

MARIANIST ORIGINS

An anthology of basic documents
for formation in Marianist identity



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for formation in Marianist identity*

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Quentin Hakenewerth, SM

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I. The Rule of Life

DOCUMENT 1: “Institute of the Daughters of Mary” - (“Grand Institut”)

1815

(AGMAR 38.4.6)

*As the first Marianist Sisters were preparing their community, Father Chaminade deputed his secretary, the lawyer David Monier, to draft a lengthy document that would serve as a basic set of rules for the new group. Completed in December, 1815, this document, containing 501 articles, was submitted to a number of readers for criticism, revised, and then presented to the first Sisters. The same document served again as a “temporary” Rule when the religious community of men was founded shortly afterwards. Soon after the foundation of the Daughters of Mary, it was felt necessary to revise the **Grand Institut**, to reduce it to essentials in order to produce a shorter and more precise edition. David Monier prepared a short text, the **Petit Institut**, in **The Institute of Mary** was produced, a much abridged Rule of the Society of Mary, which faithfully follows the two preceding writings and is simply an adaptation of them. Therefore, the **Grand Institut** served as the only complete written Rule for both the Marianist Sisters and the Society of Mary from their foundations until the promulgation of their respective Constitutions in 1839. Thus it is one of the most important sources for our knowledge of the original spirit of both communities.*

The selections given here, taken from the opening section, speak of the reasons for the new foundations and their three “objects” or purposes. In different forms and expressions, these three “objects” have appeared again and again in later articulations for Marianist religious life.

* * *

INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY (or “Grand Institut”) – 1815

Preliminary definitions

An “Institute” is a society of a number of persons who bind themselves to a rule of common life and who strive for the same end.

The word “Institute” also signifies a collection of the original rules that serve as a basis for such a society. The “Institute” in the latter sense is ordinarily accompanied or followed by general regulations which help it run smoothly, assure its accomplishment and sustain it.

Some actions conducive to the proposed end and to the means which lead to it, as well as the functions of certain offices required some particular regulations.

It is in this state, and equipped with an “Institute” and with general and particular rules, that an association can hope to take on moral consistency, to prolong its existence, as long as it pleases the will of God to allow it, and, to the degree that it enters into the designs of God, to make it an instrument of Providence. Only the rules of an Institute are gathered here. The General Regulations and the Particular Regulations have been drawn up separately.

Part one

The purpose of the Institute

2. The purpose is to bring into and to support in common life, under the protection of Mary, a reasonable number of sincerely religious persons with the firm purpose first of all of striving together toward evangelical perfection; secondly, to draw into the ways of salvation, respecting their own vocation, persons engaged in the secular world; thirdly, to maintain oneself by means of wise precautions, in spite of some unavoidable dealings with the secular world, in the pristine fidelity to the rules.
3. This purpose of the Institute under its three aspects can frighten human weakness, but it is not beyond the power of grace. One must only admit that it cannot be attained by the powers of nature alone.
4. From this first perception one must conclude that the Institute will attract to itself only souls moved by the Spirit of God, who join to this fire of Divine Love and every burning zeal of charity and a constant resolution to consume oneself each day, without any attachment to the world, in the work for one's own salvation and for the salvation of one's neighbor.

Chapter one

To Strive for Evangelical Perfection: 1st Object of the Institute

7. Mere fulfillment of the commandments is in no way perfection according the language of the gospel; perfection will belong only to those who fulfill every commandment and at the same time follow the most eminent counsels of Jesus Christ.
11. Only Jesus Christ could glorify his Father through persons of such an earthly nature; only this divine legislator could propose the perfection of counsel to such persons who attained so poorly the perfection of precept, in order to give them through

example the courage to launch out to capture the palm – less perfect, but which is more fitted to them.

12. Sublime perfection is and can be earnestly desired only by souls privileged by God according to God's designs in the way that divine love takes care to form them, in the time of God's mercy, so that they entrust to God all their love, effortlessly breaking the bonds of even the smallest passions and appetites of nature.
13. Even with these dispositions, one must not believe that true and sold progress toward perfection can be very rapid, because on the one hand it depends on grace which is all-powerful, but on the other hand it depends on daily and constant work upon ourselves, by which we collaborate in progress toward perfection and without which we will not obtain our justification.
14. It is the condition of our damaged nature that to repair it we must walk the way of the cross, in the midst of contradictions, painfully, and in great humility, sometimes falling heavily when we believe we are advancing, happy in getting up again to continue our striving toward the desired perfection.
18. In the views of God, the striving of an individual toward this high perfection has seldom sufficed for the complete edification of holy Church. The example of one believer ordinarily remains weak in this world, one person's fall, should that happen, is seen quite differently from that person's exaltation, because the greatness of Christian perfection lies in a holy humility. It was different in regard to the privilege of the God-man and that of his august Mother to leave the example of their individual grandeur for the universe. The other people, beginning with the apostles and the disciples who gathered together, as they were told, to draw down the Holy spirit, all needed mutual support to sustain one another, and all needed to put their efforts in common to strive for this high perfection.
19. It is, then, in the Institute taken as a society that one must see the way and the means to eminent perfection; each one of its daughters no doubt will render back to it a part of the perfection which she receives from it or which she expects from it.
20. We must not be concerned at all about the designs of God concerning the duration of the Association. Duration is a very ambiguous appearance of perfection. It depends on the convergence of circumstances more than on the merits of the object itself. It is ordered by God who regulates events, whose happening senseless persons attribute only to a kind of chance which they call good luck, or bad luck, and which they strive only to know beforehand. As for us, we hope in the name of the Lord.
22. A less perfect Rule will be well enough sustained by the sold virtues of persons who embrace it; whereas the most perfect Rule will remain without fruit if given over to frivolity or to changes which dilute all the duties and virtues.

23. The Association will be on the way that leads to the first object, it will in fact tend toward perfection, when a common sanctity reigns in its midst like a luminous sphere which isolates none of the members and which gladdens all of them together in the Lord.

Chapter two

To Draw into the Ways of Salvation Persons of the World: 2nd Object of the Institute.

24. Under the law of Jesus Christ, which is the law of charity, people are faithful neither to the precept nor to the counsel unless they do works of light according to their vocation and their capabilities. For that reason, the divine legislator has willed that those whom he told to flee the world, to renounce the world, should be by their flight and by their renunciation essentially useful to the world.
25. The perfection of counsel, attained or pursued before persons of the world who fear to follow the perfection of precept, is the greater example given to the world, and no one questions that it has been the most salutary. It is the first of the apt ways by which a religious institute attracts persons of the world to want to know the precept and to fulfill it.
26. Humble and fervent prayer toward heaven is the second means which rises out of claustral solitude to obtain for the world true good and a shower of salutary graces; the prayer which all people have addressed to God as the most pure incense, which the God of Abraham and of Jacob taught to the chosen people, which the holy King David modulated into the Psalter to become the most beautiful Canticle of the whole universe, finally the prayer which the Messiah came to recommend to the whole earth in bringing to it redemption!
27. If persons of the world are not always ready to let themselves be moved by example, if prayer on their behalf is not always effective, the Institute has as object a third sign to give them: the spiritual and corporal works of mercy applied to retreats, to instructions for children, for the illiterate, etc.
28. Thus the Association, in striving itself for evangelical perfection, will fulfill its second object, which is to draw persons of the world into the ways of salvation by means that are totally upright and beyond all dispute by the world itself.

Chapter three

To Maintain Oneself through Wise precautions in Pristine Fidelity to the Rules: 3rd Object of the Institute

29. Fervor has created Institutes; contagion of the world has corrupted them. For that reason some holy founders have renounced exterior works rather than expose their dear children to this contagion.
30. Examples of this kind, which inspire a holy admiration, should inspire by the same cause a rather great fear in those who found institutes in very different times, places and circumstances and when it is no longer opportune for a society of Christians to exist without relations with the outside.
31. For this reason, we must consider as an essential part of the object of the Institute the wise precautions which it is indispensable to establish so that the dealings with the world do not open it to be affected by its contagion, or so that the contagion, anticipated and constantly watched, finds itself precluded or encounters its assured remedy.
32. If holy persons have lived in the world, serving it charitably and yet as if not being a part of it, could that not happen again, when from the beginning a safeguard keeps the members separated from the world and places them as if in a different locale?
33. Models of this kind, although encouraging, do not suffice to permit renouncing even one of the precautions fitted to conserve holy space and regularity,. Institutes that have been for a long time an honor to the Church, will become its affliction by falling slowly through negligence into vexing habits, laxity, and sometimes into more extreme deviations.
34. Once fervor slackens, all relations with the world become harmful, just as when a soldier lacks courage, the approach of the enemy becomes fatal for him.

CONCLUSION ON THE PURPOSE OF THE INSTITUTE

38. The rules of this noble perfection, those of defined relations with others, as well as those of personal precautions cannot be suited to weak souls, nor do they belong to a mediocre religion. To be admitted to them, one must be favored by God and have the sure imprint of a vocation.

DOCUMENT 2: “Constitutions of the Society of Mary” – 1839

From about 1828 on, Father Chaminade sought to compose a definitive text for the Constitutions of the Society of Mary. After his experience of the initial years, he felt the need for clarification of basic guidelines and objectives that could answer multiple questions about spirit, spirituality, mission, formation and administration. He also desired a definitive statement that could serve as a basis for ecclesiastical approval. Initially with the assistance of Father Lalanne, the Founder laboriously composed and revised a text, mostly during 1828. Then, during his long absence from Bordeaux and visitation of all communities after the Revolution of 1830, he attempted to perfect this document and test its many provisions in practice. In 1834 he circulated the first book of the new Constitutions to the Society as a whole. The second book was completed by 1838 and submitted for the approval of the Holy See. After this was granted, in the autumn of 1839 the entire document was published and promulgated.

The articles here reproduced concern the basic nature of the Society and such early Marianist characteristics as the vows of stability and teaching, prayer life, the evangelical virtues, the apostolate of education, and the three “categories” of members.

* * *

CONSTITUTIONS of the SOCIETY OF MARY, 1839

Object of the Society and its spirit.

1. The little Society, which offers its feeble services to God and to the Church under the auspices of the august Mary, has two principal objects: 1) to raise each of its members, with the grace of God, to religious perfection; 2) to work in the world for the salvation of souls by upholding and spreading, through means adapted to the needs and spirit of the times, the teachings of the Gospel, the virtues of Christianity and the practices of the Catholic Church.
2. It desires, as much as God will help it, to unite zeal with the abnegation, work with prayer, and by combining the advantages of the active life with those of the contemplative life, to attain the ends of both
3. Because it happens too often that the employments of the active life expose those who are engaged in them to the contagion of the world, the Society regards as the third object of its Constitutions the rules of precaution and of reserve that tend to provide the religious constantly with the means of resistance against laxity.

4. The Christian perfection which the Society of Mary has as its first object consists essentially in the most exact conformity possible with Jesus Christ, God become man to serve as a model for all.
5. Zeal for the salvation of souls, the motive for the second object of the Society, is only one of the characteristic traits of this Divine Model; whence it follows that the Society has essentially only one end, which is the most faithful imitation of Jesus Christ. The profession which the Society makes of being devoted to Mary, as its name indicates, does not detract from this truth: "It is of Mary that Jesus was born." Nourished and reared by her, he never separated himself from her during the whole course of his mortal life; he was subject to her, and he associated her in all his labors, in all his sorrows and in all his mysteries. Devotion to Mary is, therefore, the most salient point in the imitation of Jesus Christ; and in devoting itself to the point in the imitation of Jesus Christ; and in devoting itself to the imitation of this Divine Model under the well-beloved name of Mary, the Society intends to have each of its members reared by her, as Jesus was reared by her care after having been formed in her virginal womb.
6. The Society of Mary does not exclude any kind of works; it adopts all the means which divine providence ordains for it to attain the ends which it proposes. "Do whatever He tells you." Such is its motto. The Society follows it as if the order that Mary gave to the servants at Cana were addressed by the august Virgin to each of its members.

On the Vows of (stability and teaching)

19. By the vow of stability, the religious intends to establish himself permanently and irrevocably in the state of servant of Mary. This vow is in reality a devotedness to the Blessed Virgin, with the pious design of spreading her knowledge and of perpetuating her love and her cult as much as possible, through oneself and through others, in every circumstance of life.
20. Moreover, the vow of stability is made with the intention of never depriving the Society of one's cooperation in the work that it has undertaken. Dispensation from this vow can give rise to grave injustice toward the Society. (...)
21. Since, whether it is expressed or not, the vow of stability is implied in all Orders, the Society of Mary, while adopting the consequences that it has everywhere else, intends to make it a special vow.
22. The vow of teaching Christian faith and morals obliges all the members of the Society to take the greatest interest in preserving the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion and in upholding morality. Since the majority of the members devote themselves to teaching the humanities, the sciences and the arts, they make their teaching only a means for multiplying true Christians.

23. Those who do not fulfill this vow by direct works observe it by working with the intention of favoring it.

On the Exercises of Religious Life

34. It has been laid down as a principle that it is impossible for a person to arrive at religious perfection without mental prayer and that the more a religious devotes himself to this exercise, the nearer he approaches his end which is conformity with Jesus Christ. The spirit of mental prayer should be, along with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the characteristic virtues of the religious of Mary and the one prayer is the common and unique source of all virtues.
39. Every employment which deprives a religious of the leisure of making mental prayer is regarded as incompatible, and the religious is removed from it as soon as possible. (...)
40. During his whole life, in whatever rank he may be, the religious renders an account of his meditations to his superior, or if he himself is a superior, to that religious of his house or of another house who is proposed for his spiritual direction.
41. The account of mental prayer centers on three points: 1) if it is made exactly; 2) according to the method; 3) with enjoyment and with benefit.
42. If a superior, for some reason of direction, permits a religious to depart from the method, it is always as little as possible and without ever losing sight of its essential principles which are: to make mental prayer with the inspiration of faith, the confidence of hope and the devotedness of charity. It is on these three conditions that, through mental prayer, a man of this world is finally changed into a man of God.
43. Examen is considered by the Constitutions as the practical observance of this precept of the Divine Master: "I say to all without exception: be on your guard concerning yourselves." This is enough to recommend it to all religious and to have them love it.
71. However good the intention one has in doing activities, it is impossible for the soul, when turning toward exterior things, not to lose some of its recollection. The greatest saints, following the Lord's precept and the example of the apostles, withdrew from time to time from their labors and in retreat put aside everything in order to occupy themselves with God alone and with the needs of their soul.
72. The Society attaches all the more interest and importance to spiritual retreats, since it has expressly taken as the third object of its institution to protect its

religious from that adverse contagion of the world which so easily invades souls when they are once open to it through dissipation.

On direction

97. Direction is the greatest help that souls desirous of salvation find in religious profession; it is likewise the most sound advantage that the Society can promise to those who devote themselves to God under its care. Direction is in fact nothing else than the education of the religious, that is, the care that the Society takes of those who offer themselves to it, in order to lead them from the first step to the final stage of the perfection toward which they strive.
98. The Society does not have the erroneous pretension of substituting work and human effort for the operations of grace; but it does wish to avoid the obstacles too often placed in the way of these operations by one's negligence, prejudices, illusions and misguided conduct.
99. Superiors charged with direction, whether they be principal or secondary superiors should be formed as much as possible according to the counsel and method given to the masters of novices and to the General Assistant for Zeal.

On the Evangelical Virtues

240. The imitation of Jesus Christ consists essentially in the practice of those virtues of which the gospel presents to the world the first instructions and the first examples. This practice is the first means which brings the religious to his beautiful and ultimate end. It is the result of all the other means of religious perfection: the vows, practices of penance, direction, the rule of common life. All these should instill and develop in souls the germ of the gospel virtues.
241. "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself," our adorable master has said. And elsewhere: "None of you can be my disciple unless he gives up all his possessions." Thus renunciation, abnegation, no longer seeking creatures except as if they did not exist, never listening to oneself, looking upon self as if on were nothing: that is what Jesus asks of those who wish to follow Him.
242. For the religious, therefore, there is no longer anything in this world to be seen out of curiosity or for its exquisiteness; no longer any pleasure to be sought in creatures, any amusements, frivolous conversations or correspondence, pleasure trips, reading for mere amusement, or any consolations other than those which God is pleased to give by grace for the sacrifices of virtues.
243. Poor, he rejoices in having nothing, Chaste, he finds in the privations imposed by chastity an inexhaustible source of divine consolations. Obedience has made him once more a little child, and in this humility of heart he enjoys peace of soul.

244. What he does today, what he will do tomorrow, where he will pass his life and how long it will last nowise disquiet him. Indifferent to everything else, he has only one thing at heart: to do always and everywhere what pleases God.
245. If he is employed in teaching the humanities it is in order to communicate along with them the teachings of religion; and if he endeavors to become as expert as possible in his subject matter, he does not become more attached than is proper to such things which are uncertain, insignificant and transitory by nature.
246. Peaceful in the care of Providence, he makes the best use possible of his modest talent in obscurity. Without ambition to become known and without being concerned about success, he undertakes nothing sensational or which puts him in the limelight, unless God so arranges it.
247. It is not only death that Jesus Christ gives to his disciples. If he wants them to die to the world, it is in order to have them live his own life and to transform them into himself as "other selves." You have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God." The religious finds his happiness and glory in God; he should feel nothing within himself but Jesus and that which Jesus felt. "Have the same sentiments in you as are in Christ Jesus.
248. By his exterior, he makes known to everyone the modesty of Jesus Christ
249. He loves silence because God speaks to the hearts of those who are silent in order to listen to him.
250. The Savior of the world came as a victim; he lived in privations, he died in sorrows. The same swords pierced the heart of his divine Mother. Nothing better can happen to the disciple than to resemble the Master. The religious, therefore, regards himself as a victim and is not astonished at the privations which God is pleased to send him. Far from contenting himself with abstaining from what is sinful, he deprives himself even of what is permitted. And since he accepts all the sacred restraints of his state in a spirit of penance and expiation, he considers himself all the days of his life as attached to the cross in order to continue, after the example of so many saints, the oblation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Particular Rules for Each Class of Professed

338. Although the three classes of professed do not each form a separate corporate body, there are nevertheless differences among them which require for each class particular regulations adapted to their functions.

1) Priests

339. How many conquests modern philosophism has made in the kingdom of Jesus Christ! Faith has been weakened, its torch has been extinguished in many

individuals and even in entire groups. The principles of religious are being changed more and more. How little Christian education there is! The rising generation finds so few teachers who strive to form the mind and heart to Christianity. What remedies can be brought against so many evils?

340. Among the means which the Spirit of the Lord, in mercy, has given for stopping the progress of impiety and licentious conduct, is an inspired Association composed of persons of all talents and states of life, priests and laymen, whose principal object is to form children and youth of every class: it is the Society of Mary.
341. The priests are the salt and the light of this Society.
342. They should be its salt in order to prevent it from degenerating from its primitive spirit and from its first fervor.
343. They should be its light in order to prevent it from ever compromising the true principles of the ways of religious perfection.

2). Teaching (or Lettered) Laymen

361. The priests do not teach concurrently with the Brothers in the public primary schools. Since the Society is devoted to primary teaching, the class of Teaching Brothers is generally very numerous; it is, so to say, its principal group. This class of members is charged with bringing to more than three fourths of the population the principles of faith along with human knowledge. How much good a religious teacher, truly animated with the zeal of his state, is able to do!
362. The Society likewise opens schools of higher education, liberal arts and sciences; but there is no distinction among any of the Teaching Brothers other than their assignment. The same modesty, the same simplicity, the same costume is for all: complete uniformity. Let each one guard against feeling superior because of his learning, and let him edify by harmony and fraternal charity.
363. In public, and even officially before the civil government, the lay religious engaged in primary teaching are often called "Brothers." This truly religious and Christian title should please them because of the pleasant associations which it recalls to them.

3) Working Brothers

368. The class of Working Brothers, it would seem, should stir up a pious jealousy in the first two classes. More withdrawn from the world and having fewer contacts with it, the Working Brothers can and should live in greater poverty in dress

and furnishings as well as in diet. Moreover, their recollection is less disturbed, and since they work in silence and are always guided by superiors, their hearts are more habitually directed toward God.

369. The Working Brothers are generally farmers, placed on a property of the Society. Various workshops are set up within the enclosures of the property, either for making tools necessary for farming or for other professions.
371. It is a great consolation for a religious to know that the fruits of all his efforts, his labors and his thrifty management are applied in works that concur in establishing the kingdom of Jesus Christ by spreading the faith.

Translation by H. Kramer, S.M., and re-worked by Q. Hakenewerth, S.M.

DOCUMENT 3: "Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary" - 1839

(Marian Writings: Vol. 2, nos. 606-222)

Concomitantly with his work on Constitutions for the Society of Mary, Father Chaminade also prepared a constitutional text for the Sisters. His stay in Agen during the period of 1831-34 was initially marked by some conflicts among the Founder, the Sisters, and diocesan authorities. Very probably these conflicts confirmed the Founder in his conviction of the importance of a definitive and approved text for the governance of the community. Once good understanding was restored, the years in Agen no doubt also provided an opportunity to consult and test ideas for the Constitutions. Father Chaminade submitted this text to the Holy See, together with the Constitutions of the Society of Mary, in the autumn of 1838 and received approval in the summer of the following year.

The articles given here highlight the place of Mary in the life and ministry of the Sisters.

* * *

THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY – 1839

Preliminary Articles

1. The name, symbolizing grace and blessing, which this Institute assumes and under which it gives itself to God, makes clear its entire purpose. A person cannot be truly a Daughter of Mary unless she imitates this most pure Virgin very faithfully and serves, as Mary did, the Father in heaven and his beloved son with unreserved devotedness and perfect integrity.
3. To serve God as did Mary means, in equivalent terms and making due allowance to serve God as Jesus Christ did. Grace, in forming Mary, took Jesus Christ as model, and the Blessed Virgin is perfect and pleasing to the eyes of God only by her resemblance, as total as it could possibly be, to him who is eternally the object of good pleasure to the Most High. Therefore, the imitation of Mary is the surest, most rapid, and the easiest means of imitating Jesus Christ.
4. The imitation of Jesus Christ, through resemblance to Mary, is then essentially the object of our Institute. But, since Mary's character presents three principal traits for our imitation, so that we may be conformed to Jesus Christ, the object of the Institute likewise presents itself to us under three aspects: 1) to strive without ceasing for one's own sanctification; 2) to work for the salvation of others; and 3) to maintain a vigilance reserve in the relations we must have within the world in order to protect ourselves from its contagion.
5. To strive for one's own sanctification is the first object contained essentially in the purpose: to resemble Mary and to imitate Jesus Christ. When a person stands at the gate of the convent, she should say to herself: "This is the place where one strives to become a saint;" and she who is willing to be satisfied with mediocre virtue ought not to cross the threshold. She would take the beautiful title of Daughter of Mary only to bring upon herself this reproach from her holy Mother and Patroness: "You dishonor me." For, is there one virtue, one degree of perfection, that was dear to Mary that she did not attain, as she conformed herself to her divine Son? Whoever complied more faithfully to the command: "You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect?" (Mt. 5:48)
8. Since Jesus and Mary lived only to glorify God through salvation of people, one would make only a vain pretense of imitating them if she failed to labor both at the salvation of others and at personal sanctification. The heart of a Daughters of Mary ought then to be that of a mother, a heart filled with solicitude and compassion for all the miseries of humanity, and in particular for those miseries which endanger the salvation of souls; namely, ignorance and sin. She will dedicate her life to the task of eliminating these miseries to the extent that Providence grants her the means.

- 10 This is why the Rules of our Institute, while guiding very member to each of these goals, also sets before her a third, which she ought to keep in mind at all times: safeguarding herself from evil. This was a characteristic trait of Mary. The desire to imitate her suggests to her daughters measures demanding great sacrifices, which they will joyfully accept.

Means employed by the Institute

13. To achieve the goals set for itself, goals that are entirely supernatural, the Institute does not place its confidence in human means. Above and before all, it relies on the assistance of God, and to obtain this, upon the intercession of the august Mary. It intends its members to be formed and reared by her just as the divine Model, whom it places before them, was formed and reared by the hands of this good and perfect Mother.

Proof of a Vocation

20. A person does not have a call to the Institute of Mary if she completely lacks devotion to the Blessed Virgin and confidence in her.

Mental Prayer

75. The spirit of mental prayer, along with devotion to the Blessed Virgin, ought to be the characteristic virtue of a religious of Mary, and the virtue in which, without exception, each one strives to excel. Prayer is the source of all the virtues.

Penances

99. No other penances are practiced in common in the Institute (outside of those determined by the Church, which are observed without any mitigation) except three days of abstinence, Quinquagesima Sunday and the following Monday and Tuesday, and the fast on the vigils of those feasts of the Blessed Virgin which are observed as holy days or which were formerly so observed.

Office of Choir

115. As their Office of Choir the religious recite daily the little office called the Office of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Exercises Common to All Christians

124. In addition to the holy days of obligation, the religious refrain from unnecessary work on the feasts of the Annunciation, the Purification, the Nativity, the Immaculate Conception.

On that of the Holy Name of Mary, which is the patronal feast, on those of St. Joseph, of St. John the Evangelist, and on that of the Foundation of the Institute (May 25, 1816). Permission is sought to have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on those days.

The Sodalties

144. Great importance is given to meditations on the truths of faith, on recourse to the sacraments, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, faithfulness in attending meetings, fidelity to the practical regulations of the Sodality, and union with its members, who ought to try to be together in their activities and in their recreations for mutual encouragement and to overcome more easily human respect.

Christian Education

153. Christian education is the chief work of the Institute and the habitual occupation of most of its members. Children ought to be of very particular interest to the Daughters of Mary, no only because no more useful service can be rendered to Religion than that of rearing children in a Christian manner, but also because their Patroness and Queen, who is the Mother of everyone, has a very special tenderness for children.

Retreats

214. Interior dissipation is just as destructive to souls as exterior dissipation; it is the inevitable result of prolonged engagement in the active life, no matter how good may be the intention of the person involved. There is no other remedy for this evil, no other means of preservation from this danger, than the retreat. The Blessed Virgin and the greatest saints have known no others.

Office of Instruction

232. Each teacher considers her school work as a work of zeal, as was explained above. She pictures to herself the Blessed Virgin entrusting these children to her as a precious seed that she is to cultivate, or as a treasure deposited with her for which she must render an account, and to the proper use of which is attached her own salvation and the salvation of many others.
256. Preparation for a catechism lesson or for some other kind of religious instruction calls for different methods. First of all, the teacher humbles herself before God and prays for the illumination of the Holy spirit, then she reads something about the subject to be treated; she reflects on it until she has it well organized in her mind. To each section she links, as far as possible, some story, parable, or example. At the end she again offers a prayer,

invoking the Holy Spirit and recommending herself to the Blessed Virgin before she begins to speak.

FURTHER READING ON THE RULE OF LIFE

*The religious Societies grew out of Father Chaminade's earlier foundations of the Sodality and the State of Religious Living in the World, and the first Rules of the religious Societies preserve many of the distinctive traits of these earlier foundations. To understand these developments, it will be helpful to read some basic documents of the Sodality and the State, such as those published in the **Marian Writings**, Volume 2, nos. 360-370 and 395-402*

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE

1. OVERVIEW

DOCUMENT 4: "Retreat of 1821 – 18th Meditation"

(*Marian Writings* 2: 761-767)

During the early years of the Society of Mary, Father Chaminade each autumn gathered the members, candidates, and some close associates for a retreat which he himself directed. The notes taken by retreatants preserve for us important insights into the founding spirit and relationship between the Founder and the early members.

The retreat of 1821 took place from October 8 to 23. Its eighteenth meditation, on the spirit of the Institute, is one of the earliest documents synthesizing characteristic traits and insisting on the link between the interior spirit and the apostolic thrust of the Society. In many ways this meditation is a foreshadowing of the great letter of August 24, 1839, the classic presentation of the Marianist spirit.

The text is taken from a notebook, usually called the "manuscript of Bordeaux," kept by a participant in the retreat whose identity is unknown.

* * *

Eighteenth Meditation

“The spirit you received is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rm 8:15).

We have received the spirit of adopted children whereby we cry, my Father! my Father!

First Point. What is the special spirit of the Institute of Mary?

Second Point. What means are especially fit to help us to acquire this spirit and to follow our proposed model?

Third Point. What fruits can we expect, in the order of religion, without exaggeration and with prudent foresight?

At the time when the Israelites were exposed to some danger, they used to cry out, “Lord, Lord!” because they placed their hope in God. Jesus Christ has taught us that when we wish to ask for something, we have only to say, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” The children of Mary cry out, “Our Mother, our Mother!” Their hope will not be in vain, because they have placed their confidence in her who has been endowed with great powers.

Although all religious orders have a common spirit, yet each order also has a spirit of its own. This spirit results from divine inspiration and has been adapted to the circumstances and needs of each century. What serious reflections come to mind here concerning the Institute of Mary!

We are thoroughly convinced that God is responsible for the establishment of the Institute of Mary. But if we reflect on the time of the foundation and on the objective God wants the Institute to have, we will become aware of its vast scope. Just look at the world; what awful darkness, what horrible corruption, what disheartening indifference to salvation! In past centuries, corruption found its way only into the heart, but today both the heart and mind are infected. A sick mind is incomparably more dangerous and incurable than a sick heart. It is in this situation, in this time of desolation and when the generation being born, along with generations to come, are in danger of being devoured by ungodliness and irreverence, that God founds the Institute of Mary. (May God give it the spirit it needs, the interior spirit.)

God calls us not only to personal sanctification, but to preserve the present generation from error, to revive the faith in France, in Europe. What a noble, vast undertaking! What a holy and generous project! How appealing to the person who seeks the glory of God and the salvation of others. And God has chosen us from among so many!

The spirit of children of Mary, is an interior spirit. In this community the religious makes his soul a temple to God. He sets up an altar there on which he sacrifices his will. He is constantly conscious of the presence of God, and converses gently and familiarly with

God. His heart is a sanctuary dedicated to Mary, a chapel from which fervent prayers rise to her. He also invokes St. Joseph, and has recourse to him in his troubles. The spirit of the Institute is the spirit of Mary; this explains everything. If you are children of Mary, imitate Mary.

It is essential, therefore, that we acquire the interior spirit. By what means? There are three: the first is to form in us the traits of Jesus Christ; the second, to form ourselves in virtue by following the example of the august Mary; the third to form ourselves to the evangelical counsels. It is good to reflect frequently on the excellence and the obligation of the commitment we have made, on the eight beatitudes, the mysteries of the Blessed Virgin and the virtues they suggest to the Institute, for example, her humility, her faith, her poverty, her discretion. We must try to understand thoroughly and to practice the five silences, recollection, obedience, the spirit of mortification. In a word, we must so apply ourselves that, at the end of our lives we might say with Jesus Christ: all is consummated.

Our fidelity will earn for us the consolation of being collaborators in the designs of God. The Institute of Mary is the work of God. If we, who are its nucleus, are not animated with its spirit, we will cause the ruin of this work of God and we shall be responsible. But if we are faithful, Mary herself will present us to her adorable Son.

DOCUMENTS 5-7: "Letters concerning the "approval" of the Institute - 1838-1839"

One of the crowning achievements of the Founder's life was completing the Marianist Constitutions and securing a Decree of Praise from the Holy See in 1839. Here we present three lengthy letters written as part of this process.

The first, dated September 16, 1838, is the Founder's presentation of the Institute (both the Society of Mary and the Daughters of Mary) to Pope Gregory XVI. The title of this letter clearly reflects its nature: "Short Sketch of the Plan which the Author of the Constitutions of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and of those of the Society of Mary had in Founding the Two Orders." It is a very solemn summary of a lifetime of ministry and a definitive statement of the Founder's mentality.

The second letter, dated July 22, 1839, is a circular to both congregations, announcing the good news of the approbation and expressing the Founder's desire that this happy event motivate new dedication and fervor in all the members.

The third letter, of August 24, 1839, is addressed to the preachers who were to direct the annual retreats of all religious of both congregations. This letter is the classic, most frequently quoted expression of the Founder's motivation and vision for Marianist religious life. It is probably the best known and most stirring Marianist document from the lifetime of the Founder.

Taken together, these three letters, perhaps better than any other texts, give us an insight into the outlook and dedication of the Founder and his first disciples.

DOCUMENT 5: Letter to Pope Gregory XVI, Rome

(Letters: Vol. 4, no. 1074)

Bordeaux, September 16, 1838

SHORT SKETCH OF THE PLAN WHICH THE AUTHOR OF THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND OF THOSE OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY HAD IN FOUNDING THE TWO ORDERS.

Most Holy Father:

If I had been able to come in person to place myself humbly at the feet of Your Holiness, I would have revealed to you the most intimate sentiments of my heart. I would have said, with an entirely filial simplicity, how great has been my sorrow for such a long time at the sight of the incredible efforts of impiety, and of modern rationalism and Protestantism, sworn to the ruin of the beautiful edifice of revelation. To erect a powerful barrier to hold back the torrent of evil, Heaven has inspired me to solicit from the Holy See at the beginning of this century letters conferring on me the title of Missionary Apostolic so as to revive or to rekindle everywhere the divine torch of faith, while presenting on all sides to an astonished world imposing masses of Catholic Christians of every age, sex, and condition, who, united in special associations, practice our holy religion without vanity or human respect, in all the purity of its dogmas and morals. Filled with this thought and likewise urged by worthy prelates, I poured out my entire soul in a humble supplication at the feet of our Holy Father Pius VII, who, deigning to listen favorably to my request, accorded me most ample powers by a Decree of March 28, 1801. From that time, Most Holy Father, fervent Sodalities—some of men and others of women—were organized in several cities of France. Religion had the happiness of counting a large number of adherents in a relatively short time, and much good was accomplished.

But, Most Holy Father, this means, as excellent as it may be when it is wisely used, is not sufficient. Philosophism and Protestantism, favored in France by ruling power, have taken hold of public opinion and of the schools, attempting to spread in all minds especially during childhood and youth, this libertinism of thought, more harmful even than that of the heart from which it is inseparable. Moreover who could even conceive of all the resulting evils?

I have believed before God, Most Holy Father, that it was necessary to found two new orders, the one of virgins and the other of young men, who would prove to the world by the fact of their good example that Christianity is not an out-moded institution. They would show that the Gospel is as practicable today as it was 1800 years ago; they would challenge the propaganda hidden under a thousand and one disguises; and, they would take over the

battleground of the schools by opening classes of all levels and subjects, especially for those classes of people most numerous and most abandoned.

Here you have, Most Holy Father, the design with which Divine Providence has inspired me, in the foundation of the Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary more than twenty years ago.

The Society of Mary began under the auspices of the holy Archbishop of Bordeaux, Archbishop d'Aviau, in the capital city of his diocese. Until the death of this venerable Prelate, it was the work of his heart. It includes three classes: 1) that of the educated laymen whose principal mission is the spread of the knowledge, love and practice of our holy religion by the means of teaching; 2) that of the members devoted to manual labor, which has for its object, the opening of schools of arts and crafts for young men of the ordinary classes, to protect or to turn them away from the contagion of the world, and to teach them to sanctify their labor by practice of the Christian virtues; and 3) that of the priests, which is the soul and the salt of the other two. When this last class will be sufficiently numerous, it will devote itself outside to the exercise of all the functions of the holy ministry. It is charged with the direction of the Society of Mary and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.

The Order of Virgins, Most Holy Father, which has taken the name of the Daughters of Mary, was founded in 1816 in the city of Agen, under the protection of the venerable Bishop of that diocese, who is kind enough today to beg Your Holiness to grant it canonical recognition. With the means at its command, it works towards the same ends as the Society of Mary. Consequently, it occupies itself with the work of teaching, with works proper to women, with Sodalties, and with works of charity. Thanks to the cooperation of His Eminence, Cardinal d'Isoard, it can henceforth render the greatest services to religion.

The Constitutions of the Society of Mary, Most Holy Father, and those of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, develop the ends, the means, what pertains to persons, and the government of the two orders according to the spirit of Saint Benedict, adapted, as much as possible, to the immense needs of the present century.

These two orders have taken as their distinctive name that of the august Mary. May they make it known, loved, and cherished throughout the whole world! For I am intimately convinced that Our Lord has reserved to His Holy Mother the glory of being the particular support of the Church in these latter times.

Do not consider, Most Holy Father, the personal unworthiness of the one who has dared to take from Your Holiness, in his own favor, some precious moments in order to stammer at your feet a few words about the works of which he is but the unworthy instrument. However, Most Holy Father, consider the holy Name of Mary under the auspices of which he presents himself before your throne and which constitutes all his glory and all his strength!

William Joseph Chaminade
Superior General of the Society of Mary

DOCUMENT 6: "Letter of July 22, 1839 – Circular to the two Orders with the response from the Pope

(Letters: Vol. 5. no. 1153)

CIRCULAR TO THE ORDERS

Bordeaux, July 22, 1839

WILLIAM JOSEPH CHAMINADE, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY AND OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY, TO HIS DEAR CHILDREN OF THE TWO ORDERS.

Rejoice in the Lord, my dear children! Heaven has just answered our prayers, and hell has tried in vain to paralyze our efforts at the Court of Rome. I have the happiness of finally announcing to you the solemn and authentic approbation of the society of Mary and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.

The Sovereign Pontiff has had our Constitutions carefully examined by the Sacred congregation of Bishops and Regulars, by several Cardinals who form part of it; and, so that the affair might not be too prolonged, the Cardinal Prefect having fallen ill, the Pope immediately named a temporary Prefect, with the result that, a short time later, His Holiness, on the favorable report given him in the audience of last April 12, issued the statement, while blessing the Lord, that the two Orders were worthy of the highest commendation, and that, in consequence, a Decree of Praise, approbation, and encouragement in their favor, should be rendered to them without delay.

I have then received this precious Decree, my dear children. I have read and reread it with the respect and the filial gratitude due to all that emanates from the Holy See, and my heart has been awestruck and my soul enraptured. You will soon read it yourselves, since I wish to send it to you for your joy in common, and I am sure you will all share my sentiments.

You will see in it, in the first place, my dear children, that our Most Holy Father blends the two Orders in the same decree, by the same praises, the same exhortations, and the same encouragements, to teach us for all time that our two Orders, marching together towards the same end, on two parallel lines, by ways respectively appropriate to the two sexes, are to be united, although distinct, and rival each other in zeal, charity, and efforts to procure the glory of God and that of God's most holy Mother.

It follows then, my dear children, that, henceforth, it would not suffice for you to observe our Rules punctually so as to be truly Children of Mary. More is required and especially that you penetrate yourselves well with their spirit. I myself, must make efforts to inculcate into you their principles, so that we may all respond to the wish-or rather- to the orders of His Holiness. However, you readily sense that my isolated efforts would not suffice to bring this about if the respective Heads of the two Orders, if you yourselves, if all of us together do not

work effectively at it with all the devotedness of our religious profession. And when, in the future, I recall to you the spirit of our Constitutions, when I seek to inculcate it into you, or when your Superiors do it for me, you will turn your eyes away from my personal unworthiness, to see in me only the Vicar of Jesus Christ himself, proposing to you through my voice to renew ceaselessly your fervor in the accomplishment of the work undertaken.

For the rest, my dear children, the truly magnificent approbation with which His Holiness has been kind enough to honor our two Orders does not yet completely accomplish the object of our desires; but it is the sure pledge and the strongest possible guarantee of what we are awaiting from the Pontifical Benevolence. Furthermore, a Bishop, one of our powerful protectors with the Holy See, in opening the letter from Rome, by which his Eminence Cardinal Giustiniani announced to him the precious Decree issued in our favor, exclaimed in the midst of his council: "Here we have beatification, and soon will follow canonization!" In effect the Sovereign Pontiff is giving us reason formally to hope that he will later raise the two Orders to the supreme rank of a Canonical Institution, in such a way that the vows, simple as they still are, will become solemn. Thus, in his great kindness towards us, he has officially charged his Eminence Cardinal Giustiniani to tell us to fear nothing because of the delays which, circumstances render necessary, and which do not have their motive in the Constitutions themselves, since these have highly pleased him.

Our duty, my dear children, in this regard, is to await the moment of the Lord with an entirely filial confidence. What is of greater importance to us now is to penetrate ourselves well with the spirit of our Constitutions, and to conform ourselves to them religiously. If some abuses have slipped in, if the enemy has sown cockle in our various establishments, we must all hasten to do what we can to uproot them with prudence and precaution; and if some Superiors were to find themselves powerless in this matter, I would invite them to notify me, so that in joining my efforts to theirs, we could succeed in removing the evil.

I know, for example, that through the evils of the times, a very serious abuse has slipped into the Society of Mary. There is hardly any uniformity left in the costume of the Brothers. I know that the majority seriously regret this fact to the extent that I have no doubt about the eagerness with which the means will be adopted to finally obtain the greatest possible uniformity.

And now, my dear children, the time of the annual retreat is approaching. You will make great efforts to profit by it, to recover your first fervor. Then you will be given these Constitutions, which have merited from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and, above all, from the Sovereign Pontiff, so many praises and recommendations. Prepare yourselves to the best of your ability, be it for the retreat or for the reception of your holy Rules, so that these two circumstances may be the point of departure for a renewal of fervor in the two Orders.

In terminating this Circular, my dear children, I am inviting you to the extent of my power, to render to God worthy acts of thanksgiving for the signal favors which we have just received from the Holy See. We must also pray, to call the blessing of heaven upon our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, upon Cardinal Lambruschini, Minister Secretary of State to His

Holiness, upon His Eminence Cardinal Giustiniani, Cardinal Dean of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and upon Canon Valentini, to whose kind solicitude we owe so much.

For the time being, you will say each day, to this effect, and during three months, starting with the day of the reception of this Circular, the Magnificat, seven times Glory be to the Father, and the Memorare. I shall inform you later what gratitude will require of us. In the meantime, my dear children, receive the fatherly blessing which I am giving you in the effusion of my tenderness.

DOCUMENT 7: Letter of August 24, 1839 – to the retreat masters

(Letters Vol. 5, no. 1163)

LETTER TO THE RETREAT MASTERS

Bordeaux, August 24, 1839

My dear Son,

In my circular of last July 22 I said to all my children of the two Societies: “You will see from the pontifical decree that His Holiness desires, or rather wills, that the spirit of our works, filled as they are with charity, be inculcated in all of you: he also gives you the assurance that if you persevere, you will render truly useful service to the Church.”

Now, my dear Son, you are given the beautiful opportunity to put forth your best efforts in order to fulfill these commands of the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, The favorable moment has come for you to inculcate the spirit of our Constitutions and of our works, which have so greatly pleased the heart of our Sovereign Pontiff. I refer to the retreat you are going to preach. Deeply convinced of this teaching of St. Paul: “The written letters bring death, but the spirit gives life” (2 Co.3:6), you will apply yourself with all your power to make our religious appreciate the excellence and special character of our divine mission.

In order to do this, you will explain, first of all, what we have in common with other religious orders; then you will speak of that which distinguishes us from them and finally you will strive to give a clear idea of the family trait which is our characteristic even in the works we share with other societies.

* * *

1. What We Have in Common with Other Religious Orders

The Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary profess the same three great vows that constitute the essence of religious life. Striving in accordance with their purposes

to elevate their respective members to the summit of Christian perfection, namely, the most perfect conformity with Jesus Christ, the Divine Model, all these orders teach their members to walk in the footsteps of the Savior who was poor, chaste, and obedient even to death on the cross, and to assume for this purpose, and by the exalted holiness of the vows, the obligations of poverty, virginal chastity, and evangelical vows place us in the company of all the other orders of that large family of religious, which has peopled heaven and earth with countless children from the very early ages of the Church.

When you come to apply to these constitutive obligations of the religious state the saying of the great Apostle, "The written letters bring death, the Spirit gives life, you will find it easy to show, for instance in the vow of poverty, the fruit, first of the letter and then of the spirit.

Those who are slaves to the letter stop at the externals of their vow, and without seeking to capture its profoundly spiritual intent, begin by splitting the material obligation, as it were, from the perfection of duty; then they draw a heavy line of demarcation between the strictly necessary, the fitting and the permissible. But soon, according to the axiom of the Apostle, the letter will kill them. Of course, they will want to keep their habit, but a habit that has been adapted to the alleged exigencies of their office. Consequently, they will always buy the best, supposedly keeping within the limits of their vow. They will not be particular about the style so long as it pleases them; they will seek beauty in the color and quality of the cloth, and this in a spirit of poverty or economy. Besides, they will affirm that, beyond these petty things, before which they grovel nevertheless, they seek only the honor of their state and the conversion of certain souls who would be repelled by a slovenly exterior. Their one thought is to observe the decorum required by their office, by the active and passive visits they must make, by their age and by their family. No one can possibly imagine the number of illusions which their vanity has raised to the level of imperative reasons.

Notice also that they do not restrict themselves to the matter of the religious costume. As we said, they have measured the whole range of their duties with the letter as their guide. They are aware of what is permitted without failing, at least seriously, against their vows, and they have staked out the limits very precisely. As a result they apply their own principles to everything given to them for their sue, and with admirable ingenuity they discover the secret of being rich while leading a life that is essentially poor, of owning and acting as a proprietor after having divested themselves of even the right ever to possess anything. This is how they plunder the sacrifice offered to the Lord, taking back with ingenious perfidy, time after time, that which they have renounced forever. As a result, frightening evils hang menacingly over them, and a reprobation like that of Saul awaits them if they continue to deceive themselves.

But those who strive with their whole heart to live according to the spirit of their vows act in just the opposite manner. They always accept the less desirable things, which others do not want. What is strictly necessary is sufficient for them, and they have a horror of anything that smacks of vanity, affection, or superfluity, because they are always trying to become more poor, more like true disciples of Jesus Christ, more like Jesus Christ himself, who called poverty blessed and who even made it divine in his own adorable person. O my dear Son, how happy is such a religious! "I tell you solemnly...everyone who has left (all things) for the

sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over, and also inherit eternal life" (Mt. 19:29). They are made divine here below, in a way, by the rich garments of the poverty of Jesus Christ which they wear; in the midst of privation they enjoy a peace and an unbelievably great happiness, foretastes of the joy of heaven. And so they come to understand with joy the saying of the Prophet: "The rich may go empty and hungry, but those who seek Yahweh lack nothing good" (Ps.34:10). The poverty of Jesus is, in fact, a treasure, the richest and most precious of treasures. Thieves cannot put their greedy hands on it, nor does rust consume it.

You will find it easy to apply to the other two vows, my dear Son, the saying we have already mentioned several times, and there will be no lack of powerful motives by which to inculcate the true spirit of these vows.

2. What Distinguishes the Society of Mary and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary from Other Religious Orders.

You realize, my dear Son, that among the great number of religious orders we possess a family characteristic which distinguishes us essentially from all the others. Let us describe this character, and let us, as best we can, explain in detail what belongs to the letter and what belongs to the spirit.

Every period in the history of the Church has its record of the struggles and the glorious victories of the august Mother of God. Ever since the Lord made her and the serpent enemies of each other, she has constantly vanquished the world and the power of hell. All the heresies, the Church tells us, have yielded to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and little by little she has reduced them to the silence of oblivion.

In our own day, the great prevailing heresy is religious indifference, which numbs souls and reduces them to a state of torpid egoism and moral degeneration. The depths of the abyss send forth dense clouds of black and pestilential smoke (Rv 9:2) threatening to engulf the whole earth in a murky night, devoid of every good, filled with every evil, and impenetrable to the life giving rays of the Son of justice. The divine torch of faith is burning low and dying in the heart of Christianity; virtue is becoming more and more rare and is disappearing, while vice is rampant and spreading with terrifying fury. It seems that the time is near when we are to witness what has been foretold, a general defection and an all but universal apostasy.

This sad picture of our times, unfortunately so exact, does not by any means discourage us. Mary's power has not been weakened. It is our firm belief that she will vanquish this heresy as she did all the others, for today she is, as she always has been, the incomparable Woman, the Woman of promise who is to crush the head of the infernal serpent. Jesus himself, by always addressing her with this great name, would teach us that she is the hope, the joy, the life of the Church, and the terror of hell. To her, therefore, is reserved a great victory in our day, for to her belongs the glory of saving the faith from the destruction with which it is threatened.

We have come to understand this design of Providence, and we have hastened to offer our feeble services to Mary in order to labor under her direction and to combat at her side. We

have enlisted under her banner as her soldiers and her ministers, and we have bound ourselves by a special vow, the vow of stability, to assist her with all our strength until the end of our life in her noble struggle against the powers of hell. And as an eminent religious order has chosen the name and standard of Jesus, so we have enrolled under the name and the standard of Mary, and we are willing to go wherever she may send us to spread her devotion and in this way to establish the kingdom of God in souls.

This, then, my dear Son, is our characteristic feature and the family trait of our two institutes. We are in a particular manner the auxiliaries and the instruments of the Blessed Virgin in the great work of the reform of morals and in the preservation and spreading of the faith, that is to say, in the sanctification of our neighbor. The Blessed Virgin makes us depositaries of the fruits of her ingenuity in working out the designs of her almost infinite charity, and we make a vow to serve her faithfully until the end of our lives and to carry out punctually everything she tells us to do, happy to be able to spread our lives and our strength in her service, since they belong to her. And we believe so firmly that this is what is best for us that we very solemnly renounce by our vow the right to choose or to accept at any time a different rule.

Moreover, my dear Son, by our vow of stability, we intend to bind ourselves in justice to cooperate to the best of our ability and to the end of our lives in the works undertaken. Our Constitutions, so highly praised and approved by the Holy See after thorough investigation, establish this obligation in so formal a manner that it is impossible to doubt it. It will suffice for me to recall in passing Articles 19, 20, and 21 for the Society of Mary, and Articles 69 and 175 for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary¹, and I ask if the scandal of religious apostasy does not injure honor, delicacy, and equity as well as religious and the Heart of Mary.

¹ From the Constitutions of the S.M. (1839)

19. By the vow of stability the member intends to constitute himself permanently and irrevocably in the state of servant of Mary. This vow is in reality a devotedness to the Blessed Virgin, with the pious design of spreading her knowledge and of perpetuating her love and cult as much as possible, by oneself or by others, in whatever circumstance of life he may be.

20. Moreover, the vow of stability is made with the intention of never depriving the Society of one's cooperation in the work that has been undertaken. The dispensation from this vow can give rise to grave injustice toward the Society. The apostolic Letters require that those who are concerned in a vow take the steps necessary for a dispensation from it.

21. Since, whether it be expressed or not, the vow of stability is supposed in all Orders, the Society of Mary intends making of it a special vow while adapting the consequences that it has everywhere else.

From the **Grand Institut** of the Daughters of Mary:

69. The vow to observe cloister forbids one to leave the monastery on one's own initiative.

175. The obligation of cloister governs even the desires of one's heart, and a religious must resist the desire to go out or to have communication with the outside world. She is happy to have left once for all this world of perdition; with eyes turned heavenward, she must now aspire only after eternal delights.

At this point a difficult arises and, although only apparent, I would like to consider it with you.

All religious orders, you will say, have rendered honor to Mary in a special way, and they glory in belonging to her.

I reply that we are indeed far from pretending that the right to honor Mary is exclusively ours. Such a claim would undoubtedly be ridiculous, for who has ever been able to love the Son without also loving the Mother, and who has ever dared to seek evangelical perfection while excluding all special honor to Mary from his consecration to Jesus. But what I regard as a really distinctive trait of our two orders, and what seems to me to be without precedent in all the religious orders I know, is the fact, to recall it once again, that we embrace the religious life in the name and for the glory of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and for the sake of devoting to her ourselves, that is to say, our bodies and all that we possess, in order to make her known, loved, and served. For we are thoroughly convinced that we shall never bring people back to Jesus except through his most holy Mother, since we believe, in union with the saintly doctors of the Church, that she is the only source of hope for us, **Tota ratio spei nostrae**, our Mother, our refuge, our help, our strength, and our life.

And I will reply further, my dear Son, that if other orders have this devotedness to Mary in common with us, we ought to congratulate them, bless them, and invite them to rival us in zeal and love, so as to proclaim everywhere the great name of Mary and the indescribably benefits resulting from it.

Our doctrine concerning the vow of stability is, therefore, my dear Son, such as I have just described it. In this teaching we find our rallying cry and our distinctive trait.

How easy indeed it is to realize that those who limit themselves to the letter fail dreadfully to understand their place in the beautiful family of Mary. Endlessly undecided, always unsettled, their heart suffers the gnawing effects of boredom, flutters in all directions on the wings of doubt seeking to satisfy under pretext of what is more perfect, a secret urge to be unfaithful to the Blessed Virgin. In their eyes the title, the quality of servant of Mary and her ministry has no value; the religious profession they made is not perfect enough, they feel the need for something more, as if there could be anything more noble or more perfect than to devote oneself to the service of the Mother of God and to abandon one's entire being to her maternal guidance as did Jesus himself. And so they no longer want to belong to her in this special way, because their sins, as they will say, demand a more rigorous expiation; and, in consequence, they end by breaking with their own hands the sweet chains that bind them to the Queen of Angels and of the whole human race. The rest of the story you know; in their heart they are no longer children of Mary, and sooner or later they perish.

My dear Son, woe to that unnatural child who rejects Mary and deserts her family! Happy, on the contrary, a thousand times happy is the one who remains faithful! You will not fail to make your beloved religious Brothers and Sisters share in these sentiments. Our Holy Father himself unites his voice to yours, telling them persuasively "that they need only make

progress ardently from day to day in the life they have begun under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin, with the full assurance that they will render in this way most useful service to the Church." And so you can encourage them most powerfully to persevere by explaining to them in what a high degree they are indeed children of Mary.

If all men and women are adopted children of the Mother of God, then the faithful members of the Society and of the Institute are such in a more perfect way by special titles that are very dear to her pure Heart.

Like all religious in general, they are one with Christ by the fact of their vows which attach them to the cross of the Savior. United intimately to him by very strong love, they are in him, just as he is in them. They are his disciples, images of himself each of them his other self. And so from the happy day of their profession he presents each of them as another John to Mary from the height of the cross, while saying to her, "Woman, this is your son." He wishes to say: "These are formed in my likeness, they are one with me; adopt them in me, therefore, and be a Mother to them just as you are to me!"

But I maintain that our vow of stability attaches us to Mary in a way that is even more special than the attachment uniting other religious to her. By it we have an additional title and an unusually strong claim to her preference. She therefore adopts us with more privileges; she receives with delight our special promise to be always faithful and devoted to her. She then enrolls us in her militia and consecrates us as her apostles. How sacred is this contract, my dear Son; how rich in blessings for us. After all this, is it possible to understand the cowardly desertions which we suffer? Can you understand the cowardly desertions which we suffer? Can you understand the apathetic indifference of so many? Finally, can you understand why some never make a sacrifice for Mary, who so much wants to bestow on us a very high rank in the whole human family?

3. What the Two Orders of Mary Possess as Special and Exclusively Proper to Them in the Works They Have in Common with Other Religious Orders.

Let us admire the work of Divine Providence, my dear Son, in the foundation of religious orders. The spirit of these orders, always adapted to the changing needs of the times, may be summed up in this word of the Savior: "God gave each a commandment concerning our neighbor" (Si 17.12). Some have had as sole mission to give to the world the ravishing example of absolute renunciation and of Christian mortification: the first were founded in the desert of Thebaid, and from there, as from a cradle, they spread out little by little to the entire world. All of you remember the heroes of poverty and penance, which these orders offered to the admiration of angels and the human race. Other orders appeared later, multiplying in the field of the heavenly Father laborers of every kind, dedicated to the task of eradicating the weeds won by the enemy and of striving to continue at the same time, each in its proper way, the work of self-denial and of the cross. Among these numerous congregations, founded in every century and in every region, some were called to seek the particular goal, others to strive for another.

We who come last of all, we who believe ourselves called by Mary herself to aid her with all our strength in her struggle against the great heresy of this age, have taken as our motto, according to the declaration of our Constitutions (art. 6), these words of the Blessed Virgin to the servants at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Convinced as we are that our special mission, despite our own weakness, is to perform for our neighbor all the works of zeal and of mercy, we make use of every possible means to preserve our neighbor from the contagion of evil or to cure them of it, under the general title of instruction in Christian morals, and in this spirit, we make it the object of a particular vow.

Thus, the vow of teaching that we have made, even though it is found in other orders, possesses a wider meaning in the Society and in the Institute. To fulfill the purpose of the words of Mary, "Do whatever he tells you," this vow extends to all classes, to each of the sexes, and to all ages, but in a special way to the young and the poor, so that it truly distinguishes us from every other society in which this vow is also made.

Such then, my dear Son, is the spirit and the meaning of our vow of teaching. Such is the distinctive trait which gives to us in the vast array of religious men and women, a family character that is exclusive and proper to the members of the Society and of the Institute.

This explains why our Holy Father in his joy could not refrain from blessing the Lord who had inspired in us such a design, as His Eminence Cardinal Giustiniani has said. The work has pleased him very much; he has judged it worth of all praise and of every commendation, and he desires that its spirit be inculcated in all its members, so as to stimulate them to make every greater progress. He even gives them an assurance that, instead of being of no use to the Church, they will render important service to it if they persevere. I am merely quoting for you, as you can see, the words of the Holy Father.

Now it remains for you, my dear Son, to carry out, to the best of your ability, the assignment I am giving you in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff. It is up to you to inculcate in the hearts of my beloved children the spirit of the works, entirely of charity, during the retreat which is about to begin. It is for you to impress upon the religious, who are directly engaged in teaching, how greatly they would deceive themselves if they were to limit their efforts to teaching secular subjects, if they put all their efforts and pride in turning out learned men and not Christians, if they strive to win a worldly reputation. Forgetting that they are missionaries of Mary and degrading themselves to the rank of mere hired instructors to the present century, they would fall from the lofty heights of their sublime apostolate. It is your task to explain to those employed in the work of our establishments or in teaching the arts and crafts the spirit and the secret in our holy Rule when we determined the manner in which they are to share in the general work of teaching. We have shown how powerfully they contribute by their labors, their zeal, and their prayers to the spread of the kingdom of Jesus and Mary in souls. Their part is indeed a beautiful one! Each of them is another Joseph; each has the task of assisting and sustaining the children of the holy family in their laborious apostolic ministry.

Now I bring this letter to a close my dear Son. I wanted to express to you very fully my thoughts about our works, and I have done so at too great a length. But this will not surprise you, for you know very well that we cannot exhaust a subject so dear to our hearts. I put my

trust in your charity with regard to the important work I am assigning to you, or rather that Mary assigns to you. Deeply penetrated as you are with the spirit of your state, you will not find it hard to inculcate this spirit into my dear children of both societies.

You know that the Decree of the Pope grants us the gift of a plenary indulgence for the renewal of perpetual vows, as also for making first vows. You will not fail to bring this happy news to their attention.

May Holy Mary, our Mother and our Queen, bless your trip, your efforts, your person and all our beloved children.

Receive, my dear Son, this expression of the desires of my heart, and may my paternal benediction be the guarantee of their realization. I look forward to it with confidence.

W. Joseph Chaminade

2. FAITH

DOCUMENT 8: "Retreat of 1818." Instruction 9, 10, 11

(Writings On Mental Prayer, nos. 207-221)

The Founder insisted often, even "in season and out of season, "that faith was the foundation of all Marianist life, whose mission was to revive faith in France and in the whole world. The following series of instruction, given during the annual retreat at which the founding members of the Society of Mary first made vows, develops his rich understanding of what he liked to call the "spirit of faith."

The text is taken from the notes of a retreatant.

THE RETREAT OF 1818

Ninth Meditation: "Have faith in God" Mk 11:22)

Our judgement regarding our knowledge of things may be enlightened by various lights: there is the light of reason which is natural; the light of faith which is supernatural but ordinary; and extraordinary lights, such as that of revelations. Among them all, without a doubt, the light of faith is the one which we should most esteem, desire and seek after, whether it be on account of its necessity or in view of its duration, or because of its excellence.

This faith, of which we wish to speak, is not only a human faith, as is the light of reason illuminated by the data of faith; it is faith as a supernatural virtue, the faith which comes from God, the faith of God as Scripture speaks it.

We must not confound the one with the other; they are quite different, both in their nature and in their effects. The former is only an operation of the intelligence, a truthful a truthful conclusion drawn from sure principles by a process of reasoning, the latter is like a vision, the enjoyment of invisible and future things, which have become sensible and present in some way by the certainty of their existence. The first leaves doubts, and is full of obscurity, and in matters of action it leaves one unresponsive and indifferent; the second excludes all uncertainty and determines the will. The first is acquired by study; the second by prayer and humility. The first is the faith of so many lax and disorderly Christians who live in the world; the second is the faith that makes saints, which few Christians strive to acquire and fewer still possess.

It is precisely of this last kind of faith that we say – and we want to convince ourselves of it in this meditation – that it is the most desirable of the lights that can enlighten our understanding, because it is the most necessary for salvation, the most durable and the most excellent.

1. It is most necessary for salvation

The extraordinary light of revelations is not necessary for salvation; one may readily be saved without having received such favors. The light of reason is necessary for salvation only as a preparation for the reception of the light of faith.

But as regards the faith of God, nobody can be saved without it; because it is this faith that produces meritorious works, without which no one can be saved. It is of this faith that we read: He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned (Mk 16:16). The greater this faith, the greater our sanctity; the more we believe in God, the more we will love God; the more we believe in Jesus Christ, the more we will imitate him; the more we believe in life eternal, the more we will make sacrifices to obtain it.

2. It is the most lasting

The extraordinary lights are only for an instant, and not at all constant. The light of faith ought to enlighten all the moments of our existence, and guide us in all our actions. Without mentioning that we receive it at baptism, and that it sustains us at the hour of our death, showing us the gates of eternity, by it alone, during the time between these two limits, we ought to act in all things. It is the principle which should make us live: The righteous man finds life through faith (Gal 3:11). In fact, the truths of which we are convinced form the essence of our conduct and the principle of our moral life. It is the conviction we have that certain relations, needs, or causes ought to produce certain effects; and that certain given effects ought to follow from given causes: from these convictions all our feelings and all our

actions should start. But if our faith is a faith of God, it will produce in us an intimate conviction of God's existence; of a God always and everywhere present; of a God to whom we ought to refer everything; of a God who observes and judges us in all things. Hence, if our faith is a faith of God, its characteristic is that we live by it; that it be the principle of all our actions; that we think, feel and act, always and everywhere, as being in the presence of God, of a God who judges us, of a God to whom we should refer everything, especially our love.

In this first sense, then, the light of faith is incomparably more durable than that of extraordinary revelations. Considered in this way, it seems that it is no more constant than the light of reason, because it is incontestable that in all the moments of our life we ought to be guided by reason. But we must be on our guard and not make use of our reason except when the light of faith is lacking; as soon as reason has led us to faith, we must abandon reason in order to walk solely in the light of faith.

Under another aspect reason enlightens us only during our lifetime, whereas faith enlightens us for all eternity. A day will come when all that we have learned by mere reason shall pass away, just as the world will pass away, and reason with it; and there shall remain nothing but what we have perceived by the light of faith.

3. It is the most excellent

The light of faith, by its very nature, excels every other light. What is, in fact, the light of faith? Until now we have confused faith with the light of faith, because it was not necessary to distinguish between them. But the one is not the other. Faith is the conviction we have of a truth; the light of faith is the motive which produces this conviction. The light of human faith is reason; the word of some human person; hence its uncertainties and all its imperfection. The light of divine faith, of the faith of God, is the very Word of God, it is the eternal production of the word's entire being; it is God's Son; it is Jesus Christ inasmuch as he is God; therefore, Jesus Christ is called the Word, the Word of God.

When the light of faith penetrates our soul, it is the Word of God who comes to dwell therein. This is not simply imagination. The Apostle, or rather the Holy Spirit by the mouth of the Apostle Paul, has revealed it to us: So that Christ may live in your hearts through faith (Ep 3:17)

We do not recognize Jesus Christ in our soul when we cause the light of faith to enter. It is not as Man, such as he is in the Holy Eucharist, that he dwells in us, but as the Word of God.

But if we do not see him there, we feel all the qualities that he attributes to himself: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn 14:6). By the light of faith, and by the faith which this light produces in us, we come to know the truth of God; it animates us, it is our life; it shows us what we must do, the road we must follow.

If the light of faith is the Word of God, if because of it the adorable Word comes to live within us, then we understand that faith, is the conviction resulting from the impression of this light, is precisely the union of Jesus Christ with us; a union which goes so far as to

transform us into Jesus Christ. By faith we think as Jesus Christ thinks, it is Jesus Christ who unites himself to our heart. By faith our guided will acts only as Jesus Christ acts, it is Jesus Christ who unites himself to our will. Thus the new self is formed within us.

Therefore be no longer astonished at what the Gospel and the Apostle tell us of faith, of its necessity, or its excellence, of the sufficiency for salvation, of its power. What is the light of reason compared to it? What are even the lights of special revelations? How reasonable then that Our Lord commands us by this precept. Have faith in God.

May this faith be the object of our prayers and of our persevering efforts. May the resolution to attach ourselves to it, to love it above all things, to labor to acquire it, be the fruit of the meditation that we are going to make upon its necessity, duration and excellence, as we have just explained.

Tenth Meditation: “Unless you believe you will not understand.”

What we have said concerning mental prayer, and what we have just remarked about faith, namely that their effect it to unite us to God even to the point of transforming us into God, sufficiently shows the relation existing between mental prayer and faith. Faith is the means by which we attain the end of mental prayer. Our text states that is even a necessary means insofar as we consider union with God as knowledge and love. Unless you believe you will not understand. Here we have, without searching any further, the best way to make mental prayer.

In order to develop this weighty truth and the better to impress it upon our minds, we shall first draw attention to a distinction and a comparison that theologians generally make, and we shall then indicate in what manner we ought to make use of faith in mental prayer.

First Point. The light of faith which emanates from God and impresses God’s image upon our souls is compared to the light of the sun, which, proceeding from the sun, impressed the image of the sun on our senses. The soul, which receives the light of faith, is comparable to the eye which receives the light of the sun, our mind corresponds to the essential parts of the eye which feel the sensation opening or closing, allow or refuse entrance to the light.

According to the first part of the comparison, faith, considered as a light coming from God, is objective; according to the second part, considered with respect to the person receiving it, it is subjective. We thus distinguish faith, as objective and subjective faith. By the first we must understand the light of God, and by the second the capacity of a human person to receive this light

From this general comparison, we understand first of all in what manner we must use faith during mental prayer. Just as, if our eye is strong and clear and we wish to see the sun, we simply turn our eye toward it and open our eyelids to allow the light to enter and strike it, so too if we wish the light of faith to strike and penetrate us in mental prayer, we must simply turn our understanding towards God and offer it to God through our wills. But just as, in

order to see well, it is necessary that our eyes be clear, healthy and attentive, so too in order to perceive the light of faith, our understanding must be pure, healthy and attentive, and this constitutes the entire method of mental prayer by faith. We perceive how conformable it is to this principle of strict theology, that mental prayer be at the same time the work of the human person and the work of God. This will be explained further in the second part of this exposition.

Second Point. We contend that to make mental prayer and to receive the light of faith it is necessary, the first place, to turn the eye of the understanding towards God and to fix it on this Supreme Being. That is, we must stop to consider God as depicted to us by faith in various attributes, and we must recall this by the aid of the memory. But while we consider what God is, God's light, in turn, teaches us what we are, and we shall thus be brought to consider ourselves at the same time; according to the doctrine of St. Lawrence Justinian, we are not to separate one consideration from the other: "consider attentively who you are and to whom you speak, and do not separate the one from the other." For instance, we consider in God the infinity of Being. We believe, we see that God is the Being par excellence, the Being of beings, the One who is. But we do not lose sight of our own lowliness, our littleness. We believe, we see that we are only nothingness, and it is from the depths of this weakness and this lowliness that we raise our eyes to God and consider God with a feeling of humility and confusion. Furthermore, we consider God as sanctity itself, irrefutable justice which sin offends infinitely and which must necessarily punish sin. At the same time we behold our sinfulness, we tremble and hasten to clothe ourselves, to put on Jesus Christ. Such are the considerations which habitually form the beginning of our subject matter in meditation.

After having considered, with the eye of the understanding and in the light of faith, God, though without losing sight of ourselves, without changing our viewpoint, that is, always viewing God from the depths of our misery. We consider in God one of the truths of revelation, as written by the hand of God, as proceeding from God's mouth. We believe this truth. We make oft repeated acts of faith concerning it. We question ourselves as our Lord questioned a saintly woman: Do you believe this? And we repeat it in our own minds until we can declare with some truth: Yes, I believe it. (Jn 11:26) We then apply it to ourselves, saying: If I believe this, what ought I to do, what ought I to think? Am I doing it at present, am I thinking at present what ought I to do and to think? Have I always believed this truth? Have I always acted in accordance with it? And we shall come to think of our past faults. Thus faith reawakens in us, or permeates us; it enlightens our minds; it kindles our hearts; it moves our will. We are led to sentiments of fervor and to good resolutions.

Now follows the conclusion. It is still while considering who we are and with whom we are speaking that we ought to make it. We bring back before our eyes the essential points of the truth meditated upon, and the resolution to which the consequences of this truth has led us. We view both of them in God; we receive them as an oracle coming from God: we pray God to sustain and increase our faith and its effects.

Note: After the preparation, after considering what we are and what God is, it is time to recall the purpose of our encounter with God. We wish to ask for God's lights and graces.

Therefore, let us ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us beg for mercy, and ask that the merits of God's Son, the favors he has granted his Mother and the saints speak in our behalf.

According to this method, we can make the very meditation which we are here explaining. After the ordinary preparation, we consider this truth in God who has taught it to us. Unless you believe, you will not understand. Our purpose is to strengthen in ourselves the resolution to make our mental prayer henceforth, in the light of faith.

Eleventh Meditation: "This is the victory over the world – our faith" (1Jn 5:4)

It is not merely to unite us to God, to converse with God, to make us happy through knowledge and love of God, that faith and meditation, that is, meditation by faith, serves us. We fashion for ourselves a victorious weapon by which we will conquer the world: this is the victory over the world – our faith. Faith is the weapon and meditation is the manner of using it, or better yet, meditation is the time of combat. It is the development of this truth which shall be the subject of this meditation.

It must be understood that the word "world" implies all God's enemies: Satan, the prince of this world, the world itself, that is the impious, the libertines, and all such who, living in opposition to the maxims of Jesus Christ and the laws of his Church, become the persecutors or at least the scandal of his faithful disciples. Finally the "world" includes the concupiscences to which St. John refers. Meditation by faith will make us victorious over all these enemies.

1. We can easily conceive that the devil is vanquished by meditation and faith if we recall what has been said regarding the discernment of spirits, namely, that the devil does not persuade our will until he has seduced our understanding by error and illusion. In fact, what can be more appropriate, to preserve the understanding from all error and illusion, than to direct it towards God, to enlighten it by the faith that comes from God? It is this manner of combat that Our Lord teaches us, and of which he has given us the example when he permitted the demon to tempt him in the desert. He answered the tempter with words of faith only, words drawn from Scripture. "If you adore me," said Satan, "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world." "It is written," answered Our Lord, "you shall adore the Lord your God and him only shall you serve," and the devil was vanquished. Docile to the lessons of our Master, let us, when we are tempted, have recourse to faith, to meditation by faith, and we will experience what the Apostle, inspired by the same Spirit, says: "And always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to put out the burning arrows of the evil one" (Eph 6:16).

2. It is by persecution or by bad example that the world ordinarily wars against the servants of God. By faith the latter will resist both the one and the other manner of attack, and will come out victorious over the world in both cases.

Faith will make them overcome persecution if, in its light, in meditation, they consider the persecutions that our Lord has suffered, the predictions which he made to us that the world

would treat us as it had treated him, the consolations which he has given us: "Happy are those who are persecuted in the cause of right ... Happy are you when people...speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account, your reward will be great in heaven" (Mt 5:10-11).

Faith will make them overcome scandal if, by the light of faith, in meditation, they consider well that the laws of God are not abolished by the infidelity of people, that the number of the elect is small, that the world has been cursed on account of scandal. Is there any bad example so universal that it cannot be resisted, if one believes with a faith of God, in the divine judgment, where the wicked are cast into hell by innumerable legions?

3. "The world as we know it is passing away" (1 Co. 7:21). "For what is thought highly of by men is loathsome in the sight of God" (Lk 16:15).

A God in a stable: a shield which faith opposes to the concupiscence of the eyes. Meditate these truths in the light of faith. Compare them with the applause that honors and riches give, and all the prestige of these latter disappears: you see but vanity and sin.

Woe to you that laugh, for one day you shall weep! You shall not be lustful, neither in deed nor in desire...A God scourged, crowned with thorns, pierced with nails: the shield which faith opposes to the concupiscence of the flesh. Arm yourself against this concupiscence by meditation, and all the pleasures of sense will become odious to you.

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled" (Lk 14:11). "God opposes the proud but he gives generously to the humble" (Js 4:6-1). "Every man that walks is only a shadow" (Ps 39:6). God whose self-definition is: "I am who Am" (Ex 3:14). No one else, to speak correctly, exists beside myself, that which is not myself is nothing. The shield which faith opposes to the pride of life. Who is the proud person who would not humble self once beginning to believe and meditate these truths by faith?

There is no kind of disorderly impulse of nature or of self-love to which faith does not oppose a shield to defend the mind and the will.

Let us then put on the armor of faith, the faith of God. It is with this weapon that we will conquer the devil, the world, and the flesh.

FURTHER READING ON FAITH

*The spirit of faith is richly developed in an essay written by Father Chaminade, probably in the early 1830's, entitled "Manual of Direction to the Religious Life and Virtues in the Society of Mary" (published in **Marianist Direction**, volume 3, paragraphs 422-426). This essay appears in "Notebook D." which is described later in this anthology.*

3. **MARY**

DOCUMENT 9: "Foundation of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin"

Marianist Writings: Vol. 1, nos. 67-89

Throughout his life Father Chaminade meditated on Mary and elaborated his own favorite ideas about her. Already in some of the earliest notes we have from him we find indications of these ideas.

The following texts, taken from one of the Founder's personal notebooks, are notes for conferences and instructions. These notes probably date from the first decade of the nineteenth century, when he was busy in Bordeaux founding and developing the Sodality. They include lengthy borrowings from several French spirit authors of the seventeenth century such as Bossuet and Lallemant.

FOUNDATIONS OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN (MW 1:67-73)

"For the foundation, nobody can lay any other than the one which has already been laid, that is, Jesus Christ" (1Co 3:11)

Jesus Christ is likewise the foundation on which I claim to base all our devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It is an unshakable foundation which the enemies of the glory of Mary would try in vain to weaken. Jesus Christ is today, tomorrow, and for all eternity; our devotion to Mary will be eternal.

What do the enemies of Mary's glory object to in our devotion? Is it that we exalt too highly the effects of this precious devotion? Or that we misunderstand its practice?

We will answer the first of these accusations in this first talk. Let us examine the motives on which this devotion is based.

These motives are almost innumerable. I can reduce them to two if I consider their foundation, which is Jesus Christ. These two motives are found in Mary's relation to the mysteries of the Incarnation and of the Redemption. They will be the matter of this first talk. The first relation makes Mary the Mother of the Christians and the Cooperator in their salvation; the second makes her the Redemptrix of the human race, without in the least doing injury to the value of the blood which Jesus Christ, her son, offered for our redemption.

First Point

“God, who is the almighty, has done great things for me” (Lk 1:49). How great is the vocation of Mary whom God predestined before all ages as the one through whom God would give Jesus Christ to the world! But notice – and this is the basis of the first part of this instruction – God does not use her for the accomplishment of this glorious mystery as a mere channel, but as a voluntary instrument which makes its contribution to this great work, not only through her excellent dispositions but likewise through an act of the will, namely, her love. God suspends the execution of the divine decrees until Mary has given her consent. O happy fiat! Perhaps you do not see as yet the motive which leads us to have constant recourse to Mary for all sorts of graces. Mary, through her love, cooperated in giving the world a Liberator; that is the principle. Here is the consequence: God having decided to give us Jesus Christ through the Blessed Virgin, no longer changes that decision, for God never revokes a choice (see Rm 11:29).

It is and will always remain true that, having once received from her the universal principle of grace, we shall also receive through her mediation its various applications in all the stages of the Christian life. Since her love contributed so much to our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the universal principle of grace, she will forever contribute to it in all the other operations which stem from it. Mother of the natural body of Jesus Christ, Mystical Body, Mother of Christ, Mother of Christians. “When Mary brought forth the Savior, there issued from her womb an abundance of grace that she arrived at a very close union with the author of grace, and merited to receive in her the One who is filled with all graces. In giving birth to him she, in some manner, caused this grace to flow onto all people” (St. Thomas Aquinas).

This grace of Jesus Christ has three operations: it calls us, it justifies us, and it gives us perseverance. The vocation launches the journey, justification sees to its continuation, etc. Mary’s charity is associated with these operations. The grace of vocation for sinners is symbolized in the sudden illumination of the precursor. Mary collaborates in it. Justification is portrayed in the wedding feast of Cana in the person of the apostles. Faith is its first principle, its root (see Jn 2:11; Rm 4-5). The beloved disciple is a figure of the persevering disciples. All men and women have been given to Mary as her children. Her fruitful love is the general instrument of the workings of grace. “Being the Mother of his members, she collaborated through her love in the birth of the faithful in the Church who are the members of Christ, their head; physically, however, she is the Mother of the Head himself” (St. Augustine). Her fruitful love becomes the general instrument of the divine operations.

Second Point

We have a rule for judging the sorrow, the compassion, and the other affections of the heart of Mary: her love. The very love of the eternal Father is the measure of hers. “God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16).

If we admire the love of Mary in the consent which she gave to the mystery of the Incarnation, how touching must it appear in the consent she gives to the accomplishment of the mystery of the Redemption!

Consider the many times that she gave this consent since the time when she had the joy of becoming a Mother. She renewed it in some way at every instant of her life. We see Mary's sorrow only during the time of the Passion, but we do not realize that the sacrifice of Calvary is for Mary, as for Jesus Christ, only the consummation of a sacrifice begun at the moment of the Incarnation. Indeed, in the mystery of the Purification, Simeon tells her that. Mary is not surprised.

Not only is Mary the Redemptrix of the world because she is the Mother of God; she is the cause of the salvation of the universe, for she provided the blood which was poured out for us on the cross; she formed the adorable body which served as ransom for the human race; she produced from the best part of herself the victim who was to appease an irate God, she nourished him and raised him. Mary, under this aspect, would be deserving of every merit, but we would not detect therein the voluntary instrument of our salvation...her consent to the Redemption. If the Divine Word required it before receiving a body from her, for all the more reason would he require it before giving up this body to death. Notice her submission to Simeon's prophecy at the foot of the cross. "She was to sacrifice her own Son." Let us apply the same reasoning to the mystery of the Redemption as to that of the Incarnation.

MOTHER OF THE CHURCH (MW 1:74-76)

In what way did Mary conceive us? It was through the operation of the Holy Spirit. It was in her super eminent being that this Virgin conceived us. It was in the fervor of her love that she communicated her being of grace to us, which itself is none other than a participation in Christ, so that all may be consummated in oneness. "Consummated in unity, with him who is the sole Christ" (St. Augustine).

The pastors of the Church, the confessors in particular, are called spiritual fathers because when they administer the sacraments, they truly communicate the being of grace, the life of the spirit. Now the whole spiritual being, this mystical body of Christ, this only Son of God, was conceived in Mary's being of grace at the foot of the cross. All the graces destined to form the members of this mystical body receive, as it were, new qualities from her maternal love. Consequently, all the elect will bear a striking resemblance, first to Jesus Christ, and then to his Mother Mary. We can say that the whole body of the elect, which is none other than the mystical body of Christ, was first conceived in Jesus Christ and then in Mary, because Jesus Christ wanted everything that transpired in him to take place also in his Mother, that she might participate in all the mysteries. It was to proclaim and to confirm this great mystery of the formation body of

the elect that Jesus said: "Woman, this is your son," and to the disciple: "This is your mother" (Jn 19:26-27).

The natural death of Jesus Christ was a mystical representation of the death of the "old man," and that is why the blood and water which flowed from the side of Christ represented the Church. Eve, formed from a rib of the sleeping Adam, was a figure of this profound mystery. Through the death of Jesus Christ, Mary had experienced death. The lance which pierced the side of her Son pierced her beautiful soul, displaying for us in herself the same mystery, the formation of the Church. We might say that she gave us birth.

FULL OF GRACE (MW 1:77-80)

"Rejoice so highly favored"! (Lk 1:28). "In me is all grace of the way and the truth, in me is all hope of life and virtue" (Si 24:25. Vulgate) "The only grace that comes from heaven is that which passes through the hands of Mary" (Gerson). "From his fullness we have, all of us, received" (Jn 1:16).

Mary, in becoming the Mother of Jesus Christ, gave the world the author and the source of all graces: not just as a mere channel which God made use of; it was an effect of her will. God made use of her love. Story of the mission of Gabriel. An eternal decree of the wisdom of God in respect to Mary which God shall never retract. "God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice" (Rm 11:29). Here is the reasoning: God, in the wisdom of divine counsel, predestined Mary from all eternity to be the Mother of the Savior of the world, to be the instrument of the Incarnation, which is the universal principle of grace. This choice is a gift of God and infinitely glorious for Mary. But the gifts of God are irrevocable, hence this choice will remain forever. All the graces received by men and women are merely applications or outcomes of the grace of the Incarnation. Theologians distinguish three kinds of grace: vocation, justification and perseverance. It is this grace of the Incarnation which makes Christians children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, heirs of heaven. There are, therefore, no just persons, no elect, whether on earth or in heaven who do not owe their justice and their glory to Mary. But since God had, so to say, subordinated the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation to the will, to the love of Mary, it is to the love of this incomparable Virgin that all owe...

"When Mary brought forth the Savior, there issued from her womb an abundance of holy fervor which first absorbed her and then inundated the whole world" (St. Ambrose).

"She received such an abundance of grace, that she arrived at a very close union with the author of grace, and merited to receive in her the One who is filled with all graces. In giving birth to him she, in some manner, caused this grace to flow onto all people" (St. Thomas Aquinas).

SERMON: MARY IS OUR MOTHER
(MW 1:81-87)

“Jesus said to his Mother, “Woman, this is your son! Then to the disciple he said, “This is your mother” (Jn 19:26-27). The Father associated Mary to the fruitfulness of his love, the Son associated her to the fruitfulness of his sufferings. She is our Mother 1) by her maternal love; 2) by the fruitful suffering which rent her soul on Calvary.

First Point

Jesus Christ made himself the Son of Adam in order to enable us to become the children of God his Father, (a double bond whereby he unites himself to us). Our Father becomes his and his Father becomes ours. “I am ascending to my Father and your Father” (Jn 20:17). By the same liberality, Jesus Christ gives us his divine Mother as our Mother so as to be our brother in every respect. Mary is united to the eternal Father in order to be the Mother of all the faithful. How? Through love. “According to the flesh, she is the mother of our Head; according to the spirit, she is the mother of his members, for she cooperated through her love in the birth of the children of God to be born in the Church” (St. Augustine). A double fruitfulness, one of nature, the other of love. “My children, I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again until Christ is formed in you” (Ga 4:19)/ All the qualities of motherhood are summed up in love. “Love is a mother, love is a nurse” (St. Augustine). “You should be hungry for nothing but milk”

(! P 2). The eternal Father is fruitful by nature, and fruitful by love; through the former he engenders his natural Son, through the latter he engenders his adopted children.

The natural fruitfulness whereby God engenders the Son is communicated in some way to Mary; her fecundity is the effect of God’s power. “The Almighty has done great things for me” (Lk 1:49). She had resigned herself to a blessed sterility; “How can this come about...the Holy Spirit will come upon you and cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy, and will be called the Son of God” (Lk 1:34-35).

The immense love of God who adopts us as children. God has a Son who is so perfect, yet God surrenders the Son to death in order to give life to God’s adopted children. “Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). Why was Mary called to Calvary, to this in human spectacle” Let us try to understand this great mystery. She had to be united with the Eternal Father so that, with one accord and for the salvation of sinners, they would offer up their common Son in this sacrifice. That is how she acquires her fruitfulness. “Woman, this is your son” (Jn 19:26). She is the Eve of the new covenant. What a sacrifice she made, what love! Would she give up her Son for us if she did not love us as her children? We should have a holy conformity with Jesus Christ so as to return him to Mary in ourselves. Let us renew in ourselves the life of this Son whom she lost for love of us. Although God returned him to her glorious, risen, immortal, and although she possesses him in glory, she does not cease to search for him in each one of us.

Second Point

The Son associates Mary in the fruitfulness of his sufferings. "She was pregnant and in labor, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth" (Rev 12:2). Mary brought forth Jesus Christ without pain since she had conceived him without stain. Sinners, however, are brought forth by this Mother amidst cries and torments. It was the will of the Savior of souls that her entire fruitfulness would consist in suffering. "Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain. But if it dies it yields a rich harvest" (Jn 12:24). All the mysteries of the Savior are a continual self-emptying. A force he manifests from the time he reaches his final humiliation. How inexpressible is this sacred correspondence which makes Mary feel all the sufferings of her Son!

It is in the midst of these extreme sufferings, it is in this desolation through which she enters into communion with the sufferings and the cross of Jesus, that her Son associates her with his blessed fruitfulness. "Woman, this is your son" (Jn 19:26). The faithful are therefore brought forth by Mary whose heart was torn by the violence of limitless affliction much like that of those unfortunate mothers whose children are torn from their wombs, and who die in order to bring them into the world.

"Never forget the birth pangs of your mother" (Si 7:29). The faithful dedicated to penance by the manner in which Jesus and Mary beget them...

THE BLESSED VIRGIN AS OUR MOTHER
(MW 1:88-89)

Jesus Christ, in the womb of Mary, disposed her through a profusion of graces to be the Mother of his mystical body, just as she was the Mother of his natural body. He willed that we receive through her the life of the spirit, just as he had received from her the life of the body. He wanted us to be dependent on her for the sustenance and growth of our spiritual life, just as he depended on her for the sustenance and growth of his corporal life. O happy dependence!

The Incarnate Word always retained the substance of the body which the Holy spirit had formed for him from the very pure blood of the Blessed Virgin at the moment of the incarnation. Whatever food with which he nourished himself in the manner of other men was added thereafter, was assimilated as in the rest of us. That is the opinion of Suarez. The Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Ignatius one day while he was at the altar, and told him that a portion of her substance was present there in the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus Christ in the blessed womb of Mary receives a life that is divinely human or theandric, as well as glorious. He likewise receives a life of influence in his mystical members whereby as their Head he communicates his grace to them. While receiving this life from Mary, he communicated to her in turn the capacity of becoming the Mother of Christians.

“Mother of pure love” (Si 24:24, Vulgate). You who love and praise so well, who are so well loved and praised, you who are the spouse of consubstantial love and the Mother of the divine Lamb, slain from the beginning...

DOCUMENT 10: Our Knowledge of Mary”

Manual of 1844, Chapters 5 & 6

(Marian Writings: nos. 479-503)

*During his lifetime, starting in 1801, Father Chaminade published seven editions of **That Manual of the Servant of Mary**, a handbook for members of the Sodality. The final edition (1844) was recast by Father Jean-Baptiste Fontaine, with the assistance of Father Narcisse Roussel, with a view to use by students in Marianist schools everywhere. Particularly significant is the entirely new long treatise on “Our Knowledge of Mary” at the beginning of the **Manual**.*

Even though this text is not from the Founder’s pen, his correspondence and the testimony of his contemporaries make it clear that it expresses his thought and mentality. As an expression from the last years of his life and ministry, it is a witness to his thought in a mature and developed form. The chapters reproduced here treat his favorite theme of the spiritual maternity of Mary.

Chapter Five

MARY, MOTHER OF CHRISTIANS

It will not suffice for us to know, as St. Bernard says, that Mary “has not been idle in the sublime work” of the redemption of the human race, and “that she has faithfully performed her part.” This knowledge merely establishes the fact. We must furthermore specify the nature and extent of Mary’s cooperation, and thereby verify specify the title of “Mother of Christians” given to the Blessed Virgin in the order of faith.

In order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the point in question, let us recall what has been said regarding that frightening moral and physical degradation that followed in the wake of original sin, regarding both our first parents and their posterity

By depriving us of grace, sin took supernatural life from us. By his death on the cross, our divine Savior gave back this life to us, and thus became the Father of our souls, according to the words of the prophecy of Isaias, who calls him “the Father of the world to come” (Is 9:6, Vulgate), that is, of Christianity and of all Christians..

"Now, then," says St. Alphonsus, "if Jesus is the Father of our souls, Mary is the Mother of our souls; for in giving us Jesus she gave us life." From which we must conclude that, in the order of faith, the Blessed Virgin Mary is in truth, for all people, what Eve is in the order of nature, and consequently that she is directly, and not simply by adoption, the Mother of our souls.

In fact, when Mary consented to the Incarnation of the Word, she evidently knew the work and plan of our redemption to its fullest extent, and as such she lovingly accepted it. She understood that in his natural as well as his mystical body. She could not separate him from what was to form on with him. And thus in giving her consent to the honor of divine maternity, she accepted the twofold distinction of being the Mother of Jesus Christ considered in the "fullness of him who fills the virginal womb in the order of nature, she also conceived spiritually in her soul, by her love and faith, all Christians as members of the Church, that is, of the mystical body of Christ.

This is the doctrine of St. Ambrose. Applying to Mary, as the Mother of God these remarkable words of the Song of Songs, "your belly is a heap of wheat" (Sg 7:3), he says formally: "In the most pure womb of Mary there is but one grain of wheat and yet it is called a 'heap of wheat' because all the elect were contained in that chosen grain of whom it would be said that he shall be the "firstborn among many brothers."

William of Newburgh, writing on this same subject, expressly teaches that "she who bore this one fruit became, by giving him life, the Mother of a great multitude. Mary, in giving birth to Jesus our Savior and our life, brought all of us forth to salvation and to life. "St. Bernardine of Siena says: "In giving her consent to the Incarnation of the Word, the Blessed Virgin contributed in the most powerful and efficacious manner to the work of our redemption. By the fact of her consent, she devoted herself to the salvation of the human race to such an extent that, from that time forward, she carried all men and women in her bosom as her children, in virtue of her most true motherhood.

We could multiply testimonies, if that were necessary, and could cite the most respectable names, such as Blessed Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Anselm, and St. Alphonsus. However, what little has been said will suffice to prove what we have claimed concerning the maternity of Mary. We shall merely add that the Holy Spirit, coming to the aid of our weakness, has deigned to give us more convincing proof of the matter. In the Glories of Mary by St. Alphonsus, we read these remarkable words: "St. Luke, in his Gospel narrative of the birth of Christ, says that Mary brought forth her firstborn Son. And why firstborn? Since it is of faith that the Blessed Virgin had no other son than the God-Man, that expression must refer to her spiritual sons. This explanation is so true that our Lord Jesus Christ deigned to give it to St. Gertrude. As that saint was one day meditating on this text of the Gospel, she was troubled, not knowing how St. Luke could say of Jesus, the only son of Mary, that he was her firstborn. God came to the aid of his humble servant and cleared her doubts by telling her that Jesus Christ was the firstborn of the Virgin because all men and women were her other children according to the spirit."

From what precedes we must conclude that Mary is our Mother not merely by adoption, but also, and above all, by spiritual regeneration. It follows likewise that she became our Mother when she conceived the Son of God. The Incarnation, therefore considered in its necessary consequence, is the fruit of the divine espousal of the Holy Spirit and the august Virgin. It is a spiritual yet fruitful espousal that gave life in the natural order to her son, Jesus Christ, and produced in the spiritual order, that is by faith, the regeneration of the human race. We do not belong to Mary merely from the time that our Savior confided us to her love. On Mount Calvary, it is true, the price of our redemption was paid to divine justice. That was the consummation of our redemption. On the cross, Jesus merited for us the grace of adoption and of glory. On Calvary, Mary, in whose womb we were spiritually conceived since the Incarnation, brought us forth to the life of faith. But it was not only then that she first became our Mother.

If we were her children only since Calvary, the words of our divine Savior: "Woman, this is your son," would have constituted merely an adoption in a more or less strict sense. In this case, however, how are we to understand the words of St. Luke, "her firstborn son?" Why should he say "firstborn" if Jesus alone was born? Jesus would indeed be the only one born if we were merely adopted children, for adopted children are not children by birth. How then could the Blessed Virgin, strictly speaking, fulfill the functions of the New Eve in our regard? Besides, the relation established between the Blessed Virgin and ourselves by mere adoption would not suffice to satisfy all our needs. We must have a mother, a true and real mother in the order of faith as in the order of nature. In the one as in the other, an adopted mother cannot replace a real mother.

By those remarkable words "Woman, this is your son," Jesus dying on the cross revealed to the world a truth that is most important for our salvation. He reserved this revelation for the supreme moment of his life, to give it all the sacredness of the last will and testament of a God. And may we not be justified in saying that it was the divine intention not to reveal the maternity of Mary until the day when she, at the foot of the cross, should show herself our Mother by sacrificing, for our salvation, the God-Man, her firstborn Son?

This, it seems to us, is the meaning and the importance of the beautiful words of Jesus. In saying to the beloved disciple, "This is your Mother," he wished to say, "Behold her who bore you spiritually to the faith when she conceived me corporally in her virginal womb. She is your Mother as she is mine, not indeed in the same manner, ye by the right of generation."

Thus also by these words addressed to Mary, "Woman, this is your son," he seems to say, "You are the New Eve. See now your firstborn son, his mission being accomplished, returning to his Father, but this son of your faith and my love has not yet fulfilled his mission. August Woman, Spouse of your firstborn in the work of regeneration, behold I confide him to you!"

We are, then, in very truth, the children of Mary. We belong to her as a child belongs to its mother. In her and through her, Jesus Christ, in communicating his life to us, has made us partakers of his nature, so that we are born spiritually of Mary in consequence of her ineffable union with Jesus Christ, the Father of our souls.

Without trying to plumb the depths of this mystery, let us suffice for us to know that when the Word of God in the womb of the holy Virgin emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, Mary conceived Jesus in her soul by faith, in such a way as to become another Christ. Bring then associated in all his thoughts and all his sentiments, she knew herself to be the New Eve and gave herself totally to the divine work of her Son, who willed to engender us spiritually in her and with her.

After all, our birth to the supernatural life through Mary is an unspeakable mystery like that of the eternal generation of the Word by the Father, and that of the Savior's birth in time by the Holy Virgin Mother.

While meditating on these sublime truths, let us rejoice at the happiness that is ours, and let us gratefully admire the depths of the treasures of the divine wisdom and mercy.

Chapter Six

MARY FULFILLS ALL THE DUTIES OF A MOTHER TOWARD US

One of the earliest Doctors of the Church has truly said: "There is no father like God." May we not borrow his words and say of the august Virgin Mary that there is no mother like Mary? Who can tell the love she has for us, her children? Who could even imagine the extent of her love? St. Bonaventure, wishing to show the greatness of Mary's love, does not hesitate to apply to the Blessed Virgin what the Evangelist says of God, that she "loved the word so much that (she) gave (her) only Son." In fact, the sacrifice of a son by any mother, the sacrifice of such a Son by such a Mother, a sacrifice for the sake of enemies and of ungrateful persons, a useless sacrifice for many considering their perversity, a painful sacrifice involving a most shameful death, and finally a sacrifice not merely submitted to with resignation, but in which love actually participated – such a sacrifice, indeed, is a masterpiece of grace and a triumph of love on the part of the Mother of God.

However, the sublime words of the holy Doctor seem inadequate to give us her Son unconditionally and absolutely, not for a time, but, for all times, and, not satisfied to have given him once, she gives him as often as we ask for him, as often in fact as we lose him by sin. Truly we must say that she gives him to us at every moment, "filling us with her fruits" (see Si 24:26), when communicating to us the graces he merited for us by his death. Having shown us how to live our lives according to this divine Model of the elect, she constrains him as it were, by the power of her intercession, to come to us and to show us mercy. Behold, to what extent Mary loves us!

The first duty of a mother is to nourish her child, as her first natural impulse is to love it. Mary did not wish to withdraw from this sacred obligation. As the Mother of life and of grace, she has given us life, and daily supplies our souls with the graces that must nourish maturity; for it is from her goodness that we receive all the help we need for our salvation. It is true that Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency comes, could alone merit these graces by his

death. As our Father, he has abundantly provided all that was necessary for the life of our souls, for its growth in strength, for the cure of all its ills, for the development of faith and of every virtue. But as he does not intend to exercise the rights that pertain to maternity, he has placed the treasury of graces procured by his blood into the hands of Mary, who as the Mother of a great family, distributes them according to our needs, our circumstances, and our fidelity. Thus, nothing comes to us from heaven except through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin. She is the channel that receives and transmits to us the beneficent waters of divine grace. "For," says St. Bernard, "she was given to the world in order that, through her, the gifts of heaven might be transmitted from God to us, Jesus Christ wishes to put into the hands of his Mother the price of his merits, in order that we should receive from her every gift that we could possess."

From the cradle to the grave, from childhood to old age, in joy and in sorrow, Christians owe everything to Mary. They receive through her maternal kindness the grace of baptism and of a religious education, the grace of conversion or of perseverance, the grace of strength and courage in struggle, the grace of protection and defense in temptations, the grace of refuge and consolation in misfortune, the grace of counsel and of wisdom in the choice of a state of life and in the transaction of business affairs, the grace to do good and to avoid evil—in a word, all that they need to sustain or to restore within them the life of Jesus Christ. If the illusions of nature and of the senses obscure the vivid light of faith in the soul; if the taste for spiritual things is blunted; if the Bread of Life, practices of piety and religious exercises stir up in us only disgust; if the wind of tribulation blows; if misfortune pours out its cup of bitterness. Mary is present. She is watching over us with maternal care, making herself all to all, and apportioning her help according to our needs. She is the strength of the weak, the foot of the lame, the eye of the blind, the ear of the deaf. She enriches the poor, protects the timid, disarms the angry, touches the heart of the ungrateful, and never abandons anyone. Virtue, it is true, is what pleases her; yet the sinner finds in her a shelter and a refuge against the wrath of heaven.

Our heavenly Mother is not content, however, to exercise the general care, though nothing escapes her watchful eye, and all share alike in the loving tenderness which she extends to each of us as if we alone were the object of her love. She would go further, and give us unmistakable proofs of her foreseeing and eager love. Knowing well our human weakness, she is aware that for many it is not good to wander alone and isolated along the pathway of life, and for this reason she causes her pious associations to be multiplied on all sides, extending over them and their members her most powerful protection. In this way she provides for those of her children who have understood the loving designs of her tenderness, the twofold advantage of receiving a great abundance of graces and of mutually assisting one another by the influence of their example, by emulation in the practice of virtue, and by the gentle persuasion of saintly fellowship.

Mary does not limit her maternal care to the preservation and maintenance of the life of grace within us, which through her we have received from Jesus Christ; for, she is at the same time constantly engaged in making us more and more conformable to Jesus, our divine Model.

Even though we are called by the grace of our regeneration to the glory of resemblance, we shall not be saved, as St. Paul says, except insofar as the Father finds us conformable to the image of Jesus Christ. What a sublime vocation! Yet, our own personal means of attaining it are utterly inadequate, so that it might appear as though our salvation would depend upon something impossible. To assert this would in truth be blasphemous, as it cannot be so, for Jesus is with us. If he has made himself our model to show us the way that leads to eternal life, he has also become the food of our souls, whereby we are made partakers of his infinite power, so that we may walk in his footsteps. By faith he is within us, to pray and to act with us. Besides, because Mary is our Mother, he has confided to her the care of directing our Christian education as she directed him in the days of his childhood, and of raising us to the sublimity of our holy calling.

When Rebecca (see Gn 27), the mother of Jacob, wished to obtain for him the blessing from the aging Isaac, she clothes her favorite son in the garments of Esau. In like manner, Mary is unceasingly striving to clothe us in the semblance of Jesus Christ by endeavoring to inculcate into our hearts the thoughts and sentiments of Jesus, and to bring us to a realization of our title as Christians, that is, as disciples and imitators of Jesus Christ.

To accomplish this desirable end, Mary employs two principal means. The first of these is her gentle and powerful example. Indeed, her very life is a sermon, simple, eloquent, and well within the understanding of all. In this she is, after the sacred humanity of our Savior, the greatest gift of God to people.

Discouragement and despair would have easily overcome our weakness and our faintheartedness, if the Divine Model had not presented to us the actual proof of the possibility of his imitation. That proof was Mary. For, in very truth, she is the faithful copy of her Son, having reproduced all his virtues and all his sentiments. In her we see a mere creature attaining the divine resemblances. Like ourselves she is a child of Adam, exempt, it is true, from original sin and its deplorable consequences, and, although more privileged and more perfect, she is of the same nature as we are. If she, therefore, being a mere creature, has been able to attain the resemblance of her sublime excellence, we can likewise do so in a measure proportionate to our weakness, provided we desire to be faithful to our calling.

Thus Mary is presented to us as the copy of the divine Exemplar, a copy that we must endeavor to reproduce in ourselves. It follows, furthermore, that only those will be saved who imitate Mary in that measure of perfection which has been marked out for them by divine justice. We can thus readily conceive that the imitation of Jesus Christ becomes easy for people of good will, since it is by walking in the footsteps of Mary that we shall realize in ourselves the likeness of our Savior.

The second principal means, that our heavenly Mother makes use of to lead us to the imitation of the life of Jesus Christ is her mediation. The Church, the Fathers, Catholic tradition – all urge us to look up to Mary as our Advocate and Mediatrix. The Church has always applied to Jesus the example of the great King Solomon (see 1K2:19ff) who, in the days of his glory and his wisdom, entrusted to his mother the exercise of his royal authority. Likewise, throughout the centuries, Christians have always regarded Mary as their queen,

their helper in every need, their life and their hope. One circumstance, however, which is perhaps not sufficiently recognized and to which it may be well to call attention, is that her mediation is necessary for salvation; not indeed to the same extent, nor with the same rightful claim as the mediation of Jesus Christ, yet in a very real way and in consequence of the designs of Providence.

DOCUMENT 11: "Alliance with Mary" – Retreat of 1817 and 1819

(Marian Writings: Vol. 2 nos. 739-742, 751-753)

During a retreat preached by Father Chaminade in 1817, the first members of the Society of Mary prepared for the foundation. The fourth meditation of this retreat treated the alliance of God with people in general and with Jesus Christ in particular. This gave the biblical foundations for the fifth meditation which, with proper analogy, applied these principles to our "alliance" or covenant with Mary. This is one of the first expressions of the Founder's characteristic way of using biblical viewpoints to present religious life.

Two years later the annual retreat was entirely devoted to the religious state, considered as "a most intimate alliance with God." Marianist religious life adding the aspect of an alliance with Mary. Thirteen religious participated in this retreat and took vows at the end of it.

The notes from both retreats reproduced here were taken by Father Lalanne.

THE RETREAT OF 1817

(MW 2:739-742)

Fifth Meditation (Lalanne notes)

"You have today made this declaration about Yahweh: that he will be your God...and Yahweh has today made this declaration about you: that you will be his very own people" (t 26:17-18)

Moses spoke these words to the Israelites after they had been consecrated to the Lord. We say them in the same sense to the children of Mary; in other words, "You have chosen Mary, the Queen, as your Mothers; Mary has chosen you as her family in a very special way."

This particular and close alliance with the Blessed Virgin is one of the special characteristics of the Society of Mary. In it we find, as we have found in our alliance with God, choice, commitment and society which constitute a perfect alliance.

1. Choice. We have chosen Mary, as we well know, and it has been our heart's intention to choose her for Mother; but are we just as sure that on her part the Blessed Virgin Mary has chosen us, to have in us a very special family? This is in no way less certain. We would not have chosen Mary, if she had not first chosen us. It is not through any power of our own that we have come this far, it is by a secret guidance power of our own that we have come this far; it is by a secret guidance of Providence, which has directed this movement, and has done so usually without our being aware of it. Providence has inspired in us this confident hope that we can have as Mother the Queen of the world. We do not doubt that it is the grace of God acting, and this grace, like every other, comes from Mary. For it is a certainty that Mary is, as it were, a channel through which all the graces of God come to us. From her love for us have flowed those graces which have drawn us to her. It is Mary, therefore, who has chosen us; it is she who has called us.

2. Commitment. To what do we commit ourselves? To honor her with all our power, to spread her devotion; to instill confidence and devotion to her on all sides. We must not fear that the glory of God will be in any way diminished by this or that we will provoke a holy jealousy on God's part. Jesus loves his Mother tenderly, and there is nothing we can do more agreeable to him than to love and honor her as he himself has done.

On her part, to what has Mary committed herself? To protect us, to hear our prayers, to cherish us just as a mother cherishes her dearest children.

3. Society. If Mary enters into possession of our heart and of all our talents by the offering that we make of ourselves to her, she also makes us enter into possession of her tender care, of her merit with God and of her power. We acquire a kind of right over her for ourselves and for others, every time we want to obtain something that is in the order of the wisdom and goodness of God.

RETREAT OF 1819

(MW 2: 751-753)

Twelfth Meditation (Lalanne notes)

"You have today made this declaration about Yahweh,; that his will be your God... and Yahweh h as today made this declaration about you: that you will be his very own people" (Dt 26:17-18).

The words just quoted are those which Moses spoke to the people of Israel in reference to the alliance which God had made with them. One could say the very same to us. But if we are in an alliance with God, are we not also in an alliance with Mary? And why should we not

apply these words to this alliance: "You are making this agreement with Mary; you are to be a family peculiarly her own."

Let us consider this alliance in the choice, the commitment, and the society which constitutes it, whether on our part or on the part of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

First Point: on our part

1..We have chosen Mary for Mothers; could we have made a more reasonable choice, or one that is better founded? Could we possibly have chosen a more powerful mother, a more tender mother, a mother more truly mother?

2. We have made a commitment to Mary; what is its nature? We have bound ourselves to all that a child ought to feel and do for a good mother: Love her, respect her, obey her and give her assistance. Most of all we have bound ourselves to this last effect of filial love, assistance and active good will; we have bound ourselves to make known the name of Mary and to cause it to be held in honor everywhere.

3. We enter into close association with Mary, that is to say, we acquire rights to her merits, to her prayers, to her protection, to her glory, and to everything she has received from the limitless bounty of her Son.

Second Point: Mary forms an alliance with us.

1. She has chosen us over so many others, that we might be her family and her cherished children. How have we merited this?
2. She takes upon herself obligations in our regard. What obligations? Those of a mother, to love us, to help us in all our needs, to defend us.

Third Point: We enter into a life of close association with Mary, that is to say, we share with her all our goods. All our powers are in Mary's command; we have given ourselves to Mary with all our possessions and all the faculties of our being. May she do with us whatever she pleases, for the greatest glory of her Son.

FURTHER READING ON MARY

*The doctrine of Mary's spiritual maternity is a key focus of Father Chaminade's Marian theology. This doctrine is developed already in a set of sermon notes probably written in the early days of the Bordeaux Sodality. These notes include a commentary on the foundational Marianist scriptural text, John 19, 25-27. They are published in the **Marian Writings**, vol. 1, paragraphs 531-543.*

4. **THE CHURCH, BODY OF CHRIST**

Documents 12-13: Letters to a master of novices” – 1835-1836

In 1835 Father Chaminade, visiting Franche-Comté and Alsace, established a new novitiate at Ebermuenster and appointed a young newly professed priest, Father Metzger, as novice-master. From St. Remy the Founder wrote the new novice-master ten lengthy letters of guidance in his task. These letters provide a synthesis of the Founder's mature ideas about religious formation.

We reproduce here the sixth and seventh letters, which treat the doctrines central in Father Chaminade's thought, of the Mystical Body of Christ, the headship of Christ, and the union of all the members. These letters incorporate lengthy borrowings from seventeenth and eighteenth-century French spiritual writers, but it is clear that the Founder has made their thought fully his own.

The text is taken from a notebook in which Father Chevaux copied these letters.

DOCUMENT 12: Sixth Letter to a Master of Novices

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 3, nos. 149-170)

My esteemed son, I feel a great satisfaction in having to speak to you about Our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, however, I shall speak of him in only one connection: I hope to have occasion to speak of him again at more length in accord with the object of our present correspondence.

“You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ...Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Co 6:15,19)

The body is destined only to serve Jesus Christ to whom it belongs. Jesus Christ is the head of our bodies. Our bodies are members of Jesus Christ: and this relation of head to members, and of members to head, will be eternal. Our bodies then should serve Jesus Christ eternally, in a manner worthy of him, that is, in holiness and chastity. All impurity ought to appear horrible to the Christian: “it should not even be spoken of” (Ep 5:3). All that is contrary to the most exact modesty dishonors the religious.

But how are we members of Jesus Christ?

To understand this let us distinguish with the Fathers and theologians two bodies in Jesus Christ, a natural body and a mystical body. He was clothed with the former in the womb of the august Mary but he has formed the latter of all the faithful. Through the worthy reception of his natural body, we become members of his mystical body in a manner more excellent than through any other sacrament The mystical body of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas declares, is

the Church. Jesus Christ is its head, all the faithful in the state of grace are its members. It is by Holy Communion that we are incorporated into it. Saint Paul says expressly that all the faithful, after they have been nourished with the same bread, constitute from then on only one and the same body: "We form one singly body because we all have a share in this one oar" (1 Co 10:17).

Spiritual union is a natural consequence of bodily union; for since we are only one body with Jesus Christ, it is obvious that we should be animated with his spirit, the Holy spirit. Here is how St. Cyril of Alexandria explains this mystery: "The communication of the Holy Spirit began with Jesus Christ. It is he who received the Spirit first; for, although he was God by nature, we realize that since he was a man like us, he received anointing and sanctification from the Holy Spirit. But he himself has sanctified all creatures capable of sanctification. The mystery of Jesus Christ is then the beginning and the channel by which, in receiving a sharing in the Holy Spirit, we are united to God and sanctified." But it is especially through Holy Communion that the Savior makes his Spirit reign in our hearts. For just as our souls begin to vivify the food we have eaten from the moment it is united to our body, so the spirit which animates the humanity of our Savior begins to animate us as soon as, through Holy Communion, we become his members. And just as the animal spirits spread from the head throughout the natural body to give it movement and life, so, in the mystical body of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit descends from the Head to all the faithful who are his members in order to communicate a divine life to them.

The Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation.

My esteemed son, in proportion as your candidates delight more in these beautiful truths, their faith in the presence of Jesus Christ within themselves will increase. They will conceive a great respect for their bodies, as members of Jesus Christ, and will be full of consideration for one another. And what modesty! But do not be surprised if they fail to grasp well this great truth of our incorporation of Jesus Christ. As they increase in faith and learn better the design of it, especially in the explanation of the sacraments, above all Baptism and the Eucharist.

Baptism and Penance tear us away from the body of the devil and make us enter the body of Jesus Christ, so that we become in soul and body, members of Jesus Christ. The other sacraments increase and perfect this union. Especially the sacrament of the altar, in which we partake of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, and through both, of his soul and divinity. This sacrament effects a completely divine fusion of Jesus Christ with us.

Before or after this, my esteemed son, explain well to them how Jesus Christ is the Head of Christians. Saint Paul returns to this topic so frequently in his Epistles! Here is how he speaks of it to the Ephesians: "God the Father has put everything under the dominion of Jesus Christ, and made him the supreme head of his Church, which is the mystical body and his completion through the members which it continually gives him, as he is the completion of his Church through his continual influence in all the members who are faithful" (Ep 1:22).

Jesus Christ is called the Head of his Church, because: 1) As the head holds the first place in the body, so Jesus Christ holds the first place in his mystical body. In him reside the spirit and the soul that give life to the entire body; from him all the members receive life and holiness. 2) As the head is very closely united to the body, so Jesus Christ is united to the body of his Church, so closely that he can never be separated from it. All bodies and all societies which do not have Jesus Christ for Head are not his body, because he is not united to them and does not govern them by the influence of his Spirit. But what is it that forms this intimate and ineffable union between Jesus Christ and his members?

1) This great union is formed by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus Christ received in all fullness and whom he communicates to all his members in the proper measure. This Spirit is the soul of this great body. Giving it movement and life. There are not two spirits in this body: the Spirit who is in the Head is also in the body, and in each member in particular (Ep 4:4). There is only one spirit,” says St. Paul “as there is only one body; and we have all been baptized in the same Spirit, so that we may be all together only one same body, whether Jew or Gentile, whether slave or free; and we have all drunk the blood of Jesus Christ, so that we may all be one same Spirit:” (1 Co 12:13). But let us say something greater yet. As the Holy Spirit is a spirit of union, the substantial charity of the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity, uniting the divine Persons to one another, so this Holy Spirit spread from the Head in the members, unites the faithful to Jesus Christ, so that they make with him only one body and only one man, and so that they have all together only one heart and one soul.

2) This great union is formed by the sacraments, which are the veins and channels that carry the blood, spirit, and life of Jesus Christ into each members, enabling each to perform their particular function. This is the doctrine of the great Apostle, and he expresses it as follows: “Jesus Christ is the head from whom the entire body – whose members are united and bound together by mutual bonds (the whole being united and, so to speak, sealed together by the various ministers who dispense graces to the members through the sacraments) – receives its growth through the secret influence of this head, who provides for each member according to its proper capacity, so that the whole body may be formed and perfected through charity.” “Christ who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its functions. So the body grows until it has built itself up, in love.” (Ep 4:15:16).

3) We should also say that this union is formed by faith, hope, and charity, and by the word of God. We receive these virtues from Jesus Christ; he gives them to us so that we may go to him, so that we may dwell in him and he may dwell in us.

My esteemed son, we can see nothing more admirable, nothing holier than the result and consequences of the union that exists between Jesus Christ and his mystical body. I suggest that you present them well to your candidates: I shall outline them for you with precision.

1) If we are united to Jesus Christ as members to their Head, then we make only one man with him: for the life of the members ought to be the same as that of the Head.

2) Since all the members only make one man with Jesus Christ, it follows that everything that is said of the Head can be said of the members: so that with him we are priests, victims and kings, and with him we make only one Son of God.

3) All the members participate in all the goods and all the advantages which the Head possesses, in his merits, in his sufferings, in his humiliations, and in his glory. I have given you, Jesus Christ told us, all that my Father has given me. He communicates, he shares with all his members all that he has received from his Father, that is, his divinity and his humanity.

4) It also follows from this great principle that the good and the evil which is done to the least of his members is done to him, as he will declare on the last day: "In truth, I tell you, as often as you have fulfilled the duties of charity for the least of my brethren, you have fulfilled them for me; and as often as you have refused them, you have refused them to me" (Mt 25: 40-45). "Saul, Saul, who do you persecute me" (Ac 9:4).

5) Again, we can conclude that, since Jesus Christ the Head is intimately united to all his members, it is he who, in them and with them, does all the good that they do; it is he who prays, who is sad, who acts in them, who enables them to merit, and who renders them worthy of glory.

6) The unity of the Spirit who rules this body brings it about that all the supernatural gifts and all the other spiritual goods which are confided to this body become common to all the members; and although all do not have the same functions, they all act in everything for the common advantage of this body and participate in everything that happens to it (see 1 Co 12). All members perform their functions both for themselves and for the entire body. To have part in the good in each member, it suffices that we regard it without envy and love it.

7) It also follows from this admirable union that, since the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ are one through the Holy Spirit and through the charity that unites them, there exists a holy exchange of prayers, good works, and merits among the members of this body. This is because charity, which does not seek its own, makes all the good done by all the just profitable to all who are united to the body through the Holy Spirit. It likewise follows that there is a sharing of spiritual goods among the saints who are in heaven, those who are still on earth, and those who are in purgatory. The saints take up our interests in the presence of God by their prayers, and we honor them by our praise. We pray for those who are in purgatory and God frequently listens to our prayers to comfort them in their sufferings.

8) The fellowship and union that exists among the members of Jesus Christ is so great that there is among them not only a sharing in the merits of Jesus Christ (from whom, as Head, come all the good and all the merit which is found in the whole body) but we even participate in the merits of the just who exist now and who have existed since the beginning of the world, so that their abundance may make up for all that is now being done and all that has ever been done in the Church, and he says with the prophet: "I have

part in the goods of all those who fear God and keep his commandments" (Ps 118.63, Volgate).

9) It likewise follows from this same union that all the members of this body participate in the merits of the other members only in proportion to their faith, charity, and union with Jesus Christ. The case is the same as that of a corporation in which great profits are made; those who have invested more in the corporation receive more abundant dividends. Now Jesus Christ, who is the Head, the bond and the master of this Spiritual Corporation distributes its good and profits according to the merits of each member. But these merits and profits are gifts of Jesus Christ, drawing their power and value only from his death and his other mysteries. In this corporation, all consists in being united to the Head. "Just as the branch cannot bear fruit if it does not remain connected to the vine-stock, so, if we are not bound to Jesus Christ, if he does not remain in us and we do not remain in him, we cannot bear any fruit" (Jn 15:4), nor have any merit for good works. All our happiness consists in being united to Jesus Christ by a firm faith and a constant charity, and in living in such a manner that nothing is capable of separating us from Jesus Christ.

Almost all that I have said in this sixth letter, my esteemed son, is taken from two works: Devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Eucharist by Father Vaubert, and The Knowledge of Jesus Christ, the author of which wished to remain anonymous.

You should certainly use the knowledge of these truths to inspire in your candidates a continually increasing modesty, a growing reserve in regard to their own bodies, an ever greater consideration for one another; but it will also be good to develop further what we said at the beginning of our correspondence about the mediation of Jesus Christ. How indeed would he be our mediator of religion, if he were not our Head? But if he is Head of this mystical body, if we are really his members, what consequences! If there is only one Son of God, if there is only one Jesus Christ, living and beloved by the eternal Father, from whom the Father wishes to receive homage throughout time and eternity! What a place the most Holy Virgin holds in this mystical body of Jesus Christ!

What will become of those who will not have been incorporated into Jesus Christ, or who will not have remained united to him as members living by his life?

DOCUMENT 13: Seventh Letter to a Master of Novices

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 13, nos. 171-180)

In beginning this letter, my esteemed son, I return to point no.9 about the necessity of our union with Jesus Christ, which ended my last letter. Christians are as truly united to the mystical body of Jesus Christ as branches or shoots are united to the vine-stock. It is Jesus Christ himself who makes this comparison: "I am the vine, you are the branches, whoever

remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Two immediate consequences follow:

1) Without this union the branches cannot bear fruit, anyone who has lost the faith of the Church boasts in vain of good works; separated from Jesus Christ, it is impossible for one to bear any fruit of supernatural goodness, any fruit worthy of God. All that one does is always vitiated by the state of indolence, pride, and rebellion in which one persists. Neither can the sinner who has faith without having grace do anything meritorious for eternal life. All the time the sinner spends in this deadly separation is time lost for heaven. To this essential union, of which Jesus Christ speaks here, let us add the union which we have with Jesus by interior recollection. A dissipated soul bears little fruit in comparison with a soul united to God by recollection! How many good actions (holy, if we consider only the exterior) are vitiated by a defect in intentions, diligence, attention, exactitude – the unhappy fruits of the dissipation in which we live!

2) By means of this union, the branches bear much fruit. We remain in Jesus and we prevail upon Jesus to remain in us by maintaining our hearts in faith, in grace, in recollection. Admirable union, divine union of Christians, and especially the union of religious with Jesus Christ! They make with him only one and the same body, one and the same vine. Jesus is the vine stock, we are his branches; from this divine stock grace circulates in us like a wonderful sap, provides our nourishment, our growth, our productivity. What an abundance of fruit has been borne by the apostles, the martyrs, the saints, the true religious, the fervent Christians!

There are various kinds of branches: 1) The branches that are separated from the vine-stock. Anyone who does not remain in me will be cast out as a useless branch and will dry up and be gathered and cast into the fire, and they will burn. Consider well these five curses. 2) The branches which remain united to the vine-stock. "If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, you will ask all that you wish and it will be granted to you. The glory of my Father is that you yield much fruit and become my true disciples" (Jn 15:7-8). Consider the magnificence of these promises.

What a multitude of people have the misfortune to be outside the body of Jesus Christ, and to be rather in the body of the devil! They have for head and prince the master of the evil spirits who are scattered about in the air and exercise their dominion over the unfaithful. "Obeying the ruler who governs the air, the spirit who is at work in the rebellious" (Ep2:2).

On the last day, all men and women will be distributed into two great bodies. Those who have lived and died in sin, even if they were of the visible body of Jesus Christ, will have the devil at their head. He will appear before Jesus Christ with the great crowd of the reprobate. On the other side, we will see Jesus Christ with all the elect who form his Mystical Body. Then these two great bodies will be complete; all will be accomplished; there will be nothing left to do; all will take the place due to them. The body of the reprobate will be thrown down into the depths of the abyss, with the devil, its head. All the members of the body of Jesus Christ, joined to their Head, will be raised with him in heaven to glorify God eternally. This great day

will be the day of the entire and perfect resurrection and ascension of the whole Jesus Christ; the fulfillment and consummation of God in regard to the elect.

My esteemed son, you can point out the beauty of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ and hold it up for admiration as you judge fitting. These details can provide excellent moral reflections, which could not be placed so well elsewhere. The 12th Chapter of the 1st Epistle of St. Paul (to the Corinthians) gives you some as a model.

The beauty of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ consists:

- 1) In the just proportion which exists among the members who compose it, and in the natural order in which each one is ranked – features which are evident in the natural body. In order that there be no schism or division in the body, God has willed that each one remain in his or her place, in peace and without envy.
- 2) In the difference of functions for each member; what deformity do those bring to this beautiful body, who, intended to be feet, wish to perform the functions of the hands! Can they expect to be moved by the Holy Spirit who gives life to the entire body?
- 3) Its beauty consists above all in the holiness of the Head who governs it, of the spirit who animates it, of the sharing of good things and bad things between the members and the Head. As beautiful as this body is, it does not yet have its entire integrity or perfection.

My esteemed son, you must insist particularly on the three principal duties which we owe to Jesus Christ, our Head: 1) The duty of a continual dependence on this divine Head, so that in all our conduct we submit only to the movements and impressions of his spirit, so that we desire and do nothing except according to his holy will. 2) The duty of making frequent interior acts to maintain this union, and of growing used to praying, acting and suffering with those of Jesus Christ. 3) The duty of doing and suffering everything in order to maintain union among all the members and in order never to break it.

This duty ought to extend to maintaining union among all the members of the Society of Mary and especially among members of the same community.

The principal Member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ himself; as its head' but after him the most Holy Virgin holds the first and most essential place. Several Fathers and holy Doctors of the Church have attributed to her the place of neck in this august Body. The reason can easily be seen, if we reflect a little on the necessity of this member in the natural body. Nevertheless, we should not imagine, according to the remark of the great Bossuet, that the Virgin is only a simple channel, through whom all graces and the very mystery of the Incarnation, and consequently all the graces of which the fullness is in Jesus Christ our Head. Mary is the source of this fullness, in order to transmit it to us as our Mother. It is in this sense that the Archangel salutes her as full of grace, and that sacred scholars apply to her the text of St. John: 'from his fullness we have all of us received' (Jn 1:16)

My esteemed son, if your candidates arrive at an understanding and delight in these truths, they will easily sense why the Church applies to the Holy Virgin what the sacred writers say about wisdom, and the little I have said about it in the *Manual of the Servant of Mary*, p.217 (1828 ed.); they will not be surprised when, later, you speak to them of union with the most Holy Virgin. This would be a good place to speak to you of the presence and indwelling of Jesus Christ in us and, as a consequence, of the interior life but I shall make this the subject of another letter.

III. The Spiritual Life

1. *Direction: Principles and methods*

DOCUMENT 14: "Direction of the Society of Mary"-1828-1839

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 2, nos. 1230-1234)

One of Father Chaminade's most original contributions was his teaching on the stages of spiritual growth through virtues of preparation, purification, and consummation. This spiritual growth aimed at the most perfect conformity possible with Jesus Christ. Fr. Chaminade's entire method is determined by this conformity with Christ. Writings by the Founder and his early disciples on this method of direction are particularly numerous; it seems that many of the Brothers copied one or the other presentation of this original teaching in their personal notebooks during the novitiate or during annual retreats.

The following brief outline of the stages of spiritual growth was composed by Father Chaminade himself and probably intended as an outline of the "Manual of Marianist Direction," never completed, which preoccupied him in his final years. As it stands, this brief work is the best and most characteristic summary left by the Founder on the direction proper to the Society of Mary.

DIRECTION OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY (or First Draft of the Exercises which precede)

Virtues of Preparation

First virtue: *Silence*.

1. Exterior silence of words and signs.
2. Interior silence of the mind, the imagination, and the passions.

Second virtue: *Recollection*.

1. In prayer.
2. During reading.
3. At work, at table, at recreations, etc.

Third virtue: *Obedience*.

1. Prompt.
2. Entire.
3. Blind and mute.

Fourth virtue: *Support of mortifications*.

1. Interior sufferings.
2. Exterior sufferings.
3. Trials.
4. Penances.
5. Reproaches.

By the practice of these virtues, we dispose ourselves to enter into the way of perfection. They are a series of particular examens or spiritual works.

Virtues of Purification

I. Those which purify the soul of interior obstacles:

1. Of weakness by strength and faith. "When I am weak, I become strong by grace," says the Apostle (2 Co 12:10).
2. Of evil tendencies by virtuous inclinations. For example, those which purify the soul of laziness by courage, of pride by contempt of self, of sensuality by temperance, etc.
3. Of uncertainty in conduct by openness of soul... Hence the necessity for direction and total docility, in order to avoid every false step of scruples, illusions, etc.

II. Those which caution or forewarn the soul of exterior obstacles, which are:

1. Contrarieties, (overcome) by long-suffering, by prudence and wisdom or the science of the Saints, by confidence in God combined with a total distrust of self.
2. Suggestions of the world, or Its false maxims, by the search for truth, by mental prayer made in the light of faith, according to the method, by retreat, etc.
3. Temptations of the devil, by the spiritual combat, by flight from occasions, by a holy hatred of this enemy of God and of our salvation.

Virtues of Consummation

These virtues are:

1. *Humility*. "Learn of me," says Jesus Christ, "for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29).
2. *Interior modesty*. This is the virtue par excellence of the most Holy Virgin, who combined the greatest favors and the greatest good qualities with the most profound annihilation and with an entire abjection in the sight of the Divine Majesty.

3. *Abnegation of self:*

- 1) of one's mind and one's own judgement;
 - 2) of one's natural inclinations, tastes, and attractions which are not according to God and God's grace; of spiritual consolations, etc.
4. *Renunciation* of creatures and of the world; of all vanities, intimacies; of relatives and of all imperfect affections.

Note. All these virtues of preparation, purification and consummation are indicated to us by the text of St. Peter: "Strive to go by faith to virtue, from virtue to knowledge, from knowledge to abstinence, from abstinence to patience, from patience to piety, from piety to love of the brotherhood, from love of the brotherhood to divine charity. It is by the practice of these virtues that we will come to the perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ and to life eternal. Amen." (2 P 1:5-8).

We add to these virtues of consummation some reflections on the interior life that a good religious of Mary should lead.

1. It is a life of faith. "The just man lives by faith." All his thoughts, all his desires, all his works, all his proceedings are founded only on faith, which is the root of our justification.

Living by faith, then, is the happiness of a religious on earth, as living by glory is the eternal happiness of the Saints in heaven.

This was the life of Mary, our August Mother and Patroness; that is why St. Elizabeth uttered this magnificent praise: "Blessed are you because you have believed, for what the Lord told you will be accomplished in you" (Lk 1:45).

2. It is a life of hope. We believe because God has spoken; we hope because God has promised.

To live by hope is the consolation of the religious in sufferings, in tribulations, in sicknesses, in persecutions. He says with a firm hope: "It is in you, O Lord, that I hope; I will never be confounded" (Ps 30:2). From this comes ardor in prayer, peace of soul, strength in combat, perseverance in works undertaken for the glory of God, even though they may be difficult and painful.

3. It is a life of love, the highest point of perfection which a soul can ever attain with the help of God.

Heaven grant, in the Society of Mary, in all its establishments, that this life of love may be the mainspring of holiness and the source of predestination for its members and for all who are entrusted to it or who will be entrusted to it until the end of the world!

Let us not forget to stir ourselves to love the most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary. We should above all imitate Our Lord Jesus Christ in this important point: this is the spirit of the Society of Mary. It is by her motherly care that we will become conformable to this

Divine Model. Let us allow ourselves to be directed by this loving Mother, our August Patroness, and let us submit joyfully to her direction. It is principally by this that we will prove to her our love, our thankfulness and our devotedness.

**DOCUMENT 15: “Direction concerning the
Institute of the Daughters of Mary” – 1816-1819**
(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 1, nos. 396-643)

At the foundation of the Marianist Sisters, Father Chaminade indicated his intention of preparing a manual of direction for inculcating the progressive development of the virtues. M. David Monier apparently began this work in 1816 and worked on it, under the Founder's guidance, intermittently until 1819. The work on the consummation virtues was never completed.

This text was copied, studied, adapted for men, and stylistically revised by the first two generations of Marianists. Twelve manuscript copies are extant in the Archives of the General Administration. This manual exerted much influence on later works on Marianist spirituality. The texts used as a basis for the translation given here are those of Bro. Louis Rotha and Fr. Colineau.

DIRECTION CONCERNING THE ISTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OR MARY

The virtues which have been defined in the Constitutions can concur to enrich souls who decide to meditate on them and to make of them a more habitual exercise. But it is not in this that we find what specially characterized the Daughters of Mary.

That which characterizes the members of any Order whatsoever is the impress that they ordinarily receive from a method which becomes common to them. They possess the spirit of a uniform teaching which in its principles, progress, and developed state maintains a certain family likeness in each subject who is taught.

We see that nations take on this likeness by themselves, and regions also distinguish themselves in this way, insofar as they are permitted particular customs. This observation could be carried much further, but that would be useless for our purpose in this writing.

The object is to seek that direction by which we can impart the appearance and family character which we believe we ought to obtain for the Daughters of Mary.

The **Institute** of this Order proposes the study and the exercise of virtues at three successive periods and as it were in three series.

- First period, first series: virtues of preparation.
- Second period, second series: virtues of work of purification.
- Third period or third series: virtues of consummation.

Let us try to indicate rapidly the direction to be applied in the tripe task.

VIRTUES OF PREPARATION

For the preparation for religious life, the Daughters of Mary must study silence, recollection, obedience, and love of mortifications. A special word on each of these subjects is necessary.

1. Silence

The silence to be studied is not only that of words of modulations of the voice. When our mouth does not speak, but a sign points out our attitude, we are in no way keeping silence.

- a) Even when silence of words and of signs has been acquired, we do not always have silence of the mind, of the heart, of the imagination. We are not speaking exteriorly at the moment – neither by sounds nor by any apparent emotions – but an inexplicable murmur arises in us, certain reasonings good or bad, the passions and the fascination of imaginary illusions resemble a tumultuous people in a city whose gates are well guarded. b) Is calm reestablished? The discontented have not all ceased to speak; new schemes do not break out, but they are being devised. On the side of those who have the upper hand arise intolerance and despotism; on the side of the defeated, revolt and discord still breathe. Perfect silence of nature in a single individual is never established without great efforts. Grace will doubtless concur in this, but grace does not operate where it finds a will which is not submissive and in a state of total abandonment.

Un certain individuals silence may never be established perfectly, so that the study of silence has for object to establish it as much as possible and to know to what extent we succeed in it and to what extent resistance surpasses our strength.

These points of view having been established, let us consider silence of words, of signs, of the mind, of the heart, and of the imagination.

Silence of words: This is the least difficult of all, and yet there are some persons who succeed poorly in it, who find the practice of it very troublesome, who yields themselves to it only on the condition of a later period of volubility, a gush of words which

compensates them in their own opinion for having momentarily restrained their relish for talking.

Constraint, reluctance, and compensation: it is essential to rid oneself of these once and for all.

To succeed poorly in holding back one's words in silence is to resemble one who is not able to keep oneself from making certain movements of the head because of habit; or one who, from feebleness or weakness, cannot keep from trembling. Whether it is an acquired vice or a natural vice, it always humiliates people and makes one's attitude, whatever it may be, dangerous, sometimes unbearable even in ordinary society. The chirping of birds is less unreasonable and less tiresome than the confused verbiage of those who do not know how to keep silence of words; the verbosity of a single person is like the insignificant noise of a grasshopper.

If, however, we succeed in restraining our tongue, but because of it are troubled or saddened, this is an indication of a contrary liking with which we feel content, of a judgment which we previously held about it. But this is an indication that we have the strength to conquer these opposite inclinations, even though we experience some displeasure for having disciplined them. We blame ourselves for the victory won in such a small affair. Who will change our heart attached to this childishness? Who will direct our judgment led astray by such a vanity?

To keep silence of words and to feel no disquietude for having kept it – these are the first two conditions desire.

But what should I say of the impatience to speak when a quarter hour of silence has passed? What should I say of the intemperance of words which seems to proportion itself to the restraint exercised?

We cannot expect in such a case that silence can become profitable. The disposition toward the vice of speaking too much can become stronger by the remedy that is applied to it; it is a dike which does not drain off the waters which it stops, but raises them and gives them by the very fact a force that they would never have had otherwise. It would be better if such a tongue spoke constantly.

The religious preparation, destined to separate the subjects for the Institute from those who are not, puts in the last place persons who do not succeed in holding their speech in silence, and those who keep it during the time prescribed only to make a dangerous compensation in the moments when they are free.

The subject who finds herself troubled only by silence of words can learn that silence is sweet to the soul which enjoys a certain peace. She can consider silence under points of view different from those which at first surprised her; her liking can grow. She can learn to distinguish what is true from the appearances which have led her astray.

Silence of signs: It is attributed to those who are endowed with a strong soul; the more energy they have within, the more they are masters of not manifesting their interior movements or their resolutions except when they judge it proper. This gift in the order of human affairs is regarded as the attribute of a wise diplomat.

Too study oneself as to the silence of our outward manifestations in the religious life has nothing in common with human views. The sign of our blameworthy movements are commanded to keep silence, so that scandal does not aggravate our interior faults; the signs of our blameworthy movements are commanded to keep silence, so that scandal does not aggravate our interior faults; the signs of our praiseworthy emotions are closed in and restrained by humility.

Temperance in everything is the first disposition of the religious life. Now there are scarcely more frequent or more serious occasions to give in to immoderation than by the very easy ways of exterior signs. One would say that a passion for good or for evil, limited at first to the capacities of the soul, increases and becomes inexhaustible. If the soul finds a channel to the outside by which the excess by which the excess escapes from it. Anger which is contained will die out, cupidity without exercise will dry up, the goad to pleasure will become blunt if it is not manifested outside of the subject who restrains herself. Every passion in the interior which does not manifest itself, will be like the spark of fire in the flint: it does not burn, but once you let it jump out, you cannot measure the conflagration it will produce.

To school oneself in the silence of signs, then, is no small matter in the order of religious perfection.

Of course, when the passions have been calmed, they will give no exterior signs at all, but it is when they stir, when they wish to break out, that we must impose silence on the senses and forbid them to yield to a single exterior sign. The reaction is stronger in this case than we think: passion restrained on the exterior becomes like a tyrant who has no more satellites to fulfill its whims.

The silence of signs is studied in small things and later makes itself appear in the greatest things. There is no subject who is not capable of it to a certain extent; and study in this matter will develop means which one would never suspect. From what is exterior, let us pass on to what is interior.

Silence of the mind: When speech and the other signs which replace it are more or less advantageously under control, our mind loves to speak all alone. With the aid of the imagination it can even create interlocutors for itself. The imagination will be discussed in another place; let us speak here only of the ideas and unhampered activity of the mind.

The mind recalls to us all that we already know. It forms and combines plans; it invents in its own manner; and, like the heart, it seems to have certain passions which are proper to it.

It is by these means that we daydream throughout life, that we consume our activity in something altogether different from that proposed in the place, at the time, in the activity in which we are engaged. It is a continual excursion outside of the object which we have proposed for ourselves or at least outside of what we have the duty to embrace.

To think that we will impose silence on the mind without being exercised in this silence is a deplorable error. In order to exercise ourselves in silence of the mind, we must choose certain moments in which we reject from our thought all that comes from memory, contrivance, esteem or appreciation. Human sciences, political events, religious systems, anecdotes, stories, literary productions, past or current new...All this is useless to me when there is question only of putting me in the presence of myself or in the presence of my God. If all the things I have learned always assault me and never leave me alone, I am dependent on them, I am a slave to them. It is truly a miserable condition to bear the constraint of always being occupied with them without being able to attend to myself.

If the memory supplies a few things, either because I have not retained them, or because I have not learned them, I fall into another irregularity- making plans, combining them in order to remake them and rearrange them endlessly. I go over my conduct, that of my companions, that of my Superiors. I take the administration apart and put it in order. From the rules I pass on to the matter of the establishments. From these establishments, I run on to families, to individuals, and nothing in the religious or civil, moral or physical order, escapes my reforms and my numerous modifications. How many cares, how much time employed in doing nothing!

Or, the one whom this spirit of idle fancy does not trouble instead surveys everyone else in her mind, judges them, appraises them, makes or gives her estimate of them without authority as well as without utility.

It is all too true that the mind which is continually active has much trouble in keeping silent. It is good, however, to command it at determined moments to obtain silence first over that about which it speaks most strongly; after that and gradually, over another matter. Some will hold themselves in absolute silence for several moments. This will not be in order to remain unmoved; no worry about this point. It will be in order to turn their faculties in a more profitable way towards God whom they ought to know, love and adore.

Silence of the passions: In speaking of the silence to be imposed on signs, an explanation was give of the nature of the passions which suggest them. Some are of an irresistible violence, others of an inexpressible delicacy; together they are infinite in variety. Well! It is by that very variety that we must judge the force, the flexibility, the diversity and the vast extent of the passions. To flatter ourselves that we are able to impose silence on them all at once, in a short time, is an illusory wish. I do not say that grace, which must necessarily be involved in this enterprise, cannot work a miracle; but we must not concern ourselves with the cases in which miracles intervene; we must speak only in the common and more ordinary order of Providence.

The silence of the passions to be acquired with the help of grace will be no more impossible than any other, if the principal passion is attacked first and in the right way. This cannot be made clear except by examples.

Pride is the most general passion. Let us suppose a subject in whom pride is the dominant passion – and that is not rare. Such a one, when she is preoccupied with imposing silence on the passions, will want or ought to want to impose it on pride; she can see it wherever pride shows itself overtly.

I say that she can see it, and yet it happens every day that one steeped in pride manages to tell how she has borne such and such a thing with the greatest humility and she believes it. This stumbling-block is frequent; it is therefore good from the first to avoid it.

It will infallibly be avoided in the Institute if the Superiors are attentive to it. She is more certain of what she does who admits: I was moved, the movements of my heart were not restrained without efforts. May God keep me from sin, etc..., than she who is so strongly convinced that her humility has triumphed.

Let us suppose then that the heart full of pride has learned to judge itself with this tone of distrust in all the actions in which pride could show itself in the open. This is the first degree of silence imposed on pride.

The subject who thus proceeds against pride ought to know, in the second place, that this passion, being dominant in her, must creep into her good and bad actions, its tissues or filaments will be found everywhere.

Suppose (and this is very frequent) that the proud heart is attacked by temptations of the most debasing passion. It believes itself strong on this point, precisely because of the haughtiness in which it sits in its pride, from where it looks down on the baseness of this other passion. The devil, it will say, will not gain much in this; I have promised before God not to debase myself on this point, etc...The devil gains everything here, because the heart, in this supposition, does not impose silence on its pride. The baseness of the secondary passion which was attacking it should not have been recalled or perceived by it, as real as this baseness was. It defends itself from the ruse of the enemy by attaching itself to a thread of pride, which is just what pride wants. How much better it would have been to have said: a person abandoned to pride is capable of every evil, and, calling upon Jesus and Mary, to have asked them for deliverance.

That is how, in following pride point by point – although mixed with other passions – and not allowing it to take a breath, one succeeds in reducing it to silence.

If someone told me that I did such an action, but that she refrained from speaking of it so as not to offend my modesty, I would not reply at all, nor would I give any sign, but addressing myself to God, I would say: How people deceive themselves; (God) you know that, before you, I do not know how to see my nothingness; I have not been able until this day to subdue my pride. My God, give me the humility which I lack.

Each passion, at the moment when it would be attached (to its object), would in the same way be restrained, cut back, reduced to silence in all the places of refuge where it might hide, like a serpent that is being pursued among old ruins and brushwood which intertwine and keep it out of sight.

Silence of the imagination: The imagination is perhaps as dangerous to salvation as the passions. It is the imagination which lends to the passions their false colors, their justification, or their excuses. It gives to good the appearance of evil and to evil the appearance of good. The imagination creates idle fancies, delivers our senses over to them. Reason, dominated by the imagination and by the senses, remains worthless and powerless. Formerly, it established idolatry in the world and adorned it with all its enchantment; today it puts into vogue and sustains errors and the strangest prejudices. Sects, heresies and schisms owe their birth to it. It loves only novelty, it takes offense at what is eternal and durable, it prefers to produce illusions and phantoms rather than remain inactive.

I want to believe nothing of what people have imagined, of what I myself imagine. I believe only what God has said and revealed, what the Church has taught me. All that the imagination may produce is nothing in comparison with the glory of my God, which will someday be known to me.

When the exercises of silence have been followed with zeal and constancy, one should not expect that the progress will be the same among all the Daughters of Mary, nor that any of them will arrive at complete silence of words, of signs, of the mind, of the heart, and of the imagination. But all will have imposed silence on what in them is most dangerous, or those who have not succeeded in this will not have attained the purpose of the first study. In this case it would be necessary to make them start over or to recognize them as little suited for the Institute.

We will now say a word about the second virtue of preparation, which is recollection.

2. Recollection

I said somewhere, in examining the necessity of exercising the soul in silence and of directing each one of our faculties towards it, that the soul could compare itself to an organ, whose pipes ought to sound only by design and in a framework of harmony. By the study of silence one will have recognized which pipes sound without precise order and which ones are sure and well regulated.

To recollect oneself in the widest sense would be no longer to hear, no longer to listen to the indiscreet voices which arise in us, against our will or without our approval. But when the exercise of silence is not perfect to this point, when some faculties speak often and in spite of us, recollection becomes difficult, almost always incomplete, never is it of long duration.

As this condition is the most common, especially in the beginning of religious life, it is necessary to study oneself in regard to recollection. It is a matter of knowing how to become absorbed in the faculties that one uses at will, and how to make the others keep silent. It means gathering together the strength and means one has available, in order to subdue a less will subjugated faculty.

1. To humiliate oneself, to pray, to show confidence in the help of God, to make a affirm resolution to conquer self in the faculty which resist the means to the grace one asks – such are the first means and the first forces that must be recollected in oneself.

2. The next task is to examine the emotion, the cry of the soul which we cannot keep silent. We likewise exaggerate the affection which we receive from it, the effects that can be expected from it; attachment and aversion, love and hate, means to attain or to get away – all is out of measure and proportion. We must suppose that the situation is thus, distrust it energetically, call upon reason to verify it.

When we succeed in recognizing that the over-excited soul is outside the realm of what is true, we must not stop the search at this first step; we take it up again. We remove a second part of the exaggeration; and continuing thus more and more carefully, we are astonished in the end that all is based on an illusion.

We have gained much if we come to recognize that one faculty of our soul is especially subject to illusion and exaggeration; this is a motive for personal distrust and eventually a guarantee of good habits.

3. The tumult of thoughts and interior affections will yield ordinarily to the recitation of affective prayers made aloud and with fitting gravity. This is a sure way of emptying ourselves of our own thoughts only to be absorbed with sufficient attention in those which are suggested to us. This substitution produces its effect in proportion as the thoughts expressed in the prayer recited are more expressive, more moving, more suited to our understanding.

Far from being necessary to neglect the oral recitations so wisely prescribed, there is need on the contrary to apply oneself to them, and to accustom the mind to give sufficient attention to the meaning of the words. If one does not understand the words, then love of God, faith in Christian truths, hope of salvation must supply the meaning this can often supply for the thought of the author of which one is deprived at the time.

But for one who understands the words, what effects will not the very beautiful Canticles of the Royal Prophet and those of the various books of Scripture, of which the divine office is composed, have upon her. What effects will not be produced by certain prayers proposed by the lights of the Christian world, which are renewed in each century.

Conclusions: In the greatest distress, in the complete tumult of our faculties, let us pray orally, giving all possible attention to the words pronounced, so as to understand them better – brief, sustained, rapid prayers, elevations of the heart, frequent and repeated,

even though the heart scarcely responds to them. Language must engage everything when the soul is benumbed and no longer knows what it ought to do.

One single faculty of the soul out of order can be an obstacle to the exercise of all the others. Thus a wild preoccupation of the mind, the agitation of one passion, an illusion which has seized the imagination can, each separately, engage the whole soul; and this is also the case with vocal prayer with any degree of attention whatsoever to the sense of the words.

There are some who think that to pray vocally is not to recollect oneself. They are right when, in order to emerge from a long recollection, one employs a diversity of vocal prayers in order to relax the soul and to stir up various movements in it. They are not right when one recollects oneself in order to pray and when one attaches oneself, according to her ability, to the spirit of prayer.

4. When the over-excited condition of one of the faculties of the soul or its deviation from order and subordination are only moderately inordinate, we recollect ourselves by some effort that leads us to forget the object that affects us directly, or to make other thoughts predominate. Thus a vigorous work of the mind makes us forget the greatest annoyance; enforced work of the body also distracts us powerfully from every passion of the heart; a noble affection of the heart turns us away from a project that was distorting our energies. There are some works which temper the storm of the imagination; in a word, the exercise of one faculty turns us away from the improper and feverish exercise of the others.

The relief which the faculties give one another is the principal reason for requiring that the subjects in the Institute be submitted to and exercised in all kinds of employment. The matter of recollecting oneself diversely according to the situation must be carefully studied through examples.

The Superior will very frequently give her attention to the diverse needs of her Daughters. Exterior and interior needs, material transaction will absorb her. At determined moments of the day and sometimes on certain days of the week, she must forget all her usual preoccupations; and without turning her mind back to these cares, she must give herself over to the love of God, to confirm herself in faith, to nourish her hopes of heaven.

The Head of Zeal on the contrary will have her heart nourished inflamed by constant acts of those things which she gives most frequent examples to her Sisters. At designated hours she must be called to the exercise of the mind, to matters of reasoning; at those times she makes it a duty to give herself to this exclusively.

The Head of Instruction must leave her work in order to come to the exercises which form the heart.

The Head of Temporalities would not differ from the most active persons in the world if she did not set aside determined moments for the direction of her mind and the perfection of the virtues.

Everyone else in the convent is formed gradually according to these four models, or in any case, each one strives to conform herself to them. Each Sister must learn how to recollect her soul alternately in the order of the various faculties. In each thing she must apply herself or respond affectively in turn without distraction.

This last work makes us understand that to be recollected and to be distracted are two opposite things. The application that one makes of recollection will bring about a greater knowledge of it.

3. Obedience

The lack of a guide brings about in our conduct two major disadvantages: the one stems from the fact that we never or scarcely ever take a route parallel or analogous to that of the people with whom we ought to move ahead; the other stems from the fact that we do not make decisions about our conduct without the influence of impressions which make us lean toward our personal vice, in such a way that in a group and alone, we run the risk of progressing very badly if we remain without a director. And yet what good would it do to have known the necessity of being directed, if we did not join to it a total obedience?

On the other hand, the limits of perfection will be carried very far with the aid of an Institute in which obedience, prescribed in its causes, in its means, and in its organization, can become continual and entire.

When each subject, then, knows the powers of her soul, or had discovered them in the exercises of silence and recollection, the obedience which she will already have tried to practice will become a more absolute necessity for her. Her Superiors will test her in this matter and will prescribe how her rotation in various tasks, from the most menial to the most sublime, should take place be renewed, varied, and maintained.

In these changes it will be seen what employment, what work more effectively trains the will and silences those parts of the soul which, at the time of the study of silence could not be overcome by attention alone, which the other recollected faculties could not restrain.

The subject being known, as I presuppose, when she is subjected to the will of a skillful Head, will not be slow in losing her false characteristics, in forgetting her acquired habits to evil. She will soon know how she must defend herself against the preoccupations of the mind, the passions to which her heart inclines, the illusory goods on which her imagination feeds.

The Head competent in her office will discover the remedy for each particular character. It is almost always in the opposite tendency that habits can be formed; this is not to say that it is always necessary to form by contraries; temperaments must be used prudently. If there is sometimes need for cheering up, used prudently. If there is sometimes need for cheering up, let the contrariety be of short duration and soon softened by consolations.

Obedience, or order to bring about such a great result, must be total; it will not accomplish this at all if it is not composed of trials proportionate to the resistance. The most docile character should not always be left undisturbed for the very reason that virtue resides only in habit.

When the subjects are first exercised to form them to obedience, it is of no importance whether the demand which is made of them, the work which is imposed upon them has or does not have as object to go directly against a vice known or suspected. But since in such a varied exercise we soon perceive repugnancies and related inclinations, we should not fail to profit from this discovery to orientate the subject more frequently in the direction which her advancement in obedience requires. If the subject is rather intelligent, one could point out her difficulty to her and make her use her own reason and the strength of her own firm resolutions to consent to the trials and to cooperate in her own reformation.

From obedience, we must pass on to the support of mortification.

4. The Support of Mortifications

At this point of the plan of conduct, it is easy to understand that the support of mortifications is a favorable disposition for bringing under control that which the other exercises would not have been able to subdue. Contrariety, displeasure of mind, weariness, and even certain pains of the body are sometimes necessary to subjugate the mind and the senses. All of this is comprised under the name of mortification.

If we knew how the habit and the support of mortifications acquire patience for us and add quietly to our courage, not one of us who desires human perfection would not exercise ourselves, would not rejoice in giving ourselves over to mortifications.

The support of mortifications is not exactly love of mortifications, but it is by support of mortifications that we come to love them. Human life is very often composed only of contraries of the mind and sufferings of the senses. If misfortune has not befallen us up to the present, it could happen tomorrow; the greatest part of our activity is spent in struggling painfully against our environment - today, superiors; tomorrow, subjects. Serious accidents bring frequent sufferings to us, and the end of life is almost a chain of infirmities which we drag along painfully to the grave.

The least unhappy person is perhaps she who in these misfortunes shows herself more strong and more courageous; at least, she remains the most capable of voluntarily adding

to her life the consolations of the good which she proposes to do, which she has done or hopes to do. Her heart, not allowing itself to be conquered by its own hardships, can alleviate the hardships of her neighbor.

One who cannot support mortifications of all kinds is in the same condition as if she had lost the love of people and the love of God, faith in the things promised, and the gifts of hope that good will succeed in proportion to the evils suffered.

We are like a horse which the bit restrains and which the spur pushes on. The control which holds sway over the will is the bit which directs us habitually; mortifications are the pricks of the spur which move an indolent nature to act or which set aright an impetuous movement.

Not to yield the will to obedience, not to accustom oneself to the support of mortifications is to will not to correct one's nature. It is also to affirm that the social body suffers from the will of an individual and that the virtue of the center fails in its effect by the misplaced sensitivity of one who has joined only so that this virtue would be upheld everywhere.

If the virtues just spoken of have not always been considered here in connection with the imitation of Jesus Christ, it is not that this imitation should not be the primary viewpoint of souls who tend toward perfection. But it is possible, without prejudice to the duties which all Christians (and particularly more religious hearts) have of imitating the life of submission and mortification of Jesus Christ, to seek the means of having peace of soul and the recollection which teaches us to know ourselves and to guide ourselves to our end. It has been useful to show how the soul prepares itself, how it becomes fit to be able to have itself scrutinized or to scrutinize itself.

This condition results from the attainment of silence of our faculties, recollection of our strengths compared interiorly to our weaknesses, the state of obedience in which our will puts itself, and the disposition to support mortifications.

These virtues are called virtues of preparation, because they enable us to know ourselves or to make ourselves known, the first essential condition for entering the monastic career. Next it is necessary to pass on to the purification of the soul, and from there to go on to the virtues of consummation.

Let us stop to consider the subject of purification.

PURIFICATION OF THE SOUL

Purification consists in attacking and destroying in the interior of our soul the things that tend to make evil take root and those which form an obstacle to the progress of virtues.

The most general things that incline us to evil and which hinder our virtues are:
 --From ourselves: 1) our weakness, 2) our natural inclinations, 3) our uncertainties;
 --from the exterior: 1) contrarieties of the world, 2) suggestions, and 3) temptations of the enemy of our salvation.

These are the real causes of our faults and of our relapses. But because we do not know these causes in advance, because we do not realize their malice as we ought, we remain almost all our life what we were at the time of our reform – weak, earthly, uncertain in many things, not knowing how to conquer either weakness or inclinations or contrarieties or temptations – in a word, not knowing how to purify ourselves from day to day.

Three considerations ought principally to guide us in our purpose of purifying our souls and of making it advance:

- 1) The malice of the causes which hinder us in our habits.
- 2) Weaknesses, inclinations, uncertainties which dissipate our efforts.
- 3) Contrarieties, suggestions, temptations which drag us along.

1. Malice of the causes

Because a person does not live in mortal sin, because venial is even conquered to some point, one easily believes that the state of her soul is satisfactory; she congratulates herself on the graces of God; she enjoys a peace which was unknown in the state of sin; but in truth she is not making one step forward in the way of perfection.

This state has sometimes more malice in its basis than certain faults and certain obvious disorders would have. It is only too certain that one who does not advance at all in the ways of wisdom goes backward by the very fact. The habit of good is changed into tepidity, laxity follows; and while this may not always be the case, yet there is a great evil in loss of the time which was given us in order to advance.

On the road of salvation, we must always look to the end which we must attain and not to the point from which we started. The more we delay advancement towards the goal, the farther we remain away from it. That is the only reckoning we should make.

This is one of the great illusions that the Tempter causes us when we have conquered sin – to bring us to inertia, and to flatter us secretly to remain in that state. He wants us to preserve the old self, not to attach the old leaven, to remain the children of Adam instead of becoming children of the regeneration brought about in Jesus Christ and by Jesus Christ.

In this is found all the malice of the state of inertia after sin is conquered. In this we neglect to raise ourselves almost to heavenly things, to be the worthy children of God. We take for our unique delight not to be public sinners on earth.

Jesus Christ has cast a terrible curse on this state of tepidity, and there is scarcely a more definite one among those which we know as having come from the mouth of this divine Savior. "I would that you were cold rather than tepid! I tell you, be hot or cold and not tepid; but because your tepidity is unbearable, I will begin by vomiting you out of my mouth." We will add nothing to the character of malice which Jesus Christ himself has pointed out in this state of the human soul, a state which results only from a lack of sufficient purification.

Let us continue with the means of this desirable purification.

2. Weaknesses, inclinations, uncertainties.

Weakness of virtue, inclinations to evil, uncertainty in conduct – such are, as regards the interior, the principal sources of the disturbances which come over our soul during or after its actions. We will see later the exterior causes which also bring on other disturbances.

In occupying ourselves here only with those which the interior brings about within itself, we are concerned less with the developing them in detail than in indicating the general remedies which can stop them or prevent them.

Weakness of virtue: There is no great and strong virtue except that which comes from God, and which remains dependent upon God alone. Virtues which recognize another origin and which are founded on another base are not slow in experiencing their own weakness. The disturbance which arises around them and in the midst of which they attempt to act is a warning, a cause of mistrust about which the author of our soul has wished to warn us.

Whatever virtue we may put into practice, then at the moment when there is disturbance, the remedy is to return to God, from whom alone all good proceeds. Let us annihilate ourselves to let God act, whose feeble instrument we are. When the Lord is by our consent the author of our good actions – the sole author – there will be no more disturbance in virtue to fear on the part of our weakness.

Weak virtue under the hand of God will never overrun its limits; it will remain virtue and God will test it to God's liking. But the weak virtue of which we become proud and by which we wish to puff ourselves up is like a soap-bubble which lasts scarcely a moment, and which comes closer to destroying itself at each new expansion that it receives.

The strongest virtue by the standards of the world is not exempt from this same mishap. It is a crust of earth, a mountain if you wish, formed by a volcano; it will soon produce a pit in the middle, into which it will sink some day and leave nothing more than a hole.

It is by this distinction between virtues founded on God and virtues by which the human spirit is vainly puffed up that I explain a double phenomenon equally astonishing under both of its aspects. On the one hand, there are people who are called strong in character, sometimes called great souls, who have sown their careers with nothing but faults and crimes; on the other hand, there are souls called simple in the world who have filled the

entire earth with their example, with their good deeds, with their institutions, much greater still in the eyes of God than in the eyes of people who perceive in everything only a coarse exterior.

Let no one deceive herself, then, about the strength and the weakness of virtues. There is no weak virtue when it comes from God and is related to God; there is no strong virtue when it comes from our nature and is related to our nature.

The virtue which clings to our nature produces disquiet during an action or after it; the virtue which returns to its source which is God remains without disturbance, because it is assured of its worth, and it operates without effort.

Inclination to evil: You must occupy yourself with God alone in virtue, in order that it may be without weakness and without disturbance; you must occupy yourself principally with human nature and its abasement in order to stop it in its inclination to evil.

The person on the incline to evil can very well be stopped with effort, but in order that the incline may cease its actual pull, the terrain must be leveled off; we must do away with this slope which pulls down the one who wishes to walk on it.

By what is this inclination formed in us? It is formed by the false qualities, by the false virtues that we think we have. It is always by the exaggeration of our abilities that we find ourselves drawn toward the abyss. Sin in its source comes, as we say, from the excess of any virtue.

In order to make ourselves pure and worth to attain the perfection of virtue, let us begin by being sober in those very virtues which are most habitual to us, for fear that our plenitude will begin to intoxicate us.

Do you want an example of this weakness, of this debility by which we yield to what leads to evil like a steep slope? Here are some:

We are witty: in what conversation will there not be found the contributions of our vanity, the more or less cutting remark against our neighbor; and the indiscreet petulance that often has compromised important affairs and the secret of another? Almost every day this quality of mind causes breaches of humility and charity. It kills our simplicity, our common sense; it cannot suffer the merit of simplicity and common sense in others.

We are serviceable: but what esteem within ourselves and what exterior display of the services we render? If others do not make the same exaggeration as we, they are stupid and ungrateful. That is not all; the entire world in its turn has no right to deny us the services which we judge to be useful or necessary to ourselves. Our currency is the most beautiful, it has the value of gold, and that which others give us or repay us is false or worthless.

These two traits give us knowledge of the true position in which the qualities of the mind and the virtues of the heart are shown. The use of our exterior talents and of our acquired

talents follows the same course. Anything short of fervent piety will deceive itself and will dispose itself in a dangerous manner if we do not give constant attention to it.

The remedy which we can use for all this is to level out the irregular exaltations of the heart and the mind. Let us press down in us all that rises up. Simple in spirit, humble of heart, more poor with our frivolous and useless talents than if we did not have any at all – that is our naked position before God, In any other position, we will be like those who balance themselves in the air on stilts – they are always on the verge of falling.

Let us work, then, to avoid this position in which the inclination toward our ruin is renewed or continued. The exaggeration of our qualities, of the favors we do thers, of our feeble talents, of our fragile virtues, our senseless confidence in these things – that is what constitutes our danger.

We have said that complete confidence in God will deliver us from our weakness. We have just shown that complete diffidence of ourselves will annihilate our natural inclinations or warn us of their danger. There remains a ward to be said about our uncertainties.

Uncertainties in our conduct: It seems that with complete confidence in God and complete diffidence of ourselves we should never be uncertain about what conduct to follow. But we must admit that reason such as we are able to enjoy it – that is, weak and accompanied by concupiscence – can hesitate when it is not pushed and enlightened by grace.

But in the life of perfection which we embrace in the Institute, there is no longer anything to fear from our uncertainties. Counsel is ever at our disposal to enlighten us – a Superior, a Director, a Mother prepared for all needs. We need only to will it in order to know what we must do. We have no uncertainties except those which we do not wish to conquer in submitting to a prompt decision.

Weakness of virtue, inclination to evil, uncertainty in conduct – all this will be destroyed by confidence in God alone, by constant distrust of what comes from our nature, and by the counsel in which the Institute procures for us and offers to us in every situation. In this state, if the soul does not have the virtues of an angel, at least it ceases to have human failings.

But we must provide against the obstacles which the tempter raises against us, and which hinder us in purity of conscience and heart.

3. Contrarieties, Suggestions, Temptations

Those who in everything have their confidence in the strength of God, who know the really great frailty of human virtues, and who know how to follow good counsel in their uncertainties are not exposed to as many real dangers as those who act altogether differently, but we cannot say that their life should remain without combat.

The more simple and strong a virtue is within, the more violently it is attacked from without. Providence allows new victories to merit new crowns for God's elect. Souls whose interior is poorly guarded will experience, like those who are on their guard, some assaults; but the enemy, aware that the virtue is greater, may well attempt violent assaults. Virtue may be constantly opposed, a thousand suggestions will seize the occasion to make themselves heard, temptations will become seductive or violent.

How preserve, how deliver the soul from them? A few words must be said about this.

Contrarieties: There are contrarieties of many kinds in this world; some of them are very long and very mortifying. Everyone has had them in life, or will have them.

Only one remedy is available against an evil so varied and yet so universal: it is long-suffering. Jesus Christ gave the first example of it; true Christians in all ages have followed the lessons of their divine Master on this point. What remains to be done by a soul who has placed all its strength in God, who no longer finds in anything the sufficiency of its weak but proud nature? There remains for this soul also to draw all its patience from the heart of God, to base this virtue solely on God, as it bases all the others solely on God. There is no contrariety whatever that will not yield in the end; at any rate, there is none that will not by this means become salutary to the one who experiences it.

Suggestions: When nature wearies of suffering, when it seems to want to revolt, it is then especially that we feel many suggestions rise up within ourselves, or come to us from the outside from unthinking people and false friends.

The soul frees itself from this kind of suggestions by a firm purpose, incessantly renewed, to remain faithful to the solid principles that have been taught us. The dark shadow of such suggestions is easily banished by the individual who is already prepared, as we said above, to find her strength in God alone and never in herself or in other people.

Finally, there are the more violent kind of temptations.

Temptations: In a heart that is habitually well disposed, temptations are dispelled by calling on God and by performing acts opposed to the object of the temptation.

We are not speaking here of those temptations which are to be remedied by immediate flight; this would be the first means to use. But when the temptation is in desire, in thought – then, in order to deliver ourselves from this state, we must multiply the elevation of our soul to God, so that God will deliver us: and then we must formally perform acts opposed to the temptation.

Here we limit ourselves to the most indispensable things we had to say about purification.

To know the malice that exists in the indifference in which we stop and grow sluggish, when we are in a state of half-perfection; to eat that we will find in this sleep the sleep of death – that is the first point on which we must know how to work.

Remedying the weakness of all our virtues by our all-pervading confidence in the strength of God alone; escaping from our tendencies to evil by believing ourselves by our nature incapable of any good; freeing ourselves from uncertainties by recourse to God and to the holy counsel that God has arranged for us in grace – that is how we perfect and purify the interior.

Conquering contrarities by long-suffering, suggestions by returning to the good resolutions we have often formed, temptations that we cannot flee by acts contrary to the object of the temptation – that is the way to remove occasions of evil which come from outside.

A soul that is fearful of neglecting its salvation, no matter at what stage it has arrived; one that uses the remedies for the weakness of its virtues, its tendency to evil, and its uncertainties; one that bears contrarities, banishes suggestions and knows how to turn temptations to profit – such a soul has a purity that makes it pleasing to God, or it will soon attain it.

It will attain purity of soul so much the sooner in proportion as it has more thoroughly attended to the virtues of preparation: silence and its various aspects, recollection of all that is good within itself, obedience in the conduct which it must follow in order to conquer itself, and support of the mortifications which complete the victory.

It is completely untrue that a soul which desires the perfection that God commands for the elect should stop either at the virtues of preparation or at the means of purification. In fact, no matter how well prepared and purified the soul may be, it has been freed only from all or from a part of its vices – natural ones, or ones due to habit. It is only at the first way-station on the road that is called perfection.

Once the preparation and the purification have been well managed, one should get busy with the virtues of consummation. We have indicated that these virtues of consummation are the third series in time, and also in the order of our work. It is said in the Institute that among the virtues of consummation should be placed humility, modesty, abnegation of self, and entire renunciation of the world. When these four conditions are obtained, we will be given over unreservedly to the love of God.

But in order to make understood how much things of heaven are in virtues of consummation, it is not a bad idea to prepare oneself and purify oneself still more.

Therefore, we will put off to another time the explanation of the direction of the virtues of consummation; the better hearts savor the virtues of preparation and purification, the better also will the influence of the virtues of consummation penetrate them.

Let all join their prayers, that God may soon lead us back to this work and inspire us to speak of them in the Holy Spirit.

Note. The virtues whose direction is postponed for a third part of this study should not be looked upon as useless up to then. Everyone knows that humility, modesty, abnegation, and renunciation of the things of the world are dispositions common to all true Christians. It has been possible to get a glimpse of the fact that these same virtues concur with those of preparation and purification. Besides, in the order established by God all the virtues stand together; but there are circumstances in which certain ones take on more strength or more vigor. The virtues which procure the consummation of all the others will have their development after a fitting preparation and purification.

While awaiting the Direction on the virtues of consummation, every member of the Institute should therefore by humble, modest, etc., in the best way she knows. There may be some who already bring these virtues very close to their perfection, but if they begin by preparing and purifying themselves, they will be brought subsequently as far as their strength, aided by grace, can lead them.

CONSUMMATION

I have often rejoiced that I did not give you the rules of religious consummation at the same time as those of preparation and purification. God, who directs our hearts and minds by God's own will, knows how to limit our thoughts when it pleases God; it is to God's designs alone that I attribute the obstacles which kept me at the time from treating the virtues of consummation.

Since then I have reflected that the heart and mind of every person are naturally ambitious. These two agents, whatever good or bad road they may take, tend to hurry to the goal which they desire to attain; and it is almost always their inconsiderate haste that makes them miss this very goal. They would infallibly have reached it, if they had had the prudence to advance with moderation. This is one of the reasons why it has been said that one must be wise temperately.

Once the rules of consummation are known, some disciples will be satisfied with perceiving its name and its general way of proceeding; others will perhaps be more desirous of enjoying its fruits than interested in finding out if they are fit for it; both groups will neglect preparation and purification. By the very fact they will be in great danger of never attaining it; some will be so much the farther removed from it because they blindly believe that they possess it already. Happier those who have always in mind this maxim of the prophet: the fear of not being pleasing to the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (see Ps 111:10). A maxim that should be kept in mind habitually, and with the meaning in which it has just been explained.

It is this fear that will attach us to the work of preparation and purification, making us envisage the enterprise of the complete consummation of the virtues as the highest point of vocation that can be given to us, as the work in which all the graces of Providence will become for us indispensable.

In order to form for ourselves a kind of image, both of what the consummation of the Christian virtues should be, and of the excellence of preparation that it requires, and also of the necessity of the purification that ought to precede it, we need to recall the summary to which the God-Man, at the end of his labors on earth, reduced his entire life: all is consummated, *Consummatum est*. This God and Savior had brought all genuine virtues to the point of excellence that made them worthy of pleasing God his Father and of being placed in participation with the virtues of the God of Abraham and the God of Jacob.

As members of Jesus Christ, by the gifts of the Holy spirit, whom he has deigned to send us on earth, each of us is able, with a firm resolution of following the spirit's inspirations, to renew our union with God and to place ourselves in a condition to pronounce at the end of our life these same words: all is consummated, *Consummatum est*; that is, all that God gave us – of the divine in order to rise to God's throne, and of the earthly in order to be offered to God as a holocaust – all has had its faithful destination: All is fulfilled, *Consummatum est*.

That is a very general idea of the consummation to which the Daughters of Mary are called. Let us see what virtues and what direction we can use to bring ourselves to it.

After we have formed a correct idea of consummation, three kinds of rules must be observed if we do not wish to miss our goal.

- To make sure of our vocation.
- To verify whether we are prepared and purified.
- To enter into the ways of consummation

1. Making sure of one's vocation

There is no doubt whatever that the vocation to a perfect life is the highest vocation to which a person can be called. Consequently, it is, of all vocations, the one which we ought to be most sure of when beginning to enter into it. Beforehand, we reflect on the time when we will be prepared enough and purified enough to enter into this way of perfection; by the very fact, we commit ourselves to the exercises of preparation and purification with still more care and effort.

With the advice of our director, we plan this program; with our director we appraise the interior voice that calls us, we interpret all its fine shades of meaning, we make sure that there is no illusion. And although grace is the strength that will support us in the undertaking, we nevertheless evaluate our natural strength, we see what is lacking to enable us in all probability to persist until we reach success.

Moreover, our Superiors in the order of salvation are our guides. It happens very rarely that the vocation to the perfect life is truly evident if it does not come from the impetus of the director, and if there is not a humble diffidence on the part of the subject called. When these two signs are lacking, the vocation can be called doubtful unless God gives visible

commands in situations where God's glory is made manifest, and where almost immediate accomplishment justifies the undertaking.

We must be very careful not to confuse the rules of an ordinary vocation, in which a faithful soul can work out her own salvation, with the rules of vocation to the perfect life, in which one should work out the salvation of many others in Israel. The ordinary vocation will almost never be distasteful to the one who is called; her director will be more troubled than the subject in consenting. It is only in regard to the extraordinary vocation to the perfect life that we indicate the sign, in desiring for it the encouragement of the director and the diffidence of the one called.

Let us use a noble example: the Holy Virgin was called to become the Mother of God; and it was as a handmaid of the Lord that she told the angel, "God's will be done." This high vocation was pointed out in a divine manner, it was accepted only with the feeling on the creature's part that she could do nothing about it herself, and also with a confident submission to the One who is almighty.

Moments of decision should be marked by an ardent frequentation of the sacraments, greater exactitude in all the exercises, more habitual conversation with the Well-Beloved at all moments of the day, calm in all the movements of the soul, joy in having to obey, acts which prove that a certain bad leaven is no longer at work, that the old self is strongly enchained in the depths of the soul, as if it no longer existed. These dispositions and all others of the same kind are favorable for making a decision.

If the Director makes the decision, despite repugnance on the part of the one called, the latter should give in to the impetus; her submission will often be the definitive action that precedes the brilliant light of the Holy Spirit. At other times this submission will be one of the most salutary means for the spiritual advancement that is about to begin.

When we are sure of the vocation, we must verify whether the subject on her part is causing any obstacle to it; this is the reason for rapidly verifying the state of the preparation and purification already carried out or attempted.

2. Verifying whether one is prepared and purified

Since the process of verification proposed here has two objects, it will also be divided into two articles.

ARTICLE 1: Review of the preparation

We have tried to make it clear in the main chapter on the virtues of preparation that they consist in four things:

- 1. Silencing the faculties of body and of soul; or, in any event, knowing which of our faculties do not obey the silence that is commanded.
- 2. Recollecting the more powerful and well-ordered faculties in order to subject the faculties which cry out against al good order.
- 3. Using for the same end our obedience to those who direct us, and who should be included in the plan for disciplining our faculties.
- 4. Using also for this end mortifications, which we should be happy to support, as the last and strongest means that remain to us for self-conquest.

We have not said it, but it will have been realized by experience that this victory is never completely obtained. It is a struggle ever renewed. We never find ourselves back in the same position; if we make progress, we acquire more strength and know-how, so to speak, or the resisting enemy is weakened. If, on the other hand, we are weak enough to go backwards, the evil grows, vice becomes greater, and much greater efforts are necessary to regain the lost ground and to make up for the ground that we failed to win.

In the light of all these positions in which the work of preparation places us, we must conclude that we and our Directors shall judge its worth only by a review of the first state in which we originally were, the state through which we have passed, and that in which we now are. That is what we must know before going on to the virtues of consummation.

The Superior or the various Heads of Offices under her should keep confidential notes on the principal traits which characterize the work of preparation. If these traits are well formulated, a glance will usually suffice to ascertain where the weakness lies and how much it should be feared.

We say that this will usually suffice, for it would be a mistake always to take this criterion as a guide, especially if the preparation did not have all the time which would guarantee its maturity. Besides, there are souls who reveal themselves so late or so slowly that the experience of those most advanced in the knowledge of the human heart is more necessary in their case than remarks. Habitual remarks become unhappily routine, trivial, and therefore meaningless.

In whatever manner the work of preparation is examined, whether by the summary that the subject herself makes of it, or by the notes habitually kept in a confidential register, or by the experience and judgment of those most skillful in this matter, the examination must give as its result three chief points of view:

- At what point did the subject begin when entering into the spirit of religion and piety?
- What striking obstacles did she experience, both interiorly and exteriorly? Did she overcome these obstacles?
- At what state has she now arrived?

This examination, made without any human bias, in view of God and of God's glory, will let one understand if all the faculties are in peace or if the troublesome faculties have calmed down.

The person who holds a passion in subjection by counsel and strength of soul, or by obedience and fidelity to a good guide, or by mortification habitually supported as a remedy, can become a greater saint than the one whose soul has been favored with constant peace in this world. This is a truth based on reason, but experience has made it manifest so often that it would be useless to insist on demonstrating it.

This is not to say that a soul which has the grace of always being at peace cannot be favored in such a way as to bring about great marvels for the edification of the world; but God dispenses gifts and trials according to God's will, and makes divine power and mercy shines forth in both, and at the time when God wills.

In the midst of such a diversity of spirits, there should be enlisted in high perfection or on the road that leads to it all those who, having come to know their faculties and their inner movements, no longer experience and no longer display any disordered ones; or those how, sufficient power of habit and application to conquer them.

Apart from these two cases, wishing to lead subjects to the consummation of the virtues is an illusory undertaking. They should again be set to work on preparing themselves. Exercises on the virtues of consummation would infallibly serve to increase their vice. Only self-love and pride, which imperceptibly mingle in all our actions, would gain from it. This stumbling-block must be avoided.

Let us therefore suppose a soul habitually calm - one that, when it is about to lose this calm, has the means of controlling itself, whether by itself or by obedience to the direction of another or by the use of mortifications which have become easy for it to support; such a soul has received proper preparation for the virtues (of consummation).

But before having advance to the virtues of consummation, there is no room for confidence in the preparation given, no matter how carefully it has been accomplished. We must go farther: we must put it to the test, we must review it, we must verify the strength of the preparation already received. It may be presumed good enough for remaining in the state in which the subject now is, but it may not be sufficient to allow this same subject to advance to the higher state, to the one that aims at consummation.

For this test, the subject will be subjected for a short time to an obedience that is unexpected, if possible; then it is that the obedience in which we thought she was strong may appear weak, and there may be room to doubt whether she is ready to enter into the difficult path of consummation.

To have a complete test, we will go on from testing strong and unexpected submission to testing an equally unaccustomed mortification, and we will see in this way whether or not the support of mortifications is truly acquired.

We may observe here that, up to this time of reviewing the probation, the practice of obedience and support of mortifications had for object to help subjugate the emotions of some ill-controlled faculties of the soul. But in the tests of which we have just spoken, there

is question of obeying without any motive and of supporting mortifications without any apparent usefulness; both of them in a manner independent of our reason and our judgment. Therefore it means loving obedience for the sake of obedience, mortifications for the sake of mortifications.

The difference between the two cases just explained must be understood. In the first case we were preparing ourselves, testing our souls, learning to know it and to master it; in the second case, we are entering into the path of perfection, attempting more than self-conquest and self-mastery, making a first attempt to get out of our nature and to raise ourselves to a more perfect state.

The obedience of Abraham, who leads his son to a high place in order to offer him as a holocaust; the mortifications of Job, who, deprived of all his goods, became the disgrace of everything about him these are the examples by which we should learn not only to advance, but to sustain ourselves with courage, with calm, with constancy

This idea makes human nature shudder, because this nature's nothing but weakness and nothingness. It has been prepared with great difficulty, we thought it was being ennobled, infinitely elevated, and then, in the fact of the virtues of consummation, on looking at the ground to be covered, at a miserable onset of obedience and mortification, it stops. It is ready to retreat.

We must acknowledge and be intimately penetrated with the realization that it is not from human nature and its strength that genuine virtues, those which lead to consummation, should be expected. It is from grace, only from sanctifying grace. It is enough for nature to annihilate itself and let itself be drawn without resisting as the son of Abraham followed his father, whom nothing but the spirit of God was leading to the place of the commanded sacrifice.

Happy the soul who, thus entering into the virtues of consummation, seems to breathe a new air, who feels already the great difference between her state of preparation, in which she was controlling nature, and that of consummation, in which she will forget human nature in order to put on, if we can say it this way, a divine nature. The fear of not being worthy is her only difficulty.

Once the preparation is reviewed and verified in this way, it is necessary to start also reviewing and verifying the purification.

ARTICLE 2: *Review of the purification*

Preparation, so to speak, grasps hold of the soul and attacks its great defects; purification hunts for the deadly roots of evil and the tiny seeds of virtue, to root out the one and try to nurture the other.

When it is time to progress to the virtues of consummation, we have seen how necessary it is to verify in the first place the state of preparation.

At the same time, verifying the state of purification is something no less important. Here we will recall only what was said for the review of preparation which should be applied to the review of purification.

The work of purification will be examined by the summary that the subject can give of it, by the notes kept in a confidential register, and by the experience and judgment of those most skilled in this matter.

In the review of purification, as in that of preparation, the examination must give as its results three chief points of view:

- At what point did the subject begin when entering into the spirit of religion and piety?
- What obstacles did she experience, either from her interior or from without, and did she overcome them?
- At what state has she now arrived?

Even if the review of purification is the same as the review of preparation in its manner of proceeding, as we have just seen, it is different in its matter; and it demands in this respect a development particular to itself.

We have seen that purification bears on:

- Indolence in the state one has arrived at, and the malice of the causes of this indolence;
- Our weaknesses, our inclinations, our uncertainties;
- Contrarieties, suggestions, and temptations which come to us.

The subject who is constantly restive and shackled in this purification or in one of the parts which constitute it is not yet called to virtues which develop without servitude and without constriction. Consummation of the virtues is not open to her. The faulty admission to the pursuit of the virtues of consummation would be for such a person the source of a deadly illusion.

You do not enter into high perfection with indolence regarding the state you are already in; you do not enter with insensibility to the malice that this indolence contains. You do not presume to pursue the consummation of the virtues when you do not know how to make the consummation of the virtues when you do not know how to make up for weakness by the strength of God; to hinder or destroy inclinations by the abasement of nature, from which they all spring; to leave behind all uncertainty when necessary, by abandoning yourselves to the advice of those who have been given to you by God to guide you on this earth. You are only a half-Christian, you are far from consummation, if you do not know how to oppose contrarieties by long-suffering, maligning and subtle suggestions by a firm purpose of doing good, temptations of all kinds by acts contrary to them.

When you draw on the source of grace, when you are surrounded by all kinds of helps and you do not break the miserable bonds that have just been spoken of, to presume to pursue

the virtues of consummation (except from far off and as one who is powerless) is to misjudge perfection, to be ignorant of its importance, to want to take a place at the table of the spouse without a wedding garment, to take at this same table a higher place from which you will have to go down with shame.

We take for granted that for purification we need to review the conditions fulfilled, as we have done in the case of the review of preparation. Let us suppose a soul who every day is more fearful of not pleasing God and more desirous of making herself worthy of God, all of whose acts rest on the strength of the Almighty, whose nature and inclinations abate and come imperceptibly to nothing, who entrusts her uncertainties to the authority that God has left upon earth to resolve them, who maintains kindness and patience if she is crossed, who recalls her good resolutions if opposite suggestions come to her, who opposes temptations of pride by immediate acts of humility, temptations of distrust by faith in the promises, discouragement by hope for all that is in heaven, every passion by calling on God and the virtue under attack – the purification is perfect.

But it is necessary, before committing ourselves to the way of consummation, to stop for a moment, to test, review, verify, as we did in regard to preparation. “Who will be worthy to enter into the tabernacle?” exclaims David. “It will be,” continues the prophet, “the one who is without stain and is clothed with justice...”

What is the condition for going all the way to the consummation of virtues? It is to be innocent in nature and then to put on justice like a garment – if the garment were ever taken off, it would bring about the shame of nakedness, its being torn off would be the greatest cause for affliction.

In order to test and verify the purification, we will not be content with asking the subject what each article of purification consists in – something which, however, she should know in an easy and imperturbable manner. We will not be content with the application of the rules which the subject has been able to make to her conduct during the work of purification.

We must in addition find tests appropriate to the purification and of an import similar to or different from (it makes no difference which) the trials indicated above regarding the actuality of the virtues of preparation.

We will give three examples:

The first object of purification is to deliver ourselves from the state of indolence in regard to the degree of virtue in which we are, and to substitute the always renewed fear of not pleasing God as much as we would desire, by the sense of what God's goodness has given us.

To test this, we will follow up the conduct of the subject in the change of occupations that will have been given to her in view of testing her obedience and her support of mortifications, or in view of anything else. One of the occupations will be more in line with her tastes or her ability, the other will be less so.

In taking occupations in live with her tastes or abilities, her fear – if thoroughly purified – will be to dedicate her efforts to and satisfy some acquired talent and its natural enjoyment, rather than enjoy the satisfaction which comes from obedience and submission to what has been commanded.

If the subject goes on to the works which she knows how to do less well and which are less to her taste, her fear of displeasing God will diminish in proportion as her lack of success in the work gives her more reason to humiliate herself.

If, on the contrary, the fear of being displeasing in the eyes of God decreases because of better success in exterior things, if lack of success brings about an inexplicable distress, if it gives rise to a confusion that is produced by the fear of secret pride or of less esteem from people, the purification is not very far advanced.

When the test is finished, we must instruct the subject and set her back to work arousing the desire of pleasing God alone and the fear of not succeeding in this.

The second kind of things subject to purification includes our weaknesses, our inclinations, our uncertainties. We have already seen an explanation of them.

In order to test the state of purification we should not at all hesitate to propose to the subject under examination the things in which her virtues have at times been weaker; those in which her inclinations have shown themselves to be strong, or those in which some ill-broken attachment leaves her in uncertainty and suspends her effort. The greater or lesser promptness in returning to the rules given and also the firmness with which these rules are embraced is the criterion by which we can appraise the degree of purification.

The third kind of things which are the object of purification comes back naturally enough: contrarities, suggestions, temptations.

In order to test a subject in this regard, it suffices to abandon her to herself for a few moments, and to verify what her decisions are when she has to make them spontaneously by herself.

If the rules were not known to her, or if there were not question of testing her degree of purification, we should not try her nor have the appearance of abandoning her: for it is mutual support that guarantees the holiness of Christians, and particularly that of a monastic order.

When, in the majority of the cases which have just been indicated the subject whose degree of purification is being examined does not separate herself from the rule of justice and conduct that has been taught her any more than she would separate herself from her clothing, we may well repeat with the prophet: "Who will be worthy to enter into the tabernacle?" But it will be in order to praise God and bless his mercies.

So that the purification thus verified may be considered sufficient, it is necessary on the part of the subject that the application of the rules which are inculcated should not meet any

resistance of the will, that they should not be unused due to a kind of forgetfulness; but that inexactitude in a few regards in their application should come only from some character defect that seems capable of being corrected in time, such as youthful levity, gaiety, vivacity, or a certain habitual slowness, occasional sadness, etc. Quite a different thing would be ill-humor; caprice; a character that is vain, lazy, inclined to frivolity, infatuated with novelties, inconstant; or any habitual disposition that constitutes a simple but dangerous passion.

The purification is satisfactory when the rules for it are well known and the practice of these rules is habitual, in all cases that are relevant.

The double verification of preparation and purification resembles that which would be made for foundations placed in a ground that is not well-known, but upon which one is planning to raise a large building; once these foundations are tested, understood and judged solid, it is time to act.

We have made sure of the vocation to the perfect state, the soul of the vocation to the perfect state, the soul is prepared, it is purified of that which led to evil and that which harmed the good. There is question now of spelling out for it some rules for going farther, and just as far as it will be able to take itself. This is the object of the third section announced in the division of this part.

3. Entering into the ways of consummation.

Every virtue can be brought to the degree of perfection at which it will be called a consummated virtue. But it is not enough to bring a single virtue to this degree, if the one who exercises it is to be consummated in virtue. In order to come this far it is necessary to carry forward several principal virtues by the same movement, to place oneself in such a state in which all the virtues at once feel the effects of this progress, and that there be at the end not a single one which cannot be exercised easily in a manner analogous to the most perfect and the most habitual.

The virtues by which it is useful to involve ourselves in this work are called virtues of consummation.

In the Institute, the first of the virtues that must be brought to consummation are those which can bring about within us the entire sacrifice of the old self; the others serve for the pure offering that the new self should bring to the feet of God. These two considerations will give place to distinctive rules, which will be the subject of two articles.

1st ARTICLE: Manner of consummating the sacrifice of the old self

The virtues most necessary for this end are those indicated in the Institute, four in number, as having to be included in the virtues of consummation. They were called: humility, modesty, abnegation of self, renunciation of the world. To these four virtues we should first of all direct the movement which, under the aspect of annihilation of the old self, ought to bring about

consummate perfection. The virtues which are their consequences or their companions can be indicated later.

1. Humility

Christian humility is the recognition of our nothingness in all things. Here the definition, as we can easily perceive, includes the rule; but we would be very much mistaken if we believed that its application, in order to arrive at a consummate virtues, is always simple and easy.

The attitude of our nothingness in all things is more reasoning than practice. We agree that it ought to be so; we bring ourselves to will it; but the old self opposes its own annihilation. It quiets down at times, but only to revive on occasions when its nothingness must become more entire.

So we have performed some acts more or less close to humility, but we are not substantially humble. We advance with effort towards Christian Humility; but like shipwrecked swim towards the shores every time we think we have made it we find ourselves borne away by waves that recede and carry us back out to sea.

The attitude of our nothingness, which constitutes Christian humility, is impeded either by ourselves or by a cause coming from outside.

By ourselves, that is, by a secret complacency in our qualities, in the beginnings of virtues or in dispositions that we consider as our own merit, either because we forget from whom they come to us, or because we forget the fragility which can cause us to lose them at any moment.

For the annihilation which Christian humility brings about in all things, we must have always present the source from which all comes and the cause that sustains all; let nothing in the habit of our virtues take the place of this source an cause and mix in with it.

Good qualities, virtues, dispositions toward good – all come from God, all are preserved by God. Since we receive all these things from God and preserve them through God, our attitude, - if we desire these things, have obtained them, or recall them – ought to be that of praising God and humbling ourselves, an attitude of gratitude in the sight of our own total powerlessness.

Like a straw which for a time is unbroken and does not yet become the plaything of the winds nor matter for the trash-heap; the storms roll above it, nights and days succeed one another to make it grow or to refresh it, it serves as a delicate stem for the grains that will crown it, covered with gold for its coating, strong and gracefully shaped, despite all its slenderness – what will it become if a hot wind wilts it before its maturity, or breaks it before the total formation of the grain which it should soon present as an offering: Thus in the designs of God, the soul is the organ of the richest productions in the moral order; but just as powerless as the straw to create itself, it is limited to what it has received and has no other

merit of its own except that of faithfully fulfilling its destiny, always and with a holy fear, crowning itself with fruits which will justly glorify only the author of all these things.

If this appears to us to have been the rule after the creation and before the fall of man and woman how much more should its truth be perceived in the order of the redemption brought about by Jesus Christ. This God-made-man has brought upon earth the teaching and the example of Christian humility. He has taught that turning in on oneself to attribute to self any kind of merit is an abomination, a great theft of what is due exclusively to God the Father, and an impiety that sets one in the place where God alone should reign.

Human nature was by the pride of our first parent so degraded, the ways to sanctity and justice for us were so corrupted, that the outpouring of grace was necessary for this nature to stop making an idol of itself – the most extensive idolatry that has been established on earth.

But one who has the grace and revelation of Jesus Christ, who is regenerated by the blood of this divine Savior, who wishes to stop being the old self: what should she add to this teaching of humility that the words and example of our Christ have given us, if not to practice it at every moment of her life, to attribute nothing to herself because all is God's and comes from God, to destroy in her soul the most indirect seeking for self-satisfaction, the slightest ideas that put us in the place of the author of good and let us feel complacency in it – a complacency in idolatry even when it would be transitory, slight, almost imperceptible.

The attitude of Christian humility and of our nothingness is not only hindered by the weakness of our nature, but also by causes that come from outside of us.

The language of people, all their dealings in the whole of society – do they not consist in attributing or refusing mutually to one another the merit of their good qualities or of their respective actions? This corrupting language is in a way like the air we breathe; we don't know how to cleanse it of what is baneful and most deadly. If some, a small number, bring to bear a certain restraint and some propriety, how many others push their manner of speaking even to adulation! From this terrible and fatal point of view, social dealings are like a burning furnace, from which it would take a miracle to bring us out safe and sound.

If you are convinced of your nothingness and if grace in solitude has penetrated, steeped you so to speak, with Christian humility- Oh, close your ears to the subtle accents of idolatry, consider as a deplorable idolatry any praise that is not addressed to God and God alone; pray for those who are in error; reject the opinion that they want you to share; say in the depths of your heart, say also with your mouth if you have any right to speak, say with an accent of conviction: God is all and we are nothing. Praise is an evil road if it is not directed to God alone. It is quite enough for one to be justified before the Lord's justice, in the sense that one has a clean conscience, and if mercy covers one's sins.

In the Institute and especially among the subjects who are admitted to work at their consummation in virtue, one must study how to correct, to change all language that verges, no matter how little, on adulation. We must regard as a plague those praises which the world calls delicate and which form the most subtle poison in their crafty course.

We should reply to praises by referring the praise back to God alone. She who listens to them without this referral is wanting in the work of consummation. She who permits herself to dally with praise should no less reproach herself and make it less the object of accusation on the plea that she had little will or pleasure in doing it. If she was merely the organ of Satan, she should humble herself and consider whether the levity and indiscretion which the tempter used was not a faulty cause in her, one that she should correct.

The consummation of virtue (we must really be on guard here) does not close up its treasure within itself, and we do not advance to consummation if we do not give powerful support, and as much as grace prompts, to the virtue of others.

The attitude of our nothingness in everything, in every action, without secret complacency in our good qualities or in our seeds of virtue or in the dispositions or good that we experience—that is what, constantly practiced, will constitute our Christian humility. To relate all things to God the creator and preserver, to Jesus Christ the only Son, author of grace, to the Holy Spirit who has been sent to us. To regard as abomination and idolatry the hollow attribution to our selves of anything at all among the gifts and virtues; never to receive this adulation from another without rejecting it immediately; not to let it come near; to find ourselves powerless to give flattery to any creature; to abhor the exchange of it that would be established with the companions of our activities – these are the constituents of humility brought to consummation.

2. Modesty

Modesty is the manner of accepting and bearing the advantages which we think are due to ourselves.

Modesty in exterior signs, to which this name is given, can very often be the expression of the humility we have just explained, either because the well-perceived nothingness of our interior qualities removes our pretenses and makes us repel praise, or because the well-known nothingness of some exterior physical advantages hides them from ourselves and shelters them from all regard under the livery of modesty. This exterior modesty, whether it comes from humility or from a natural or acquired disposition, is a quality prized in the world by discriminating judges; but it is precious in another manner in virgins consecrated to the Lord.

This quality manifested exteriorly, which has a powerful effect, it nevertheless not the thing which we are here concerned with in order to bring it to its consummation. Our power is rather limited in regard to our exterior habits, once time has confirmed them.

We are concerned here with the habitual attitude of modesty, which becomes an excellent and profound virtue of the soul and which can be perfected. The virtue of modesty undoubtedly brings assistance to humility and to chaste reserve; but, lending itself with the

same usefulness to all the other virtues, it is like the glaze that harmlessly covers leaves and flowers and keeps them from being changed..

The active and delicate attitude of the soul which is called modesty finds its perfection in its quickness, its sensitivity and the defense by which it opposes attacks, and the criterion which it uses to condemn or to tolerate.

Quickness in being moved: Modesty aims to protect the other virtues from attacks of self-love which soils them, perverts them, and at best leaves them only a false luster. Safeguard and sentinel of the holiness of our virtues, placed next to the active and subtle enemy who attacks them, it cannot let itself nod without everything being at every moment in danger. To move even at a false alarm assures the security of a besieged place. To move with the speed of light, which shines out and pierces everything it touches – that is the first and most precious quality of modesty.

Self-love, they say, is very susceptible; it thinks itself wounded by an approach as much as by an outright attack. Modesty, which opposes self-love within us, should, if possible, be in no way inferior to it in watchfulness. The mechanism that joins the various faculties of our soul should not permit self-love to stir unless modesty is around in advance, just as the movement of a clock makes the clapper rise before the bell can ring.

Slowness of modesty in moving lets self-love take the field. Humility will come slowly and reflectively to repair a part of the evil; modesty aroused opportunely would prevent it entirely.

The quickness of modesty in moving is one of its perfections.

Sensitivity in perceiving what is attacking it: This is another precious quality of modesty. Sensitivity in perceiving attacks in which modesty is compromised does not consist in taking immediately to oneself an allusion, a story, an example in which we are not being thought of, but which our foolish self-love unreasonable applies to us. On the contrary, that is a failing against modesty, which we are very often the last to perceive. Sensitivity here would consist rather in not suspecting, not wondering if the allusion, the story, the example, or any other concoction of flattery could possibly concern us.

Sensitivity consists in perceiving within ourselves the least or worthless opposite qualities that leave us strangers to the example. Sensitivity means not to go on to a half-complacency, but to perceive the danger, the carelessness, and – if we may put it so – the poison.

Promptness in defending itself; As modesty under attack is revealed immediately by a blush on the face, so it should be revealed by the disavowal which the soul would give to the word or action that aroused this movement.

Criterion which rules it: The characteristic of this criterion is always to be lower in the estimation of our advantages than others would want. She is not modest who thinks herself more or as much as others estimate her to be.

If modesty considered from a human point of view should move, perceive, defend itself and apply its criterion with speed and exactness, what should be said of the attitude of modesty in the Christian? What must be thought of it in the Daughters of Mary?

Modesty will reign in the heart and in the countenance, in the attitudes of the soul and in the habits of the body. It will always be present in perpetual watchfulness.

There is no question, in regard to the modesty of virgins in the Institute, of considering, appraising their virtues or their good qualities – Christian humility has annihilated these before God. There is question of knowing the attitude with which they will receive the graces, which in their abundance do not come from their merit, but which in their favor sometimes shine forth in the bosom of the convent.

I am the handmaid of the Lord, let God's designs for me be accomplished: that is the manner you should maintain in order to imitate your divine protectress. That is and that will always be the great lesson of modesty: you will cooperate in the works of God as God's Handmaid; it is God's designs and not yours that will be accomplished. If they shine forth in you or if you are their instrument, are you not the straw loaded down by cooperation with the marvels brought about by God, your eye being unable to follow his hand - the straw loaded down with more riches and more crowns than it can possibly bear?

The attitude and the practice of modesty in this state will be brought to the consummation which this virtue can attain.

3. Abnegation of self

When Christian humility and holy modesty have received their rules or formed their habits, there remains the task of directing our appetites and our wills; it is in their regard that abnegation becomes necessary. "If anyone wants to be a follower of mind, let him renounce himself and...follow me: (Mt 16:34).

A truly religious person should renounce her wisdom, her mind, her will, comforts, luxury, delicacies, her viewpoint, her desires, her curiosity, every preference. Abnegation of self includes the whole system of mortifications: the mortified life consists in renouncing oneself perpetually..

If, in the preparation for the life which the Daughters of the Institute should lead, they were instructed and committed to the support of mortifications, it does not mean that they should stop there in their growth toward perfection.

Their virtue will be consummated only by the accomplishment of the entire designs of Jesus Christ, their divine Spouse. They no longer need the support of mortifications, but the love of them. We acquire this love by renouncing ourselves. We renounce ourselves by giving up attachment to our body and attachment to our own will.

Attachment to our body. We are not in the convent in order to have more comforts than we would have in the world. We have embraced the cross of Jesus Christ. To get free by a thousand satisfactions indiscreetly requested of superiors is to renounce the cross of Jesus Christ and not to renounce oneself.

Abnegation in what concerns the body consists in not worrying about it, nor about the comforts that it seeks. Every delicacy in drinking, in eating, in the daily customs of life should be crucified. Small discomforts are offered to God alone, in the realization that they don't amount to much. Sicknesses that require help are accepted with resignation. We should not deny them, nor disguise their symptoms. They present themselves of their own accord and we relate faithfully their beginning, their progress, their variations and the principal circumstances.

But to request a dispensation from rising and from morning exercises because of insomnia, to refuse to do the work of one's office because of an endurable pain, to have oneself cared for like a sick person for fear of a sickness that is on its way, and other like things – is this carrying the cross of Jesus Christ? Is this being dead to oneself? Is it not a demonstration of one's attachment to life and an extreme sensibility to the slightest evils that accompany it? Daughters of Mary, free yourselves from this excessive and subjection to your body, think of spiritual things, renounce at the outset the most abject part of your existence.

Attachment to our will: The abnegation of yourselves should be more complete, because this is possible. Your will has no necessities which must be obeyed despite yourself. It can and it should be entirely immolated. To will what God wills, to refer to the order of the Superiors to whom obedience has been promised – that is what your heart and all exterior movements should confirm.

What can God give you that would be harmful to you? God is your Father, the ruler of all things.

On the other hand, what can you ask of God that should knowingly and infallibly turn to your greatest good? Will you ask God for sufferings? They will destroy you if consolations and interior joys? They may not turn to your salvation, if you need trials to strengthen you. By the weakness of your nature, you are in the state of calling good what is bad, and calling bad what is good. The sacrifice of your will will leave only the will of God, who is your Father.

FURTHER READING
ON FATHER CHAMINADE'S
METHOD OF DIRECTION

The virtues of consummation are more fully treated in a document entitled "Direction of the Institute of Mary" preserved in the novitiate notebook of Father Charles Rotha and published in ***Marianist Direction***, volume 2, paragraphs 1012-1051.

"In His Likeness", a booklet by Father Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, presents a faithful contemporary synthesis of the method of direction in a practical and easily accessible way. Use of this booklet is particularly recommended for teaching and practicing the method.

**DOCUMENT 16: "Three Conferences of Fr. Chaminade to
the Daughters of Mary on
Perfection and the Spirit of the Institute"**
(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 2, nos. 1132-1180)

We have no historical data on these three conferences, which must have been given of Agen during one of the Founder's visitations in the early days of the Marianist Sisters. The text is translated from a copy of these conferences kept in the Archives of the Society of Mary.

The first conference gives an overview of the virtues and then develops the virtues of preparation. The other two conferences give us access to the very teaching of the Founder himself on spiritual growth.

THREE CONFERENCES OF
FATHER CHAMINADE
TO THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY
(on perfection and the spirit of the Institute)

First Conference

For the greater glory of God, the salvation of neighbor, abnegation of self, and obedience.
"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

This was the text that our good Father took for the first conference he gave us on perfection. Jesus Christ, addresses these words in his Gospel to all Christians, but he makes them a

precept for all religious, so that we are obliged to tend to this desirable perfection of our heavenly Father; we will never succeed in attaining it, but we should work at it without interruption and make it our principal occupation: in order to encourage ourselves for this work, we must consider what that perfection is to which we are called, and what means we should use to attain it.

1. Perfection consists in taking off the old self and putting on the new; now, what is the old self? It is that corrupted nature which our father Adam has left us. We must therefore deal death to this nature, take it off entirely so that the new Adam may be formed in us. What is this new man? It is Jesus Christ. The old self was earthly because it was formed from the earth, the new self is all heavenly, because it comes from heaven. The first seeks only those things which can satisfy itself, the second finds its pleasure in depriving itself of them; the first seeks the esteem of creatures, the second desires only their scorn, finally the first is attached to all that is passing, continually groveling on the earth, the second, on the contrary, scorns all that is on the earth, rises incessantly towards eternity, towards God who it is its heavenly Father.

Let us turn away, then from this miserable earth, let us look to things from above, let us no longer grovel like slaves.

But what means do we have to bring about this death and acquire this beautiful perfection? Those which the Institute offers us. And if we pretended to look for them elsewhere, we would be under an illusion, we would exhaust ourselves in vain, we would seem to make much progress, but all this work would come to nothing, because we would not be working according to the order (of our vocation).

What then, is this order that we should follow? It is this: first, exercise ourselves in the virtues of preparation, which are silence, by which we succeed in silencing within ourselves all the indiscreet voices that keep us from listening to our God and which also makes us mistresses of ourselves and of the passions that wage war against us.

Recollection (is the second), not the recollection which makes one absorbed in God, but the recollection of our Institute, which consists in re-collecting or bringing together the efforts we have made in the practice of the virtues proposed by us, in seeing where we are, what is strong and what is weak. The practice of this virtue makes us know ourselves, it gives means to remedy the evils of the soul; because if I see that I am weak in one point and strong in another, I bring my strength to bear on the area of my weakness, and I remedy the evil which would have grown much without the knowledge that recollection has given us.

The third virtue of preparation is obedience, but which we put ourselves entirely at the disposal of our superior, so that they may help us conquer our nature and prescribe the remedies which we do not have the courage to use ourselves.

Support of mortifications is the fourth. We must be courageous to practice it and have a great desire for our own annihilation. A religious animated with this attitude begs her Superiors not to spare her, she consents to being mortified, humiliated, contradicted in every way; provided nature dies and grace triumphs, what difference does it make?

These four virtues are called virtues of preparation, because they actually do nothing but prepare a soul to put on that beautiful robe of justice which is perfection. When a soul is thus prepared, it has done only a small portion of the work. It must start again with new ardor, or pass through a second period, which is purification.

Purification consists in an assiduous work that we perform upon ourselves in precise self-examinations, in order to discover the roots of evil and its characteristics. In preparation we have done nothing but cut off the branches, but in purification we seek out the little roots in order to dig them up and destroy them.

To make us understand better, the good Father drew a comparison for us between the root of our vices and couch-grass. That horrible plant, he said, clings so tightly to the ground that, if you have the misfortune to miss a very small shoot, it reproduces itself immediately and the field in which you left it is covered a week later with this grass and with more of it than before.

It is the same with our vices; we have done nothing if we only clip them, or if at the time when we actually dig up the roots, we leave some of them hidden in the soil of our hearts. For this reason it is necessary in purification to examine carefully not only faults but also the causes that make us commit them, and we must be determined on their destruction. We need great courage and good will, but the sight of that mountain on which we will find our God should indeed animate us for this work.

After the work of purification, we must begin the (final) labor, or rather the sacrifice. Up to this point we have only tied the victim to the funeral pyre; we have tied it well, but we must give it the death-stroke.

Humility, chaste abnegation of self, renunciation of the things of this world, and poverty are the four virtues which our Institute names virtues of consummation, which completely annihilate the old self and reclothe the soul which possesses them with justice, making it suitable for the formation within itself of the new self, who is Jesus Christ. Then the soul, having come to this point, lives only by faith, hope and love!

Beautiful life, truly happy! Oh, who will give us the power to imitate it and to walk as Daughters of Mary, in the footsteps of our Mother, to live and die of love! This should be our whole desire and the aim of our prayers, but even more, the aim of all our actions. Let desirable perfection to which our God calls us. In the morning, on arising, far from letting ourselves go in our sluggish pace, let us say to ourselves; O my soul, consider the work you have today; God calls you to perfection and wishes, through intimate union with you, to make you a participant in God's Divinity. What an honor! What a glory! O my God, I hasten and I am resolved to use well this new day that you give me.

Our good Father reminded us of the flight of Elijah into the desert; having arrived at a place, overcome by drowsiness and the fatigue of the journey, he fell asleep. An angel came to awaken him, saying these words: "Arise and eat because you have yet a great journey to

make." Elijah arises, eats, and goes back to sleep; but the angel awakens him again and says to him for the second time, "Arise and eat." And, having finished the rest of the bread, he felt himself so strengthened by the heavenly food that he walked for forty days, at the end of which he arrived on Mount Horeb, where he saw God: this one moment made up of all his toils and pains. This mountain was a figure of perfection.

Our good Father told us that the virtues of preparation and the work of purification are half of the bread of Elijah, that we ought to eat it and not remain there, but finish it entirely, that is, acquire the virtues of consummation in order to arrive at that desirable mountain where we will see our God. He gave us to understand the sweetness experienced by a soul which enjoys only one moment with its God; this instant, so short, is yet so lovely that it makes up for all the pains that we may have suffered. He recalled that St. Francis Xavier would not have thought anything too much in order to gain one of these happy moments, which remain engraved in the memory throughout life. That is that holy repose, that sleep, or better that sweet ecstasy which Adam was enjoying when God took one of his ribs to form the first woman; and which symbolized the sleep of Jesus Christ, on the tree of the Cross, with his side open, from which came forth his holy spouse, the Church.

Second Conference

No one will be crowned, if one has not fought valiantly.

What is the crown which we are told is promised only to those who fight? How beautiful and enviable it is! How powerful is the hope of one day wearing it upon our heads to encourage us to do the work necessary to acquire it! We can judge its brilliance and beauty by the hand of the laborer who fashions it, because a thing is beautiful and valuable in proportion to the ability of the one who makes it.

But what we should notice here is that God, who has formed it, works on it only in so far as we furnish God the flowers and pearls. It is then, in our own interest to be active, to gather those precious stones that must serve to embellish this immortal crown which our divine Spouse, who is the king of heaven, will place upon our heads.

But what are these flowers, these pearls, these precious stones, if not the strength we will show in overcoming nature, the patience in bearing contradictions, the constancy we will use in rooting up our evil tendencies, and finally the assiduous labor in dealing death to the old self.

All these details frighten our cowardly nature, but let us raise our eyes, let us consider the crown suspended over our heads, and let us say to ourselves: Well then, would I wish, for the satisfaction of a moment, for the sake of gratifying my nature, to lose that crown, or even to diminish its luster and deprive myself by my laziness of as many degrees of glory as the acts of virtue I would fail to practice, of as many degrees of glory as they were occasions of conquering myself? Let us then revive our courage, let us conform to the benevolent designs of mercy that God has for us.

What ought to fill us with love and gratitude towards God is the pleasure that God takes in forming our crown. God seems to delight in working on it, judging by the length of time that God uses for it. It is not that God is not powerful enough to form it at once; God needs only to say a word in order to create this vast universe and reproduce it at any moment. A single act of the will would suffice, then, but God does not think this is enough. God wishes to use all our lifetime for it. O the goodness, the love of our God! Who can fail to be moved by such an excess, who can fail to take the resolution to repay God by great fidelity?

But what is the work we must do to merit this crown, and what are the enemies that we have to fight? The work is purification, which was explained in the preceding conference. The enemies are very strong and numerous; hence we need a very special grace of God, and, at the same time, a noble courage to conquer the enemies and to bring ourselves to combat with the strength of God, under whose protection and standard we are fighting.

Among all the enemies that war against us, we can count six principle ones, to which all the others are related. Three are interior and three exterior. The first three, which form the subject of this conference, are called our weaknesses, our evil inclinations, and our uncertainties. These ordinarily dwell in our hearts; that is why it is very difficult to be victorious over them and that is why we usually are inclined to hide them from ourselves, whereas we ought to put all our attention on knowing them well in order to rid ourselves of them.

What are the weapons which we will use against our enemies? Our venerable Father gave them to us, or pointed them out to us. But before using these weapons against their contraries, it is necessary to know them well; and that is precisely the work. First, our weaknesses – they are great; and, since the sin of Adam, they are such that we can do nothing for salvation unless God especially helps us. So let us recognize that, despite all our good desires and all the resolutions which we continually formulate, we fall. It is said that the just person sins seven times a day, which proves the great weakness of the human being. How many great falls do we see, even among the greatest saints! Witness St. Peter, the head of the Church, who had protested that he would follow his Master even to death, and the voice of a servant-girl cause him to make a frightful denial of his Savior, a denial which cost him so many tears. We are reduced to that! What will we become with such a terrible enemy?

The remedy that we ought to use against our weakness is a great confidence in God, who is all-powerful and who has no greater desire than to help us. Of ourselves, we can only fail and fall; but, if we lean upon God, who could harm us? Let us then revive our complete confidence. We have so many reasons for it: the goodness of our God, the power, the experience we have had of God's protection, even at the times when we should have least expected it – everything prompts us to this tender confidence, in order to move us to it. God actually wishes to call himself our Father, and the most tender of Fathers; Nothing displeases God so much as distrust in God's goodness. I even say, nothing offends God so much.. On the contrary, God's mercies and graces rain down abundantly on a soul that casts all its troubles upon God's heart. O how sweet it is to have this God of love for a friend and comforter. Whoever places confidence in God will never perish.

In order to encourage us to practice this virtue, our good Father said that however difficult the thing we are told to do is, whatever difficulty we find in practicing the virtues or in removing our faults, we should not say that we are unable. God is all-powerful, and is ready to give us all the graces we will need.

Every time, he said again, that God give us a responsibility or commands something, God always puts grace to work in the direction of the command. Do you believe that God does not know that you are incapable of carrying out what God desires of you? No, of course it isn't that, but why does God command you to do things of which you are incapable? It is because God is powerful and intends to help you, provided that you ask God's help in full confidence. Have this confidence, then; reflect often on the motives that ought to revive it in your heart; ask it of God, who will not refuse a grace that God is so desirous of giving you.

The second enemy that wears upon us, or rather the second set of enemies, is our evil inclinations. Alas, we need only enter into ourselves and examine our hearts; what will we see? What evil inclinations, perverse tendencies, a leaning towards all that can lead us to evil; so that, if we should wish to practice virtue and walk in the good, we must perform the same kind of work, which is very painful since they (i.e. virtue and good) go against the current that ordinarily carries along all that it encounters. It is the same as, when we wish to walk on a straight path, we must guard against our leanings, which, like a swift stream, would draw us to the precipice if we did not take care..

Father Chaminade told us in this connection something horrifying which makes us see clearly that when we give in to our inclinations in little things, we run a great risk of falling completely in great things. I knew a priest, he said, and I even went to confession to him when I saw him the first time, he did not edify me. Nevertheless he performed his duties well, but he had about him something indefinable that seemed to foretell his downfall. I did not dwell upon these thoughts, and I chased them from my mind. I was not wrong, unfortunately, during the revolution, that priest was one of the worst culprits. He found himself following his inclinations when the revolution began; he felt himself slipping little by little; finally the torrent carried him off. He lost himself completely and became even more bad than he had been good and in a holy state; for, as is ordinarily recognized, the more precious a liquor is, the more thoroughly it spoils.

What should we oppose to these evil inclinations, and what remedies are most helpful in correcting them? Vigilance and distrust of ourselves. Father Chaminade told us the following, to make us understand the dangers that we run when we are not vigilant and do not distrust ourselves. What would you think of a person on the bank of a river, who, seeing a swirling of water which is evidence that the place is very dangerous (because ordinarily there are deep drops), would wish to go closer to look at it? What would happen? At the least turn of the head she would fall into the whirl and be swallowed up. Now would you not think that such a person was foolish and that she loved herself very little to expose herself in such a way for her satisfaction?

We are surrounded by precipices. We walk on a slippery ground which continually draws us toward the abyss; and we walk there fearlessly, we let ourselves give in to little things.

Today we grant our nature one satisfaction, tomorrow it will demand another, and thus little by little we slip without realizing it, and if we are following our evil inclinations at the time of a violent temptation, we will certainly be dragged down and lost.

Let us then repress and remove everything that leads us to evil so that the road on which we travel may be smooth. For this end, let us distrust ourselves, let us not be so certain that we will triumph over our enemies. In your prayer and resolutions you do not realize, said our good Father again, that you do not distrust yourselves. For example, after communion you are very fervent, you promise our Lord to correct one of your faults, it seems to you that nothing will be able to make you change your resolution. Nevertheless, it will happen very often that on the first occasion you will forget all the good sentiments that animated you.

Well, it isn't difficult to understand. It is just that you do not recall that besides sanctifying grace which animates the soul there is an actual grace which sometimes leads us to noble attitudes. Then we make a promise to God and have the intention of being faithful, but what happens? Actual grace ceases; we are left to our weakness, and we do nothing. Why is it that souls who raised themselves like eagles and undertook great things have suddenly fallen and abandoned their good intentions in discouragement? It is because they have mistaken actual grace for their own power.

Do not be surprised if, when you feel a holy impulse and desire to do a good work, you cannot afterwards put it into practice. Remember that besides the grace that inspired this good work in you, another particular grace is necessary to carry it out, which God wants you to ask for. And do not forget that it often happens that God grants the desire, the inspiration to do a good work at any time, although God wishes us to execute it only at another time. Thus, for example, God inspires a person to leave the world to consecrate herself to God's service, but God does not give her the grace of strength to break her attachments. Then the person who has had this inspiration must wait impatiently on the moment of grace, asking for it with submission and humility, knowing that she is capable of nothing. But if on the contrary she wants grace and then she wishes to go farther than grace will take her, she will be filled with trouble because of her inability to arrive at the goal she first proposed to herself. She will torture herself and place herself in danger of being deprived, at the time God had appointed, of that grace with which all would have succeeded and without which, even with all her efforts, she can do nothing.

Thus when you feel that grace moves you, be faithful in corresponding to its movements, but with great distrust of yourself. Ask God to give you the grace to accomplish what God inspires you to do, and believe that despite your good desires and your good will, you will do nothing unless the Lord gives you strength and courage and unless you ask God for it with great distrust of yourself.

Father Chaminade told us that, no matter what degree of perfection a soul has reached, it would certainly be lost if it did not have this distrust. He went even farther, for he said that if St. Teresa or St. Francis Xavier came down to earth at this moment to serve God, they would be lost in all their perfection if they did not distrust themselves and have the firm belief that they could do nothing without the grace of God.

O my God, give us, then, this virtue which is so necessary for us, without which we will do no good, and with which we will attain great sanctity, because you take pleasure in pouring out your graces on those who, thinking themselves capable of nothing, place all their confidence in you! For whoever hopes in God will never be confounded.

After weaknesses and evil inclinations come uncertainties, which greatly impede our advancement and slow us down on this beautiful road of perfection. But where do these uncertainties come from? From pride, which does not wish to humble itself to the point of looking for a guide; or, if at least it has one, thinks that it is more clear-sighted than its guide. "Those who wish to be their own guide," says our Holy Rule, "proceed, or are in danger of proceeding, very badly." Surely, our venerable Father told us, if I wish to go all alone to a house I do not know, it will take me a long time to arrive; because, instead of going directly, I would take a wrong turn when I think I am there, and I would perhaps discover that I was farther from the house which I had planned to visit than before leaving. I would have walked and been tired out for nothing. This will not happen to me if, instead of going alone, I take a guide; then I will not need to bother myself looking for the road or asking people where I must go. I will peacefully follow the guide and arrive without any difficulty. In the same way our uncertainties on the path of perfection will cease if we know how to submit to obedience and be docile to the voice of our superiors.

Third Conference

Be courageous in battle if you wish to have the crown of life.

Run in such a way that you may win the prize. What is done by those who take part in the race? They all run, but there is only one who wins the prize. You can all win it, provided you run and be courageous in fighting the enemies that war against you. But in what manner should this war be fought? According to the ways of the Institute and following the method it indicates, all having the same spirit helping and supporting one another in combat in order to overthrow our enemies. For she who would pretend to conquer by using means different from those proposed by the Institute, even if they were more perfect, would not succeed and would not attain that beautiful crown prepared for those who are faithful.

The exterior enemies of which our good Father speaks to us are contrarieties, suggestions and temptations. Although they may not be so forceful as the first of which I spoke, because they do not reside in the heart, they are nevertheless very powerful and often cause us deadly wounds if we are not on guard against them.

First, contrarieties are enemies which very often cause virtue to fail, but which make it stronger when we know how to apply to them the remedy which has been proposed to us in the institute. What is this remedy? Long-suffering.

But what do we call contrarities? They are of all kinds and they happen every day and especially in every circumstance. Happy those who know how to make them meritorious by profiting from them through resignation and patience. In this case, far from being harmful, they are very helpful, since they serve to destroy the old self and clothe us again in the new, who is Jesus Christ. Hence we can understand that everything which deals death to nature can be called a contrariety.

Thus sickness, mortifications crosses, difficult of all kinds that come to us – all serve to detach us from the world and from ourselves and make us turn to God; work that we don't know how to do or trials that we do not know how to support without going against our tastes and our sensualities – work or trials which, for the very reason that they go contrary to us, make us pleasing to God, who prefers the sacrifice of ourselves to all the holocausts, that could be offered to God.

Father Chaminade told us in this connection that he had known a person, (a vicar general of Bordeaux, if I recall correctly), who told him one day when he went to see him because he was sick; I thank the Lord that it has pleased God to send me this sickness; it has made me realize that everything is nothing, that there is nothing truly great and worthwhile except that which is eternal. I find myself entirely different, he said again, since God has tried me by this sickness. Nevertheless, he was leading a very regular life; but such trials purify the just and make them continually holier.

It is in affliction that we learn to know ourselves and open our eyes to the truth to see that everything around us is nothing. It is by contrarities that we learn to conquer ourselves and to find out for ourselves whether such virtue as we may have is solid or illusory. God shows us well enough the need for contradictions and trials by placing before our eyes his crucified divine Son for our model and by telling us that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and thus enter into his glory. If then we wish to follow our spouse into glory, we must suffer courageously and generously all that pleases him, without choosing and without laying down conditions. If our hearts are in these dispositions, far from fearing combats, we will love them.

But if we do not yet have these generous attitudes and if our nature revolts at the very word of contrarities or sufferings, what must we do? Arouse it to patience, consider the advantages we find in a cross borne with these dispositions: first, the cross makes us expiate our sins; it also makes us practice virtue; it even makes us find happiness.

All these considerations can help us greatly. But the sight of Jesus Christ suffering and humiliated, more than anything else will teach us to suffer; and the invincible patience he had will encourage us to be patient ourselves. Long-suffering is, therefore, the most salutary remedy which we can use in order to support to the end all that goes contrary to our nature. At death we will rejoice that we have had the means to acquire the crown of life; then we will find ourselves well compensated. For if we could have any regret when we possess (eternal life), it would be that we did not suffer enough. Let that thought encourage us; let us not allow ourselves to be conquered by our cowardice, but rather let us overcome it. And, if the work makes us fearful, let the reward give us courage.

Suggestions are also enemies which can do us great harm. Our good Father told us that it would seem that we should not fear them; because we are separated from the world (if we are faithful in observing them) shelter us from the snares that it would lay for us by its suggestions. Well then, suppose that someone came to speak to us of the pleasures, the finery, the satisfactions that persons of the world claim to enjoy. The error would be a bit gross, too gross to let us be taken in. We would soon recognize the illusions of that suggestion; we would reject it forcefully, and we would be right.

It is not therefore so much the suggestions of people of the world that we should fear; nevertheless, we must not neglect the means that can strengthen us against their poison.

But our holy Founder told us that we could more easily be taken in by suggestions made by lax persons; for example, if a person told you: "You are scrupulous in being so exact in regard to silence. The rule forbids talking, but we may without failing say a few words here and there." Again, in recreation, under the pretext that the rule prescribes gaiety and even laughter, someone may suggest to me that I am not wrong in laughing raucously, that just for the moment I may give myself this relief, omit this exercise, dispense myself from this rule just this once, and so on – a thousand little things which appear to be nothing, which lead to laxity, which make an impression and persuade a heart that is weak and lacking in generosity.

What should we do if such a thing happened to us and if maxims favoring laxity were suggested to us? Return to the rule, propose to observe it, and often reiterate this resolution as the surest means of not falling away from our first attitudes. Be on guard not to stay habitually with persons who pass on to us their evil dispositions. On the contrary, keep with the most regular persons, and profit from their good example. Our good Father mentioned these examples to us only in order to warn us against what could happen as a result, for it may perhaps happen that everyone will not always be regular and will not always love the rule. Then it will be necessary to redouble our vigilance so as not to fall into the snare, which would swiftly put the rule to death. May it please God to preserve us always from such a misfortune, which would be the worst that could befall us.

Temptations, which are the third exterior enemy, ought to be combated most often by scorn that we have for Satan and for the vile things that Satan inspires in us. When we are tempted, we should also have recourse to God, who is all our strength. Temptation will dissipate in a soul that loved God and places in God all its confidence in calling on the Holy Name. Jesus Christ gives us an example of prayer in temptation; the devil approaches him in the desert to tempt him; what does Jesus Christ answer? Words of prayers taken from Holy Scripture; and with these arms alone puts the devil to flight. Let us imitate this Divine Model, and all our enemies, will disappear.

**DOCUMENT 17: “Manual of Direction to the Religious Life
and Virtues in the Society of Mary” – 1829**

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 3, nos.1- 36)

During a visitation in 1829, Father Chaminade established a novitiate for the numerous Marianist candidates coming from Northeastern France and appointed the recently ordained Father Cheveaux as novice-master. For the guidance of the new novice-master, the Founder began the composition of this manual, drawing liberally on spiritual authors of the French School, especially Jean-Jacques Olier.

Father Chaminade’s intention was to provide those charged with formation a series of brief developments on the most essential truths of faith and directives for inculcating these truths. Only the “preliminary notions” were completed (faith, baptism, sin and grace, the Holy Spirit and discernment). Even in its fragmentary state, this Manual provides a rich insight into the Founder’s understanding of the spiritual life and of Marianist formation.

MANUAL OF DIRECTION
TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE AND VIRTUES
IN THE SOCIETY OF MARY
1829

Forward

This Manual should be only in the hands of those who are charged with spiritual direction in the Society of Mary. Selections from it which may be to their advantage can be given to the subjects of the Society. The higher Heads of Office will make use of it in their dealings with the subordinate authorities under their direction.

This Manual presupposes:

1. That the subjects who need direction are full of good will. Nevertheless, the Directors will seek to assure this. They will take the means of maintaining and increasing it, either by exhortation or by instruction. Sometimes it would even be dangerous to explain the beautiful paths of Christian and religious perfection to those who still groan under the tyranny of their passions or who have not yet savored the inestimable gift of their vocation.
2. The Directors will still have to convince their subjects of the fundamental principle that salvation and sanctification are at one and the same time the work of God and the work of the human person: of God, by grace and the light of faith; of the human person, by faithful and constant cooperation with the divine activity. The Director, who should possess both the knowledge of God’s ways of acting and the experience of complete cooperation, does no more than guide subjects in the paths which the guide has already traveled. If a path that is new to

the guide should appear, one would pray, call upon the lights of the Holy spirit, and, if necessary, consult one's own Superior, for a Director should never abandon the subject, especially in doubtful or extraordinary cases.

Preliminary notions

1. On the 2nd and 3rd articles of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary". And eternal life is this: "to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3) "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16)

Note: After some progress in faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ and Mary's divine motherhood, it will be good to pause a little on the last two words of the second article of the Creed: **Our Lord**. Yes, Jesus Christ is our Creator and our Lord and our Master; Jesus Christ is our Creator and our Redeemer. The greatest of masters - one who, out of love, has led us out of nothingness and redeemed us by the price of his blood!

2. Here we may interrupt, so to speak, the plan of direction in order to give some notions about the first three words of the Creed: **I believe in**. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus Christ. They mean that not only do I believe that there is a God, but also I love God and hope in God; that there is a Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, and I love him and hope in him.

Note: As progress is made in the preliminary notions of the plan of direction, more notions about faith will be added. The second notion that might be given, for examples, is summarized in the following three words of the Holy Council of Trent: "Faith is the beginning, the foundation, and the root of all our justification."

3. The Director should retain the word "only" in the second article of the Creed: the "only Son" of the Father. It is indeed a fundamental truth of our faith and our religious that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God and the "only" Son of God, by nature and not by adoption, natural, having the same nature and the same substance as his Father. The Father, in knowing himself, begets his Son, and this begetting is called generation. You are my son, this day have I begotten you (Ps 2:7).

4. Heirs of the disgrace of a guilty parent, we were "by our nature children of wrath" (Ep 2:3). But baptism gives us a new birth, a new life, the spiritual life of the soul. God adopts us and numbers us among the children of God.

See how the heavenly Father has loved us, what charity he has had for us; for he calls us his children, for such we really are by his adopting us at Baptism (1Jn 3:1). As we left the sacred fonts, the Father looked upon us with love and said of us, as of his divine Son: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt 17:5).

Saint Augustine treats in detail the wonderful prerogatives which we receive in Baptism, as follows: "See brothers, what an abundance of benefits Baptism has conferred on you; not only are we free and liberated from the slavery of the evil, but we are also holy. Not only are

we sanctified, but we are children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Not only children of God, but heirs, co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Not only co-heirs with Jesus Christ, but his members, the temples, the organs of the Holy Spirit. O Christians, realize your dignity!"

5. It is of faith that Jesus, the God-man, is the only son of Mary according to the flesh; but she is the Mother of Christians and even, in a sense, of all people. St. Luke, in his account of the Savior's birth, says that Mary brought into the world her first-born son; this should imply other spiritual children.

It is in the same manner that we should understand this passage from the Cantic of Canticles: "Your fertile womb is like a heap of wheat surrounded by lilies" (Sg 7:3). In Mary's most pure womb there was but one grain of wheat; nevertheless, we call it a heap of wheat because all the elect were enclosed in this chosen grain, which was to be called the first-born among many brethren. "A single grain of wheat was in the womb of the Virgin, Christ the Lords; and still it is called a 'heap of wheat' because this grain virtually contains all the elect, so that he is the first-born of many brethren" (St. Ambrose, De Instit. Vir).

She who had borne this unique fruit became, in giving him life, the Mother of a great multitude. "In that one fruit, in that single Savior of all, Jesus, Mary brought forth many unto salvation." Mary, by bringing Jesus our Savior and our Life into the world, has brought forth all of us unto salvation and life." "In bringing forth life, she has brought forth many unto life" (St. William of Newburgh, In Cant. Iv, 13).

Her love, which prompted her to cooperate in the birth of the Church, made her the mother according to the spirit of the Savior's members. "By the Spirit, she is the mother of the members of the Savior because she cooperated by her charity in the birth of the faithful in the Church" (St. Aug, de Virg., cap.6).

Note: While strengthening the faith of his subjects in these great truths, while having them make many acts, the Director will take care to warn them that the acts of faith which they produce must be accompanied by attitudes of the heart. It is faith of the heart that brings about justification (Rm 10:10). Faith of the mind alone does not sanctify. St. James tells us that the devils have faith; faith produces fear and trembling in them (Jm 2:19).

It is this faith that comes from the heart at the same time as from the mind which the Holy Council of Trent said was the root of all our justification: *Radix totius justificationis*. And St. Paul called it the nourishment of the life of the just. "The upright one finds life through faith" (Rm 1:17).

If it is thus with all the truths of faith – if we should believe them all from the heart, even those which are most frightening – with what affection, and tender affection, will we believe those truths which give us the very Mother of Jesus Christ for our Mother. She gave birth to us in giving birth to Jesus Christ, because the life she communicated to her adorable Son was a life of influence.

Mary is the one who became his daughter at the same time that she was his beloved Mother; therefore she was the most excellent copy of that divine original formed in her virginal womb by the Holy Spirit.

She is doubly the mother of Jesus Christ: Mother according to the flesh, Mother according to the spirit. At the same time that our Lord was conceived in her chaste womb according to the flesh, at the very same time he was conceived in her beautiful soul by the operation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ which was none other than the Holy Spirit sent by him in order to bring about within her all his mysteries of annihilation and to make her not only conformed but uniform with himself.

All these mysteries of love were not brought about in Mary without her active participation. They were brought about in her only after she pronounced the Fiat which makes heaven and earth happy. It is her admirable faith that places her in the actual disposition to receive all these benefits from the Most High. "Blessed are you for your believing; all that the Lord has told you shall have fulfillment" (Lk 1, 45)..

How admirable is the faith of the august Mary! She believes in the mysteries announced to her, and these mysteries are accomplished in her, and they are accomplished only because she has believed. Faith, fulfillment: what a lesson for us! The same mysteries have been announced to us; they will be accomplished if we have faith. They will be accomplished, so to say, in proportion to our faith. Our faith contains them substantially. It seems this is what St. Paul wished to teach when he said that faith is the substance of the things for which we hope (Heb 11:1).

6. Since the Christian life is but a continual exercise of mortification, the Director will have to instruct his subjects about what we are as the children of Adam. It is a very certain truth that, since sin, every Adam has been cursed, that is, Adam in all his race, so that whatever there is of him in us is rejected by God, and God's holiness will not accept it.

The soul did not at all originate in Adam, but in God. It was drawn out of God's bosom and placed in the human body, which is descended from Adam, that is why God considers the soul as a daughter or won and is careful to purify it, to cleanse it, to keep it apart, to sanctify it by the grace of the Son, by the sprinkling of his blood, and by the presence of his Spirit, who takes it aside and withdraws it from the stains it has contracted through this alliance.

In this life our rebirth is never perfect, our regeneration is partial, and it will be total and entire only on the day of judgment and universal regeneration! For then our bodies will be renewed, they will be converted and will change their evil inclination of the flesh into inclinations of the spirit; the grace of Baptism does not bring this about.

By baptism our spirit is regenerated and thus it receives new inclinations. It receives the inclinations of Jesus Christ instead of those of Adam, with which it was filled because of its relations with the accursed flesh descended from Adam – a flesh which carries with it the inclinations of its father. We groan within ourselves, says St. Paul, because we experience at every hour the movements of the flesh and the life of our unfortunate father Adam. We groan

because, being already children of God in the spirit, we are not yet such in our bodies, because our flesh has not yet received the inclinations of our Father, and because it is not a participation in the inclinations of our Father, and because it is not a participation in the inclinations which our spirit possesses. "We too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free" (Rm 8:23).

We groan because we are only half-children, "a sort of first fruits of all that he created" (Jm 1:18), and because our bodies are not yet adopted. For they have not received the grace of adoption in its effects and are left here without enjoying, as our soul does, privileges of the redemption of Jesus Christ.

"What is born of the flesh is flesh" (Jn3:6), that is to say, the works of the flesh. The flesh does nothing for us that is useful for eternal life. St. Paul calls it death and flesh of sin, because it leads us to sin. It has in itself no other inclination and movement but to sin.

The works of the flesh, which are brought about in us only by the movements and instincts of the flesh, or even by its prudence are nothing but works of death, and they are regarded by God as proceeding from the evil will of the devil. The devil has corrupted our flesh and has left it the evil inclinations which prompt it to draw us away from God and to put itself in God's place and to seek itself in all things as its final end. "The flesh is never docile to the law of God, and even cannot be so." "It is death to limit oneself to what is unspiritual" (Rm8:7 and 6).

7. To deepen our understanding of these truth, which it is so essential to know, and to bring the work of our sanctification to its consummation, we must often consider our Lord Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and our Repairer.

As Our Redeemer. Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, has rescued us from the power of darkness in order to bring us into His kingdom. "He has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the son that he loves" (Col 1:13).

Let us understand first how people by sin had abandoned God, their lawful master; and how God, in just punishment, had delivered them over to the power of the rebellious angels, who held them captive to have their will with them. This is still the punishment of those who draw away from God by their crimes. Not willing to obey God and to serve God as their sovereign, they are made subject to the power of the spirit world, to the spirits of malice and to the prince of the world, who exercise power over these souls in rebellion against God (Ep 6:12).

There is nothing we can do; we are slaves either of Jesus Christ or of the devil, we have only these two masters. This slavery or captivity of the devil was prefigured by that of the Jewish people under Pharaoh.

It is the law of the spirit of life which is in Jesus Christ that delivers us from the law of the sin (Rm 8:2). The Spirit of the Lord, becoming the master of our spirits and of our hearts,

banishes from them the spirit of the world and subjects our inner movements to the influence of grace. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Co 3:17).

It will only be, properly speaking, at the end of time that our Redemption will be perfect (Rm 8:23). "Hold your head high, because your liberation is near at hand" (Lk 21:28).

As Our Repairer. Jesus Christ has been given to us as a second Adam, in order to repair the disorders in us and the whole universe caused by the sins of the first Adam. We have become sinners by the disobedience of one man, says the Apostle, and so by the obedience of one man we will be made just (Rm 5:19).

The same power, the same hand that had made us was alone capable of repairing the disorder made by sin both in us and, consequently, in the entire universe.

Jesus Christ, has, so to say, molded the human race a second time in his blood, in order to give us our pristine beauty. He renews us by adorning us with his own holiness, his own justice, and his own truth. We renew ourselves, says the Apostle, by putting on again the new self according to the image of the one who created us. "You have stripped off your old behavior with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator: (Col 3:9-10).

As for the disorders caused in creatures by sin, Jesus Christ by an admirable effect of the power of his grace has withdrawn them from the just. He has withdrawn them from the vanity to which sinners are subject despite themselves, having been made to serve their iniquities and having become slaves of their passions. The divine Savior has merited for us by his death the grace to use them (the passions) with moderation and according to the design of their Creator. He will finish this work of repairing at the end of time, when he will purify the whole of this vast universe by the fire which he will send before him, which will renew the face of the earth.

Note: Directors will find frequent occasion to point out to their subjects the seriousness of sin, which is an offense against god, so that they may see what it is through the disorders that follow it and the difficulty of repairing it.

8. It is indispensable to exercise the subjects in faith on the eighth article of the Creed: **I believe in the Holy Spirit.** The light of faith in the Holy Spirit will reveal that the Holy spirit is a third person in God and one God with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Spirit, invisible, unable to be seen or touched, though represented in the Holy Scriptures under sensible forms, a purely spirit substance. The Spirit is a substance inseparable from the Father and the Son, although quite distinct from both of them. This is what makes the Spirit a person in the adorable Trinity. It is a subsistence which can be communicated and which actually is communicated, but always remains inseparably united to the other two persons. It is the Holy Spirit who conforms us to Jesus Christ and makes us live by his own life. "Through (these gifts) you will be able to share the divine nature" (2 P 1:4).

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; that is, from all eternity the Father and the Son produce the Holy Spirit. This is how the Fathers of the Church explain this procession or eternal production of the third person in God: the Father and the Son, knowing themselves from all eternity, also love themselves from all eternity. It is this mutual love that produces the Spirit of Love. In God, this union is a person, and this third person is called the Holy Spirit. It is produced from all eternity and is eternal as the Father and the Son.

It is this Holy Spirit who comes down upon us at baptism, who cleanses us from original sin, who strengthens us at confirmation. It is the spirit who comes into our hearts and our minds when we need light, who illumines and guides us in our conduct, who warms us and animates us with divine fire, who gives us the strength and grace necessary to resist temptations and to practice virtue. It is the Spirit who diffuses in us the gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel fortitude, piety, fear of the Lord, which we call the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The gift of wisdom makes us love the good, virtue, the things of God, and detaches us from the world and from the folly of earthly things.

The gift of understanding makes us understand revealed truths insofar as a limited mind is able, and makes us understand our obligation to believe in them, on the word of God, despite their measure of obscurity and impenetrability to our reason.

The gift of knowledge clarifies for us the duties of Religion and the path we must take to reach heaven.

The gift of counsel directs us in the various decisions we must make and in the choice of what can best contribute to the glory of God and to our own true advantage.

The gift of fortitude strengthens us against dangers, obstacles, temptations, difficulties, weaknesses, discouragements, and miseries which would overwhelm us were it not for this divine support.

The gift of piety makes us have a heartfelt love for the Lord and the practices of holy worship, and procures for us consolation, pleasure, joy, and ease in everything connected with the service of God.

The gift of holy fear – filial respect mixed with love – which makes us fear to displease or to offend God, to incur God’s disgrace and vengeance. Fear is a beginning of wisdom and of right living (Ps 111:10).

Note 1: The Director will take great care that his subjects do not place obstacles to the lights of the Holy Spirit, by their levity, their dissipation, their sins, their resistance to the spirit’s inspirations. For this “Spirit breathes where it wills” (Jn3:8). The Spirit’s pure rays do not ordinarily penetrate through a conscience that is corrupted, soiled, darkened by the fumes of sin. Attachment to vice and evil inclinations darken the soul; they are like a fog that hinders the view of these divine lights. “An unspiritual person is one who does not accept anything

of the Spirit of God” (1 Co 2:14). We must avoid even the least faults and not sadden the Holy Spirit in us (Ep 4:30; 2 Tm 1:14). For venial sin displeases the Spirit, hurts the Spirit in some way, and cools the Spirit’s holy ardor in us.

Note 2: Say often the sequence of the Church: “Veni Sancte Spiritus et emitte coelitus lucis tuae radium”. A translation paraphrased as a prayer: “**Catchisme dogmatique et moral**,” by Jean Courturier, Vol. 1, page 238. (cf. MARIANIST DIRECTION, Vol. 3, nos. 484-493. for this translation.

Note 3: The opposition to virtue which young people sometimes find in themselves comes from a poor reception of the sacrament of confirmation. This is all the more unfortunate because we can only receive this sacrament once. We should not only do penance for this sin, as for the others of our past lives, but we must, so to speak, revive its grace.

To revive this precious grace, we must do in a spirit of penance what we should have done for the reception of this sacrament:

1. Instruct ourselves especially in what regards the sacrament of confirmation.
2. Purify our conscience more and more.
3. From instruction and purity of conscience we will soon experience desires to receive the grace of this sacrament and all the effects it produces. It is good to increase these desires more and more by multiplying acts of desire.
4. Prayers and invocations to the Holy Spirit should be frequent, and sometimes prolonged; some communions for this intention.
5. To the one who has worthily received the sacrament of confirmation or has revived its grace, the Holy Spirit abundantly communicates all the strength necessary to become a perfect Christian; one should confidently enter into battle against one’s passions and the enemies of salvation. But one should be grateful, faithful, and take great care not to sadden the Holy Spirit. “Otherwise you will only be grieving the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal: (Ep 4:30).

Note 4: With the grace of baptism we receive the Holy spirit, in order to form us as spiritual children of Jesus Christ. “You are new born” (1P 2:2). This is the grace which develops in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in order to conform us spiritually to the state of Jesus Christ’s divine infancy. This grace of baptism is nothing but a divine mil with which the Holy Spirit feeds us spiritually.

The grace of confirmation is like a solid food which, by the proportionate operation of the Holy Spirit, makes us grow spiritually in Jesus Christ even to the age of maturity. That is why we say that confirmation makes us perfect Christians.

Note 5: There is some difference between the spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, for although they are in reality only one, nevertheless the Holy Spirit takes one or the other name according to the different operations carried out.

When the Holy Spirit acts in us and establishes in us virtues of fortitude, vigor and power, and makes us partakers of the perfections and the attributes of God, which contain in themselves no abasement, then this divine Spirit is called the spirit of God, because God, as God has in self only grandeur and majesty; but when this same Spirit effects in us the virtues of Jesus Christ, which are the Christian virtues and which entail abasement and humiliation (such as love of the cross, of humility, of poverty, of scorn) then this Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

There is a complete opposition between grace and nature, between the Spirit of Jesus Christ and the evil spirit. Directors should become skillful at making this distinction. But the discernment of spirits, of course, is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit. A divine light is necessary to distinguish well between that which comes from nature and that which comes from grace. A director will acquire greater facility in making this distinction by frequently comparing the movements of nature and of grace, as they are indicated in the fifty-fourth chapter of the third book of the Imitation of Christ: "On the corruption of Nature and the Power of Grace."

Directors are counseled to penetrate themselves well with what holiness is in God, and consequently, the holiness of God's Spirit. "Holiness in God applies to God alone and separates God from every created being; and it should have the same effect in all Christians who are consecrated to God by Baptism, and whom St. Paul for this reason calls saints (1Co 1:2; Ep 1:1). But if all Christians ought to be holy and separated from everything, priests are more particularly obliged to be so, since it is principally to them that God says: "Be holy, because I am holy" (Lv 11:44, Vulgate). Be separated from all things because I am.

"Priests, who offer bread and incense to God, 'should be holy for God'" (Lv 21:6, Vulgate). That is, they should be separated from all things and attentive to God alone. God deserves it indeed; but more, God wills it because of great holiness. As God is holy and separated from everything and can suffer nothing except as willed, God wills the priest who draws near to be consummated in God by God's own Spirit, so that nothing impure may approach God, and in this way God can remain holy and separated from all things even when united to the priest.

"Holiness separated the soul from all creatures and keeps it from opening itself to them and from being drawn to them by affection. It obliges the soul to withdraw into God and to tend to nothing outside of God. Thus the austerity of holiness is very great, and its severity very demanding, since it does not allow the least concession of the soul to that which is not God."

"The soul established in perfect holiness remains purely united to God by faith. It amuses itself with nothing; it stops at nothing and seeks nothing but God. It separates itself even from attachment to God's gifts, since they are not God, who is pure and holy and detached from everything."

“Not that we should not use God’s gifts to go to God, but they ought to be merely a means; and we should have no attachment, so that we may possess God alone. If we attach ourselves to the gifts, there is something between God and ourselves – something which hinders God from uniting entirely with us.” (Selection from *Introduction la vie et aux vertus chrétiennes*, by M. Olier)

One of the most characteristic marks of the Holy Spirit’s action in us is the holiness of the Spirit’s inspiration. It is not sufficient that the object be good, or even that it be holy; the motive that makes us attain it or leads us to it must be pure and entirely pure, hence simple and without mixture of aims or interests from our nature. However, holy may be the motive we have for performing an action, if it is not the determining factor in the action, if it is not the prime mover, if it is only concomitant with some other motive that nature suggests, we must distrust it. If the action we are to do is in order, but if a natural motive caused us to undertake it, we should sanctify the motive, that is, renounce it in order to direct it to God.

Satan sometimes transforms himself into an angel of light; that is, he leads us to things to which the holy angels would lead us. Consequently, these things seem to be divine inspirations; but if we are attentive, we quickly perceive that they are only unworthy suggestions which lack the purity and holiness proper to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Ordinarily, we see that those who are duped by these illusions are headstrong, opinionated in their views, closed to good advice, hasty, etc.

M. Olier explains the distinction between the movements or impulses of nature and the operations of the Holy Spirit as follows: “There is a sign by which we can tell the difference between works to which we tend by the principle of the flesh and those to which we tend by the principle of the Spirit. It is that we tend to those done by the principle of the flesh with haste and vehemence, for our own pleasure, and without having in our minds any view of God drawing us on. But the Spirit prompts us by showing us interiorly some divine motive; and we do it for God, to please God and to make ourselves able to serve God. We regard God more than the work we do, and more than the creature we need.

“In short, the Spirit is even perceptible in the raising us toward God, toward God’s gentleness and peace, and by the gentle impulse with which the Spirit leads us to deal with things, separating us from them and keeping us detached, drawing us to God and taking possession of our wills in order to carry them about for whatever the Spirit desires of us.”

“And, properly speaking, this is what it means to be spiritual and to live in the Spirit in everything; when the Holy Spirit moves everything in us, possesses us entirely, embraces us, and leads us to whatever pleases God. Although this is brought about more perceptibly in some than others, it is still really brought about in all who wish to discipline themselves and who renounce their self-indulgence in everything.”

“When we make room for and allow the Spirit the liberty to act in us and to use us, the Spirit never fails to act in us and guide us, never fails to possess our powers in order to raise them to the works that God desires of us. For the Spirit exists and dwells in us only to work through us for the glory of God; the Spirit is in us only to give us life and to be the principle of our new life and of the divine life by which we should live.”

“Truly, after baptism, in which we have received the spirit of children of God, we should live according to God and even by the life of God; for children should live by the life of their father; they descend from him as a second living being and should continue, expand, and multiply the same life. In a word, their own and their father’s life-principle should be the same. Now the life of God in God is God, and is itself its own source. Thus the life of God in us is God, the principle of God’s own life. In like manner the life of God in us is the very life of God, who is the principle of our life, animating us, moving us, and strengthening us.”

“The baptized are different from pagans in this, that they have received the Spirit of God, who is true God, who dwells in them, in order to be for them a new principle of life and of guidance. But pagans and all the children of Adam have the flesh and the evil spirit for their guidance; they live according to their attitudes, their movements, and their life. And this same condition exists in Christians who are in mortal sin; for they have renounced the Divine Spirit with whom they were previously but one, and they have been separated from that Spirit, in order to unite themselves with and adhere to the Evil One by mortal sin. They become, by the very fact, one with the devil.”

“The devil has great power over the flesh. This obliges us, if we are faithful, to be watchful so as to renounce Satan courageously. The devil arouses the flesh, moves it, animates it according to his own wishes, for our flesh is not yet regenerated nor sanctified, as our spirit was by baptism.”

Note: The flesh is, so to speak, the domain of the devil; concupiscence is in our flesh. When the devil tempts us, it is generally by our concupiscence. Everyone is tempted by concupiscence. “Everyone is tempted by concupiscence.” These temptations are common to everyone and even to the greatest saints. We could not pretend, without self-delusion, that we never feel their attacks. The devil can extend influence over the humors of our bodies, over our emotions, and even over our memories and imaginations. Satan can artfully move our passions as organists can move the keys of their instrument, to form temptations in us which would seduce us and lose us. Sometimes, it is with force and even with violence that the devil attacks, creating terrible storms with all our passions; they are violent whirlwinds that sweep us off, we know not where. In Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit ordinarily represents the devil to us under one of two figures, either as a deceptive serpent or as a roaring lion. Under both figures, Satan is always our implacable enemy; but always, we can and should resist the devil with the weapons of God, with the buckler of faith. The devil as the prince of the world, can use all that is in the world to stir up our concupiscence...”

DOCUMENTS 18-22: Texts on Marianist spirituality from "Notebook D" - 1828-1838

Especially in the years 1828-1838, Father Chaminade was preoccupied with the task of perfecting and solidifying his religious foundations. During this period many new members were joining both congregations, especially the Society of Mary, and several novitiates were opened, often under the direction of religious who were quite young and inexperienced. Both congregations experienced significant tensions and growing pains during these years. Naturally the Founder, who felt that he was approaching the end of his life, was eager to consolidate and clarify the bases of Marianist religious life.

Besides completing the texts of the Constitutions of the two groups in these years, Father Chaminade also made many attempts, most never completed and never published, to express in writing the essential traits of these foundations and to compose a manual of direction for initial and continuing formation. A particularly interesting series of these attempts is preserved in a notebook (classified as "Notebook D" in Box 18 of the Archives of the Society of Mary) written in the Founder's own hand. The date of this notebook is unknown; most probably it was used from time to time over a decade (1828-1838) while the Founder was concurrently working on the Constitutions. In these essays he incorporated liberal quotations from his favorite spiritual authors, such as Jean-Jacques Olier and St. Alphonsus Liguori, always integrating their explanations into his own original spiritual synthesis. Apparently the contents were never circulated during his lifetime, but they are a precious indication of his thinking.

Here we reproduce four complete essays from this notebook: -

- "The Institute of the Society of Mary" (Doc. 18)
- "The Society of Mary considered as a Religious Order" (Doc. 19)
- "Principles of Direction" (Doc. 21)
- "Summary of the Principles of Direction" (Doc. 22)

We also include the introductory paragraphs of another essay entitled "Society of Mary: Principles of its Constitutions and its Regulations" (Doc. 20). The remainder of this essay, copied for the most part from contemporary authors, is a treatise on the religious vows.

The Founder's key emphases on the collective pursuit of perfection by the entire Society, on conformity with Jesus and on the spiritual motherhood of Mary are clearly and eloquently expressed in these essays.

DOCUMENT 18: INSTITUTE OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY (MARIANIST DIRECTION: vol, 3, nos. 302-333)

This **institut** relates the entire Constitutions of the Society of Mary to three points: the object, the means, and the persons.

I. THE OBJECT

The object of this Society is:

1. To raise itself, both **individually** and **collectively**, to the highest perfection;
2. To preserve the generation being born from the contagion of the world, and to withdraw as many of the present generation as possible from the world's influence.
3. To take all kinds of precautions in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of the contact and relations with the world which zeal may provide.

1st Part of the Object: *To raise itself, both individually and collectively, to the highest perfection.*

Note: The word **collectively** is used here only so that all the members of the Society may realize:

1. That they are given **to the world as a spectacle** of confusion, so that the world may understand that the practice of Christianity, even in its perfection, is not only possible, but pleasant and easy, and that it may be able to easily perceive the evil absurdity of impiety in rejecting the Gospel.
2. That they are given **to people as a spectacle** of edification, in order to constantly stir up emulation and courage for the practice of Christian virtues.
3. That they are given also **to the angels of heaven as a spectacle** of admiration and zeal, in that these angels see other angels on earth: "The chaste person and the angel differ, but in happiness, not in virtue." "We have been put on show in front of the whole universe -angels as well as men" (1 Co 4:9).

One of the aims which brought about the founding of the Society of Mary was to renew throughout France, or rather throughout the world, the spectacle of the infant Church, the Church of Jerusalem. It is for this end that two Orders, one for men and the other for women, were included in the same inspiration; and in both all states and all conditions of life could be included without confusion, by means of wise organization and good general and particular regulations.

Although **collective** perfection results essentially from **individual** perfection, still it is true that the **esprit de corps** contributes admirably to the support, progress and perfection of the entire Society by means of the interest for one another that it inspires in individuals, so that the harmony and edification which result from it may never be lacking.

Let us proceed to the **individual** perfection that each of the members of the Society of Mary ought to have principally in view.

Four questions must be answered:

- What is the high perfection which the Society of Mary desires and to which it must tend?
- Is the religious obliged to work always for his perfection?
- What does this obligation include?
- What are the principal means for acquiring perfection?

1st question: *What is the high perfection which the Society of Mary desires and to which it must tend?*

This perfection is the faithful imitation of Jesus Christ, true Son of God and of Mary.

In this answer we find:

1. The motives which should oblige us to imitate Jesus Christ, and at the same time the sure means of succeeding in our work.
2. The advantages of striving toward perfection through the imitation of Jesus Christ, under the auspices of Mary.
3. As a consequence, the practice of this imitation of Jesus Christ.

ART. 1 - The **motives:** *Jesus Christ is the true Son of God; he* **sure means:** *Jesus Christ is the true Son of Mary.*

The following are the motives:

1. God the Father, in sending his adorable Son to us on earth, gave him to us to be our guide and teacher (Is 55:4). God made him our head, and said to us: Follow him, imitate his actions, walk behind him; you will never lose your way if you walk in his footsteps, etc.
2. The dignity and worthiness of his person invite us to follow him, and it is an infinite honor for us to be like him by a living expression of the life that he led when he was among people on earth.
3. To make this imitation easy for us and to accommodate himself in some way to our weakness, he chose a common life, thereby removing any pretext which could be brought forward to the effect that since the model is too great, too exalted, too perfect, it would be impossible for us to copy him so as to truly resemble him.
4. The aims for which Jesus Christ was made man cannot subsist except inasmuch as we make efforts to imitate him. Without these efforts, Christ would have sacrificed his life and poured out his blood in vain, because he did these things only so that we might imitate his actions and practice his virtues.
5. Finally, he humbled himself so greatly, he suffered so much, he became poor, only to make these virtues appealing to us and to prompt us to acquire them. He wishes, then, that we be like him. But how can we do so? It can be only by imitating him and conforming ourselves to him.

Jesus Christ, **true Son of Mary**. This is a motive and at the same time a sure means of success in our work.

A **motive** first, because he is true man, as well as true God: hence the motives for his Incarnation.

A **sure means:** Mary is really the Mother of Christians, the Mother of the predestined, the Mother of the disciples of Jesus Christ. As Jesus Christ was conceived according to nature in

Mary's virginal womb by the operation of the Holy Spirit, so all the elect are conceived by faith and baptism according to the Spirit in Mary's heart of tender charity. Whatever Mary carries in her womb can only be Jesus Christ himself, or can live only by the life of Jesus Christ. Christians are members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, they constitute only one Jesus Christ, and every Christian can be said to be "born of the Virgin Mary". What a powerful means it is for arriving at likeness to Jesus Christ to have for our Mother the very Mother of Jesus Christ!

ART. 2 - The advantages of striving toward perfection under the auspices of Mary.

The first advantage is that our perfection depends entirely on the zeal with which we should imitate the conduct of Jesus Christ toward his Father and the virtues he practiced. Our perfection is easy to attain in imitating Jesus Christ; and if we do not imitate him, it will seem very difficult to us, if not impossible. For everyone knows that it is easy to follow a path that has been cleared, but one easily goes astray on another which has not been cleared. The road of examples is easy and short; that of precepts is long, difficult, and obstructed.

The second advantage is that in imitating Jesus Christ our perfection will be assured. But if we do not imitate him, it will always be uncertain, that is, subject to error, deviation, and illusion. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). It will be assured in the first case because Jesus Christ is the way that leads to perfection, the life that gives it, the truth that makes it known, the gate that leads to God. If we enter through him, by imitating him, we will be saved. Our perfection will, on the contrary, be uncertain in the second case, because in following any guide other than Jesus Christ we will have only human beings for guides, and they are often blind.

The third advantage is that if we imitate Jesus Christ, our perfection will be a high perfection. Therefore it is easy to conclude that failure to follow Jesus Christ by imitating his virtues is failure to desire one's own perfection.

Under the auspices of Mary.

Mary will not exercise maternal care except to form us according to the model, her adorable Son. Our submission to this divine Mother ought to be like that which Jesus Christ always had for her.

ART. 3 - Practice of the imitation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ himself explains it to us: If you wish to come after me by imitating me, you must renounce self, take up your cross, and follow me: you must do the things I do in the way I do them, suffer like me; seek what I sought, flee what I fled, love what I loved, hate what I hated, practice the virtues I practiced. You must make my will the rule of your life, as I made the will of my Father the rule of my life. You must destroy in yourself the old Adam in order to form the image of the new one. That image must be so life-like that in seeing it, people see another Jesus Christ.

We shall always pay attention to the Blessed Virgin, who does not cease counselling us to do whatever Jesus Christ tells us.

DOCUMENT 19: SOCIETY OF MARY Considered as a Religious Order

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 3, nos. 334-347)

1. The new Order takes the name of **Society of Mary** because all who compose it consider themselves as her children; perhaps a better name would have been **Family of Mary**.
2. A truly Christian person cannot and should not live except by the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ; the religious is especially called to this. It is this divine life that should be the principle of all his thoughts, all his words, and all his actions.
3. Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of the august Mary by the operation of the Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ was brought forth from the virginal womb of Mary. "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary."
4. Baptism and faith make the life of Jesus Christ begin in us, and thus we are, so to speak, conceived by the Holy Spirit; but we should like the Savior, be born of the Virgin Mary.
5. It is in the virginal womb of Mary that Jesus Christ willed to form himself to our likeness, and it is there similarly, that we should form ourselves to his likeness, regulate our activity according to his, our inclinations according to his inclinations, and our life according to his life.
6. Whatever Mary bears in her womb can only be Jesus Christ himself, or one living only by the life of Jesus Christ. Mary, with an unimaginable love, bears us always as her little children in her chaste womb, until, having formed in us the first traits of her Son, she brings us forth like him. Mary never ceases repeating to us those beautiful words of St. Paul: "My children! I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you" (Ga 4:14).
7. The religious who aspires to be a Son of Mary should never stop contemplating this life of Jesus Christ. He should compare it with his; then he will understand whether he is a worthy Child of Mary, whether he enters into the views and attitudes of his august Mother. In what a place and at what a time did Mary bring forth her adorable Son!
8. For his own consolation as well as for the glory of Mary, the religious should never lose sight of the fact that, if Mary had the incomparable happiness of being the Mother of Jesus in the order of nature, she was still more blessed in being his Mother according to the spirit. See the answer of Jesus Christ to the exclamation "Blessed is the womb", etc. (cf. Lk 11:27).

But it was only afterwards that she herself was engendered by the divine Savior. "(Mary) is Mother according to the spirit, not of our head – who is the Savior himself, and of whom she rather was born spiritually, because all who believe in him, of whom she is one, are rightly called children of the Spouse – but clearly Mother of his members (which we are), because she cooperated by her charity in the birth of the faithful in the Church, the faithful who are his members" (St. Augustine: *Lib. De Sancta Virginitate*, cap. 6).

According to the sayings of the Father, Mary became our spiritual Mother on two occasions and in two different sets of circumstances.

First, in consenting to the Incarnation of the Word, the blessed Virgin contributed in the most powerful and most efficacious manner to the work of our Redemption; and by her consent, she devoted herself to our salvation in such a way that we can say that she carried all people in her womb as their true Mother. "So that from then on she bore all in her womb, as a true mother bearing her children" (St. Bernardine of Siena)

St. Luke, in his account of the birth of the Savior, says that "Mary brought forth her first-born son" (Lk 2:7). "Your fruitful womb is like a heap of wheat surrounded with lilies" (Cf. Sg 7:3). In the most pure womb of Mary, there was only one grain of wheat; but it is called a heap of wheat because all the elect were enclosed in this chosen grain, which could properly be called the First-born among many Brothers. ("For this grain virtually contains all the elect, that he himself may be the first-born among the brethren" (St. Ambrose, *De Instit. virg*).

The second occasion on which Mary brought us forth to grace was when, on Calvary, with a heart broken by sorrow, she offered her only Son to the eternal Father as a holocaust for our sins: "Mother according to the spirit...etc. as above, St. Augustine).

9. The religious truly dedicated to the holy Virgin will not be in her service long before he begins to assimilate the way of life and the spirit of Jesus Christ. Mary will somehow take charge of his religious education. Was not Jesus Christ subject to Mary in everything? Did Jesus Christ not associate his divine Mother in all the mysteries of his life? In giving Mary to his beloved disciple as Mother, did Jesus Christ not give her especially to religious who glory in walking in his footsteps, imitating him in his virtues, meditating incessantly on his divine teaching, and conforming their lives to it? Yes, Mary is really the Mother of the disciples of Jesus Christ. This divine Savior has given her to them from his cross, and Mary has really taken them for her children.

An author above suspicion in this regard, concerning whom there can be no fear that he is exaggerating, says: As it was, properly speaking, on Calvary that Jesus Christ formed his Church, it is clear that the Blessed Virgin cooperated in an excellent and singular manner in this formation. Thus it can be said that, if she brought forth Jesus Christ the Head of the Church without pain, she did not bring forth the body of this Head without pain. On Calvary she began on the Pater and Ave, by Nicole, *Inst.* 5, ch. 2).

10. It is from this divine life, communicated by Mary, that the Society which glories in bearing the holy name of the Immaculate Virgin should draw the spirit which should animate it. Along with the natural but completely divine life that Jesus Christ received from Mary, he received also this life of influence that we communicates to all the members who are united to him.

11. Doubtless, the Society of Mary embraces a state of high perfection; but what should it not hope from the protection of its august and tender Mother? If there are some who have not responded to her love and kindness, they should never forget that she is the Mother of mercy. What happiness, there is in being under the protection of such a Mother! Who will ever dare to tear the children of Mary from her bosom? What temptation or disturbance can conquer us, if we trust in the patronage of God's Mother and ours?" (Bellarmine, De sept. Verb.).

12. The nature of this essay permits us to develop this spirit of the Society of Mary only succinctly and through the principles in accordance with what it is constituted, as well as the general and particular regulations which are drawn from them, especially in regard to the direction of novices. Here there will be question of principles only. These principles will be relative to the vows we take and the most essential virtues that should accompany them.²

DOCUMENT 20: SOCIETY OF MARY: Principles of its Constitution and its Regulations

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 3, nos. 348-351)

Note: An explanation of why the Society of Mary is formed of Constitutions and regulations proper to it can be found elsewhere.

Principles of its constitution and of its general and particular regulations and, first of all, of its name.

1. The Society of Mary desires to take the form of a true Religious Order.
2. This order takes the name of **Society of Mary** (**Family of Mary** would better express its nature), because all those who compose it or will compose it in the future should (1) consecrate themselves to Mary; (2) regard her as their mother and themselves her children (3) form themselves in the womb of her motherly tenderness to the likeness of Jesus Christ, as that adorable son himself was formed there to our likeness; in other words, tend to the highest perfection or live by the life

² Par. 12, despite its somewhat obscure construction, seems to be an introduction to the following document (20), with which it should constitute one whole.

of Jesus Christ under the auspices and direction of Mary; (4) always undertake their works to attain the mediate end of their Institute with an entire confidence in the protection of the august Name of Mary and with the desire of glorifying it. The true secret of success in their works, whether for their own perfection or for the support of religion and the propagation of the faith, is to interest the Blessed Virgin in them and to refer the glory of these works to her with the aims and attitudes of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The secondary end of the Society of Mary, or the immediate object that it proposes for itself, is the multiplication of Christians and the support of religion in opposition to the efforts of impiety. Hence the variety and multiplicity of the means it uses; hence also the form of its structure, adapted as much as possible to the present century.

DOCUMENT 21: Principles of Direction

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: (vol. 3, nos. 466-474)

Our Lord Jesus Christ came into this world in order to bring to it respect and love for his Father, and to establish his kingdom and his religion.

During the 33 years that Jesus Christ lived on earth, he took root in the minds and hearts of the faithful whom he foresaw were destined to be those in whom he should diffuse his own religious, in order to honor his Father in them, just as he did in himself.

Mary was the first one to be conceived in Jesus Christ according to the Spirit, as Jesus Christ was himself conceived according to nature in her virginal womb. That is to say, Mary was formed interiorly to resemble Jesus Christ, her adorable son, and was associated from then on in all his mysteries, both in their exterior and interior aspects; so that her conformity might be the most perfect possible, or rather, that there might be as much **uniformity** as possible.

Thus Jesus Christ is the first of the predestined. So there will be no predestined except those who are conformable to Jesus Christ, and all the predestined will be conceived and formed in Mary. "Your belly is a heap of wheat" (Sg 7:3).

At the moment of the incarnation, faith in the Son of God becoming man was in Mary as a grain of wheat sown in her soul, which made her conceive Jesus Christ and all the predestined by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord continued after his death to obtain for all people by all the devices of his love that virtue of religion toward God. And he gave them his Spirit, which is the Spirit of God living in him, to establish in them the very attitudes of his own soul, so that, communication in them

the very attitudes of his own soul, so that, communicating thus his holy virtue of religion, he formed God's one and only religious, composed of himself and all Christians.

Reigning in heaven, he lives in the hearts and the pens of the Evangelists, in the hearts and mouths of his Apostles, to establish everywhere contempt for the creature and respect for God alone. The Spirit of God continues in priests what it did in Jesus Christ.

Finally, Our lord, in order to extend his holy religious toward God and to multiply it in our souls, comes into us and remains on earth in the hands of priests as a victim of praise, to communicate to us his spirit of victim, to make us join in this praise, and to impart to us interiorly the attitudes of his religion. He is diffused in us, he perfumes our souls and fills them with the interior disposition of his religious spirit, so that he makes our souls and his one. He animates them all with the same spirit of respect, love, praise, and interior and exterior sacrifice of all things for the glory of God his Father, and thus he places our souls in communion with his religion, to make us in him one true religious of his Father. communicate to us his spirit of victim, to make us join in his praise, and to impart to us his Father.

To perfect our state and to raise us to the purest and holiest degree of religion, he communicates to us his state of victim. He does this so that we may be one victim with him, religious not only in spirit but also in truth, that is, in reality, having sacrificed interiorly in ourselves the entire present being of the flesh in all its attitudes, not only having sacrificed them like Jesus Christ on the cross by mortification and interior crucifixion, but also having consummated everything interiorly with Jesus Christ who is consummated on the altar.

This is the degree of perfection to which he calls us in this life. For by his intimate presence in us, and by his fire that consumes us, he communicated to us the most perfect state of his religion, which is the state of a victim consummated for the glory of God, a victim that no longer lives in itself by its own life and the life of the flesh, but lives totally by the divine life and the life consummated in God.

This is, properly speaking, the state of risen life, to which we have been called in imitation of our Lord, who was exteriorly consummated in his Father on the day of his resurrection, and who wishes us also to be risen and made conformable to him. That is why he says that he has communicated to people the glory that his Father has given him. "I have given them the glory you gave to me" (Jn 17:22). This glory is the risen state which he possessed already in the host at the Last Supper. "May they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you" (Jn 17:21). I am in them, having the same effects as you, O my Father who are in me, have in me. I give them life as you give me life; I bring them to consummation, as you bring me to consummation. "What we ask in our prayers is for you to be made perfect" (2 Co 13:9).

The First Conformity We Should Have with Jesus Christ

We are all obliged to be conformable to Jesus Christ. St. Paul teaches us this when he says that God "intended (us) to become true images of his Son" (Rm 8:29).

Now this conformity consists in resembling him: 1) in his exterior mysteries, which were like sacraments of the interior mysteries he was to operate in souls. Just as our Lord was crucified exteriorly, we must be crucified interiorly; it is the same with his death and burial. And this interior life, expressed in exterior mysteries, and the graces acquired by these mysteries, should be in everyone, since they were merited for everyone. "You have died and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3).

The spirit of the holy mysteries is given to us by baptism, and it operates in us the graces and attitudes that are related with and conformable to the mysteries of Jesus Christ. It is our part only to let him work and act by the power of his graces and lights upon us and others in conformity with the holy mysteries.

The Second Conformity We Should Have with Jesus Christ

is the conformity we should have with the interior in his mysteries, so that our souls may become conformable in their interior attitudes and dispositions not only with the exterior of the mysteries, as we have seen, but also with the interior attitudes and dispositions that our Lord (had in these mysteries).

DOCUMENT 22: Summary of the Principles of Direction

(MARIANIST DIRECTION: Vol. 3, no. 483)

Jesus is truly the Son of Mary: "ex qua natus est Jesus" (see Mt 1:16). No one will be saved except insofar as one has a great conformity with Jesus Christ; God predestines no one except to be conformable to Jesus Christ.

2. MENTAL PRAYER

Note: The practice of mental prayer is an integrated part of the Method of Direction. Fr. Chaminade taught them together. Moreover, the **Writings on Mental Prayer** and the writings on **Marianist Direction** interpenetrate and refer to each other. Therefore, the reading and study of the following texts should be linked with the reading and study of the writings on the spiritual life.

DOCUMENT 23: "The Other Method" - 1818

(Writings On Mental Prayer: nos. 122-127)

Teaching the fruitful practice of personal meditation was one of the Founder's chief concerns for Marianist formation. Already during the first year of the Society of Mary he began to work

on a characteristic Marianist approach to meditation and its underlying theology. During this year (1817-1818) the novice Jean- Baptiste Lalanne composed, under the Founder's guidance, a treatise on the subject.

In 1818 the Founder himself wrote the following brief essay, which is called the "Other Method" to distinguish it from Lalanne's effort. This "Other Method" borrowed heavily from a work on mental prayer which Father Chaminade had composed around 1810 according to the traditional Sulpician method of the French School, for the benefit of sodalists and members of the State.

This essay gives us a clear insight into meditation as the Founder wished it to be practiced by the first Marianist religious.

THE OTHER METHOD

A. Preparation

The preparation is threefold; we must (1) place ourselves in the presence of God, (2) unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, (3) invoke the Holy Spirit.

1. Placing ourselves in God's presence. The Gospel tells us that Jesus knelt (Mt 26:39). The royal prophet put these words in the mouth of Jesus: "Everyman that walks is only a shadow" (Ps 39:6). That should be my disposition, both interior and exterior: humility of the body and more so of the mind and heart, some acts of faith in the presence of the majesty of God in whose presence we are, an act of contrition and shame, for faults committed since the last meditation.

2. To unite ourselves to Jesus Christ. We do this by desire and by prayer. By desire: wanting to pray as he does, with him and through him. By prayer: praying in union with him just as he united himself to us when he prayed to the Father. To pray as he did is to give our prayer the qualities his had: humility, love of God, love of neighbor and all Christendom. To pray with him is to clothe ourselves with his merits, his spirit, his person. To pray through him is to pray only in his name, as another Christ.

The homage that God expects from us must be through his Son. "Through him and with him and in him is all honor and glory to you, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit (Canon of the Mass).

3. To invoke the Holy Spirit. This means to depend on the Spirit's inspirations and to ask for the three characteristics of true union with Jesus Christ mentioned above. This invocation calls for several interior acts, (1) renouncing one's own intuitions, (2) renouncing curiosity, (3) giving up one's own will.

"God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). "In spirit" means in the Holy Spirit; in truth means Jesus Christ who is himself truth.

We must remember that without the help of the Spirit we cannot have a good and meritorious thought. Let us prepare ourselves for meditation lest we be considered tempters of the Divinity.

Another prostration and adoration, now that we have put on Christ and his merits.

B. Body of the Meditation

There are three points to the body of the meditation:

1. We must first consider Christ with respect to the subject of our meditation and render him homage.
2. We must (a) convince ourselves of the importance of the considerations made in the first point, (b) apply them to ourselves, (c) pray fervently for God's grace.
3. We must take firm resolutions.

Development of the First Point

The first thing to do at the beginning of the meditation is to contemplate our Lord, seriously and respectfully to consider his actions, words, and feelings on the subject of our meditation (This is the rule of St. Lawrence Justinian). Secondly, we must follow St. Augustine's advice and give homage to Christ: adoration, admiration, praise, love, thanksgiving, congratulations, or compassion if we are dealing with a sorrowful mystery. The method is very correct in prescribing this point: we must be the images of Christ and model our actions on his; but in order to make a copy we must first examine the original.

Development of the Second Point

1. We must at the outset be convinced of the importance of the subject we have chosen, study our reasons and our motives for the choice.
2. Next we must apply it to ourselves. That means (a) to be conscious of our need for this truth or for the virtue we are considering, (b) to note the faults committed in this regard and to discover their source.
3. To ask for this conformity sincerely, confidently, with humility and perseverance. So that our prayer might be heard, to have recourse to the merits of Jesus Christ, to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Joseph, of the holy angels and of our patron saints and protectors.

Note. These considerations must be made (1) effortlessly, without stressing the imagination; (2) simply, without too much reasoning, (3) with faith based on the Gospels, (4) with devotion, with occasional aspirations. We must experience in ourselves the sentiments of Christ. "In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus" (Ph 2:5).

Development of the Third Point

We must take resolutions that are effective; they must (1) be solidly motivated, (2) be very precise, (3) rely more on the expectancy of God's help than on presumption and self-esteem.

The firmness of our resolutions depends on the motive force behind them, and on the impression this motivation has made on us.

When we are challenged to take resolutions that are more difficult and more painful to nature and self-esteem, we must recall the strength and courage displayed by Our Lord in the great decisions he took and carried out for the glory of his Father Jesus Christ decided to spend his whole life in the service of his Father, in abasement and suffering and to lose it in the ignominies of the Cross. Nothing in the world could dissuade him, no terror could shake his constancy. Although he suffered every cruel thing that the fury of people and the rage of demons could invent, he never willed to defer the execution of what he had resolved. What an example!

C. Conclusion

"Better the end of a matter than its beginning" (Qo 7:9). The end of mental prayer is more important than its beginning. The conclusion consists of the three acts of thanksgiving, contrition, petition to the Blessed Virgin, and the choice of the spiritual bouquet.

1. We must thank God for the pious thoughts, the holy affections, and for all the other graces God has given us. In periods of trial, distaste, and dryness we must not fail to thank God. It would still be a great grace were we to be conscious of no other than to have had the honor of being tolerated in God's presence.

2. Regret our lack of openness to the Holy Spirit and our having responded so poorly to God's grace when God urged us to produce pious affections. We must apologize profusely for our lack of respect for God's majesty, ask pardon for our distractions, our lightmindedness, our lassitude and for the other faults we have committed.

3. We must put into Mary's hands everything that was good in our meditation, begging her help to put it to good use.

Note. This must be done with all the confidence which good children have in the best of mothers. Mary sustains our virtues lest they weaken, our merits lest they be lost, our graces lest they be scattered.

4. We must collect some of the good thoughts and affections which God has given us during mental prayer into a spiritual bouquet which, by its fragrance and presence, will recall for us at intervals during the day, the good sentiments we had during our holy exercise, to refresh and encourage us in our trials and our labors.

FURTHER READING ON METHODS OF PRAYER

*The "Other Method" was revised and developed on the basis of experience and synthesized with Jean-Baptiste Lalanne's essay of 1817 on the same topic. The result was called the "Common Method." It seems to have been written by the Founder himself around 1820, then to have been revised again before 1829. The "Common Method" is preserved in very numerous notebooks of early members of the Society of Mary. The text is available in **Writings on Mental Prayer**, pars. 132-154.*

DOCUMENT 24: "Mental Prayer of Faith and of the Presence of God" - 1829 (Writings On Mental Prayer: nos. 373-399)

This document, which seems to date from 1829, is composed of a dozen notes written by Father Chaminade as a spiritual director seeking to assist disciples with their difficulties in prayer. In these remarks and explanations, he drew heavily on the writings of one of his favorite spiritual authors, a seventeenth-century Jesuit, Jacques Nouet. The Founder's text was frequently copied by novices and religious between 1829 and about 1840, but we have a copy as late as 1880.

The format of brief, unconnected notes was a congenial method of composition frequently used by the Founder. The great emphasis on faith is particularly characteristic. Perhaps better than any other text, this little essay gives us an insight into the Founder's understanding of what he called the "prayer of faith and of the presence of God."

MENTAL PRAYER OF FAITH AND OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Prayer of the presence of God, combined with that of faith, is a calm attention to the presence of God which prompts the soul to look upon God in the light of faith, with all the attention it can command, and to desire nothing but God; it looks upon God unceasingly and never tires of doing so. The light of faith leads us to consider God in all the divine attributes and in all their consequences.

Note 1. Let us remember that faith is more a question of the heart than of the mind. You believe that God is your all, your Creator, the preserver of your being, your last end; savor these truths, savor the truths that are essentially contained in them. You believe that God is your all; you savor that truth; how could you not savor the essence of that truth? I mean, you are nothing; and how could you not then love to abase yourself before the divine Majesty? You believe that God is your Creator; you are unable to love the Creator of your being? God has loved you for all eternity; that is why God created you. But do you not discern in this truth of faith in a Creator God your absolute dependence on God, and consequently, your need of God's Providence in the order of grace and of nature? Love, savor that dependence.

You believe that God preserves your being, that in God you have being, movement and life. What sweet repose you must find in God! And yet what filial awe should this condition inspire in you! God could crush you in an instant if you displease God!

You believe that God is your ultimate goal, that you were created for God alone, and that only in God can you find that complete happiness which your heart craves. Love these designs of God in your creation and in the preservation of your being, but love also the obligation that is implied in that blessed destiny.

All your thoughts, desires, plans, words, actions, and proceedings must relate to this ultimate goal of your creation.

Note 2. Your faith in God can perhaps be most usefully applied to the God-made-man, or to the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ in some of the mysteries of his life. Therefore, whether you see the divine infant in the manger or the man of sorrow on the cross, always behold in him only the Son of the Living God.

Is the subject of my meditation Jesus Christ as infant in the manger or in the arms of his august Mother? I see in him only the Son of God, eternal, become a little child. Oh! What charms! What amiability in an infant God! But the infant I see, is it only a human infant? No, it is the divine infant, it is the very Son of God! Prompted by love, the son of God has reduced himself to the condition of an infant, so that we might become, by grace, what an ordinary infant is by nature. Oh! How beautiful is this evangelical infancy, which is the expression and the copy of the infancy of Jesus Christ!

Is the subject of my meditation Jesus Christ on the cross? Again by my faith I see the Son of God crucified for me. I calmly fix my attention on this crucified God; I consider every one of his wounds in that same spirit of faith; I kiss them mentally with the tenderest affection; if I am alone before a crucifix, I may even kiss externally the wounds of my crucified God. What should one think feel and do who believes firmly that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, died for us on the cross?

Note 3. This mental prayer of faith will be more or less active, more or less labored, according as faith brings us into closer contact with the subject of our prayer. It is an incontestable principle of mental prayer, that our minds and hearts can only raise themselves to God if God draws them. God raises up the mind by the light of faith, and faith draws the heart by the holy

warmth of this supernatural light of faith. Not that God could not lift up our spirit and enlighten it by other means than that of faith, for instance, by the first four gifts of the Holy Spirit. But these are special favors, and in every case we must act in the light of the faith which we have, so to say, always at hand. Constancy is one quality of faith; we receive it in baptism and it depends upon us whether we lose it or whether it leads us to paradise.

When faith has made considerable progress in a soul, it loves to dwell in the thought of the presence of God and of the sacred humanity of Christ. Faith binds us in a way to God; it brings us into communication with God, merges our spirit with God's Spirit, our heart with God's heart. The light of the Spirit passes into ours, we see things only as God sees them; we judge them as God judges them. Gradually our prejudices are scattered; we become practiced in the science of God, and this is the science of the saints.

The knowledge which is communicated to us by faith is preferable to all human knowledge, to all natural and supernatural knowledge, to the knowledge Adam had in his earthly paradise, even to the marvelous knowledge of Salomon.

Faith allows the soul to share richly in the attributes of the divinity and in the sentiments of the heart of Jesus Christ. Faith multiplies the Christs of God it incorporates us into Jesus and makes us living members of his mystical Body. Listen to the divine word: "Have faith in God" (Mk 11:22), that is, a great faith. Or these other precepts: "Go on growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 P 3:18). "It is impossible to please God without faith since anyone who comes to God must believe that God exists" (Hb 11:6).

We do not intend to reject the method of meditation that we have set down but we must not confound meditation itself with the method of meditation. In this case it is good to use, with prudence and discretion, the means which the method furnishes us for considering better the truths which faith proposes to us, for guiding the affections of our heart and for strengthening our resolutions. The preparatory acts will also prove useful. Then only does the meditation become a true mental prayer; but we must be careful while making considerations to keep the mind relying on the light of faith and on affections, to keep the heart open to the divine influence.

Note 6. During the first moments of the meditation, it is good to multiply acts of faith in the presence of God.

I am more thoroughly immersed in the immensity of God than a fish is in the ocean, a bird in the wide expanse of the air. I am in God as my thoughts are in my mind, without occupying any space.

It is good not to represent God to ourselves under any visible form unless it be that under which God also deigned to appear when he annihilated himself and became man.

If our faith be great, we shall soon feel ourselves dwelling in God, and we shall, as it were, feel God within us. We shall experience that in God "We have our being, our movement and our life."

We may distinguish four manners of being in the presence of God, two active and two passive. The first, when we actually call to mind the presence of God; the second, when we have acquired the habit of walking in the presence of God. "Bear yourself blameless in my presence," (Ge 17:1), says God to his faithful servant Abraham.

The third is that in which God operates within our souls, and hence it is called passive. Ordinarily it lasts but a short time, a quarter of an hour at most, unless God should grant us the gift of presence (which is the fourth manner); but this gift is rare. In the first case, the presence of God is passive and transitory; in the second, it is habitual.

We must often use our best efforts to dwell in the presence of God. We do this when, in the course of the day, we repeat acts of faith, especially if our heart habitually participates in these acts: "By believing from the heart you are made righteous" (Rm 10: 10).

The practice of absolute silence is an excellent means to a habitually active presence of God. By absolute silence we understand that complete silence which enables us to hear God within us. "I am listening. What is Yahweh saying?" (Ps 85:8), says the prophet. Silence is complete only when to the silence of words and signs we join that of the imagination, mind, and passions. Speaking and acting by duty is not considered a breach of silence as long as the duty lasts.

Note 7. Faith is not merely the beginning, the foundation and the root of all justification, as the Council of Trent expresses it; it is also the weapon with which we can overcome all the temptations of Satan, discover all his snares and dissipate all the illusions of our minds.

It is especially in mental prayer that we learn how to use this weapon that is intended to render us invincible at all times and in all places. St. Paul tells us: "Always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to put out the burning arrows of the evil one" (Ep 6:16). For, as the wise man in the book of Proverbs tells us, "Every word of God is alloyed, he is the shield of those who take refuge in him" (Pr 30:5). "You yourself will remain unscathed, with his faithfulness for shield and buckler" (Ps 91:7). The truths taught by faith or the word of God, will cover you as a buckler; you shall not fear the terrors of the night, the arrow that is shot during the day, the hidden snares of enemies gliding along in the darkness, nor the suggestions of the noonday demon. "You will learn the truth and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:32). You will recognize the truth in the light of the Holy Spirit; you will ponder over it before God, in meditation, with the eyes of faith. You will set it up in your mind and when it has taken possession of you, it will deliver you from every manner of temptation that your enemies may raise up within you.

Oh! How powerful are acts of faith, well-conceived and often repeated in meditation, to detach your heart from undisciplined affections and to give them true freedom! Believe me, nothing is more effective as a means to mortify the old self and to animate the new than a frequent remembrance of the truths of faith (William of Paris). Do you know upon what the labors and cares of all your life should concentrate? According to St. Augustine, it should be upon correcting the eye of your soul, which is faith.

Note 8. We might strengthen the above principles and enlarge upon them and apply them to every passion, to every remnant of concupiscence that we detect in us.

St. John tells us explicitly that faith has overcome the world for he says: "Anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the Victory over the world - our faith" (1 Jn 5:4). St. John tells us furthermore in the same epistle, what the world is: "Nothing the world can offer - the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions - could ever come from the Father but only from the world (1 Jn 2:16). Those in whom none of these three concupiscences are to be found are no longer of the world. When St. John says that faith has conquered the world, he means to say that faith has overcome the concupiscences.

Faith enables us to conquer pleasures or the desire and love for pleasures; it teaches us, for instance, that our body is a rebellious slave, a criminal condemned to death, deserving only fetters and torments. For a criminal slave there is the rack and torture" (Si-33:27).

Faith induces us to despise riches, for it shows us that they are the bait that lures us into the trap of the devil. The prize that you wish to seize conceals the snare that has been laid for you; by taking the goods of others you are taken yourself by the demon. Faith reveals to us the deep sense of_ this divine word: Riches are deceptive. Faith makes us fear them, it makes us despise them.

Faith leads us to shun honors by showing how all the glory of the world is but an illusion, ever since the world mocked Christ and, in derision, covered him with a purple garment.

Finally, faith renders us victorious over every vice, drowning some in our tears, burning and smothering others in the flames of hell, banishing others by fasting and putting them to flight by penance.

Note 9. In the beginning, we need a kind of valor to keep up the exercise of the presence of God in meditation. On the one hand, we put aside the remembrance of all creatures and all interest we may have in them or affection we may bear them; we leave ourselves, we divest ourselves, so to say, of the love of self. On the other hand, we know little as yet of the infinite kindness of God towards whom we wish to tend as to our last end. We must not, therefore, be amazed at any disgust that may come over us, nor even at a multitude of distractions.

The great profit we derive from meditation does not result from the ease with which we think, consider, feel, or occupy ourselves, but in being in the presence of God, with God. We should believe that God works in us, though insensibly.

We should make use of every means to sustain our minds and animate our hearts with faith in the presence of God.

1. Means During Meditation

When there is question of the presence of God in general, you may draw upon your mind, your memory, and your imagination.

Upon your mind by reasoning. For instance, God is immense: therefore, God is everywhere, therefore God sees all things; therefore, God is here and sees me. God is the Creator and has created me according to the idea God had of me from all eternity. There is nothing within me that God has not placed there. I have no more hair upon my head than has been determined to be there from all eternity; therefore, our Savior says that all the hairs on our heads are numbered. I have no more drops of blood in my veins than God has seen and counted for me from all eternity, etc. Not only is the surface of things visible to God, but also the very interior of bodies and minds. God is necessarily the Creator, nothing exists but by God, and all we have we hold from our Creator. It follows that it is impossible for God not to see perfectly and most intimately the entire essence and structure of creatures. What a series of reasonings these truths suggest, always giving rise to new acts of faith in the presence of God!

At other times we may reason in like manner upon God the Preserver of all things. All things being essentially nothingness, they would of themselves tend to nothingness if God did not preserve them. The preservation of beings requires the same power and Immensity of God as did their creation.

All this reasoning about details quietly occupies the spirit, and God always looming up greater and always present, our hearts are filled with sentiments of respect, admiration, wonder, humiliation, confidence and love. Movement of the heart must follow, for it is impossible for the heart not to be affected by the views of the mind. And these views, these sentiments are the views and the sentiments of faith.

The imagination may also be called upon to sustain our faith in the presence of God. I believe in the immensity of God I believe that all creation is in God. What will then prevent me from representing myself as plunged in this divine immensity, acting, resting, in a word, performing every action of a living being in this abyss or boundless ocean of the divine immensity?

The memory also may aid us by recalling texts of Holy Scripture on the presence of God. For instance, the royal prophet is speaking as much in his own name as in that of our Savior Jesus Christ when he says: "Everyone who walks is only a shadow." I cannot think of that text without thinking of the sentiments of David and above all of our Savior, whenever I recall the presence of God. The same applies to this text: "Let my prayer rise like incense before you." Why should we not, with this text before our mind's eye, desire that God would illumine our minds by the light of faith, inflame our hearts, that we might address a prayer to God that might be like sweet-smelling incense? In this way we can collect various texts that may with advantage nourish our souls.

2. Means Outside of Meditation

These means are all those helps for spending the day well and maintaining us in the presence of God.

The first is, upon awakening, to raise our minds and hearts to God under whose eye we have passed the night, and in this way prepare ourselves for mental prayer, while promptly and modestly dressing ourselves. We must desire to appear before the feet of the Divinity; the hours of meditation are the most precious of our lives. No reason but the command of God should we ever make us omit or shorten our meditation. We should be thoroughly convinced of this remarkable saying of Tertullian: It is something horrible to pass a day without prayer.

In the second place, let us often during the day breathe aspirations of our souls to heaven in ardent expressions resembling, for instance, those written so lovingly by St. Bonaventure: O Lord, when will I ever love you? When will I press you closely to my heart? When will I ever attain to the happiness of being with you? Or like the fiery outbursts from the heart of a St. Augustine: O Lord, how long shall I be like an outcast before you? How long will I languish in the toils of my crimes? Even the words: I believe in one God, I believe in God the Father, in God the Creator, are lively aspirations for one who has well grasped their importance.

In the third place, let us accustom ourselves to purifying our intention. In all our actions, let us seek God alone. Let us do all for God, see only God in our neighbor. Above all, let us see only God in our superiors. Thus, by degrees, faith will shape, accompany and regulate all our actions.

When first we accustom ourselves to this kind of meditation we must keep our fervor and good will by determining upon the number of acts of faith or other aspirations we intend to make every day or every hour of the day, by resolving to perform several of our principal actions of the day in a true spirit of faith, by increasing the number little by little, by keeping an account of the fidelity we have shown in observing the practices, we have chosen and imposing upon ourselves a penance in reparation for all the omissions, even doubling or trebling the number of practices should any negligence have crept in.

Note 10. It will be easier to meditate if we habitually begin with an act of faith in the presence of God and of God's infinite Majesty, before whom we are nothing in body and soul, nothing in our essence, faculties and actions, an absence of any good of nature or of grace.

In this preparatory act of faith, we must follow the counsel of St. Lawrence Justinian: When you pray consider seriously who you are and to whom you speak, and do not separate the one idea from the other. Strengthened by this act, the habit of never separating the sight of our nothingness, of our powerlessness, of our miseries, etc., from the sight of the Being who is infinitely great, powerful, good, merciful, etc. will generally be maintained during the rest of the meditation.

We would make very rapid progress if we began our daily actions with similar acts.

Note 11. This eleventh observation is more particularly aimed at the directors. It deals with the goal of mental prayer. Beginners should be informed of it only in proportion to the progress they make. The sight of so exalted an aim might discourage those who have not yet entered the beautiful path of faith; but it is a valuable encouragement for those who have entered upon this path.

The purpose of mental prayer is to raise the soul to the infinite Being, to pay homage, to speak with God, to unite the soul with all its faculties to God, to promote God's glory by spreading knowledge and love of God, to be transformed into God, to perfect the image that the soul reflects of the divine perfections through the practice of the most excellent virtues, and finally, to converse with God not only about one's own salvation and perfection, but also about the salvation and perfection of everyone.

The most sublime perfection of a person in this life, says St. Bonaventure, is to be united to God in such a manner, that the soul, centered in God, with all its faculties and all its powers, becomes one spirit with God, so much so that it remembers only God, thinks only of God, relishes nothing but God, and that all its affections, mingled with movements of divine love, bear pleasantly upon the sole enjoyment of its Creator. For the image of God is impressed on the three faculties of the soul, that is, on the memory, mind and will. As long as the image of God is not wholly impressed on the soul, the latter is not Godlike, for God is the form which must be impressed upon the soul like a seal upon wax. Now this impression is never perfect if the intelligence is not fully enlightened, within its capacity, by the knowledge of God who is the supreme Truth, if the will is not perfectly moved by love of the Sovereign Good, and if the memory is not completely absorbed by the prospect and continual remembrance of happiness.

The soul in mental prayer strives toward God with all the strength of its will, its understanding and its memory, because in prayer, the soul seeks to attach itself to God alone leaving aside everything else. Mental prayer has reached the pinnacle of perfection when the soul has obtained what it sought, that is, a complete detachment from all earthly goods and union with things divine, so that it neither will nor can relish anything else but God, in whom it finds true repose and in whom it enjoys with unspeakable pleasure the splendors of light, the delights of consolation and the tranquility assured by peace.

The soul reaches this noble goal in three steps that are related to the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. The first is purity of heart, the second is the practice of solid virtue, the third is pure love, whose object is intimate union with God and our transformation into God. This takes place in mental prayer, as St. Paul says, when, by the gift of wisdom, we contemplate Christ, the glory of the Father, and in so doing divest ourselves of our vile and earthly being to put on the heavenly and divine being, so that it is no longer the old self who lives in us, but the new. For the soul, light is constantly growing brighter the deeper its penetration into the divine by contemplation, until it reaches the summit of sanctity.

Note 12. We must insist that faith is a supernatural gift, and as such, any increase of faith is not directly due to our perseverance in repeating acts of faith and in performing our actions in a spirit of faith. It is not our efforts or our actions that increase our faith, but the Spirit of

God operating within us; we are merely collaborators. Although faith is not properly one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is nonetheless true that the Holy Spirit, whom we received in baptism, always works to increase that faith in the guise of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. Our mind is subject to five defects: blindness, foolishness, lack of shrewdness, ignorance, and rashness. Faith cures our blindness, wisdom our foolishness, intelligence our lack of shrewdness, knowledge our ignorance, and counsel our rashness.

Our will also is subject to three great faults: weakness, stubbornness, and love of its own excellence. Fortitude heals its weakness, piety its stubbornness, and fear of the Lord its love of its own excellence.

At times the Holy Spirit operates clearly in the soul through its gifts. The Spirit sometimes shares these with the soul in a high degree. Mental prayer can be made through the gift of wisdom, or knowledge, etc. But for us, let us always use faith in our mental prayer.

DOCUMENT 25: "Method of Mental Prayer on the Creed" 1840

(Writings on Mental Prayer: nos. 511-584)

This late text expresses the essence of Father Chaminade's thought on initiation into mental prayer and proposes an approach that has been practiced by generations of Marianists.

The Founder refers to his work on this text in a letter of January 1840. Several manuscripts, mostly from the novitiate of Courtefontaine, preserve it for us.

In all his previous projects and essays on prayer, the emphasis on faith was paramount. Now in this culminating work this thought attains new clarity and precision. This work is the summit of Chaminadean thought on prayer life.

METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER ON THE CREED IN ALL THINGS LOOK TO THE END

Why are we on earth and what are we to do in heaven? What did the Creator have in mind in calling us into existence? Faith replies that our end both in time and eternity, is to know God and; as a consequence, to love and glorify God. This is our sublime destiny and this is the

intent of the Holy Spirit who insists that, in everything we do, we keep our goal in mind, and so order everything in our lives to this end.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to our magnificent destiny. In heaven we will see God intuitively; we will see God face to face, in nature and in essence. This beatific vision will give rise to a great love, a love as all-embracing and strong as is our power to love. The human heart was created to love, but only to love what is truly lovable. In an ecstasy of joy, it will praise and extol the indescribable perfections of the beloved. Plunged in God as in an ocean of light, bathed in the ravishing splendor of the Divinity, our intellect will be eternally absorbed in ecstatic contemplation, and it will eternally furnish fuel for the divine flame which will devour our heart without consuming it.

This is heaven; this is the life we will lead if we fulfill here below the designs of our Creator. All our happiness, even like that of God, will be in seeing, loving, and praising God.

Our destiny in this life of tears offers us the same elements of happiness. The good Master, whom we are called to serve, wants us to experience here on earth, so to speak, the happiness that he promises us at the end of our pilgrimage. That is why he leads us as pilgrims through this land of exile. Our aim, our only aim, is to know, to love, and to glorify him. Whoever does not do this will be judged unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven and will be rejected.

Therefore, all our happiness here below consists in seeing God, in loving and serving God. Through faith we truly see God, not of course in an intuitive manner, but as the Apostle says, as in an enigma, in a mirror (1 Co 13:12). The light of faith is just as infallible as the light of glory, but it is essentially less luminous, less perfect. Yet it is sufficient to illumine the infinite perfections of our God which then flood a pure heart with ineffable delight and instill in it a vehement longing for the happy end of its pilgrimage.

The soul which has faith does not count the cost when it is called to prove its love for the beloved. Nothing can separate it from the beloved, neither death, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor nakedness, nor sickness, nor persecutions, neither insults nor hell, nor earth nor heaven ... (Rm 8:35 ff). The soul rejoices, it exults, it is truly happy when it can suffer for the God who is both the object and the promise of faith.

Clearly therefore, our goal is to know, to love and to glorify God. Faith, the beautiful order of the universe, and the still more fascinating order of religion, are all directed to this sublime goal. Earth is like a novitiate of heaven: we must do here what we will do eternally in the bosom of God. We are directed to this goal not merely by counsel; we are obliged to pursue it if we are to be truly happy in this life and especially if we are to earn such happiness in the life to come. Such is our belief. We also believe that, left to ourselves, we cannot attain this goal because the degradation of sin has made us unfit for such a noble destiny. Besides, without grace we can do nothing in the order of salvation.

The Savior of the world teaches us that the indispensable condition for seeing God is to have a pure heart. It would profit the soul nothing to be enlightened by the most striking splendors

of faith if the heart were not pure. For then the soul would frustrate its life of faith and render itself all the more guilty, all the more miserable.

It follows that all our efforts, all our trials and all our struggles must be directed toward purification of the heart. This is really the whole purpose of Christianity. For, to have a pure heart is to love God alone, to seek God alone, and to strive toward God with all our energies. It is to avoid sin and even the semblance of sin. It is to observe the laws of God, to fear God's justice, and to adore God's sovereign will. To have a pure heart is, in a word, to practice faith and to profit by the lessons which faith teaches. Clearly therefore, a faith which is God-revealing is necessarily one which purifies the heart; it is an operative faith.

But what is Christianity if not the practice of the teachings of faith? Faith tells us that all the descendants of Adam, as a result of the disobedience of their first parent, are born slaves of the triple concupiscence of the eyes, the flesh, and the pride of life; that although the three concupiscences are subservient to the soul after baptism, they are not destroyed and they continually struggle to recapture the empire which they have lost. Finally, faith tells us that both the world and hell combine with the already formidable efforts of the flesh in order to destroy the spirit, that Jesus came among us to abolish our shameful slavery and to enable us to maintain ourselves in the freedom which he purchased by his death. The means that he left us are the sacraments, the theological and moral virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and his law. Some of these means are for the mind, others for the heart. All concur effectively in purifying the heart and enabling it to see God. But we must make use of them, for God did not intend that our perfection be so much God's work that it would not also be a work of our collaboration.

ON MENTAL PRAYER

We have just seen that the Creator's purpose in calling us to life and to the Church was to know, love and glorify God. We have also seen that faith is the light that enables us to see God here below, and that it can do so only in pure hearts, that is, in hearts that are faithful to God's teachings. Finally, we have seen that the purpose of our Savior's mission was to break our fetters, to purify and restore our hearts, and so to prepare us for the noble end of our existence.

Now, among the means at our disposal to attain this desirable goal, mental prayer is, without a doubt, the one that will prove most effective, for it is by this exercise that we will most easily empty our hearts of all that is not God. A few reflections on the nature and requirements of this exercise should suffice to convince us.

Mental prayer is a holy encounter of the soul with its God, an indescribable exchange in which God condescends to reveal Deity to lowly creatures and to initiate them into the

depths of God's eternal decrees. It is a communion where the soul, after contemplating in the light of faith the Divinity's infinite grandeurs, adorable perfections, wise projects and the admirable design of its works, humbles and prostrates itself at the sight of its own nothingness, and admires and adores the goodness of this great God who deigns to tolerate its presence. The beauty of heaven, the blessings the soul has received, perfections holiness and justice, and, on the other hand, the soul's own hideous degradation, its monstrous ingratitude, the remembrance of its crimes, the sight of its weakness - all these profoundly stir the heart with sentiments of sorrow and pain and love and hope, of shame and fear. Who can describe what takes place in a soul that is enlightened by faith, and that stands in the presence of its God? What indescribable raptures, what pure joys, what comfort even in the tears which are shed! Also what insights are given to it in proportion as it acquires a contempt for and a forgetfulness of all that is not God; insights into God in whom it discovers ever new lovable traits; insights into itself revealing new depths of abjection and of nothingness; insights into creatures from which it rapidly frees itself. If the soul is constant in its fidelity to grace, its heart is purified, its faith increases, and it soon attains that blessed state where, absorbed in God, it forgets itself entirely in the contemplation of God's infinite perfections.

Considered in its true perspective, mental prayer is essentially founded in faith; its object and its method must be faith. Borne on the wings of faith, the soul soars, so to speak, to the bosom of God, there to contemplate and admire at their source, the sublime truths of revelation. It considers them either in their magnificent totality or one after another. It reflects analytically on the elements of its belief. It strives to penetrate their adorable secrets. The soul is not averse to the smallest details, to the simplest principles, to the most ordinary truths. Provided they are suggested by faith, it treats them as objects worthy of its undivided attention.

But in mental prayer the soul is not content merely to consider and to study the various elements of faith. It examines their bases their certainty, beauty, excellence, and the happiness they promise. While it deplores the folly and the misfortune of those who do not believe it is humbled because it has been enlightened in preference to so many others. It thanks and extols the royal magnificence of its God.

Following this contemplation of the main objects of our faith -God and ourselves -the soul tries to take stock of its faith. It is soon struck by its weakness and listlessness, and it begins to practice faith zealously, invoking God with the Apostles: "Lord, increase our faith"· or with the centurion: "I believe, Lord; help my unbelief."

As the soul examines its weak, wretched faith in the light of its own past and present conduct, what cause it finds for shame, regret, confusion and sorrow, for humiliation and self-abasement! How shocked it is to find itself so vile, so ungrateful and yet so blessed with heavenly graces and favors! How conscious it is of its unworthiness and wretchedness!

It is struck with growing admiration for the boundless ineffable goodness of its God who, instead of crushing it as it deserves; tolerates it to remain present, showers it with blessings, and forces it, as it were, to return to God; as if God had need of its tokens of esteem!

It is in this fashion that the soul learns to know God and to know itself in the mental prayer of faith. These two kinds of knowledge are so related that to advance in one is to progress equally in the other. The more the soul knows the infinite perfections of God the more it will cling to God's love and the more it is capable of sacrificing itself.

As it advances in self-knowledge, in the conviction and the intuitive evidence of its weaknesses, of its wretchedness and its imperfections, so does its humility and self-abasement increase. It recognizes it is worthy only of aversion and scorn, and this is but one step removed from desiring and urgently demanding from heaven self-loathing and self-contempt.

Moreover, the knowledge of God and of its own nothingness makes it realize the hideousness and the odium of any crime that attacks the infinite majesty, wounds its all-holiness, and defies its most awe-inspiring justice; the hideousness of a crime committed by a vile creature who has nothing and can do nothing, depends utterly on the one it offends even for the power which it abuses to offend. As its suffering becomes more acute and its sorrow more keen, its heart is torn. It cries to heaven for help and begs to be constituted the minister of the Lord's vengeance. Humility takes root, penance and mortification become dear to it, and it blesses Providence for the sufferings it sends. The heart is purified, divine love establishes its domain and the soul begins to experience a foretaste of heaven in the vision of God.

We have just sketched rapidly the nature, the object and the procedure of mental prayer. Let us add a few words on the comportment of the soul in this wonderful exchange.

We must not be misled into thinking that to meditate is to give free rein to our imagination and our own ideas as we contemplate the great objects of our faith. This type of mental prayer would be fruitless; at best it might be of some use as a study; it would most certainly nourish intellectual pride and complacency.

The soul in the presence of its God, and conscious of God's grandeur and excellence and of its own meanness and deep distress, humbles itself prostrates itself in adoration, calls for the divine aid of the Holy Spirit and for that of the august Mary, and submits itself to them as enlightened guides. It is careful not to follow its own insights for it knows these are vain, weak and inadequate. It reflects and examines only because it is urged to do so by the Spirit of God. The soul needs only to open its eyes to the light of faith and immediately it sees, admires contemplates, and it considers itself happy to see and contemplate. It praises and thanks God; it deplores its own in gratitude and begs forgiveness.

When persons who are not too conversant with the ways of God discuss mental prayer, they treat it as an exercise which only a certain class of people can practice successfully. Learning is postulated as an indispensable condition for mental prayer. They claim that the ordinary

person, an ignorant person even though sufficiently informed about religious obligations, is incapable of mental prayer, etc.

What a strange illusion! What a deceitful ruse of the spirit of darkness! What! This humble individual, this simple religious domestic, who may not even know how to read but who is called, just as you are, to know, love and serve God here below, is called, just as you are, to see God in heaven, to love and serve God there. And you would consider such a one unfit for mental prayer, that is, for an exercise whose sole purpose is to learn to know God and oneself? To be consistent, say rather, if you dare, that such a one is unfit to know, love and serve God, or is condemned to love and serve God without knowing God! Of course such a person is unsuited to that type of mental prayer which is more an exercise of the mind than a work of God, which is closer to a theological or philosophical treatise than to a consideration of faith. But such a mental prayer is nothing more than a somewhat sterile study where the intellect and judgment play a greater role than faith of the heart. I grant you that one is blessed in being unfit for such a mental prayer; it is more a stumbling-block for faith and humility than a real asset.

I admit also that such a person is probably unfit for that type of sublime mental prayer attained by St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and -St. Bernard. Yet, how dare I speak with such assurance? I wonder whether such people might not be capable of reaching such sublime heights, since after all, it is the Holy Spirit who teaches the pious exercise of mental prayer to the upright and the simple. We have examples of many holy anchorites, of most of the monks who populated the deserts and who were ignorant of the most elementary things, of the great saints: Anthony, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius, Rodriguez, and of so many ordinary people, poorly endowed and with little education, yet so well versed and enlightened in the most sublime mental prayer. Do not all these examples disprove my first statement? Read the lives of the Fathers of the Desert and of the saints and then tell me if you still believe that the poorly-instructed common person is unfit for mental prayer.

But you could say to me that I speak in such a way as to imply that instruction is perfectly useless in mental prayer. No. I make no such statement. I think I agree that it is useless in mental prayer. My thought is that a person who believes it is mental prayer to make, in God's presence, the most beautiful considerations upon some truth (I am implying that it is done without pride), would be completely mistaken. At best one would be making a useful review of what one had studied. In the presence of its God, the soul does not indulge in lengthy speeches nor in endless reasoning. It listens to the Holy Spirit and begs the Spirit to speak when it seems to be silent. Enlightened by faith, sustained by hope, and burning with divine love, the soul raises itself effortlessly to God. I repeat, it does not engage in endless chatter.

Were we to judge a meditation by the beauty and soundness of the considerations, we would have to conclude that contemplation is less than perfect, for here the soul acts like an idiot - pardon the comparison - who only stares like a child without asking "why" or "how." But such a conclusion is evidently contrary to the principles.

Were I asked what legitimate use could be made of one's talents and knowledge in mental prayer I would say in answer to this difficulty ...³

There are confessors who, according to their penitents, advise them that it is better to engage in practices other than mental prayer, since they make little or no progress in it. Accordingly, they prescribe other exercises of piety, such as reading and vocal prayers. What an illusion! Instead of seeking the cause of the difficulty and eliminating its effects, they prefer to abandon a practice which is indispensable if one is to walk the paths of perfection.

Penitents complain that they cannot perform mental prayer, that they are continually distracted and troubled by the most bizarre thoughts, that they are usually calm but the moment they try to meditate, they are plagued by distractions. They think that they wasted their time and offend God instead of pleasing God. They conclude that it would be better to give up mental prayer for a while. They seek the advice of their director who will dare to reply in all seriousness: "It would seem that God has withdrawn from you as a trial. Be patient and ready for the moment of God's return. Meanwhile, do this or that good work instead of your mental prayer."

What a decision! And how it must reassure the penitent! No more mental prayer until God returns, that is, stay away from God as long as God stays away from you; be patient until God returns, then you can approach God again. Whoever makes such a blunt decision must ignore the fact that St. Teresa faithfully performed mental prayer for ten years even though it was a torture for her. During this terrible time of trial she multiplied her meditations, her visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in spite of the anguish she experienced. St. Teresa would certainly not have approved the director's decision. St. John of the Cross was forsaken by God for years on end; yet he remained faithful to prayer. Both St. Francis de Sales and St. Ignatius underwent the same trials but they never thought of giving up mental prayer. On the contrary, they practiced it more assiduously. We have but to read the lives of the saints to find that they all acted in a similar way.

To those who complain of dryness and distractions I would ask:

1. How do you make mental prayer? How much enthusiasm and good will do you put into it? What means do you take to banish the distractions that bother you?
2. What kind of distractions are they? Are they intellectual or sentimental? How do you resist each type?
3. What is at the root of this dryness, of these distractions?

There are two kinds of causes. Positive causes: fickleness of mind, pride of heart, temperament and passions. Negative causes which are but a lack of care and of preparation, an absence of the necessary dispositions for mental prayer. Mental prayer cannot be improvised; I mean that one cannot go to mental prayer without preparation. Whoever does so is responsible for the obstacles which arise because of this carelessness.

³ This sentence is unfinished in the Roussel MS and the rest of the page is blank.

A conscientious examination like this would inevitably lead to the following conclusion: see to it that you do not give up mental prayer. It is your fault if you find it so difficult. Begin by living more in harmony with the Spirit of God and all will go well. Do your best and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

Later we shall discuss the dispositions which should habitually be ours if our mental prayer is to be satisfactory. When dryness comes from God, the soul must be careful not to be disheartened and not to succumb to aversion for mental prayer. The soul must take courage and humble itself at the thought that it is totally unworthy of an encounter with God.

Dryness which comes from God is not as common as we might think. We often make God responsible for what annoys God more than it does us. It is the duty of the wise director to distinguish between what comes from God and what does not. After a careful review of a person's life, of the struggles and feelings of a soul who admits that it is suffering from dryness, it is difficult to be mistaken, because everything bears the mark of God's action.

METHOD OF MENTAL PRAYER

There are many methods of mental prayer but few persons of mental prayer. Why is that? Is it the fault of the methods or of the persons who follow them? Or is it the fault both of the methods and of the persons? It is not up to us to decide. The men and women of God who left us these methods had unusual insights into the paths of perfection. To blame the methods they taught us would be presumptuous and lacking in the respect we owe these persons. Let us recognize and not hesitate to admit that these methods are good in general, very good in fact, and capable of leading to a high level of mental prayer. But while we give them the praise they deserve, let us not give them an exclusive importance. Let us not insult their holy authors by thinking that they were unaware of better methods. These methods, by their very nature, are subject to variations and are not suited to all times, places and persons. They even have this peculiarity that they are not suited to the same kinds of persons at different times. Their purpose is to teach the soul how to converse with God, to give it the fundamentals of mental prayer, that is, to guide its first steps in this pious exercise. But once the soul is initiated, these fundamentals gradually lose their importance and are then discarded; just as a child lets go of the nurse's apron strings once it knows it can walk alone.

Our method is really an absence of method. Or, if you wish to call method the practice we are going to explain, then, here is our method.

Note. Before going into details, it may be good to recall in a few words the general principles which we stated above concerning our destiny and mental prayer. Having been created to know, love, and serve God, we must live only to achieve these aims. All our thoughts, affections, actions, aspirations ought to be for God. Whatever we do and whatever we say, all should be directed to the author of our being. St. Paul teaches this especially, and such is also the belief of the Church.

In mental prayer the soul sacrifices to God its highest faculty, reason; and it does so through faith. It learns to know itself. This knowledge in turn leads it to love and to praise God as God

demands. Mental prayer must be entirely faith-oriented; it must revolve around the truths of faith and in the light of faith. Of itself the soul is incapable of mental prayer; it must place itself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God to ponder only what the Spirit inspires, sacrificing its own insights in order to yield to the divine impulsion.

Purity of heart is the whole purpose of mental prayer.

It is on these principles, well understood and accepted, that we base our practice of mental prayer which, in our opinion, leads more directly and surely to purity of heart, that is, to seeing God. This exercise is so simple and clear that it is suited to all sorts of persons. Besides having the sanction of experience, it is sure and enlightened because it has faith for its principle, its object, and its means.

PROCEDURE FOR BEGINNERS

Whoever wishes to enter the paths of mental prayer must begin with mixed mental prayer on the Apostles' Creed.

After placing themselves in the presence of God, as we will explain later, beginners will start by reciting the Apostles' Creed with all possible attention. They will then mentally repeat it article by article, pondering each one as long as they feel an interior attraction and passing to the next after this attraction wanes, to avoid opening the mind to distractions.

If some articles make no impression on their heart, beginners need not pause at them, for there must be no effort, no strain. If the Spirit of God seems to be silent it is not insistence, which is always distressing, that will make the Spirit speak. Beginners will have no recourse but to humble themselves, to recognize how puny, frail, imperfect and sluggish is their faith, and to ask God immediately for an increase of faith.

If beginners are so interiorly disposed that they cannot stop more than a minute on each article of faith without being distracted, then they should pause for that minute. If they cannot stop that long, let the pause be shorter. But they must strive to be alert, allowing distractions to pass through the mind like clouds driven by the winds. Let them resign themselves to reciting the Creed two or three times or even four, if necessary, provided they do so with all possible attention.

As a first objective beginners must aim at making meditation with the least number of distractions; only good will is required.

As a rule, after having thus spent several periods of mental prayer as ~faithfully as possible, beginners will find that they can no longer review each article of the Creed several times. Divine attraction will increase in proportion to their perseverance. Some articles will strike

them more than others, and they will spend more time on them. They will recall these articles often during the day and renew acts of faith, hope and love.

Whatever progress beginners might make in this practice, whatever good will they might manifest, they always begin by reciting the entire Creed so as to exercise faith on this wonderful collection of truths. Then they consider the principal articles and tie in the others with these.

The manner in which I address myself to each article is simple. Let me take the second article as an example. I recite it mentally with all possible attention. Then I remain silent, open to the Spirit of God. I feel interiorly attracted to contemplate Jesus Christ as Savior or as the Son of God, as King, Priest and Prophet. I pause to consider him under the aspect which appeals to me. I examine my faith and compare it with my conduct. I see from my actions how wretched and imperfect it is. I then humble myself, I make acts of faith and I ask God to grant me an increase of faith. Then I adore Jesus Christ under the aspect which appealed to me and beg his pardon for not having known him until now. Finally, I listen to what faith prescribes for the future in regard to this mystery, and from the goodness of Jesus Christ and of his Mother, I ask for the grace of fidelity.

After that, I turn to another article or to another consideration and I proceed in similar fashion, trying to get a clear idea of each mystery, or drawing practical applications from it, comparing my behavior to the obligations which my faith has revealed to me. For instance, concerning this last observation, could I possibly contemplate the sanctity of God without becoming aware of my obligation to conceive a greater horror for sin? And when my faith has convinced me of the disgust which sin should inspire, a repugnance measured by that of God, do I not naturally tend to compare this disgust with that which I should experience? How little I had when I yielded to sin· how little I have now when I sin so easily! Am I not led to make amends to God for the past and to ask for the present a horror commensurate with the sin?

I now come to the mystery of the Son of God become man.

I consider either the wisdom or the power or the goodness of God in this mystery. The self-abasement of the Son who dares assume the condition of a slave, the magnitude of our woundedness as attested by the preeminence of the remedy.

I consider successively all the wonders of this mystery; a God conceived while still remaining a virgin; a God hidden under the shapeless sheath of a half-formed body in the womb of a woman. This God, hidden and reduced to nothing, is the God of the universe; yet he knows his base condition and submits to its humiliating restrictions; and he does so for the sake of unfriendly hardened sinners. And this God accepts his human birth; as man he is weak and he suffers. He depends on his mother. He has all the appearances of an infant: he cries like an infant, and that infant is God! A God who grows in wisdom in the eyes of people as he grows in age. A God who passes for the son of a carpenter! A God who obeys this carpenter, working with him to earn his food like a son of guilty Adam ...

I apply my faith to each of these marvels and I try to find lessons for my own conduct. Humility, gratitude, love are so many consequences which my faith draws from this great mystery. From these consequences, as from principles, flow other practical truths which I weigh in the light of faith and which I beg God and God's Son to make mine.

If I consider the last article of the Creed, the one on eternal life, I exercise my faith on this truth. Then I try to get a proper understanding of it. What is eternal life? Is it the present life? If it is not the present life, then there is another. Will eternal life resemble this one? What difference is there between this one and the other? How many kinds of eternal life are there? Heaven and hell. I believe in heaven; I was made for heaven. What shall I do in heaven? If I am made for heaven and if heaven is so delightful and eternal, I should set little value on this life; I ought to despise the joys and pleasure of this life and do everything so that I might enjoy eternal life. But what must I do? God has told me; but do I keep his word? If I am not faithful to it, that means I do not wish to go to heaven. When I offend God I do not think of heaven. Reflection on the past: sorrow, regret, reparation, firm resolve, hope, thanksgiving to God who allows us the time to earn our heaven- everything is summed up in these considerations. And what considerations and reflections I can -make if I consider hell! What are the tribulations of this life compared to hell? What are the deceitful pleasures of life compared to the hell they procure for us? All we have to do is rely on the Spirit of God to give us penetrating insights on all these truths.

This kind of considerations gives us an idea of those which the Spirit of God suggests.

We do not think it possible to linger like this over each article of the Creed in a single meditation. The Creed has enough substance to occupy a person for a lifetime, for all eternity even, since the saints in heaven will be eternally busy with the contemplation of the Divinity.

In the beginning, we do not allow ourselves to dwell too long upon each article, since our purpose is above all to banish distractions. So we give ourselves a few moments for each article and none at all for those that do not appeal to us, so that our mind will not be bored, and aversion of the will will not follow the dislikes of the mind.

Once our attention span allows us to spend the period of mental prayer in relative calm, we can prolong our reflection on each article. But it is still advised merely to read through the articles that do not move us, to pause briefly at those that move us slightly, and to spend more time on those that impress us more. It is also recommended that during the day we recall the striking thoughts of our mental prayer and apply our faith to them.

Everyone's instruction on the Creed should be sufficient and proportionate to their mental dispositions. Those who cannot go beyond the lessons of their catechism should try to understand these well; the more gifted should read more extensively on the matter.

Finally, we insist that there be a real will and effort. There can be no hope for the someone who shows no desire. But for those who seriously want to make mental prayer, it will be sufficient to have them adopt the practices we have explained. Certainly no great effort of the will is required to spend a moment or two pondering each article of the Creed. If the soul

can acquire the habit of attention, if it can listen to the Spirit of God who will infallibly communicate with it in this recollected state, it will gradually appreciate the truths contained in the Creed; it will be attracted to them and it will love to return to them. It will realize that the Creed is truly a vast subject for mental prayer, an ideal subject giving enjoyment and enlightenment. The soul will become attached to the truths of faith, especially to those that touch it particularly.

It will brush aside the distractions as importunate and unfriendly things seeking entry to deprive it of the proffered consolations. It will close the door of the mind to them. Should they force their way in, it thus foiling the devil who will retreat in confusion. And should the whole time of mental prayer be spent in combating distractions, I would consider it a well-made and meritorious prayer. If the soul scores several such victories, the devil will finally leave it in peace. Besides, God, seeing the faithful struggle of the soul, will come to its assistance and reward it amply sooner or later.

In the beginning, we expect to tire quickly of the constant return to the same truths, to the same Creed. Nonsense! If we are faithful to the method indicated, we shall soon be convinced of the contrary. We also think that we shall never be able to pray for a half hour without distraction. This is another illusion which is just as harmful as the first.

The method we propose is the best to banish distractions. The following reflections will help to substantiate this statement.

Our method addresses itself to both the intellect and the heart; our mental prayer is both meditative and affective. The variety of ways it suggests to make considerations and the variety of subjects allow the mind to pass easily from one to the other, as it is attracted, with no possibility of boredom. If you can pray only vocally, then pray vocally; if you can make considerations, do so. In all cases you are exercising your faith because you are making frequent acts of faith both interior and exterior. You spend your time making a variety of acts, and they keep your attention from wandering.

I know the difficulty of beginners to meditate on a single virtue or on a single truth for a half hour, without too many distractions. Their heart has little or no appreciation for the exercise and their mind wanders at the first appearance of a distraction. But the difficulty will be considerably reduced if you give them topics where the mind and heart can choose.

Now you might object that the practice I suggest is not a true method, or rather, that the mental prayer I perform according to the method is not a true mental prayer.

Here is my answer to that: all the Fathers of the spiritual life have recognized it as a true mental prayer. This is proven by the name they gave the practice: mixed mental prayer.

Secondly, I claim that it is a true mental prayer and I can prove this easily. The main purpose and aim of mental prayer is doubtless to purify the heart and to condition the soul to see God. Now we can only see God here below by the light of faith, and this light is stronger and more perfect according to the fidelity of the soul. Faith makes us know God as God wishes to be

known, and all those shafts of light which reveal God's nature and marvels to our eyes have been gathered by the apostles into one luminous beam, shining on all those who would be faithful to the Lord. Finally, the faith that reveals God to us is a faith which justifies, purifies the heart, and has been defined by the Council of Trent as the "root and foundation of all justification."

Now if mental prayer proposes to condition the soul to see God, and if the soul can see God only when the heart is pure, mental prayer must depend on faith, which is its principle, its foundation and its indispensable instrument.

All our perfection consists in knowing God and in knowing our self. "That I may know you and know myself," St. Augustine repeated. It is a wonderful prayer which we also should repeat constantly. Now where can we learn to know God and to know ourself if not in mental prayer where God has promised to teach us? How is God manifested if not by faith? And where do we find faith if not in the Creed? Is it not evident that a mental prayer which does not have faith for its object, its means, and its principle is a false mental prayer? Is it not also evident that to consider all these beautiful truths together is necessarily to make mental prayer? And what are we doing when we recite the Creed vocally, recite it mentally, pause at each article as long as grace attracts us, exercise our faith, if we are not making mental prayer?

Note. When we say "to exercise one's faith" we mean to apply the elements of one's faith to a revealed truth, to make acts of faith, vocally and internally, to draw conclusions, to examine one's conduct, to deplore one's blindness, to humble oneself, to ask the Lord's pardon, to ask for an increase of faith and to desire it ardently. Whoever does all this will finally be heard by heaven and will be given greater insights. With an increase of faith, hope becomes more pronounced, love more active and pure, humility deeper, regrets more poignant and the desire to see God stronger. God is revealed in proportion to the fidelity of the soul. Such are the delicious fruits of that ineffable encounter of the soul with its God.

But we must not expect to be the early recipients of such favors. The guilty soul, the sinner, especially one who has wallowed in impurity, stands in the way of the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven within. The mind and heart are the slaves of nature and can no longer taste the things which are of God. Many are the illusions and great are the depths of ignorance which such a one opposes to the splendors of faith. A perverse will puts many obstacles in the path of grace. And when such a person does consider some practical truth involving renunciation, abnegation, humility and penance, the passions are aroused and they choke the soul with their smoke. The very thought of these virtues inspires such a person with horror.

Those who find themselves in such a state - and who does not? - should not aim too high. They must above all not lose patience if they do not become persons of prayer as rapidly as their silly pride makes them hope. Let them only be faithful, admit their unworthiness to encounter God, humble and abase themselves, and wait for the moment of their complete deliverance in patience and humility. God proceeds with the work of purification with wise deliberation. Do not our troubles, our weakness and our ingratitude compel God to do so?

Let us wait with patience. There is a great deal to be done, but the worker is a God. Let us not create new obstacles to God's divine inspirations; let us be persevering ...

We will not experience a lively faith, an unshakeable hope or an ardent love after only a few days of effort and fidelity. God will stay hidden perhaps for a long time. Even though we do not sense God's presence, God will be near us. Until our passions are subject to the yoke of faith, and the haze in our mind is dissipated, we shall be visited alternately by aridity and by sensible consolations. But how can we dare hope that God will be visible to us if we continue to offend God with thousands of daily infidelities; if we do not live according to our faith, however weak it may be; if we go to mental prayer as to any ordinary exercise? If we do not strive with perseverance and cooperate with grace, if we are the slaves of the flesh, if we ruin the reputation of our brothers, if we do not observe our rules and vows, how can we expect the blessings of mental prayer?

Let us begin by approaching our God who will also gradually draw near to us. Let us observe the rules and the vows of our Order. Let us faithfully perform the duties of our state, watch over our senses and especially our tongue. Let us live for God, for heaven, and conformably to our divine destiny. If the Lord wishes to test us after that, let us acknowledge and adore God's sovereign goodness. Let us recognize and admit in all humility that we are only useless servants.

THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

When the soul has been sufficiently trained in the prayer of faith, and has comprehended its spirit and method, the next step will be to speak of the exercise of the presence of God which must always accompany mental prayer.

When I appear before God for mental prayer, as for every exercise, the first thought that occupies me is that of the divine presence. I am before the God of heaven and earth, before the powerful and terrible God, before the infinite, immense Being who created all things by one word, who gave laws to the whole universe, and who presides over their observance. God's hand supports the earth; the sun and the moon recognize God's voice. All the earth proclaims God's grandeur, magnificence and adorable perfections. I am before the avenger of vice and the rewarder of virtue. I am before the One who will judge me, whose eye reads into the depths of my heart; to whom my most secret thoughts are known. Who knows whether at this very moment God's arm is not raised to punish me?

Who am I to dare to appear before God? Who am I to aspire to the most holy, the most intimate encounter with the Sacred Heart?

"O God, that I may know you and know myself!" What a miserable creature I am, a poor nothing, more vile, more despicable than nothingness, since I have added the nothingness of

sin to the nothingness of my being! God is all and I am nothing! God is holy and I am covered with blemishes! God is just and I am full of iniquities! God is good and I am ungrateful!

What contact can be established then between God and myself, between Being and nothingness, between sovereign perfection and sin?

O my God, who sees the abjection of my being, you sustain me in your presence! You do not crush me! On the contrary, you call me to yourself, as if you needed my homage! How the sight of such goodness makes me contemptible in my own sight! All glory to you, to me all scorn! To you, all praise; to me, confusion! You can do all and I can do nothing; may you be blessed! You are of infinite value, and I am worth nothing; may you be blessed! Glory to you, Lord! You are all and I am nothing. Grant that I may occupy the lowly position that I deserve! Grant that I may know myself as you know me, so that my pride will not puff up my mind, and my heart will not rejoice in anything except contempt.

O God! I am before you to pay you my respects. But how can my homage possibly profit you? Therefore, it is not in my name that I offer it, but in the name of your divine Son. It is in his name and with him, as does his holy Mother, that I praise and bless you, humble and abase myself at the sight of my afflictions and my sins, thank you for the countless graces that I have received from you, finally, ask you for those which I need to be faithful to you today, at this moment, and in all the moments of my life.

Lord, penetrate my soul with the thought of your presence, my mind with the notion of your infinite perfections, my heart with your indescribable loveliness.

Fill me with the fear of your judgments, with the most vivid sorrow for my disorderly past and my present infidelity. Increase in me the light of faith until, knowing you better and knowing myself better, I will love no one but you, I will see nothing but you in all things. It is for these reasons that I am at your feet, to consider the truths of faith in the light shining from your adorable face. Help me, because I can do nothing without you. Holy Spirit, source of every light and every grace, it is you who must guide me, who must lead me. I abandon myself to your direction. I renounce my own ideas, which are like the follies and falterings of a child, so as to follow only the ideas that it pleases you to inspire in me.

O Mary, since you are my Mother, you must present me to your divine Son. Make me presentable. You know very well how to gain his graces and obtain his blessing for me if you want to.

It is by making acts of this nature that we place ourselves in God's presence. All these acts must be inspired by these two fundamental truths: God is everything, I am nothing. We must exercise our faith on these two truths and listen to what the Spirit of God inspires in us concerning them; this is what is meant by the exercise of the presence of God.

We submit as a principle, that the person who does not acquire the blessed habit of the presence of God will never make mental prayer. We are sadly mistaken to think that it is sufficient to make some acts of faith, adoration, humility and contrition before beginning our

mental prayer. These acts, formulated out of a purely mechanical habit, mean nothing, produce little or no recollection, and leave the soul open to waste its energies. All the methods which demand such preparatory acts suppose the habit of the presence of God, without which the acts that they prescribe would be altogether meaningless.

In order to acquire the habit of the presence of God, we must often recall God's presence outside of mental prayer.

"O my God," we should frequently exclaim, "you are by my side, you are in me, you are all around me, and I pay no attention to you! You see and watch me constantly, either to protect me against the snares of my enemies, or to inspire me with holy thoughts, or to sustain me; and I do not see you! How great you are and how small I am! How beautiful you are and how ugly I am! I beg you to raise just a little the veil that hides you from my eyes so that I may know you better and also know myself better, that I may love you alone and despise myself, that I may adore you and humble myself. You see, O my God, how desperately I want to believe that I am something. Vanity fills my heart and pride puffs up my mind. A miserable nothing, I forget that I am a creature and that you are my Creator. I constantly forget you and I do not recognize the caring hand which nourishes me, which clothes me, which defends and sustains me. O my God, help me to see myself such as I am, so that I be humiliated as much as I deserve, and that I might not be so foolish as to think that I am something. Help me then, Lord, to know you and to know myself. I believe in your divine presence but my works testify to the weakness and imperfection of my faith. My pride leaves no room for doubt on that score. Increase my faith, I beg you; make it a living faith."

It is by acts of this nature, often repeated in the course of the day, that the soul will acquire the habit of the presence of God. This habit, us. No effort or strain will be necessary. The presence of God in our thought and in our heart will give our acts and our faith an inexpressible liveliness and pleasantness.

Do not think that, to make mental prayer, we have to entertain continually the actual thought of the presence of God. We know too well that the ever-present thought of God is a favor of heaven, a favor as rare as it is precious, one that God gives only to certain privileged souls.

What we insist upon is the "habitual" thought of the presence of God, that is, the blessed habit of maintaining our self in God's presence, a habit that the soul acquires by means of frequently repeated acts. In this happy state, the soul, accustomed to and even familiar with the idea of the presence of God, recalls this presence with the greatest of ease the moment it enters a church or wishes to make mental prayer.

On the contrary, those persons who have not acquired the habit of the presence of God outside religious exercises, and especially outside of mental prayer, experience great difficulty in putting themselves in God's presence and in remaining there, either during mental prayer or during Holy Mass. This is the main reason for the slight success in the ways of perfection. Since the thought of the presence of God makes little or no impression on the mind and heart because of a lack of practice and of faith, it is only with great difficulty that considerations of faith will cause the mind and heart to be attentive, impressed and receptive.

A mere nothing is sufficient to carry them far from their subject. But the soul that is strongly penetrated with the presence of God entertains feelings of respect, self-abasement, praise and love. It does not dare, it does not even think of straying from the subject, in order not to be disrespectful to its God who is present and who is a witness of its actions. It is captivated by the great objects which are offered for its consideration, and it sustains its attention with a facility which increases in proportion to its progress in the blessed habit of the presence of God.

The reason why so few people succeed in mental prayer is the fact that so few acquire the holy habit of the presence of God. Ask them how they spend their day, how they perform their different exercises of piety, and you will find that they cannot accustom themselves to the idea that God is with them, that they often forget God even in their prayers. After that, would we be surprised if they did not succeed in mental prayer? For myself, I confess that I would be even more surprised if they did succeed.

After all, what is the likelihood that a mind which is by nature so volatile, an imagination which is so vagabond, and a heart which is as vain as the human heart, will be able to stay in a respectful and tranquil silence at the feet of the Lord, to listen to divine oracles, and to savor the beautiful truths God was good enough to reveal to us, if they are not bound by the yoke of the presence of God? There is no need to insist further on the necessity for a successful mental prayer of growing familiar with the thought of the presence of God. This necessity is already too self-evident to require more ample proof.

We know that the two great pivots around which the exercise of the presence of God ought to revolve are the two truths: God is all, I am nothing. We still have to add a few words about the length of time we ought to devote to this exercise in mental prayer. First, I say that we cannot assign any fixed period of time. Secondly, I say that we ought to continue the exercise as long as the Spirit of God and the attraction of grace solicit us. Thirdly, I say that we will have made a truly good meditation if we have spent the whole time in the pious exercise of the presence of God, because we have fulfilled all the requirements of mental prayer, and in so doing we have attained the goal of mental prayer. Finally, I add that it must be our heart, our sentiments and the conviction of our faith that produce the various acts which constitute the exercise of the presence of God, and not just a purely natural and mechanical habit.

I note that those who seriously wish to advance in mental prayer frequently recall the thought of the presence of God outside the time prescribed for mental prayer. As a result, because of the habit they have acquired, they need less time to put themselves again in the presence of God and they can spend more time in formal mental prayer. But the exercise of the presence of God is not the only condition. There are others which must be explained at greater length.

DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED FOR MENTAL PRAYER

In addition to the habit of the presence of God, we should bring to mental prayer several other indispensable dispositions.

We read in Holy Scriptures that when Isaac crushed under the weight of infirmity and age, thought he was on the point of appearing before God, he called his oldest son, Esau, and said to him: "My son, I am near the end of my life. Go out hunting and bring me some excellent game, and after you have prepared it the way I like it, you will bring it to me and I shall give you my blessing." Esau quickly took his bow, his quiver and arrows, and left for the fields.

However, Rebecca, who had heard the words of her husband, and who had a marked predilection for Jacob, the younger son, called the latter and said to him: "My son, your brother has just left for the hunt at the order of your father. He is to prepare some game, the way you; father likes it, and then he will receive the patriarchal blessing. Hurry then, my son, go to the flock and you will bring me two of the fattest kids; I will prepare them myself and you will present them to your father, who, taking you for Esau will give you the blessing. I will be responsible for everything; only go, my son." Jacob, ever the obedient one, but who was also inspired by the Spirit of God, ran to the goat pen, slaughtered two superb kids, and brought them to his mother. Once the dish was prepared, Rebecca went to the clothes closet and got the sacrificial robes which Esau, her oldest son, had entrusted to her. She vested Jacob in them, covered his hands with some of the goat skin so that, in touching them, the aged Isaac would be deceived. Then she accompanied Jacob to the bed of the holy patriarch. With pleasure Isaac accepted the dish from the new Esau and found it good. Then, taking Jacob's hands into his own, he said: "These are truly the hands of Esau, but the voice is that of Jacob." Nevertheless, he gave the young boy the blessing to which the heavenly favors were attached.

Here, it seems to me, is a most striking figure of the first disposition for mental prayer: it is union with Mary. Since the new alliance was concluded between heaven and earth and sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ, God the Father recognizes only his Son, loves only his Son, and adopts us only in his Son, who is our older Brother. All that we would offer him by hands other than those of his Son would not be acceptable because it is his Son alone that he chose for our High Priest and our Mediator. Therefore, we must unite ourselves to the Son in order to go to God. But how will we unite ourselves to the Son if not through the mediation of the Mother, the depository of the garment, that is, of the merits of her oldest Son? Let us ask Mary, the new Rebecca, to clothe us in them, and to present us herself to the Father who, on seeing the decorations and apparel of his oldest Son will bless us. '

Mary was constituted our Mother and Guardian by her own Son from the height of the cross. It is in her hands that he placed the treasures of his grace, so that we believe her to be the naturally constituted mediatrix between the Son of God and all people, just as the Son is the necessary Mediator between God and all people. Nobody can go to the Son except through Mary, just as nobody can go to the Father except through the Son.

The mediation of Christ is of faith. If that of Mary has not been defined by the Church, it is taught by the generality of doctors of the Church, so much so that it is very nearly of faith, and it would be rash for someone to dare to deny it. Is it necessary for the Church to notify us by decree of the obligation to believe in this truth for it to be commonly accepted? Does it not suffice for true Catholics for docile and submissive members, that the Church manifest to the~ its belief through the positive, teaching of theologians and doctors? The all-powerfulness of Mary is too evident to be disputed. If a mother has full sway over a well-bred son, imagine what a mother like Mary could obtain from a Son like Jesus Christ! When we read the beautiful Praises which the Church addresses to her, the wonderful prerogatives which it attributes to her, when the Church encourages us to sing the fact that Mary is our hope, the gate of heaven, our refuge, our help, can we doubt that the faith of the Church regards Mary as our necessary Mediatrix?

And we, members of a Society which takes glory in belonging to her in a special manner, we who have experienced so many times the efficacy and perhaps the necessity of her mediation, we who are, in short, her witnesses and living proofs, would we be so ungrateful; so foolish even and so crass as to deny this most beautiful prerogative of the Mother of God? O Mary, would I be so unnatural as to commit such an insult? Is it not enough, that I have disregarded you and saddened you for so long? Would I still want to dispute a power and a quality which are so justly vested in you? No, I protest with all my heart against such a crime! Be my mother; be my good mother; be my advocate and my mediatrix. Be my joy and my hope, my strength and my refuge, my salvation and my happiness. My heart and my life are entirely in your heavenly hands!

If this is my belief - and I am happy to say that I think it is - then I conclude that it is impossible to make mental prayer without Mary. If no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed him (Mt 11:27), likewise no one knows the Son except the Mother and the Church to whom she has revealed him. Let us then unite ourselves to Mary in mental prayer and beg her to make her Son known to us, she who knew him so well and who studied him so well; she who welcomed and preserved so religiously in her heart all the words which came forth from his mouth.

Who could better initiate us into the beautiful mysteries of the Incarnation and the Redemption than she who had such a great share in them? If I contemplate Jesus in the womb of Mary, what more could I ask for than to know, to experience some of the sentiments of faith, hope and love in which his Mother was completely absorbed? If I contemplate Jesus at birth, is it possible that I can lose sight of the Mother who brought him forth, who holds him in her arms, presses him to her heart, and presents him for my worship and adoration.

Is there a single mystery of the life of our Lord to which Mary is a stranger? But if the Mother is to be found wherever the Son is, how could I be so foolish and so foolhardy as to separate Son from Mother when they have never been separated before?

Union with Mary, then, is an indispensable disposition for mental prayer. It is absolutely necessary that she offer us to her Son, as it is necessary for the Son to offer us to his Father, if we want to receive the intimate communications of faith.

A second disposition, one that is equally indispensable, is union with our Lord. This union is one of faith. We believe that, since the fall of Adam, no one has been able to go to God except through the Son. Since that lamentable fall, faith in Jesus Christ has been indispensable for salvation, so much so that whoever has not believed in him has not been saved.

We believe that the mediation of Jesus Christ, as Priest and Pontiff, is equally indispensable for salvation. Since the disobedience of our first parent, God does not wish to deal with us. God does not know us anymore and does not love us any more except in the Son. Consequently, all our greatest and most meritorious actions are as nothing in God's sight, if the Son does not present them. That is why the great Apostle says: Whatever you say, whatever you do, always be united to Jesus Christ.

Then all that we do, even the most common things, will be acceptable to God if the Son presents them. On the contrary, God will reject with disdain and contempt all that will be offered by a hand other than the hand of Jesus Christ, even the works most worthy of the divine heart.

Who are we to pretend to go to God by another way than that of Jesus Christ? Miserable creatures, we are more vile in God's eyes than nothingness, since we are covered with the filth of sin. We should never cease to be astounded that God endures our presence with such patience. And we cannot escape from the fact that God would have already crushed us, utterly destroyed us in the womb of our mothers, if God's just vengeance had not been restrained by an all-powerful arm. And if we have already been an object of contempt from our mother's womb and an insupportable abhorrence in God's sight, can we dare flatter ourselves that we are more acceptable today, we who have added to the sad heritage of our first parent so many iniquities that are a thousand times more monstrous?

O my God, it is a marvel of mercy, for which we can never adore and glorify you enough, that you have willed to give us your own Son, to shatter our fetters, wash our stains and reconcile us with you. It is through your divine Son that you want us to come to you. Could it be so hard for us then to associate ourselves with a God who became so lowly in order to draw us to you and to save us? Could there be anything repugnant in a lamb, a model of patience and love?

Let us cling to Jesus Christ. If this is necessary in all our actions, how much more necessary is it in mental prayer, where we receive the insights which his Father has charged him to give us.

A third disposition for mental prayer is to make our life a continual preparation for it.

Shortly after we begin to follow the method which is there proposed, we realize that everything that is said pertains directly to mental prayer, but that, on the other hand, we are constantly doing things which are obstacles to this holy exercise.

With faith becoming more active and more explicit, and with the help of God's infinite mercy, we acquire a greater knowledge of the grandeur of our God, the perfections, the holiness, and what God has the right to demand of creatures. We are also more conscious of our own distress and unworthiness. The past appears in a terrifying light and the present is not reassuring.

How hateful and hideous is the soul in its own eyes when it is ever so slightly enlightened by faith! Penetrated by its own weakness and by the vast range of the duties of state which it has neglected up to the present, it is humbled and abashed. It weeps, it appeals to heaven for assistance, calling on it to be a witness of its vows and promises. Having sensed how ridiculous it is to protest to the Lord without ever being attached to God, and to seek to know its obligations without fulfilling them, the soul finally realizes that this is making a mockery of God; that to go to mental prayer while living this way is to tempt God imprudently. If the soul has committed a slight but deliberate fault, without bitterly deploring it, it will experience dryness and aridity in mental prayer, signs of God's withdrawal. It sees itself grow pale, so to speak, and become immersed in darkness in proportion to its infidelity.

This obliges the soul to make strenuous efforts to avoid all deliberate faults if God is to continue communicating with it, if its faith is to develop, if its horror of sin and its love for virtue are to increase. True, the soul does not yet delight in mental prayer, but it values its precious advantages sufficiently to practice meditation as often as it can. Since the method is essentially a practical one, the soul redoubles its efforts to dispose itself to mental prayer.

That which is special about the study of God and of oneself is the fact that the soul discovers in itself new grounds for hatred and scorn, and in God, new things to love. The more it advances in the knowledge of God, the more it discovers God's excellence and infinite perfections, the more it uncovers the ugliness and the monstrosity of sin, its own insolence and faithlessness, its straying and ingratitude. This gives rise to sentiments of the deepest sorrow, of firm hope and ardent love. It also leads to the most generous efforts and sacrifices. The soul finds penitential practices no longer irksome; "it suffers in patience the trials and contradictions which heaven sends it. It desires suffering and seeks for the cross. Finally, it imposes these upon itself and becomes the minister of divine retribution.

This is the result of our method, provided the soul follows it faithfully; I said provided the soul is faithful. Fidelity is indispensable for two reasons. First, it is impossible to make mental prayer for any length of time, in the manner we have explained, if one does not practice what one has learned. In fact, people soon reach such a degree of distaste and interior unease that they can no longer meditate, either because, for the sake of peace, they do not care to be enlightened further on the duties of state which they prefer to neglect, or because they refuse to make the sacrifices necessary for the faithful execution of them.

The second reason is that God, provoked at the meager manifestation of generosity in the cowardly and pusillanimous soul, withdraws and abandons it to itself. What a spectacle is the soul that understands the necessity of detachment from riches but will not give them up; that returns to mental prayer and discovers new obligations, only to refuse to fulfill them.

Such a sight is intolerable to God, who ceases to enlighten the unfaithful soul; it is also intolerable to the soul itself who, not feeling itself strong enough to practice what it sees, fears further enlightenment and gives up the mental prayer that was the source of these disturbing insights. Fidelity to the teachings of faith is an indispensable condition, not only for making progress in mental prayer, but also for persevering in the practice. So, to summarize everything that we have said on the dispositions that are necessary for mental prayer, we must: (1) live according to the insights which faith gives us; (2) recall frequently the presence of God; (3) remain constantly united to Jesus and Mary, or, in other words, practice faith, humility, confidence and union with Jesus and Mary. These are the necessary dispositions if we are going to make profitable mental prayer.

FURTHER READING ON PRAYER LIFE

*The practice of the presence of God as a basis for the life of prayer is treated in Father Chaminade's fourth letter to a novice-master (1835 or 1836), published in **Marianist Direction**, volume 3, pars. 117-135.*

*The Founder's earliest extant writings on prayer are found in letters of spiritual direction addressed in 1796 and 1797 to Mlle. de Lamourous. Many characteristic emphases already appear in these early documents. The relevant sections are published in **Writings on Mental Prayer**, pars. 1-18.*