let's tell him that from now on we don't want to offend him.

#### CHAPTER 50

##### PRACTICAL METHOD OF PREPARING OURSELVES FOR HOLY COMMUNION SO THAT WE CAN PROGRESS IN THE LOVE OF GOD

If we want Holy Communion to produce in us feelings and affections of love for God,

we have to remember the immense love that Our Lord had for us and I hope that the night before we begin to think about the communion we will have the following day. Let us think that this God whose power and majesty have no limits, not content with having created us and having sent us his own Son to pay with his sufferings the debts of our sins, gave us his Most Holy Son as food for the soul in the Holy Eucharist. In fact, what Saint Augustine said was fulfilled here: "Since God was so powerful, so wise and so kind, he found no better gift to give us than his own Holy Son".

Comparison.

Let us think: is it possible that He who is eternal and infinite will come to stay in my poor soul, which is so small and miserable? His love for us is so great. What merit could I have for the Savior of the world to come visit me? None. Does the good God seek any gain from this demonstration of his infinite love for me? Anything. I am nothing and less than nothing and therefore nothing can be gained by loving myself. Your love is infinitely free. His goodness and His goodness alone is the reason He comes to visit me in Holy Communion. In God there is no interest in obtaining profits from the love he shows us, because he does not need them nor can we give them to Him. Everything is the result of his infinite generosity.

Unworthy address.

I will think how unworthily I receive the Divine Visitor into my soul. With a stained, ungrateful, unfaithful, cold and evil soul. The manger of Bethlehem, however poor and miserable it was, was not nearly as unworthy of receiving the King of heaven as is my poor soul, stained by all kinds of infidelities. Given this consideration I must perform acts of admiration.

Can the Most Pure and Holy God come to visit a soul as sinful as mine? Could you ask for greater demonstrations of your love? Now he can repeat to me the words of the prophet: "What more could I do for you that I haven't already done?"

Orders.

Before taking communion, or if you wish, afterwards, it is advisable to make some requests to the Most Holy Jesus such as these: "Lord: You make the sacrifice of coming to me. Make it so that I too can sanctify myself through You. You are eternal love . May this heart of mine that is like a block of ice be illuminated with love for my Creator and Redeemer. You live eternally in heaven. Grant me the grace to become independent of what is merely worldly, earthly and material. Are you interested in coming to me. Make me live with you, through you and in you. You are holiness in person. Free me, poor sinner, from the slavery in which passions and vices keep me. You are total and infinite beauty .

Decorate my soul with the beauty of virtues."

Hopefully this should be thought about before taking communion.

And when the time comes to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, let us think briefly about who we are going to receive? To Jesus, the same one who was in the arms of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. The same one who was hanging on the cross on Calvary. The one who is resurrected. The favorite Son of God the Father. The Judge of the living and the dead. The Redeemer and Savior. The kindest and humblest of beings that ever lived on earth.

And for whom does He come? for a very sinful soul. And let us say to Him with all our hearts: "Lord, I am not worthy for You to enter my house, but one word from You will be enough to heal me."

## CHAPTER 51

### HOW TO THANK YOU AFTER COMMUNION

After we have received Holy Communion, we should join together in pious meditation and worship with deep humility and reverence for the Lord, saying the following or something similar: "Lord and my God, You well know how easily I offend You; You know the dominion that the passions have over me, especially some, and how few and weak are my strengths to overcome and master them. Victory will depend largely on your power and kindness, and although I want to do "I do everything possible to triumph over my evil inclinations, but only if you send me your powerful help can I hope to obtain good results."

Then, turning to the Heavenly Father, we will thank him for having given us his Most Holy Son in the Holy Eucharist, and we will offer him this communion for some special intention, especially to achieve victory against some sin that we have commented on most and we repeat. And we offer you the purpose of fighting in the best possible way against the temptations and spiritual dangers that wage the greatest war against our soul, repeating acts of faith and hope, remembering that if "we do what we can on our part, the God's power will do what we cannot obtain."

Knowing that "all spiritual good comes from God" (James 1:17), it is only right that we thank him frequently for the many favors he grants us daily, for the victories he allows us to achieve against the enemies of our holiness, and for the good works he does. allows us to do and for the evils from which it so often frees us. But the most appropriate favor to be grateful for is for the visit that Our Lord Jesus Christ pays us in Holy Communion. Only in heaven will we know the infinite value of this gift from God: giving us the Body and Blood of his Most Holy Son, as food.

One reason.

To encourage ourselves to be more grateful to Our Lord, we must think about the purpose that moves Him to grant us so many great favors. He does this only because He loves us, because He desires our greatest good, because we are very important to Him, because His generosity is infinite and He takes greater pleasure in giving than in receiving. How can we not bless and praise such a good God?

Another reason.

Let us also think: what is it about us that deserves so much kindness from the good God? Nothing good, but on the contrary infidelities, ingratitude, evil. Therefore we must say to him: "O Lord: how is it possible that you come to visit a being as miserable and full of stains and guilt as I am? Your goodness?" "May you be blessed and praised forever and ever."

And what does he ask of us? Our Lord only asks us to love him. May we return love with love. May we strive to serve you in the best way possible; Let us try to make our lives pleasing to Him. Let us have feelings of gratitude towards such a good God and be filled with the desire to always and completely fulfill His Most Holy Will.

## CHAPTER 52

### SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Spiritual communion consists of an intense desire for Jesus Christ to come into our hearts and a fervent request that he come in truth.

It differs from Sacramental Communion because in the latter Jesus comes in visible form under the appearance of bread, in the Holy Host, while in Spiritual Communion his visit is invisible. There is also the difference that Sacramental Communion cannot be received many times a day and, on the other hand, Spiritual Communion can be done at any time, in any place and as many times as the person wishes.

How to do this? The pious authors recommend the following way of making Spiritual



Communion.

1st Ask Our Lord for forgiveness for the offenses we have done to Him. Then implore Him with living faith and humility to come into our soul, however stained and unworthy it may be. Tell him that we need his visit because we are weak, full of weakness and misery, and attacked by terrible spiritual enemies. May he deign to bring us his help and spiritual graces and strengthen us in our struggles. We won't always tell you all of this: we can tell you something similar or better. But the essential thing is that we desire Jesus Christ to come and visit our soul and we ask that he really pay us this sacred visit.

The advantages.

When we need to mortify and overcome some of the passions or perverse tendencies that attack us, or we want to grow in some virtue or quality that we lack, or if we are faced with anxieties, problems or special difficulties, it is very useful to ask Jesus to come into our soul. .

To make this Spiritual Communion it is not necessary to have confessed on those days, but it is necessary that we ask for forgiveness for our sins and have the firm resolution of not wanting to commit them in the future. Because for the visitor to feel happy, the person visited and the place they arrive at must be pleasant. And how will Our Lord feel happy if whœver invites him wants to continue sinning and his soul is too stained and there are no visible efforts to purify and correct himself?

After Spiritual Communion, we must thank the good Jesus for the visit he so generously pays us. He never comes empty-handed.

Therefore, every time he visits us, he finds good dispositions in us, he brings us some grace or spiritual help.

#### FORMULA.

Generally the formula used to make Spiritual Communion is this (but others can be used): "My Jesus: I firmly believe that You are in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I adore You above all things. I love You with all my heart. I want you to come into my heart, but as I cannot receive you sacramentally now, I ask you to come spiritually into my soul (brief pause. At this moment we will stop for a few moments to do acts of love, trust and ask for some graces from we need). As if you had already come, I deeply thank you for your visit and I beg you not to allow me to be separated from you. Come, Lord, Jesus. Eternal Father: I offer you the most precious Blood of Jesus Christ in atonement of my sins and the needs of the Holy Church and the conversion of sinners.

#### CHAPTER 53

#### HOW TO OFFER OURSELVES TO GOD

Like Abel. The book of Genesis says that Abel offered God the firstfruits or first fruits of his flock, and adds: "God looked with great favor and satisfaction on the offering that Abel made to him". Like this holy man, we should have as our motto "the best for the Lord". In Psalm 49, God tells us: "Offer to me a sacrifice of thanksgiving. And I will deliver you and you will give me glory."

A profitable condition.

It is extremely convenient that we frequently offer to God what we do, say, think and suffer, what we possess and all our good desires. But for this offering to be completely pleasing to the Lord, it is appropriate that we unite it with the offerings that Jesus Christ made to the Heavenly Father during his mortal life, of everything he did, thought, spoke and suffered. This gives immense value to the little we can offer in our poverty.



An example to imitate.

Everything that Jesus suffered and did, thought and said, he offered with great love to the Heavenly Father for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. The letter to the Hebrews says: "Christ, during the days of his mortal life, offered prayers and supplications to God, with loud cries and tears, and was heard by his obedient attitude" (Heb 5,7). Let us combine our offerings with those that Jesus made and in this way they will acquire great value and special sympathy in the eyes of God the Father. This is the first condition for the offers we make to be well accepted.

The second condition.

It means not having any undue or exaggerated attachment to creatures. Because if our heart is too attached to what belongs on this earth, we no longer offer God a whole heart, but a divided heart: half for Our Lord and half for our selfishness and creatures. And what we offer is not ours, but someone else's, because we have given it to other beings.

And so although we offer and deliver, we will always remain in the middle of the path of holiness and perfection, because we remain tied to the shores of the sea of this world and it is impossible for us to sail towards the Eternal Port. And it happens to us how the sailor who rows and rows at night and at dawn sees that he has not left the shore, because his boat was tied to the beach with a chain and that prevented him from moving forward.

Although not so total.

We are weak creatures and therefore the good God will not require us to be completely detached from creatures to offer him what we do, say and think. But he demands that we make every effort to become independent of exaggerated attachment to what is earthly.

And may we offer him all our inclinations, humbly asking him to straighten and purify them and to grant us the necessary strength to deny ourselves and distance ourselves from everything that separates us from God.

Jesus said that the first condition for achieving this is to "deny yourself."

But we can never obtain this without special help from heaven and a strength from the Holy Spirit. What can be achieved with fervent and constant prayer.

Third condition.

For our offering to be pleasing to God, we must fulfill what Jesus said: "Whoever wants to follow me must accept his cross of daily suffering" (Luke 9:23). It is necessary to repeat in times of suffering, anguish and pain the beautiful prayer of Jesus in the Garden: "Father: if it is possible that this cup of bitterness may be removed from me; but do not do what I want, but do what you want" (Luke 22:42). Lord: do with me whatever you want. I am in your hands and I place myself completely under your divine will so that you can dispose of me and my assets as you see fit. I have full confidence that everything you allow to happen to me will be for my greatest good. But I beg you that if you give me pain, you also give me the courage to bear it. "You know how weak and impatient I am in the face of suffering." And let us offer each pain and suffering, uniting them with the sufferings of Christ, as this gives them a very high value in the eyes of God.

A convenient intention.

Let us remember from time to time the offenses we committed against Our Lord in the past and offer in payment for them the good we do and say, and the sufferings that come to us, and all this together with the works of Jesus Christ and the terrible sufferings of his Life, Passion and Death. (I deserve more for my sins, said Saint Ignatius). Thus, when the time of Judgment arrives, we will have already paid off most of the bills that we will have to pay in Purgatory. And let us not forget that all this must be offered not only for ourselves, but for the conversion of sinners, for the sanctification of priests, for the work of missionaries, for the salvation of the sick and

for the rest of blessed souls.

Repeat this frequently.

When traveling by boat, it is necessary for the pilot to continuously steer with the rudder towards the objective he needs to reach, as winds and waves tend to divert him from the route he must follow.

This is what happens on the journey to the eternal beaches of heaven: the slightest carelessness, selfishness or laziness, pride or exaggerated attachment to what is earthly, diverts us from the true objective that we must establish for ourselves in everything we do. , let's say, we think and suffer. And then we must repeat our offering to the Lord God many times. "All for you, my God." "May the words of my mouth, the thoughts of my head, and the desires of my heart be pleasing to you, Lord" (Ps 18). Rather death, Lord, than the desire to dedicate myself to working only for creatures destroy me, what Saint Paul criticized the Galatians would happen: "How is it that, having begun to work for God, they ended up acting wrongly?"

Solomon's evil.

In spiritual life, it is called: "Solomon's Evil" the terrible error that consists of having started working to please God, and ends up dedicating himself to pleasing creatures, becoming their slave. This is what happened to King Solomon, who at first was generous and pious and built a beautiful temple to the Lord, but then he allowed himself to be enslaved by creatures and ended up losing his faith. May God save us from falling into the terrible "evil of Solomon".

## CHAPTER 54

### WHAT TO DO WHEN SPIRITUAL DRYNESS ARRIVES

When a person starts his spiritual life, he usually feels a lot of comfort and joy in his soul at the beginning. This is what the authors call "the sweetness of God". He thinks it's beautiful to pray. He loves reading spiritual books. He feels fervor when receiving the sacraments, etc. This is very beneficial because it stimulates us to a life of fervor and piety and encourages us to continue on the path of holiness.

A danger and a norm.

But if these joys are very great and even exaggerated, we must be careful that whoever produces them is the enemy of souls. And this is a danger because then it can happen that the spirit becomes excited by the sweetness of God and not by the God of sweetness.

In these cases we must follow a very important rule: let us ask ourselves: do these spiritual consolations and joys produce correction in my life? Do they bring about reforms in my customs? If so, they come from God and we can rest assured.

If, on the other hand, we love them because they bring us sweetness and joy, and because they help others to think better about ourselves, then we must be very careful because they can come from the enemy of the soul.

### THE ARIDITY.

But it often happens that after the first fervor and joy, an overwhelming spiritual dryness begins to affect the soul. He no longer feels like praying. Reading spiritual books tells you nothing.

He receives the sacraments without any emotion and even coldly, no matter how much he wants to be fervent. It seems to him that he is not making any progress. This is what the saints call "The Dark Night of the Soul." It is something that causes a lot of suffering and can last a long time. In some holy souls this lasts for years and years.

Where could this come from? The causes of spiritual dryness can be diverse.

1st They can come from the devil who tries to discourage us in our spiritual life, take

us away from the path of holiness and lead us back to the joys of worldly life.

2nd They can come from our human nature, which is very evil inclined and always seeks the material instead of the spiritual, and the earthly instead of the eternal. Saint Paul himself complained saying: "I feel in my body a force that fights against the spirit."

3rd It may be that spiritual dryness comes from a plan that God has to make us independent of the tastes and pleasures of this world and thus become excited about the pleasures and joys of eternity. When things on earth no longer attract or fall in love, then things in heaven can attract much more. It may be that through this suffering we also pay to God some of the debts we owe for our sins and learn to understand those who are going through this painful situation. Another reason could be: that Our Lord has prepared such excellent rewards for us in heaven that He allows us to suffer strong sufferings on earth so that with them we can gain those joys that await us in eternity.

What to do when dryness arrives?

First of all, let us examine whether there is any defect in our soul that displeases God, any repeated fault that robs us of sensitive devotion. If so, we must seriously dedicate ourselves to correcting this defect and avoiding this fault, not so much to enjoy the spiritual sweetness of fervor again, but above all to avoid what offends and displeases God.

But if we do not see in our behavior any special flaw or any defect that we are not trying to correct, then what we should do is humbly accept what God allows to happen to us. Repeat what the holy Job said: "If we accept the good things from God, why should we not also accept the bad things? (Jb 2:10) But in no way will we abandon the practices of piety, good reading and acceptance of the holy sacraments. Let us accept this dryness as "the cup of bitterness" that the Lord allows to reach us, and like Christ in Gethsemane let us say to God the Father: "If it is not possible for this cup to depart from me, let it be your holy will."

Perhaps with one hour of spiritual aridity we will be winning more prizes for heaven and saving more souls than with many hours of joy and sweetness, of happiness and fervor.

There is no need to be discouraged.

Spiritual dryness is a cross that the Lord sends, and Jesus left us saying: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must accept the cross every day". It is necessary to say again and again: "This too shall pass." "The Lord gave me spiritual joys and consolations and the Lord took them from me. Blessed be God."

And cry out to God.

It is not convenient for people to go around telling us about this painful situation we are going through because they will not understand us and on the contrary they will mock us and invite us to abandon spiritual life. It is advisable to notify your spiritual director and ask for advice. But who we must turn to with all our soul and without becoming discouraged is the good God. Repeat the phrase that Jesus, at the height of his spiritual dryness, on the cross, said to him: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Repeat certain phrases from the Psalms that are very comforting, such as "Do not abandon me, God of my salvation."

Tell him what Saint Peter repeated to Jesus three times: "Lord: You know that I love you." Or what Tobias said: "Lord, You allow us to descend to the deepest abysses of sadness, but You can also make us rise to the highest levels of joy and peace. Therefore, have mercy on me and deign to console me, if that is your Holy Will (Tb 13,3).

A very timely memory.

On these occasions it is very useful to remember the terrible anguish and desolation of Jesus in the Garden when he said: "My soul is saddened to the point of death." And to think that the more sadness and anguish Our Redeemer felt, the more and more he prayed to God the Father. Let us also imitate him in this.

## CHAPTER 55

### WHAT IF TEMPTATIONS ARRIVE?

For many people who dedicate themselves to spiritual life, one of the martyrdoms that bring them the most suffering are the continuous temptations that befall them. What the Holy Scripture announced was written for them: "If you dedicate yourself to the spiritual life, prepare yourself for temptation". If Jesus, the Holy of Holies, suffered the three temptations in the desert, how much more will we, who are weakness itself, have to suffer them? Furthermore, the enemy of salvation is more interested in attacking those who want to save souls and take them to heaven, than those who are already slaves to sin and obey it and follow its perfidious advice.

The vision of Saint Anthony.

It is said of this ancient saint that in a vision he saw that for an entire neighborhood there was only one demon trying to make people sin, while for a single spiritual person there were seven demons attacking him. And asking why, they replied: "It is because worldly people invite each other to sin, but for spiritual people, it takes hellish spirits to make them sin." What are temptations for? A saint said that the greatest danger for a person would be not to have temptations, his pride would devour him and he would despise the weak; and a saint added: "I am not so afraid of anyone as he who feels no temptations", because he can become very cold in his life of piety. Spirituality authors point out the following reasons why it seems that God allows temptations to come to us:

1st So that we trust God more and implore his mercy.

2nd So that we distrust ourselves, our weakness and tendency towards evil and our lack of willpower to resist sin.

3rd So that we have more understanding of the weak. Saint Bernard said that it is good that many people are weak, malicious and have little resistance, so that they can understand poor sinners who fall more through weakness than through evil. Saint Augustine, remembering his past life so stained and unworthy, repeated: "There is no guilt that a human being has not committed, that I cannot commit". That's why I have to have great understanding for those who fall and are stained and guilty."

Don't worry, don't worry.

When the unclean spirit troubles us with impure thoughts and abominable imaginations, let us not be distressed or discouraged. Let us remember what Jesus asked Saint Catherine when she complained about the horrible thoughts that came to her: "Tell me, did you consent to these bad thoughts?" - "No, Lord, I hated them with all my soul" - she replied - and the Lord added: "This hatred and aversion to evil thoughts was bestowed upon you by me who was there witnessing your spiritual battle to later give you reward you for your victory."

Don't abandon prayer.

In these cases we will say many small prayers and try to direct our thoughts to other topics. Let us invoke the Blessed Virgin, conceived without the stain of original

sin. She who steps on the head of the infernal serpent will obtain for us the victory of her Divine Son against the tempting demon.

## CHAPTER 56

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSCIENCE EXAMINATION

Another condition without which we cannot do it.

Historians say that the great mathematician Pythagoras, who lived 500 years before Christ, and whose wisdom was so esteemed in the East that numerous students from different countries began to be accepted as disciples, never admitted a student if he did not commit to making an examination of conscience every day in which they had to ask three questions: "What did I do? How did I do it? Why did I do it?", and they tell old stories that with this method they managed to improve the behavior of some people.

The requirement of Saint Ignatius.

This great saint who led so many souls to holiness demanded that his disciples, without exception, carry out a double examination of conscience every day. One about his behavior in general, and another about the defect he proposed to correct that month or that year. He insisted that each month there be a day of monthly retreat to think about God, the soul and eternity. As for the monthly Retreat Day, he exempted those who had very serious occupations or who made long journeys from any other practice of piety, except for making an examination of conscience about how their behavior had been that month, as he stated that without the examination of conscience it is impossible to progress in holiness and perfection.

The first thing to do.

Saint Ignatius recommends that when beginning the examination of conscience we think for a moment about the presence of God, that Our Lord sees us, hears us and accompanies us at all times like the air that surrounds us. And then we thank him for some special favor, and ask him to grant us his lights and illuminations so that we may know which of our faults displease him most and what we must do to avoid them.

Like a ray of sunshine.

When we are inside a room and a ray of sunlight shines through a window, we see a lot of small debris in the air that we cannot see with the naked eye. This is what happens when in the examination of conscience we ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us: we will see many of our faults that went unnoticed and we had not noticed before.

### THE CAUSES.

The wise Pythagoras said that in the examination of conscience it is not enough to ask: what harm did I do? but also why did I do it? Many people examine themselves, but do not progress in holiness because they do not discover the causes that lead them to repeat their sins, and as long as the cause is not eliminated, the sin will not stop occurring, just as until the spider is killed, it will not cease to exist. For example, I find that I often have tantrums. I have to ask myself: why these outbursts of impatience? Does pride dominate me? Could it be that I don't rest at the right time and my nerves are destroyed? Do I give too much importance to facts and words that are not important? Do I get upset about things that God doesn't like? So why get upset about it?

Avoid occasions.

If I know that in such a place or such a person, or in such a situation I fall and sin,



however, I go there, without serious need, and continue dealing with those people or expose myself to that situation, with that I am already sinning because I am exposing myself to the occasion, and experience teaches me that as the occasion arises if I expose myself, I will fall every time. The experience taught me too much for me to be stubborn enough to continue insisting. The wise man already said this in Holy Scripture: "Whoever exposes himself to danger will perish".

In the exam it is necessary to ask ourselves "what occasions lead me to sin? What can I do to avoid these occasions?" Saint Paul says that God will not allow temptations greater than our strength to reach us, but this is on condition that we do not expose ourselves guiltily to the opportunity to sin. If we expose ourselves, Divine Justice no longer has the obligation to give us extraordinary strength to win. Let us not forget that temptation is like a brave dog tied to a chain. If we get as far as the current reaches, it will bite us.

Determined purpose.

During the exam, it's not enough to say, "I won't do that again." This and nothing are almost the same. It is necessary to have concrete, determined purposes: "I will do this and that", "I will avoid this occasion"... etc. And then pray to Our Lord to grant us willpower to achieve our purposes. In this what Jesus said is fulfilled: "Without Me you can do nothing". And let us repeat to Our Lord the prayer that that holy soul said to him: "Lord: make sure that what you don't like doesn't please me either. Lord: that if a friendship can harm me, I don't feel any attraction for that person. " but repulsion and antipathy". This prevents great evils and sins.

Pay the debt.

If we carelessly break a neighbor's china or vase and ask him to forgive us, he may tell us "yes, I will be happy to forgive you. But please pay me the price of the vase." The Divine Judge could tell us something similar when we ask for forgiveness every time we do an examination of conscience (because doing an examination without asking God for forgiveness would be a very harmful fault, since He is the one offended and we have to beg Him to forgive us). What will Our Lord tell us then? "I will gladly forgive you. But will you pay me for the mistake I made?"

As? In what way?"

"To carry out an examination of conscience without intending to offer in penance some good acts for the faults committed will be to leave such an examination mutilated, lame and one-eyed. That I have said too much? Will I offer it to the Lord who will remain silent a little longer on this day? That he treats others with severity? Well, today I'm going to try to be a little more gentle. That I let myself be carried away by laziness? Well, how good it would be if, as penance for these faults, you read one or two pages from a spiritual book this day. This way we will be able to bring good even to the evil we have done, and we will progress in perfection and holiness."

## CHAPTER 57

### HOW IN THIS SPIRITUAL COMBAT WE MUST PERSEVERE UNTIL DEATH

What more should we ask for.

Of all God's favors, perhaps the one we should ask him most is to persevere in good until death. To achieve the virtue of perseverance we must dedicate ourselves with great care throughout life, and to obtain the grace to persevere until the end it is necessary to always mortify and dominate our passions, because they never die while we live, and always grow in our hearts. , like weeds in a fertile field when you are not careful to remove or prune them.



A very harmful error.

It would be true madness and harmful imprudence to think that there will come a time in our lives when we will not feel the assault of the enemies of our holiness, for this war does not end until our earthly life ends, and the person who is not prepared to fight their passions and your tendencies towards evil, when you least think about it you will lose spiritual battles and even the peace of your soul.

In the struggle to obtain holiness we have to fight against irreconcilable spiritual enemies, from whom we can never expect peace or truce, because their function is to attack incessantly and in addition the infernal spirits hate us to the point of death. In this matter, the danger of being defeated is never greater than when we imagine that we will not be attacked.

But don't be discouraged.

Although the enemies of sanctification and perfection are many, formidable, they attack us everywhere and always, however, we must not be discouraged by their number and their strength, because in this battle only those who do not use these two formidable weapons which are prayer and mortification, and those who do not avoid occasions of sin or are filled with pride, self-sufficiency, and too much confidence in themselves, or lack sufficient confidence in the power and goodness of God.

We have a good boss.

Those of us who strive for Christian perfection can walk with confidence because we have a Leader who is never defeated. It is Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, to whom the heavenly Father granted victory over all his enemies, as stated in the book of Revelation (cf. Rev 6:2). He is more powerful than all those who wage war on our soul, and "has the power and kindness to give us much more than we dare ask or desire" (Eph 3:20). Christ the Lord will give us many victories as long as we do not trust in our own strength, but in his great mercy.

What if he takes a while to help us?

It may be that Our Lord will take a long time to help us and it seems that he will leave us at the mercy of the dangers that surround us.

Let us not be discouraged by this, because He never fails to respond to those who ask for His protection and will organize things in such a way that what seems to be for evil ends up being for our good.

But do not neglect any enemy.

It is important that we do not stop fighting any of the enemies of sanctification, and that we do not stop fighting any of the passions or addictions or evil inclinations, because even one of them that we fail to fight can harm us like a spark in a gas tank or a poisoned arrow stuck in the heart.

## CHAPTER 58

### THE LAST FIGHT. THE ONE WHO WAITS FOR US AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Patriarch Job said that this life is like a continuous struggle, like military service in time of war (Jb 7:1) and perhaps the most difficult battles are those that occur at the end of life, the last battles. And these are definitive because our eternal destiny may depend on them. The Book of Ecclesiasticus teaches: "The Lord on the day of death will repay each person according to his behavior; and at the end of each person's life we discover what their achievements really were. We know how much a person is really worth" (Eccl 11:26).

As you live, you die.

Saint Augustine repeated: "Qualis vita, mors et ita", which means: as life was, so will

death be. That is why, from now on, when we are healthy, with vigor, strength and mental lucidity, we must exercise ourselves in the fight against passions, temptations and tendencies towards evil, because when our strength and mind is clouded and weakened, it will be much more difficult to fight, to be able to fight well. Only if we now get used to being victorious against the enemies of our salvation will we acquire the habit of triumphing against them and in the final hour will we be able to defeat them.

A healthy memory.

The Holy Book advises: "Let us think about what awaits us at the end of life and in this way we will avoid many sins". And he adds: "prepare your soul for the test, and thus you will have victories at the end of your existence" (Eccl 2,3). It is very useful to think about our own death from time to time, because then when it arrives it will cause us less fear and our spirit will be more prepared to face the last battles.

A danger. Those who are very attached to the goods of this world do not want to think about the death that can come to them, nor about the step they will have to take towards eternity and so their disordered defects, instead of decreasing, grow without ceasing and are increasing, enslaving them. more and more. This was not what happened to Saint Paul, who exclaimed: "Who will separate me from the love of Christ? Not even death, for me death is gain" (Phil 1:21). He was so independent of earthly and material things that death did not frighten him, but the memory of it comforted him, thinking that when it arrived he would receive the great reward promised to those who serve and love Christ in this world.

You have to prepare.

A dying man said with humor to those who admired his nervousness: "Forgive my lack of calm, but this is the first time I have had to die" (and it was certainly the only and the last): let us remember that dying it will be something we do just once and if we do it wrong, we can never recover from that mistake. Therefore, it is advisable to prepare well from now on. In the next chapter we will explain the four last battles that can arise in the final moments of our existence and how to emerge victorious. Each person has to die only once, and after death comes judgment (Heb 9:27)

## CHAPTER 59

### THE FOUR TEMPTATIONS AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The experience observed in other people shows that in the final hour four temptations can reach the soul that bring suffering, anguish and damage, and they are: temptation against faith, thoughts of despair, temptation to vainglory and vain and deceptive illusions. Let's analyze them one by one.

#### 1st. TEMPTATIONS AGAINST FAITH.

Even very pious people can have serious doubts about their own faith in the last hours of their lives. It is necessary not to give them exaggerated importance and to carry out many acts of faith. "I believe, Lord, but increase my faith. I believe, Lord: help my unbelief" (Mc 9,24). If these doubts keep coming, brought by the enemies of our soul, there is no need to worry, because the Lord knows that internally we do not accept such temptations. A very holy soul said in his final moments: "Never in my life have I had so many temptations against faith as in these last days of my illness.

But also, I have never in my life made so many acts of faith as I have done in these last few months." Overall: he came out victorious, because although the doubts that arose in him were frequent and serious, on the other hand, the repeated acts of faith What he did brought him enormous blessings from God.

When these tormenting doubts come, let us offer to Our Lord the suffering they cause us and ask Him to grant us the strength to resist them and let us commend to Him those people who suffer this same torment of temptations against faith. Let us say to Him: "Lord: I believe for those who do not believe. Increase our faith in all of us. Amen."

## 2° THE TEMPTATION OF DESPERATION.

It consists of exaggerated fear and true terror when we remember the countless and serious mistakes we have committed throughout our lives. In this case, it is worth remembering those very consoling words of Jesus: "Whoever comes to me, I will not cast out" (John 6:37). Let us go to Him with our prayer and our repentance and Jesus will fulfill His Holy Word and will not cast us out, because before heaven and earth pass away not even a single word of the Holy Scripture will fail to be fulfilled.

If the temptation to despair continues, let us remember what the beautiful Psalm 103 says: "As the East is far from the West, so the Lord distances our sins from us. He forgives all your faults. The Lord is compassionate and merciful. He's not always accusing or holding a perpetual grudge. He does not treat us as our sins deserve nor pay us according to our failures."

Let us have some phrases from Holy Scripture engraved in our minds to remember when the temptations of despair attack us, especially in the final hours of our lives. For example: "God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn, but so that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

"I did not come to seek the righteous, but sinners," said Jesus. Let us remember the famous phrase He said to the repentant sinner: "You are greatly forgiven because you show much love" (Luke 7:47) and say to him repeatedly: "Jesus, I love you."

Let us remember that beautiful news that the prophet Micah gave us: "God will cast our sins into the bottom of the sea, never to be seen again" (Mic,19). And we say many times: Lord, I trust in your mercy. Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. "Mercy, Lord, I am a sinner." And let us not forget the news that Jesus gave us, that the tax collector who repeated this last prayer was forgiven by the Lord and regained his holy friendship (cf. Lk 18). Like the tax collector in the gospel, if we ask God for forgiveness, we will be forgiven by God.

## 3° THE TEMPTATION OF VAANGLORY.

It is called vainglory to be proud of what you are not, or of things that do not deserve pride. If thoughts of pride come to mind when we remember the little good we have managed to do, let us remember Saint Paul's phrase: "What do you have that you did not receive? " (cf. 1Co 4,7). Let us not believe that the successes and triumphs that the goodness and generosity of the Lord have allowed us to achieve are a reward for our merits. Everything is a free gift from the good Lord.

"When we think of pride in the triumphs achieved, let us think about the failures and weaknesses committed in the past." This is advised by spiritual teachers. And let us remember that all our efforts and qualities would have been useless without God's blessing and help. The Book of Proverbs states: "What brings us success is God's blessing; our eagerness adds nothing."

## 4° THE TEMPTATION OF ILLUSIONS AND FALSE APPEARANCES.

Saint Paul says that the enemy of souls disguises himself as an "angel of light" to deceive us (cf. 2Co11) and can even present us with hallucinations, or sensations or images that do not correspond to reality, to try to make us believe more holy and advanced because of who we really are. Let's not pay attention to them. The sick brain knows how to create images that are not true. Some to scare and others to fill with exaggerated joy. Let us convince ourselves that it is not advisable to give

greater importance to these imaginations and false representations than that given to a dream that happens while the will does not direct or govern our thoughts. In other words: no importance.

### HAPPY ENDING.

We mentally go towards our death before it comes to us. The good thing that we would have liked to have done at the time of death, we will do from now on. Let us take an inventory saying: "At the time of death, what will I wish to have and what will I wish to have given up? What does not stand the judgment of the final hour, I must leave behind from now on." To have a happy ending you need to prepare it well.

Lack.

A very elderly sage was asked, "How old are you?" And he replied: "Eight or nine years" - Why do you say that? "I lived preparing to die. I lost the rest. Just as I only have the coins I have now. The rest, the ones I spent, I no longer have.

Happy surprise.

One of the greatest wise men the Catholic Church has ever had, a great devotee of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, already dying, said: "I never thought that dying would be so gentle". I wish myself, and I wish all readers, a death like this: happy and at peace with God. Amen.

### [The Rosary](#)

This book was digitized on November 6, 2011, for the use of faithful believers in Our Lord Jesus Christ and for those who consider it necessary for their spiritual growth.

May God have mercy on us and keep us for eternal life. Amen

SAN PABLO BOGOTÁ OFFICE 2011.

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