

"Little Way"

*Spiritual fragments selected
from some of the writings of
Blessed Aloysius Guanella*

by
Father Annibale Giannini,
Servant of Charity

VOLUME ONE

Translated by and adapted for the use of
the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence
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Little Road or Little Way

Little Road shows us spiritual fragments, the maxims and spiritual thoughts which were taken from some of his writings that have already been published under different titles.

They are destined, first of all, for his religious—the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence—the "first-born" of his spirit and of his great heart, who frequently are remembered in these pages.

Nevertheless, these thoughts may prove useful to other religious and to priest-friends of the Guanellian Institutes who are familiar with the life and the episodes of the Founder's charity. No doubt, they have hastened with their prayers and good wishes, the day of his beatification and now look forward to the final declaration of sanctity.

Little Road or *Little Way* should also be of help to persons who, although they cannot spend much time in meditation, seek a short pause, a spiritual anchorage in their difficult and busy life.

One, two, or three thoughts for each day are presented for the months of the year. They are meant to help us on the road of our earthly life, to provide a breath for the soul while we travel toward that final

goal, heaven. There, in heaven, we all hope to meet and be happy forever. We can believe that heaven is enjoyed now by our Blessed Father Guanella, who must be smiling at our feeble efforts as he blesses and encourages us.

Such is our prayer and wish,

Father Charles DeAmbroggi
Superior General of the
Servants of Charity

Motherhouse: Como, Italy
Feast of the Annunciation, 1962

Preface

Blessed Father Aloysius Guanella was an apostle of charity as well as an apostle of the press. He repeatedly said: "I would fear to sin if I did not use the press as a powerful means of diffusing good."

He left some forty little books, mainly of moral and ascetic content, for people in general; in particular, various regulations and guides for the two congregations founded by him: the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

All of his writings are expressed in a clear, popular style, yet are enriched with a delightful Franciscan savor and are made precious by maxims that flowed spontaneously out of love of God and of neighbor.

The anthology of thoughts and maxims has been arranged diligently by the faithful compiler. (He has given us also, *Souls*, another collection of thoughts and maxims of the Servant of God, Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, the first successor of Blessed Guanella who later became the Bishop of Lugano, Switzerland.)

Here is reflected, in beautiful light, the virtues and characteristics of the spirituality of Blessed Guanella: his profound faith in God and his serene trust in the Providence of God; his lively devotion, especially towards the Holy Eucharist, and his ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

Throughout, we note his tender and active charity for the poor, and above all, for the most abandoned. We see, too, his fidelity to the program which he himself lived so intensely and then left as a spiritual testament to his children: "Pray and Suffer."

Little Road or Little Way, besides making better known the spirit of our Blessed Founder, may offer enlightenment to many minds and warm hearts as we travel the road of goodness in today's world, dark and cold, which is marked with a selfishness found, at times, even among Christians.

January

Work Conscientiously

**"To save our soul
we must be conscientious
in everything."**

While still a child at home, Blessed Luigi listened to the repetition of this maxim, a synthesis of all Christian wisdom. At an early age, he grew to understand it and made it a part of his inner being. As a priest and apostle, he repeated the maxim in various ways so that we may ponder them in our minds and hearts. We may reflect upon: conscience, the soul, virtuous and holy example, the virtue of purity with its dangers, confidence in God.

1 Peace of heart, besides drawing down on us the benevolence of the Lord, also has a strong and beneficial influence upon the body. Better than any medicine, it often restores health.

2 Children need motherly care. This care must be exercised with delicacy of heart and intelligent understanding.

2 Our Lord offers His grace to help us do good. As a prudent Father, He wishes us to use it in little

works. If the Lord finds that we are negligent in carrying out small undertakings, He will withdraw His grace and leave us alone. Mindful that our Lord rewards only that which is done for Him alone, we must purify our intentions.

3 Good example is, in itself, like a continuous breath of the power of the Holy Spirit. Example is like the sun which is light and heat; it makes flowers grow and fruit ripen in the orchard of sanctity.

Chains are for the rebellious. The first human rebels were our first parents, Adam and Eve. They failed God and since then we are prone to be rebellious.

4 Children should never be expected to participate in long services on the same day; they become overtired and their piety and devotion will be lessened.

5 Our Lord judges persons and things with better judgment than that shown by the best of men. In the sight of God, a farmer who tills his land can be worth more than a professor who teaches from the rostrum. To sweep the floor diligently is as meritorious as to reign.

Flee self-love as you would a pest. Do not be tempted to make your opinion prevail; if it is accepted, do not let yourself become vain.

6 The spirit of the world is always dangerous, so much so, that we can only deplore that kind of life. Let us, also, be on guard against a certain human

and worldly spirit which spreads, and as a flame, burns even the precious field of Jesus Christ.

Let us work with all our strength, with our poor mind, and then throw ourselves into the arms of the Lord and say to Him: "Give me Your help to do it as it should be done." Then let us have great faith—God will certainly take care of us.

7 Observe the bee. From every flower, even from the wild thyme, he gathers the nectar which he later transforms into honey. All temperaments, all characters enlightened and fortified by grace, are able to produce the "honey" of the most beautiful virtues.

Shadows and dark objects pass before the sun, yet the sun is not contaminated. So pass rough temptations without leaving any trace whatever in the virgin of the Lord who deplores them. They even may add a notable increase in merit.

8 Every man is fallible; only God is infallible. The Word of God, therefore, is to be followed instead of the word of man.

By following the words of the Holy Gospels, we do good. If you are not able to please some with your virtues, remember you are dear to God.

9 The very serious dangers which threaten society (as in the time of war) bestir and move us profoundly; we all feel the need of having recourse to God with fervent prayer and good works.

If, until now, we have done some good, it is because God has given us His help. To start again, it is necessary that God help us anew, and that He continue to do so until the end; alone, we are incapable of any good.

10 Time is precious and let us take advantage of it for the purpose for which the good God gives it to us.

God's merciful intention is beneath all the chastisements which He permits to come to us.

11 Are you afraid of your weakness? But if you are weak, God is strong. If you invoke Him with faith, He will give you His strength.

He who uses the pen as well as he who manages the spade is precious in the sight of God if in every action, noble or common, he keeps his mind fixed on God.

12 Work with holy abandonment; pray with the greatest confidence and trust that God will come to your aid. If you know how to invoke Him always and live constantly in His presence, the enemy may be able to torment you but he will never overcome you.

It is wise not to be too free or to extend confidences to the immature and the young.

If we work with aged persons, let us do our best not to become impatient with them.

It is necessary to know how to bear the defects of our friends; work to gain those who may be against you by doing repeated acts of charity and kindness.

13 The spirit of cynical criticism leads to rash judgments, to murmuring and other dangers which, if not watched, can lessen and delay the good program developing in an institution.

Sometimes our Lord chooses those persons who are little esteemed by the world to confound the vain-glorious.

14 Man, sociable by nature, needs to empty his heart into the hearts of those who are brethren by blood or by choice, to hear their voices, to exchange ideas, to accept their kindness, to give and receive advice in the various circumstances of life.

Urged by grace, we should offer our actions, throughout every hour of every day of our lives.

15 With prudence and liberality, we must allow everyone full liberty in the exercise of their powers.

The same love we show towards our relatives and friends, we must have for all, even strangers with different customs.

Our Lord is the same for all, rich and poor. In His sight, all human creatures who inhabit the earth are equal.

16 Always preserve an unlimited confidence in God from whom you will draw the grace of a faith ever more firm; thus you will have more courage in trials and obstacles.

The harvest continually increases in the field, the cultivation of which has been confided to us by the bounty of the Lord. The laborers are few for this work, so let us endeavor to intensify our virtue to compensate for the shortage in number.

17 How carefully we should pass along life's road. If we attach ourselves to this creature or love that luxury or convenience more than God, then we have lost our pure intention to love Him alone.

The truly humble person is heard less than others; he shows this quality in his entire bearing without,

however, exaggerating or provoking praise as these are contrary to evangelical simplicity.

18 It is beautiful to live in a community when all have the same manner of thinking and willing.

We must never abuse youthful energy for it is like straw which cannot resist inclement weather.

19 Everyone who works makes mistakes or is likely to make them; it is great charity to bear with the faults of others especially when these occur in good faith.

The devil as a roaring lion, or again as an insidious serpent, threatens our way; he conspires fiercely for the loss of nations, for the loss of souls. Let us rise up as one to send away the enemy. Let our voices ring out in one cry: "Take everything from us but not our Faith."

20 Illness is one of the greatest afflictions of life not only for the one afflicted but also for the one who assists the sufferer.

The sick person, to be good and to merit the help of the Lord, must be resigned, that is, she must make every effort to put her heart at peace, to accept the illness with which she is afflicted and to realize that it is sent by God for her salvation.

21 It cannot be considered too much for us to make a fine examination of conscience to discern every fault, however slight, and to understand our defects which impede our giving greater glory to God.

Be careful not to show that you are partial to some, particularly when working with the aged and the mentally retarded, since this could produce unhappiness and great inconvenience for all.

22 Let us eagerly confide in the wisdom of the saints; but as for the folly of the sinner, let us, not even for a moment, consider it or let our hearts be drawn to it.

We should confide much in the fervent prayers of innocent souls.

23 To keep silence is certainly not easy. For some people it costs great effort. For these reasons, those who try to overcome their natural inclination to overtalkativeness will merit in proportion to the effort expended.

Order and cleanliness are the first coefficients of the moral and physical order.

Be careful to determine the daily schedule of activity and work in relationship to the age and health of the children for whom you are caring.

24 The Christian, chaste in the faculties of the mind and the senses of the body, must be like the sensitive plant which does not wish to be touched. We should preserve white as snow the uses of the senses—eyes, ears, taste, touch and smell.

The children should be well-dressed and well-housed because this is to reflect the goodness which exists in the Institute and the contentment of the human hearts within it.

25 To see things as God sees them and to know how to adapt oneself to them and to love the truth which is God Himself, Fountain of life and charity, by giving evidence of all of this in our daily lives, is the great work of days, of months, and of years for the true Christian.

Remove anything that can give any occasion to anyone to think or speak evil of you; endeavor to edify your neighbor with your conduct.

26 The ways of God are many and varied. Who ever is foolish enough to despise little ones may find that these are destined often to create, to give life and growth to the greatest works.

Your fidelity in trials will give you the pledge of divine blessings from which alone proceeds every temporal and spiritual prosperity.

27 To mistrust yourself, to confide in God will be infallible weapons to resist temptations in the moment of trial. They will give you victory and secure for you that spirit of contemplation which will make you see God in all your work, in every difficulty, in every suffering, in every moment of your life.

Good example is the first and the most eloquent of all sermons.

28 Avoid useless or superfluous visits to your sick and do not be too hasty to call and recall the doctor.

Let us think about and perform exactly the works of our state in life, for this is only what God expects of us.

29 The Christian must live an angelic life on this earth. He raises his heart and mind to God by the good, strong wings of prayer.

Holy souls know and love one another in the bonds of deepest friendship.

30 What is earthly life? It is like vapor which rises from the ground on a hot day after the rain and immediately spreads out in the air and fades.

Let us pray for one another, that we may save our souls and the souls of those whom the bounty of the Lord wishes to save through us.

31 Let us bear the weight of each other's defects and sufferings and thus we shall set out towards the heights, towards You, O Lord, our God.

Love the Lord because He alone can fully satisfy our hearts. God is our last end.

That concern which the angels have for us, we in turn should have for poor sinners who need help in order to be saved.

February

The Holy Eucharist— Food of the Soul

Blessed Aloysius Gonzaga ranks with the zealous apostles of the Holy Eucharist. It seems that the Blessed Mother appeared with her maternal smile on the very day of his First Holy Communion to show him how to extend his love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

His desire to be a priest was fulfilled on the day of his ordination, May 26, 1866. His youthful enthusiasm found expression in the words: "Most holy and glorious day, the most beautiful one of my life! Its memory, in the years to come, should make me forget every anxiety and cause me to leap with joy and gratitude."

His exhortations to find the delights and the joys of Eucharistic Love were frequent. Let us listen to some of them.

1 Jesus, truly living in the consecrated Host, remains there awaiting your adoration, the outpouring of your soul, ready to strengthen your will in the difficult practice of good works.

Let us endeavor to make the life of the Eucharistic Sacred Heart our life, convinced that we must fill our life with the spirit of charity if we desire to do good to our souls and merit graces for the great needs of others—for the relief of many bodily and spiritual miseries.

2 The foundation for a fervent life in the holy priesthood is in the fervent celebration of the august Sacrifice and in the devout recitation of the Divine Office.

Holy Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament must be well understood and should hold the first place in the mind and heart of every one.

Our devout reception of Holy Communion assures us of a place at the Banquet of Paradise.

3 Let us devoutly participate in daily Holy Mass and make well our meditation each day before the Blessed Sacrament. Our Rule gives us prescribed hours for adoration, and daily recitation of the rosary before the Blessed Sacrament.

The holy altar is our Calvary; we must look up and travel toward it until our last breath.

Let us search in the holy tabernacle for a prayer of infinite value and offer Jesus to Jesus Himself, and to His Divine Father. Thus, we shall have an abundant means to pay our debts.

4 The bread which sustains our body, as well as the Bread of our souls—the Holy Eucharist—are free gifts of the Lord which certainly no one has ever merited; let us humbly beg our Father in heaven for both.

Holy Communion is the food of the strong which makes them scorn earthly vanities; the Blood of Jesus Christ is the Drink of virgins and saints who disdain sense-pleasures and the delights of self-seekers.

5 The Fountain of holy love is in Jesus Christ and we have Jesus with us in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. From that throne of love, how often He enlightens the minds of His children, and how many find peace of heart again.

Holy Communion nourishes in the soul a treasure of love to which a total return of love should exist.

6 From the tabernacle comes a perfume of purity—a profound lesson of humility. Such untiring virtue teaches us not to allow a single occasion of zeal to escape which can be used for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

In order to grow in strength of soul, it is absolutely necessary to guard against mortal sin which is the death of the soul; it is well to feed the soul with its food of prayer and Holy Communion.

7 A fortunate group of boys and girls, dressed in white, coming back from the altar of Communion for the first time, excites a lively joy in one's soul.

That day on which, because of illness, impossibility, or obedience we are deprived of the Bread of Angels should seem to us like a day without sunshine, like a body without a soul—a sorrowful deprivation.

The church is holy and we must behave reverently as the sanctity of the place demands.

8 Legions of Angels surround the tabernacle in adoration; therefore, the persons who have the office to decorate the earthly Throne of the Most High on earth, should be angelic.

Practice all the approved devotions you desire but always put them in second place, convinced that there is no practice however holy it may be, that can compare with the attendance at Mass and the reception of Holy Communion.

9 Permit Jesus to become sacramentally present in your heart as often as possible. From the very hard stone of your heart will gush forth a spring of living water which will convert and heal all the unfortunate ones who have recourse to your assistance.

Jesus in His Sacrament is the Sun of the earth, and this Sun will enlighten the souls of good will unto the end of the world.

10 The life of the soul, greater than that of the body as heaven is greater than the earth, this life of the soul so noble and yet so poor, needs to be nourished every day with the food of prayer, with the vigorous potion of good example, with the pious exercises of charity. Above all, it needs that food par excellence—the food of Holy Communion.

All those who have at least a little good will to sanctify themselves can and must partake of the Sacrament of the strong.

11 Holy Communion forms virgins and prepares them to run to work in flowery yet thorny fields of charity.

Holy Communion gives strength and joy to the weak little virgins even to the point of martyrdom.

Do you wish to eliminate every reasonable fear? Live with such purity of intention as to merit to receive Jesus in your heart in Holy Communion at any moment.

12 We must be zealous in going eagerly to participate in the Holy Mass and to draw all those whom we assist in our Houses to do so by our good example.

The Christian world is more or less virtuous according to the degree of fervor which they maintain towards the Blessed Sacrament.

13 Praise the Lord Who on earth has placed His special tabernacles of love and petition.

The reception which God will give us in Heaven will be proportionate to that which we give Him when receiving Him in Holy Communion now while we are on earth.

Awakening to the light of Faith for some persons at first may consist of just entering a church after having been urged to do so. It is enough that such a man can bend his knees and adore the Lord each day a little more than the preceding one. Thus, with the increase of fervor and by his continued cooperation, he will acquire a greater abundance of God's grace.

14 Don't neglect to assist at an extra Mass when your work is not too important. Send others, too. Oh, if you could understand the value of a Holy Mass!

Frequent and daily Holy Communion should be the Great Meal of our youth, our aged, and our unfortunate children. Bread, as well as the Lord's Bread, must always be plentiful in our houses because these houses are sustained by the Providence of God.

15 If you are able to attend Holy Mass without prejudice to your duties, be glad—even two, or three Masses a day. If someone accuses you of excess, answer that you became a Religious not to satisfy the world, but to live close to God, to sanctify your soul and to obtain the conversion of poor sinners.

Have you not experienced a feeling of loss on a day when you were unable to attend Holy Mass?

16 In the same manner in which the sun appears on the horizon to greet the new day and to promise copious fruits to the earth, so Jesus, the true Sun of Justice, appears on the altar of the Holy Sacrifice to bless the souls and bodies of men.

During Holy Mass, the church is like a Calvary—it is a gateway to Paradise.

17 As we participate in Holy Mass, our love grows and we desire to assist at a thousand. When we love to receive Holy Communion, we will desire to receive Jesus every day of our lives. When we succeed once in converting a sinner by our prayers, we will be anxious to continue our prayers so as to convert the sinners of the whole world to God.

If up until now we have labored and given our best to our Lord, we will be drawn to the further desire of giving Him our sweat of blood.

God is such a good Father that He will recompense us according to our work and our desires.

18 Our body is precious because it is the work of God and because Jesus comes to us in the Holy Eucharist. Yet it is weak and sensitive. Like a delicate and fragile glass, it can be stained or broken.

Little secondary devotions are not to be recommended when these diminish the fervor of devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

19 Ah, if you could only be consumed with love before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament like the flame of that lamp which burns before the Tabernacle.

From the bounty of His Divine Heart, Jesus has filled His saints with grace when they have drawn close to the altar of the most Blessed Sacrament.

The Holy Eucharist is the Sun which gives light; it warms the earth and makes it fruitful.

20 An hour of adoration each day is a sure means of clarifying one's vocation and of obtaining perseverance.

Frequent Confession and Holy Communion made with all the preparation of which the aged are capable, will accustom them to fearlessly await the end which approaches. It will help them to live, even here on earth, a heavenly life and will make their own death less painful.

21 The Holy Eucharist is the Sun of the earth, the Life of the world, the true Paradise on earth for all Christians who believe.

The sick and the aged, although they may be reluctant at first, can be encouraged to give themselves to the practices of piety and especially to frequenting the holy sacraments even though they have not been doing this previously and may feel somewhat incapable of knowing how to prepare themselves or have not known up until now.

22 Holy Mass is the Great Sacrifice which sustains the world and saves sinners.

An hour of adoration helps piety immensely—piety which is the fear of God and the desire to increase the love of God and one's neighbor.

The center of all devotion is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He is the Sun which gives light and warmth. He is the Fire of the Charity of God.

23 It is necessary that we, poor children of God, force ourselves to know and remember His bounty, His wisdom, His holiness. We poor children, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, believe in accomplishing His holy will which leads us to give glory to God and to sanctify our souls.

The first nourishment of our piety should be daily Holy Mass in which we participate with fervor and desire.

24 The One Who built this great Universe was God. God alone knows how to govern it wisely. Since this is our belief, isn't it sad that we try to get away from obeying His laws?

25 The priest and sister must participate in the love and the very agony of the Divine Heart Who immolates Himself for the salvation of all mankind.

Close your eyes to the world and all your past life; keep them fixed only on God and try to discover His intentions in your regard.

26 We can brighten and revive material fire by blowing our breath upon it; with the spiritual breath of prayer, we revive the fire of zeal and charity.

Let the wings of fervor give you speed on your way to Holy Mass.

Spiritual exercises are needed to form the souls of the novices, to help them develop a spirit of charity.

27 Vocal prayer, to be really fruitful, must be made with faith and fervor. When praying we must realize that we are conversing with God. Try to understand that you are addressing God. Be sincere in asking for the graces which He intends you to ask for and He desires you to obtain by this means.

The study of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament must be a study of a lifetime for the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

28 Graces are obtained by humbly asking for them from God.

To try to know the Holy Eucharist which is the perpetual marvel of angels and men, the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence study perpetually to understand its depth and enkindle in their hearts ever more vigorously the flames of charity in order to be able to love It with all their strength.

29 The Holy Eucharist is the Life of our Institute.

Be convinced that there is no true wisdom which is not founded on the holy fear of God. Beg the Lord to enlighten you, and He will fill you with light and strength to light up the steep and difficult path of Christian perfection.

The Lord watches over you with sighs of love more than a father who counts the very heart beats of the sleeping babe.

March

Loyalty to Christ's Vicar, the Holy Father — Good Priests

What did Blessed Aloysius Guanella expect of priests, of his priests? He wanted and so educated his priests to love and live the Holy Mass, to be souls of prayer, strong in their confidence in God, men who would look upon every happening as coming directly from above.

He desired that his priests should be holily detached from everything and every one, to shelter the poor in the name of God—servant priests, therefore, servants of the poor who would be their masters, and they, true Servants of Charity.

All of this is to be noted in the pages which follow and throws light to explain what he so often remarked: "Do you know what a priest is worth? Do you realize the value of a priest...?"

1 When in anxiety of mind, men have recourse to advice from the man of God, they value it because they consider him to be also a man of prayer.

Follow the advice of the priest—the man of the Lord—for he has the experience and the enlightenment of the grace of his exalted ministry.

2 The priest must participate in the love and the very agony of the Divine Heart immolated for the salvation of the redeemed.

Priests may have their defects but these experiences should make them use mercy and pardon towards sinners who beg for mercy through the minister of God.

3 Our Lord raises up in nations illustrious individuals who care for existing needs and even affect the future good. It is the Lord Who raises up enlightened Pontiffs for the Church. It is the Lord Who chooses from the mass of people, men of upright heart and simple thought to become the instruments of great works in cooperation with Him, the Omnipotent. The priest represents Jesus Christ for us—for Him he acts, and it is he who guides us to heaven by word and example.

4 The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ which the priest is empowered to communicate to us is like the glorious sun that joyfully makes us discern all the beauties of creation.

The Servant of Charity confides entirely in God yet he uses all those means which human prudence suggests.

5 Every priest represents Jesus Christ and continues the work of Jesus Christ—he is a channel of graces to men and a true dispenser of heavenly gifts.

6 Priests are human, too, and it is better that they, as men, have been chosen rather than angels to dispense His gifts. Yet they are called to be holy men,

martyrs of virtue and charity, who are capable of seeing eye to eye with their fellowmen and of speaking with them.

The breath of the Holy Spirit must fill the religious Servant of Charity, developing him in accord with the spirit of the Institute which, as a father, has adopted him.

7 Today we find even some outside the Catholic Church who look upon the Sovereign Pontiff with profound respect and concern for his welfare. They watch the steps of the Vicar of Christ and respectfully interpret his intentions.

Blessed are they when they carry on high the name of the Vicar of Christ. More blessed are they when they generously show their attachment and allow themselves to become a target in defense of the Pope when he is attacked by poisonous darts hurled by his adversaries.

8 The Servants of Charity realize that they are to proceed with ingenuity, that they must be like a crystal in which is reflected the image of truth and their charity.

The Servants of Charity must be religious of great prayer thus preserving a worthy reputation for their brethren who will be drawn to realize the value of prayer.

9 The priest is the way, the truth and the life in the name of Jesus Christ and in virtue of the office entrusted to him.

The characteristic marks of the Servants of Charity are to be shown in their charitable and amiable

manner, in their discourse, and their conduct in general in and out of the house.

10 Of great consolation to all of us should be the paternal interest of him (the Holy Father) who is heir and successor of the charity of Christ, our Master and Redeemer.

All vocations come from God and the Servant of Charity must accept vocations with a grateful heart at the time, in the manner, and in the person most pleasing to the Lord.

11 The man who is invested with the priesthood is distinct from the priest participating in the power of the Divinity when administering the Holy Sacraments, especially that of Penance.

The Servants of Charity should not hesitate to present well-grounded opinions and arguments on current events, using the best techniques in modern communication.

12 The vocations of aspirants to the Servants of Charity must be like iron, strong in the disposition to become religious of good spirit.

Let us console the august Vicar of Christ in his many trials by doing all and always the greatest possible good, and by guarding ourselves against every evil.

13 As long as holy priests of God offer the Holy Sacrifice, and the virgins of the Lord immolate themselves, especially their self-will for the welfare of their neighbor, faith will not die out in our midst

because the Immaculate Lamb will make the work and prayer of His beloved spouses precious with His divine blood.

14 He who leads souls to Heaven is the priest of the Lord! Strengthened with the spirit of prayer, the Servants of Charity will be zealous for holy works; particularly, they will make themselves victims for the poor of Jesus Christ. Only under these conditions will they find themselves happy in the Institute and sure of persevering until they receive their crown from the Lord.

15 Jesus Christ in heaven is the invisible but powerful leader of our army; visible is the Sovereign Pontiff who is Jesus Christ present for us. When the Pope speaks as Vicar of Christ, we must assuredly look upon his words as the truth of Christ.

16 Oh, blessed are the steps of him who comes to bring you heavenly good. Blessed are the steps of the priest who comes to cure you.

Avoid, as a plague, every sensitivity, and do not consider the gifts of mind and heart of the ministers of God from a human standpoint, but only as issuing from their ministry.

17 The Servants of Charity seek to clothe themselves with that spirit which characterizes the saints of our times, virile individuals who succeed in imitating the virtues exemplified by holy masters of religious life.

The Servants of Charity must be profoundly cognizant of the loftiness of their ministry; they must

be profoundly animated to be able to arouse and touch the souls of others.

18 As in heaven, angels and saints are in perpetual adoration around the throne of God, so also on earth there are priests and chaste persons who imitate them and desire to offer perpetual hymns and acts of glory to the Lord.

Blessed are the steps of the priest who is permitted to assist Christ in the work of saving souls. Let us listen to him.

19 Priests have been consecrated in the priesthood so that as "priests forever" they become the light which dispels the darkness of the world and are the salt to season the earth and offer the means of salvation.

20 One always walks with security when he follows the light which comes from on high, keeping his ears open and his steps obedient to those who have received from God, the right and duty to guide.

Let us have confidence that the blessing of the Vicar of Christ on earth confirms the blessing of the Lord in heaven.

21 If, in corporal sickness, we obtain help from medical consultation, so also in spiritual difficulties we can be assisted by the enlightened words of a good minister of God. It is well to expose our difficulties in a sincere, orderly manner.

To safeguard the conscience of each one, every Christian may have a confessor who is called the di-

rector of his soul. Let us all choose a wise director and let us make a good resolution to follow his guidance.

22 The Servants of Charity will become healthier in body, wiser in mind, and above all, stronger of heart, if they can work together as true brethren and communicate their ideas to one another with simplicity, sure of being heard in a friendly manner.

A Servant of Charity does not desire to ascend in the offices of his congregation but when he does, he realizes this is only to help him fulfill more perfectly what is given him to do for the glory of God.

23 The priest, as a heavenly envoy, presents himself to God's people to show them the way to heaven. They together receive his word and guard it for the benefit of their own souls and the souls of their dear ones.

Do not think that you are doing a favor to the confessor or to your house when you choose him as your confessor. Be sure of this: the pleasure you give him is the pleasure of martyrdom.

24 Let us respect the holy minister of God, the priest, who leads us to the sheepfold of the Lord.

We should consider our students in our normal schools as youth in a gardener's hothouse—special persons from among whom vocations can be cultivated.

25 The Servant of Charity should be a man who appreciates prayer, mental and vocal, always advancing in the art of lifting heart and mind to God.

It is the aim of the Servants of Charity to serve one another helpfully, to respect each other's opinions. To consider oneself superior to another is more than a small defect. It is a sign of immature growth in virtue.

26 Assiduous in the holy celebration of the Mass, the Servants of Charity inspire their Brother Assistants to participate fully at the daily Holy Sacrifice and devout reception of Holy Communion. May they together be apostles in spreading an eager devotion to the Divine Sacrament particularly among the children, the aged, the sick, the chronically ill.

Visits of the priest to the sick should be brief, bringing spiritual encouragement. Notify the patient or his family beforehand so as to give them a chance to prepare for the priest's coming.

27 Priests are expected to be virtuous, especially showing humility and mildness, eager for their personal spiritual advancement. They will be anxious to do the spiritual and corporal works of mercy being, above all, Christ-like in their sublime ministry.

Every Servant of Charity must be, before all else, an imitator of Jesus Christ, King of Martyrs.

28 Servants of Charity, let our bearing be regulated and strictly religious: be extremely careful in personal relationships, guarding our priestly dignity, particularly with persons of the opposite sex—not extending a hand too readily nor traveling alone on excursions. All conduct of such kind may be dangerous and could give rise to misinterpretation.

29 A priest spends his life in ministering to souls; some will disregard him; others may deride him. Oh Christians, Christians, learn to respect the person of the priest who works for the salvation of souls.

The Servants of Charity, if they exercise their apostolate with energy, caring for poor youth, the aged, going along as guides and helpers, will be doing work pleasing to God with benefit to themselves and society.

30 Those who wish to enter the novitiate of the Servants of Charity should be led by the Spirit of God. They should be guided by the right intention which is to do all for the greater glory of God and the sanctification of souls.

31 The Servants of Charity should have a great desire for their own and others' sanctification. However, even in these holy aims, they must resign themselves until the hour of Divine Mercy rings out for the development and the accomplishment of their desires.

More fortunate will be he who, overcoming himself, will have followed zealously the rule of priestly and religious perfection as it is mapped out in the Institute.

April

Sharing in Christ's Redemptive Mission

What an advantage to be able to say: "I was enabled to cooperate in the salvation of a soul—this soul will praise the Lord forever." Here is the theme of the maxims of this month.

To participate in the redemptive mission of Christ was the leading motive of Blessed Father Guanella from the beginning of his vocation. It was his guiding star and, united with confidence, he was able to surmount indescribable difficulties of every kind.

Blessed Father Guanella understood that Our Lord had sent him for this—to help to save souls. One day St. John Bosco made this heart-warming request to him: "Don Luigi, help me in the work of winning souls for Christ." Although it seemed at that time that they were to work together, yet they were destined to work apart in different institutes.

Bishop Aurelio Bacciarini, the worthy successor of Blessed Guanella, absorbed his spirit and program and repeated as his last testimony: "Let us save souls. That is everything."

1 To live in the world and not to absorb the spirit of the world is truly astonishing, almost rare.

If our conscience reproaches us, telling us that we have committed serious sin, let us weep bitterly for we have offended God with enormous evil.

2 Who knows but God what results your charity may have in leading more than one poor sinner to mend his ways? When we show compassion to someone, we give evidence of the Mercy of God Who reserves His greatest mercy for the most miserable of sinners.

He who is too talkative becomes annoying; he who is too taciturn shows lack of interest, seeming to be without spirit or life, indifferent, as it were, to good or evil.

3 If, out of compassion for the suffering of our neighbor, we render him a service for the love of God, let us hope that this may become a spur to others to do likewise for the same motive.

It is unfortunate not to have all that one really needs of this life's goods, but it is a greater misfortune to attach one's heart to that which we possess. Earthly means are instruments to perfect, not to destroy, the life of the soul.

4 He who works in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the Most High, should be careful not to do anything, say anything, think anything which would, in any way, detract from the glory of God.

Sometimes young persons, desiring to win the esteem of good and spiritual persons whom they admire, choose the religious life. In reality, they will soon sound like cracked bells which ring out but are not in tune.

5 Holiness—the true happiness of man—consists in observing God's laws of love even when trials are serious and difficult to sustain.

Let us love the Lord because He alone can fully satisfy our hearts. God is our last end.

Better the last place than the first; "he who humbles himself shall be exalted and he who exalts himself shall be humbled."

6 Only God is holy; all men have defects, more or less. Let us, therefore, learn to converse, above all, with our God.

Here are defects to guard against: gossiping, ambitious rivalry, secret passions; all these are dangers which disrupt the spirit of peace and harmony of action.

7 Be consumed by the holy flames of piety and charity. Your example will help others to be equally generous.

Maintain a family type of government, that is, authority which is mixed with love, yet in such a manner that mild treatment will not compromise authority.

8 Love Our Lord and for the love of Jesus, love all brethren; this is our duty.

We who are so miserable can confide with immense confidence in the Lord's mercy because we see that He continues to extend mercy to His creatures on earth with a generous Hand.

9 It is important for us to accept a person for what he or she is, that is, weak, frail, mortal. With this

attitude, we can begin to do good both for ourselves and the persons in question. The Lord alone is without sin and defect.

For a good nurse, holy prudence is a great virtue. If she has a good heart, she will find her best ally in thoughtful consideration.

10 A wise Christian endeavors to model himself or herself after the example of the merciful Christ.

Affection of the human heart is a great power but most dangerous when out of control.

11 Christian charity is the infallible master of amiability and kindness.

Often the very poor can become quite demanding. Prepare yourself for this: those whom we assist most may prove to be the least grateful.

It is necessary to avoid the two extremes—excessive rigor and excessive indulgence.

12 Even our good thoughts and desires are rewarded by our good God.

God made man's body from the clay of the earth. Reflecting on this, should not he always be humble?

All should pray so that the grace of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit may be poured into the minds and the spirit of those who are in authority.

13 We must guard against reading newspapers and books which criticize the teachings of the Holy Father.

Watch out for unsuitable reading matter brought in by the residents of our homes and schools or by those who are associated in various phases of work.

14 God knows each of His children; He is more interested than a natural father is in his own family.

Every Christian must be a good soldier. Look up to God each hour to tell Him we are ready to do His Holy Will.

15 Let us not question the extent of our neighbor's neediness; rather, let us try to help him insofar as we are able, rejoicing in the opportunity to assist someone.

Sacramental Confession, profitably made, is a most powerful means of discipline as well as a means for conferring sanctifying grace—restoring the individual to the Life of Christ if in grievous sin or of increasing tremendously sanctifying grace in the souls of the just.

16 Friendship, if it does not spring up among equals, causes friends to become equal: Christian friendship signifies the ascent of two or more individuals toward a pure and holy ideal of reciprocal improvement.

Our struggle consists in presenting with great faith an unrestricted offering of ourselves to Jesus Christ.

17 It is easy to avail oneself of good volunteers for all kinds of needed assistance, but it is necessary to use them with rare prudence.

It does not matter if a person of the opposite sex is of great piety and virtue; human as we are, there should always be caution lest there arise an occasion of danger.

18 How abashed we must be when taking stock of our defects, to realize that we have turned off at least some of the salutary waters of divine grace. From our past experience, let us learn our lesson for a more faithful future.

19 Our coldness and poor correspondence to Divine inspirations may cause Our Lord to permit a rigorous government. Souls dedicated to God are purified and detached by various forms of suffering in which they learn the perfect spirit of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

20 The union of members of the community in charity constructs an insuperable tower to resist the invasion of man's arch-enemy.

21 Our Lord provides the needed grace at all times; souls who mistrust themselves need to realize this and then confide entirely in Him.

The care of the body calls for measure and discretion. This applies, also, to moral education. Just as too much food encumbers while too little weakens, so it is with spiritual food—too much which is not digested well may cause disgust, but too little leaves the soul unprepared for the difficulties of life.

22 The heroic exercise of virtue by an individual will vivify the spiritual life of a religious institute and will affect its spirit not just during the lifetime of that person but for generations to come.

To know how to form an upright conscience and arouse a holy desire is to make great progress in the

ways of God. Realizing always that one is incapable of doing anything without Divine help is knowledge which can never be acquired by worldly culture.

23 We need to beg continuously for mercy from the Lord—pardon for our own personal sins, pardon for the sins of the world.

Bodily health must be maintained, not for itself, but for its service to the soul.

24 For him who sees in a suffering creature the soul redeemed by the Blood of Christ, all efforts in its behalf become light and sweet.

Blessed is that religious who rejoices in consecrating herself to the redemption of the mentally retarded.

The grace of God must become the whole treasure of our hearts; what is all the rest for us?

25 We should try to procure the salvation of our erring brethren insofar as it is possible for us to do so; we shall experience an indescribable consolation for cooperating with the Divine Savior in His love for souls.

26 How unfortunate it would have been for us if Jesus Christ had not pitied so greatly our wretchedness. How unhappy we should be if the followers of the Divine Redeemer would not show pity toward human defects.

Because charity consoles the heart and greatly enriches our soul, it is well to do good to others solely to please God.

27 When evil threatens and the enemy lays snares against faith and morals, brandish the cross—it will be the invincible weapon by which you will obtain victory.

What an advantage to be able to say: "I have worked to help save a soul who will praise Our Lord forever." What a consolation to be able to add: "I have cooperated in the work of saving another's soul; now I believe God will help me save my own soul."

28 Our arms extend, our feet walk, we can speak, but who governs the power to accomplish all this? It is the soul which influences the body. What is the body without the soul? It is a hopeless corpse, just putrid flesh. And what should we be if God did not help our soul and body to function?

29 Fear and dismay—believe one who has experience—do not come from the Lord.

The enemy of souls, if you pay attention to him, will not cease to trouble you to the point of trying to make you think religious life is insupportable.

30 It is difficult to guide souls chosen by God to their profession of vows. It is also difficult to send away those who think they have heard the voice of the Lord but instead have been led only by a whim or caprice, or may have become embittered by life and so have decided to plunge into religious life.

The Lord enters with His inspirations into minds which do not lean towards the earth but who raise themselves toward Heaven. He makes Himself felt with His charity in chaste and simple souls.

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May

With Our Blessed Mother

The filial devotion of Blessed Guanella to Mary most holy began in early childhood. It reached a special peak in the graces he received on the day of his First Holy Communion. Its intensity extended throughout his life. His love is marked by the names he and his spiritual children have given to foundations made by him and his congregations. These names are indicative of his faith and trust. We mention some of them: St. Mary's, St. Mary of Providence, Annunciation, St. Mary of Peace, Mary Immaculate, Mary of Sorrows, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Nazareth, Our Lady of Work, Our Lady of Repose.

The Blessed Virgin was pleased with him for his undertakings; they prospered spiritually and temporally, affecting all the persons drawn into them. Let us enjoy, one by one, some of his expressions of devotion regarding Our Lady.

1 In Heaven we have a compassionate Mother, most holy Mary; let us be devoted to her and she will give us those virtues so necessary for us.

Let us dearly love our Holy Mother of Providence; let us speak to everyone about Mary. She is the mother of us all and is the gate through which we pass to the favor of her Divine Son, Jesus.

2 Mary Immaculate was filled with holiness because she was destined to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate.

3 Have recourse to the Mother of God for help and comfort; she will increase your faith and will give you the grace to remain faithful to your promises.

Jesus, Divine Master, Immaculate Virgin, angels and saints of heaven, help us increase our love for our holy vows and the congregation we have chosen. We have confidence that when our trial is over we shall go to heaven to sing the hosanna which will last forever.

4 Mary gives us Jesus with ineffable affection; she gives us Jesus Who saves us; she gives us Jesus Who drives the reign of Satan away from the world.

He who finds Mary has found the way to salvation. In fact, it is the Will of God that in the world the Blessed Virgin is called the Gate of heaven and Mediatrix of salvation.

5 Have confidence in this your dear Mother, obey her commands, even when they are difficult and painful and you cannot understand them.

If all the saints and angels said that Heaven abandoned me and I knew that Mary would say one word in my favor, I should remain tranquil and confident in the solicitude of such a great Mother.

6 Let us place ourselves at the feet of Mary most holy and let us beg her to make us worthy of being blest by her Divine Son.

In order that our devotion to Mary be perfect, we must imitate her virtues as closely as possible.

7 Immaculate Virgin, make me humble, accepting God's Will in all things; teach me how to be humble in my relations with others, particularly in my submission to the commands and counsels of my superiors.

Most Holy Mary, save me; save my brethren in the congregation; save the Church.

8 If you consider the great grace of having been called to be a religious and of having been admitted into this congregation, how could you ever be ungrateful to Jesus and Mary? Our gratitude is sincere if we desire and make great effort to strive faithfully toward union with God.

The Blessed Virgin has subdued the serpent, crushing him with her heel; if you are faithful to the Madonna, she will defend you.

9 The bees which stay the longest on the flowers give us the best honey; our souls become dearer when we become more solicitous in seeking out the flowers of the virtues of Our Lady.

Show us your heart, O Immaculate Virgin, and grant that we may love you as much as we are capable of loving.

10 The heart of Mary is a flame of love; she loves us because we are miserable children. Her

love for us is the same love with which she loves Jesus, her Son and her God.

How can you succeed in such a great work if you do not feel in the depths of your soul that you are the daughters of the Madonna? Seek shelter in Divine Providence—Mary's Son.

11 Mary, who submitted to the ceremony of Purification, teaches us the value of faithful obedience.

Mary was strong in tribulations and thus greatly increased her merits; imitate her in your great misfortunes.

12 The Madonna, your Mother and Patroness, will save you from making false steps, will guide you to safety. Walk with holy simplicity in your glorious field of work.

To belong to Mary is joy ineffable; to possess her is unfailing security.

13 Let us all have faith in the mercy of the Lord, in the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, and in the intercession of our Mother of Divine Providence, Help of Christians.

It is consoling to be called by a name that is, in itself, a program. A Daughter of St. Mary of Providence desires nothing other than to live under the wings of the Providence of God, confident of the protection of the Blessed Virgin who is His loving and faithful dispenser.

14 Mary, from her heavenly heights, wishes you to rise above your pettiness and faults and come to her. You have much to do: scrupulously

avoid wasting time, gossip, and useless conversation, particularly if these offend against charity.

Never cease to thank the Blessed Mother and your Guardian Angel who, having taken you by the hand, have led you to the threshold of paradise.

15 To nourish true devotion to Mary, meditate upon her virtues; read books about her which help you in this. By thus meditating, your mind will be instructed and enlightened by light from on high. Reading about her virtues will help us to find true values and will lead us to seek heavenly treasures.

16 Sisters of good will are inspired and assisted by Jesus and Mary. Working humbly, you will merit divine grace to accomplish works worthy of eternal life.

May the privations of Mary encourage you to practice patience.

17 After Jesus, place your confidence and your hope in His immaculate Mother, that Lady of Providence whom you have chosen as Patroness. She is the joy and protection of those who confide in her.

Like Mary, you must plant in the depths of your heart the Cross of Jesus Christ.

18 Run, run to Mary our dearest Mother. Cling to her all-powerful arm. Take shelter beneath her mantle; invoke her with all your heart and she will come, full of compassion, to sustain your wavering strength.

In every event of life, pray to God as Mary did and then have confidence.

19 O Blessed Mother, send good vocations to our institute. Pray to Jesus Christ with me in this manner: *Ut mittes operarios in messam tuam: Te rogamus audi nos.*

Make me thine and all thine, O Mary, so that like a flower I may be transplanted from the earthly garden of virtue into the heavenly garden of glory.

20 After God, our confidence rests in the Mother of God and our Mother!

Pray to the Blessed Virgin to take you and your congregation under her protecting mantle. In the peace of God promised to men of good will, the House of Divine Providence united in one heart and in only one family, will reflect the Holy Family on earth.

21 How dear to God are His children. Save their innocence and inspire them with love of God. Faith planted in the child's soul may seem to have died out for a long time but the Holy Virgin, if invoked, will know the opportune moment to reawaken the flame and lead that soul to salvation.

The good child lets himself be guided gently by the voice of his Blessed Mother.

22 God in loving Mary enriched her with all possible gifts.

Daughters of the Madonna, recommend yourselves to Jesus and His Mother in heaven.

Notwithstanding your unworthiness, if you know how to be truly humble, you will do good—very much good.

23 The Madonna, your Teacher and Patron, gives you a taste for piety and kindles ever more your love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and for her.

Cling to Mary—you will develop a great strength of soul as did John, the son given to her by Jesus who represents us all and is our model in devotion to the Mother of God.

24 The Immaculate's beauty is often compared to a very white lily; your soul, too, should strive for great purity.

We need much discretion, patience, and prudence; a sure resource to obtain this help is to be found in the counsel given by the Madonna whenever needed.

25 Frequently, especially in times of uncertainty when the mind is darkened by egoism or tempted by the evil spirit, let us repeat with all the effort of heart and mind: "Mother of Good Counsel, help us perform the good works entrusted to us."

26 Let the love of Jesus, aroused by meditation on Jesus Crucified, be the program of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence which will permeate their lives and actions.

27 You are not only spouses of your dear Jesus, but children of Mary, your Mother.

After the midday meal, all members of the congregation make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Madonna.

28 When you look upon your religious habit and feel unworthy of your sublime calling, or your

unworthiness to approach the Sacred Banquet, or find it difficult to perform certain works of mercy, do not permit yourself to be disheartened. In these moments, hold on to the arm of the Mother of God and your Mother. With her help, beg Jesus to make you His—always His.

29 The prayers of so many innocent souls who are dear to God surely will intercede for pardon and mercy for penitent souls when they are offered through the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Mother of Divine Providence to the Father.

Queen of Peace, Help of Christians, by these prayers help to open an era of tranquillity and well-being for society.

30 Gradually, one learns to renounce one's will, I should say, security, to give all to the Spouse of the soul. There will be trials such as doubts—wondering whether or not we are liked or disliked by those persons around us. All this is to prepare oneself to acquire a holy indifference which merits great graces from the Divine Son through the hands of His Mother.

31 The more you attach yourself to the things of heaven, the more you will dissolve or loosen the bonds which tie you to the earth. You will join the virgins and martyrs, your Immaculate Mother and Queen before the throne of the Most Holy Trinity. It will be your delight to meditate on the infinite mercy of the Eternal Father Who created you, the Eternal Son Who redeemed you, the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies you, Who gives you good thoughts.

June

The Bounty of a Heart

"Do you wish to rest in the most holy heart of the Redeemer?" wrote Blessed Guanella in his booklet: The Bread of the Soul. He answers: "By means of the sacraments given us by the priest, we enter this heart as part of the mysteries of the charity of the Incarnate Word, and we become great with the greatness of God."

We have dear memories of works undertaken by Blessed Guanella who sought to be but one heart with the holy heart of Jesus. The sanctuary of the Sacred Heart was built as his first great church connected with his home for the poor in Como. Bishop Ferrari of Como, his true friend, when visiting the site before construction, ordered Don Guanella to "step off" a still greater length than originally planned. With gladdened heart, Don Luigi did so until the Bishop cried out: "Stop." This was but the outward sign of their desire to draw countless souls to Him Who wishes to dwell in the living sanctuaries of men's hearts.

People filled this church to hear the burning words of Father Guanella as he preached to the con-

gregation on the love of the Sacred Heart. His biographer states that the people were moved to tears during these services.

Today the incorrupt body of Blessed Guanella lies in a beautiful glass-enclosed casing visible to all. It is above an altar in this same church of the Sacred Heart. He is still speaking to us today as we recall the following ardent words culled from his writings.

1 The Heart of Jesus, Whom we adore in the true Church of Christ, is the delight of our poor hearts.

Christians are all sons of God and brothers of Jesus Christ; all must help each other as good sons of a holy Father.

2 The Divine Heart of Jesus has been from the beginning of our Institute, the Patron, Guardian, Master and Lord of the houses.

Pray to the Divine Heart of Jesus asking that He give us fervor to carry out our best resolutions, to help us become virtuous and instrumental in drawing persons to Him.

3 If Jesus knocks at the door of your heart, will you keep it closed, even erecting barriers which prevent the Divine Consoler from entering it?

The heart of a chaste Christian resembles the adorable Heart of Jesus Christ.

4 May Our Lord bless all of us and may our prayers, our acts of charity and other virtues be worthy of obtaining mercy and grace from the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Our works spring from the most sublime Heart of the Man-God Who has made them fruitful and sustains them. We cannot make them more successful nor can we light in ourselves the fire of charity unless we unite ourselves to the Heart of Jesus Christ to understand His virtues and draw forth favors.

5 As Jesus was, so will you sometimes find yourselves to be signs of contradiction, maybe even objects of ridicule, but blessed are you, if you know how to bear contempt and scorn for love of Him.

Mistrust every fear which puts a sense of desolation in your heart. With sorrow and full of humiliation, acknowledge your sins, then throw yourselves into the sea of flames of the Divine Heart of Jesus. Think of this Heart that is burning with love as It appeared to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

6 The Church of Jesus Christ is the union of all the faithful attached to and living the very life of Jesus Christ, Redeemer and Master.

With all the fervor of our love, we must have before our eyes Jesus, poor as in Bethlehem, Jesus, weary in the shop at Nazareth, Jesus bleeding on the way to Calvary. Then say: Oh, I wish to perform my work with those same intentions with which Jesus offered His actions to the Eternal Father.

7 To be called to follow the evangelical counsels is a special grace from God by means of which a Christian is changed from a simple servant in the House of the Lord to a confidant of the Heart of Jesus.

The love which Jesus has shown us until now will be continued in the future, and there will be no lack of divine favors granted by this Sacred Heart.

8 Jesus, as an Infant in His crib, was known by the shepherds and then a few princes of the Orient. Jesus, Doctor of the people, always poor, was believed by a few disciples; Jesus stripped of all and nailed to the cross, was known by Mary, His Mother, by a few women, also by John and a few others. Today—how many know Him?

9 As a thirsty man near a fountain, you have only to extend your hand to obtain what you ask. Jesus has solemnly promised: "Ask and you shall receive."

Jesus is that poor man of whom the Psalmist speaks when he says: "Blessed is he who understands the poor and miserable."

10 Jesus Christ is the Friend Who never forsakes us.

Jesus, Spouse, Brother, Companion is a wise and loving Physician. If we call on Him always, if we receive Him into ourselves, He will truly sustain us on our thorny path through life and will be our Companion and Guide into a blessed Eternity.

11 The choirs of the angels sing the praises of the Lord, while on earth the members of the army of Jesus Christ give Him glory by their daily combat in life's struggles.

Oh, may the fire of Divine Charity come as a holy conflagration. May the Lord send forth the Spirit of His Divine Charity and the world will be renewed.

12 "Give me your heart," says Jesus Christ, "and I will give you Mine. With this you will become as I desire: great with My greatness, powerful with My virtue, and thus you will become My instrument, worthy of My undertakings."

Goodness of heart and a spirit of great charity are necessary in all undertakings.

13 Our Lord is Master of hearts; as Master, He confides to each of us the offices He thinks best in the great family of the Church.

Our hearts and the hearts of our superiors should become as one heart according to the infinite wisdom of the Heart of His own.

14 The fire of the charity of Jesus Christ gives vigor to the Christian, urges him to proceed quickly in good works, gives him strength to follow His inspirations and thereby to inspire the hearts of others. This charity is capable of removing the greatest impediments, and leads to speedy progress in the way of perfection.

Jesus Christ preaches His doctrine to us. From the Mount of the Beatitudes, He still preaches as we read Scripture: "Blessed are the poor—blessed are the suffering—blessed are the clean of heart."

15 Are you ill? Jesus is a Physician and He will cure you. Do you lack virtue? He is the inexhaustible Fount; He will make you virtuous. Are you cold? He is the Divine Fire descended from Heaven which burns but does not consume. He will set you on fire with His love. Are you ignorant? He is the Fountain of true wisdom. He is the Son of God and God

Himself. Hear Him! He will instruct you. Are you sinners? Jesus loves the humble and contrite heart. He raises them up if they have fallen. He presses them to His Heart.

16 The Heart of Jesus, moved to compassion by the touching prayers of many of our unfortunate persons confided to us, has preserved us from many calamities and has given us the strength we need to bear our crosses.

The religious Christian must love Jesus Christ, above all, and conform his heart to the desires of the Heart of Jesus Christ in Whom he finds his happiness.

17 Jesus, Who is Fire of Charity by essence, came upon this earth to bring this fire. By opening the loving furnace of His Divine Heart to all, He desires that all be enkindled.

Today, just as throughout all the history of the Church, there are those who seek to put Jesus to death in the members of His Mystical Body. Blasphemers swear against Him; unbelievers deny the very existence of God. Defend Him with all the strength of a compassionate soul.

18 He who is weak may approach the altar and receive the Bread which the bounty of the Heart of Jesus presents to him—Heavenly Bread, Bread of Angels, which helps men lead lives of virtue.

19 Our secure fold is on high with God in paradise; here below, our refuge is the Heart of Jesus.

The God-given power of the priest brings us the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus Who will accompany us throughout life, leading us into His paradise.

20 Each and every one of the houses of Divine Providence was begun with faith and placed under the loving care of the sweetest Heart of Christ Jesus.

It is the Heart of Jesus Whom we promise to adore in a very special manner. We are confident that this Heart will warm us with true affection which penetrates into our being thereby increasing our faith and charity toward God and neighbor.

21 Jesus Christ is such a wise Physician that He uses even our miseries to make us progress in the spiritual life, just as the physician sometimes uses potent poisons to cure some corporal ills.

We cannot grow weary of the assiduous practice of Christian self-denial. By this we are obeying perfectly the words of Jesus Christ: "He who wishes to come after me should take up his cross daily and follow me."

22 We must find joy in reflecting upon our good and merciful Lord as He presents Himself through the writers of Sacred Scripture.

As fire liquefies metals, so the fire of the grace of Jesus Christ burns away the dross of our defects and dangerous inclinations and makes our minds and hearts glow with pure acts of love of God and neighbor.

23 Priests must not only experience within themselves the true fire of zeal and the flame

of the charity of Jesus Christ, but they must radiate it to others so that they, too, feel the warmth and charity of God and of their neighbor.

24 Our Lord has won for all the never-ending joy of the Paschal Alleluia.

Our Lord gives us the treasure of true peace which springs from the inexhaustible fountain of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

25 The Church is our Paradise on earth.

While we are engaged in establishing new foundations as well as carrying forward the work of existing ones, our love for one another should increase. This reciprocal charity thus becomes a spur to serve better our heavenly Spouse, Jesus. May the pleasure we give Him in our fraternal charity amongst ourselves win many souls for Him.

26 May our example of patience in contrarities encourage our neighbor. May we all understand well that to help the poor is but to render personal service to Jesus Christ.

The good Servant of Charity must realize the importance of a continuing study of the meaning of the profession of vows which he has made. He must consider that his being called to this profession is the highest honor and the greatest treasure. He must aim to practice truly the inner substance of the virtue of the vows which were exteriorly promised.

27 Our Lord uses many ways to lead souls to perfection. Each soul has a different temperament and potential.

As long as we are alive, let us work gladly for the glory of God.

28 As prudent virgins, keep the light of your faith bright with the flame of charity so that you can go at once to the Spouse when you hear His voice.

Protect your lamp from every worldly breath which could extinguish the flame; keep the oil ready to renew it, and when the Spouse arrives, go to meet Him ready to begin the never-ending feast.

29 The soul who yearns for perfection realizes that convent life offers the most desirable means to achieve it.

Those who cannot follow the life you have chosen, and even those who understand only a little of your effort to obtain holiness, will recommend themselves to your prayers. You must unceasingly make yourself worthy before God.

30 As a child in the cold winter warms his little hands on the paternal bosom, we must desire to draw near to the bosom of our Divine Savior. We must, if it were possible, open His side and then reach into that adorable heart of Jesus, experience that fire of love so that it will penetrate us and help us to live His Life.

Delights of holy love—blessed is he who can understand them. We shall be blessed fully in heaven where we will understand the ineffable mysteries of Divine Love.

July

Humility and Penance

In the month of the Precious Blood, we take up the theme which was an habitual one with Blessed Don Luigi—the thirst of Jesus for souls and the great evil of sin which caused Jesus to suffer so deeply. This should impel us to suffer for our own sins and those of others.

We find these thoughts over and over again in his writings. In his last painful illness, he gave utterance to the thought of the gravity of sin which requires expiation.

The older sisters remember his sermon on the fifth word of Jesus as He hung upon the Cross: "Sitio," "I thirst"; overwhelmed, he could not restrain his tears on this Good Friday at Como in the Church of Santa Maria.

His spirit of compunction for his sins and the evil of sin in the world was so alive in his consciousness that it led to measures of expiation from which he had to be restrained.

Here we find him presenting the Christian at work.

1 The life of the apostle is a hard life; it is outlined in blood, but be comforted: before him Another has marked the way!

The Christian who is merciful reflects the mercy of God.

An unlettered but patient person obtains much more by self-control than the educated individual who has never learned true self-discipline.

2 We must be alert to cooperate whenever and wherever it is possible in every good and holy work. Do not excuse yourself from further effort by saying: "I've done my share for a long time and God will not abandon me." This will not count.

Pride is a demon who knows how to hide himself in the house so as not to appear because he knows he will be thrown out.

3 Let us pray that in the inspirations of an upright heart we can find a guide; to this guide we confide ourselves, not to the guidance of immoderate inclinations of great enthusiasm or, on the other hand, to an annoying indifference.

Too often it happens that the devil transforms himself into a false angel of light to seduce God's children.

If, instead of worrying about our miseries we would seek encouragement in the Word of God, we shall find a treasure that will make us desire to hear or read it on our knees.

4 Here is another consolation which should flood our hearts: to know that our trials are a sign that God will never leave us, and that we can draw closer to Him than we otherwise would have done.

We need to cast an upward and downward glance: a glance on high towards God, another down, to see the dangers and the weaknesses around us.

5 Children from families who do not have much of this world's goods may often develop better characters than those who have been surrounded by wealth.

Find a way to prudently advise one another of personal defects. It is a spiritual work of mercy.

6 Patience is a queenly virtue; it is accompanied by a band of subsidiary, excellent habits. If this virtue is allowed to lose its command, the servant virtues fall dead.

Oh, if the rich and talented would use a part of their goods and ability to help the poor, to relieve the sick in the name of God!

7 The Church militant prepares her soldiers for the battle which Christ wages for souls. She conducts them in the fray and assures them of a happy triumph and glorious palms of victory.

The prudent man is careful not to believe all that he hears and he does not waste time in carrying on useless conversations in an effort to avoid the pitfalls of gossip.

8 We must do all we can for the poor. St. Theresa said: "The greatest advantage we can give to the rich is to obtain an alms from them for the poor for the love of God."

Sad experience teaches us that mortal falls always come from beginnings that seemed negligible.

9 In order that the Word of the Lord produce abundant fruit, we must defend it from the assaults of the enemy; we must then patiently nourish it in our own hearts.

A well-behaved son shows a good heart to his brothers; a wise Christian endeavors to be merciful as God Himself is merciful.

10 It is a good kind of fear which can keep sin afar off.

On the tempestuous sea of this life, cry to God to save us but at the same time fulfill all the good works which are possible to us.

You are prudent Christians if you know how to talk, also when to be silent. If you can, offer worthwhile advice humbly or help with a bit of wise counsel.

11 Let us not refuse Divine proposals because the Lord is very generous in rewarding every little thing we endure for Him.

Always and everywhere hold simplicity dear, both in speech and action because simplicity is essentially sincerity. It lovingly covers defects and purchases the sympathy and love of your neighbor whom you must always have at heart in order to make him fall in love with God.

12 Let us confirm ourselves in holy, firm resolutions; let us grow daily in virtue. Our Lord will bless these efforts and permit our work to be fruitful.

In this house, God makes His voice heard; in this house He forgives our sins. Here, then, is the peace which is found in the House of the Lord.

13 A Christian is wise when he knows how to direct his works so as to possess the friendship of God, to please men honestly and to quell the enemy passions within himself.

If you wish to imitate the mercy of God, use mercy and the kind of love which Our Lord gave to all so generously while on earth.

14 Our spirit is strengthened similarly to the manner in which our body is invigorated: its health must be preserved, well nourished, exercised.

To fulfill one's office well, it is not only necessary to fulfill it exteriorly but also to think of God interiorly.

15 If we want God to bless our undertakings, let us reverently enter into the field of work; a faithful and honorable servant treats the things belonging to his Master with great care.

He who would be a friend of the world cannot be a friend of God. No one can serve two opposite masters.

16 Those who see Jesus in the poor will receive heavenly rewards; others who do not have such great hearts, obtain nothing.

Often the sick person has need of a drink, of broth, or of a "cordial." The nurse with the sympathy of the Heart of Jesus discerns these needs without waiting to be asked.

17 When we see Christians accomplish evil works which they try to pass over in silence or to hide, our reaction cannot be other than one of horror.

Our hearts are too small. Oh, if we could but love God as the Seraphim love Him! If we could love Him as do all the just on earth! The more we love the Lord, the more contentment we will find in our hearts.

18 The more a religious man increases in holiness, so much more does he humble himself.

God created man for noble actions. Have you noticed that even an ordinary reaction to an individual's show of pride is annoyance? Stinginess or miserliness causes loathing.

19 The greatest mercy Our Lord can use with us is to urge us onward at times with painful scourges or to hold us back from sin with the wounds of His darts.

My brethren, we must not act here below as do sensual worldlings but perform as spiritual Christians.

20 It is sad to think that we would allow ourselves to become indifferent to little failings. If you are not careful to extinguish immediately the spark that falls on wood, soon you will have a whole house on fire; if you are not careful to stop up the little cracks in the bottom of the boat, you will be buried by water before you die.

In the sight of God, not the powerful proud man but the poor humble man is esteemed.

21 An innocent soul is the delight of the Lamb without spot and should be treated with respect.

It is good to pray to God in His churches; it is good to mortify one's passions by means of corporal penalties; but to help the sick, to try to reform a sinner are good works which surpass when used in proper order.

When a Christian knows he has helped someone, he experiences an indescribable happiness in his heart.

22 There is a proverb which says: "Only he who does something errs, but he who errs today, learns to do better tomorrow."

All that is not done for God is sad vanity.

Thank God for those who exercise themselves in fasting and mortification so as to do penance for themselves and for others, also for those who give themselves to fervent prayer. We are grateful when we see an increase in Mass attendance and reception of Holy Communion. In our times, we marvel at those who join contemplatives.

23 Patience of soul is like the queen bee in a beehive; if she is taken away, the rest of the bees become confused, noisy, and kill each other down to the last one.

When your intention is pure and your conduct correct, yet should you be misunderstood and not appreciated, be sure, God will find a way to clear you from suspicion.

24 Who are all men in comparison with God? A slight comparison may be made when we think of a grain of sand and the mighty Alps or a drop of water to the oceans and waters of the whole world.

Consider well the Divine Word: never lose it. Fight valiantly against the enemies of the Faith.

25 Holiness, and therefore, the happiness of man is found in the observance of the precept of charity even when trials are serious and difficult to support.

To prudently keep a secret as well as to know when to speak requires light from above. Nature is in-

clined to speak either too much or too little. Speaking too much may stem from a desire to relieve oneself or to show others how much we know about intimate or secret things. Speaking too little may be a sign of a selfish person, unwilling to give of himself.

26 Have a good heart. Do all for God. Strive to keep your mind clear as a beautiful morning.

Too often our natural prudence suggests thoughts that are very different from those which God knows are best for us. Our duty is to meditate upon what our good sense and our conscience dictate and then pray to God to enlighten our minds, to direct them with certainty.

27 Gaze upon God. Look into yourself. You will never find anything else in God but goodness and nothing else in yourself but misery.

If those who have evil habits and prefer bad companions, who are always attracted to the concupiscence of the flesh, could be jarred into realistic thoughts of death and judgment, perhaps they might show some of the terror of men at sea when waves threaten to engulf them. We hope and pray that they will repent and be deterred from further sin in the house of their soul.

28 Pride is a sin which is nested in the secret recesses of the human heart. How often we perform good works yet they become evil because they are guided by the spirit of pride.

Ban every whim and discontent. They lessen your crown greatly and endanger your very salvation.

29 The angels and saints, your protectors, are ready and desirous of defending you against the assaults of the enemy.

30 If an angel from heaven should come to tell me that I am as pure and holy as he is, I would be in danger of losing all the merit that I had acquired in long years in such an act of pride. If, on the contrary, he told me that I am in the state of sin, I might thereby lose courage, even lose the way.

He who keeps a secret carefully is rewarded with esteem for his sense of responsibility; he who betrays it is considered incapable of bearing an important office.

31 It is difficult to treat familiarly with holy persons and still more difficult to deal with sinners.

Work naturally causes fatigue. However, to do little or nothing is most vexatious.

August

Religious Vocation

As a young priest, did Blessed Don Guanella have a special conviction about the best that life holds? We can trace it easily from childhood to the very end of his life. He desired that others should aim for the more perfect life, trusting that the call of Christ would not go unanswered.

While raising his parishioners' lives to a higher plane, he discerned those souls destined to lead the life of a priest or a religious, and cultivated the seeds which blossomed into many priestly and religious vocations.

His enemies soon struck out against him, trying to vilify him by these words: "He stole too many girls to give to the Lord—he's aiming to populate Valtellina (his area) with priests and nuns."

When God's hour really struck for his special work, he found himself in charge of a little group of religious women whose first formation had been begun by their zealous pastor, Don Coppini. This good priest, when dying, had made the prophetic remark that one would come who would lead them further than he.

The middle-aged Don Guanella became director of the group of precious souls, one of which was Sr. Clare Bosatta, whose outstanding virtue would one day make

her a candidate for the honors of the altar. Their director brought with him the experience of three years spent in religion under the now known St. John Bosco.

His love for this form of life never died, but for the time being, obedience to God's Will, as manifested by the needs of his diocese, made him leave the happiest years he had known. All of his trials led into new beginnings which ended in the formation of his own two congregations, the first for women and the second for men.

His words on the religious life inspire and guide us anew this month.

1 The gift of the religious vocation is a very special gift: the human mind cannot understand it, nor worthily appreciate it.

2 The religious man, in his first trials, can be compared to a roughly cut marble statue. To become a statue worthy of being presented in the house of the Lord much further work is required from the hands of a highly gifted Artist who will shape it to perfection.

3 When God gives us heavier trials, He will also give us His graces in more abundance—to help us bear them.

The ill-natured manner and bad example of persons consecrated to God give scandal and provoke malicious gossip especially from persons who are evilly disposed.

4 Don't let prosperity attach you to the goods of this earth but always nourish your gratitude and confidence in Him Who has blessed your efforts beyond your hopes.

Our Lord raises up Congregations, each with its own particular work and spirit. Woe to those who will not follow that spirit as its guiding rule!

5 Contemplative religious hide themselves from the material world so that they may live in solitude and there find the Lord.

Try always to realize the great gift of a religious vocation. Do not permit the spirit of darkness to diminish your merit in it. Fidelity to it comes through the constant practice of your duties whose essence is charity: love God above all else; love your neighbor as yourself.

6 The perfection attained through the religious vows is acquired in a manner which we might compare to climbing a staircase. One ascends step by step, according to the strength one has, assisted by the degree of grace which God intends for that soul.

Work, work willingly, Oh daughters of the Lord. Work is both merit and reward. If you do all you know how to do and are able to do for God, He will reward you with His grace and help.

7 Be conscious of the dignity of the religious habit, even if it be poor and mended. Be careful to keep it clean because it represents one's internal order.

No one should try to enter without being determined to follow the guiding rule of the house. If one did not have this good intention she would harm herself and hurt others.

8 Love your Congregation as the pupil of your eye, as the sweetest bond which binds you to God. If

all do this, you will experience the incomparable joy of living with persons who are pledged to live and work according to the thought and will of God.

It would be a form of badly misunderstood charity to delay over a long time the final decision concerning one's vocation.

9 Whoever wishes to be a perfect religious must leave on the outside of the convent door all that does not morally and materially fit the service of the religious institute into which one enters.

Virtue is in the interior of the soul; our habitual ways are the exterior signs which denote its presence.

10 Many times what has been denied to priestly zeal is granted to humble sisters who pray quietly at the bed of the sacrilegious blasphemer.

Prayer, humility, and charity are the purest oil to make the mystical wheels of the religious run toward its high end—the perfect love of God.

11 Great effort should be directed toward finding candidates for the novitiate. We should use a discerning eye of lively faith in seeing vocations that may have been hidden but which can become a great help to souls.

Oh, how many vocations could be gained by those religious who are penetrated with the spirit of their institute and who know how to instill it into the hearts of others.

12 A religious institute is a body which prospers, finds joy and triumphs when its head and members are guided by grace and when imperfections and deliberate faults are fought against by each one.

The habit does not make the monk, it is said, but certainly it points him out.

It is wonderful that in the most perfect society in the world, the Church of Jesus Christ, there are different offices, congregations of priests and religious for the general fulfillment of the many functions of the Church.

13 The congregation or religious body is like the human body which experiences joy in success and suffering when ill.

Our relationships with seculars outside of the institute should be such as are required by our office and inspired by charity; outside of these reasons, proceed with great caution. Otherwise, we shall find ourselves distracted from our work and damage may occur to our religious spirit.

14 It is easier to begin than to persevere; it is rare that a good novice becomes better after profession if he doesn't have special attention, care and solicitude.

Never tire of thanking your heavenly Spouse for having called you to follow Him, even if it be on the way of suffering and sacrifice; the spouse of the Crucified would certainly not wish to crown herself with roses.

15 Unhappy is the religious who does not know how to progress in one's sanctification by means of a spirit of penance.

To pass one's life in doing good is the truest satisfaction and the highest blessing that Our Lord can give His sons and daughters inasmuch as what we do in charity to others, we do to God Himself.

16 Charity, while teaching us respect for those who are our superiors, affection for our equals and inferiors, also teaches us to honor others and to consider ourselves honored in the faithful fulfillment of our duties.

What do you care about your talents, your youth, your exterior gifts—only one thing is useful for you, sanctify yourselves by helping others to love God.

17 The thought that all religious are not saints is certainly one which terrifies. If you wish to be a worthy instrument in the hands of God, you must be daughters of prayer. Make meditation, prayer together and exercise of virtue sweet and familiar to you.

18 Love your congregation to which you have given your name. You should give to it your whole heart, your intelligence, your life. Yes, love your congregation with all the impulse, not of words, but of sacrifice—of that sacrifice of which heroes are made.

Blessed those sisters who penetrate the promises of our Lord and reveal them to those who know how to sacrifice themselves for His love, and who treasure this intimate, unspeakable meaning in their hearts!

19 Do not seek martyrdom—that is temerity because martyrdom is God's gratuitous gift to those who merit it.

The sisters love, serve, consider the sick, the aged, or children confided to their care as members of their own family, but at the same time they understand their position in the house which God has opened for them.

Our benefactors who give us the means to open and keep our houses open, do this just in order to give us the *means to welcome many needy persons.*

20 It is real virtue to know how to tolerate in those under your care their defects of character which, while they are almost inherent in human nature and almost impossible to correct, are really not seriously prejudicial to the individuals or to the Institute.

Charity of my God! How useful you are to reconcile the most impervious sinners!

21 You must consider the holy habit as a defense for a body damaged by original sin and who knows how many actual sins! The religious habit which marks you as a spouse of Christ becomes almost a part of you and not even the vow of poverty has the power to deprive you of it.

Blessed are you if you know how to become an angel of comfort. To do this you must really radiate God's gifts.

22 Charity of the Lord, you are a ray of heavenly bounty which restores the misfortunes of life!

Prudence and charity should guide the good religious.

To form a religious institute in which souls can be drawn more closely to God is a very grand work.

23 Let your charity be prudent, not one of those pretenses of charity which make you foolish.

Love one another. Love one another tenderly in God, most noble Center of your aspirations. Your love will become a fount of joy and will fill you with merits for the other life.

24 Happy are those privileged persons who are grateful for the call given by the Lord to leave all things. The life they lead in the convent sends forth a beneficent influence to those outside—a breath of that spiritual life in which the whole life of the Christian should be contained.

25 We have our defects—all of us! We must insist that charity well understood is all in bearing one another's defects.

Nourished by piety, you will become agile and strong in work, spiritually, ready always to fulfill the word of God.

26 Total abandonment to the God Who so loved us as to want us to be His own forever should be accompanied by a total fear of ourselves, to complete correspondence to grace, to fidelity in the fulfillment of one's general and particular duties.

27 Apply yourself with tender solicitude to serve the poor and sick who are dear to God as the pupil of our eye is to us. In serving these "darlings" of God, you will become His friend and He will not fail to assist and comfort you in the moments of your greatest needs.

The Sisters will be careful to maintain scrupulous observance of modern and reasonable rules of hygiene regarding personal cleanliness, neatness, ventilation of the rooms, changes of clothing, uniforms, linens, and bedding.

28 The virtuous person is an inestimable treasure who will make the life of a religious family thrive.

It is not charity just to give money only to one who languishes in misery. It is often a greater charity to treat tradesmen with generosity and especially if they are poor or needy themselves.

29 I urge you to appreciate always more the great benefit the Lord has conferred upon us by uniting us together in the form of a religious congregation. I urge you to correspond always more with the abundance of this grace by observing the rules of our institute diligently.

Oh, if we understood what happiness there is in living detached from the spirit of the world, certainly each of us would desire nothing else but love of a true interior life.

30 The world can declare war on the virgin who, urged by the love of God, offers herself as a victim for souls in danger and for the poor of Christ. It is, nevertheless, obliged to bow before the miracles of charity: these miracles, thanks be to God, are frequent.

Let us force ourselves to ascend to the highest we can in the love of God—the perfection of charity. God grant that we always realize that we cannot do so through our own merits.

31 Our charity is a queen who has for her sisters two heavenly guides, faith and Christian hope. Catholic charity is to be so universal that it liberates us from the evils of life. Blessed is this charity: may the good God sow it generously in the land of our poor hearts!

September

Vows, Virtue, Rules

We realize the love which Blessed Guanella had for the essence of religious life. Poverty, chastity, obedience, the Holy Rule will be considered inasmuch as they form the substance, become the safeguard and prosperity of every religious congregation.

His words are taken from correspondence to the first Fathers of the Congregation. They breathe his spirit: the spirit of prayer, meditation, the value he places on good spiritual reading. The work he desired us to do also comes in for consideration. "Let us pray the Lord for the grace to do a little good for His glory."

"I desire that our houses be filled with those persons whom Divine Providence wishes us to have under His care."

1 Obedience and the spirit of union with God will save you from every danger.

Let us listen to our superiors with religious attention. In their voice is the holy will of the Lord. Fulfill diligently their commands which are confided to your prudent ministry.

2 It is much better to obey than to command. Insofar as possible, the superiors should not make the authority of the command weigh heavily: the dependents should obey through a principle of faith and should not feel forced as a slave does.

3 No one is born who is self-sufficient.
There is no love without obedience.

He who commands should think that he commands in the name of Jesus Christ, meek and humble of heart. He that obeys should always think that in obeying superiors, he is obeying God Himself.

4 Be doves of purity and the Lord will give you wings to arrive at Christian perfection.

Never permit anything contrary to the holy vows or your religious dignity to reach your eye or ear, consecrated as you are to God and good works.

5 Our building or construction work is to do firmly the will of God.

The holy rule, almost a resume of the Holy Gospel, is the daily bread to feed our souls. Let it fill your minds with good thoughts, your heart with holy affections. At the same time, it is a font of every good for you, bringing you to live in the meditation of the life, passion, and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

6 Let your obedience rest upon and rise up from faith, hope, and charity all united and thus you will walk confidently and securely in the fear of God.

Obedience is worth a hundred times more than sacrifice; he who obeys will be saved and he who does not obey will be damned.

7 Let us obey the most High: if He calls us, it is a sure sign that He loves us. His love is a sure sign that He always wishes to help us. Raise up your hearts; always confide in the Lord!

In doubts and anxieties seek light from the Holy Rule; find peace in it and hold dear the enlightened words of the superiors.

8 The Rule, pure and simple, is like a statute which requires study, explanation and interpretation.

The Rule and spiritual direction are favors of heaven, true benefits from the Lord.

9 All those are idolators of their own will who manifest in their ways the appetite of their disorderly affections. They prefer all this rather than accede to the will of the superiors which is the will of God.

Obedience, after the manner of a wise and prudent and loving mother, takes the good religious by the hand and leads her triumphantly through a thousand difficulties to the port of salvation.

10 Medicine will have no power to cure or improve one's health if God does not wish it. Nevertheless, you are not dispensed from giving, with prompt obedience, an act of respect to the doctor in whom is reflected a ray of the authority of God.

The sick person obeys in taking the food and drink ordered, or in abstaining from this and that. One obeys in remaining in complete repose of mind and body; one obeys by taking medicine and maintaining the prescribed regimen.

11 The religious who gives her will to God the Father fulfills the most virtuous act which resembles the great mystery of the Eternal Word Who became man to fulfill entirely the will of His Father.

All persons who have attained great sanctity took great care to study the virtue of obedience and to practice it.

12 The holy rule teaches you further about the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Your body, as a clear crystal, will let the virtues which animate it shine through and send forth and around it the pleasing fragrance of charity, of purity, of holy fear which will help to draw others to God.

13 The spouse of Christ must be careful not to admit into her mind and heart any indiscreet or impure thought, just as she would avoid allowing a mad dog or unclean animals to enter a home.

If you do not receive a direct command from the superiors, remember never to expose yourself to works of charity in which your virtue would be put to trial.

14 Not all the sisters are adapted to stay with the mentally retarded or abnormal; therefore, the decision is up to the superiors who will assign the most worthy to them since this work requires great virtue.

You must respect and love your religious habit, looking upon it as a protection and the veil of the body which is daily sanctified by the most holy sacrament and by the practice of the holy vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

15 The holy rule may be compared to a pious and discreet mother since it offers you guidance to free yourself from faulty inclinations and to infuse the opposite virtues without threats rather through love.

He who obeys his superiors need not think he is debasing himself because they represent truth and God commands us to love and respect those who command in His name.

16 Remember it is written: the letter kills and the spirit vivifies. Therefore, endeavor to interpret the holy rule according to the spirit which dictated it.

To show disrespect to the superiors would be as foolish as if one would put one's finger into the eye for they are as the pupil of God's eye. Obey them with all one's heart and for the love of God.

17 Concord must exist between superiors and inferiors by avoiding disputes. Charity must reign supreme before all else.

Those greater acts of liberty which reason permits are granted and permitted within the limits of the house and according to its rule.

18 It is necessary to take the middle road—to be satisfied with the relative poverty or comfort which the Lord gives to us.

Once the fire of charity is kindled for the holy rule, this fire will feed in it the fire of the love of Our Lord which destroys all weakness and transports souls to desire nothing but the holy will of God.

19 The holy rule teaches you to observe the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church with the same, or greater, punctuality than secular persons.

We must study the divine words which place the greatest degree of religious perfection in the perfect submission of one's will to the will of God, and therefore to the will of the superiors.

20 To be worthy superiors, you must have great mercy upon your dependents as you perceive God has for you.

Let us try to be very loving and very diligent because Our Lord deserves that we love Him with all our hearts and that we obey Him with precision.

21 To be poor and not attach ourselves to the goods of this earth is easy; to be rich and not to attach one's heart to riches is miraculous.

To those who are obedient, Our Lord promises victory over the temptations of the flesh, the senses, the world and the devil. The obedient man becomes a capable person who finds victory over all adversaries.

22 How beautiful and fruitful are the steps of the virgins who run to praise the Spouse!

On her way, a thousand flowers of the most elect virtues spring up and divine charity sinks deep roots which make the timid virgin strong and valorous against the snares of the evil one, against the temptations of the world and the flesh.

23 Do you know about the mimosa, commonly called the sensitive plant? It resents the slightest touch and withdraws within itself; thus it teaches never to permit our body to be contaminated by profane contacts.

If you had a precious glass such as a crystal, would you permit anyone to touch it with soiled hands or to handle it with little respect?

24 Ruined hearts, capable of spreading evil, are not well received.

Your decorum is needed in body and soul but more so, in the soul.

Do not be overwhelmed when, under obedience and through necessity, you must undergo that which will be painful to your modesty.

25 That Sister would do wrong when, through false modesty, she hides her sufferings from her Mistress or Superior. (This happens more often among young religious.)

If you wish to walk securely in the spiritual way, you must abandon yourself entirely to the will of God, not by force but through love.

26 We must be on guard against those maxims and examples which, in some way or other, make us fail in obedience and the veneration due to the Spouse of Christ and our holy mother the Church.

Obey blindly when you are commanded to do good things; obey, also when in doubt because you must not think that one who commands would order you to do evil things.

27 Obedience, daughter of faith, hope, and charity, produces all the important virtues and the smaller ones, too, and confers the grace to help whoever comes near one.

The greatest possible detachment should be used when one has to deal with the opposite sex, especially if that person is in religious or priestly life.

28 The voice of obedience, sweet to the heart of a pious religious as is the voice of a dear mother, gives to the eye a flash of heavenly light, to a heart a throb of love, wings to the will, and also joy in effort and sacrifice.

Obedience increases your merits and the renunciation of your will will give the same and even greater merit than the doing of the mortification you had renounced.

29 In the resolution to obey faithfully, blindly, without scruples and fears, you will be happy; particularly if you accept from the hand of God and in penance for your sins, the heavy work of the day.

To trust in the Lord means to abandon yourself with blind and filial tenderness to His will, to accept all—both fatigue and the joy of serving Him only and always with love.

Be ready always to take upon your shoulders the cross, that is, whatever cross He in His paternal love will destine for you.

30 All of the houses of our institute have risen up and developed in absolute poverty.

The personal holiness of each one, living cheerfully the common life, will bring God's blessing to prosper the work and give us the joy and peace that comes from this holy union.

October

Ascending Calvary

The month of October, 1915, was the final one in the earthly existence of Blessed Aloysius Guanella. The sufferings of these last days were very great. Worn by age and ceaseless work for others, he was struck with paralysis. The complications which developed tortured his body, but greater than this were the moral sufferings which God permitted as purifying trials.

His virtuous and strong soul was touched by fear and discouragement, but he turned every pain, temptation, humiliation into a prayerful offering in union with the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

This was but the final ascent on that road to Calvary which he had followed throughout his life. He summed up his life's program in three words: "Pray and Suffer." He repeated these words as his last testament to the followers who were with him as well as to those who would come to unite together in the future and carry forward the work of his two congregations.

The following passages from his writings point out his spirit of self-denial and his eagerness for others to travel by this road.

1 Good works mature by means of prayer and sacrifice.

Ambitious people of the world become famous though many deeds that require self-denial. The saints practice mortification and attain everlasting honor for their heroic virtues.

2 The greatest comfort here below is to look up to God and call Him, "Father, Father."

The chains of the Lord hang from your neck but they will be like golden necklaces which point you out in the sight of men as the children of holy liberty—that liberty which Jesus Christ brought by His coming to men on earth.

3 The good God converts the contradictions and adversities of nature, both material and immaterial, into a shower of heavenly gold.

We are soldiers, and we must fight the battle of the Lord. Oh, how trained for the battle we must be in order that we may be enabled to meet the struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

4 Extraordinary sufferings, extraordinary graces! To work with energy and tranquillity and, at the same time, to be humble and satisfied rendering humble service each day: this is the sure way to employ our life with profit.

5 The world is always condescending with the enemies of Christ; on the other hand, it is extremely exacting of those who follow the Nazarene.

Victims are needed always, especially victims who, united with the great Victim of Calvary, raise up towers of salvation for souls.

We cannot do good except by climbing the painful path of Calvary.

6 Oh, how we should prefer the chains of the laws of the Lord; these cause us to enjoy great liberty.

To be "little founders," ardor, sacrifice, and faith are necessary.

Mortification is so necessary that without it we could not reasonably live on this earth.

7 Without drawing attention to oneself, many mortifications of the senses can be made.

How much mortification needs to be made before the image of Jesus Christ is imprinted in the soul and it "becomes a worthy instrument for holy works in the hands of Jesus Christ!"

8 It is necessary to have loved tribulations before one can enjoy the consolations that occur when the house is prospering.

He who desires to love God does not love Him sincerely until he has a continual thirst for suffering.

Bitter and disgusting mortification, like all medicines, is an infallible medicine to overcome and dominate our passions.

9 Unhappy is he who is not guided by the spirit of mortification.

We live but briefly in some sorrow and God rewards us with happiness forever.

Here we have the little rivers of the waters of tribulation and above, we shall find the torrent of purest pleasure.

10 The willing victim who suffers has a heart similar to the heart of Jesus.

It is hard to guard the ears so as not to hear evil or dangerous conversations. The ears are ready to listen to everything and without great caution much could be gathered which would disturb peace and deprive one of that loving simplicity which is of great advantage to the religious life.

11 The battles of the spirit are fatiguing but how glorious to return victorious from them!

It costs great effort to hold the desires of the heart in restraint, such as excessive feeling, sensitiveness, eagerness to show one's knowledge. If we do not force ourselves diligently to correct ourselves, we will end up like the man who, because of imprudent and uncontrolled liberality, gives away not only all his own property but also that of others.

12 Plant Jesus crucified in your heart and all the thorns will seem like roses.

To mortify the intellect and to keep one's imagination under control costs a great deal of effort. He who will not make this exertion will find himself in ruin; he is allowing his passions to throw him about like a man incapable of riding an unbridled colt.

13 To do good we must ascend to Calvary, for every good work must be built on suffering.

In the House of Divine Providence there is the conviction that in order to consolidate every new foundation, the voluntary sacrifice of one or more of its dear daughters is expedient—carrying its weight and assuming the difficulties—like a cornerstone.

14 The Lord works on the human soul somewhat in the manner of the sculptor who uses his chisel to form the statue he desires to make.

The hardships of life, the poverty of one's state, the contradiction encountered, develop character when properly used, producing right thinking and high motivation.

15 Young hearts are led lovingly, little by little, along life's thorny path to holiness under the guidance of wise spiritual direction.

Sobriety leads to longevity.

"Go for counsel to the man of God," says God in the holy Book. Now that soul is of God whose delight is to converse with God, who knows how to embrace divine charity, who forces himself to read in the book of the crucifix the way to win one's neighbor by word and deed. In the crucifix he finds strength to do good, no matter what the cost.

16 The love of fervent souls should never grow weary.

Our Divine Savior, about to enter into His agony in Gethsemane, wished His disciples to leave Him alone to pray and sweat blood. He foresaw that the sight of His sufferings would be too terrible for them who were still immature as they had not yet received the Holy Spirit.

17 Mortification of one's taste is a good beginning in the life of spiritual combat.

Keep from lamenting about the cold and heat or the weight of your clothing and other inconveniences which comprise your decorum and the seriousness of your state. Complaining gives proof of frivolity.

18 Nothing is done without effort. There will always be contradictions but they should teach us more about our Master's life.

Prudence is the greatest gift for one who has the difficult office of guiding others.

Accustom yourself to hide the thorns of life so as not to lessen merit and offer them generously to your heavenly Spouse.

19 Oh, how comforting it is when one is suffering to think that God sees everything!

The cross which shines on your breast, a shield against the assaults of the enemy, speaks to us if we but listen. It tells us that the patient love of suffering is the prerogative of the virgin of the Lord.

20 Zeal to mortify oneself more than the Holy Rule requires comes, almost always, from presumption.

It is a good thing to mortify one's flesh, but it is much better to cleanse one's heart from disorderly affections.

Our Lord knows that we are weak; let us humble ourselves when we see we are.

21 How much work of mortification there is before we become instruments of holy works in the hands of Jesus Christ!

Love poverty, love the cross, embrace penance but always remember to do all of this under obedience and to see in your superiors the authority of God Himself.

Difficulties, doubts and oppositions will never be lacking, but rather than weaken our good resolutions, they should make them more valuable.

22 It is necessary that everyone, according to his capability and the grace of God, precede in giving an example of a very temperate and mortified life.

The life of a Christian is comprehended in the two words: abstain and tolerate.

Let us be satisfied to mortify our mind, our heart and our will. This is the fasting that is good for all, can harm no one and to which we all are obligated.

23 Is the cross with us? Treat it as a friend because all spiritual graces come from the cross of Christ.

The sure proof of the love of God is the desire to suffer for Him. Sanctity consists, I would say especially, only in seeing God everywhere and in wishing that He should triumph in all hearts.

24 Mortifications and penances are especially useful to keep the mind humble, to comfort the heart, and to keep the body in subjection.

Among bad people you will find many who hate you and persecute you. Instead of letting this surprise and irritate you, you should promise to pray for them.

He who wishes to follow a thorn-crowned Jesus cannot expect to live a life strewn with roses.

25 Alas, for the Christian who does not wish to carry the chains of the Lord—he who will not wear the chains of the Lord will be obliged, later on, to wear the chains of the devil.

Fortunate is he who can detach himself from the world. Learn how to live in the world without attaching yourself to the least part of it.

26 God, infinitely good and wise, sees our good will and our misery. He cannot otherwise than come to our aid when our agony of the garden comes to us. When we are permitted to drink of the bitter chalice, beg of God the strength to drink it to the dregs.

26 Let us not waste time in preambles. One thought should occupy us for all our lives: the sufferings of our Savior.

27 Desire the rigid penances of the holy penitents of the deserts but do not move a step beyond that which is required or granted. The Lord will keep an account of your holy desires.

28 More efficacious discourses cannot come from the mouth of the priest or from the heart of the saints than those of mortification and of penance.

How many souls, strong in suffering, have made gigantic strides in virtue! They have made unheard-of efforts and will acquire the palm which God gives to those who have fought valorously.

29 Blessed is the man who knows how to mortify himself and overcome temptation!

Jesus has taught us by prayer and example to overcome the devil. Imitate Him in prayer and fasting and you will have the means to fight the devil successfully.

30 Those sufferings of spirit, that profound oppression which can afflict even the strongest heart are from the permissive will of the heavenly Father and are part of His plan for maintaining His child in humility and dependence.

Those tiny persecutions from one who seems to be against us or those actions of others which annoy us are little pricks which should awaken us to the proper perspectives on life. They should teach us how to control our passions.

31 If you suffer persecutions and are calumniated and derided, don't permit yourself to become discouraged, but go on, secure and confident in the charity of Christ.

The virgins of the Lord, nourished by the Bread of Angels, will desire to become the companions of Jesus and follow Him in His sufferings in the Garden, in the flagellation, on the sorrowful Way of the Cross and finally up to the top of Calvary. They will accept willingly all that is sent them even though their soul may be weighed down by sorrow and even the body torn by penance.

November

Faith in Providence

The month of November brings us the Feast of Our Lady of Providence. The sons and daughters of Blessed Guanella are led to reflect upon this great attribute of God—His Providence. In the month of our Lady, we study Mary's place in God's providential care of His children.

In speaking of his works which were undertaken with complete trust in God, we hear Blessed Aloysius say: "Our Houses travel along like the old trains with a chug-chug. Yet, pity the spirit of that house which is free from debts. Alas for those houses which do no charity for the very poor who have recourse to them!"

He continues to tell us: "As for the rest, let us have confidence: the work is that of Divine Providence, and we should not figure too closely, because then Divine Providence would cede Its place to man's foresight and human providence."

Thus, Blessed Aloysius laid forth his program of complete trust that God would inspire him what to do and provide the means for doing so. In a world which so largely denies a Divine Providence, his spiritual children and his social works are to be the great witnesses to the God Who loves and provides for all. Humbly his religious pray: "Most Holy Providence of God, provide for us."

1 To live in great poverty and to confide completely in Divine Providence is a virtue of high perfection.

2 To receive with two hands from Providence, it is necessary to give with four hands to the poor. Superiors are the representatives of God; the poor are the "darlings" of Providence; they are the real lords and masters because the houses were instituted for them and the benefactors extend their help to these needy.

3 To the poor and the most unfortunate is due not only affection which stems from charity, but an esteem of veneration since they more closely approximate the suffering of Jesus Christ.

4 Let us pray for all the works which the goodness of Divine Providence has confided to us.

Our Lord has obligated Himself fully to grant us the minimal necessities but not to provide for superfluities and pleasurable ease in our lives.

The great duty of every Christian is not to tremble in the face of danger but to work with all the energy he has and in all the ways that Providence suggests.

5 Fill the Houses with poor who will draw down blessings.

He who is called to the strict observance of poverty should fully and in every way confide in Divine Providence.

6 Providence aids, above all, in necessary things, then in those useful, and finally in all the rest.

We are all little chicks under the wings of Divine Providence. We must always and in everything confide in Divine Providence, Who disposes all things in due time and in right measure.

7 When religious and charitable foundations depend too much upon human measure and human assistance, then it seems that the hand of Divine Providence withdraws.

8 The Congregation will become ill when no effort is made to keep from growing wealthy; comforts and wealth furnish poisons which corrupt it.

9 Divine Providence has Its determined hour to intervene. Confidence is necessary to obtain Its assistance.

I am anxious to invite all to have great faith in Divine Providence which will assist us always as It has in the past. Your best human efforts should accompany It and then go forward without any doubt or discouragement.

10 The poor are the "Benjamins" of Divine Providence.

In economic matters it is necessary to limit expenses and to observe strict economy. This is in line with the dutiful practice of poverty. On the other hand, we cannot deny necessities to ourselves and others since Providence intends that minimal needs be met. (We must always have confidence that Providence will provide when our trust is sustained by prayer and fervor.)

11 When Providence has opened the way, we must hurry and get started.

The spirit of the congregation is not that of living on advertising but neither does it wish to neglect the lawful means of honest foresight, such as the marvelous institutions of Cottolengo are accustomed to do. They have a special vocation which we lack, which is to throw themselves blindly in the arms of Providence.

12 Our Lord will take care of the debts contracted with the right intention when prudent judgment has been used and the debts have been incurred for a holy work.

The secret of confidence in God is the soul of our work.

The heart of a religious person is like an orchard or garden which, when cultivated, produces flowers and fruits of blessing.

13 The poor are our "Benjamins"—our masters; we must work and suffer for them.

When the finger of God has helped a foundation, be comforted, feel secure and proceed with a firm step on the path that has been laid out.

14 May Our Lord, who has blessed and prospered our work since its beginning, nourish and increase your faith and bless your initiative!

The House of Divine Providence must place her aims on a high level and see that the institute be filled with needy persons who are so dear to God and therefore more apt to draw down heavenly blessings.

15 He who gives to the poor receives from God. The most afflicted in body and mind must be the first to be considered as the "Benjamins" of Providence. However, if a resident is a danger to the common good of the community and if, after several warnings, she does not repent, she should be sent away.

16 A grain of confidence in Divine Providence is worth more than all measures of human prudence. By our mistrust we impede the work of the Lord.

The Lord cares for the birds of the air and the little ants of this earth. Certainly, He will care for us in every circumstance of life if we show that we believe in His words: "Seek, above all, the Kingdom of God and His justice and all the rest will be given you over and above."

17 We cannot stop working as long as there are the poor and their needs to be met.

Divine Providence assigns human persons to carry out Its plans and it is necessary that we follow them.

18 The House of Divine Providence had its beginning with the Italian letter "f" repeated four times: fame, freddo, fume, fastidi (translated as hunger, cold, smoke, troubles).

Prepare the food and offer it with sentiments of faith and charity.

19 Do you fear you will not succeed? Abandon yourselves in the arms of Divine Providence from whom you receive your name and strength and you will be sure of success.

You should have a lively desire to grow and Our Lord will multiply the workers in the vineyard of the House of Providence.

20 The bread which comes from the hands of Divine Providence is always sweet but especially sweet when it costs the sweat of labor.

When Providence wishes to try you with scarcity and suffering, then no one should lament. All should think that here is a chance to profit by this, in a way to become a martyr of poverty, as well as of many other virtues.

21 Keep always in mind that our work was born and grew, with visible help, from Divine Providence; this will never be lacking as long as we do not degenerate from its spirit.

The House of Providence must place its aim on high and see that it is filled with needy persons, dearer to God, and therefore more apt to make celestial blessings pour down.

22 In the houses of Divine Providence, the substance of charity must reign, not just its simple appearance.

Preference should be given to those who are without human protection and whom we can call the children of the predilection of Divine Providence. These, in a special way, cause the blessings of the Lord to descend upon the house.

23 Under the tile roof, all is dark. If we have no faith, our house is the earth.

The works of Divine Providence live on charity because they possess nothing except confidence in God.

Oh, how grand it is to live and die under the auspices of Divine Providence!

24 Great faith and the right intention is necessary in the soul of him who is called by the Lord to be an instrument of His Providence.

Never lack confidence in Providence. Providence provides generously for all that we do for God's sake.

25 Each house will be particularly blessed when each and every one of its members realizes that, as an instrument of Providence, she works to procure the material, moral and spiritual well-being of the house.

"Until midnight, I worry—after that God takes over."

26 Two things may cause the Providence of God to withdraw: sin and lack of confidence.

To live in great poverty and to confide completely in Divine Providence is a virtue of high perfection.

27 The God Who dresses the lilies of the field more beautifully than was ever seen in the raiment worn by Solomon will surely bless those who work solely for the greater glory of God. Never will He let them want.

Happy those religious whom Divine Providence selects to be living stones in the building of the institute in which pure souls consecrate themselves to work for the orphan, afflicted, poor, lonely souls.

28 The world says that a person who is without money is as if dead. Our Lord, on the contrary, says: "To him who has given all for my Love, I will give Myself; to him who gives his heart, I will give Mine; I will not permit him who has given up all his belongings to lack the necessities of life, when he has given all to abandon himself to My Divine Providence."

29 Daughters of Providence, bread for the body represents the care of Divine Providence and so it should be very appreciated by you.

Have great respect, therefore, for bread as it comes from your Divine Spouse. Recall that He Who having multiplied it to satiate the hungry crowd who followed Him to hear His words, ordered His disciples to gather up the fragments that remained lest they be lost.

30 May the Lord bless us and make us prosper in works of mercy which the bounty of Divine Providence deigns to confide to our care.

Souls gathered under the protection of Divine Providence, you should desire to be angels bringing comfort, the peace of God to the poor who extend their arms in search of help. And for those who do not seek you, who may even abhor, calumniate and persecute you, bring them, if you can, the word of God, that word which consoles, revives, announces the ineffable triumph of grace.

December

Death — Heaven

The last month of the year! It is destined to bring our thoughts seriously to the contemplation of those last things: death, judgment, heaven, hell.

Blessed Guanella, you kept all these thoughts before you. Your charity encompassed the dying. For them you established a Crusade for the Dying, calling all thoughtful souls to participate in another noble work of charity, to pray for poor dying people.

It is necessary to look at death and to accept daily and willingly the death that God wills for us.

Here we present some of the thoughts that Blessed Guanella formed concerning that which awaits us.

1 Death is the end of every evil, the beginning of every good—rather it is the full arrival at the greatest good: paradise.

Raise up your heart; do not detach your glance even from yourself. Hope and fear impel the bird to fly upward. Hope and a holy fear are the two wings which raise up the soul of the Christian.

2 It is a general precept that he who has sinned must choose one of these two: either hell or penance.

To appear with great faith before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, it is necessary that our faith be very alive, hope well-rooted, charity multi-form and ardent; it is necessary that the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance shine in us like burning torches.

3 He who sins is not wise.

With a wing of hope which raises us on high, with another of fear which regulates the ascension, we accomplish our journey from this earth to paradise.

O Lord, send down a ray of life from Heaven! That is the light of wisdom which saves.

4 There are Christians who, though they do not give their soul to Satan outrightly, behave in such a manner as to place their cause in Satan's keeping.

The applause of the market and of the theater make many people lose their heads; such applause makes remarkable geniuses go astray.

5 The devil is always that sad liar; the weapons he uses are always the same.

Christians are found who not only renounce paradise for the reign of this earth but renounce it for even less goods. It seems incredible, but it is true that a house, a field, a hoard of money is enough to make them sell themselves to the devil.

6 When God calls us to Himself and we fly to heaven, then we will cry out for joy: "We have loved and now we are saved."

Let us work; let us work! If we feel fatigue we must not cease working; if we encounter difficulties, let us look up to heaven and then go on.

7 So long as you are here, you can have mercy; but at the judgment of the Lord, justice will be done entirely.

Holy faith shines in our minds in all its splendor and every sacrifice will be sweet, every pain will seem light just so we reach our last end, the salvation of our souls and the glory of God.

8 To say there is a God and yet to rebel always, to believe there is a paradise and then to live a life of a devil of hell—what a horror to think about this!

Oh Lord, generously extend your peace! Your peace is the bread of the soul; it is more than the nourishment of our body. Give us, oh good God, "Bread and Paradise," because we wish to be yours for all eternity!

9 He who knows he has found the way which leads to heaven should hurry and follow it without "if" or "but," without delaying on the way.

Alas for us, if our lives were such that the Lord, in justice, must shut us out of Paradise inasmuch as we did not love God enough here below. Let us love God because He is supreme goodness. Let us love Him so as not to be chastised with hell but rewarded with His paradise.

10 It is a beautiful and desirable thing to die as a martyr, but it is not commendable to die for having voluntarily failed to use the necessary remedies.

Let God's Will be done. If He is Master and Judge, He is also a Father, a most tender and merciful Father.

11 Let us live as if at every moment we are about to die. This is wise counsel.

Do not be attracted by the smoke of vanity which arises from the earth, but rather continue to be on our way to the Father's land, paradise.

The Lord is all holy and complete within Himself, yet He loves His creatures made by Him. Although they were destined to die after Adam's fall, they were redeemed by God's own Son.

12 In hell, sinners will cry: "Death, death," and they will smother in torments to find it, but they will not.

In the seat of paradise, faithful servants appreciate all they know, all they are. They will say: "If I possess anything good, it is God Who gave it to me." In anticipation, say this now; it is highly pleasing to the Lord.

13 Let our eyes be filled with tears until by the grace of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we realize we are safe in paradise.

One travels well to paradise when accompanied by the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, and so as to say, we cover ourselves with His clothing and His virtues.

14 We work very hard to increase a treasure of material richness; sadly, to most of us, it mat-

ters little whether we acquire treasures of graces. Let us say: "Heaven is to be with God—what does all the rest of the world matter!"

Know how to live by faith and charity so that you may become "angels of peace." Thus, you will emulate on earth the fervor of the angels of paradise.

15 There are two roads before us: God is leading us to one, while His adversary, the devil, tries to involve us on the way which pulls us into the wicked spirit of the world. The choice depends on us.

The avaricious man is not of God because he refuses to look up; instead, he prefers his own vile, lowly interests. What does this mean for avaricious man? He is miserable. He crawls on the ground like the serpent. His life passes as a whiff of dust stirred by a movement of earth and air.

16 The chains of sin lead to eternal damnation. The satisfaction of a fast, of a prayer, of an offering, of alms, is a safeguard to prevent us from being caught in those cursed chains.

Our days down here are very few and they pass so rapidly!

17 Children of God and Eve though we are—we should love the Most High and our neighbor. When we love, then we are happy for we touch the boundaries of heavenly beatitude.

We cannot expect to laugh always while on this earth and then enjoy paradise.

Bread and paradise! The good God will give us bread for the present life and paradise for eternal life.

18 He who is in extreme need easily finds someone to help, but not he who is in ordinary need. Our Lord speaks clearly. Blessed is he who cares for the poor and miserable for on the day of judgment the Lord will deliver him.

Our Lord will not reward you according to the dignity of your work but rather according to the generosity you have used particularly when working in low offices, just because the world considers them unimportant.

19 The discourses of Jesus are warnings which when taken assure us of eternal life.

It behooves us to mingle with those who remind us more readily of heaven. We should choose, preferably, those occupations, if we can, which are more apt to cause us to raise our thoughts to God.

20 Call us to Your Right, O Supreme Judge, and with the angelic choirs we will raise our voices to intone a canticle of love which will never end.

Let us long for God and the blessed Lord will raise us up from this earth to the throne of His holy Paradise.

21 Two kinds of sinners will find themselves at a great disadvantage on the day of judgment: those who have until the end, made fun of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and those, who, although they believe, live as pagans in many wicked vices.

22 The saints would willingly have given a kick to all the kingdoms of the earth, if offered to them. They did not wish to lose a single degree of the glory of Paradise.

Ah, Christians, Christians, who give yourselves to the service of the devil! To expiate for you requires not mere tears, but tears of blood!

23 Look up always and the thorns in your path will not discourage you. When you feel their pricks, you will see with your free and healthy eye the reward prepared for your sacrifices.

That which we desire for ourselves, we should do for others; then our Lord will give us that recompense which is indicated in the Holy Gospel: a just measure, shaken, pressed down and overflowing.

24 When the good God has given us grace to fulfill good works for His glory, even then we face the judgment of Our Lord because of that reverence which we must always have for the Most High.

When the devil wishes to steal a greedy prey, it is rare that he appears in his infernal ugliness; he dresses rather in clothing of delightful colors.

25 Do you wish to go to heaven? The door through which one enters is Christian poverty accepted, willed, and loved as a gift of God. Therefore, love poverty—it is the key to heaven.

Our Lord prepares a great jubilee at His banquet in heaven for those who have suffered the most.

26 Have great charity even for the dead. Speak well of them and pray much for them.

What are all the diamonds of the world, nay, even all the kingdoms of the earth, in comparison to one degree of glory in Heaven?

To save one's body until tomorrow is little in comparison to the saving of a soul which will live for all eternity.

27 Blessed are the aged even in their childishness, for they soon will become worthy of paradise! That Jesus Who said, "If you do not become as little children, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," leads us to venerate those whose human powers are fading.

28 It is useful to pray for the dead in general so that they may, in turn, help us. Let us think also of the souls who are leaving for heaven whose heredity is the good example of lives of virtue which we should imitate.

Dip your gift of charity into the wounds of our Most Holy Redeemer. Its perfume will ascend to Heaven.

29 We must be persuaded by the thought that death will come to us, too, and that the judgment of the Lord will be for us also. We know that paradise shines above our eyes and that Hell roars under our feet. Are we sure that paradise is for us? If no one can really be sure, how must we fear with all our heart?

30 Christian parents have the habit of blessing their children in every circumstance of life, and also every evening before they go to sleep. Before going to sleep may all have the blessings and good wishes of their father.

Thus, the heavenly Father blesses us always. It is a pledge of that blessing which Jesus Christ will give to His elect on the last day: "Come, O blessed of my heavenly Father!"

31 Observe the little child who follows the steps of his mother up the paths of the mountain. He feels weak in his little members or vacillates in his steps and is fearful of every new face he encounters. But he has before him a figure which re-animates him, the image of the goodness of his mother. He hears the voice of his pious mother, receives encouragement and sometimes has the support of her hand. This gives courage to his heart and makes him hope that he will safely reach the summit of the mountain above him.