

Father Aloysis Guanella

The Voice of Our Father

Guide

for the Daughters of
St. Mary of Divine Providence

Dominus providebit

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Since all copies of the May 1938 edition of "The Voice of Our Father" have been depleted, we have attempted to return to the original source for corrections and additions. We attempted to update vocabulary, however, for the most leaving the exact expressions of our Founder. Even where significant changes were made great effort was placed to preserve the original text. In the update of vocabulary, current terminology was used for a more meaningful reading. Hopefully, this revision will renew each Daughter of St. Mary of Providence in their effort to study and know the spirit of Blessed Aloysius Guanella.

Daughters of St. Mary of Divine Providence, you possess a true treasure--the Holy Rule--which is approved by the Supreme Authority of the Church, the tender mother and infallible teacher which our Divine Redeemer left us. Hold this rule dear to you. In it you will have a sure guide leading you to that degree of virtue to which God calls you, and assuring you of a worthy and glorious reward in Paradise.

Now, to render the interpretation and the application of the Holy Rule easier, it will be useful to put before you a "Guide"; that is to say, a clear and simple explanation for the particular cases in which you may find yourself during your Religious life.

Do not weary of following the instructions of this book, step by step, and be sure to follow them with great rectitude of intention and will.

One walks always with security when he follows the light which comes from on high, keeping his ears open and his step obedient to the word of the one who has the God-given duty and right to guide us.

However, to obtain in its entirety, the fruit of your pious efforts, I recommend one practice, and it is this. Before reading either the Holy Rule or this Guide which I now place before you, raise your mind and your heart to God! From Him only will you be able to obtain the grace and strength to follow faithfully the difficult path to which He Himself has called you with a holy religious vocation. In every allusion to matrimony or family I have a simple rule to follow as to you and God bless you!

It is a large quantity and number of books that will be needed to give an idea of the life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga and his spiritual director Fr. Aloysius Guanella. There has been a loss of many of them, especially during the last two world wars. I have a copy of the biography of St. Aloysius which I have had for many years and which I have had the pleasure of reading many times.

It is a good book and will be given to you as soon as possible. I hope you will find it a good book and will be able to profit by it.

Introduction

God has created men to love and help one another. The Church of Jesus Christ is the union of all the faithful, attached to and living the every life of Jesus, Redeemer and Master.

In our Holy Mother, the Church, the faithful love one another as brothers in the charity of Christ, under tender and filial obedience to His Vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff; however, they are starving for Christian Doctrines and the Holy Sacraments, which are the principal means given us by God for our sanctification.

Almost as though it were not sufficient for the Heart of our Father Who is in Heaven to have given us the Holy Church as our mother and teacher, He also willed that in her and from her should spring other particular societies, called by Him with the voice of predilection, in answer to the special needs of given souls.

By this time you will have guessed it; these privileged societies are those very Religious Orders, and the many Religious Congregations, suited to individual abilities and to the needs of the times.

Your dear Union of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence is a Religious Congregation, especially loved and blessed by our Holy Father. Cardinals, Bishops, and Prelates praise and encourage it, and even simple priests and lay brothers love to take advantage of the works of mercy which emanate from it. All good people and often even the wicked are grateful and devoted to it.

Certainly among the wicked you will find many who will despise and persecute you; but this, far from disturbing and amazing you, should urge you to pray for them, since he cannot expect to traverse a path strewn with roses, who wishes to follow a thorn-crowned Jesus. In persecutions you will have the grace to live in greater humility and union with God, detached not only in word but in deeds from persons and worldly interests.

Reflect rather on the love of predilection of your Jesus who has willed to call you to the religious life without any

merit on your part, and ponder seriously on the duty incumbent on you to correspond to this special grace. Avoid all occasions whatever for others to think or speak ill of you, and use all your powers to edify your neighbor with your conduct.

Nowadays there is a universal tendency, in business, study, and in life, to form groups, and each of these groups expects to be respected and loves to achieve steady progress. If therefore, there are Societies of Labor, of Defense, and of Pleasure, why can there not be also societies in which, as in yours, souls unite in a holy cooperation against sin, in a holy race towards perfection?

Nevertheless, in the world men always raise their voices against Religious Congregations. You, on the contrary, strong in your own rights, must cry aloud your joy in belonging to one. If others dare to form unions which have sometimes a wicked purpose, you glory in your Congregation which keeps you closely united to our Lady under the loving eye of Jesus, with the one and only aim of sanctifying your own soul, saving other souls, and comforting many in misery.

Be always proud of your Congregation, because it provides for you both your temporal and eternal happiness and thank the Lord continually for having called you and taken you into His keeping.

With the honor of being associated with the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, you naturally have not only rights but also duties. Therefore, if you fulfill your duties and are a good religious, you will have also the right to share in all the spiritual and temporal benefits of the Congregation to which you have consecrated yourself.

To make clear your duties and rights are the principal aims of this "Guide," which I put before you as your rule of life after invoking the light of the Holy Spirit.

May the grace of your religion give you the strength to stand by your principles and not to be swayed by the world or to be led into any action that would bring you into disrepute or bring discredit upon your order.

CHAPTER I

Why the Name Daughters of St. Mary of Providence?

First of all because, to those who desire nothing else but to live under the wings of the Providence of God, it is consoling to call themselves by a name which is an entire program in itself; these individuals confide in the protection of the Virgin, who is the living and faithful distributor of this Providence.

If Providence is unappreciated and even insulted in the world, it is also true that those who place all their faith in mankind always come forth deceived and deluded. You instead, by your example and even by your very name, teach those who surround you and depend upon you to place all hope in Mary, and to expect all help from Him whom you invoke each day as "Our Father," and who each day sends to

the good and the bad His sun and His bread.

On the other hand you have affiliated yourself with many other souls to unite with them in raising high your arms and hearts continually to invoke pity for poor sinners, and to employ yourself with all your power to redeem the souls of your neighbors, alleviating even their material needs.

On one hand are the pressing cares of the poor orphans, the innocent to lead to God and save; on the other, a long line of aged, chronically ill and mentally impaired call for your patience and your charity. How can you even succeed in such great work if you do not feel in the depths of your soul that you are Daughters of the Blessed Virgin, and if you do not seek shelter in the shadow of the Providence of her Divine Son?

Teach the children, who enter our facilities from a life of suffering, and the aged and chronically ill who have already one foot in the grave, to pray with you; and Jesus, Who is all love for those who endeavor to follow Him, will hear your supplications and will make the blind see, put the erring on the right

road, help the fallen to get back on their feet, and alleviate the moral decline which threaten our land and ourselves.

How many, many sinners, comforted and assisted by you, will, by the light of your discreet and industrious charity, open their eyes to know their sins and detest them, and will set themselves to recall their lost faith, to practice good works, and to aspire after eternal happiness! Will not yours be a splendid victory?

Revive their good will by your virtues and prayer, and animate and help them to return to the Father as so many prodigal children. Oh how grateful they will be to you!

The Lord Himself has called you in great numbers to unite in order to save mankind by sacrificing voluntarily your youth, your worldly comforts, and even life itself if necessary, in carrying out the ministry of charity. Blessed are you who, having chosen the better part, can glory in the name--and even more, in the public profession--of the Daughters of St. Mary of Divine Providence!

CHAPTER II

A Pious Desire

The humblest souls are more insatiable than others in their desire to do good works: what's more, the less trust they put in themselves, the more trust they put in God. Therefore, they aspire with an insatiable enthusiasm to do great things, in concealment and in sacrifice.

Therefore, let the goal of aspiring to glorious works of religion and of charity not seem indiscreet or proud to you, O Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, but rather remember that you should reinforce these your bold aspirations with constant prayer and by rendering voluntary services to the children, the aged and the mentally impaired entrusted to your care.

Pray with all your hearts to your Heavenly Bridegroom that this providential work of mercy may develop immensely to

correspond to the needs of our time, and fear not, the Lord will graciously hear you, if in your actions as well as in your prayers, you do not put your trust in yourselves but put it solely and completely in God.

The holy vow of poverty, observed with love, will maintain you in these dispositions of spirit and of body which will make you acceptable to God, and will render you worthy of the gift of the Religious Vocation which you have received.

Now, to maintain this precious treasure within yourself, you must love religious poverty very much, not only in theory, but much more in practice, accepting with resignation--with joy even--the frequent and inevitable inconveniences found especially in new foundations. Ask the Sisters who have gone before you, and you will hear how all of your houses began in absolute poverty and in this poverty they have prospered.

Does the fear of not succeeding frighten you? Abandon yourself to the arms of Providence from which you derive your name and your strength and live secure of your triumph. Expect everything from

God--nothing from man. Man can do something, it is true, but only when he is used as an instrument in the hands of the Lord; therefore, you must raise your eyes and your heart to heaven, and endeavor to serve and to please God alone. When you are burdened by doubts and anxieties, seek light and peace in the Holy Rule, and always hold dear the inspired word of the Superiors. Mind that it is written: *the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth.* Endeavor, therefore, to interpret the Holy Rule according to the spirit which dictated it.

Gather together the powers of your mind, of your will and of your body and await with serene calm the hour when the Lord will call you for combat and work.

That hour of trepidation, rest assured, will be followed by a complete triumph, if you know how to abandon yourself always in the arms of the Lord.

This is the wish of him who speaks to you, prays for you, and blesses you.

CHAPTER III

Purpose of the Congregation

Foolish is he who lives and works without an end in view, and I do not mean any common end but one that is both possible and sublime.

Blessed are you, Daughters of St. Mary, who have no goal in life other than the glory of God and the salvation of your own souls, and those of others. All the rest, and you are right, has not and cannot have, for those who truly love God, any importance whatever.

To reach this high goal, work first of all to become a Saint yourself. How can you sanctify those around you when you are neglectful of your own soul? A vessel gives forth the wine which it has; you too radiate edification and virtue only if you cultivate a treasure of good

will within you, and hold dear above everything the grace of God.

If you concentrate all your efforts on making yourselves imitators of Jesus Christ, the good example you give will spring forth spontaneously from your whole being; from this good example, virtue will issue forth, inspiring those who depend upon you and who share your way of life and your vocation.

The Apostle St. Paul, speaks with great reverence of Virgins and calls them temples of God, sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit, tabernacles of the Most High.

In order to merit these titles, endeavor to keep burning in your soul the divine flames of charity.

To this end, the most powerful means will be effective meditation, Holy Communion (being careful never to omit it for vain motives), great charity to the most abandoned, the most handicapped and the most needy of God's creatures.

Let the characteristic of a true Daughter of St. Mary of Providence be her upright intentions, maintained constant by the presence of God, by continual

ejaculatory prayers, and by the habit of recalling the heart and the mind to holy things every moment, according to the teachings of the Divine Master Who says: *Pray; pray without ceasing. Pray always!*

The angels of Heaven live in continual communion with their God, and you must imitate them by endeavoring to become angels on earth, pure in your thoughts and in your deeds, remembering always your lofty mission. Therefore give glory to God and edification to your neighbor.

But you have still more to do.

The Lord wishes to speak a more intimate language to you, O privileged souls, and for this He has invited you to fix your eye on the Heart of the Spouse of chaste souls; and because of this He has made you hunger for that Bread which never wears, but which satiates, strengthens, and renders divine; for this reason He repeats to you: "Come to Me."

When your Director was visiting the Holy Land, he ascended Mt. Tabor and saw before him the Mount of Beatitudes, and thought, with paternal tenderness of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. He saw you amazed and recollected, listening

to the words of the Divine Master Who went on repeating: "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice." Blessed are they who love to do the will of God, and the will of God is that we should all become Saints.

And while following the path of the mountain of the Beatitudes, your Director felt himself being gently transported to the intimate union with God. Being deeply moved, he thought of you, he thanked the Lord for having called you to hear His divine sermon, and he begged Him with loving fervor to give you the strength to follow Him.

The whole secret of perfection consists in doing God's Holy Will without *ifs, ands or buts*. Let the holy vows of poverty, chastity and obedience be the solid and unfailing ladder with which you reach your sanctification, a state of being which can only be attained through the perfect fulfillment of the Divine Will.

St. Thomas teaches that religious vows are almost a second baptism; St. Bernard adds that, if the world knew their worth,

the religious congregations would be taken by storm. Within these Congregations, the sacred vows are the shield that renders men and women invulnerable; they are the force with which the most bitter battles can be won, with which the highest walls can be scaled.

By embracing the holy vows, you have already embarked on the blessed journey to the Heavenly Jerusalem; the Sermon on the Mount must incite you to sacrifice in order to reach that difficult and arduous goal.

By embracing the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, you have placed yourselves safely in the house of the Heavenly Bridegroom, where you are safer than the dove in the clefts of the rocky cliffs, safer than the eagle upon the inaccessible Alpine peak. There, Jesus has pledged to defend you, provided that you remain faithful, and he will undoubtedly defend you from the temptations of the world and of the flesh.

Love your vows tenderly, and teach the postulants and novices to aspire to them with great enthusiasm, as they would to a great treasure; make them understand the priceless value of these vows.

Write the divine plan in your hearts in characters of fire: to be faithful until death to the precious vows with which your Lord Jesus has made you His bride. Bless that sacred day, as you wait for that other, more glorious day in which the Divine Redeemer will call you, saying: "Come, O Bride, my dove, come, O my faithful one, to receive the palm of virgins, the glory of saints in Paradise?"

But you are not only the brides of the Lord, but also His handmaids: thus you must know and follow your consecrated way of life if you wish to be admitted to the place encircling the throne of God on high.

Now, you will find this Rite of Consecration in your Constitutions. The Constitutions, which you have sealed with prayer and with charitable works, were studied by authentic theologians. They have obtained the approval and the blessing of the Vicar of Christ. Thus, you must hold them dear, second in importance only to the Gospel. These Constitutions, inspired by the maxims of the Gospel and supported by the word of Christ, Who is the true word, will indicate virtue to you, and will explain the way in which

they can be put into practice, in imitation of our Divine Teacher. Follow these precepts with love.

As the Apostle says: "I live, but it is not I that live, rather it is Christ that lives in me." In this way you also should endeavor to live in the charity of your Heavenly Bridegroom, who is none other than Jesus Christ, in fact, Jesus crucified.

Let the love of Jesus and the meditation of the crucified be the program of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence; upon this program let them base all their actions and their lives.

If the constant aim of the entire Congregation will be to stray not even an inch from this divine program, they will ascend to the summit of the holy mountain of perfection.

If the intentions behind all the actions of your religious life will be upright and pure, if you will be faithful to the vow of chastity, poverty and obedience that makes you the bride of the Word made flesh, you will win uncompromised victory, not only over your defects but also over your inclinations. One day, I

assure you, when the battle will be won, as a reward for your constancy, for your love of Jesus, and for your sacrifice, you will hear Him call: "Come, my bride, come to the kingdom which will never end!"

CHAPTER IV

To Sanctify Our Neighbor

Since we are children of God, and brothers in Jesus Christ, all redeemed by His Divine Blood, we must live in such a manner as not to afflict Our Father Who is in Heaven but to cooperate with all our power in the divine work of saving our brother.

Here is the reason why: if we want to work efficaciously for our own sanctification, we must be zealous in cooperating for the sanctification of the persons confided to us, or living with us. Not only among your Sisters, but with the orphans, or the aged who surround you, whenever you meet with any defect, you must endeavor, by all the means which charity and prudence suggest, to correct it to the best of your ability, accompanying your observations with the greatest kindness and with fervent piety. Prayer

should be your inseparable weapon in every circumstance, doubt, or anxiety.

If it be true, and it is very true, that it is folly to propose to sanctify others if we do not first strive to sanctify ourselves, you must nevertheless accustom yourselves to the holy practice of pointing out each other's personal defects. Remember, however, to always use gentleness and prudence, without pride, when doing this; in fact, offer this counseling ~~only~~ with a full and profound humility and simplicity, being always ready ~~not only~~ to give, but also to receive the corrections of your fellow Sisters.

Superiors are obliged to lead their Sisters with a good example, and so you must recommend them earnestly to God. They too will appreciate the humble, respectful, and sincere observations of their Sisters, because they too aspire to the pure joys of this community of the Brides of Christ. A Sister, be it a Superior or not, has no greater ambition than to merit ever more and more the caresses of Him Who has called her by name, to follow Him, and to carry the cross with Him.

Love your Congregation as the apple of your eye, as the bond which binds you to God, and you will taste the incomparable joy of dwelling with souls pledged to live and work with you, in the thought and in the will of God. Then you will say: "Oh, how sweet it is to live in the shadow of the sanctuary, and in the fire of the Charity of Christ! Oh, how sweet it is to be called His Bride."

This bond of charity explains the loving flame of so many souls who generously offer their youthful life for the prosperity of the Congregation and exert themselves always to acquire new, skillful, and fervent workers.

These religious, then rejoice when new members are joined to the house or when new foundations are added. For them it is a greater joy to spend themselves in the works of charity to which they are consecrated, than to gain prosperity and all earthly fortunes.

Jesus, Who is by definition the fire of Charity, came on earth to bring this charity, and now opens to all the living furnace of His Divine Heart, so that all hearts may be enkindled there. You, Daughters of St. Mary, must imitate your

spiritual Bridegroom by burning with the desire to help others, both spiritually and materially. Kindle the flames of divine love in your heart and in your will, and, just as the strongest metal melts and the hardest stone dissolves in fire, so, before the heat which emanates from your souls, the hardest sinners, the most obstinate will repent and the converted will, with a joyful hymn, invoke abundant blessings upon your houses.

A great many times what is denied to priestly zeal is granted to a humble Sister who prays in silence at the bed of a poor sinner. In the fire of her charity the sinner is converted, and transforms blasphemy into a profound act of sorrow, into a cry of faith and of charity, and he who previously was an enemy of God is now renewed by penance, and becomes a faithful follower and perhaps an apostle.

Many times the Sister, burning with zeal, joins mortification to prayer and besides her own prayer and mortification seeks aid from the piety of her Sisters and the residents. What wonder then if the unrepentant sinner, maybe an attempted murderer or a suicide, without any apparent explanation, changes all of

a sudden, asks for the last Sacraments, and dies with that Jesus Whom he has so many times blasphemed, outraged, denied, and mocked?

Inexhaustible are the miracles of charity, because Charity, Child of God, comes from God, rather it is God Himself. *Deus Charitas est.*

The Sister will beg God for charity, light, and strength in the moment of need and of danger, and will overcome difficulties considered invincible. Did not St. Monica obtain the conversion of her Augustine by the perseverance and fervor of her prayer and sacrifice?

And then, too, did not Jesus Himself give us an example by praying until He sweat blood in the garden, and by suffering and dying on the cross, abandoned by all, in the midst of insults of the people, just to redeem sinners? What does Jesus not suffer on our altars, enclosed in the tabernacle, exposed to profanations and to sacrileges, just to win souls away from sin and to draw them to follow Him?

We must do as much to spiritually aid our neighbor. We must be ready to give

all, including life itself, in order to save the souls which the blood of a God has saved, and to make faithful worshippers of those who were and still are sinners.

But to obtain these victories it is not enough for a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence to pray and sacrifice herself in secret: it is necessary that she aid her suffering brethren in all their necessities, happy if in caring for those infected with contagious diseases, she may be given the opportunity to gain the palm of martyrdom.

Blessed are you, when, serving the sick and suffering in hospitals you offer your youth as incense before the Lord, happy to comfort them. If this exposure to contamination weakens your fragile life--thank God who, in this manner selects you from among thousands, to be more worthy and ready for the Beatific vision of your Bridegroom.

In the House of Divine Providence there is the conviction that, in order to solidify every new foundation, it is opportune to have the voluntary sacrifice of one or more of its dear daughters, who, as cornerstones, bear the weight,

and assume all that is burdensome and difficult.

Happy are those religious whom Divine Providence chooses to be the cornerstone of a foundation, where other pure souls consecrate themselves generously to gather together the orphan, the abandoned, and the widow! To those who have answered the Divine Call by becoming sister, friend, mother to the abandoned and the forsaken, God promises Himself in return and for these prepares His Paradise.

Blessed are those religious that penetrate to the core of the promises made by the Lord to those who know how to sacrifice of themselves for His love, and who keep this intimacy in their hearts.

Nothing is more dear to Jesus than those abandoned souls, who in this world are in danger of losing their innocence. Now these religious, burning with the very fire of Jesus, sacrifice themselves in order to save their innocents in danger, or to give back life to those who have already been lost. These religious merit the love of the Divine Lamb and will come to the embrace of His infinite joy.

The world may make war on these virgins, who, urged by the love of God, become victims to save souls in danger and for Christ's poor; but the world is nevertheless forced to bow reverently before the miracles of charity; and these miracles, thanks be to God, are frequent.

A good religious never limits her field of action, but lends herself joyfully and quickly to whatever is assigned to her by holy obedience.

Full of good will and pious, she becomes the staff of the aged, the eye of the blind, ear and tongue to the deaf-mute. She consoles the afflicted, comforts the dying, prays over the dead and accompanies them to their last resting place; in all and always she tastes the joy of sacrifice, the delight of obedience. Always and everywhere she hears the voice of Jesus, which tells her with divine sweetness: "That which you do unto this soul, it is as though you had done it unto me." Strengthened by this divine encouragement, the more the good religious does, the more she wishes to do, the more she suffers and sacrifices herself, the more she wishes to suffer and sacrifice herself.

Oh! when these souls see the light of their lives becoming dim, they run fearlessly to the goal, because their eyes will see Jesus in His glory coming towards them to call them: "Come, blessed ones, come!"

But it is not enough that your zeal remain only behind the walls of the convent to which you have withdrawn; it is necessary that your beneficial and helpful work expand itself also outside, where the danger to souls is greater and more frightful. If your spirit is ready for this call, the Lord will multiply the means!

The mercy of God brings forth the religious community and inspires vocations, so that, as beacons, they may enlighten the darkness, illumine the stormy night, during which the souls of our brethren are threatened.

So long as priests of God offer the Holy Sacrifice, and Virgins of the Lord offer themselves and their will for their neighbor's welfare, faith will certainly not be extinguished in the midst of us, because the Immaculate Lamb with His divine Blood enriches the work and the prayer of His beloved Brides.

Go on, go on with courage and with faith, generous virgins, go on: Jesus is with you!

What matters to you, your youth, your talent, your exterior gifts, whatever they may be? One thing only matters: Sanctify yourself, sanctifying others.

As this is the aim of the Congregation to which you have joyfully given your name and your life, let this be the aim to which all your faculties tend: Sanctify yourself in order to become worthy of sanctifying the persons committed to your charity, thereby giving honor to God and extending His reign to all souls. May God help you.

May God help you. *Wish you to have a safe and comfortable journey. Please be kind to people around you. I am sending you this message to let you know that I am well.*

CHAPTER V

Homes for Neglected Children

This general heading includes:

- 1) Neglected children between the ages of two and twelve years, economically poor but innocent.
- 2) Children orphaned of either or both parents.
- 3) Children who are abandoned and in danger because their parents are incapable of educating them, or cannot do it on account of sickness or for other reasons.
- 4) Developmentally impaired children of severe and moderate levels who are, however, not dangerous to themselves or those who surround them. These may be received at any age.

- 5) Developmentally impaired children of mild and borderline level who are in physical or moral danger.
- 6) The chronically ill in general, as long as they are not affected with contagious diseases.

Manner of Acceptance

Usually acceptance is made upon the presentation by the Pastors or even priests or persons occupied with works of religion and charity, because these are more worthy of trust. Nevertheless even after taking all these precautions, difficulties are encountered which it is well to avoid if possible.

The persons named are usually inclined to be partial to those recommended by them rather than to consider the needs of the facility, therefore it is necessary to verify with the greatest care the proposed charges, so as not to be caught in error.

If those admitted are of the same city or nearby, it will always be better to invite them to come and present themselves, in order to decide each case fairly and wisely.

In granting or refusing applications keep in mind the glory of God and the good of souls, rather than the position of the one who makes the recommendation. Moreover, if the person be influential and wealthy, it is well to persuade them in a nice way to become instruments of Divine Providence, by making themselves a real protector of the orphan or mentally impaired whom they are presenting.

This maxim should always be before your eyes: if a person has any means of her own, or can procure it somewhere, she must never live as a burden on the facility.

If therefore money is plentiful in one case and scarce in the other, it is necessary not to accept proposed offers immediately, but better try to arrange them for the good of the individual confided to you, because cost of maintenance is frightfully increasing as are also the needs of the residents.

The person who recommends another for care in the facility must be responsible for the monthly payments, and for the individual in case she must leave the facility.

Once their share of financial participation is agreed upon and signed, do not permit it to be withdrawn or diminished without clear evidence of the necessity of such an action.

Experience teaches that people are quick to liberate themselves from their responsibility once they have obtained a safe place for their children. Therefore it is indispensable to anticipate this grave inconvenience, by clearly defining the terms of the contract from the outset.

When the applications come from the city or from some agency of charity, the facility runs less chance of being deceived. Nevertheless, should the city Municipality or the agency of Charity fail in their obligations, it will be well to have recourse to higher authorities to constrain them to care for the obligations they have assumed.

It is necessary to be frank and precise so as not to be deceived, but it is necessary at the same time to be cautious so as not to fail in that charity which is the spirit and life of the Congregation.

The invariable rule for acceptance is to demand more from those who can afford it, in order to be more generous and less exacting with the needy ones who can give less.

It is also indispensable to require of each applicant a medical certificate testifying that she has no contagious disease, because an oversight on this point might cause great inconvenience to the facility.

And when there be even a slight suspicion of immoral activity, let a careful examination be made by the Doctor to avoid greater distress for the Community.

In every instance, prudence and charity must guide the religious.

Care of Young Girls

The care which must be given to young girls must be both uniform and threefold, having as its objectives the body, the mind, and the soul.

1) Care of the Body

It is well, therefore, to give them enough nourishing food, air and work,

proportionate to their needs.

- a) Cereals, vegetables and milk products are to be preferred, and while distributing them abundantly, care should be taken to avoid abuses both on the part of the Sister inclined to generosity, and on the part of the children inclined to gluttony.
- b) If it is true--and it is very true--that good air makes good blood, the Sisters will be careful to maintain scrupulously the rules of modern and reasonable hygiene, in neatness, proper ventilation of buildings, cleanliness of clothing and bed linens.

A young girl, simple and clean even though poor, is healthy and contented and does honor to the facility and to the one who is in charge of her. What's more, order and cleanliness are the primary factors of the moral and physical order.

2) Care of the Mind

The minds of the children committed to your care must be above all nourished with religious teachings so that, con-

scious of their duties, they become capable of observing them even when doing so costs effort and sacrifices. Let therefore every care be taken to teach the Catechism in all its parts, according to the great and ever increasing needs of the times, and according to the individual capacity. Neglect of this would result in great moral harm to the children and would compromise the decorum of the facility.

Religious instruction should proceed at an equal pace with ordinary elementary school instruction. The young girls that then demonstrate special aptitudes should be encouraged to pursue higher studies.

If afterwards certain girls, besides demonstrating an inclination towards study, demonstrate an inclination towards religious life, they should be encouraged and guided to complete secondary school so that they may obtain a diploma as an elementary school teacher.

The Sisters must have at heart the betterment of the girls and also that of the facility, and they should therefore manage to reap all the good possible from the girls.

It will always be very useful to encourage special talents of the girls to render them capable of gaining a livelihood when they leave the facility. This can be accomplished by training them in sewing, in embroidery work, white, colored or gold, for use on the vestments of the Church, or in trousseaus; in hand knitting, lace making or any other work in common demand, and which brings the best income.

Care should be taken to consider the age and health of the children in selecting the program and assigning time for work.

It is highly recommended of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence that they be kind and motherly with the girls, all the while keeping away from that type of condescension that all too often degenerates into weakness and compromises religious dignity.

3) Care of the Soul

As was the case with the care of the body, moderation and discretion must also be used in dealing with the girls' moral education. Just as with food, where too much encumbers you and too little weakens

you, so it is with spiritual food: too much brings nausea and disgust, and too little leaves the soul unprepared for all the difficulties of life.

Those suited to the religious life can be efficiently helped with a well-rounded, sound education; those who are inclined towards indifference must be sustained without, however, forcing them suddenly into the fullness of devout practices. It will be preferable to help these individuals slowly without annoying them or, God forbid, instilling in them a sense of rebellion which would ruin all your work, and thus their future.

To all of them, you must gradually introduce the presence of the Holy Sacraments, watching over the girls carefully, however, so that they should partake of them with sincere fervor and not with duplicity. Their daily presence at Holy Mass, and the reciting of the Rosary, which is the rule in every Community, will not be too much to ask of some of your girls. The Sister who is fervently and blessedly alert will be able to instill in her girls the spirit of piety, correct judgment and firm resolutions. Excellent postulants are often formed from among the girls, as well as the best

subjects of the Congregation, because, having grown up in the House, they have become infused with and have assimilated its spirit.

In order to obtain good vocations, you must avoid excessive gentleness, or at least it must be tempered with a love of sacrifice, the only source from which good works spring. The sailor must sustain incredible hardships to reach port, and only by disregarding his own life can he save it and become a hero.

The practice of monthly retreats is very useful, because during this time the girls can be cultivated like delicate flowers to receive inspiration from on high. Try to introduce and maintain this pious practice in the House under your jurisdiction, and you will very soon see abundant fruits.

There would be many other things to add regarding the means necessary to give a healthy education to the young girls, but for now, it will be sufficient to hold to the few precepts outlined above, allowing further experience to show the weaknesses in them, and to find the means for perfecting them.

The Developmentally Disabled (Moderate, Mild, Borderline)

One of the functions of the House of Divine Providence is that of assisting those limited in intelligence sometimes with speech and hearing impediments, who in their own families and on the streets encounter danger of every kind and are not rarely the laughing-stock of the other children, and the thoughtless.

When these belong to a well-to-do family it should be expected that they make a monthly payment--enough for their support and perhaps enough to help those deprived of everything. It is not right to refuse shelter to the poor on account of lack of funds, and then lavish it on those who are not poor. Charity and perhaps justice would suffer if we did this.

Even the developmentally disabled can be educated to understand the faith and to perform some manual work, which would lessen the burden to the house, and at the same time render them happier by making them self-respecting and endearing them more to the Sisters.

Of course, to succeed in this you need a true spirit of sacrifice, and an unbounded patience. But, to those who, in these individuals, see souls redeemed by the Blood of Christ, all hardships become light and easy. Blessed is the Sister who joyfully gives herself in the redemption of the mentally impaired!

They are innocent, which is a treasure so great that it is enough to endear them and render them precious to the Daughters of St. Mary. By their self-sacrifice and by the observance of their vows, these Sisters desire to become always more pure and dear to God.

These children of limited intelligence do not know how to provide for themselves, and so on the Sister to whom they are confided falls the entire responsibility of administering to them, in proper measure and manner, the food of the body as well as food of the soul. They must supervise, too, the personal cleanliness of the children and that of their environment, and help them find various activities and work. Whenever possible, it is well to take them for walks as this is a valuable means to relaxation and diversion, and at the same

time for edification of neighbors so that they learn to respect and aid them.

For these handicapped individuals it will be well to have separate houses in the country, if possible surrounded by land under cultivation, because here even the most limited may easily accustom themselves to work in the field, and on the other hand, association with normal children might cause difficulties.

It is, however, useful that from time to time the mentally handicapped--who in our houses are called GOOD GIRLS--be introduced to normal children so that they get used to seeing and entertaining them. The same and more can be said of the poor aged, because it is necessary to find occasions to exercise not only the novices but also the girls in the works of charity of the house.

Moreover, it is well for all to become acquainted with the sorrows and evils of life, to make one realize all the benefits one enjoys, and to give occasion for gratitude to God.

The Developmentally Disabled

(Severe and Profound)

Besides the above mentioned mentally handicapped individuals, capable of receiving some instruction, there are many unfortunates who are incapable of any useful ideas, wholly unfit for work; destined, unless a miracle takes place, to remain infants until death.

Yet, even in these special ones, a soul beats, which, even though it is enveloped in darkness, deserves respect and veneration.

Usually this absolute lack of intelligence is coupled with repulsive bodily deformities, and many are unable to move themselves or to attend to the lowest, indispensable actions of life by themselves. Sister, therefore has to compensate for their incapacity and wash them, dress them, feed them, and help them in everything.

But to do this, one has to overcome reluctant nature, the violent impulses of nausea and of disgust which will be transformed into so many occasions for merit.

It is certain, however, that not all the Sisters are adapted to stay with the mentally handicapped. The Superiors have to make the decision, and they will choose the most worthy because here is needed the greatest virtue.

For the severely mentally handicapped as for the profoundly mentally handicapped, separate living arrangements are necessary, as well as nourishing food, regulated exercise, the greatest cleanliness, and well ventilated rooms.

For special cases, special instructions should be requested from the Superiors.

Facilities for Adults

The general rule for acceptance is the following:

Accept first, and with greatest generosity, the neediest and most abandoned individuals, considering them invited by God's Divine Providence, which alone cares for them.

These will be the blessed of the Congregation.

Next are those who, although they be neither disinherited nor abandoned, are not able to support themselves. Whenever the applicants are more numerous than the places available, precedence will be given to those who aspire to enter the House in order to give themselves over more completely to the service of the Lord, and who wish to prepare to die in a holy manner.

There are also people who, in the world or in their families, are in grave spiritual or bodily danger. With these individuals, if the information received is true, you must be ready and generous to save them in time from grave perils. You must be careful, however, to ensure that these are not dangerous individuals.

As to the arrangements to be made, they must be proportionate to the means at the disposal of the applicants.

When doing the works of the Lord, we must put all our confidence in Him who does all; but, although we recognize our own inabilities, we must strive to be prudent and cautious, as though everything depended on us alone.

Therefore, it can never be too strongly emphasized: get information, so that there be no hidden facts which we must be aware of concerning those who seek and those who obtain admittance. Act with utmost caution so as not to tempt God's Providence.

With adults as with young girls, we must adopt a policy of family government--a combination of authority and of love--in such a way that gentleness of manner does not compromise necessary authority, and that this in turn does not lead to harsh treatment.

The Sisters must love, serve and regard the girls as daughters or younger sisters, but also as the true mistresses of the House that the Lord has opened to them. Our benefactors who give us the means to open and maintain our Homes, do it to enable us to receive many unfortunate individuals.

Thus, it would be good to instill in the souls of our girls the conviction that they are in their own homes; this will lead to a bond between them and the Sisters, and an attachment to their work that will make them industrious and will

promote their improvement and their development.

We must be so virtuous as to deserve to be considered veritable angels of mercy and charity by the girls, and to teach them to be prudent, discreet, and unpretentious, to thank the Lord and recognize that the benefits they receive come from Him.

The residents in general, but especially the aged, must be governed with care, for misfortunes and the passing years have rendered them vulnerable. In all cases, the aged need care and caresses. With age, infirmities grow, and indigestions and congestions become more frequent; thus a watchful assistance is indispensable to prevent any disorder caused by food or drink.

The Religious who is assigned to the care of adults should try to cheer up their leisure hours with readings or with the telling of interesting and edifying stories. To accomplish this, one should obtain a small collection of books adapted to their level of understanding, so that they may find in them instruction and enjoyment.

Regarding the food of the spirit, we can repeat what has already been stated: not too much, so as neither to annoy or disgust them; not too little, so as not to weaken their faith and diminish the impetus of their virtue.

It is, however, proved by experience that the infirmed and the aged, often difficult at first, finally give themselves over to piety and especially to the practice of the Holy Sacraments, even when little accustomed and capable of disposing themselves to them.

The Sister should do all she can to help these souls; but then she must render them over to the paternal arms of the Lord, who will know how to infuse an effective piety, capable of receiving the most chosen graces, into the affectionate simplicity of these special persons.

CHAPTER VI

In Case of Sickness

Sickness is the greatest affliction of life, or at least one of the greatest, as much for the afflicted individual as for the one who assists him.

Convinced that we must ignore passing indispositions, in real sickness, on the contrary, it is necessary to use every effort to overcome them, and to follow the doctor's orders to the letter with the constantly renewed intention of obeying God. It is also necessary to submit your own wills entirely to those of your Superiors.

Consequently the nurse should be good, and the doctor who cares for her should be good.

The patient will be good if sensibly and devoutly she resigns herself entirely

to take as a punishment and in expiation of her own sins the sufferings with which she is afflicted, if she controls her own character and first impulses of feeling, if she takes her medicine and follows her treatments, if she bears all with Christian courage, likening her pains to those of the suffering Christ and to the Sorrows of His Mother. Finally, it will be good to prepare oneself to accept all from the hands of the Lord: cure or continued sickness; life or death.

The nurse will be good if she responds to her capabilities and more so to the duties of her office, and assists the sick entrusted to her, with compassion and prudence, seeking to promote recovery to the best of her ability and with all the precaution and vigilance required by the case.

To discharge her difficult task in the best possible manner, the nurse should keep herself continually united to her Heavenly Bridegroom, from Whom alone she can obtain the unalterable patience and the necessary promptitude and insight or understanding in difficult emergencies where a prompt assistance, and instantaneous decision, and a firm resistance to the indiscretion of the sick is required.

From such virtues, drawn from the Heart of Jesus, result all those heroisms which to the astonished world reveal the Religious nurses as angels in human guise at the bed of the sick, in the obscure cell, or in hallways of the hospitals.

These wonders are more frequent in those Sisters who, if they have not had instruction and education from their birth, have instead known how to procure both in the Congregation, humbly obtaining from their Mothers and Mistresses those teachings which have modified their characters and molded their habits and manners.

To obtain good nurses, to render them more familiar with modern methods and the more immediate necessary remedies, the Houses of Divine Providence established in the large centers send the younger Sisters whom they consider more capable of nursing to Schools of Nursing where they will obtain a nurse's diploma.

Thus our patients, seeing themselves assisted by good and expert Sisters, are tranquil, and the Congregation itself reposes confidently in Divine Providence according to the Proverb, "God helps those who help themselves." Would the

Lord deny His help to one who has used all possible means to correspond faithfully to the Divine Call?

The doctor too should be good, and he will be good when, understanding his duty, he has the fear of God, Who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. The best doctor is he who is prudent and discreet, and who sees in the sick a brother a soul marked by the blood of Christ, and so cares for the sick according to the dictates of science and of charity.

The Sister nurse should be discreet in visits and questions, always careful not to tire the sick with excessive requirements.

It may happen that a nurse, good of heart but lacking in cleverness, wearis the sick instead of anticipating their needs. To avoid every inconvenience the wise Superior watches and admonishes; sometimes a single word will suffice to put a Sister on the right trail and transform her into a valuable nurse. Experience has proven this a hundred times.

If the illness presents even a minimal risk, it will be well to encourage the

patient to receive the Holy Sacraments. However, at the same time it will be useful to avoid every shock, making her understand that the Sacraments do not kill, but instead are a powerful means to obtain graces, including those of cure. It should be emphasized to her, and she should be persuaded that remaining far from God for fear of death is an obsolete prejudice; it is sufficient to make her reflect that everywhere, even where Jesus is disbelieved and blasphemed, people die at every age. Do not the pagans and the unbelievers die?

With regards to the choice of a Confessor, if possible at all this should be left to the patient, helping her to call that priest or those priests whom she considers necessary or in whom she has greater confidence.

If on the contrary the patient is pious, it will be well to see that the Sacraments are repeated as often as possible, because it helps her to sustain her sufferings and prepare herself for the end. If the sickness is not mortal, Holy Communion will always be a comfort and a better help than any other.

Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX, consider-

ing the grief and privation of pious souls who on account of sickness cannot fast, with a decree of love gave them permission to communicate several times a week, even after having taken food or drink.

(It would be opportune and essential here to explain the easing of regulations concerning eucharistic fasting, which were recently published by the Most Holy Pious XII along with the Apostolic Constitution of January 6, 1953, which was followed by the explanatory "Instruction," issued the same day by the Holy Office:

- 1) From the faithful and from the priests is completely lifted the restriction of drinking natural water before the Holy Communion or before the Holy Mass;
- 2) The faithful who are sick, even those who are bedridden, with the mandatory consent of their confessors may, both after having taken confession and without taking confession at all, consume some beverages every day. This may be allowed sometimes as long as the same conditions of the sickness last, in cases where the individual

cannot fast before the Holy Communion because of their illness without experiencing discomfort. The beverages may be the following: hot chocolate; broth, even with some bread crumbs; eggs, raw or slightly heated; a little wine, etc. Alcoholic beverages are excluded, but all liquid non-alcoholic medicines or solid ones, as long as they are truly medicines which were prescribed by a physician, are allowed. These medicines must in every case be commonly recognized as such (as long as one doesn't consider all solids consumed for nourishment medicinal). Sick priests, even though not bedridden, can take advantage of this same dispensation, whether they intend to celebrate Holy Mass, or if they only wish to receive Holy Communion;

3) With the mandatory consent of the Confessor, given both within confession and out of it, and even sometimes for the entire length of the serious inconvenience, the faithful who cannot approach the Sacred Table (Tabernacle) because they have not fasted due to a serious inconvenience, after having taken something in the guise of drink up till one hour before, may participate in Holy Communion. The following

may be considered serious inconveniences: a) a debilitating work which precedes Holy Communion (workmen assigned to offices, to transport, to dockwork, or to other public services, be they on the day shift or the night shift; those who, because of office or charitable duties pass the night awake, such as nurses, hospital employees, night watchmen, etc.; women with children and mothers who, before being able to go to church must, for long periods of time, take care of household chores, etc.). b) If the hour of the Holy Communion is delayed (e.g., for those faithful who can only procure a priest at a late hour, for the children for whom it is too dangerous to go to the church in order to take communion and then to return home to eat and go to school, etc.). c) If the road to travel to reach the church is long (about two kilometers on foot or the equivalent if travelled by mechanical means, etc.). In some cases, by consent of the individual Ordinary Diocesan, it is allowed that a meal be eaten with moderate intake of wine or beer, but without liquor, up until three hours before the beginning of the Mass or of the Communion (e.g., to the workmen in certain industries

where the shifts follow one another, even on holidays; to certain categories of workmen who are occupied during the morning of holidays; within gatherings of a religious or social nature in which a large group of faithful participate, etc.), during the holidays when the precepts are in force, and when they are suppressed; and on the first Friday of the month; and on solemn occasions celebrated with a great public participation; and one day of the week for certain categories of persons; before the only celebration of Holy Mass and of Holy Communion during the day (as long as it isn't before four o'clock in the morning). Thus ends the recently added note.)

The nurse should encourage the souls to make very good use of this paternal dispensation. When the end draws near, the faithful soul does not become alarmed, but rather reanimates her own courage to accept with resignation from the hand of God the end of her sufferings, in the hope of an eternal reward. The nurse even in this case, remembers that the sick has need of being cared for not only in body but per-

haps more so in soul. She must call the priest in time to quickly administer the Sacrament of the sick, the recommending of the soul and the plenary indulgence on the threshold of death.

The nurse reminds the patient in those last days that death is the end of all evil, the beginning of all good, rather the full attainment of the greatest good, Paradise. In fact, the Church celebrates the anniversary of her Saints not on the date of their birth but of their death, knowing that day to be the one in which they arose to a true life, the eternal life of heaven with God. Regarding medications and nutrition: when curing the sick, the general rule is to lean towards abundance; however, some thought must be given to the poverty of the sick person as well as to the poverty of the House or of the Congregation.

Certainly we depend on Providence; therefore, Providence must help us, but if instead of providing the necessities of the sick the nurse indulges in superfluities as done in the houses of the rich and affluent, Providence might ask of her and abandon her in the hour of need.

During the agony of someone of the house, the whole family prays for her. Even prior to this--that is when a patient is in danger--the Superior ought to inform the Sisters and all the Community so that in Holy Communion and in the Holy Mass, and in all their good works they may warmly recommend the soul who is about to appear before the tribunal of God so that she may find not justice but mercy.

As soon as the sickness shows signs of a serious character, care should be taken to inform the relatives, and in case of death they should be informed even by telegram, telling them the day and the hour of the funeral.

All of the Community recites a third part of the Holy Rosary for the soul of the deceased and offers Holy Communion and Mass.

Let each one of us renew our faith in the hope that through the infinite mercy of God, that soul has attained her end in the glory of heaven; and praying for her, let us invoke her to obtain for us the graces we need from our Father and Divine Master.

CHAPTER VII

Two Classes of Sisters

The Sisters of St. Mary of Divine Providence are divided into two classes, the first Directresses and the other Coadjutants.

The aspirants who show an aptitude for direction are destined from the beginning to the first class.

To the second class are destined the others who have a common aptitude resembling that of Martha in the Gospel, not only for moral and spiritual life, but and even more to endure the material weight of offices which require strength and good will.

This distinction will not appear unjust if one considers that no well-regulated house could sustain itself if there were

not on the one hand those who command and on the other those who obey.

Love with filial tenderness the Congregation which is named after you, and to which you must give your heart, your mind, your life; accept and approve these distinctions. The Congregation with the approval of Holy Mother the Church has heard repeated within herself the evangelical sentence: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are the chaste, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice!" Yes, love your Congregation with all your souls, not in words but in sacrifice, that sacrifice of which heroines are made.

Have faith in this your dear mother, always obey her and submit yourselves with docility to her commands, even when they become heavy and painful or when you do not understand them.

As Martha and Mary were both dear to the Heart of the Divine Master, so the Daughters of St. Mary of the two classes are equally dear to the Heavenly Bridegroom, who finds His complaisance in them, not so much in view of their dignity as of the perfection with which they perform their duties. She who handles

the pen as well as she who handles the spade is precious and dear to the Lamb without spot, provided that in all her actions whether noble, or lowly, she keeps her mind fixed on God, the very breath of her soul.

Holy Church numbers among her Saints not only the monks who said Mass, but also many a lay brother, that is to say a brother assigned to the manual services. Even St. Francis of Assisi was not a priest.

In the same manner that the angels and saints are given special privileges, so too are the Daughters of St. Mary given different duties. As long as in each one of them shines the light that dominates and encompasses all others: holy virginity. This makes them Brides of the Immaculate Lamb Who has come upon earth to redeem the sins of the world with the shedding of His Divine Blood to the last drop.

Like the Holy Virgin you have the fortune of being offered in the temple of the thrice holy God. The Congregation has opened to you its arms and with the benediction of the Priest and the ratification of the Vicar of Christ it has

enrolled you in the works of the living temple of the Holy Spirit. What fortune is yours!

The Blessed Virgin united prayer to work, and lent herself voluntarily to all the pious works of charity to which she was permitted to extend her beneficent and loving hand.

And you like your Mother live a life of union with God, lending yourself with love, I would say even with a privileged love to the more humble offices, be they in the concealment of the kitchen, or the laundry, or of other manual tasks, in the schools and kindergartens or in the service of the sick and poor.

Imitate with zeal the Blessed Virgin in the perfection of obedience and the total abandonment of your will to the holy will of God, which for you is manifested in the command of your Superiors, especially so when they assign you to low offices and keep you in a state of complete dependence.

To you, Daughters of St. Mary of the second class, the Blessed Mother addresses a special word. Giving you a caress or predilection, the Blessed Virgin

repeats that the Lord will not reward you according to the greatness of your office, but according to the generosity and zeal which you have manifested in these lower offices, just because they are held as useless by the world.

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After having spoken to the two classes of religious incorporated in the Congregation, I feel it my duty to address a word to the other souls even more dear to God, who because of advanced age, afflictions, or for other circumstances or imperfections cannot be admitted among the virgins of the Lord in this, His house.

These are to be consoled. If the taking of the habit and the making of the holy profession is not granted to them, nevertheless, they too may belong to the House of Divine Providence, so long as they follow its spirit and devote themselves to the offices assigned them with the love of daughters, of sisters and of dependents. That God Who scrutinizes hearts will appreciate their sacrifice and will prepare a reward which surpasses all rewards. In this case is verified

the proverb: It is not the habit that makes the monk.

And you, daughters of St. Mary, love these souls as good sisters and help them to serve the Lord. Be their loving guides and they will be useful supports in the difficulties of your ministry. How many times will it be advantageous for the House to communicate with the outside world through a Sister who does not wear the habit! The ways of God are so many that it is unwise to belittle the humble, who oftentimes are destined to create and give life and ardor to great works.

May God bless you all--souls desirous of arriving at perfection, souls practicing charity--and may your works and your humility receive a crown.

Acceptance of the Postulants

It is a meritorious work to encourage the holy aspirations of a young girl when she wishes to withdraw from the dangers of the world and put herself on the way of perfection. Simple reason alone teaches us to support or encourage all efforts toward good, but faith strengthens reason, because in its light we come

to know the excellence of the Christian virtues.

St. Cecilia said to her spouse Valerian: "Do not touch me because my angel is at my side." Valerian, curious to see the angel, and moved by veneration for the girl, received baptism, made her holy desires his, and with her merited the glorious palm of martyrdom. This is one of the many proofs of the great esteem in which God holds anyone who aids a soul to preserve its chastity.

Jesus appeared to St. Theresa many times to recommend that she open many convents so that there many souls would have the opportunity to start on the road to perfection.

Now we, in order to have a norm for the acceptance of postulants who knock at our door, have our Holy Rule, approved by Holy Mother the Church, and in it we can live secure. But to interpret it and apply it suitably, it is necessary to have a spirit of prayer, a pure intention, and a strong distaste for every biased or human judgment.

It is not an affair of little importance to guide to spiritual espousals the

souls elected by God, nor is it of less importance to sift out those others who believe that they have heard the voice of the Lord, and instead have followed the caprice of a moment, or a misunderstood disappointment.

To make a wise decision it is necessary to pray much, to let God be your guide, and to study the postulant and all the circumstances surrounding her.

It is only after having received enlightenment from on high that you will be able to understand if the girl is urged on to the Congregation by a sincere desire to serve God, or rather by levity or by a worthless wish to escape the struggles and miseries of life. Some girls even dare to enter Religious life in order to merit the esteem of good and spiritual persons. Certainly the vocation of such would not be of good quality. They are like those cracked bells which ring, it is true, but so out of tune that instead of being pleasing to the ear, they only jar and pain it.

Instead, that vocation which resists the opposition of parents and family will be more secure, that is, bringing a life of punishments and doubts, surrounded by

jeers, persecuted by the wicked. The soul which has overcome such contradictions, and who comes forth victorious, gives proof of sincerity and earnestness and merits to be rewarded.

In the interpretation of the Rule, keep well in mind that the letter kills, and the spirit vivifies, that is to say, it is not always necessary to take the literal sense, but rather you should interpret the inmost thought which has dictated it.

So in the spirit of the Rule you should understand that, in the acceptance of a Postulant who give true signs of a vocation, it will be well to pass over certain secondary conditions, that is of age, health, of dowry, remembering that every rule has its exceptions.

Suppose we are mistaken, someone will say. And to her I answer that it will be a lesser evil to be mistaken because of an excess of kindness than of an excess of rigor.

To her who suggests that it is better to have few Sisters, all virtuous, healthy and wise, I will say without any

roundabout language that the "Best is an enemy of Good."

Only God is completely good. Even the best of men are a mixture of good and evil. Who of us is without fault? To refuse a Postulant because she is not perfect would mean never accepting any. Instead it is necessary to refuse without pity those who do not show a real desire to amend themselves.

And if in doubt, you ask me? And I repeat: In doubt it is better to say yes than no, because in the convent, with the grace of God, many souls who were full of defects have overcome themselves and arrived at the greatest perfection. And then there are two years of novitiate, and during these, the intention of the postulant and the depth of her vocation will be able to manifest themselves clearly.

There are those who in the present times, when Brothers and Sisters are continually threatened, say that to accept those in poor health, those without money, or those with defects may be an error, and certainly a serious imprudence.

And would it not be a more damaging error to receive those who have a languid and unstable faith? And if our Sisters of limited mental talents, old, sickly, and full of defects, should be like the lame of the Gospel, the persons destined to sit at the wedding Supper? Do we want to be more severe than God? The devil, as a raging lion, as a wily serpent, threatens our countrysides, conspires furiously for the ruin of nations, for the loss of souls; let us rise as one to dispel the enemy! Let our voices ring out in one cry: Take from us all, but not our faith! To save the faith, which means to secure the salvation of souls, let us be ready to give all, even life itself.

Is the struggle terrible and the battle unequal? Let us not lose courage. It is written that if God be with us, all the forces of hell cannot prevail against us. Non prevalebunt!

Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, you have a Rule. Hold it dear, it is the blessed anchor to which you will never attach yourself in vain.

The Rule and light from God will tell you which Postulants you should accept

and which you should refuse, and will make you know what the insurmountable obstacles are, and which are the ones that can be overcome. In doubt, I repeat, give in and accept and open the door to whomever knocks.

Should there be special circumstances, remember that some difficulties can be aired and removed by the Counsel of our Congregation, and others must be submitted to the infallible college of Rome.

It is always well, however, that there be a zealous and charitable soul who protects the cause of the one to be refused, and if necessary she may write to the Superiors so that the will of God be known and triumph.

The good judgment of the Sister Directresses, coupled with the heart of a mother and of a sister, will be used in favor of many of those less gifted girls, who desire to take the habit. God will repay them generously, and even more than they have done for these poor children of God.

CHAPTER VIII

The Postulants

Girls entering in the Congregation come with bleeding hearts caused by the detachment from their town, their family and all the customs of their former lives, and so must be treated with Christian delicacy by the Superiors and Sisters.

Usually the postulants are in suffering most from the struggles they had to undergo against parents, friends, and the world, and often even against their Confessor, who corresponding to His Divine Call, has spared no means to sound out the vocation. All of this tells you that you must receive them with affection.

Are you afraid that the poor child coming to you will splash blood upon you from her wounds? That is even a greater reason for you to receive her lovingly,

to sympathize and help her. For those, who, having known the world, have detested and abandoned it, our Lord may have in mind a great victory over the world. Maybe they will bring a new inextinguishable light into the Congregation for their own sanctification and the sanctification of others. Receive them, I beg of you, as sent from God.

Be careful, however, not to be too affectionate, for it is necessary for a Sister to learn in time to repress the movements of her heart, in order to give place to the purest outbursts of charity. It is one thing to follow one's natural sentiments, which will lead you to one person rather than another; it is quite another to cultivate the impulses of faith, which makes us see in those who suffer so many souls redeemed by the Blood of Christ, and so these impulses tell us to console these souls.

Thus, do not reveal your tenderness too much to the postulants, so that they will not take advantage of the situation. For this wholly spiritual reason, it is well to make them understand that the Congregation does not need their help, and it will not harm them to leave them awhile without a determined occupation, as if

they were abandoned. It is in this way that a mother hides herself to see if her children really love her, and they, sorrowing because of her absence, seek her.

With your wise bearing and by giving good example to the Postulants, they will come to have a proper esteem for the Congregation and will succeed in eliminating from themselves all the clouds and difficulties which little by little formed in their minds regarding religious life.

This work of preparation usually requires much time, and always requires the grace of God, and thus constant, intense prayer.

Finally light will fill the soul of the girl, who will learn to believe that the will of God must be interpreted in the will of her Superiors. She will learn that the sure proof of the love of God is a lively desire to suffer for Him, and that sainthood consists chiefly--I would say exclusively--in seeing God in all things, always, and in the desire that He should triumph in all hearts.

Teach the Postulants to consider the Congregation as the threshold of the House of God which is the eternal dream,

and they will then make themselves comfortable in it, desirous of sanctifying themselves, anxious to merit there the crown of the good soldier who permits himself to be killed to defend his flag.

An excessive timidity and that feeling of terror with which they are often troubled, are harmful to souls, and the good Mother must endeavor to instill in them a sense of respect, but at the same time an unlimited confidence in that Jesus Who has called them, promising His help to whomever abandons themselves into His hands.

Accustom the Postulant to find her joy in Church before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and in a short time her heart will forget the sweetness of her abandoned family and the customs of her former life.

Adoration will unite the soul of the Postulant to her Heavenly Bridegroom and will prepare her to desire an office in the House, and this office will be given her as a reward, no matter how humble or heavy it may be or seem to be.

All should be careful of their health, allowing themselves the food and repose

necessary, and little by little they will become used to the requirements of the house and to the significant difficulties of community life.

Removed from the liberty of family life and perhaps even of pure country air, the aspirant should in the early days be permitted to follow her customs, so that as before stated, she does not find the routine too difficult, and does not become discouraged; a French author says that discouragement is the worst wrong that we can do to ourselves.

It is said that St. Bernard in the beginning of his Community burdened the novices too much, and many of them left; but when he understood that the way of perfection is long and arduous, he did not disdain to help his followers to progress step by step so as to get them accustomed a little at a time to the steep climb, and they remained faithful and continued to climb with him up the mountain until they reached the height of monastic perfection.

The Postulant on her part should learn to moderate her desires, even the holiest, beginning with that of entering the novitiate soon, and from there to pass

without delay to Profession. This desire is a real illusion, because if one spends her time as Postulant zealously she is fulfilling willingly and with fervor the will of God. When a girl passes to the novitiate and to Profession prepared holily, she will make rapid strides, and be sure God will not count the years she spent in the religious life, but rather how her years were spent.

The Postulants must depend in all and always on the Mistress of Novices, and on the Vice Mistress. The Mistress directs them in a general way and the Vice Mistress accompanies them step by step until she finds them worthy of passing to the Novitiate.

All the Sisters must pray for those who aspire to enter the Congregation, so that they, like tender little plants, supported in the beginning, may become one day majestic trees and maybe pillars of the house.

But this will never be repeated enough. Do not let the Postulants understand the interest which they awaken in the Superiors and in their companions, so as not to spoil their devotion, degenerating it

into a personal attachment which is really dangerous to religious profession.

The Postulant is born to the religious life, strictly speaking, under the benevolent word of God and Holy Communion, which generates in her soul the desire to give herself completely to works of mercy.

The exercise of this in its turn will persuade her to completely renounce all her life, all her attachments and thoughts; it will accustom her to familiarize herself with the thought of death, and often it will lead her to desire the difficulties, sickness and all the miseries inseparable from those who choose the difficult yet sweet road of Christian perfection.

In a word, the Postulants should be prepared and taught the meaning of virtue in all its forms, and especially in that of dying to oneself, breaking every thread which holds her attached to her own will.

A great aid in this task will be the reading of holy books, and especially the life of St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa, and all the penitent saints.

CHAPTER IX

The Habit

When you are dressed in the habit of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence you must respect and love your religious habit, considering it as a protection and veil for a body sanctified by the Holy Sacraments and the practice of the Holy Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience.

At the same time you must consider your holy habit as a defense for a body imperiled by original sin and by who knows how many actual sins. Therefore, you must conceive an unlimited gratitude to that Jesus, Who, notwithstanding your unworthiness, calls you to His ranks, and covers you with His habit.

The religious habit singles you out as a Bride of Christ and becomes almost part of you, and not even the Vow of Poverty has the power to deprive you of it.

Yes, love your habit very much, even though you blush at the thought of all your miseries, and remember that Holy Church in giving you permission to wear it, has testified that she considers you worthy and loves you with great tenderness.

The Priest, in blessing you and your habit with Holy Water, has sanctified you with his blessing and given you strength against the powers of the enemy, almost as an armor destined to protect you against the devil and outside contacts. Wear your habit with faith and respect, and look upon it as a seal which marks you as belonging to your Congregation.

If you knew how to question it, your habit would teach you many things and would give you wise advice.

Your bonnet will tell you of the sacrifice of your hair fallen under the scissors, that is to say, of the voluntary renunciation of one of a woman's greatest vanities, and therefore of the triumph over vanity and selfishness. Thus, renouncing the pleasures of the world, it is clear you must long for the crown of the elect. This crown, however, you must gain by continued efforts,

exercising, according to the command you receive, your charity towards God and your neighbor. The bonnet also protects your ears and thus, symbolically, your hearing and your sight; it thus teaches you to not admit vain, sinful thoughts into your minds. Remember this always: do not permit your eyes or your ears to receive anything contrary to the Holy Vows and to your Religious dignity--consecrated as you are to good works and to the Glory of God.

The Crucifix which shines on your breast, almost a coat of mail against the assaults of the enemy, teaches you patience in adversities, love in suffering, that patience and that holy love that is imperative, and is the distinguishing trait of the Lord's virgins. How many souls, strong in the Cross, have made rapid strides in virtue and with unheard-of strength have won the crown which God grants to those who have valiantly fought! Listen to their voices, follow their example, and you too will arrive at a very high degree of Christian perfection.

When it happens that the fulfillment of your apostolate or the command of your Superiors prevents you from remaining

kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament or from making the Holy Way of the Cross, lovingly press to your heart with faith and love your dear Cross, and be sure you will win the favor and the many apostolic indulgences granted you by those who have the power, like those which are granted by making the Via Crucis, with crucifix in hand, as though you were following the way which leads from the Pretorium to Calvary.

And when, aware of your spiritual weakness, you have not courage to receive Jesus in your heart, and thinking over your sins, you fear and tremble, look upon the cross which rests on your breast, invoke the Precious Blood with which it is bedewed and repeating with profound sentiments, from the bottom of your heart: *My Jesus have mercy, approach the altar. Cleanse your faults in the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, you will feel that you are purified and strong in Him Who has said: I came not for the just, but for the sinners.*

Just by looking upon your crucifix and repeating the name of Jesus you will gain many indulgences. Happy and rich in these, go ahead, certain of God's pardon.

Upon dressing in the morning, kiss your holy habit and pray your Guardian Angel to assist you to wear it worthily. Feel the dignity of the monastic habit, even though it be poor and tattered, and be careful to keep it clean, because it represents internal order.

Be orderly, clean and simple, both in dress and in your dealings with your neighbor, and exclude all signs of ambition or false humility. The truly humble person feels less worthy than others, and she shows it in her bearing without boasting or inviting praise, which are opposed to evangelical simplicity.

Not infrequently among the Sisters who correspond better to the spirit of Divine Providence, there is a holy competition to have the oldest and most faded habit, and to have the coarsest and oldest linens. Certainly, this competition is praiseworthy, but it should always be accompanied by what is said above, that is by holy simplicity and real humility, and by constant care to keep the habit and linen clean, out of respect for the dignity of a Religious consecrated to God.

Be careful never to complain against the heat or cold or the weight of your clothing, because you would, by doing this, give proof of frivolity, and you would easily compromise your decorum and the seriousness of your state.

When undressing in the evening, go in spirit before Jesus, stripped of His garments, and cruelly scourged, and you will be not only modest but recollected. Lying down and saying, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul," you really renew the offering of yourself to the Heavenly Bridegroom, and begging: "Assist me in my last agony," you will remember that sleep is a picture of death. And because you could pass from sleep to eternity, by saying "Jesus, Joseph and Mary, let my soul expire in peace with you," put yourself into their hands, as if you saw really present around you, with your own eyes, the Blessed Virgin, her most pure Spouse, and their Divine Son. Crossing your hands on your breast, go to rest and be sure Our Lord will grant you peace and tranquility.

Our Lord, be sure, will bless your sleep, if you know how to sanctify it with the right intention to restore your

strength in order that you may work harder in the day which He is about to grant you. If instead you cannot sleep, God will in the same way bless your waking, and will make it a source of patience and of great merit.

The following morning as you dress yourself with the habit again, recall that it is a visual sign of the battle that you are ready to renew every day, till the end of your lives, for God. In that day, when the struggle is finished, you will receive the palm of the brave soldier who has battled for God with the external and internal enemies, and has known how to overcome the world, the passions, and himself.

Carry the battle and the signs of a life of virtue with you and work by degrees, without ceasing, for the "victor". And this is the reason why we say that the greater the virtue, the more easily you know that you are doing well and that the devil envies you. For the devil is always seeking to impede your good works by various means.

Remember that the same good virtue which you do not work out in one place, you will find it in another place, and that it is the same virtue.

CHAPTER X

General Directions for Novices

There are three fundamental rules for all souls who are seeking eternal salvation, and especially therefore for Religious and novices, to whom we shall never repeat them often enough.

I. Confide in God.

II. Mistrust yourself.

III. Be strong in the moment of trial.

The young girl of worthy spirit must have examined with care her own vocation before entering the House of Divine Providence, and as soon as she knew that it was truly the calling of God, she wept and prayed for assurance of that fact, so as not to fall victim to a momentary illusion. With humility and faith she then turned to a pious and wise counsellor,

who in turn sought light from on high, and finding the true sign of a sincere vocation, gave his consent.

Having entered in the Congregation, the young Postulant listened to the divine Voice, and animated by a vivid desire to sanctify herself, was permitted to enter the Novitiate, that is to say, the threshold of the religious life into which God admits chosen souls destined to become His beloved Brides.

Now there remains no more doubt or hesitation. The time is passed for that. Abandon yourself confidently in the loving arms of that Providence which has called you, and in His name and for love of Him, throw yourself confidently and securely in the maternal arms of your Superiors, following the light of the Minister of God Who, in the Tribunal of Penance, holds and guides the reins of your soul.

To confide in the Lord means to abandon yourself with blind and childlike tenderness to His Will, to receive all from Him with love--the difficulties as well as the joys of serving Him alone, and Him always--being disposed to take up your

cross, and whatever cross He, in His Fatherly love, may destine for you.

The loving child must, with the same enthusiasm, accept both food and medicine from his mother. He would prove himself unworthy of maternal tenderness if he were to put up resistance to the smallest commands that require effort and hardship.

Courage then, oh Novices of Providence! Close your eyes to the world and to all your ways of times gone by to keep them fixed on God alone and to discover His intentions in your regard. Since you can neither see nor hear God, listen carefully to the voices of your Superiors, because they are the real channels through which you may know the divine will.

Not a few Novices are tempted to lock themselves up in an inactive silence, giving in to an ill-advised timidity. Woe to them if they permit themselves to be overcome by this temptation!

Come out to work and struggle! A living work awaits your cooperation, promising you Paradise as a reward. The moment to secure this reward which surpasses all others is precisely during

your period of Novitiate, during which you will lay the unshakable foundations of a holy and active life.

Certainly your efforts to forget yourself and confide entirely in God must not end with your novitiate. Rather you must ever increase in mistrust of self, and confidence in Him Who called you to His service, by making His voice penetrate into your heart, overcoming a thousand obstacles to do so. If He Who can do all things has called you, He will hold in reserve for you all the graces necessary to follow His inspirations.

Do you perhaps feel the fear of your unworthiness move you within under a thousand forms, and you ask yourselves a hundred times, "Did I tarnish the baptismal innocence with one or more sins?" Has Our Lord pardoned them? Are my Superiors satisfied with me or not? Courage, child, in the name of God take courage! Fear and alarm--believe one who has experience--do not come from God! If you know you have offended God grievously, repent sincerely, but after having received Sacramental pardon, abandon forever all fear. This fear does not come from a real love of God, but from

self-love--against which you must fight without ceasing.

The eternal enemy of good and of souls, if you give him a chance, will not cease to torment you, to make you fancy that the religious life is unendurable.

Many things will seem difficult: among others, the fact that, except rarely, you cannot approach your Superiors, never or almost never being able to open your heart to them, and having to go on in the continual doubt as to whether they are satisfied or displeased with you.

It is necessary to renounce even those seemingly legitimate satisfactions, if we want to be in direct communication with Almighty God. Renouncing a little at a time one's own will--I would almost say one's own security--to confide entirely in the soul of the Bridegroom, always unsure whether we are objects of tenderness or of repugnance and disgust to the people who surround us; this is how to prepare oneself for that holy indifference which brings upon us all the merits of the Virgin and her Divine Son. As for the rest, be assured: nowhere better than just here does the following proverb fit, "No news is good news." If the Superiors

do not complain, it is a sure sign that they are satisfied with what you are doing. They will not compliment you, or at least compliments are rare, but they will not keep still when a reproof is necessary.

Any anxiety is also out of place as to when you will receive the habit or be professed, or in what class and where you will be sent, and to what office. Do not worry about all this, because, even though you are not understood or badly understood, if your intention is pure and your conduct good, Our Lord will know how to clear up every suspicion and make you triumph. If your vocation comes from Him, from Him also will you learn the most perfect way to follow it.

St. John of the Cross, that great Saint who is considered an equal of St. Theresa, was considered hopeless, and even limited in intelligence, and as if that were not enough, he was inflicted with seven months of heavy imprisonment which he supported with joy, happy to suffer with Jesus and for Jesus.

Now this treatment on the part of man brought forth the greatest sweetness on the part of God, Who, while St. John was

wrapt in ecstasy, asked him, "John, for all that you have suffered, tell Me what shall I give you as a reward?" And do you think the Saint asked for his own glory, or to be justified before those who blackened his character? No! Humbly bowing his head, he answered, "Oh, Lord, I desire to suffer always and be despised for your love."

In this answer radiates all the beauty and sublimity of Christian perfection.

But to reach such a high degree it is necessary to keep one's ears open and one's will ready for the teachings of the Divine Master, renouncing one's own will and judgment.

The novices must live absolutely separated from the Community, disposed to obey, but without assuming as their own, any work of the house, since they have need of being immersed in prayer, and they must remain in solitude where they can learn to relish the intimate conversation of their Heavenly Bridegroom.

The Novice will encounter many difficult battles on her way; nevertheless, she will be able to overcome them easily,

if she meditates and follows the example of Jesus and His Holy Mother.

Like a dove which, getting out of the water, shakes its wings, and this mist--almost a dew--refreshes the flower parched by the sun; in the same way, the novice, upon finishing her prayers, will show forth an edifying spirit that will comfort the weak and console the weeping.

Our Lord told the prophet to eat the holy book, to teach us to make our food and our drink the Passion and the Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is only by living in the contemplation of the divine mysteries that we can make rapid progress on the way of perfection, and use eagle's wings to fly to sublime heights and to fix our eye on the Eternal Sun.

A hundred temptations will return to you, poor frightened dove, recalling to your mind the memories of the world you have left, your parents, your town, your home, the church of your town, the sermons and whatever has brought to a head your religious vocation. It will seem to you sometimes that there, among your own people, you would have been able to do more and better things.

No, do not listen to these voices. God permits you to be so tried to test your fidelity to His Call.

Be not frightened, doves of the Sanctuary, but open your hearts candidly to your Mistress, and she will know how to console and enlighten you. Prayer united with labor will do the rest.

If you are not careful to communicate your fears in the Holy Tribunal of Penance, or into the heart of your spiritual mother, you run the grave risk of falling into doubts or--may God preserve you from this--of losing your vocation.

Woe to you if you listen to those lying voices which repeat to your heart such foolish, such unreasonable fears! Passing from one fear to another you will finally arrive to the point where you will approach Holy Communion with repugnance, or omit it entirely, and then you will finish by descending the ladder, which will remove you never further--and probably inexorably--from your goal.

May this never happen to you, oh Daughter of St. Mary, but strengthened in faith, in hope and in charity, mistrusting yourself, confiding in our Lord, you

will resist fearlessly in the moment of trial.

When the angry tempest and the rolling billows threaten to submerge his ship, the pilot remains faithfully in his place, raises his mind and heart to the Master of Sea and Ship, his hand on the helm and his eye on the course, disposed to perish with his ship rather than be unfaithful to his duty.

See the poor pilot, victorious, at port, storm-beaten, but not overcome, because with him was God, his hope and his strength. Abandon yourself into the hands of God, imitating the example of Jesus, Mary and the Saints, and also the example of your Sisters, and invoking the help of those who have gone before you to Paradise, you too will issue forth victorious from the difficult trial.

If, in this anxious state of mind, the Superiors add to that by giving you another office, thank God and accept the office as a reward and a caress which the Bridegroom of your soul sends you to lighten your burden, and prepare you for heavier and more intensive labor in the future.

If the Novitiate seems to you a desert, because in it you find it difficult to open your hearts to your Superiors, obliged to live with companions towards whom you not only feel no attraction, but almost a certain sense of repulsion, there is nothing else to do but to renew your sentiments of faith in God, and prefer meditation to human conversations, which leave you dry and suffering.

It may so happen that your quiet is disturbed by letters or visits from your parents. Fight against these assaults, because your nest, which Our Lord has prepared for you in the Community, might be taken from you, and what would become of you if you should return to the world and its dangers?

Reassure your parents and tell them not to worry on your account, telling them that you do not forget them, and that you pray for them; in fact, that all the Community prays for their health and the prosperity of their families, and they will without doubt be comforted.

Certainly they will feel your absence; this is inevitable, but you persuade them that you feel this sorrow too, but yet you have learned to dominate and overcome

it in view of the reward which Our Lord is preparing for them and for you in heaven.

Remember the words of St. Francis Assisi: "So great is the joy which awaits me that suffering is my delight."

Your parents, with the grace of God, will be consoled by your words; but should they not listen to reason, be resigned, redouble your prayers for them, and God will give you the grace to pacify them.

Mistrust yourself, confide in God, resist temptations in the moment of trial; these will be infallible arms which will obtain victory for you and will gain for you that spirit of contemplation which will make you see God and find God in all your work, in all your difficulties, in every suffering and in every moment of your life.

Raise up your heart and your mind! The Bridegroom has prepared his nest for you! Do all you can to be worthy of finding shelter there forever.

The Dowry

Parents are obliged to work to maintain their children, and when they are grown up and choose a state in life, they are in duty bound to give them a dowry proportionate to their condition. This dowry may consist in the necessary wardrobe only, or it may include a substantial sum of money.

Thus, in Canon Law it is decreed that every church and every work of charity must establish a dowry in order to support itself, because it is easier to start a church or a charitable service than it is to maintain it.

In this manner our Divine Savior, teaching us to live in that fraternal charity which lives on Providence, wished that one of the Apostles should hold the purse, and distribute to each of the brethren the necessary amount to live.

One who aspires to Priesthood may not receive the higher Orders if first he is not assured of a source which will provide for his needs in case of incapacity or illness. Every girl who goes to her husband receives a small or large dowry, according to the wealth of the family.

The girl who becomes a Religious so as not to expose herself to living as a burden to others must do the same, which is not only contrary to the laws of charitable behavior, but it is also unjust.

In our Congregation the demands are very small, and it is left to the discretion of the one entering to establish the sum to bring with her.

It may happen that a girl of good spirit should be so poor that she could not bring any sum, and then, if she be capable of teaching, or is strong enough and willing to assume the heavy work of the Institute, it is better to be satisfied with that small sum, be it ever so little, that she has to give.

The dowry, guarded jealously by the Congregation, is given back entirely to that girl who for any reason whatever must leave the Community; but, of course, without the interest, which, along with her wardrobe, will have been used up during her stay in the Congregation.

It is well to repeat in order to avoid any misunderstanding: the daughter who leaves the Congregation will bring back to her family her dowry without interest,

and that clothing which has not been used. If one thinks well, they will see that this is really too generous, for in two years of novitiate the aspirant has cost the house much more than the entire dowry.

CHAPTER XI

The Religious Vows

Fortunate is that soul chosen by the merciful God to taste the sweetness of divine love!

Jesus proclaimed on the mountain, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the clean of heart, those who hunger and thirst to imitate the virtues taught and practiced by the Divine Master."

But the Sermon on the Mount is listened to and followed by few, and few are the fortunate ones who are called to understand its inmost meaning.

You, Daughters of Providence, are among those few. For you the voice of the Nazarene has made itself heard persuasively and convincingly. It has come down to rouse you from your lethargy, to raise you up to Him, and to invite you to

become one of the number of those noble and generous souls who follow Jesus to Calvary, to the death of the cross.

Bow your head, grateful and reverent before such a precious privilege, and promise the Spouse of chaste souls to follow willingly not only the law proclaimed on Sinai and written in indelible characters in your souls, but even the evangelical counsels; and be sure that Our Lord will always protect you with His grace, and consider you as his dear daughter of predilection until the eternal joy of heaven.

Receive the gift of the call of God with gratitude, preserve it with fidelity, and give in exchange a confident love and a salutary fear.

So the total abandonment to that God Who loved you so much that He wished to make you His own forever must not be unaccompanied by a fear of yourself, of your correspondence to His grace, of fidelity in the fulfillment of your general and particular duties. In short, knowing and feeling that all the good things you have come from God, you must remember the saying of the Apostle: --- I am nothing and good for nothing. You have

recourse to the Blessed Mother for help and for comfort; She will increase your faith and will give you the grace to remain faithful to the promises you made.

With the help of the Immaculate Virgin, of your Saints and your Guardian Angel, you will overcome all the difficulties of the Novitiate, and the same fear with which you will be assailed, will be beneficial to you.

When you look upon your religious habit, when you approach the Holy Table, when you come across some serious difficulty in the exercise of the works of mercy, when you feel unequal to your elevated mission, do not permit yourself to be cast down by fear. In those moments of temptation and trial, hold tight to the arm of the Mother of God and our Mother and, with Her help, call on Jesus to make you always His. She, if constantly invoked, will obtain grace for you.

Jesus is a jealous lover of His chaste Brides. Never let there be a doubt as to His full possession of your soul by admitting even one affection contrary to His most pure love, and then He will help you and He Himself will be your defense.

If you wish to protect your soul, as you should, you must watch jealously over your body, in which Jesus comes in the Blessed Sacrament to repose so often. And never forget that even the body, if it has obeyed the laws of God, is destined to a glorious immortality. Oh, to be able to merit to rise up on the last day, and in body and soul fly to eternal happiness, no care will be too much, nor any suffering too heavy! Grant, O Jesus, that we may all merit one day to ascend to You, and with You be happy for all eternity.

The world, always condescending to the enemies of Christ, is instead most exacting with those who follow the Nazarene. You must, therefore, not be surprised if He demands so much of you.

Like Jesus, you will be made a sign of contradiction, perhaps even of scorn; but blessed are you if you know how to support contempt and disdain for His love! To do good to those who mistreat you, and to gain souls for God is one and the same thing. Enrolled in the army of the followers of the crucified, oh Daughters of St. Mary, fight with prayer and works the battle against her enemies. If it is given you to convert only one soul, you

may rest assured that you have saved your own. What shall it be then if you save a multitude?

A splendid means of exercising the meritorious apostolate of helpers of Jesus is that of going forward with good example and with faithful observance of the Rule. If you suffer persecutions and are calumniated or ridiculed, do not lose heart, but go ahead, secure and confident in the charity of Christ.

Too often a bad demeanor and the bad example of a person consecrated to God gives serious scandal, and causes slander on the part of ill-disposed souls. As for you, take care to never give reason to the wicked to blaspheme the holy name of God.

Are you frightened at the difficulties on the way? Lean entirely with heart and will on that God Who has called you, and faithful to the vocation received, confide in Him and your trust will never be confounded. He is and will be your Bridegroom. He will nourish you with the bread of the strong, He will rear you to struggle, and He will make you share in His cross on earth, but only to make you participate in His joy in Heaven.

CHAPTER XII

The Vow of Poverty

Your parents have always been lovingly occupied with you, they have had you baptized, and then according to their condition and their wealth, have endeavored to accumulate a sum to assure your future. And when they were assured that your vocation called you to serve God, those good people gave you what they could, so that after entering these sacred walls, under the protection of our Holy Mother of Providence, you would consecrate yourself entirely to the service of God in His poor.

Great, therefore, should be your gratitude towards those who, after the gift of life itself, have given you the next greatest gift, that of facilitating your entrance into the Congregation; much greater should be your gratitude to Jesus, who, overlooking your nothingness

and unworthiness, has opened His Divine Arms to receive you and number you among the souls consecrated to Him.

Just think -- that small sum given by you or for you to the Congregation frees you from every preoccupation for your care for all your life, which may be long, and never cease to thank the Blessed Mother and your Guardian Angel, who, leading you by the hand, have conducted you to the threshold of Paradise.

Yours is an enviable position, because besides assuring you of your necessities for all your life, it gives you the great merit of renouncing all goods for love of God; a greater merit that quickens spiritual conversations, and in contemplation of divine attributes.

When we possess nothing as our own we become more strictly united to the Congregation and to the Sisters who have like us renounced all, and we are better disposed to put up with the defects of others and to give and take example of edification. Free as you are of every possession, and therefore of every earthly care, you will give less thought to pettiness and discontent.

The world says that a person without money is as though dead. Our Lord on the contrary says: "To him who has given all for love of Me I will give Myself; to him who gives Me his heart, I will give Mine; to him who will have given up all his belongings to abandon himself to My ever present Providence, I will give the necessities of life. Think of Me, oh souls detached from the world and its vanities, and I will think of you."

This language will be sweet to your soul, and will make you feel a truly super-human joy, knowing yourself to be a devoted and loving Daughter of Divine Providence, from which the Congregation to which you have consecrated yourself takes its name and its strength.

Work with a holy abandonment, pray with the greatest confidence and faith, and God will come to your aid. If you know how to invoke Him always and live constantly in His presence, the enemy may surprise you, but he will not overcome you.

What has been said will aid in opening your soul to the hidden meaning of the words of Christ: "Blessed are the poor in

spirit because theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

Do you want to go to Paradise? The door with which to enter it is Christian poverty, accepted, desired, and loved as a gift from God. Love poverty: it is the key to heaven.

It is necessary to fathom the depths of the words: *Poor in spirit*, to make your poverty more meritorious. These words signify, in the first place, the duty of living detached from riches, not to long for them, but rather to despise them. Poor in fact and poor in spirit were St. Benedict Labre, St. Francis Assisi, and many other modern and ancient saints.

St. Philip Neri went so far as to raise up a man from the dead who had left him heir to all of his possessions in order to urge him to will them to someone else.

There is another mystical meaning even more elevated, and it is that by which some Saints wished to appear poor in spirit, or rather lacking in intelligence, incapable of office, through a desire of being disdained and maltreated in order to resemble their Divine Master.

Nor should this heroic virtue be considered a pious pretense. By the main force of virtue, those who exercised it, keeping before their eyes their defects, ended by persuading themselves that they were really contemptible and worthless. They then wished to convince their neighbor of this, and thus amassed the richest merit before God.

In truth, what have we to boast of, if all the good we have comes from God, and if we are forced to recognize that of ourselves we are but a heap of misery and sin? And if we really believe ourselves such, why do we not want to be rated at our true value?

It is difficult to raise ourselves up to such a high degree of poverty of spirit as did so many Saints, nevertheless let us pray and hope that among the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, more than one will arrive at such a point.

St. Alphonsus of Liguori says opportunely that a religious may be called really a religious when, as St. Peter, she has generously left all her little things to follow Jesus, forsaken all desire of possession, and is satisfied to

find herself in the place God wills her to be.

And if, besides being satisfied with your state of poverty, you detach yourself from every superfluity, keeping only things necessary to life, you may feel sure that you have gone a good part of the way which leads to perfection.

But to arrive at that height it is necessary to imitate those good souls, who in health or in sickness, finding themselves destitute of the very necessities, do not lament, but rather consider their absolute poverty as a gift from their Heavenly Spouse, Who wants then to participate in his sufferings, in his abandonment in the garden, in his martyrdom on Calvary.

Many of your Sisters laid down their lives as pioneers of new foundations, without means, without help, or afflicted by long and painful illnesses, as you will read in the life of Sister Dina Bosatta and in the short biographies of the other Sisters, and we trust they reached a high degree of perfection in the grateful acceptance of pain in all its forms, and even by the desire of ever greater crosses.

We can assuredly believe that these Sisters, who eagerly sought to suffer with Jesus, have reached their goal.

They chose for themselves the poorest food, the hardest bed, the least healthful room, the most difficult and least appreciated chores, and everywhere the last place. This insatiable hunger for poverty and privations, this thirst for virtue, made them loathe to take the necessary nourishment and indispensable repose, which they accepted only for the merit of obedience.

Now of such Religious, greater care should be taken than of the others, lest they become victims of their zeal. The watchful Superior will know how, with motherly love, to moderate that zeal, which tends to become excessive, and will compel her subjects by holy obedience to take all that is necessary to preserve life for the glory of God and for the service of souls. In the Superiors, heart and mind must harmonize so that the virtue and health of their dependent Sisters may not be exposed to danger.

Therefore the following observations must be held in high regard:

In the existing houses where nothing is lacking of necessities for soul and body, the Sisters will be permitted to ascend little by little, the difficult steps of which we have spoken above.

In the houses, on the contrary, which are as yet undeveloped, it is not only permissible but advisable for the Superior to keep a small sum in reserve to meet any urgent needs which may arise. In any case, however, the Holy Rule, the Superior General and your Confessor can give you a sure rule in your doubts. God bless you and make you Saints!

It is, however, necessary to remember that virtue lies chiefly in the mind and in the heart. Hence we must shun the blunder of those religious who surrender themselves to the merely material observance with half-hearted regrets and who will not remember that it is of far greater value to adapt oneself to the will of one's Superiors than to fast ever so much.

Love poverty, love the cross, embrace penance, but always, always remain obedient and see in your Superiors the will of God Himself.

Animated with these sentiments, embrace evangelical poverty with enthusiasm, be ready to ascend the long and difficult ladder of perfection faithfully, fulfilling your duties, and accepting the offices, the house and the place to which you will be assigned.

Ascend the ladder of perfection with an upright and willing spirit, and the Lord and the Holy Virgin, from whom you have never severed yourself, will take you by the hand on the last day to lead you to the blessed throne in heaven.

Another reason which induces us to make this exhortation is the following. "And recall the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he said to his apostles, 'I will give you the power to cast out devils, and to speak with new tongues; and I will give you a knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall ask in my name, I will give it you. And this I say to you, that you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven, if you have not repented of your sins'."

My dear children, the kingdom of heaven is not given to us, who are drunkards and sinners. "For example, if you should say to ten men, 'Go into the harvest field, and gather the fruit which is ripe,' those ten men, if they were sinners, might say, 'We know not what is the kingdom of heaven; and we are not worthy to be partakers of it.' But you, children, who have been converted, who have repented of your sins, and who have renounced the world, you will say, 'Lord, we are worthy to be partakers of it.'"

CHAPTER XIII

The Vow of Chastity

The word chastity is a generic word which indicates the different degrees of the angelic virtue of purity.

It can, however, be divided into three classes.

Those souls who have never failed grievously against Holy purity belong to the first degree.

Now to commit a mortal sin, everyone knows that it is necessary that the matter be serious, and, although it is recognized as such, one still wants to commit it in full conscience and with premeditation. In this case, it is easy to understand, one should weep tears of blood for the sinful fall, and implore pardon from God without ceasing.

Fortunately this case is not frequent among those who aspire to our Congregation, who usually have led a devout life from childhood, and at about fifteen or so, ¹ felt that they were called to the Religious life. Now this call ordinarily coincides with the knowledge which generates a desire of giving oneself immediately and entirely to God in order to avoid such dangers. The poor child then struggles against herself, against her relatives, perhaps against her Confessor, until, bleeding but victorious from the struggle, she passes over the threshold of the convent where finally she finds herself in safety.

It is useless for her to lose herself in conjectures, as to whether or not she has preserved unstained her baptismal innocence, or whether she will ever stain it.

Leave to God such investigations. He alone knows our true state, and He does not want us to penetrate too deeply into it.

On the other hand, should an angel from Heaven come and tell me that I am, like him, pure and holy, I should run the risk of losing in an act of pride all the

merit acquired in long years; vice versa, should he tell me that I am in sin, I would lose all my courage and stray from the path of virtue. That is why God leaves us in total uncertainty. Let us thank Him.

Let us keep ever before our eyes the sin of Lucifer, which changed him from an angel of light into an angel of darkness, and the sin of our first parents, who with a single vain thought provoked the chastisements of God through which the entire human race was punished.

If, therefore, Eve seduced to sin the person who was given her as a companion, let the religious be careful, after such a terrible example, never to become the cause of scandal or of sin to anyone.

Let holy humility be for you all the armor of defense and preserve you from every fall. If, to your misfortune, the lily of your virginity has been spotted with even one single mortal sin, weep bitterly, because that lily will never bloom again. Penance only can make you a friend of God again.

An innocent soul forms the delight of the Lamb without spot and must be treated

with care as one treats precious and delicate things.

The soul, which is lifted out of mortal sin and turns to God with penance, will become again the object of the delight of the Divine Bridegroom if, like Magdalen, knowing her sin, she repents bitterly and makes reparation to His merciful Heart.

There are also other women, who like St. Chantal, lived in the married state, and on being deprived of the husband given them by God, desire to leave the world to vow themselves entirely to God. These, too, may make their vow of chastity, and enter into the Congregation, to throw themselves into the arms of the Lord Who deigns to receive them--even late--into His service.

St. Francis de Sales was in fact thinking of this very state of widowhood when he established the Sisters of the Visitation; but because the time was not ripe, it was not granted the Saint that the order founded by him should follow the way traced out by him, and his Nuns had to subject themselves to the Rule of Inclosure, which did not correspond to the aim which he had in mind.

Our Congregation, inspired by the very spirit of St. Francis de Sales, who wanted to let forth in the world--or, I should say, among the misery of the world--a purifying breeze, now sends you, oh Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, to perform this office of redemption among the poor, the orphans, the sick, the severely mentally handicapped, and among every type of person in need of aid.

It is understood therefore that among our ranks may be enrolled to take the vow of chastity: first, those girls who have never stained their virginal purity; second, those who have stained it once or oftener, but have purified themselves with sincere repentance and a love to make themselves always purer by works of penance; third, the others who, having consecrated themselves first to a husband and a family, now intend to sanctify their widowhood. We can affirm that all those who aspire sincerely to the religious profession will all wear the Habit with dignity.

The Bride of Christ must avoid permitting in her mind and in her heart any indiscreet or impure thought as she would

refuse to admit into her house mad dogs and unclean animals.

Someone will object; it often happens even against one's will, that immodest images and impulses pass through the mind and heart of the Sister. And even if they should? Even in front of the sun pass shadows and filthy objects, and yet the sun is not contaminated. Thus, the evil temptations will pass without leaving any traces in the virgins of the Lord who have deplored those temptations, unless that trace be a sizable increase of merit.

The lily of the field stands upright and sends forth its fragrance even when the wind blows; and the virgin will become dearer to God when she has rejected and overcome the whirlwind which the devil has excited within her to make her unfaithful.

You have seen the mimosa, commonly called the sensitive plant. It resents the slightest touch and withdraws within itself, to teach you never to permit that your body be contaminated by profane contacts. If you had a precious crystal would you permit anyone to touch it with

soiled hands and to handle it with little regard?

There are cases of necessity in which, by the order of the Superiors, you may be submitted to a delicate examination by a doctor. In these cases you will not receive any satisfaction, certainly, but the humiliation, disgust and perhaps pain which you feel during these visits will be for you occasions of greater merit. Obedience and the spirit of union with God will save you from every danger.

It is only too true that sometimes, despite us, a fire burns within us which is almost like a half extinguished volcano and then what shall we do? Let us think of the children of Babylon who came out of the furnace unharmed because even in the midst of the flames they did not cease to praise the Lord.

Let us remember St. Anthony and St. Jerome, who in the desert overcame the devil and his temptations with prayer and penance. Let us remember St. Francis Assisi who threw himself into a thorny bush to extinguish the insults of his rebellious flesh, and he saw from the thorns of that bush come forth roses. Even today that bush flowers, but its

leaves carry even today spots of blood. Let us remember Our Lord in his forty days' fast, and we will find an abundance of grace to put out the passions with which we are threatened.

Jesus taught us by His word and with His example to overcome the devil with prayer and fasting. Let us imitate Him, and like Him, we will suffer, but we will triumph.

Not rarely the purest souls are those who are tempted the most. St. Paul comforts them by saying that virtue is made perfect in combat in the midst of weakness.

Our Divine Savior is pleased to see His timid spouses become lions to overcome the enemy lion, and He presses them tenderly to His heart, inflamed with love.

And the devil, angered at being overcome by a fearful dove, growls angrily when he sees a weak creature on the way to take the place lost by him, amidst the angels in heaven.

If the devils curse these angels, martyrs of sorrow and desire, men, even those of the world, bow ~~on~~ their heads

before them as they pass, and submissively and secretly entrust themselves to their prayers.

St. Ambrose, in his unsurpassed book on virginity, describes the virgin consecrated to God as a great creature before angels, before man, and even before God, but fear-inspiring and terrifying, and consequently an object of the hatred for the wicked and for the devils.

Meditate on the heroism and the purity of the women of the New Testament, and weeping with love and gratitude thank your Jesus that He has called you to the high dignity of His purest Spouses.

Animated with holy zeal, pray God that He may call many girls to increase the ranks of the virtuous and prudent virgins who, with burning lamps, go to meet their Bridegroom.

If, overcome at the sight of your miseries, you fear to lose your Heavenly Spouse, take courage: if you are unworthy of Him, He will make you worthy imparting His virtues to you; if you are weak, He will give strength. Do you not see, do you not hear Jesus? That does not matter. He is nearer you and more united to

you when you feel His presence the least, because He is pleased sometimes to hide Himself behind the walls, just as a loving mother hides herself to have the joy of hearing the voice of her child affectionately call her.

In the same manner Jesus loves to hear your voice, while in the midst of tears over His loss you call Him and implore Him to come back to you.

If, however, you should become obsessed by fear which makes you grow cold, beware! for this is the work of the devil, because Holy fear of God is never divorced from hope, and is therefore diametrically opposed to despair. The angels and your saintly protectors are ready and desirous of defending you from the assaults of the enemy if you confidently call on their help. Deplore and weep over your past sins, and make amends with a firm resolution and love of suffering to expiate them; then be sure of God's help.

When you are afflicted and do not know how to unveil to your Confessor certain hidden recesses of your heart, invoke the Holy Spirit and He will give you light.

Then, open yourselves freely to the minister of God; declare as certain those things of which you are certain, doubtful those things which are doubtful, temptations those things which seem thus to you, and, if you are sincere in your accusations, sincere in your sorrow, chase all vain fears from you and open your souls to faith.

Be careful, however, to adopt the greatest brevity in your sacramental exposition. Few words, as modestly as you can, and then go on. The Confessor will readily understand, or if he does not and he thinks it necessary, he will ask for more explanations.

Pay no attention to the temptations which come to you after Confession, that you have not explained well, or that you have not told all. You have certainly said all there is to say if you sincerely told all that you remembered: "I felt so many things within myself and just now they escaped my memory." Much better, because, by leaving the Sacrament of Reconciliation without being entirely satisfied, you are more greatly humiliated, and humiliation is a regenerating balsam for the soul which aspires to perfection.

The difficult subject of religious chastity is vast and yet very dear and important, and so we will add to this other suggestions which will be the subject of another article.

In the meanwhile humble yourself before God and beg Him to take care of the purity of your soul and also that of your body.

CHAPTER XIV

Virtues and Defects in the Practice of Chastity

Cassian imagined a ladder of seven steps and on it he saw chaste souls in their different degrees.

According to his vision, on the first step were the virgins in the act of protesting against any temptation or danger, ready to die rather than sin, distrusting themselves; confident, however, and abandoned in God.

On the second were sitting those generous souls who, already practiced in virtue, send from them at the first appearance the images which darken the mind. In the light of God they recognize such temptations for what they are and cry out: *Get behind me Satan!*

On the third step are the souls assailed unexpectedly by the temptations of sin, but quick to defend themselves against them, like the wary and courageous warriors who never lose their self-composure and succeed in turning the ambush of the enemy into his defeat.

Those prudent souls go up to the fourth step who, knowing themselves to be surrounded by the treacherous world, listen and are on the defensive like those who, finding themselves in an unhealthy place, take every precaution not to be bit by the mosquitoes, nor poisoned by the infected waters.

On the fifth step stand sentry those souls on whose shoulders weigh difficult and heavy enterprises, intent on guiding themselves according to the will of God, to Whom they listen with humility and purity of intention and follow faithfully, because they desire in all and above all the glory of God and the good of souls.

On the sixth step are those souls who, by dint of struggle and sacrifice, have acquired a certain fortitude, recognizing and repelling every troublesome thought at its first appearance even to the point

of ignoring and overcoming the very illusions of dreams.

At the top of the ladder, on the seventh step, are enthroned the souls which have triumphed over the devil and over his enticements by constantly rebuking him; those which have been able to keep their senses in check by the spirit.

Who of us will not long to arrive at this highest degree of perfection, in which the flesh will be servant and slave, and the spirit, invigorated with faith, will be the only master?

Considering the innocent virgins at the bottom of the noble ladder, we understand that, inexperienced as they are in the mysteries of life, they will easily let themselves get caught in the snare if they do not use every precaution in order not to fall.

These unfortunates who, having drunk once from the cup of pleasure, but who had the great fortune to detach themselves, horrified should always fear the invasion of the evil one, who can assault them under deceitful appearances, and they should arm themselves against every diabolical surprise.

St. Francis Xavier wrote from far away India to St. Ignatius: "Send me missionaries who have had experience with the world, and who for that reason know its deceits, and detest them, because I believe that they, better than the inexperienced, will know how to overcome the battles of their senses and will know how to gain the souls of these poor pagans."

In the difficulties you may encounter on the way, the observations which I am about to make will help you, and I beg you to ponder over them attentively.

- a) If you do not have a precise command from your Superiors, remember that you may never venture upon works of charity in which your virtue will be put to the test. As far as you are concerned, believe one who has only your good at heart, you never will have sufficient distrust of yourself and of your strength.
- b) If instead, the prudent Superior should believe it best before giving her command to ask you if you feel strong enough to assume that delicate office and leaves to you the full decision as to whether

you will accept it or not, answer sincerely, with liberty of spirit according to what your conscience suggests. Be careful, however, not to expose yourself more than necessary, nor with too great ease or levity; that would be presumption. At the same time do not refuse without necessity, for this would be weakness or cowardice.

c) You must, however, know and keep it well in mind that the Rule does not oblige you to assume offices in which your souls may be in danger. On the contrary, the Rule explicitly obliges you to withdraw from those offices in which your virtue is endangered and there is good ground to fear losing it.

Your first duty in the Congregation is that of saving yourself, and the works confided to your activity, piety and prudence must serve as a means to arrive at sanctity. So that, when on the contrary you should be put in danger of losing God to save others, you are obliged to renounce all, remembering that Jesus has told you and repeats every day and every hour: Save yourself.

Taking advantage then of this, your right, you must not give rise to any disturbances, because by retreating from danger, you are behaving according to truth, charity and justice.

You will make giant strides in virtue if you persistently constrain yourself to become detached from self, from your Sisters, from the House, from all that is in the world and of the world. With this detachment you will succeed in raising yourself with the angels up to heaven. The more your heart is attached to the things of heaven the more you will have loosed the bonds which bind you to earth. You will rise up with the virgins and the martyrs, with the Immaculate One, your mother and queen, to the feet of the Holy Trinity, and your delight will be to meditate on the infinite mercy of the eternal Father Who created you, of the Eternal Son Who redeemed you, and of the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies you and gives you good thoughts.

If you wish to fly up high to where the Blessed Mother wants you and waits for you, be on your guard against losing time in gossiping and useless words, especially if they are harmful to charity.

It is unfortunate to see religious wasting time, which is our passport to eternity, in useless chattering, when there is not the faintest reason of real charity to justify it.

It would be even worse if a religious were to speak frivolously, looking down with feigned affection on a companion, or flattering her with praises, or taking pleasure in praises addressed to herself.

Think of the means with which the traitor lures into sinfulness an innocent soul, and be fearful lest the serpent of vanity should impose himself and take possession of you, and having made of you his prey, prompt you to greater faults.

It is not rare to find religious who, besides praising their sisters perhaps without reason, encourage them indirectly in their defects, assuring them that they are not defects, or else they are defects of little or no account, where they are really a disturbance to the community and set bad example to beginners. Here is where the demon of jealousy is born.

For goodness sake, watch out for this fault which might assume grave importance and make you an enemy of God! If you

permit this poisonous serpent to take you by the hand, rather than being useful to the Community, you will cause harm to it, and you will be a scandal to世俗s. They will say, and with reason, religious differ from the women in the world only in their clothing; how could we deny them?

An excessive attachment to a companion, wishing her in the same office with you, is always a blameworthy thing, and much more if this attachment be fostered because you find in that Sister a support for your habits, maybe for your defects and caprices. Be careful if you do not want to slip into such imperfections, which in their own good time will smooth the way to the violation of your vows and violation also of the holy law of God.

Examine yourself in the light of faith, as to whether or not you keep yourself free from the above faults, and if you are, be thankful to God Who has deigned to preserve you from the sorrowful state of those foolish virgins, who were found without oil in their lamps when their Bridegroom called them.

Like the prudent virgins watch, under the light of faith, with the flame of

charity to go to meet the Bridegroom as soon as you hear His voice. Safeguard your lamp from every worldly breeze so that its light may not be extinguished; always have oil ready to renew the flame, and when your Bridegroom is about to arrive, go to meet Him and begin the feast which will have no end.

The principal means to arrive at this beatific and eternal vision is prayer united with mortification: it will be your strength too, and will give you the victory over the evil one, a complete victory over the attacks of the flesh and of the passions.

Imitate the Immaculate Virgin, most pure crystal, which neither a laborious and troubled life, nor the powers of all hell could dim. Beg her help in the terrible and insidious attacks of the passions, when distasteful and unclean thoughts come upon you, and you will receive strong and abundant help to conquer all. Now, the fear of having consented to the ugly phantoms which come before your mind should not disturb you, when at their appearance you have put out your arms to cling to Mary, that purest fount of all purity.

Be devoted, willingly devoted to the Immaculate Virgin and to frequent Holy Communion. That divine contact will purify you, will give you the strength to overcome concupiscence, and if the impure phantoms return to disturb you, they will become a means of purification for your soul, on account of the sorrow which they cause you and on account of the salutary fright which you will feel.

Follow up your vocal prayer with mental prayer, that is to say with a spirit of union with God, as if you truly saw Him near you, as near as the Crucifix which rests on your breasts, and live secure against the temptations of the world and of the flesh combined.

Dedicate yourselves with the greatest effort to charitable works, or to the manual work which was given to you by your vow of obedience, and, besides overcoming the evil thoughts that might overtake you in your leisure, in the evening, during your Examination of Conscience, you will realize with joy that you have lost not even a moment of the time that the Lord has given you to purchase, with great effort, Paradise.

With tranquil conscience you will repose your tired body in order to be able to begin the work and the battles of the following day. Do not fear; when the evil one sees that he cannot make you fall with his insidious weapons, he will stop his attacks or at any rate you will be able to laugh at him on the last day.

Numerous virgins consecrated to God take the place of angels on the earth, doing good and spreading virtue which urges others on to good, and to the desire of a blessed eternity. You who are among that number, thank God without ceasing, for having enrolled you in His ranks, and made you His Brides.

CHAPTER XV

The Vow of Obedience

Obedience, as a wise, prudent, and loving mother, leads the good Religious by the hand and, passing over a thousand difficulties, brings her triumphantly to the port of salvation.

We read of St. Frances of Rome, that when a child, she saw her angel near to her when she was obedient and she saw him withdraw from her side, scowling, when she yielded to caprice.

Thus, let us imagine, and it is right, that our Angel flees from us when we are disobedient.

A Sister may travel on willingly towards heaven and religious perfection so long as nothing contradicts her, and so long as the sun shines; but when night comes and brings the darkness, she very

easily stumbles and falls. It is well for her if the Superior, as another Raphael, takes her by the hand with Holy Obedience, and leads her securely in the ways of the Lord.

No one is born free, but it is a general rule that man, and especially women live in continual dependence on whoever is over them. The King Himself, the Pope Himself must obey God, the law, and his Confessor.

This continual cry, therefore, of liberty is a real Utopia, while we all live in continual dependence one on the other. The one who eats needs the one who prepares this food, and the one who prepares the food needs someone to give him the means to procure it. This is the same process which underlies all the necessities of life.

How, then, can we have the boldness to say: I am sufficient unto myself? That would be foolishness, that would be a lie. As we are all children of Adam, we need the help of others, in the necessities of the body as well as the far greater needs of the soul.

It is much better to obey than to command.

Ask your wise Superiors regarding this, they who were unable to free themselves from the weight of office neither by petition nor by pleas of incompetence, and only by obedience do they submit to a position so extremely difficult and heavy.

Love, then, all you Daughters of St. Mary to live in obedience, in the assurance that, by being obedient, you will never falter. The ancient proverb says: *The obedient soul will be saved, the disobedient soul will be lost.*

Pray God to give you good Superiors and to increase in them the spirit of the Divine Master. If they are sweet and kind, do not take advantage of them, and if they are austere and hard, thank God, confident that your soul has need of being guided by the crack of the whip; therefore bend under the strong hand and make it your treasure.

Ordinarily God gives to the subjects the Superiors that they deserve, therefore one cannot err in judging the

subjects bad when the one who guides them is full of defects.

Live the life of faith and you will see in your Superiors God from Whom they have received their authority. Doing this, you will give glory to your Heavenly Bridegroom Who loves you as the apple of his eye. Always obey blindly when you are asked to perform good things; what's more, obey when you are in doubt, because you must not think that the one who commands you wants to ask evil things of you.

If it should be possible, however, that you should be commanded to do things which are clearly evil, beg light from your director and be guided by his judgment.

Very rarely will a Superior command you in virtue of Holy Obedience. This will happen only when she will have discovered reluctance in you and when her kind and indulgent words have been useless. Or it might happen that she would have to give solemnity to the command because of the gravity of a special case.

It has never yet happened, and we hope it will never happen in any house of

Providence that a Superior be obliged to take with her two of the older Sisters to give an authoritative command and obtain obedience from her subjects. The Lord deliver us! But in extreme cases recourse will necessarily have to be had to such measures.

Obey with love and then the command will be easier.

Imagine to yourself the Congregation as if it were the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and your mutual relations will be reverent, sweet and full of charity and dignity.

Be careful not to criticize appointments of a Superior: "This one would be better, that one would be better." Keep silence, humble yourselves, and receive in good faith the Superior assigned by God, and whom, after all, you yourself have merited. Respect, sympathy, obedience.

Your obedience should rest on and spring from faith, hope and charity all united, and you will walk confident and secure in the fear of God.

If obedience is hard for you, accept it with resignation. If, however, obedience is such that it threatens to cripple you, remember the camel, who bends to receive the burden, but when he sees that it is greater than his strength, refuses it.

But you must not refuse it, you instead must humbly tell your reasons to the one who commands.

If, however, obeying the command would put your soul in danger, you not only have the right, but also the express duty to clarify the matter in order to save both your duty to obey and your own soul.

It can never be repeated enough: the good of one's soul is always to be preferred to the good of one's neighbor.

Whenever such a fear surprises you, and you lack the courage and the words to explain yourself with your Superior or your Director, remember that your sanctification is at stake--maybe your salvation--then reveal candidly and quickly what weighs upon you and the Madonna will help you without fail.

If, then, the danger is doubtful, resign yourself to the decision of your Superior, ready to inform her if the danger should be verified.

It may happen that the directives of the Confessor might clash with that of the Superiors. In this case, it is necessary to reflect that the Confessor judges from the internal conditions of the conscience, but has no authority to meddle with the external discipline of the Congregation. With this rule in mind, every doubt will be dissipated. In extreme cases, however, it will be good to have recourse to the highest Superiors.

But for the love of Heaven, do not be too ready to take this means. Rather examine whether the spring which spurs you to action has not its origin in caprice, vanity or ambition, and in this case correct yourself.

Remember the rule which Jesus Christ gives: "Have an understanding directly with your Superiors; if this is not enough, call in two witnesses; if this is not enough, then you can have recourse to the Church, that is to Supreme Authority."

The Holy Father, the Bishop, the Superiors of the House are all your Superiors, and you own them full and prompt obedience. The Superiors have never the right, however, to know the secrets of your conscience, and should they endeavor to find them out, you must denounce them. If, however, these secrets are revealed spontaneously, there is no evil at all, but it is well, however, to use great prudence.

The Superiors may not command austerities over and above the Rule, unless they have positive faculties. The practice of heroic virtue must be spontaneous and cannot be commanded.

The Superior may suspend the private vows of the Sisters when they put the Community in danger. She cannot, however, order them to do things beneath the Rule, that is, useless or vain things, unless they are used as an exercise in mortification.

In some cases the Religious who is wanting in obedience may commit a mortal sin, and the cases are as follows:

- 1) when there is question of a serious matter, commanded in virtue of *Holy Obedience*;
- 2) when she refuses to obey manifesting formal contempt of authority;
- 3) when by the disobedience serious scandal be given to the Sisters or to secular persons, or a serious inconvenience result to the Community or to others.

Heaven deliver every Daughter of St. Mary of Providence from such a disgrace, and rather let us dispose ourselves to consider the great good which all derive from the faithful and loving observance of *Holy Obedience*, which should be so precious to all.

CHAPTER XVI

Obedience--Source of Virtue

Obedience is a supreme virtue. It gives to those who practice it a complete victory over their defects, vices, and especially over self-love which is our greatest and most insistent enemy, the first to be born, the last to die.

Obedience, daughter of faith, hope and charity generates all the capital and minor virtues, and gives the grace to help anyone who approaches it. Obedience means a full and loving submission of all one's faculties to God and those who represent God.

Rightly, St. Thomas assures us that the religious person who fulfills his vow exactly, and is therefore a child of obedience, may be called a Saint. Who ever has the good fortune to live and die perfectly resigned to the will of God

will fly rapidly to Paradise without touching Purgatory.

Now, obedience consists in nothing but making ones own food and drink--as Jesus says--the will of His Eternal Father, Who is also ours.

Oh! Let us hunger and thirst after this divine food if we wish to be numbered among those whom Jesus proclaimed BLESSED!

Some Religious, little understanding the sublime and hidden spirit of obedience, obey rather from obligation than from love. Their mind does not try to penetrate the intimate meaning of that virtue, and their heart does not love it because it does not know it. These, alas, not knowing and not loving Religious obedience, cannot enter into the profound and practical spirit of the Congregation which is nourished by it.

These Religious may be discreetly good, but certainly they could be better. In them a thousand little defects peep out which Obedience alone would have the strength to eradicate.

Other Religious obey because they are obliged to, even with a pure intention of pleasing God, but at the same time murmuring within themselves, "I obey because I know it is my duty, but if I were Superior I would do this or that very differently." Not even those who act in this manner can consider themselves of one mind with those who command. From this spiritual separation is born, in the depth of the soul, a certain disgust from which arises melancholy, the greatest enemy of perfection and destroyer of that peace which should reign where many Sisters are united in the service of their Bridegroom.

By the grace of God, Sisters in general are much better than those I previously indicated and consider obedience under a different light. They unite their will and their judgment to that of their Superiors in such a manner that desiring, what the Superiors desire, they obey without effort, in fact with joy. They remember that Scriptural saying, "He who hears you, hears Me," and in the command received they hear the command of God Himself.

No matter how difficult and oppressive obedience is, these souls feel a great

sweetness in practicing it. For them obedience is charity and therefore real perfection.

Holy souls know each other, and with all their hearts and with the bonds of the deepest friendship they love each other. The greatest happiness is that of two or more persons engaged in helping each other in the difficult affair of their sanctification. Now in the Congregation, there should exist a holy desire to realize this exalted purpose.

The voice of obedience, as sweet in the heart of a pious Religious as the longed-for voice of a dear mother, gives to the eyes a flash of heavenly light, to the soul a pulsation of love, to the will, wings, and joy even in struggle and sacrifice. This consolation might seem to her a human thing; but no, it is instead the grace of God.

The pious Religious runs happily and lightly to the most difficult obedience; she willingly employs therein all her powers, because she knows they have all come from Him Whom she loves to serve. She becomes ingenious in doing with the utmost perfection all of her duties, all of her discourses, desiring to fulfill

all and always the dear will of God, not thinking at all about the reason of the command, but rather of the authority of the one who commands.

The action and the obedience of such a religious make her like to the angels.

Wish to be so many angels and yours will be a paradise on earth, living in the midst of a group of prudent virgins who vie with one another in obeying promptly and blindly to the Holy Will of the Lord.

Take note that besides being a virtue, obedience is a vow for you, and as such unites to the preventive surrender on your part all the power of grace on the part of God.

Remember that obedience must be both simple and enlightened if the works commanded are to succeed well for the honor and glory of God, to Whom you have made homage of yourself and your life.

When the Religious has renewed and preserved the purity of her intention, she will arrive at the perfection to which she aspires, and the angels and men admiring will praise God.

The Lord usually rewards these predilect creatures, and for their good works withholds the thunderbolt of divine justice, and changes it into a copious rain of graces. If the good Lord admits us one day into His Paradise we will see how many souls were saved because of the virtue of other holily obedient souls.

Think of the quantity of souls which would have plunged into hell if no prayer of reparation had been said for them; and then, judge the conduct of those who detest the obedience of the convent and consider it barbaric.

Liberalism, and the sects with which our society is scourged, boast of obedience to their caprices, and while they want to be obedient without question, they deny us the joy of uniting to celebrate the glory of God and of sacrificing ourselves for love of our neighbor.

Let us protest against the assaults of the enemy, and let us demand in a loud voice the full liberty to do good, to practice charity, to practice Holy Obedience.

No, she who obeys does not lower herself or degrade herself at all before her

Superiors, because they represent the truth of God, and He commands us to respect and to obey those who command us in His name.

Superiors, because they represent the truth of God, and He commands us to respect and to obey those who command us in His name.

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CHAPTER XVII

The Confessor

The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, as all sisters in general, have by Pontifical Decree particular Confessors, as if to show the privilege accorded by God and His Vicar on earth the Roman Pontiff, who delegates the Bishop to name Confessors to the different monasteries.

The Superior, in accord with the superior council, may expose to the Bishop her desire regarding the opportunities of the choice, but accepts humbly the Confessor that is assigned to her.

The Confessor remains in office three years and then is changed or confirmed; but such confirmation may not take place without the request of the Sisters, by majority of votes, presented to the Bishop, and he may at his pleasure grant or refuse such confirmation.

Usually the Bishop assigns to Religious Communities an *Ordinary Confessor*, an *Extraordinary Confessor*, and a *Supplementary Confessor*.

It is immediately understood that the ordinary Confessor is that of every day or every week, according to need.

The extraordinary will act only occasionally during the year, as for instance, on Ember Days or in special circumstances.

The *Supplementary* as the name implies, takes the place of the ordinary or the extraordinary in case of his absence or illness.

The Religious must have for their Confessor the greatest respect as the minister of God, as a minister of charity to their souls, and also as a minister of Sacrifice.

Here St. Francis de Sales observes that it is not only a martyrdom to confess God before men, but also to confess men before God.

These words of the Saint not only teach Confessors to fulfill with seriousness

and sanctify their calling, teaching the penitents to see not the man in the Confessor, but only God, Who vests him with His authority.

Be careful to put to flight all secondary intentions from you to avoid the danger of falling into human thinking--may God deliver us from it!--into excess sensitivity, which is the mournful source of many defects and, not infrequently, of the total loss of souls. Too many examples tell us how mortal falls always come from beginnings which seem of little importance.

Approaching the tribunal of penance, let the penitent be convinced that here man functions as a representative of God, let her rouse in herself sentiments of faith in the efficacy of the Sacrament, and then, however, with fear and faith, open candidly to the Confessor the inner recesses of her soul to be cleansed and to receive pardon with the fullness of grace.

If you desire to receive fruits of peace from the Sacrament, open your heart with simplicity to your Confessor. Do not withhold anything that might give him light to read into your soul, and to

prescribe the efficacious remedies which will make you a Saint. Be doves of purity, and the Lord will give you wings to arrive at Christian Perfection.

For a Confession to be good, it must ordinarily be brief.

If, however, the Religious is in need of special direction or special comforts, she may somewhat prolong her Confession, always, however, as little as possible, and this is for many reasons, but especially because the Sisters who are waiting might become disturbed.

If it should be necessary for the Religious to make a long confession, which should be very seldom, in accord with the Superior, she should arrange a day and an hour when she may confess with greater freedom without forcing her companions to wait.

When the extraordinary Confessor comes, all the Sisters must present themselves in the Confessional. They may, however, with full liberty, either make their confession or only ask for the holy blessing.

It is, however, advisable for the Sisters to open the secrets of their souls to the extraordinary Confessor, and manifest the faults of their conscience to him, even with some detail, for if in corporal illness, one has recourse to consultation, so in the spiritual illness, a sincere and orderly exposition which elicits the enlightened word of another minister of God will prove useful. Let us thank God, Who, seeing our miseries, multiplies His help.

The extraordinary Confessor is given by the Bishop as an aid to the Ordinary who, for whatever reason, is unable to fulfill his office.

But let us not confuse the roles. If it is convenient--perhaps necessary--that the sister be unable to confess to the ordinary Confessor--she may confess herself to the supplementary Confessor, it is not, however, right that anyone do this out of mere whim, because without just motives, it is not permitted to any Sister to change her Confessor.

And I repeat: Avoid as you would a plague every mark or token of sensibility, and do not consider the gifts of mind and heart of the ministers of God,

from the human side, but only a part of their ministry.

Neither is it permissible for you to expect that busy Priests should set aside their studies or the care of souls to spend long periods with you, and give you frequent conferences.

Do not think that you are doing the Confessors a favor to select them for your House. Be persuaded of this: The enjoyment which this gives them is an enjoyment of martyrdom, as we have already said. Think, for example, how difficult is the martyrdom of a poor Priest who has to deal with a religious affected by nervousness, or with scrupulous individuals. With such poor souls, who find themselves in a lake of spiritual sufferings, the charity, the prudence and the patience of the Confessor must be unlimited if he wishes to save them from drowning.

It is also difficult to be Confessor for souls called to high perfection, but of this we will speak elsewhere.

CHAPTER XVIII

Spiritual Direction

Many persons believe spiritual direction useless, while all admit that not a thing or a person moves if there be not a firm hand at the helm.

The child needs the direction of her mother, or of one taking the mother's place. The student depends on the teacher, and the soldier obeys the order of his captain. There is no doubt but that whoever (in whatever circumstance or state he may be) should desire to govern himself and follow his own caprice, would ruin the social and domestic order.

So, while seeking pleasure, riches and power, the worldly man never knows when to say "enough" but strains, wears himself out, and sacrifices himself to arrive at his goal--a worldly goal--we expect, moreover, that religious individ-

uals be content, as they say, with their little corner of heaven, even renouncing all pretenses of climbing too high on the ladder of sanctity.

Everyone can easily see how false and deceptive a similar line of reasoning is.

I don't deny that you are good, and I rejoice with you. But if the followers of darkness, as we have seen, desire to mount ever higher, why should you, who consider yourselves children of light, wish to dally lazily on the edge of the abyss without cultivating in yourself the desire to shake off that indifference in order to soar upward to perfection? In the world they use airplanes to rise as high as possible above human miseries, and you, souls consecrated to God, will you not make every effort to raise yourself up above earthly things, breaking all the threads that bind you to earth? These threads, you know, are the inclinations to sin, are the many defects to which even the just are attached. And, you and I, can we fancy ourselves free, absolutely free, from such error?

No, I be persuaded of bit, as you are Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, and aspire to be her worthy daughters. If

you consider the great grace of having been admitted into the Congregation thinking of your Immaculate Mother and Jesus, your sweetest Bridegroom, you will not be able to live in peace if you do not cherish the hope of making great strides in the way of perfection.

Spur yourself on at the invitation: Be perfect, as Your Heavenly Father is perfect. You should give wings to your feet to hasten in obedience to your divine Master, Who teaches you that sanctity is the way of true wisdom. Let the word of Jesus inflame your heart and your will, and you will receive one day the crown of those who have fought and won.

The invitation of your divine Bridegroom is full of love; but rough is the road, and long and painful the journey, and if you do not find a strong arm to sustain you, an eye which points out to you the road, a hand which lifts you over the difficult steps, how will you ever arrive at the goal?

God, ever good and merciful, will send to you as to Tobias, an Archangel Raphael, if you know how to merit him by constant purity of intention, by humility, by obedience and by prayer.

Your Raphael, your Angel Guardian when you were yet in the world, was the zealous and prudent Confessor who guided you with Christian awareness, and warned you of the dangers of the world, and taking you away from the world, brought you into the safety of the Sanctuary.

Now you must recognize your Raphael in the Confessor of the Community, who, aided by the extraordinary Confessors appointed by the Bishop, will be your sure guide. With faith, open your soul to them, trained to see in them not man but God Himself. And remember this always. If the Confessor is not always worthy of honor as a man, once he has been invested with the ministry of God, He is worthy of all of your loyalty and obedience. For the same reason of faith we recognize the infallibility of the Holy Father when he deliberates *ex cathedra*, that is, in the name of God, no matter how fallible he is in his own right as a human being; in fact, he must, like us, confess his sins to a Confessor.

By the grace of God, in the same manner that the Sovereign Pontiffs are generally worthy of every respect, and many of them have merited to be raised to the altar, so it is with the Confessors whom the

Bishop has appointed for your House and for you. But you must impress this well upon your mind the man invested with the priesthood has nothing to do with the Priest hypostatically united in the Divinity in the administration of the Holy Sacraments, and especially in that of Penance.

Besides the guide which God gives you in your Spiritual Director and in your Superiors, earnestly seek light from your conscience, and strength of will in spiritual books, and in the religious and pious persons of Christian conduct and sound doctrine. Seek, with the proper spirit, the voice of the Lord everywhere and always, and God will not fail to make you hear it. Keep the eye of your mind and of your heart towards heaven, and you will know how to derive edification from association with pious persons, even though they be lay persons, and without culture. For those who faithfully serve Him, God willingly supplies all that is needful, that they may find the proper food which will bring them to the greatest perfection.

But above all, copy the example of some of your Sisters, rich in the special gifts of prayer, of mortification, of

charity. Certainly, they will endeavor to hide their virtues because they love humility and practice it; but they cannot hide their gifts so completely that not a single ray will escape. The violet does not show itself, but rather hides itself, and yet is discovered by its perfume. Once these souls and their holy industry are recognized, avoid all praise, so that they may not be tempted to vainglory; but approaching them as Sister with Sister, ask them to assist you in dispelling your doubts, and you will receive that motivation which will speed your soul on the sure road to perfection. Once bound in holy friendship to these privileged souls, try to occupy yourself in striving with them in the acquisition of virtue, never, however, allowing your weaknesses to be known.

If friendship does not arise between equals, it forces friends to become equal. Now, Christian friendship really means the elevation of two beings toward a pure and holy ideal of reciprocal improvement.

It will certainly happen that you too will be victim of suffering, sometime even of the most overwhelming disappointment. Do not become troubled or

disheartened, oh little souls. Jesus, your Bridegroom, desires only your good, and He knows how to fill your heart and body with humiliations, the source of true humility. He, always knows how to lower your sensibility, to remove any affection for the world, and direct it onward, free from every earthly attachment, to greater perfection.

Don't become frightened, therefore, if the Divine Hand falls heavily upon your head and upon your heart. Your weak heart has need of the divine surgeon to recover health. If you wish to walk safely in the ways of the spirit, you must abandon yourself entirely to the will of God, not through force but rather through love. The ways of your Heavenly Bridegroom are so varied that the human eye knows not how to discern that which is best for it. Therefore, let God do what He wills, for though He be our Master and Judge, He is always our Father, a most tender and merciful Father.

St. Theresa always repeated to those who had recourse to her for advice that, in the way of perfection, the help of experienced masters is most useful. And the same Saint, who was to shine as a star of greatness, earn the title of

doctor, had to bear for many years a painful aridity of spirit, living in the humiliation of that painful uncertainty of being an object of hatred to her God. By means of this trial, Theresa of Jesus made gigantic strides towards the exalted end she had set for herself--and from which she thought herself so far away.

Happy are you, oh young religious, for in in Holy Mother Theresa you have an experienced teacher, a spiritual directress, who has gone before you, and much more often than you has passed through the crucible of sorrow! From her you must first of all imbibe the strength of soul which knows how to steer your course against the tide, that is to stifle all temptations to pride, illusions of every kind, to keep yourself ever pure, fervent and faithful to the Bridegroom you chose from your youth.

Your spiritual Director, it is well to repeat, will ordinarily be your Confessor, and to him you owe the greatest respect and prompt and blind obedience. If, however, in this director you do not feel all the help for which you thirst, humble yourself in your heart and speak of it with God alone.

Avoid that great defect of running from one Confessional to another, which would be unpardonable defect. If you really need to change Confessors, do so, but with great prudence and for a genuine necessity and not an imaginary one.

Some people go around talking of Confessors and Confessions as if they were speaking of ordinary and common actions. This is a very grave defect. This would betray, in the one who acts thus, little or no respect for the person invested with the authority of God, and for the Sacrament itself.

May such defects be far from us! Let us preserve in our hearts the advice and instructions received, and let us venerate in the Confessor the Minister of the Most High, the Father and the Guide of our souls.

Sad to say, imprudent conversations about Confessors and confessions give rise to unpardonable petty gossip and other evils which we must avoid at any cost. Usually what the Confessor says to us is repeated but we do not tell, or else dress up falsely, the accusations which provoked his remarks. But let us pass on. I do not believe that such

irreverent gossiping will ever occur among you. These conversations are not for such as you, but rather for commonplace souls, who do not know and do not seek the ways of God.

Let us endeavor to rise high, as high as we possibly can in perfection; yet may God keep us from the vain presumption of having risen by our own merits. If we should do that, we shall crash to the ground as did Icarus, who tried to fly with waxen wings, and when the hot rays of the sun melted the wax, he was crushed in a terrible fall.

Let us ask God for wings to fly, and if we want to be successful, let us begin with following punctually and faithfully the will of God expressed in the duties of our state. True sanctity rests principally in the fulfillment of these duties, slight and offensive though they may seem to us.

Our Lord--and we must fix this well in mind--does not need us nor our works. No, He does not need any of us. Only because of His great incomprehensible love does He desire in our hearts, the hearts of creatures redeemed by Him in Holy Baptism, those souls sanctified by

washing in His Divine Blood, which was shed during his passion and death on the Cross. If the Lord wants our hearts, we should, with our every faculty consecrate them to Him, fulfilling in all and always His divine will, rather, completely giving our will in His forever.

In this fusion of ourselves in God, we shall find, with the Divine grace, a sure guide who will show us the evil in order to avoid it, and point out the good that we may follow it. And He will point out to us also a source of life where we can quench our thirst, where we can satiate our hunger, where we can be guided in doubts and receive strength in dangers. What is this source? Jesus, in the Sacrament of His love. Everywhere, where a group of virgins are gathered in a holy race to save their own souls and those of others, Jesus runs willingly, happy to sit in their midst to nourish them, to comfort them, guide them, and send them forth on the road to perfection. Jesus, actually living and truly present in the consecrated Host, is there waiting for you to adore Him, to pour out your souls before Him. He is ready to

infuse into your soul holy thoughts. He is desirous of strengthening your will in the difficult practice of virtue.

Nevertheless this loving exchange of sentiments is not enough for your Bridegroom. His divine love has inspired the miracle of Holy Communion in which, making Himself your food and drink, He infuses Himself into you, rather He raises you to Himself. "It is not I who live, but rather Christ Who lives in me."

Fortunate are we if, called each day to sit at the heavenly banquet to nourish ourselves with the Immaculate Lamb, we can pour out to Him our daily sorrows, beg for help in all of our actions, and conform our will and our conduct to His. If we did not know how to profit by this inexhaustible mine, we would be a hundred times more foolish than those who should die of thirst, having within arm's length a fount of clear water.

Like the thirsty person near a fountain, you need only extend your hand to receive what you ask for. Jesus has promised it under oath: "Ask and you shall receive."

Let not even the thought pass through your mind, that if you do not receive certain graces long desired, that Jesus is deaf to your prayers. No, think rather that either Jesus denies you those graces to prove your fidelity, or by denying you those things that would be a loss, not a gain, He prepares for you even greater things in His infinite mercy.

Content with the possession of the Most Holy Sacrament, the fount of all graces, do not go searching elsewhere for rivulets of salvation. Practice whatever devotions you desire, but always put them in second place, convinced that there is no other practice, no matter how holy it may be, which can be compared in value with Holy Communion.

In the same manner, do not lose your head while reading miracles and extraordinary sanctity of those who were favored with special gifts of penetration into hearts, of raptures and ecstasies. Humbly and sincerely venerate the Saints like St. Theresa, and in times nearer to our own, the Sainted Cure d'Ars, who worked such miracles, but always desirous of arriving at sanctity, be convinced that sanctity does not reside in these

privileges. Sanctity lies essentially in love of the cross, and in the practice of humility. Keep this well in mind.

If our Lord, in order to sustain your weakness, deigns to grant you spiritual consolations sometimes, accept them with deep gratitude, acknowledge yourself unworthy of them, and avail yourselves of them as fresh incentives to spur you on to work and suffer that one day you may arrive at the enjoyment of the happiness of Paradise.

But please do not attach yourself too much to these consolations. Sometimes the Lord gives them as candy, as a bait to dispose your soul for her entrance upon the sorrowful yet richly meritorious road of spiritual sufferings.

Then will the roses fall, or hide themselves from your view and nothing will be visible save the thorns; the shadows will take the place of the warm light of the sun, and it will seem that you are drifting into an unknown sea shrouded with fog and rumbling with thunder, the stench of stagnant waters will replace the perfumed blossoms of the Divine Garden, and you will seem to be groping in a terrible labyrinth which ends in an abyss.

Nourished with the Bread of the Angels, the virgins of the Lord who have followed Jesus in the sorrowful way of the cross, and who have proven themselves faithful companions in the Scourging, in the Garden, on Calvary, will be happy to suffer with Jesus, always content, even when their souls are in the winepress of pain, and their bodies are weakened by penance.

Those foolish Virgins instead, who have ever been coddled in consolations, who have not learned to love the Cross, will fall miserably by the way. Alas! may this never happen to any of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence. No, never!

Avail yourselves, oh daughters in Jesus Christ, of these few suggestions, to aid you in the fierce battle of the flesh against the spirit, and let them serve as a beacon to guide you in the ways of God.

But the most and best you will find in adoration at the foot of the altar, meditating the life of Jesus and the fountains of teachings which abound in the Holy Gospel, and to some degree also in your Holy Rule.

Will it happen sometime that you will feel yourself ready to fall, well nigh crushed under the weight of your vocation and the trials with which you have tortured both your body and your soul?

Run, run to Mary, our dearest Mother, cling to her powerful arm, hide under her mantle, invoke her with all your heart and she will come with pity to sustain you and your diminishing strength.

Look around you. God has put at your side a guardian angel. It depends on you to make use of his strength to reinforce your own, and with your guardian angel you will pass unharmed in the midst of all combats and overcome them, and arrive safe at your goal, God.

It will be well to read this when you feel weary and the trials of life seem overwhelming. It will give you comfort and courage. The author does not know the name of the author of this little book.

CHAPTER XIX

Holy Communion

Holy Communion feeds souls with a treasure of love, to which love, however, a strain of reverent awe should not be a stranger.

These souls love Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and wish to burn continually as so many sanctuary lights, repeating unceasingly their act of faith. But when this love is not sensibly felt, but like a dying ember it lies still and hidden in their souls, they tremble with the dread of being unworthy of Jesus, and they torture themselves by recalling their past sins and their present defects.

To them it will never be repeated enough: *Humble yourself profoundly; that is right, yet know that Christian hope should be coupled with humility.* Mis-trust any fear that leaves in your heart

a sense of desolation, and with sorrow and humility for your sins, throw yourself in the sea of fire of the divine Heart of Jesus, over and over again picturing it to yourselves all glowing with love just as it appeared to St. Margaret Alacoque. In that heart your sins will be consumed, and in your own heart will be lit a loving fire which will enable you to find the greatest delight in pressing to your heart your loving Bridegroom, living and real.

Holily eager for the Divine Food, let us draw near to receive It each day, and always with a preparation of faith, of humility, of contrition, but above all of love. That day on which, either because of illness or impossibility, or in obedience you are obliged to remain deprived of the Bread of Angels, should seem a day without a sun, a body without a soul, a sad privation; let us try to nourish ourselves by sending up continued fervent invocations to Him, Who, not content with having assumed human flesh, wished to be despised, to suffer, to die, and to be buried for our love.

And to think that for a false fear many souls deprive themselves of this Divine Food! This reserve shows a great lack of

confidence, and is a great wrong to that Jesus who having given Himself to us out of love, asks only to be repaid by love.

If Jesus knocks at your heart desirous of entering therein, would you enclose that heart as in a fortress, so that the Divine Consoler may not reach it? Think of it! Imprisoned in that manner, it must die of hunger, it must perish in abandonment.

Open, open your heart to the Divine Guest. His coming will cancel the past, it will create new power, it will spread within you a seed of sanctity. In the same manner the May sun warms the air, softens the clods of earth hardened by ice and frost. Let us open our hearts with confidence to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and with Him we will receive infinite graces. NO ONE CAN SEE ME AND LIVE said our Lord to Moses. For this very reason, He remains hidden from our eyes in Holy Communion, so that His divine Majesty should not frighten us.

Nevertheless, even though hidden under the appearances of bread, the majesty of the Son of God made Man, revealing Himself to our soul by means of faith, should suffice to terrify us.

Faith says, however, "Come to receive the God of purity because He has the power to cancel your sins," and encourages us to approach Him.

Repeating three times, striking your breast: *Domine, non sum dignus,* think less of your own unworthiness than of the infinite mercy and tenderness of God, and approach the sacred banquet with a holy hunger. Desire to receive Jesus, and you will receive with Jesus the fullness of His graces.

But our littleness, even after Holy Communion, needs tangible help sometimes; of a voice which admonishes us, guides us and enlightens us with certainty, to overcome the temptations external and internal, to allay our uneasiness, and to urge us on in the way of God.

God, always good with a sinful man, has condescended to respond to these needs of man's heart, and has given in the person of a fallible man, as we are, an infallible teacher like to God. The Vicar of Christ, son also of Adam, and subject too to the assaults of the devil, will know how to have compassion for our miseries, because he knows them and touches them with his hand. The Vicar of Christ, in

his capacity of representative of God, invested with His authority, with His infallibility, will give us words of life which shall be confirmed in Heaven.

The Holy Father, burning with the charity with which our Divine Savior burned, urges us all to cleanse our faults in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and to approach confidently the Eucharistic Banquet.

The Pope of the Immaculate Conception, the great Pius IX, left in his testament to the Pastors of Rome the little book of Segur on Frequent Communion, intending with this to animate all the faithful to adopt this practice.

Segur's little book maintains that all Christians of good will may communicate frequently; the good, because as St. Francis de Sales says, being good, they deserve to approach their lips to the Bread of Life; the weak may do so that they may become strong.

Pope Leo XIII of happy memory, repeatedly by word of mouth and in writing, inculcated upon the faithful the practice of frequent Communion.

And Pius X, who, like his glorious predecessors, from his earliest childhood drew abundantly from the fountain of grace, recommends with glowing ardor frequent and even daily Communion. "If the Heart of Jesus desires it," He says with simplicity, "His Vicar must also desire it."

And our Holy Father in his zeal has gone even further, to the point of thinking of those Christians who because of illness cannot remain fasting. Now he has permitted them to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament several times a week, even after having taken food or drink, just as always has been the custom for those who receive Jesus as Viaticum.

So also to facilitate the acquiring of all possible holy indulgences, for those who communicate daily, Pius X has removed the obligation of weekly confession, declaring it sufficient to confess every fifteen days or even longer, provided the soul is free from mortal sin.

To extend ever more the great advantage of frequent Communion, the reigning Pontiff, with his Encyclical which has frightened evil thinkers and rejoiced fervent souls, has ordered that First

Communion be not delayed as before until ten or eleven years, but be made at the age of reason, that is around seven years, when it is customary to send children to the Sacrament of Penance.

From the Holy Communion of these innocent children, the Holy Father looks for great advantages, and you yourselves are edified by the piety with which your little orphans approach the Sacred Table--those little ones who know so little, yet already feel Jesus alive and truly present in their hearts as they press Him tenderly to their bosoms.

To all in general Pius X recommends Holy Communion, but to the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence especially, since he commissioned their Founder to recommend daily Communion to them.

And you, with this Fatherly command, go full of courage and rejoicing in your heart. You have good reason to do so.

You have chosen the Lord for your portion, and the Lord, accepting you among His many beloved Brides, is happy to descend and remain in your heart.

You are not only Brides and Daughters of your Jesus, you are also tender sisters of His, because He is the Son of God and the Son of Mary your Mother, who was descended as you are from our First Parents, yet remained, by an unheard-of privilege, immaculate from her conception.

Jesus, Spouse, Brother, Companion, is also a wise and loving Doctor of our souls.

After having set us upon this thorny path of life, if we invoke Him always, if we receive Him with proper dispositions, He will be our companion and guide till we reach a blessed eternity. Jesus will be ours just as much as we wish to be His. To St. Theresa who when asked her name, replied, "I am Theresa of Jesus," Our Lord appeared in the form of a child and said, "And I am Jesus of Theresa."

When Jesus taught us to say with faith every day: Give us this day our daily bread, He was not only thinking of that which was necessary for our existence, but also of that which is the bread of the strong, of the viaticum of salvation, of which His children would partake at the Sacred Table during the course of

centuries. Our soul, oppressed by its miseries, hungers and thirsts for the body and blood of Jesus, shed for us on the Cross, the body and blood which alone have the power to restore and strengthen it.

As within a richly adorned Tabernacle, Jesus finds His delight to rest in a soul wholly dedicated to His service and honor, by the practice of that Virginity which seems almost to imitate the innocence and fervor of the angels.

I am sure, you tremble with fear feeling that you are such sinners. You should, because even your good deeds are not really good; too true it is that they too are intermingled with many defects! Good reason for us all to humble ourselves before God!

And yet, if the Lord finds pleasure in remaining with the children of men, as long as they despise their own misery and pettiness and sigh after Him; if the Lord can and will draw out from a handful of earth a son of Abraham why can He not, of you imperfect virgins, who have fled to the refuge of the cloister, why can not His powerful hand make so many Brides of

election? Yes, let Him descend sacramentally as often as possible into your souls and from the hardness of your heart will spring up a fountain of living water which will cleanse and heal all those in need who come to you.

Lucifer with all the rebel angels tried, with his sacrilegious revolt, to diminish or destroy the glory of God, but God destroys with his wrath and confounds the devils eternally by showing them the multitude of converted souls, or those who preserving their innocence, come to fill so gloriously the places left vacant by them.

Place at the feet of your Bridegroom Jesus, every thought, every doubt, every anxiety. Jesus infinitely good, for on one grain of good will and love will cancel all your previous miseries. Always remember the pitiful and touching story of Magdalen: "Much is forgiven her because she has loved much." Love Him, love Him dearly, and He, turning to you with His grace, will make you worthy of Him.

Are you ill? Jesus is a physician and will heal you. Are you without virtue? Jesus is the inexhaustible fountain

virtues. Are you cold? He is the divine fire descended from heaven which burns but does not consume, and He will set you afire with His love. Are you ignorant? He is the source of true knowledge. He is the Son of God and God Himself--listen to Him. He will teach you. Are you a sinner? Jesus loves the humble, He raises the fallen, He presses them to His Heart. Have recourse to Him, therefore, with confidence and you will be made white again as a lily. To heal your soul of its present misery, Jesus offers you infinite means; there is nothing left for us to do but to make our choice; it is left for us to win all the profit. Holy Water, an Our Father, a "My Jesus, Mercy," any raising up of the soul to God, and more than anything else, one "Lord, I am not worthy," said with feeling and faith before approaching Holy Communion, are sufficient to cancel the venial sins of which we may have become guilty since our last confession.

Do you wish to dispel every reasonable fear? Live with such purity of intention as to merit every minute to receive Jesus in your heart.

In the Preparation and Thanksgiving use all the time given by the Rule, that is,

all that the offices of charity assigned to you will permit.

There is nothing to stop you, however, from preparing yourself and offering thanksgivings while fulfilling your duties, offering at least the intention you wish to renew daily and many times during the day. Doing this, you will keep Jesus company at every hour. Oh, yes, run to Him in desire, for light, guidance and comfort. Whenever it is at all possible, reply to the angelic voices which cry out, "Come, let us adore Him," hurrying to prostrate yourself at the foot of the Tabernacle. Beg Him to descend into your heart when the sun begins to rise, and beg Him to be always near to protect you against yourself.

Let Jesus fill your heart with the flame of His Love, beg Him to make it his own, and full of confidence in His bounty, humiliated in your nothingness, and rejoicing that the Lord is triumphant in His power to take to Himself your miserable being, draw near to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, Redeemer and Reconciler.

Holy Communion forms Virgins and prepares them to run and perform miracles in

the fields of charity. Holy Communion strengthens and gives joy to weak Virgins even for martyrdom. When you suffer, think of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and you will be comforted. And repeat often:

Blessed be God and blessed be His Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints. Amen.

CHAPTER XX

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

The center of all devotions is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He is the Sun which illuminates and warms, He is the fire of the charity of God. In this Sacrament guilty humanity is purified, and comes forth transformed into wheat of election, into substantial bread, capable of nourishing and converting other souls, who, in their turn, in that sun, in that fire, will cancel their past and will learn to live in such a way as to extend the kingdom of God.

The Holy Bishop Ignatius, submitting to martyrdom exclaimed: "I am the wheat of Christ, and crushed by the teeth of the lion, I hope to be found worthy to be presented to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

In Holy Communion and in the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, good religious are formed, because their evil tendencies, their habitual defects are there worn away, their character is perfected, their good will is strengthened. It is there they learn a hatred of sin, compassion for the sinner, and they find courage to convert him even by the sacrifice of themselves. From the Holy Tabernacle comes forth an aroma of purity, a profound lesson of humility, a virtue which prompts us never to allow an occasion of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls to go by unexplored.

Even in our materialistic and pagan society, the unbeliever, and the fallen away love to put their children, when sick, into the hands of a religious of good spirit. Many times one who calls himself an atheist, and who blasphemes God, falls ill and then wishes to be sent to homes or hospitals run by Brothers or Sisters. And this consoling fact is repeated every day and everywhere.

It is rare in a family that two women live together in harmony, and yet in the vast family of the Congregation, where members are counted not by dozens but by

the hundreds, charity is exemplary and concord admirable. Out in the world there is a contest to see who will command, here everyone wishes to be under obedience; and oftentimes a humble little shepherdness is enough to guide well a flock of a hundred, maybe a thousand religious, all docile as lambs.

From what does this admirable union spring? From Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the life and strength of the Congregation and the members.

The religious gathered around the fire of divine charity, the Most Blessed Sacrament, there receive eloquent lessons of Christian living, and they are warmed by such a fervor that they become superior to all the petty miseries and misunderstandings which the evil spirits spread among men, with the firm purpose of sowing discord, and then disorder, and finally rebellion against God, and His laws.

The Holy Rule, to protect you from these satanic attacks, commands you to adore the Most Blessed Sacrament with all your strength, and prescribes the manner and the time so that our adoration may bring you abundant fruit.

Adoration, offered by turns through all the different hours of the day, of the evening, and of the night, results in a continuous prayer among the Sisters and residents of Divine Providence, and every moment Jesus, invoked by His devoted ones, hears them and blesses them.

When you are performing your office of adoration, love to place the dear orphans in front of you, as a bulwark, as a pledge capable of drawing down divine graces upon you. The young girls housed by you, beautiful in their innocence, perhaps have never seriously offended God, and so are very dear to God because of their purity and they will draw down blessings upon you and the House.

Be sure to train the young girls early in adoration, and as our Holy Father prescribes, admit them as early as possible to Holy Communion. To receive Jesus, innocence is more necessary than knowledge, and you see how many children as pure as angels, knowing only the most necessary things, approach with edifying fervor to receive the Bread of Life. Those little souls are not capable of saying long prayers, they will not understand them, yet they possess the secret of the love of Jesus, and they obtain the best graces

for themselves, for your House, and towards the conversion of sinners.

Take care, therefore, to initiate your young girls into adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, bringing them sometimes in a group and sometimes two by two to render homage to Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, and Jesus, Who redeemed them with His blood, will sanctify them with His grace.

Let not your care to instill the devotion for the Blessed Sacrament be limited to children, but let it flourish and extend itself to all the persons confided to your zealous care, be they old, ill, or mentally handicapped, those poor souls who you, in the faith of charity, call "good girls."

With what love the Heart of Jesus receives the poor, the afflicted, and those lacking intelligence who nevertheless bear also on their brow the image of God! Didn't Jesus wish to be treated Himself as though He were an outcast of the common people?

The poor, the abandoned, the little ones are the favorites of Providence.

Don't you hear resound in your heart the cry of the Divine Master: "Let the little ones come to me"?

It may sometimes happen that a certain young girl, because of a lack of intelligence or lack of strength, is unable to withstand work; and yet, having learned to pray, she willingly stays before Jesus hidden in the Tabernacle, adoring in silence or counting and recounting the beads of the Rosary.

Let these souls who are spiritually weak speak with God. Perhaps they only appear weak. On the other hand, the cry of her who lives without enjoying or taking part in the life around her, but who feels religion in her heart and believes firmly and without analysis the truths of faith, the cry of such a soul will penetrate the Heart of the Son of the Most High and will draw from It many graces.

Besides these little creatures who have been little since birth, there are others who have become so on account of age or sickness. These have become children at 70 years, perhaps after having gone through a thousand painful difficulties,

perhaps after having returned bleeding from a battle with life or for life.

Love these dear souls and force yourselves to give them a spark of joy with your affection, with your care, but much more by giving them a love of prayer and of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Blessed is the return to childhood in old age, if it makes them worthy of Paradise!

Jesus who repeats always: "Unless you become as these little children you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven," calls us to reverence that inevitable state in which the marks of humanity have vanished, and the person of the aged is invested with an air of halo, of mysticism which makes her ever more spiritual.

Our Lord looks with an eye of love upon these venerable grey-haired ones, even when a certain receding of intelligence, a loss of memory links the age of ~~even-~~ tide with that of earliest dawn.

The religious, entering into the secrets of God, looks upon those grey-haired persons with respect and cares for them with filial tenderness, to such a degree as to overcome courageously every sense of aversion. But the Sister

venerates and loves the old people because she sees in them a soul that can be drawn nearer to God, and she thus becomes piously industrious in order to instill in them frequent and easy practices of devotion.

She tries to encourage them to go to Church, to give them the desire and the taste for Eucharistic adoration, to stimulate their relish for Holy Communion: tries, in a word, to make of them faithful adorers.

Frequenting Confession and Holy Communion with whatever preparation they are capable of will accustom the aged to await without fear the end fast approaching, will make the passage from this life to the next less sorrowful, and at the same time will get them accustomed to live a heavenly life while they remain here below.

Even if childish, so long as they are able to distinguish the Eucharistic bread from common bread, do not deprive them of their spiritual food on Feasts and principal solemnities. Take advantage of the guidance of the Confessor, but remember that much is left to your zeal and charity.

It rests with you to guide the aged, in words and affection, and I repeat, give them a liking for adoration and Holy Communion.

The Local Superior will be careful to have Mass celebrated in the home as often as possible, and with all charity to accompany to Church those infirm who can be brought there.

It is your duty to instill a spirit of adoration in the persons committed to your care, it is easy to infer how urgent this duty is of adoring Jesus hidden in the Tabernacle or exposed on the altar.

The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, who are supposed to inflame others, must first be inflamed themselves with the fire which glows in the divine Heart of Jesus. In this fire they must find the motive of their zeal, strength to live in concord with their Sisters in religion, and the need they have to edify with their piety the residents, and all who are subject to them.

If you have a mother's heart, and from your heart you gain the tactful skill of having compassion and comforting their miseries and their ailments, then orphans

and aged will never be heard to complain of food, housing, or discipline. Your gentleness will lighten for all the difficulties of life.

We all live more on family affections than on material bread. We often see very poor families who lack the barest necessities and yet who find in family relations any inexhaustible fountain of peace; we see them produce the highest type of generous souls.

Praise the goodness of God Who fits the wool to the sheep according to the season, and keep your heart on high near your Divine Spouse.

When temptations or aridities overtake you, hasten to the Tabernacle, and from the Tabernacle will flow faith which will make you strong against aridity and temptation.

From Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament you will receive the gift of piety, and this piety will lead you to heaven, but it will also help you in this life giving you a fullness of peace and perfect aptitude for the Religious Life to which you have consecrated body and soul.

May the Blessed Mother your Teacher and Patroness give you a taste for piety and always increase your love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and for His Mother, your model and your support.

The good Angels will be your strength and guide and all the Saints of heaven will strengthen you for the battle, which the world, the devil, and your passions will stir up within and around you.

CHAPTER XXI

Word of God--Exercises of Piety--

Meditation

Be eager for the word of God. This sacred hunger is a characteristic of the true religious of good spirit.

The word of God instructs the mind, strengthens the will, is an incentive to work, and stirs the heart to holiness. St. Augustine praises its efficacy so much as to say that the word of God is worth as much as God Himself in the Sacrament of His Love.

The early Christians touched the Holy Gospels with respect before making the sign of the cross, and carried them on their breast as reliques, to give courage to their souls in face of dangers, and to become strong against the assaults of external and internal enemies.

St. Francis Assisi gathered up all the little pieces of paper for fear that the holy name of the Lord was written on them and that they be trampled underfoot by the passerby.

If, instead of thinking so much of our miseries, we would think of the immense value of the word of God, out of respect we would have to read it or hear it on our knees. If when reading or hearing a telegram from the Holy Father we stand out of reverence, how much more respect does not the reading or the explanation of the Holy Gospel (which is the word of God Himself) merit?

I repeat, be holly eager for the Sacred Scriptures and especially for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why go to quench our thirst at rivulets when we have the royal stream flowing from that copious and crystal clear source which never fails?

As it is opportune to change the food of the soul to one less substantial, you may seek nourishment also in books of men; but here always give preference to the writings of the Saints. You will gain much by reading the lives of the ancient and modern Saints, being careful

to gather all those examples of virtues which are adapted to your state so as to model yourself upon them.

Hold dear the Bible History and the Church History of St. John Bosco. They are two small books in size, but they contain a sanctity full of wisdom and knowledge.

Don't confuse your mind with reading many books; but rather endeavor to master, that is to study attentively those few that you read, so as to digest them well. The spirit doesn't gain from the great amount studied but from a little taken and kept.

Even more than reading, the word of God preached by His Minister does good to the soul. The axiom is old. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing is nourished by the word of God."

If you can choose, give preference to preachers of solid piety, of solid doctrine, clear and simple as the apostles.

Every Saturday before the first Sunday of the Month, find a priest of holy life who will prepare you for a day of prayer in preparation for death; and having

found him, listen to him attentively and do not permit the word of God to fall by the wayside or among the thorns.

Seek out also a priest of God, to lead the retreat, that the Rule prescribes for you every year. These are days of your spiritual vacation, so you must try to gather a plentiful harvest to serve as useful nourishment for the whole year.

Let the Superiors of the different Houses think a long time before obtaining a priest who is suitable, so that they and the Sisters subject to them may receive that spiritual food of which they are in need to save their own souls, fulfilling faithfully the special duties of their vocation.

If you wish to taste fully the joy of conversing with God as a child with its father, as a friend with friend, separate yourself from every possible care during the days of retreat. Then, isolating yourself with your Heavenly Bridegroom at least in will, you will enjoy a foretaste of the happiness of Paradise, and His consoling words and inspirations will penetrate your heart.

When circumstances do not permit a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence to take part in the Holy Retreat with her companions, she must make up for it by herself, with the aid of a good book, and search her conscience and arouse those good sentiments which are the aim of that yearly practice. When you are deprived of sermons--not through your fault, but for reasons over which you have no control, Our Lord Himself will directly inspire you with sorrow for your sins, and will impart to you a lasting, strong and salutary purpose of amendment.

I repeat again, be eager for the divine word! It will enlighten your mind with a heavenly light, it will dispel the shadows of doubt, and will make you understand how much better it is to be pious and humble than to be learned and presumptuous.

Be ashamed of your ignorance and humble yourself profoundly for it; but then convinced that there is no true wisdom which is not founded in a Holy Fear of God, beg light of God, and He will fill you with light and strength to climb the high and steep mountain of Christian perfection.

Glowing with the fire of sanctity, kindled by the word of God, your heart will be full of zeal and your piety will have no bounds.

The first food of your piety must be daily Holy Mass, heard with fervor and desire. During Mass, meditate on the passion and death of Jesus, imagining that you are assisting at the agony of your Crucified Redeemer. Whenever possible, without neglecting your duties, assist at two or even three Holy Masses daily, and if someone criticizes you as if this were excessive, tell them that you have become a religious, not to please the world, but to live more closely united to God, to sanctify your soul, to obtain the conversion of sinners.

But if the duties of your office should suffer? Then sacrifice your piety, or rather sanctify it with the sacrifice which will at the same time increase your merit.

Never, never neglect the sick committed to your care. If, however, it be a case of persons all well taken care of, who have no other special needs, tell them in a pleasant way that you are going to hear

Mass for them too, and they will be patient and gain greater merits.

As for you, strengthened by your piety you will become quick and strong in difficult labors, spiritualized in your various relationships, and always ready to fulfill the will of God.

When you are fulfilling your Spiritual duties, get used to meditating. Then, when you start to talk, use common sense. He who has good common sense will think and reflect seriously before our Lord before speaking and working.

Every day when you make the *Via Crucis* think of the road to Calvary, where, burdened with that heavy cross, the Man-God goes forth on the way that leads to a shameful death.

Accompanying Him with your mind and your heart as did the pious women, and united in spirit with them, meditate at the different stations in the mockeries which Jesus bore to expiate the sins of mankind, and especially your sins. Imagine that you are making the sorrowful journey on Good Friday with the *Ecce Homo* and you will make it profitably.

If you make the *Via Crucis* meditating thus you can well be dispensed from the half hour meditation in the evening. Make it, therefore, devoutly.

Meditation, strictly speaking, is the first and best exercise of piety because it should accompany all of your pious practices, or rather it should be the essence of them all.

As Religious you must have a thirst for the word of God. Now it is precisely in meditation that God makes you realize His words, His will, the happiness of following Him on the path of suffering. At least a half hour every day Our Lord wishes a heart-to-heart talk with you in solitude. Listen to His voice and obey it. He speaks clearly, but His divine Word cannot reach those who are deafened by earthly noises, worldliness, and frivolity.

If you were to go before the Holy Father, you would be so worried about it that you would find someone to accompany you and guide you. Being attentive to the words of the Vicar of Christ, you would answer with the utmost respect, invoking the paternal blessing. Then, returning home, you would recount to your

Sisters every detail of the audience granted you by the Pope.

Why don't you do the same for meditation? It is God Who has called you, therefore you should run to Him, keep your ears open to hear His words, and when it is not granted you to taste His divine consolations in a sensible way, bow down at least to receive His blessing.

If our Lord did not let you hear His voice, in meditation, go away humiliated; that humiliation will be of no small gain to your soul.

Many say that it is difficult and tiresome to meditate well. But tell me is there anything in the world that doesn't require effort? Even doing nothing is difficult, often more difficult than the heaviest work.

Those condemned to prison terms, besides being imprisoned, are forced to absolute idleness as chastisement, and the monotony of those endless days and nights often brings on desperation.

Work, work willingly, oh children of the Lord, work is merit and reward

together. If you do all in your knowledge and strength for God, He on His part will repay you with His graces and His help.

Endeavor to be daughters of meditation and you will become the favorites of the Lord. He will reveal to you the secrets of His Divine Heart, and He will instruct you in all the particular circumstances in which you may find yourself.

When you are questioned, answer with simplicity and firmness as our Lord dictates, because He will put the words on your lips. With how many, many privileges souls truly spiritual are favored.

If the world knew the joys of the Religious life, unknown to the proud, how many of them would wish to retire to the silent shadows of the cloister!

Make at least a half hour meditation together each morning, and this will be good air which you inhale into your soul to aid you against the difficulties of the day. He who meditates well has learned to do all for God, to receive all from God; now this thought smooths away every difficulty, and sweetens every bitterness.

I said to meditate together because God has promised to be in the midst of two or three persons gathered together in His name. On the other hand, if you are full of defects the piety of your Sisters, by virtue of the Communion of Saints will make up for your deficiency.

When you are assembled for meditation imagine you see Jesus in your midst; speak to him with open and confident heart, listen attentively to all that He says within you, and your love will rise, at your nearness to your God, at being one heart with Him.

The Superior of the Community should see that all the Sisters make meditation together, because doing this is the same as gathering together to beg graces of and offering homage to the King of Kings; and therefore is an inestimable value of which it would not be wise to deprive herself or any of her companions or subjects.

Also, she must be sure that all the Sisters have plenty of time to receive Holy Communion every day. Every soul has the right and the duty to receive it.

If it be cruelty to deprive the Sisters of food, it would be a greater cruelty to refuse them that Substantial Food which sustains and strengthens.

Let us summarize.

The word of God is food of the soul.

Exercises of piety, to be made devoutly.

Holy Meditation, the very soul of all pious exercises.

Finally, the devotion of a good death to be practiced faithfully every month To accomplish it in a convenient and fruitful manner, prepares yourselves a day in advance by means of meditation--one of the last ends, better still if a sermon be given at the time.

Then with special devotion examines your conscience, and approach the Sacrament of Penance with all that sorrow which you would desire to have if it were your last Confession.

In the examen, give special attention to the faults you have committed again your holy vows, because in them

centered all the substance of Religious Life. Give a general glance, not too minute, however, over the Rules of Discipline, which are not binding under pain of sin, except where the commandments of God or the Precepts of the Church are transgressed, or where you are a scandal to others, or God forbid, where you transgressed them out of contempt for the Rule.

Except for these particular cases, concentrate your attention around the substance of the vows, remembering, however, that you must not look at the letter which kills, but rather look at the spirit which vivifies. Avoid all subtleties and, humiliated over your misery, animated with confidence in that Jesus Who calls you to become His Bride, promise Him that you will from now on serve Him with all diligence and fidelity.

If you wake up at night, think of God and send up to Him some fervent ejaculations to implore His aid now and at the hour of your death. In the morning imagine that your cell is a death chamber and your bed a coffin, and you must remain there dead and immobile waiting for the moment to come when you will be consigned

forever to the earth from which you were made.

Approaching Holy Communion, receive it as Viaticum and, in performing the devotions for a good death, think that the last moment may come at any time, even soon, even immediately--and maybe unexpectedly, and prepare your heart to contrition.

I want to give you another piece of advice here.

Carry with you always a note-book in which to write the most significant things you read or hear in prayer and consult it every once in a while. Let it be your friend; it will repeat comforting words and will raise up your spirit when you are troubled and desolate; it will encourage and raise you up when you stumble in the way of virtue.

This vade-mecum will be like the books used by the merchant to show his profits and losses each day. In it you will find whether and how you have corresponded to inspirations, whether and how you have fulfilled the promises made.

Let us learn from the prudent of the world, who many times are wiser than the children of light.

Recall to your mind all the important things which have been explained in this chapter and convert them into good food and a guide for your conduct.

If you serve your Jesus diligently on earth, be sure that He will crown you in Heaven.

May the Blessed Mother give strength to your resolutions, and God reward your efforts!

CHAPTER XXII

Guide to Mortification

- I. In what does mortification consist?
- II. Of what use is it? III. How is it applied? These will form the subject-matter of this chapter.

Mortification, bitter and distasteful as are all medicines, is a sure remedy to overcome and dominate our passions.

To mortify the mind and keep the imagination within bounds, costs--it is certain--not a little fatigue, but he who would refuse to make this effort because it is hard on nature would only hasten his own destruction, just as one who would deliberately expose himself to the fury of a wild colt.

It costs effort--laborious effort--to hold within bounds the desires of the heart, excessive sensibility, sentiment,

tality, and the desire to be noticed. But if we do not resolutely put forth every effort to correct ourselves, we will end like the man who out of boundless and an uncontrolled way of life squanders his own goods and those of others. The heart, capable of every good, is, however, blind and has need of always being guided by faith and reason, else it will run amuck and rush into utter ruin.

It is difficult to keep the eyes in check so that they never see dangerous situations or actions. But just as it were foolish to keep one's eyes open and stare at the sun which would blind one, just so would the abuse of one's vision take away vision of heavenly things.

It costs to guard one's ears so that they may not hear evil or dangerous conversations, because the hearing is open to every sound, and without an earnest effort, who knows how many ugly things would filter in to disturb peace of soul and mar that simplicity of the dove which is of such priceless value in religious life.

The same could also be said of the necessity of mortifying one's taste and sense of smell, but even more, the

tongue, which was purposely put by God behind a double row of teeth, as if to teach us to reflect much before talking. If it were not so, it would easily slip into conversations contrary to the spirit of charity and--may God never permit it--against that angelic virtue which is the most beautiful ornament of a soul consecrated to God and to good.

Our whole body, precious because it is a work of God, and in it we receive our Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, is as weak and delicate as a fragile glass, and just like the sensitive plant (called touch-me-not), it shudders back at the faintest touch as if mortally offended. Let us guard it jealously so that no stain of sin may ever cast the least shadow upon it.

Love mortification as a powerful means to work out your salvation; consequently, be willing to swallow if the bitter medicine it prescribes for your cure from spiritual weaknesses or for their prevention.

Your conscience will tell you how and how often you should mortify yourself but even conscience may sometimes mislead you.

It would be good therefore that you subject yourself to the Rule of your Congregation and to the particular prescriptions of your confessor, who is the physician of your soul. He will order, regulate or suggest as needed, how you should conduct yourself in private; but with regard to public mortification, besides the judgment of your Confessor, you must ask permission of the Superior of the House.

Jesus, holiness itself, chose mortification for Himself to teach us that without suffering, it is impossible to gain anything for heaven. Following the example of the Divine Master, what a great multitude of Christians have exercised themselves in mortification even to the point of heroism, until they merited the honors of the altar. Let us too love mortification; we who are so unstable that at every little trial we are in danger of falling, we indeed have a special need of it.

Nevertheless, even in the desire to mortify oneself we need a guide, and we must not try to guide ourselves, but rather, I repeat we are obliged to submit to the judgment of those who have the duty and right to guide us.

Some assert that fasting does not harm them, neither do hairshirts, etc., and under this pretext they guide themselves without asking the permission of their superiors. They do not understand that this mortification, far from being meritorious, is a trick of the devil to lure them away from submission and obedience.

Be guided by the Rule, be guided by the judgment of your Confessor and beware of an eagerness to afflict your body with greater austerities than those arranged by God through the mouth of your Superiors and Directors. Obedience will increase your merit, and the renunciation of your desire will increase merit, and much greater merit than the mortification which you have renounced.

You, Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, in the fields of spiritual and temporal charity assigned to you, will find a good reason for continuous and severe mortification. The mortifications, which do not depend on your own choosing, are much more meritorious than any others.

Believe him who speaks to you, fortified by long experience. The craving to mortify oneself beyond that which the

Holy Rule commands almost always comes from presumption.

Desire if you will the austere mortifications of the holy penitents of the Thebaid. Our Lord will keep count of your desires, but do not attempt anything more than what is prescribed or permitted.

Do not refuse yourself sufficient food, nor the necessary covering in the cold of winter, or the heat of summer, because you have no right to endanger your health, which is necessary in the service of the House that shelters you and the souls committed to your care.

Perhaps when you were at home, in the freedom of the fields, you could stand many privations which now are incompatible with your ~~to~~ convent life. You were birds of the woods, and you have become caged birds; even though the cage you so willingly entered be wired with gold in as much as you now breathe the air of Paradise, nevertheless it is easy to weaken constitutions so long accustomed to the free air of the mountains.

The change of environment and of occupations, the discipline of the

Congregation, are already instruments of penance and take the place of many arbitrary mortifications. On the other hand, this new mode of life, notwithstanding the fact that it is full of satisfaction unknown to the worldly, is of itself such a mortification that many spiritual souls did not have the courage to embrace it.

By the grace of God you had the courage to embrace this life of mortification, and you should thank God day and night, begging Him at the same time to grant you Holy Perseverance. And it is precisely in order to obtain this gift that you must not force yourself too much, remembering that he who pulls too hard soon breaks down.

There is a long road yet to travel before you arrive at sanctity, which is steep and difficult mountain; therefore it is wise for you to go slowly if you want to be sure of arriving. The mountaineer who wishes to reach the peak walks with slow and measured pace, while the city lad, inexperienced in climbing hurries, puffs, perspires, and is obliged to give up; then, while trying to catch moment's rest the cold air of the mountain strikes him, goes to his lungs, and he is fortunate if he does not die.

who goes slowly," says the Proverb, "goes safely and goes a long way." So should we behave in regard to our mortifications.

Some souls need a push, because being tepid they are reluctant to suffer. These who are lazy in their devotion, and but little attached to their Rule, need a firm and kind persuasion to accustom them to accept their medicine, and to overcome their defects, that is, a well directed mortification.

Some prudent and obedient souls are able to guide themselves. These are peaceful under the good guidance of the Lord, and ask for nothing else.

There are instead, some Sisters who, feeling themselves weak and miserable, expect to make themselves over again, by going to excess in mortification. Such will share the fate of those who, being seriously ill, imagine they will be cured sooner by taking more and more medicines and changing the dosage. These, instead of gaining health, will lose it altogether. Nor is it good to abuse the enthusiasm of youth, because it is often a straw

fire which will not withstand the inclemencies of the weather.

The most frequent age of death, but especially with the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, is between the ages of twenty and thirty, which means that the youth of our time has little resistance and stands in need of special care and must not be crushed by oppressive burdens.

Measure well your strength, listen to the inspirations of God, and then, submitting your resolutions to the advice of your Superiors with whom you will be candidly open, go on in security. Have no fear; he will never fail, who obeys.

Many times Our Lord calls a soul to extraordinary perfection, making her walk with Jesus the road to Calvary. No one should impede the work of grace, but neither should anyone pretend to put herself of her own on the road reserved by God for a few privileged souls.

As for us, poor and imperfect souls, let us content ourselves to mortify our mind, our heart, and our will; this is mortification which is useful for all, can harm no one, and which everyone is

obliged to adopt. To mortify one's passions is the duty of everyone, but much more so of every religious. On fidelity to this duty depends our progress along the spiritual life, much more than on corporal penance.

Remember always, and always repeat it to yourself, obedience is worth more than sacrifice. In the resolution to obey faithfully, blindly, and without scruples or vain fears, you will be happy if you accept from the hands of God, and in penance for your sins, the duties of the day which are often heavy.

In the faithful accomplishment of your office, you will feel very tired at the close of the day, exhausted, as St. Paul often said happened to him. Then raise your heart to God and offer to Him with love and simplicity your labors and your exhaustion.

The Angel of the Lord will descend then upon the religious and overshadow her with his wings, and will make her sleep in holy peace, happy at having filled the day with good works.

CHAPTER XXIII

Manner of Deporting Oneself

Every country and every family has some distinctive traits; so every religious family has its own particular spirit or character, as it has a habit all its own.

The exterior, or the particular manner of acting which distinguishes the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence should be natural, spontaneous, joyful, modest, as though presuming nothing of itself, but expecting all from God, their only Good.

External behavior, as is quite reasonable, should be in them the expression of their internal sentiments, as like their words, which should always clearly express their thoughts without hidden meanings.

The Daughters of St. Mary should be inspired from on high, and know the

truth, and so she should endeavor to learn all that God wants of her, and according to this knowledge should conduct herself in every circumstance.

She should desire good with a holy zeal, that is to say, she should always exert herself so that the divine will be fulfilled always and everywhere, and on her part she should put forth every effort that virtue triumph and the guilty acknowledge his fault, and find mercy and pardon.

According to what St. Paul says, you should endeavor with the greatest zeal to become temples of God, sanctuaries of the Holy Spirit, tabernacles of the Lamb without a spot. What great dignity is conferred upon you with these sublime ideals!

Meditate within your heart on the height to which you are called, and grateful to your Heavenly Bridegroom for such graces, exert yourself to become worthy of them, always humiliating yourself more profoundly in your nothingness and misery.

If you really knew how to forget yourself before God and submerge yourselves

in the conviction that the free gift of your vocation comes from Him alone, a sense of tender confidence in your Divine Redeemer would fill your soul, and this confidence would infuse an edifying simplicity. This will dispose you for a complete surrender to the arms and will of our Father Who is in Heaven, and thus instill a spirit of prompt and blind obedience which will make you happy in being guided by those who command you with divine authority.

This complete surrender of yourself, of your will, and of your intelligence to the service of the Lord, will make you dear to the angels who surround His throne, will give great edification to those about you, and will improve your residents.

Then your body, as a bright crystal, will radiate "let" the virtue which animates it, will diffuse all around you the beauty of charity, of purity, of holy fear, which will make all the people with whom you come in contact like you: modest but without pretense. Do not doubt that your good example, passing beyond the walls of the convent, will make converts and will draw many souls to God and to holiness.

On your face will glow correct judgment, in your eyes will shine purity of heart and the constant desire to do good to all; let a constant and meritorious smile be on your lips, as one who amidst pains has glimpsed the reward of Paradise, and on your face will shine a genuineness which spreads and excites in all hearts a lively desire to do good.

Simple in bearing, no false refinement, but always clean and never careless in dress, the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence should reflect even exteriorly the dignity of the Congregation to which she is conforming her soul and all her actions.

Hold dear always and everywhere, I repeat again, holy simplicity, both in speech and in action, because simplicity is essentially sincerity; it lovingly covers the defects of others, and wins the sympathy and affection of your neighbor whom you should always desire to inflame with love of God.

As a good child of a family is with her wise and prudent mother, be open with your Superior, keep nothing from her so that she may have help in the care of the House confided to her.

All should be common property in a well ordered family; therefore you must contribute in all sincerity to cement this good order in the Congregation to which you have given your name and your heart.

If the good Religious should keep nothing hidden from the one who guides her, so the Superior, as a good Mother, should, as far as possible, keep the Sisters informed regarding the work and the spirit of the House. Doing this, the Sisters will be happy at having found in Religion the intimacy of their natural family and home, and they will put forth even greater efforts to further its reputation, and to spread as far, as they are able, the desire to belong to it.

In the Congregation, the letters which come from home should be shown promptly to the proper person. The Sisters may discuss in friendly conversation the common interests and especially their different offices, just as would be done in a well regulated family.

It would be a good thing, if every evening, or at least every once in a while, the Superior or the one taking her place would call to her separately her Sisters to have them give an exact

account of what they had done during the day or during the week. She should be careful, however, in asking questions that every Sister will have full liberty to confide her opinions and discuss with her the manner and the proper circumstances for success in her work, or the work given to others. The rule to regulate these dialogues may be copied from the freedom and the sincerity which a wise and prudent mother would use towards her daughter to correct wrong ideas, to confirm her in her good ideas, to guide and enlighten her in doubts, to comfort and strengthen her when on her road she finds more thorns than roses. If the Superior will make herself felt as a mother of her Sisters, she will find in them a complete loyalty, and this loyalty will aid the works of mercy which are the principal aims of the Congregation, and will give a family atmosphere which is modelled on the Holy Family.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is poverty and persecutions lived in charity and in peace which became a source of universal edification and instruction for ages to come. Let us imitate them.

If the Superior knows how to give correct ideals to her spiritual daughters,

she will bring it about that the spirit of the Congregation be preserved, and she will pass it on intact with the sum of all the merits acquired by the entire religious family.

To preserve the spirit of the Congregation intact, there should be but one Novitiate, so that they all may receive the same instruction and be governed as the Holy Rule, approved by the Holy Father, desires.

It is only too natural that from the Novitiate the religious do not come forth entirely perfect, because the vocations were tested there, and only the first and more difficult work of training was begun, but to finish the work just barely commenced is the task remaining for the Congregation.

In special cases, the Sisters, besides the Superior of the house, may turn to another person ~~or~~ ^{or} by letter to other Superiors; but be careful to do this only in particular cases and in urgent needs.

Before taking it upon herself to appeal to the Superiors, the Sister must seriously reflect if it be really useful and necessary, and ponder over the good that

she may reasonably expect from such an action. Woe to her if she allows herself to be guided by a silly mania for novelties, or by a spirit of ambition! That unfortunate Sister may meet some sad surprises, and unexpected and perhaps insurmountable difficulties.

Should there be question of spiritual consultations, she should, before all else, turn to the immediate direction that is at hand. If, instead, it were a case of removing some annoyance or repairing some defect, she should begin by exhausting the means which are in her power; then, if all her efforts should be in vain, have recourse to the Church, however, speak to the Superior of the House, but I entreat you, remember that you should not go to higher authority for little things, but only for things of the greatest importance.

You ask me how you should behave with the persons who come to visit you, be they parents, relatives, friends, men or women.

I answer: the Rule will tell you to enter the parlor accompanied by a Sister assigned to you by the Superior; however,

if you can spare your Sisters this inconvenience, it would be a considerable gain. Now, to discern whether or not it be wise to dispense with the companion and her embarrassment requires judgment and prudence.

Let me explain. If you can foresee that people who have come to visit will ask you annoying questions with which to deceive you, ask, for mercy's sake, that the Superior grant you a Sister as companion. By doing so you will avoid the double danger of losing time in listening to long conversations which have little in common with your state, conversations of which would move you further from that state of recollection in which you've put yourselves, and at the same time you will have given a good example and will have gained merit in the eyes of the Lord.

If instead you have the security that your visitors are sensible and will not hold worldly conversations, which will be embarrassing and make you suffer, then go alone to the parlor; always remembering, though, that the Guardian Angel is near you taking note of every word that leaves your lips.

In the time through which we are passing, do not be too willing to leave the house or go on a trip, no matter how short, without having another Sister, or at least an orphan, as companion. I do not say this because of any sure danger, but because going out alone, you may give occasion to wrong interpretations.

There is still much to be said about your behavior, regarding your spiritual and social instruction, and for the amendment of the defects into which you might fall, but for the hundredth time I repeat: turn sincerely and humbly to the Lord, obey your Superior promptly without *ifs, ands, or buts*, and proceed secure on the way you have chosen. The Blessed Mother, your Mother and patron will save you from any mishap, and will guide you safely into port. Walk with holy simplicity and in the field of the works of the House, and should it happen, and it will certainly happen, that you should stumble into some blunder, you will find that even your enemies will excuse you. Do not fear, oh Daughters of Providence! An upright conscience, the holy desire to make rapid strides in the way of the Lord, profound humility in acknowledging yourself incompetent and good-for-

nothing, will take the place of education and social graces which you lack.

Go on in peace and let nothing disturb you.

CHAPTER XXIV

In Sickness and at the Hour of Death

We have already pointed this out in a previous chapter. In time of illness, all effort should be made that the patient be good and conduct herself so. The nurse and the doctor should be good too.

I -- The patient, in order to be good and merit the help of God for herself, must be resigned; she should put forth every effort to keep her heart in peace, accepting that illness with which she is afflicted as coming from God to insure her salvation.

Peace of heart, besides drawing down the loving glance of the Lord, has a strong and beneficent influence on the body also, to which many times it

restores health quicker than any medicine. With good reason, it is said that anxieties of the soul wear down and seriously injure health. The patient who struggles nervously and worries much on account of her illness only aggravates it.

Another who would disregard the prescribed care and pretend to live as though she were well, certainly cannot say that she is good. The only "good" patient is one who obeys without complaining all the orders of the doctor, the nurse, and the Superiors. Remember this well: *Obedience is worth a hundred times more than sacrifice; she who obeys will be saved, and she who does not obey will be damned.*

Let the patient obey in taking food and drink as ordered and in abstaining from this and that. Let her obey by keeping her mind and body in complete repose. Let her obey by taking the medicine, and in following out the prescribed routine.

As it happens many times that the patient knows a better than anyone else what harms and what is good for her, the religious should be permitted to express her ideas simply to the doctor, so that

he may have light and guidance in his work. But once the patient has disclosed with sincerity what she considers useful or harmful to her system, she must submit herself then to the judgment of the doctor, who derives his authority from God Himself.

II -- It is necessary also that the nurse be good.

Insofar as possible, give the patient the opportunity to choose the nurse who is most pleasing to her. It is a great good to have at one's side in the moment of suffering a sister who is really a sister and almost a mother, and this comfort should be given if at all possible. It might be an indiscreet presumption to expect that the patient be so perfect as to bear willingly at her side a nurse who is perhaps unpleasant, who would perhaps not understand her easily and not try to guess her needs.

In the choice of a nurse, the Superior should be very careful and attentive so as not to make a mistake.

Especially when dealing with a Sister who has made progress in perfection and who considers it more virtuous to accept,

resignedly, the commands of the one who assists her rather than express her own needs; the Superior must select an attentive, capable, watchful nurse full of virtue and kindness. She will intuitively know the needs of her patient, and will not deprive her of those comforts which the patient should never dare to ask.

It is not a good rule to change the nurse often. The poor patient, more especially if she be of a delicate conscience, has already certainly made many acts of virtue to overcome the repugnance of her natural shame, and if the nurse be changed, she will have to start all over again, which might be harmful to a health already waning.

On the other hand, it is difficult and hard to entirely gain the heart of a Sister, and the Holy Spirit says: "He who has found a true friend has found a treasure." It would therefore be cruelty to change the nurse who might be a real treasure for the poor suffering soul. If, however, necessity brings about this change, see that it is done without giving pain to the patient; use delicate manners with her, explaining that you are

so sorry to give her pain, but you can do nothing else.

A nurse who corresponds to her calling must make the needs of the patient her own; therefore she must foresee them, attend to them, and help her in body and in soul with holy suggestions and good thoughts.

See that she is instructed in the manner of nursing according to the rules of good health, and see that she does not rely entirely on the experience which she might have had.

A good nurse must maintain a pleasant disposition to keep her patient in good spirit, and to make her resigned in her suffering, and to erase, if possible, the exaggerated impression that might make her believe her illness is more serious than it is.

She must try to always keep the patient's morale in a state of tranquility, which will make her accept easily the holy will of the Lord. Amiability and sincerity should be the characteristics never lacking in a nurse according to the heart of God. Let her

learn how to make herself loved and believed by the sufferer while telling the truth about her condition, try, however, as said above, to instill christian hope and banish fear. Holy prudence will inspire the nurse with ingenious tactfulness; and if her heart is good, it will be her first teacher and she will find in prayer a strong ally.

Oftentimes the patient needs a drink, some broth, or cordial. The nurse, according to the Heart of God, will sense these needs, and not wait to be asked. The patient who aspires after perfection, if left to herself, will not have courage to ring her bell for these things which seem to her luxuries, and so will suffer in secret, and the enemy of souls will have free rein to appear to her in disgusting and rebellious thoughts.

Certainly, if the patient is not seriously ill, and can in many things help herself, the one who attends to her may leave to go to take care of other patients who may be in greater need. But if instead one is seriously ill, stay near to her, and you will be able, with the grace of the Lord, to help her much, not only in alleviating her physical

sufferings, but also those more painful of the spirit.

How many times a wise and attentive nurse, with her intelligence and her heart, has brought back from death to life a Sister whom the doctors already diagnosed as incurable.

The model nurse suffers and prays with those who suffer, and offers them uplifting thoughts, which many times make them resigned to suffer while before they were reluctant to carry the cross.

III -- We have said and we repeat it: at the bedside of a good patient, that is, one who is disposed to accept recovery or illness, life or death, from the Lord, Creator, Father and Master, a good nurse is needed, one who is pious, capable, well-instructed, cautious and with a loving heart.

Furthermore, we have also said that the Superior must do her best so that the doctor of the House himself be good--in fact, a believer--so that neither by words nor by deeds will he be able to offend in the least the simple soul of the virgins consecrated to the Lord.

The Doctor, to be good, must be studious, solicitous, attentive to diagnose the illness and its cause and to apply the right remedies.

Aside from the positive case where the doctor does not seem to know the sickness and he himself calls for a consultation with other doctors, and considers it necessary, it would be contrary to the vow of poverty to desire such a recourse; besides it is often useless.

The better the doctor is, the more sure and firm he is in applying remedies without beating around the bush, without mincing words, working with the frankness which comes from a clear knowledge of his duty. Therefore, with delicacy and prudence, he will endeavor by his serious bearing and dignity to cause as little embarrassment as possible to the patient who already is suffering great pain in being obliged to submit to treatment which calls for enormous sacrifice of that fine sense of virginity to which she is accustomed.

To alleviate this pain of spirit and make the patient feel secure, she yields to the obedience to which she was obliged, the nurse will always be present

at the doctor's visits, take his orders and follow them out with greatest exactness thinking of the divine command: "Honor the doctor in time of need." Certainly, the medicine will have no power of healing or improving health if God does not second it with His grace; but this does not dispense you in the least from offering, in prompt obedience, an act of deference to the doctor in which a ray of God's authority is mirrored.

Avoid all useless or unnecessary visits to your patient; and do not be too anxious to call and recall the doctor. To do so without real necessity is not in harmony with the spirit of the Congregation, and besides would give proof of a lack of faith.

It is necessary, however, that the good religious remember always that decorum is not in the body so much as in the soul. Rest assured that there is no evil in rendering oneself obedient out of necessity to what is most painful to personal dignity, but which does not offend its sanctity. Rather, this great sacrifice will add the merit of martyrdom to your sufferings, and you may thank God if He wishes thus to enrich your crown.

It is opportune to note here that the Sister would be doing a great wrong, and it happens more often with the young Sisters, who through a false modesty would hide her sufferings from her Mistress or Superior. It would then happen, as it has often happened, that when the evil has taken hold and can no longer be hidden, it is too late to cure it.

It is a beautiful thing and desirable to die as martyrs; but it is not so commendable to die for having deliberately lacked in submission to the treatment prescribed. However, should such a thing have happened out of good faith, the right intention will find its compensation and perhaps reward on the part of God, Who sees the heart and the will.

When the sickness becomes serious, and danger is near, the Sisters will offer some Holy Communions for the patient, and invite her to do the same, placing her in the arms of God, disposed to follow in all and always His divine will. All the Community should pray and try to comfort the patient as much as possible, above all spiritually. So also she should be asked what Confessor she desires, and full liberty should be given her to have recourse at her pleasure to the Ordinary,

the Extraordinary or perhaps even one out of the House.

Know, oh Daughters of St. Mary, that the Priest is very glad to bring Holy Communion to the bedside of whoever desires It; furthermore, he will be greatly comforted, uniting himself to the will of the Holy Father, Pius X, who, as you know, to facilitate the reception of Holy Communion by those not seriously ill, permits them to receive it even when they cannot fast.

Let the visits of the Priests to the patient be short and spiritual, and let them always be announced to the patient to give her time to prepare herself as for the visit of an angel.

When the last hour is drawing near for the patient, let prayers be multiplied for her in Church and in the Community, and let the dying one be advised of her condition so that, comforted by her faith, she may dispose herself with an act of resignation for that great moment.

Let the Sisters be careful not to abandon themselves to excessive sorrow, and much less let them show excessive grief and uneasiness; let them rather rely on

their faith and give proof of the firmness of their faith in knowing how to support sorrow and the loss of the persons dear to them with Jesus, and for Jesus.

When the patient is about to enter into her agony, the Sisters should not crowd around her as those who yield to unrestrained emotions; but rather let them gather together in church before the Blessed Sacrament, which is usually exposed at this time, and let them pray and plead before the Heart of Jesus in the name of the dying Sister.

Girls and young timid Sisters should not be permitted to assist at the agony of their companions, because this sight might leave too sad an impression and harm them in body and spirit.

Our Divine Savior, when He went into His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane desired that His disciples should leave Him alone to pray and to sweat blood foreseeing that this sight would be too terrible for them, who were not yet advanced in virtue, because they had not as yet received the Holy Spirit.

Out of respect, avoid too much light in the room of the dying Sister, and when the Priest is not present, the nurse and a few of the Sisters will suggest thoughts of total abandonment in God, of resignation, of hope and of love, endeavoring to have the holy name of Jesus and of Mary accompany the patient up to the threshold of Eternity.

When the Sister is at the end of her life, let the Agony Bell be rung so that everyone in the house may recite for her the prayers for the dying. And when the Sister will have given out her last sigh and entered into eternity, do not cry and lament as is the custom with pagans and all those who, having no faith, cannot have any hope. Poor souls! Let us pray for them, who in separation from their dear ones are deprived of all Christian comfort in the hope of seeing them again and joining them in a blessed eternity.

You, oh daughters of faith, unite your sentiments with those of Holy Mother the Church, console yourselves with the thought that, when she remembers her saints, she commemorates the day of their death as their birthday in heaven,

because by closing their eyes on earth, they have opened them in Paradise.

Do not prepare the body of the dead immediately in a coffin because, as experience and the medical science teach us, death may be only apparent. In consequence of this doubt, Holy Mother the Church suggests that when it has been impossible to administer the Holy Sacraments, the Priest may, immediately after the apparent death, administer the Sacraments, provided only that he does it under the condition that the person is alive.

In the Congregation of Divine Providence, the Sisters are accustomed to prepare the body of the dead and to dress her in the habit of her religious Profession, intending, by this means, to honor the virgin and the grace of her vocation.

Gathered again in Church, the Sisters offer for the deceased all the prayers of the day, and recite for her the Rosary of the Eternal Rest.

Let the Superior be solicitous to have Holy Mass celebrated for the repose of her soul, and ask the Sisters to offer for the deceased their Holy Communions

for the three following days. Let all recommend her often to the divine mercy, so that she may soon be admitted to the Beatific Vision with the Lord.

The Daughters of St. Mary should always be mindful to pray for all the Sisters who are deceased, and they should remember that they will one day receive the same charity which they have used towards others.

CHAPTER XXV

The Greatest Evil to Guard Against

The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence are closely bound to the Congregation by three chains, one stronger than the other.

The agreement which obliges the Sister to serve the Congregation, and at the same time binds the Congregation to take solicitous care of her, as of a dearest child, is a chain of strong steel which unites one to the other with the sole aim of doing good, that is to say, the sanctification of soul and the glory of God. This double contract or agreement, pondered over during the whole period of the Novitiate and willingly accepted by both parties, was witnessed by competent judges, the ministers of God in the name

of Holy Mother the Church, and therefore is sacred.

Now, as already said, the reciprocal promise of service and help forms the solid chain which binds you to the Congregation and the Congregation to you. After having seriously deliberated all the time of the Novitiate, you yourself desired this bond with which you were and are still satisfied; then if you are virtuous and persevering, your happiness in having become a living part of the works of Divine Providence will become always greater.

Remember that this solid and durable chain might be broken. Do you know how and by whom? Unfortunately, it could be broken by mortal sin, from which may God always preserve and free you!

Certainly, if God has kept you free from mortal sin until now, He will keep you even in the future; but it is necessary that you on your part cooperate most fervently by living in holy fear of the Lord, that is to say, being zealous to avoid dangers and occasions of transgressing the rules and infidelity to the vows of your Religious vocation. The Fear of the Lord, if you guard it in your heart,

will keep you free from the greatest of all evils--sin.

A second chain, and this one is of the purest silver, will unite you solidly to the Congregation if you let yourself be guided, rather if you will abandon yourself with joy to that bond of Christian charity which reigns in it, with a sway more living and pure than even in the best families.

Family affections often undergo a noticeable change from a simple love to a deep love. Frequent favoritism and conflicts of interest often ruin the peace of the family, and in any case, family ties are changed when a son or daughter breaks away from the home in which they were born to create a new one for themselves.

In Religion, however, none of all this. Here, no partiality, because all the Sisters are equally sacred and dear to the Lord, and therefore to the Congregation. No sentimentality, because for earthly love is substituted a love of charity which comes directly from God; no aims of self-interest, because the vow of poverty deprives every Sister of any

property whatsoever, while giving her the assurance of the necessities of life.

In Religion, the silver chain of Christian Charity binds together in indissoluble union hundreds of Sisters--a union full of support which gives a fore-taste of heaven.

Can this spiritual love of the Congregation be compared with that family love which is many a time so sadly lacking?

In families, harmony between two or more people is difficult; characters, habits, all is a cause of discord.

Here, on the contrary, all of the Sisters are but one heart because all tend to God and depend on God. They move and work with one sole intention, with one heart, all for one, one for all. This union causes the virgins consecrated to God to repeat: "How beautiful it is to dwell in the tabernacles of the Lord! One year in them is worth more than one hundred under the tents of sinners!"

Your soul, in love with the silver chain which means purity and love for God, will make it dear to you as life; nor can it be otherwise, because on it

all your life depends. Now what would you think of him who would rashly dare to remove it from your hearts under the pretext of granting you liberty?

And yet this someone could be for your soul an evil thought not rejected immediately, a thought which might come to persuade you that you are not made for the Congregation and that the Congregation does not agree with you. And as the devil--fallen angel--knows every trick, and uses every art to drag souls to perdition, you need all the graces of God, all the promptness of spirit, and a firm will to resist and overcome the evil one.

What would become of you should you be dismissed? You would find yourself forsaken and alone, deprived of the protection of your sisters, of all moral, material, and spiritual support. And have you not experienced many times that only in union is there strength? For the love of God, be faithful to your vows.

If you should permit the whirlwind of sin to break the double chain which binds you to God and to the religious house chosen by you and then abandoned, who will have pity on you? And do you not know that after so many graces, once

fallen so low, it would be difficult for you to rise again?

Courage, children, as the sailor attaches himself to the ropes and fixes his eyes on the compass, so you must hold tight to the steel chain and to the silver chain so that no strength may be able to detach you, and in the meantime fix your gaze on high, on the heaven which awaits you. Turn confidently to your Father who is in Heaven, and strengthened by the loving protection of the dear Mother in whose ranks you are enrolled, repeat confidently, especially in the hour of danger, to our Lord: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

But another chain, a hundred times more precious than the other two, a golden chain, binds to the Congregation the Daughters of St. Mary. Do you know what it is? In its links are entwined the religious vows. Hold your vows dear, and love them as means given you by God to soar up to Him. These are powerful means, and yet the infernal lion does all he can to destroy them. Stealthily he spies upon your heart to see, if perchance you open it ever so little to his flattery, that he might then break into

it and shatter to fragments the three chains which bind you to the fortress of the Heart of your Bridegroom to make you his own. Be careful: love your golden chain because it starts on earth but reaches up to Heaven.

The Virgin has subdued the serpent and crushed him under her heel; if you are faithful to the Blessed Mother she will defend you.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Superior General

The Superior General should be considered by the Daughters of St. Mary as a most tender mother, and as such they owe her obedience, help and love.

Someone will object: the mother who has given life to our body should come first. No: she is mistaken, because if heaven is so much greater than earth, just so much greater should be our attachment to our spiritual mother, who trains our spirit and in the name of God guides it in the way of perfection, while the other one has given life to the body alone.

God has cultivated in your heart a religious vocation, always respecting your free will, and you, treasuring the divine voice, followed your vocation and have elected your spiritual mother in the Superior of the Congregation chosen by

you. The Lord has graciously accepted your desires, and on the cross nodding to His Mother, He spoke to John, as He does to you: "Child, behold your mother."

You must never lose your love for your natural mother; love and pray for her. But the General Superior represents for you on earth the one who fulfills the part of Mary our most holy mother, who from heaven protects us all and invites us to perfection.

As you would confide in the Blessed Mother, so confide in your Superior, because she loves you as daughters in Christ, and provides for your temporal, moral, and spiritual needs, even when it seems she is not thinking of you, and the evil spirit tempts you to mistrust and discouragement.

Many are the spiritual children of the Superior; but believe this: the Lord, in giving her that office, has also given her a mother's heart so big that it is capable of embracing you all in the immense sea of her charity.

Too true is it that many times you have done as the apostles did, considered yourselves forgotten and abandoned; but

if you have the power of penetrating into souls, you would see your mother do just as Jesus did, when He commanded the elements to calm themselves; and you would hear her voice repeat with Him: *I sleep, but my heart watches.*

The heart of your mother, as a honey-comb, will infuse heavenly sweetness into her words to comfort you and raise you up, and her calm smile will teach you, in your trials and combats, to look for peace of conscience in the faithful fulfillment of your vows, and to seek your joy in sharing as much as you can the sufferings of the cross.

How many times your Superior General, oppressed and harassed by urgent cares and needs, though weeping in secret, will smile upon you; and she will hide herself from your gaze to save you the pain with which she is afflicted so as not to sadden you. By confining her anguish within herself she will tenderly withhold from your head the thorns with which you are troubled, and she will thus make your life meritorious and calm.

Have you ever observed this, oh daughters of the fields? Among the bees, one is at the head and is called queen; she

guides her companions where the flowers are more plenteous and fragrant. Then she gathers them, and calls them to deposit the honey in the beehive, and her bee subjects obey her. Not differently does your Superior General hold the reigns of your house and of yourselves, and governs with great love her Sisters whom she loves as daughters, so that from them the Lord may gather the elect and abundant honey of good works and of a saintly and busy life.

Your Superior--do not forget it--is your mother, and so imparts her directives with prudence, submitting them first to the Rule, and measuring them by your strength. She does not expect from all the same degree of perfection, nor heroic acts which may not be commanded, but are determined only by a very special grace of God.

Be careful not to give in to the diabolical insinuations, which will try to make you imagine that the commands of the Superiors are contrary to the Holy Rule or too austere and difficult, or too relaxed. Let God judge those over you; so far as you are concerned, respect her, love her, and see in her the hand of the

Lord who has elected her to guide the group to which you belong.

I will never repeat it enough to you: you are never allowed to judge your Superior. Many times, even though she loves you sincerely, she shows herself hard to you because she desires to prove your fidelity and to urge you on to greater perfection. Her mother's heart would force her to keep for herself the thorns and offer to you the roses only; but her duty as mistress of souls imposes on her that she trains you to follow and love the thorny path which leads to Heaven. How many times she is pleased to try your fidelity with a rigor which usually does not come from her heart but is only apparent and superficial!

Loving and intelligent Mother that she is, she knows (or at least she studies to know) your needs, your defects, and so in all manner possible she exerts herself to provide for your needs and to correct your faults and imperfections, to reap the fruits of good and to implant in your souls the virtues which are opposed to these imperfections. She is a wise doctor for her dear children; and so open yourselves to her, and she will cure you, or at least she will comfort you in your

afflictions and she will raise you up in your battles.

Abandon yourself lovingly to your Superior, conduct yourself in a way that she can read into the deepest recesses of your heart, and you will gain the blessing of light for your mind and fervor in your relations with God.

Does it seem to you that your Superior General does not understand or neglects you, and does this fear disturb you? Beware lest that self-love or the evil one blind you; but even though such should be true, raise your mind to God and ask Him for comfort. For the rest, no matter what it may be, never fail to confide in the Mother given you by the Lord as guide in the way of perfection; in this case God will be bound to help you even if by a miracle.

The Superior General, the Local Superiors, and all the Superiors should put forth every effort to be impartial and just, and provide for the needs of the Congregation and its members since on them alone is incumbent the duty and the accompanying responsibility.

They should spare no pains, therefore, to know what is best for the House and for the individual persons, and to be ready to face everything.

The wise mother does not spare efforts but with gentleness and prudence according to the demands of the religious spirit, avoids excessive solicitude, and endeavors to reconcile the different offices of Martha and Mary for the good of the house and general edification. Always usefully employed, they must avoid excessive abuse of the body, mind, and heart, because if "too much breaks the lid," so too much work would paralyze her activity and compromise her health.

God sometimes asks heroic sacrifices of souls who are particularly dear to Him. The spirit of darkness only too often brings about large harvests of martyrs in the world; the Lord, however, is pleased to spare His virgins, Brides of the Immaculate Lamb, and yet sometimes he loves to put them to the test and see if they know how and really desire to win for themselves the red, bloodstained palm of martyrdom. When He has found generous souls, who thirst to give their blood and their life for Him, He raises them up to

His Throne near to the Mother of Seven Sorrows.

It has become almost traditional in the works of Divine Providence that for every new foundation, as cornerstones of the edifice, God requires the life of one or more pure virgins of the house. And experience has proved that whenever one of our houses is founded over such cornerstones, its future is assured, because over it the mantle of Divine Providence is spread maternally and benevolently, and God prospers and blesses it.

On hearing such narratives do some of you become frightened and draw back? And yet, if God calls you, would you refuse your free consent? Are you afraid of your weakness? If you are weak God is strong, and if you call upon Him with faith He will give you His strength. St. Francis de Sales says: "I must work as though I were alone in the world, and then I must open my heart to confidence as if I were not the one working, but the Lord worked in me." Apply these words to yourself.

Nor should this law surprise you in the least, because God, infinitely good and wise, seeing our good will and at the

same time our misery, cannot refuse to come to our aid. When the agony of the Garden draws near to us and we are given the bitter chalice to drink, if our nature rebels, let us beg God for the strength to drink it with Jesus to the end.

And you, Daughters of St. Mary, you with all your defects, are nevertheless armed with holy desires to serve God in your needy neighbor; therefore, have courage. Strengthened by your holy vows, you have dedicated your youth, your life, your all to your Heavenly Bridegroom, and He has embraced you with enthusiasm and has given you a secure shelter from the tempest. If He should one day ask of you a sacrifice, even that of your life, would you have the heart to refuse Him?

Do not seek, do not expect martyrdom; it would be presumption. That is a gratuitous gift and God gives it only to those who merit it.

As far as you are concerned, put forth every effort with tender solicitude to serve the poor and the sick so dear to God, as is the pupil of our eye to us. Serving the favorites of God, you will make Him your friend, and He will not

fail to aid and comfort you in the moment in which the need is greatest.

Let the Sisters pray fervently for each other, and much more for the Superior General and for the local Superiors, knowing well that their own well-being and their happiness cannot exist if not in loving accord with all the members, who even when they go to Heaven want to go in great numbers headed by all their Superiors.

Jesus has promised that, where two or more persons are united in prayer, there He Himself will be found in spirit to gather up the petitions in order to present them to His Eternal Father. How can you fear then that your prayers said together will remain unanswered?

May Holy Faith, which sends the light of Paradise to earth, shine brightly in our minds, then every sacrifice will be sweet to us and every sorrow will seem light, and so will we reach our last end, the sanctification of souls and the glory of God.

And it is also your duty, oh dearest children, to pray to the Lord for the Clergy, whether he be Bishop or simple

priest who in the name and by the order of the Vicar of Christ assists, with his wise protection, the Congregation to which you have vowed yourself, and who presides over the election of your Superior General.

Consider what a great kindness it is on the part of the Holy Father to assign a Bishop for this solemn meeting, and what great humility and charity it is for the Bishop who, in person, or represented by one of his priests deigns to preside over your elections.

The clergy will encourage you with loving zeal, and you will receive his words with reverent respect. He will speak to you to direct you in that most important act of electing at least for six years a Superior according to the Heart of God. Follow the counsels of the man of God, because he has experience and the enlightenment of his high ministry.

He, representing the Supreme Pontiff and God Himself, rejoices with you in the election of your Superior General, and with inspired words will give you useful advice and teachings. Cherish within your hearts the light received from the words of the Superior, and with the

humility and devotion, the periodically prescribed five-yearly report will be transmitted to the Vicar of Jesus Christ through the Sacred Congregation of Religious.

The first time that St. Theresa, after being elected Superior General visited the different monasteries, she used to bring out the picture of the Madonna for veneration of her sisters, then calling them around her, she said to them, "I present to you in Mary the real Superior of the Convent. I promise never to do a thing that will be displeasing to her."

You do the same. Put your complete confidence in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and remember always to mistrust yourself completely and to confide only in God. However, after Jesus place your confidence and your hope in His Immaculate Mother, that Mother of Providence whom you have chosen as Patroness. She is the joy and the protection of all who trust in her. No, let it never be said, let us repeat with St. Bernard, that anyone who had recourse to Mary was not heard and answered.
Beg the Blessed Virgin to take you and your Congregation under her protecting

mantle, and in that peace of God promised to men of good will the Houses of Divine Providence, united in one heart and in one family, will mirror the Sacred Family on earth. But remember that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph labored and suffered much on earth; to you too, if you love and embrace labor, sacrifice and suffering with them, it will be given one day to be all united in heaven. There, to sing and praise and to swell the already great blessedness of the blessed, your voices will be united, and you too will be blessed for all eternity.

What joy it will be to meet all the daughters of Divine Providence at the last Judgment with the Superiors at the head -- if they all have followed the way pointed out by God! How sweet will be the voice of the Heavenly Bridegroom who calls all together: "Come to my right because you have observed my laws and your vows, and you have lived in charity. Come."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Superior Council

The Daughters of St. Mary of Providence have their Superior Council--they should respect and obey it. Thus the sons of the Holy Patriarch Jacob held him in great honor, and all the Hebrew people obeyed and honored Moses as their teacher and father. What more? Mary, and Jesus Himself, the Man-God, looked upon and obeyed as head of their family the Holy Patriarch Joseph. Consider yourselves therefore highly honored in having a Superior Council, and respect its decisions.

In imitation of the Word made flesh, who wished to have His disciples as assistants, sending them out before Him to prepare the people for His divine coming, so some Sisters are assigned to the Superior General as collaborators, who form with her the Superior Council.

In both the civil and the religious order, society is presided over by a group of directors, called empire, kingdom, or republic, Holy Mother Church, or parochial authority. The Pope has his Cardinals, the Parish Priests their trustees, every tribunal is made up of the president surrounded by the judges, every family has its head in the father and in the mother.

With serenity thank the Lord for having placed you in an Order of discipline and subjection, which is in accord in all and always to the sublime order of nature and of grace which reigns in the universe. And you should thank Him much more because He has chosen you yourself as ministers and cooperators.

Redouble your prayers and recollect yourselves often to implore the Divine assistance, and you may be sure that Jesus will descend in your midst with His grace, and He will suggest the part which you must take in the nomination, and He will help you to give your opinion with holy frankness. Never cease to supplicate God to give you a Superior according to His heart, of sane judgment, of energetic heart, charitable and patient, but above all prudent, because prudence is

the greatest gift for those who have the difficult task of ruling.

With your prayers and votes, as real ministers of God, let your choice fall on the most worthy Sisters, and in that way cooperate in giving them the office of Mother. Once you have nominated them, you must acknowledge these mother Superiors, respecting in them, the very authority of God, because, remember always, that all authority comes directly from Him. In Your Superior General and the Superior Council elected by you and placed at the head of the Congregation, convinced of the great responsibility thrust upon them, may feel themselves unequal to the task of corresponding to the faith which is deposited in them. Persuade them that you will pray often and fervently for them; assure them that you will assist them with your docility and love by fulfilling to the best of your ability the office assigned to you; and the newly elected will regain courage, and will unite themselves closely to you in prayer, in hope and in love of God and of their neighbor.

The universal acclamation of the Sisters, with the grace of God, will infuse a tenderness and a maternal wisdom in your Superiors, and will give them an energy springing from charity and zeal. All their thoughts, all their affections will be turned to you and your good, and if you are faithful daughters, they will be incomparable mothers.

This admirable harmony of faith and charity is the established foundation of the Congregation, which is proud of its title, Saint Mary of Providence.

Let your Superiors study your characters, your needs, your defects in order to correct them, your virtues to increase them so as to arrive at greater perfection, and be grateful to God who has prepared for you a maternal heart to sustain you in your combats and raise your spirits.

But above all this heart of mother is meant to enrich your mind with useful knowledge, and your soul with precious gifts. This knowledge and these gifts, by rendering virtue familiar to you, will make you fruitful branches in the Congregation which expects great good from every one of you.

See how your mothers are immersed in prayer? Yes, certainly they keep their hands raised to heaven, so that their dear daughters, precious part of their hearts, will run triumphantly in the way of perfection.

It is therefore your positive duty to pray with equal fervor for your spiritual mother. Pray as children and endeavor to imitate her good qualities, avoiding, however, with every effort to imitate the defects which she may have. And that she could have defects should not surprise you, because it is written that the just man falls seven times a day; therefore, you should not be scandalized.

Endeavor to enter into the spirit of the Superior, cooperate with loving fidelity in the good which she wishes or tries to do, and lend yourselves willingly to obey not only her commands but to follow out her desires and her holy intentions. As to the rest, I repeat, if you wish to be understood in your miseries tolerate, without showing that you are doing so, the defects of your Sisters, and much more that of the Mother whom God has given you as guide and comfort. If you really know how to cultivate these good dispositions in

yourself, obedience will be easy and spontaneous for you, and obedience prompt, blind, joyful, cheerful, without if, ands, or buts, without replies or murmurings of any kind.

Obey with pleasure and joy when the command is not above your capacity; but should it become extremely difficult and heavy, or dangerous, open your heart candidly to your mother and she will lift the command, or modify it, or change it according to the case. You must always be persuaded that your Superior, in the role of affectionate mother, does not wish to impose on you a command which is above your strength, much less to put in danger your health or your virtue. She has the right to command you, and she has also the right to be advised by you of any personal or general conditions which oppose her orders, so as not to incur unnecessary hardships and--God forbid--dangers.

If you only know how often, though outwardly showing a holy indifference, your Spiritual Mother is in great anguish for your good! Listen to her as often as you can, not to give her nor to add occasions of suffering, but rather be a source of relief and joy. Accustom yourselves to

hide the thorns of life in your own hearts, so as not to lose the merit, and offer yourself generously to your Heavenly Bridegroom; nevertheless, if you feel the need, or it seems useful to make them known to your Superior, open yourself freely with her, but await the moment when it will be easier for her to receive your confidences, and she will have time to tell you the proper solutions.

With generous simplicity, offer yourself, your work, and all your good will to your Superior, so that you may be useful to her, for the good of the House; and for your own profit then await her orders respectfully with the intention of carrying them out even though they be difficult and burdensome. When she has proof of the promptness of your obedience, and your generosity, seeing you ready for the difficult work of zeal and charity to which she has destined you, she will be greatly consoled, and will thank God for having blessed her efforts and her labors.

If in some dark moment, you should be overcome by laziness, or reluctance to submit your talent to that of your Superior, bear in mind that this fault is

inexcusable, because she is your mother. Now children are obliged to help their mother in every need, and in every work which is within their strength.

The Sisters may not in any way remain disinterested in the burdens of the house and in the various works which are performed in them. They must rather feel themselves personally invested with the responsibility of their mother directress, because the natural law itself says that to carry the burdens of the Congregation the aid of each and every member must be utilized.

When they are animated by a good spirit, they will find the burden light and the yoke sweet, and it will be especially true for a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence, that the yoke of the Lord is the sweetest yoke, and the weight of the evangelical counsels is light, and a great help in all of life's contingencies.

The Motherhouse, in which the General Council resides, should be a model house to which the others must conform. This will aid in perfect observance of the Holy Rule.

The local houses, mirroring themselves in the Motherhouse, live the same life, and participate in the fervor and energy of the Motherhouse, in the same manner as the smaller wheels of a complicated piece of mechanism move and work in compliance with and in support of this movement of the principal wheel, that is, the motor, which gives power to all the parts put together.

The Superior Council keeps attentive watch over the direction of the local houses, of which, to continue the comparison, it keeps the register, and directs the movement. The Councils of the individual houses which receive life and direction from the Superior Council, should communicate them to all the members of the house, so that every one of them, fulfilling their own part, concur in that concord, harmony, and holy work of beneficent apostolate which is the scope and end of the work. In such an admirable union of intention and action which multiplies the good to be done, we have a splendid proof that only in union there is strength.

Console yourselves, dearest daughters in Jesus Christ. Your Congregation which unites a great number of souls is like a

well-guarded fortress which cannot be reduced by hunger nor by the united forces of hell, because the finger of God, which in a moment could destroy and annihilate them all, protects it.

The union of so many Sisters, bound to the holy cause by the triple vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, all animated by the sole desire for the glory of God, service and relief of the miseries of their neighbor forms a respectable body, an army in the line of battle. Now if God aids them, they will overcome the armies of the devil, and will gain souls for the Lord.

When the trumpet announcing war is heard, that is to say, when error threatens souls, and the troops of the enemy lay traps for faith and morals, oh Sisters, raise aloft the cross; it will be the invincible weapon with which you will obtain victory. Be on the alert therefore, and armed, remembering what Holy Job said: *"The Life of men on earth is continual warfare."*

But never fear, I repeat, because your army is under the guidance of the divine Captain, Jesus Christ. He loves you greatly, and so He has not left you

alone, but has put you under the protection of His vicar, the Holy Father, and has given you as escorts and defense, the Superiors of the Congregation. Lift up your hearts, daughters of the Blessed Virgin! Go on securely in the way you have entered, strengthened by divine assistance, and your dear vows. Sustained by your Superiors who guide you in the name of Divine Providence, with the omnipotent protection of your Mother who is in Heaven, go on fearlessly until the last triumph: the cross, death, but then eternal Paradise, eternally happy.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Elections in General

As God, when He created man, set his head on top as though to direct the body and all its parts, the same is true of your Congregation, which is a most noble body, to which it is necessary to give a head to guide it and lead it in all its actions.

Now, the visible head of the Community of Divine Providence is the Superior Council and after that comes the particular council of all the houses, whether they be spread over Italy or other countries.

In every well governed family, in every office, in every town, in every nation, there must be a head under the name of father, master, mayor, king or president of the republic, who has the supreme authority in domestic, civil, or social

affairs; and if this head is good and wise, the family, the office, the town, the army, and the state correspond to their calling and work together to establish morality and universal peace. The dependents of the head, that is to say, the helpers, who are the arms, and often the heart, contribute efficaciously to the well-being of the private and public affairs. If instead the head is ailing, everything goes wrong and it is hard, very hard to prevent complete and irreparable ruin, of the society, small or great, which depends on him.

Let us think, therefore, how important it is to the work to which we have given our name and all our strength, that it have directors as nearly as possible in accordance with the adorable will of the Lord, and to the needs of the House, which God in His infinite mercy has blessed and made prosper up till now beyond all our fondest hopes.

Remember, though, what we have already said, that obtaining a good leader depends largely on you, beyond the part which you take in the election, because the Lord wants to give a Superior and a Council according to his wishes as a reward to those who deserve it.

Be good, therefore; endeavor to become very good, and God, Who is always great and generous far beyond our merits, will give you Superiors who will anticipate your needs, and will aid you with the greatest zeal on the way to perfection.

The Lord, even though He gives you His Council and the leader which you deserve, wants, however, that the election come freely from you. It is already a high honor for you to be ministers of God in this act of the election.

This great honor, however, requires from each one of you a wise and valid cooperation, and this will not be possible if you do not endeavor with all your strength to obtain light from on high. And it is understood that to obtain this light it is not enough to pray and to do one's duty; you must render your prayers worthy of a hearing by a generous and constant sacrifice of your inclinations and tastes and do your duty with the greatest diligence, avoiding every defect. The author of the Imitation of Christ says: "Do well, whatever you do." Let us reflect on this.

If you wish to be a worthy instrument in the hand of God, you must be a child

of prayer and thus make meditation and the exercises of virtue enjoyable and familiar. It will be very useful for you, to this end, to study the virtues of your sisters in order to imitate them. When, however, you see in these some defects, learn from them and avoid them.

If it happens that you are to take part in the Superior Council or even the local Councils, invoke the grace of God, so that you may enter into the hidden thoughts of your companions, discuss difference of opinion, if there be any, and confirm them in their suggestions.

Above all, however, with your heart full of tenderness, wise and prudent, enter into their thoughts to reinforce their inclinations to virtue, and restrain them from any weakness. If you show that the charity of Jesus Christ alone urges you, that the least movement of curiosity or indiscretion has no power over your judgment, take courage, continue your work, and you will be sure to exercise your influence in a meritorious manner with all those who depend on you or who approach you.

It may happen sometimes that a certain Sister, due to peculiar circumstances o:

birth or of life, or on account of natural tendencies to withdraw into herself, or maybe because she is well advanced in perfection, detached from all and by all, preferring to be understood by God alone, may remain aloof to your loving inquiries. In that case, do not force the door of that heart. It is a sanctuary into which no glance many penetrate; you do not wish to lift the veil in which she is surrounded, and with that holy amiability which is the first-born of charity, help that soul if perhaps she is suffering, imitate her virtue, respect her reserve, because it is very probable that under this reserve is hidden a high degree of perfection. But let your charity be wise, and not an apparent charity which makes you foolish; if you see that her reserve is born of indifference or discontent, try without delay to mend the matter, seeing to it that the Sister be given an office according to her taste, for which she has capacity, and for which she is adapted. If you do this she will soon recover, and that heart which was sealed to your affections will open as a flower to the rays of the sun, and will in its own time give forth abundant fruits.

Useless, difficult, and dangerous would be the union of many persons obliged to live together an identical life, if that happy unity of thought and affections which characterizes you, of Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, would not reign among them. You are blessed, if thus united, you steadily cherish the wish and seize every opportunity to help one another. What is your secret? A love which is not according to the flesh, but springs from and is centralized in the love of God. Love one another, love one another tenderly in God, Who is the noblest center of your hopes; and your love will become a fount of joy and will fill you with merits for the other life.

With this method of reciprocal knowledge of aptitudes and virtues, it will be easy for the Superior Council to choose those Sisters who will correspond to the confidence placed in them, and to the innumerable difficulties they will meet for new foundations or for Direction in the smaller houses.

The Local Council is under the immediate jurisdiction of the local Superior. This is named by the Superior Council, by a proposal of the local Superior, which

will consult with all the Sisters of the House about which Sister to elect.

If the House is large, the Superior will be given a Vice-Superior, who usually serves as Secretary, and an Econome, and two Councillors. These constitute the Council. With the Council thus constituted it will be easy for the Superior to discuss and dispose with good practical sense the different offices, and the proper development of the work begun with the consent of the Superior Council who, as before stated, resides in the Motherhouse.

The many local houses so united and joined, have the opportunity to make suggestions, often very valuable, and are in a position to present the needs and the desires of the locality in which they are located, and of the civil and religious authority with whom they have contacts and dealings, and in that way they may carry on to greater perfection the progress of the works of Divine Providence.

Never let it be forgotten. It is a thing of the greatest importance, that the local houses bring or send exact and detailed reports to the Motherhouse, as

it is a natural thing and a duty that a devoted and obedient child depend entirely on the one who has given her life, and this obedience will be taken note of to provide future references.

It often happens that they find themselves embarrassed in the choice of personnel, and it is only too true that a mistake is often made, and this is almost always due to lack of information. If instead, the information were well studied, many mistakes would be avoided, the assignments would be made easier, and having the proper persons in the right places, more satisfactory results would be obtained, as is usual where the Sisters are expert in their assignments.

In effecting this happy cooperation between Sisters and Superiors lies the perfection of the Council, who if they are well informed as to what is going on in general and in particular in the house, can with greater security and efficacy, fulfill their duties and make the necessary changes, without being wrecked on Schylla or Charydis.

The Superior Council, as a natural center, is the head of all the undertakings and individuals of the Congregation, and

it is their duty, as already suggested, that they keep an exact list of all the Sisters, no matter to which house they belong; as it is also to make accurate notations of the characteristics of each and every facility, hospital, kindergarten and any other centers of education or work of charity which belongs to the Congregation.

To register simply the names and the dates would not be difficult nor too much to ask, but to keep a strict record of the physical power of each individual and further, of the intellectual, moral and religious qualities of each member is possible only when every house transmits truthful and detailed information to the Motherhouse, written with the proper judgment under the eye of God.

The same Superior Council is expected to conduct the affairs of greater importance and therefore it is necessary to keep the files and all the entries up to date to aid in the prompt execution of the affairs aforementioned. Only in this manner will they be able to smooth away the usual difficulties which arise in every undertaking, and they can be aware of the snares which may be laid for them and frustrate them in time.

It will be well for us to stop here while we are on the practical subject of the Superior Council, and its different offices so that there be no misunderstandings.

The Superior Council, it is well to repeat in order to avoid equivocations, must live in the Motherhouse, so as to be more ready to treat of the necessary matters regarding this house, which are united with the interests of the local houses.

Exact in administration, exact in discipline, exact in the charitable fulfillment of the different offices, the Motherhouse should excel as a model before all the other houses.

In all economic, commercial, political, or religious organizations the necessary qualifications are required of those who lead or administer. We observe in fact especially in industry and in commerce frequent failures, and if we seek the cause, we will find it always in the incapacity or substantial defect in administration.

The same could happen, and often does happen, in religious endeavors with the

best intentions: the one at the head has not the necessary qualifications to stand up in the face of contrary winds.

Instead, assign to a task a person who is competent for her office, who knows how to gain confidence and conduct herself with good manners and virtues. You will see. The work will sail smoothly. Personality means everything. The rest comes by itself. Money will come; all the means which Providence finds necessary will come, if the one who guides the work knows how to mistrust herself and confide only in God.

From our reasoning above it follows that the Superior Council, if they have at heart the interests of the House which are the interests of God in His poor, must know how to gain universal confidence by faithful fulfillment of their duties.

The persons belonging to the Council must not only respect one another, but they must respect themselves for the dignity of the office which is entrusted to them, because it is necessary that all who belong to the House hold in high esteem the position of authority, and acknowledge that this comes not from

individual merits but entirely from God. Fortified by this thought, the Sisters respect and obey the Council and will have full confidence that by the grace of God they will receive enlightenment from on high, and will therefore guide well the works confided to their care.

In view of our misery and our short-sightedness, it will be well to repeat again.

Sympathize, sympathize wholeheartedly with the defects which you may see in the persons higher up in the Council; and remember that even the sun has its spots, and on the other hand every human, being made of clay as was our father Adam, is fallible and mortal. And let me add, because these persons are in high positions, it is easy for those under them to see every tiny speck that mars their sanctity, even though it may not have its roots in the soul. Anyway, even if you see them full of defects, do not cease to obey, but take it upon yourself to recommend them to the Blessed Virgin, and she will make them Saints.

And then think of this. When you have diligently fulfilled your office, you are finished. The Superiors instead have a

continual solicitude and continuous anxieties, and they are obliged to constant mental stress which leaves them no peace night or day while you can repose tranquilly at night, maybe they are kept awake by pressing worries which hinder the necessary restoration of body and mind.

It would be foolish to expect that the Superior should be occupied for long periods and intensely in other offices of charity, because on the one hand, time is lacking, and on the other they are no longer accustomed to and have no longer the aptitude for such work. That is very natural. Her task is not small. They must get the Sisters organized, distribute offices, be seriously occupied with the development of the work, and all this requires continual effort and study so as to give advice.

Therefore, Religious should never expect to judge, and much less to condemn, the dealings of the religious who are over them; but even though they should discover in them some shadow, let them be careful not to judge, especially to judge rashly, and let them always persist in obedience to their Superiors.

This subject is of such great importance that a whole book would not suffice to instruct and exhort you, good Daughters of the Blessed Mother. In giving you this Guide, we intend to give you only an outline, and the general norms of conduct.

You, oh souls called to evangelical perfection, are expected, with the help of the Lord, to beautify this outline and to fill in the gaps in these pages.

May the Blessed Virgin, in whose name you are gathered together, give you the grace to know this gift greater than all others; faithful to your vows and to your calling, walk generously in the way marked out for you by charity and by obedience, avoiding evil and doing good, all that good which Divine Providence will point out to you. And God bless you!

CHAPTER XXIX.

Election of the Four Councillors

of the Superior General, of the
Secretary General and of the

General Econome (Treasurer).

It will not be repeated often enough that, in electing Sisters, it is necessary to keep it fixed in mind that we must invoke the Holy Spirit and thoroughly study the special aptitudes of the candidates.

So, before naming the Econome (Treasurer), it is necessary to investigate whether the Sister has inclinations and facility in treating the affairs of the house, and whether she is gifted with great piety, and has a practical mind, and above all a spirit of faith, of charity and prudence.

The Econome (Treasurer) of the Congregation has more or less the office of Martha, it being her duty to find out the cost and the quality of the merchandise, appoint the time, the place and persons suitable to make purchases for the maintenance of the Congregation. It is the duty also of the Econome to oversee the costs of constructions or repairs of the buildings, which expenses require caution and a calm spirit, so as not to run the danger of deceit and not to compromise at the same time the always very poor cash box of the house.

The Econome (Treasurer) must always attentively watch the quality of the merchandise, avoiding if possible dealing with people whose honesty is doubtful. If, however, by mistake a merchant gets the best of you, be careful not to let him take advantage of you a second time. Be careful, however, of being too fastidious and inclined to suspicion, because this manner of acting would offend both the dignity of the Religious habit and the persons with whom you do business.

When, once you are sure of the honesty of a person and you have had experience with him, it is not wise to be too miserly with regard to the price; because it

is not only charity to give to those who are languishing in misery, but it is often a more delicate charity to treat contractors with generosity, especially if they are not wealthy and maybe in need themselves. Do you know that this contractor is honest and poor? Treat him with some confidence, treat him generously, and you will be rewarded.

The works of Divine Providence are maintained by charity because they possess nothing besides confidence in God; so the Econome providing for them must live a life of faith. Let her do the best she can and trust sincerely in the Lord.

With regard to necessary expenses--that is, those regarding food, clothing, and housing of the Sisters and of the residents--let her provide these with a generous heart, because Providence is obliged to aid her when she knows how to avoid superfluous expense with prudence and humility, and keeps rigidly to what she thinks indispensable for her life and that of the persons confided to her.

There are many other expenses which are not of prime necessity but which are convenient and useful. If the Econome has

already received or knows that she will receive necessary funds from Providence, let her permit such expenses; but she must remember to be very cautious, and not to decide without having heard the Council of the General Superior.

To these sometimes are added expenses which are neither indispensable nor strictly useful, and yet very opportune to give the house a tone of completeness, such as flowers in a garden and fruit in an orchard. Here also is required the greatest caution in the Econome, so as not to disregard anything which might be useful to the house, and at the same time not to cut notches into the vow of poverty--to which poverty are attached abundant graces for the Congregation.

Not by chance have we said that the Econome must be a Religious of great faith, and, we add, of great prayer to know how to decide and act according to prudence and charity. She, like Joseph, the son of Jacob in the Palace of Pharoah, functions as a dispenser, and poorer than he, holds in her hands the purse, that is to say, the limited property of the convent, from which must come all that is necessary and maybe also that which is useful.

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However, with all the economic affairs of her office, she must keep her heart detached from all property, opening her heart and her hand with the greatest generosity to the poor. The office of Econome is extremely difficult and dangerous; therefore, must be confided to persons of great and proved virtue. She, remembering the traitor apostle who committed deicide, keeps closely united to the Heart of Jesus, Who seeing the hungry crowds exclaimed: "*Misereor super turbam,*" and felt a deep compassion and worked that miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. You certainly will not be so presumptuous as to pretend miracles, but if you know how to mistrust yourself, you will have the right to confide in God, even against all hope, and He certainly will send unexpected aid, whenever you know how to merit it.

The General Econome must provide not only for the Motherhouse, but also for all of the local houses, especially for those in the state of formation, because, as children, they do not know how to get on by themselves but are in all things and always in need of motherly help.

To the General Econome, the Local Economes should promptly send their

monthly and yearly reports, and they should consider her their leader for advice and guidance.

It would be very useful to have in the larger houses a purchasing agent, so as to be able to make purchases direct from wholesalers. Besides buying food and ordinary merchandise in a large quantity, it would enable you to get better quality and also better prices. While this manner of providing would be useful in some respects, it might on the other hand be a disadvantage, because Religious often consume more when they have no anxiety about getting the money to make the purchase. Now this fact might frequently compromise the spirit of poverty which must be maintained unchanged in our work. Let the matter be talked over, and then decide what is best.

The General Econome must be in accord with the views of the Superior General, to work with her and give her the indispensable assistance necessary to the success of the various works, and distribute the work with equity and profit. If the two agree in their decisions and keep their minds and hearts constantly turned to God, with the right intention of following His holy inspirations and

His ways, the work will go on with the greatest order, and will reach in a short time a most successful development.

The Sisters, when electing the Economie, will keep before them the foregoing observations and will recommend the matter to our Lord so that they may designate one who has in her all the requisites necessary to meet the picture sketched above.

Regarding the naming of the General Secretary, it is necessary to repeat all that was said for the nomination of the Superior General, because she must be almost the mind and heart of the Superior General.

In the same manner that the Economie must provide for the material needs of the House, the Secretary must cover the moral and spiritual needs of all the persons belonging to the Congregation with her activity and her zeal.

Both dependent on and equal to her, the Secretary is almost like the Superior General in everything that must be foreseen and provided for the Sisters and the residents.

To succeed well in all this, the Secretary must make the thoughts and preoccupations of the Superior General her own, she must study the physical, moral and spiritual needs of the Congregation and must endeavor to be a relief and comfort to the General in her many and serious cares. She must be secretive as her name implies, and studying to put her whole soul in that of her Mother, she will gain her affection and confidence and will know how to keep it.

Truly she would be acting against charity and against her duty should she divulge the interests and the affairs of the Superior and of the House, and in addition she would give start to curiosity and gossiping which are really dangerous, and of great harm to a Religious Community. She is Secretary, therefore, let her learn to guard the secrets.

Let her keep herself far from that stiff attitude which would make her appear to her Sisters as a severe judge, in whose presence their hearts should beat with fear and trembling. No indeed! The Secretary should be free and easy, cheerful and self-possessed, in such a manner as to encourage the Sisters and invite them to serve God with joy. Let

her speak to them with an agreeable charm, but always with a holy prudence; and when she is questioned regarding things which require secrecy, let her amiably change the subject. If she cannot succeed in this, let her answer simply: "Regarding this I can tell you nothing," or even: "I know nothing"; and she will mean: "I know nothing which I can tell those who question me without necessity." Prudence, let me repeat, must accompany your every act, your every word.

It is also strictly a duty of the Secretary to write and keep up the heavy correspondence of the Congregation, and of the Motherhouse with the local houses.

It is her duty to keep the files in order and this requires, without a doubt, much work and much ability. If with the growth of the Congregation, this work should become excessive, it would be useful and opportune that the Superior Council should assign to the Secretary a religious as assistant file clerk.

The Secretary should be prepared to assume all the affairs of the Congregation, know all the advantages, rights, duties and especially the spirit, so as

to be able, in every encounter--which happens often--to indicate the simple, clear and absolute solution to problems.

Let her go quickly to the bottom of things and never let them hang suspended or unfinished.

A humble and hardworking Secretary must substitute for a good Superior in case of necessity; if the Superior is ill or advanced in age, the Secretary should and must be a help and comfort to her.

Before, however, nominating the Secretary and the Econome, four Councillors General are to be nominated, of which the first must substitute for the Superior General when she is sick, far away, or unable to attend.

Next, because of the necessity of ordering prayers and suggesting ways of obtaining the grace of God, a Vicar must be put at the side of the Superior General, along with valid Councillors. She will be both her walking stick and her advisor.

That Sister who naturally possesses the gift of reading within people, who understands the root of affairs readily

and finds a way to straighten them out, will be a Councillor as God intended. Let the choice fall on her.

There are many souls, who without having made any particular or deep studies, have received from mother nature, or rather from the Lord, a special tact and ease of manner which is equal to a treasure of experience and of knowledge.

If, to this natural inclination the Sister adds humility and recognizes every good from on high, we will have in her a model Councillor. She will never make herself appear in giving Council, but will refer all to the merit of God, and will abandon herself to the wisdom of the Superior General for the decision. It is only under such conditions that the Spirit of the Lord will descend into hearts, and will make them decide for the best. Whoever desires to acquire much virtue must pray much. The Lord enters with His enlightenment into minds which do not bow down to the earth but which are raised up to heaven, and He makes Himself felt by chaste and simple souls. Go for council to the man of God, says the Lord in Holy Books. Now that soul is of God, who delights to converse with God, who knows how to embrace divine

charity, who makes an effort to read in the book of the Crucifix the manner of edifying his neighbor, and in the Crucifix finds the strength to do good no matter how much it costs.

The Councillor is obliged to refer to the Superior in necessary and useful things, but sometimes she will have to treat about superfluous matters. I know no better suggestion than that well known one of St. Augustine, who left it written: *In necessary matters, all must be of one mind to carry it out; when things are dubious or simply useless, let them choose freely. In all matters, let the spirit of charity prevail.*

Let the Councillors seek to win the confidence of the Superior General and of the Sisters of the Council. They will gain confidence and esteem by putting their good qualities into action, and adopting manners full of charity towards their Sisters, knowing themselves to be in debt to all.

They will never try to propose their own advice with the obstinate intention to make it prevail; but let them wait to be questioned, and even then let them give their opinion with simplicity of

manner and word, without expecting it to be adopted.

In the ordinary conferences of the Superior Council, the Councillors are obliged to state whether they disapprove or approve what has been brought up for discussion. If they approve heartily, they should declare it openly, careful to avoid any flattery and every vain fear or cringing; they must be careful also not to commit the sin of pride, taking it for granted that their advice triumphed. Let discussions be short and once a solution is found, do not return to them, so as to avoid confusion. Begin both the Conferences and discussions with invocations to God to enlighten you, and end them with prayer.

In the Conferences, only matters which should be treated in Conference should be brought up without referring to facts or persons, the memory of which might bring about damage to someone or offend charity in some way.

The general upset of ideas and the revolution which floods the world has engendered such confusion even in the good, that no one can dare take a step to make a decision without fear of failing.

Invoke, therefore, and call on the help of the Blessed Virgin to obtain for you the virtue of Counsel. Every Sister, therefore, should remember the necessity of mistrusting her own judgment and of confiding in that which comes from on high, if she does not want to run into ruin.

We are very grateful to Our Holy Father Leo XIII of holy memory, who has come to the aid of our littleness, adding to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the dear invocation, *Mother of Good Counsel, pray for us!* And we, at every hour and especially in uncertainties and when our mind is clouded by egotism and the evil spirit comes to tempt us, will repeat with all the fervor of our heart, with all the submission of our will: *Mother of Good Counsel, pray for us!* *Mother of Good Counsel, accompany us in our quest for Virtue.* *Mother of Good Counsel, help us carry out perfectly the good works which are the aim of our life!*

CHAPTER XXX

Conferences

Man, a sociable creature by nature, needs to bare his soul to the soul of those who are his brothers by blood or by choice, to hear their voices, to exchange ideas and love with them, to give and receive advice and help in the various trials of life.

Now this emptying out of hearts, one into the other, when it is not a useless waste of energy, is exactly what is meant by a conference. To confer with someone means to expose one's thoughts, and judgment, to listen to the judgment and thoughts of others, and from the comparisons made, to deduce consequences, or practical decisions in regard to the facts on which the conference has been held.

In families, in business, in cities, and in government, conferences are held. It is, therefore right and just that the House of Divine Providence too should have its conferences, and in them the Religious of the community work together.

The Parish Priest, as a good father of the family, calls his helpers and co-operators to confer on the happenings of the day and so learns how to protect and instruct the flock committed to his care.

Imitate the good pastor, of Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, and gather together in the name of the Lord to expose to the community the most important things which regard it, and how best to maintain in it the spirit of holy vows, and to keep away all that may impair harmony and good success.

I do not intend to speak of extraordinary conferences here, but rather those conferences which it is the custom to hold every week in all the houses.

Give the importance to these conferences which they are due, because, as I've already reminded you, Jesus has assured us: "Where two or three persons are gathered together in my name, I will

be in the midst of them." Keep near to Jesus with the greatest care.

Be animated by faith, and no matter how little it may seem that you have to say or do, in the name of the Lord open the conference. He will enlighten your mind and comfort your hearts to do good every time that you gather together.

To overcome any difficulty in finding a free hour, set an hour which will be most convenient, and list it as one of your duties.

In order that the Conference should serve its purpose, it is necessary that the Sisters come to it with the holy desire to find some new means and ways of presenting our work and then practicing it. Avoid self-love as a plague, so as not to be tempted to make your opinion prevail, and if your opinion is accepted do not become proud. Regulate yourself so that you may give edification and receive it.

Be careful not to abandon yourself excessively to any oratorical art which even unintentionally might overcome all opposition and give your counsel the

victory, because such strategem would offend holy humility.

If your advice is thrown out, instead of regretting it, thank God because in this way He has given you a salutary humiliation.

If instead your advice is accepted, do not demonstrate any childish delight, but refer all to the glory of God.

Two other big defects which you must avoid with the greatest care are that of talking too much and of talking too little. He who talks too much becomes annoying; he who is taciturn shows himself disinterested in the work, without spirit or life, and appears indifferent to good and evil.

Discussions are useful and necessary oftentimes in the conferences; therefore, the parties interested have the duty to talk and to answer for the interest of the good cause and in the name of God, in Whose name they have assembled. If you act thus, oh Daughters of St. Mary, the Lord will bless you not only in your conferences, but also in all your words and actions.

What will be the subjects of the conferences?

They are many and varied, and may concern the material, moral, and religious order of the Congregation.

In the material order you will study the best way of saving on the expenses of the house, while providing necessities as also to procure the improvement and maintenance of the buildings with the utmost economy. Regarding the administration of the material goods which have been given you by Divine Providence, you will never lack difficulties to settle, questions of taxes and so forth. You will have to talk about the greater or less convenience of providing material for clothing, furniture and for the food of the Community and maybe also other things.

Passing over onto the moral order, it will be useful to talk about the ability and aptitudes of the Sisters, so as to decide on the best way to occupy them usefully. It might also be necessary to discuss the residents with the view of giving them work that is satisfactory to them, and at the same time such that it will aid them to provide for their

necessities when they leave the facility, and also render them useful to the house while they remain.

It will be necessary to discuss the means of maintaining harmony in the Community, studying attentively how to remove every difficulty and every impediment which may interfere with good order.

Of course the need will necessarily arise to inquire whether the religious spirit reigns supreme in the house, and with this in view it will be good to treat about the obligation of always renewing the right intention in all our actions, and to get the soul accustomed to live constantly in the presence of God.

A machine, no matter how good it is in itself, needs a good and capable mechanic to repair the inevitable wearing away caused by its continual movement. So the Congregation, notwithstanding its strong foundation, has need that all the religious give a hand in preventing any difference of opinion which might spoil or break up its harmony. Prayer, humility, and charity are the purest oils to make the mystic wheels of the Religious Community run smoothly--or rather fly--

towards its highest end: perfection and God.

In the spiritual order, it is good to proceed with respectful caution. It is not wise for this book to go too deeply into a minute examination of persons, but it is well to take up here especially the external acts which we can see. It is indispensable to good success to correct the defects of the members, and especially the bad habit of murmuring, because nothing more than murmuring is a powerful weapon in the hands of the devil to disrupt union of souls, and to sow the seed of discord and disrespect in religious communities.

This lack of charity, even if small, is like certain imperceptible leaks in a boat which it is necessary to stop up immediately so that the water will not penetrate and it will not sink. Tar is used in boats, and for souls the oil of charity is necessary.

We should never judge a Sister guilty if we are not sure and do not know her sins for certain. It is our duty to think well of our neighbor until we have proofs to the contrary.

This is not only a religious law but also a social one, and it is much more serious when it treats of persons consecrated to God.

It is also very true that she who loves, fears, and so Superiors must be lovingly on their guard to know the internal dispositions of their Sisters: Now this holy fear is far from being a guilty one; it is on the contrary a delicate adornment of maternal charity. Conscientious mothers fear always.

Job, speaking of his own sons said: "They seem good to me, but they may not be, and they may hide within their souls thoughts and affections which are dangerous, therefore from the rising of the sun I offer to God prayers and sacrifices to expiate the hidden faults of my children."

The council should endeavor with every possible effort to arrange that the Sisters and the persons in the house should lead an exemplary life in the observance, not only of the Rule, but also of the Regulations which are an explanation of the same Rule.

In regard to the girls and the aged, it is necessary that they also conform themselves to what is prescribed in the House of Divine Providence, because being guests, it is their duty not to command, but rather obey, which means that they must follow the method and the customs which reign in the house.

It is the right that all the residents of the House remain there with the same trust and with the same love which they find in their own homes, but it is also just that they guard themselves well from offending the decorum of it or disturbing its order with discussions or with acts which are not edifying or proper.

These fundamental principles of culture and religion must be instilled with loving care in the residents of every age, with human arguments, but much more with arguments taken from faith and charity, as is fitting of a Congregation which lives and prospers on charity and faith.

In the meetings of the Superior Council, and especially in the solemn occasions of the general chapter, special matters are treated, often of great importance.

It is, therefore, opportune that at least a month before such meetings the Motherhouse notify by means of letter the matters which they propose to treat. In addition it would be better to group the various matters under special headings and so assign them to those Sisters who are considered better fitted to study them and solve them.

The Sisters chosen will make use of the advice and instructions which they have been able to gather in the period of preparation, and they will thus be able to treat intelligently at the general chapter everything regarding the order and the development of the Congregation.

It may happen that in the general chapter some little modifications may be introduced in the articles or in the observances of the Holy Rule; but oftener important foundations, extensions, the Novitiate, the formation of a Province in the Congregation, changes in the administrators of the Congregation itself, will be treated.

As is evident, in all these subjects of high importance, it is necessary to have the vote of the majority of the Members which vote must be communicated to Rom-

to obtain the approval of the Holy See without which no determination of any value will be valid. In the head and in the heart of this Guide is carved your ideal: that the life of the Congregation of St. Mary of Divine Providence must be a life of prayer and of continual work, and you must not cease to repeat it to yourself that just as such a life is your aim, so it is also your strength. It is only by means of work interwoven with prayer and nourished by faith and charity that you will be able to fulfill entirely the plan and the Rules of the conferences, which we have talked of with pleasure and we hope with fruit.

Invoke the aid of the Blessed Mother and the guidance of your guardian angel, flee from every fear, and go on in the way you have chosen.

CHAPTER XXXI

The Superior General

You know it already, but it is well to repeat it again: the General Superior is as a loving mother in the midst of her many daughters, who after having elected her, look upon her and gather around her with filial and affectionate devotion. And it often happens that every group of these daughters would like to remain in the Motherhouse to be near the Superior, see her, hear her often, and receive instructions and help from her.

But the Congregation has many and varied houses; therefore the Superior cannot keep all near to her, neither can she be at the same time with all her sisters, whom it is necessary for her to disperse afar in the different houses.

The Superior General, assisted by the General Council, must make her norma-

residence in the Motherhouse, and transfer herself where prudence and opportunity suggest.

It is not permitted to change the normal seat of the Generalate, if not for reasons so serious that they will need the approval of Rome.

The Superior, however, may choose other temporary places of residence for herself, according to the many and various needs of the Congregation. It is just, a duty rather, that the good Mother not only visit but stay a little while where the need is felt, or where it would be useful to supervise other foundations in order to start them out in good order and discipline.

For her health, the Superior may go from one place to another, and certainly no Sister would find anything to say about that, because the Mother has not only the right but also the duty to take the means of keeping herself in good health for the good of her many spiritual daughters.

For whatever reason it might be, the choice of a residence of a Superior is always an affair of great importance, and

therefore it is necessary to prepare for it with wisest caution and with love and prudence, so as not to have the Sisters dissatisfied, and to concur in the best manner possible for the particular interest of the House and the universal interest of the entire Congregation.

It is the precise duty of the Superior General to watch closely over her spiritual daughters, direct them and aid them. To do this, she must obey the Holy Rule which orders her to visit the houses in turn so that at least once every three years, she may say she has visited them all.

As to the houses newly founded, or those which would be in greater need of guidance and help, it will be better if they are visited with greater frequency, perhaps once or more each year, when enormous distance or difficulty of travel not interfere.

Whenever a House should have a special need of being visited, on account of some old or new difficulties, and the Mother is not in a position to go on account of health or serious business, she may delegate a Sister, after having instructed her to go in her place, giving her the

office and the power to provide and report.

It might be useful to invest a Sister with the authority of Visitor so that she could be sent by the General Superior to visit the different houses in her place and in her name.

In this case the choice made by the Superior must be approved by the General Council and then only ~~on the~~ the religious designated, capable and prudent, will fulfill the mission confided to her as representative of the Superior General and as Visitor. The Sisters will honor in her the very authority of the General Superior whom she represents, and they will give her their obedience and respect.

It may sometimes happen that the Superior may charge the Visitor to observe and propose the provisions which she should consider necessary and opportune, but she reserves to herself the final decision, while at other times she will give her full leave to decide and act, as she thinks necessary. In matters of greater importance, however, it is always useful that the advice and the provisions come directly from the Mother General, so

as to find a more benevolent reception and a more prompt and blind obedience.

The Sisters who have elected her for their Superior General should be desirous of receiving orders from her, even though they may be heavy, because in her they seek and find maternal affection.

However, it should not be surprising that on account of illness or old age, the Superior would not be able to visit the religious scattered in different parts of the country, especially when they are far away or out of the country altogether, as it is her duty to do. In this case it is necessary that, in agreement with the Superior Council, she name, as above indicated, a general Visitor.

The Mother, notifying the houses of the arrival of the Visitor, will send them a questionnaire to which they will answer. In it she will outline various questions regarding the moral, disciplinary and economical order of the house, and regarding the solution of the special affairs of that house.

The Visitor, conscious of the dignity of her office, must be one time, and I beg of God the grace to be cautious and reso-

lute in straightening out difficulties and putting matters right. She will invoke the light of the Holy Ghost, mistrust herself, and yet confide in the help of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin.

She will get all necessary information, impart with amiability but firmly her orders to individuals and make necessary decisions. In doubtful cases she will report to the Superior General the result of her investigations, and awaits from her the decision for that adjustment which she, in her maternal prudence, thinks necessary for that case.

The Visitor will order the Superiors of the Various Houses to put into effect in the shortest possible time the obedience received.

It is necessary that the Superior and the General Visitor work in accordance with the greatest prudence, so that the great precept of religious charity be not infringed upon.

It is often wise to rise above little inconveniences rather than run the risk of awakening a fire of discontent, which in its turn might become a means of discord.

The Superior, and in a measure also the general Visitor, must remember that, in accepting this office, they have taken upon themselves the difficult duty of hearing the complaints of many, the sufferings of all, and to have compassion for and provide for the order and relief of the Sisters and the residents.

It would seem at first sight that the Superior, as her name implies, should be relieved of every heavy duty, but instead just because of her office she has the weight of the whole Congregation on her shoulders with the obligation of studying, understanding, and providing for all the needs of the whole Congregation. She must consider herself the servant of all the Sisters, and therefore she must forget herself to come to their help and comfort.

The Holy Father, Vicar and representative of God on earth, loves these daughters who are children of God, of the Holy Church, and his, and so he takes a special care of them. He receives from them detailed information and desires that the Superior General, every five years at least, give Him exact accounts, communicate to Him the condition of the Congregation the spirit and its undertakings.

This paternal interest of Him who is the heir and distributor of the charity of Christ our Master and Redeemer, must be of great consolation for us; but especially you, Sisters, should rejoice because it is not a small comfort nor a small glory to know that you are especially guided and blessed by the infallible Head of Christianity.

Before having that supreme joy of conferring with the Holy Father, the Superior, after begging inspiration from the Queen of Divine Providence, her dear Mother, should prepare her report.

She will submit it then humbly to her Bishop, and accept his advice and ask his blessing, without which she would find it difficult to submit it to the Sacred Congregation of Religious.

This work will be easier and more complete if the General Secretary gets into the habit of keeping notes or having them kept as they come up regarding the matters of greater importance. Only by these means of foresight and prudence will she be able to compile a report which will give an exact idea of the Congregation.

The House of Divine Providence is closely bound to the Roman Pontiff as a child to a father, therefore on the occurrence of the principal feasts, of his name day, and jubilees of the Holy Father it will be well if the General Superior write him a few words of greeting and affectionate good wishes. In like manner will she treat with the Most Reverend Bishop in whose diocese are found the different houses. The Superior will also remember, in a proper manner, the feasts of benefactors and friends of the Congregation.

The Sisters must never forget that, as they are loving daughters of God, they must also be such in regard to the Holy Father and to the Bishops on whom they depend.

It is true that the Daughters of St. Mary have the right, and sometimes even the duty, to correspond directly with the Holy See, yet it is also true that they owe reverence to the Head of the Diocese who in his turn has the right to watch and see that they follow the Holy Rule, and spread the word of good example.

On the other hand, our Houses having the inestimable privilege of keeping the

Blessed Sacrament, the Bishop has the right to see that rubrics are observed, and the particular directives of the diocese are carried out.

Every foundation has some particular legacies and therefore particular duties of hospitality or shelter, and it is necessary always to remember that the wish of the testators should be followed with the greatest exactness. This is still another reason to keep you bound to the Bishop and also to the local Pastor. Only on the reservation that, on your side, you do all you can to ensure this agreement will your work correspond fully to the vocation given to you by the Lord for the good of the people.

Besides your own houses, to your loving and intelligent service have been confided kindergartens, Sunday schools and oratories, the sick in their homes or in the hospitals, and working girls. Now all of these souls depend on the Pastor as sheep on their Shepherd, and so it is right that he should know your work. The Pastor then on his own account will keep in touch with the Bishop and it is likely that they will both love and protect you. None of your missions have entered into the diocese without the full consent of

the Bishop; therefore, it is just and right that you keep yourself in the best of relations with him.

Then, remembering that whoever obeys his Bishop obeys God, the Superior General should never permit herself to be overcome by excessive timidity before him, neither should she seek audience with him too easily, but only to pay her respects, or for some special need. And when she has obtained audience, she will not forget to be reverent, frank, and concise, so as not to take up too much of the venerable prelate's time.

Profoundly respectful, she will avoid with every care the two extremes, of rudeness and excessive confidence, but she will keep herself in that moderate confidence full of respect and devotion which will dissuade the Bishop from using rigorous measures with her and with the House.

Above all, the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence will show themselves and will be truly generous with their Bishop; and he will repay with similar or even greater generosity by giving them protection, encouragement, and maybe aid. But even though they should be treated with some

severity, let them bear the trial with Christian courage, and never permit their own reverence to be lessened toward him who, like Jesus, while trying them, yet loves them and desires their good.

It seems to me that I have pictured in this chapter all the principal duties and rights of the General Superior whom you love and who loves you as a mother. And you, Daughters of the Blessed Virgin of Providence, endeavor to live and work always according to the teaching of faith and charity of Christ. Never lose courage on account of the difficulties in the way! You will see that, if you know how to work humbly and constantly free from self-interest, the Holy Roman Pontiff and his representatives the Bishops and the Pastors, following out the designs of Divine Providence, will defend you with their protecting wings from every assault, and they will win for you on earth the great blessings which Jesus, the Bridegroom of your souls, prepares for you in heaven.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Superior Council

The Superior Council may consider themselves the connecting link of the General Superior with her Councillors, and with all the members of the Council, and of the Superior and of the Council with all the members of the Congregation.

The Superior General, in her dealings with her Councillors, should act as a mother, who loves dearly and keeps in her company her older daughters and looks upon them as her right hand.

The Superior must first of all keep alive in the hearts of her councillors a fire of generous charity towards God, towards herself and towards the members of the Congregation, because the Superior Council must be the center and furnace of this divine flame--must be the heart of the Congregation.

The more the Sisters of Divine Providence are invested with higher offices, the more they should be humble and consider themselves the servants of all those depending on them, seeing in the Sisters, and in the residents, the reason of their own existence and of the prosperity of the Congregation.

Occupied continually and absorbed in the interests of the Congregation, the Sisters assigned to positions of authority must not let themselves get distracted by things of minor importance and by exterior matters.

As from the heart, the center of life, flows the blood which is then distributed to all the body in proper measure even to the extremities, so the Sisters of the Superior Council must nourish themselves with the spirit of sacrifice, of fervor and of every virtue, if they wish to diffuse the same spirit among the Sisters and residents.

From the degree of faith and charity that reigns in the Congregation, one can tell the usefulness of the community and the account in which it is held by God our Father. What does all the rest matter?

In what other manner, if not by faith, and charity, can a beneficent influence be exerted over the Sisters and over the entire Congregation?

Feed, yes, feed with love the holy flame of piety and charity and, being consumed yourselves, the others will soon be consumed by your example. Now, to spread the good seed, to make souls grow and love virtue, there is no better means than to be thus animated yourselves. You cannot give what you have not yourself.

And in order that your apostolate may not tarry in the realms of the abstract, but be quickly translated into practice, let the Superior take the lead, and after her those in charge, and treat with respect and genuine charity the Sisters and all the persons of the house, even to the last and the most unworthy.

With prudence and with liberality it is necessary to allow everyone full liberty in the exercise of their duty.

This respect must be absolute. Let the Superior do what she is supposed to do, and let the Sisters do all that belongs to their offices.

Some important business as described in the Rule requires the consent and the cooperation of the Sisters belonging to the Council, and it is prudent and a duty to refer to them.

However, the Superior, solicitous to find the proper means, must be the first to propose modifications or amendments, always ready to discuss the reasons and the difficulties of persons and business. Let full liberty be given to the Sisters to make their remarks, which should be taken into account, because very often they are guided by experience which is the best master in many things.

In conclusions and deliberations let the vote of the General Superior be manifest, and so by the Sisters of the entire Congregation will not be led to believe that the decisions--and therefore the blame or praise--is due to this or that Sister. Advice and commands which come directly from the Mother General are always received with better dispositions, obtain more prompt results, and awaken greater energy.

In the same way, in treating with the Sisters and granting every one of them

the greatest confidence, the Superior should be all to all.

In secondary matters, however, it is not always prudent that she should ask their ideas, because her authority must not be considered diminished, in which case the efficacy of her direction would not be received well.

It will never be repeated enough to the Sisters of St. Mary, that they must be compassionate and supporter with filial love the defects which they may find in their Superiors and especially in their Mother. On her part also, the Mother General, recognizing in her own weaknesses and defects that she is a poor daughter of Eve, must humble herself profoundly and ask God with humility for the grace to correct herself. She must be all the more sorrowful when she considers that bad example is all the more harmful if it comes from the Superior, in the same manner that the higher a fall comes from, the more serious it is.

Let us go now, to consider the duties of the religious towards their Superior General.

They must behave towards her with the affectionate respect of children towards their Mother, and they should not consider her with the senses, but rather with the eye of faith and ardent charity.

Considering themselves, and feeling themselves daughters and dependents, the Sisters will spend themselves body and soul for the Superior, their Mother, and their loving guide.

Let everyone freely propose her suggestions, and the inspirations which God might send her; but let her be on her guard against a feeling of disappointment if her advice is rejected or accepted only in part.

Thank the Lord, oh Daughters of the Blessed Mother, that authority, and therefore the heavy burden of responsibility, rests on the Superior entirely, and holding sacred her difficult power of command and guidance, put forth every effort to make the burden lighter for her.

You will be happy if, as wise and modest councillors, you are content to listen rather than to speak, ready to put forth your own efforts at the cost of sacrifice, rather than to propose your

own suggestions, reserving your judgments until you are sure that it is your duty. Doing thus, you will become always more acceptable to the Superior and to the Sisters of the entire Congregation, you will gain before God and man, and you will acquire the help of God, and the confidence of your Sisters, who will be edified with your prudence and your humility.

With these good dispositions of mistrust in yourselves, and of full confidence in Him to Whom you have dedicated your entire life, you will attend to the office assigned to you, and go on confidently in the difficult way of religious perfection.

Let us now pass on to discuss the attitude which the Superior General and the Sisters of the Council should bear toward the Religious of the entire Congregation.

Every Sister, no matter what her office and her degree of authority in the house, has full responsibility for her own actions. Every one of them must keep themselves in continual correspondence with the local Superiors and with the members of the Council of the local House.

And on their side, the local Superiors should communicate continually by letter with the Superior General and, if it is possible, to visit her in person to come to an understanding with her so that the success of the local houses be in harmony with the guidance of the Motherhouse. As it is natural for the sculptor never to be satisfied nor tired of correcting and perfecting his statue, so the Superior General must put forth every effort to better the work committed to her care.

Nevertheless, she will guide with grace and charity so that the sensitive heart of the Religious may not feel pain or grow sad, for then the good which she intended to do would be jeopardized.

To conduct oneself well in this need, the help of the Lord is required, and to have this help it is necessary to ask for it with earnest, humble, and insistent prayers.

The Sisters of the Superior Council must communicate to all the Sisters, even those scattered in the local houses, that they should address themselves in all business to the Superior Council which, as already known, resides in the Motherhouse.

In their needs, they must refer without hesitancy to the Superior Council, because, if the father has the right to help the children, so the children have the right to be helped.

In difficult situations, they will have recourse to the Council, and they will receive direction and encouragement.

On the occurrence of Feasts, either of name day or jubilee, it will be well to exhibit to the Superior and to the persons of the Council one's sentiments of devotion and of Christian affection. These demonstrations will aid to unite always more and more the one who commands and the one who obeys.

Here, however, I hasten to add, that if a correspondence of greeting and affection is praiseworthy, yet every offering or present is seriously prohibited, no matter what the circumstance be.

Once a year, however, there can be an exception to this directive, when the name day or a special feast of the Superior General occurs.

The local houses are obliged to contribute according to their means in equal

shares and with the greatest prudence to the gift which is made to the Mother.

In addressing letters and information of the house, care should be taken not to send them all and always to the Superior General, so as not to overburden her with work; but sending them to the Sisters of the Superior Council, they will not overlook the Mother General, who has the right to be held in high esteem.

So, the Superiors of the local Houses will be careful to address themselves to the Superior General in things of greater importance and intimacy. For common needs, instead, they will write to that Councillor who presides over that particular area of work. In temporal interests and money matters, she will turn to the Econome. With the Secretary, she will treat of those things which should be taken care of by the Superior and her Vicar, who takes the place of the Superior. It will be good, therefore, to take up things of greater importance with the Superior or her Vicar.

Oftentimes, there will be need of correspondence with the Mistress of Novices, to help her in the manner of continuing her work with the Sisters just out of the Novitiate.

The Mistress of Novices must always endeavor to form the spirit of the young girls confided to her care, with all the attention which charity suggests. She should also take pleasure in continuing her delicate office with the Sisters recently professed, whenever she notices that they have need of being helped by their former Mistress.

The Superior Council usually meets once a month; but if the matters calling for settlement begin to accumulate, the Superior has the right to call a meeting when she thinks it useful and necessary, even more often.

That the deliberations of the Council be not forgotten or changed, the Secretary has the duty to put in writing immediately all the conclusions reached. These notes then should be read at the beginning of the next meeting, so that everything may be done with knowledge and fruit.

Even in the manner of holding council meeting and taking the necessary deliberations, a businesslike manner will be useful, as well as the perfect knowledge of the works of Divine Providence and of the prescribed rules, a knowledge which

can only come from loving prayer and from the observation of the rule.

Experience, and even more the super-abundant grace of God will inspire to make many things clear, and give suitable perfection and the desired development to the Congregation.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Councillors of the Superior General

We have arrived here after making various observations regarding the Econome, Secretary, and all the Sisters who cooperate with the General Superior. Let us add, or rather summarize here, other norms with respect to the Councillors of the Superior Council in the hope that God and the Blessed Mother will aid you to reap the greatest benefit from them.

We wish now to consider the Councillors, first, in themselves; second, in relation to the Superior; and third, in relation to the Sisters and the Congregation itself. Let us invoke the spirit of the Lord, and concentrate all our attention on this since we have to treat of a matter of high importance.

The Councillors, in order to fulfill their offices well, must be both light and salt to the Congregation and to the Chapter. It must be their study and their urgent duty to become profoundly versed in the Spirit of the Rule and in the general and particular guidance of the Sisters and of the Congregation.

To arrive at this important end a continual observance, a well-nourished experience, and well considered and assiduous reading of appropriate matter adapted to the capacity of everyone in the different offices is necessary.

Before all else, the Holy Rule should be studied attentively and in the Spirit of Faith, and when this has been well assimilated and digested, pass on to the study of the Guide, which explains and makes the Rule itself clearer.

If you only knew how important it is to interpret the Rule, not so much according to the letter as according to the spirit, you would not find any effort too great in order to understand its inmost significance.

When you will have reached an orderly and serious understanding, it will be

easy for you to apply the Holy Rule to the particular cases with clearness of ideas, with broadness of views, and it will make it easy to apply it for the one who acts as well as for the one who orders the action.

I repeat it again. To acquire this command of the Rule, which is the same as the guiding spirit of the Congregation, serious study is necessary, as well as profound humility and fervent prayer. Experience will do the rest.

Study, pray, suffer for love of your vocation and of your Bridegroom Jesus, and you will acquire the precious and twofold gift of counsel and of command. Remember that the person in whom are found these precious gifts is considered in the house and especially by the Superiors a real treasure. Thus, struggle to become one.

The Sisters may be in need of guidance in regard to the manner of working in the thorny yet sweet field of charity; at the same time they are obliged to preserve their health, so advantageous in the exercise of the apostolate. It is therefore necessary that the Councillors have at least the principal rules of good

health. I do not mean so much theoretical as practical knowledge, so as to be able to be useful to themselves and to the people that depend on them.

Also the Sisters, especially those who have just entered the Congregation, or who are not capable and have but little instruction, will turn to the Councillors to be helped and enlightened in their interpretation of the Rule to be applied to particular cases. It is therefore necessary that they know and study well the spirit of the Rule and the Guide, so that they may enter into the ideas of the General Superior and of the entire Congregation.

To respond to the needs of the moral character of the Sisters, it is necessary that those at the head have a profound knowledge of what concerns the true education of the Sisters, and of what is necessary to place them and keep them in a state of peace and activity capable of sufficient relaxation avoiding scrupulosity.

But inasmuch as the dependent Sisters are so called because they are subject to those who guide them not only in their work and in their exterior behavior, but

much more in their needs of soul, so the Sisters in command must know how to be wise and prudent masters of spirit for their Sisters. So if in profound humility they will take as their guide St. Theresa, and apply themselves with every effort to acquire the instruction which they need, they may be sure that they will obtain it. But this doctrine, it is well to remember, is acquired with study, and even more with prayer. Pray to Jesus that He look upon you from the Holy Tabernacle, and give you the inspiration you need.

The rest you know already: God does not command the impossible, but when He has given a command He offers also the manner and the help necessary to succeed.

In order that the Councillors succeed in such a difficult calling, they must not be excessively burdened with special offices. It is well to allow them time needed to cultivate themselves with good reading and make such observations as will serve them as guidance to know both the needs of souls and those of the works confided to them. So also having to give their advice in the meetings, they should learn to improve somewhat their manner of expressing themselves so as to avoid te-

dious speeches, and to speak in few, but clear and conclusive words which do not leave room for misinterpretations and do not leave hurried irritabilities, which would ruin good harmony and charity.

It would seem to some that too much is required of a Sister who was perhaps a country girl with little instruction: but I repeat that if you wish to acquire perfection you must always strive to ascend, and be sure that with the grace of God you will perform miracles. Force yourselves, for the good of the Congregation, to move upwards. It will not be the first time that a Sister, limited in intelligence and even more so in culture, reaches a height that even the wise of the world cannot reach.

Let no one say that she has done but little until now. Everyone has done all that time, capacity, and the condition of the growing Congregation has permitted her to do. The rest and even more will come from the blessing of God, from the help of the Holy Virgin, from the inspiration of the Angel who watches over your steps and guides your actions.

We must not deceive ourselves on the idea that the simultaneous command of

more than one person will generate confusion. But let us add at once that all confusion will be avoided when the Councillors agree among themselves, and remain near the General Superior, so as to form one heart, one judgment, and one identical action with her.

The young girls, leaving their families and the world to embrace the religious vocation, had and do have much desire to interpret and support, in all and as best they can, the will of Him Whom they themselves have chosen as a Bridegroom in sorrow and in love. Now how can they better know the will of their Bridegroom than in the will, in the command, and in the advice of their Superiors?

If it is true that God is the Supreme Being, and that no one can see His face without being overcome by admiration and joy, rather struck down with awe, let us thank Him with all our hearts for having hidden Himself behind the shadow of mystery and for having given us, in our Superiors, His true representatives. With them we may speak, open up our soul as we do with our friends of childhood with our dearest friends, and we will have answer, order, advice, and comfort.

Let us renew, let us increase our faith, and our charity. Faith and charity, true guiding stars, radiant lights and inextinguishable beacons will guide our steps toward heaven, and even in the bitterness of penance and on the way of the cross they will give us a taste of never ending consolations, a pledge and foretaste of those of heaven.

Let us talk a little bit about the attitude that the Councillors of the Superior General should maintain with the General Superior and with the Council members.

The ways of the Lord are many to lead souls to perfection, but characters and faculties of the souls are also very different: for while one goes to God by a path overrun with thorns, the other arrives there full of holy joy, singing hymns of praise and happiness to the Bridegroom, chosen among thousands.

It can also happen, and it does often happen, that a Superior, and with her a motherly and kind Council, pass sweetly on the road of the Rule and the Guide, in which all the members find peace and dification.

You are fortunate, oh Daughters of the Blessed Virgin of Providence, if in the sweetness of the direction you feel less the thorny road, and you will be encouraged to embrace willingly and joyfully all the crosses which are part of your ministry!

Thank God for having given you Superiors with pious and gentle spirit, and live in such a way as not to be unworthy of this good fortune, because it should be given by God as reward for a life which is holily active.

It might happen, alas, that the Sisters abuse a government full of gentleness, and they take advantage of the condescension of the Sisters to lead a more comfortable and relaxed life, in the exercises of piety and in the observance of the Rule and the fulfillment of their office. In this lamentable case, Our Lord, Who is a compassionate and wise physician, but at the same time severe and inexorable, will see that the Superior Council which we consider one of mercy is replaced by one inspired mainly by justice. This one, in the interpretation and enforcement of the Rule and of the Guide, will be inclined rather to rigor than to liberality, and will establish an

austere government, even to the point of scrupulosity.

If the Sisters should regret this change they would do wrong. They must instead, acknowledge that they have deserved it. God has given it to them as a medicine fit to cure them of their tepidity in the service of God and souls, and to help them to arrive at perfection. Therefore they must be grateful to Him Who calls them by means corresponding to their merits.

The Lord intends to correct our coldness and our ungrateful correspondence to His voice by a rigorous government: and if this be not enough, He will permit a storm of persecution and privations that souls consecrated to God may learn the real spirit of Poverty, of Chastity, and of Obedience, a spirit which will never more admit of any relaxation. History shows us clearly that in almost all centuries, religious persecution has made its sad appearance, and nothing reassures us that it will not become always more ferocious.

Learn, oh Daughter, to obey God and your Superiors exactly and promptly if you do not want to be obliged by your

indolence and your tepidity to submit to other government and other commands much more difficult and painful.

Experience teaches only too well that whoever refuses to obey the good spirit, is obliged to give obedience to the evil spirit, and therefore to be dragged around, tyrannized over by a diabolical spirit of hate and of persecution.

Know how to live by faith and by charity as the Lord wants you to do, and becoming angels of peace, you will emulate on earth the fervor of the angels of Paradise.

Living by faith and charity, you will love your house and the work confided to your prudent activity, and you will merit from God the gift and the merit of secrecy. I said gift and merit, because to guard a secret means to know how to keep silence and how to talk at the right time, a thing which requires inspiration from above and is hard on our natural tendency to close ourselves off, thinking selfishly of ourselves; or else to open ourselves totally, to unburden ourselves, or even to show others many intimate and private feelings.

Giving confidence is a natural thing for us, created as we are for society; but virtue changes nature and guides it according to faith and according to reason, and still more according as duty and prudence prescribe.

Maintaining silence is certainly not an easy thing, in fact for some it is an effort, a great chore. For these, however, the struggle will be proportionate to the fight they have put up against their natural inclinations.

This struggle will not be incumbent upon the Councillors only, who are sorry to keep concealed from the Sisters news which would interest them greatly; furthermore, it is perhaps more costly to the Sisters who keep themselves from questioning and from other methods used for exploring and knowing her. This is the case of the forbidden tree, that our first forefathers were not supposed to touch. Let us be careful not to imitate Eve, in her curiosity, in her lack of prudence, and let us remember what a serious disaster came to her, to us, and to all humanity. The same could come to our Congregation, if those who compose it should give in to passion or even to curiosity.

And yet, if we look upon secrecy with the eye of faith, we will find in it a rich source of merits and of spiritual consolations. Let us give it a trial!

The Councillors must therefore guard the obedience of secrecy as a heavenly gift.

It is an elementary idea, not only for religious but also for the persons who live in the world in a christian manner, that we must keep our virtues sealed up so that the praise of others, and consequent self-love, may not come to rob us of them. It is written: *Secretum meum mihi*, as others would say: I hold fast to my heart my treasure so that no one may steal it away.

When you do not know well enough how to appreciate the gift of God, Who has granted you silence as an occasion and source of merit, remember that it is an explicit obligation of your Rule, that is to say, an integral part of the office confided to you by the Lord.

I repeat to you again. Secrecy is for you what the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was for our First Parents in the garden of Paradise. Be cautious,

therefore, if you do not wish to destroy with one blow the edifice built with such fatigue to bring you nearer to heaven and to the Bridegroom of chaste and prudent souls.

And till now we have reasoned along the lines of spiritual principles, which are really the most important. Let us now consider the matter from its human side, and we will be persuaded always more and more that she who jealously preserves secrecy will secure as a reward the esteem of the world and well-deserved praise, whereas she who transgresses it or betrays it is considered unworthy of any office of importance. If then she would wish to enter into our Congregation, either she would not be received, or she would be expelled from the Council, which requires the greatest secrecy from its members.

Let the Councillors be very careful not to compromise any secret and let the Sisters be careful to respect it. That Sister who would endeavor to investigate or snatch from the mouth of a Councillor, the information held so jealously veiled, would invite the devil, who tempts souls to lead them to ruin. Be careful, never to tempt anyone.

Natural levity, and impulsive feminine talkativeness if not overcome by the spirit of God which is a spirit of sacrifice, once it discovers a secret, leaves no peace until it has been revealed to the public under the title of news. Without doubt then there arises a great deal of gossiping, a mixture of criticism, of observations, or murmurings, and if charity is not wounded to death, certainly, however, it will be injured in body and spirit.

What an account that rash Councillor will have to render to God for having imprudently lacerated the law of secrecy, having been the cause of such havoc to the entire Congregation, and what shall she do to repair the harm done? To avoid a belated sorrow, accustom yourself in time to be prudent guardians of virtue and therefore also of secrecy which is an integral part of your office.

Do not believe, however, that the law of secrecy, which is universal and incumbent on those who command as well as those who obey, on the rich and powerful as well as on the poor and subjects, needs to be accompanied with gloom and with a weight of rigor and austerity

which will make you a misfit or a snob! Oh! no law which comes from God can be contrary to charity, and Christian charity is the infallible teacher of amiability and kindness.

Rather charity, teaching us respect for those who are over us, love for our equals and our inferiors, will teach us to honor others and consider ourselves honored in the faithful fulfillment of our duties; but it will also teach to consider the responsibility inherent in high offices, therefore to be satisfied with our humble condition and that of our dear Congregation.

In Paradise the angels and the saints, admitted according to their degree of sanctity to the heavenly joys, far from being jealous of those placed in higher stations than theirs, rejoice all the more, enjoying ineffable harmony, resting in the Holy Will of the Lord.

The greatest poet says that when a holy soul was asked whether she did not suffer at seeing other souls so much higher than she was, hung her head out of compassion at the ridiculous question, smilingly answered: "In His will is our peace."

In the same manner, you, oh Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, be satisfied with your office and the place assigned to you by the Congregation, and you will acknowledge in the dispositions of your Superiors the Holy Will of that God Who knew how to inspire you with a disgust for the world and its pleasures, to make you hear His Divine Voice and gather you into the place prepared for you. Appreciate always the inestimable gift of a religious vocation, and so that the spirit of darkness may not come to lessen its excellence, guard it jealously in the constant practice of your duties, which is also the faithful practice of charity. Love God above all things, love your neighbor as yourself.

God bless you, and the Blessed Mother gather you beneath her mantle!

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Provinces

Ants and bees, when they have increased in number, leave and go to other lands to show their prudence and to gather honey from different flowers than those from which they had their first nourishment.

In the same way people, when they are too crowded in one place and fight over bread and living space, or when in their abundance they desire to diffuse their power and their work, tearfully they leave their country and their families, and go to seek refuge in new lands.

This fact, which is continually repeated, is a proof of universal brotherhood, by which we are all children of one Father Who is in heaven. "All children of one redemption."

Our Divine Savior ordering His Apostles: "Go and preach the Gospel to all nations" has also communicated a spirit of evangelization, and He had taught us to carry into faraway countries, that faith in which we glory in the name of Christians.

But if sometimes God sends His priests to carry the torch of truth among the infidels, at other times He Himself prepares the way of the Apostles by means of good Christians who, on account of commerce or industry, live among the enemies of God. These infuse the necessary dispositions with their good example and virtue, then as soon as a good word is spoken to them, it flares up as fire of charity in their hearts. History teaches us how, many, many times humble and unknown persons have known how to give souls the leaven of faith and civilization, and have thereby become a salutary reproof for priests who have erred or gone astray. A St. Joan of Arc, obedient to the voice of God, saved her country and died a martyr; and in our own days, St. John Bosco, without human means, worked wonders and is still working them, not only amongst us, but also in faraway countries.

These and a thousand other examples should serve to stimulate our confidence in the mission assigned to us by God and to increase our trust in proportion as we recognize our unworthiness. It is obvious. If God wished something from me, and I do not know how to do it, He Himself is obliged to do my part, therefore I am bound to succeed if I place all my confidence in Him.

In this manner is explained how our Lord deigns to impose difficult works on religious who were country women, inexperienced, and to all appearances incapable of the work to be undertaken.

But why will we not take into account the immense grace of the religious vocation? It tears you away from your family to place you in the number of souls consecrated to the Lord, and it will therefore effect all its promises. And will we not have faith in that second vocation, even more generous and thorny, which urges some souls to say goodbye to all, and go to hostile and strange lands, to carry the faith to the infidels? Those souls know well that they will be assailed by fever, persecutions, hunger, and the anger of those whom they benefit; and even though these fears are spared

them, they will probably be attacked by a disease which will make them die one by one. They know all this, and yet they walk joyfully to the difficult apostolate which leads even to martyrdom; even more, they go on, frank, resolute, securely, as to a feast, sending out a cry of invitation to follow them, and many companions, all those in whose hearts the voice of God is heard, rush to follow.

Animated by the divine call, groups of timid youth are filled with courage under the Religious Habit, and challenge mountains, seas, distance, persecutions, sufferings of every kind, urged on by the word of Christ: "Go, preach the Gospel to all nations."

From the spirit of the Lord comes, even in these times of religious indifference, the multiplying of vocations, the spreading of houses destined for recollection and charity, and from all these in turn issues a fragrance of that purest joy, inseparable from the services of God, though in the very midst of fatigues and sufferings.

Also, vocations are ever increasing, and the religious houses are extending

their spheres of influence. God be praised and with Him His Holy Mother!

When, thanks to the immeasurable bounty of God, who is pleased to raise up the little ones, a similar development is given to the works of Divine Providence, the Superior General and the Superior Council find it impossible to spread their activity everywhere and direct each one of the foundations individually and especially those in far away countries.

To make it possible, or rather to make this sole direction easier, it will be necessary to group the houses into provinces, and create a house called Provincial House. Each Province will then receive the right of regional direction with a Superior at the head, who will also have the title of Provincial.

This done, the principle direction will still rest with the Motherhouse, with whom all the Provincials will have active correspondence.

These provincial houses will be created only when the need is felt, and need will be evident when the number of the houses is great, and when there are many far

away from the Motherhouse, from whom they have their origin.

Division into Provinces and the foundation of Provincial Houses are established and organized by the Superior Council, when they think it opportune, always, however, with the permission of the Holy See. In everything of importance as already said, it is necessary to have the approval of the Vicar of Christ, protector, patron, and guide of the various religious Congregations, who, as legions of soldiers at his command, are ready to fight the battles of the Lord for the salvation of souls.

The Provinces, under the guidance of Divine Providence which has raised up the first Houses, will become worthy to accomplish in humility and sacrifice, works of sanctification and of charity.

The foundation of the work of Divine Providence has risen up, imitating the wisdom of the serpent, which puts his head into the first hole that he finds and little by little crawls in entirely, and there makes himself comfortable.

The work to which you have dedicated your hand, mind, and heart, had its

beginnings in a poor place which was rented: after a little while the rented place became its property; little by little the small property grew, and the buildings were extended and multiplied. May the Lord, Who has blessed and prospered the work since its birth, nourish and strengthen your faith and bless your beginnings! And He will bless them if you know how to keep yourself always humbly subject to Him, making His will your own always, even when it costs effort and denial of your views and inclinations.

Now, however, you have your Rules approved by the Successor of Peter, and you should not rashly wish for miracles. Our Lord ordinarily wishes that all here below follow the common way, and does not promise His aid to those who expect the impossible. Remember, therefore, that not even with the best of intentions should you assume the burden of foundations without the assurance of having what is necessary for the sustenance of the Sisters and for the maintenance of the Community.

However, it is difficult to define the borderline of necessity and possibility, and therefore it is necessary to take into account the place, the persons, and

the circumstances before coming to a decision. Watch and pray, and the Lord will inspire us to the best path to follow.

Usually more good can be done in the city than in the country, because in the big centers there are greater needs and it is easier to get help.

Nevertheless, when the city is well provided with charitable works, it will be better advice to provide for the country, where the good example of faith and the exercise of charity may raise up other good souls to unite themselves to you to do much good among different classes of people.

Many founders have wisely dedicated their work to farmers, knowing them to be abandoned and needy; but even today there are great numbers without help, and they cry out for those who will work for them, gather them together, instruct them, and help them in their many needs.

Those who must decide as to whether or not to open new foundations should weigh and measure the pros and cons of every proposition, and give just value to the greater or lesser probabilities of

finding the necessary aid to erect and maintain the newly established house.

And remember always the directives of the Holy Rule. This does not want new houses to be opened, unless there is a well founded hope of being able later on to shelter at least six Sisters, even though it can be founded with only two or three Sisters if necessary, as long as they be of good spirit.

The Superior called Provincial, because her jurisdiction extends over all the different houses of the Province, will have her own Novitiate, and in each Province the novices must be addressed and Sisters professed as in the Motherhouse, always, however, it is understood, in accordance and with the permission of the legitimate Superiors.

The Superior General and the Superior Council should not lose their interest in the Provinces, but rather, whenever it is possible, they should make the visits required by the Rule, and provide for their good success, because they depend on these Superiors as do children on their father.

By thus multiplying many times the foundations of persons and of good works, their shared love will always grow and will be a mutual edification--a spur to always serve the Heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus, more effectively, gaining many souls for Him.

The fervor of the Sisters is animated by the assurance that they participate in all the good which the others do in the different regions with one only spirit of faith, and they thank God. They are in that way closely united among themselves, not only in the Holy Dogma of the Communion of Saints, but even more closely in the same vocation, in the bonds of the same Rule, under the coat of arms of the same Habit, under the protection of their Crucified Love.

This unity of intention, this affection and work in common is a sign and pledge of heavenly blessings, is a guarantee of Divine Providence, which, as it prepares for every tree the proper soil, so to every individual offers a place where he can better succeed. Individual conditions of health, education, culture are different; so that one religious will be better placed in the city, another instead will be better off in the country;

one at the books, another at the loom, or at the bedside of the sick, or with children, the aged, or the mentally handicapped.

Different foundations in different cities will give just this opportunity for each one to follow out their own inclinations, dispositions and aptitudes, as everyone can see, with greater profit.

But this subject will be explained when necessary, as the time is not yet ripe to think of division into provinces. Nevertheless, since the provinces of Lombardy, Venice and Rome may very soon be in need of special care and of timely aid, it is not out of context to mention them here.

Let us pray in the meantime, that the Blessed Mother will deign to enlighten those who guide the works of Divine Providence, to make those decisions which will tend to make the House more solid, and increase its spread and efficacy. May God increase the strength of those who work, and give life to vocations so that many and strong may be the souls who intend to spend their knowledge, their heart and their life in the service of their neighbor, for their own sanctification, and for the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Local Houses

Our Lord urged his beloved daughter, St. Theresa, to hurry to establish and organize her convents, so that inside them many souls may find their own sanctification, souls which outside of the cloister would have been in danger of falling, and would perhaps have been miserably shipwrecked.

A convent, in fact, when it is founded and maintained in conformity with the spirit of the Lord, becomes a hearth of devotion, an oasis in the desert of the world, a tower of safety, a ship of heavenly bliss. Whoever dwells therein, and corresponds to his vocation, and makes use of the invincible shield of the Holy Vows walks on the earth, it is true, yet he leads a heavenly existence bound in intimate union with God, ready to give up his life a hundred times rather than

desert the field which is a continual battle against the world and against passion. These privileged souls, as clearest crystal, beam forth the splendor of truth and virtue; they, burning with the charity of Christ, practice good works, and never tire of gaining the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of souls by any means, which bad examples could drag far from God and from the triumph of faith.

Oh how lovely is the convent for a soul who aspires after perfection! Even those who are unable to withdraw into the Convent as a dove to its nest, if they understood even in a small way the joys of the soul, would sigh for it with burning desires and recommend themselves without ceasing to the prayers of the Virgins.

Happy those privileged souls who, gratefully receiving from the Lord the holy inspiration to leave the world forever, and though hidden in the Convent, know how to send out a beneficent influence, communicating to those outside a breath of that spiritual life in which all the life of the Christian should be contained.

It is precisely this evangelization of Society which is the greatest need of the people; this is the duty of those who have the good fortune to dwell in the cleft of the rock near to their Jesus, living for Him and in Him.

That great lover of Poverty, who was the Poor One of Assisi, heard the cry of the multitudes who begged for help to reach their eternal salvation, even though it was not given to all to abandon their businesses and their families. Do you remember how St. Francis answered this cry? He detached from his order a branch, gave it the name of the Third Order, and he constructed it in such a manner that the laity too, associating themselves together, could participate in that living ray of spiritual life which emanates from the First Order--that of the Fathers--and the Second, that of the Sisters, and become so many brothers and Sisters living in the world. No one can forget how many Saints have come forth from the Franciscan Third Order, and how much light it has spread and continues to spread over the world from the ghetto to the palace.

The Daughters of St. Mary of Divine Providence, even though they cannot join

the Third Order of St. Francis take pride in belonging in spirit to the Army of the "Poverello," by gaining acceptances for this army among the residents. Furthermore, if they know how to continue this highest mission in profound humility and love of the Cross, they will be certain to be called by the Lord to carry out a holy apostolate among the simple people of the region, or else in the city, where by the very situation requires more alertness and not less devotion.

Daughters of the Blessed Mother, recommend yourselves to Jesus, and to His Mother in Heaven, and be sure that even in your unworthiness, if you know how to be really humble, you will do much good.

The principal occupations and preoccupations of the families can be divided into three headings, absorbed as they are in the pressing work which leaves no rest.

First and most important is the care of children.

Then the care of the sick.

And thirdly, but not the least important, the care of their aged, chronically ill, and the mentally handicapped.

And so we see even people without faith confide their children, their sick to Brothers and Sisters, because they all know and feel that only the Charity of Christ knows how to infuse the heart of a father, a mother and of a sister into those who sacrifice youth, beauty, health, and life to consecrate themselves entirely, completely to suffering humanity.

Souls, gathered together under the wings of Divine Providence, you wish to be angelic bearers of comfort, of the peace of God, to those suffering souls who hold out their arms begging assistance. And to those, too, who do not seek you, who perhaps hate you, calumniate you, persecute you, bring them, if you can, the word of God, that Word which consoles, revives, announces the ineffable triumph of grace. And you can if you know how to wait and take advantage of the opportunity--that of suffering.

Never cease thanking your Heavenly Bridegroom for having called you to follow Him, even though it be in the path o

sacrifice and suffering. The Bridegroom of the Crucified would disdain certainly crowning herself with roses.

Moved with confusion and tenderness, humility, and courage, mistrusting of yourself, confiding entirely in God, brace yourself for the work, no matter what it is, that the Superiors wish to assign you. In the voice of the Superior is the Holy Will of God, therefore listen to it with Religious attention, and fulfill most carefully the office confided to your prudent activity. Look always on high, and the thorns on the path will not discourage you, and when you feel the pricking, having a healthy outlook, you will see the reward prepared for your sacrifices. Then that vision will make you suffer every sorrow--gladly.

A house is never started if not called for or encouraged by the Ecclesiastical Authorities of the place, and especially by the Bishop into whose Diocese you are about to enter.

Before deciding on the establishment of a local house, it is necessary to ascertain whether there is much good to be done with the possibility of success, in

such a manner, as said before, that there is a well-founded hope of increasing the number of Sisters--six at least--so that with activity blessed with prayer, a base of spiritual and material work may be established on a solid ground for the good of many and the Congregation may be consolidated.

When you are sure that the new house will be really useful, that there will be sufficient means to do good, and you will not lack the moral support of Superiors, hurry and establish the house and Our Lord will bless you.

Quicken your pace, rather put on wings when God calls you, and putting aside every fear, say with the Seraphic St. Theresa of Carmel: "Theresa is nothing, but Theresa with Jesus is all, and can do all things."

Hurry to do good to the people who desire you and waits for you, and with the grace of God, disposing yourself in great humility for the new work, you will proceed with good example and you will sow around you seeds of heavenly virtues.

The Madonna will make those seeds fruitful very quickly for those who

confide in her, and the new house will receive a protection from her, and a great quantity of fruit, which in its turn will multiply and perpetuate the good which the Lord in His infinite mercy has given you to begin and to cultivate.

Start out to the place where your mission calls you, you will arrive there unknown and unnoticed, as the Blessed Mother at Bethlehem was obliged to take refuge in a cave. Your total abandonment in God, your lively desire to pass unnoticed, though working unceasingly, will make you love holy humility and the virtues which spring from it, and it will be a good beginning for the Community.

Lovers of humility, and observers of the Holy Vows, in the exercise of the Apostolate you will experience the joy of poverty which, in privation or lack of necessities, will make you rise up and walk in an atmosphere entirely spiritual of intimate union with God.

Humble and pious, endeavor to give good example, making it understood not by words but by acts that you are seeking for neither the comforts of life, nor glory, but only the good of souls,

because you know that by saving the souls of others you will save your own.

If you can inspire those around you with the certainty that you are not moved by any human motive, you will find those who to relieve your poverty will share their bread with you and they will make you a part of their responsibility. You can then give abundantly of that bread of the soul which vivifies for eternal life, making use of good example, and of the word of God, colored and adorned with prayer, and you will be able to exercise the works of charity, beginning with the care of the children. How dear these children are to Jesus! Save their innocence and inflame them with love of God and of good! Faith inculcated in the childish heart may seem to be dead, even for a long time; but the Holy Virgin will know how, when the right moment comes, to rekindle the flame and lead that soul to the gate of salvation.

Later you may be called to the bedside of the sick, and if you cannot devote yourself entirely to their care, busy as you are with the duties of the House, yet be solicitous to pay them a visit now and then, to render useful service, to comfort and to bring them nearer to God.

Blessed are you if you know how to be an angel of comfort! But to do this you must be real angels yourselves.

Little by little as the foundation grows, you will be able to house a young girl, a mentally handicapped person, an abandoned aged person, and you will have the consoling certainty that your House has taken deep roots. For a Daughter of St. Mary of Providence, is there any greater comfort than to find herself in a place where her zeal and her heart may expand and extend the Charity of Jesus Christ?

A Community founded on mistrust of oneself, but with unlimited confidence in God, never doubt, will have a firm foundation, and all the anger of hell will not succeed in shaking it.

When the finger of God has aided in a foundation, be comforted and assured, and go on securely in the way traced out for you.

If you succeed in getting a House and a bit of land of your own, Divine Providence will find means to expand your activities, either by showing you a profitable advantageous trade, or even a

will, or by small but frequent offerings. Put in order as best you can the building in which you are exercising your apostolate, and then leave the rest to God. He will often leave you in anguish and preoccupation, but then He will not fail to come to your aid.

How does the snake act? We have already told you. He gets his head in a hole, then he pulls in all his body. You do the same.

To faithfully fulfill ~~as the~~ the calling received from God, it is necessary to have reasonable care of your health, and I mean health of your body, because if you lost it through your own fault, you will become a burden to the Community.

Pray fervently the Lord of the harvest not to let you lack the necessities of life, and He will hear you. It would be a lack of faith in Divine Providence, if it would be to give ear to the deceitful insinuations of the devil, if the spirit of holy poverty were poorly interpreted and you were to let your health be ruined by excessive labor or you were to deprive yourselves of necessary nourishment.

Remember, however, that I said a reasonable care of your health, not an excessive care as that of those who caress the body and hold it as sovereign. No, a hundred times, no. The body must be preserved and guarded, not for itself but for the service of the soul.

As the new foundation grows, and you find things comparatively easy, be careful not to permit your fervor and your love for the holy Poverty you have vowed to languish. Remember this: it is a great deal easier to start a Community than it is to know how to make it grow and preserve it.

The three years term of office of the local Superior flies rapidly, and it will be difficult for her to detach herself from the House in which she has spent all her energies. And yet obey she must; she must hold herself ready to change places when obedience wants it, without reluctance, without demonstration, and without a word. The local Superior should leave the House founded by her with holy indifference, desirous of taking elsewhere her activity and her desire to do the holy Will of God.

She who knows that she has found the way which leads to the Heavenly Home must hasten on without ifs, ands or buts, without delaying on the way. Now you, oh Daughters of the Blessed Mother of Providence, who have already started out on the road, follow it energetically in the practice of virtue, and on the fulfillment of the duties inherent to a Religious vocation. Do not let prosperity attach you to the things of this earth, rather let it nourish your gratitude and your confidence in Him Who has blessed your efforts beyond your hopes. Extend your fields of action in proportion to the means provided for the needs of the House, and watch carefully that you do not attach your heart to earthly goods, and to the persons of the world. The Lord says: "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." I now repeat it to you.

The Superior, faithful observer and interpreter of the Rule, will study, according to the directives of the same Rule, to form her Council.

Considering herself a daughter and dependent on the General Superior, she will ask her and the General Council for guidance and support in the foundation of

a local house. She will avoid excessive anxiety in handling business, and not trusting in her own strength, which would be presumptuous, but confiding solely in God, her master, teacher, and father, she radiates peace around her and cultivates it in her own heart.

The Superior looks upon the Sisters of the House as her Sisters, and she loves them, not as is the custom among lay people, but with a spiritual affection, with enlightened charity. She will have heart to sympathize with their inexperience and their defects, she will console them in their sorrows, she will animate them to progress quickly the Way of the Cross. She will smile at them sweetly and raise up their spirits, repeating to them and to herself: it is by mistakes that we learn.

All the Daughters of St. Mary, whether they be assigned to administration or other offices, will receive comfort and courage at every step, no matter how small, from this material and moral progress, and let them be encouraged in their happy progress in the ways of the Lord and for the good of the Congregation.

Confide and hope, oh willing souls! With the help of Jesus and of Mary, under the guidance of your Guardian Angel and through the intercession of the suffering souls, enter confidently on the path of religious perfection. Is your misery and your unworthiness great? Cling to the Holy Tabernacle and let yourself be sprinkled with the Blood that drops from the Crucifix. Remain near to your Blessed Mother and your progress will be certain. Will you meet thorns and rocks in your path? That doesn't matter. Overcome the sorrows and difficulties of this life and you will enter into that other where joy is eternal.

Courage: up there you will receive a plentiful reward for every difficulty suffered, and whatever you have done here below in the Congregation will be there a reason for glory.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Secretary

Although we have already said something about the Secretary of the Superior Council, it will not be out of place to state here more precisely what the obligating duties of her office are, and what are those over and above her obligations.

As the Secretary is the confidant of the General Superior and of the entire Council, and to her is confided the secret of the things to be done, therefore, she must remember that her office is extremely delicate, because her influence may have much weight.

The essential qualities of a good Secretary are prudence, wisdom, and intelligent activity. She must know how to gain the confidence of Superiors and Sisters, with the greatest impartiality for persons and works. Amiable with all,

let her be frank, however, and tell the truth always with a holy sincerity. Let her often renew her intention of serving God the best she can, and the Lord will supply what she lacks.

The Secretary must avoid having and showing too much attachment to her office, so that no one in the Congregation would think that she considers herself more than the others, and that she loves to sway the Congregation at her will. She must be united to the Vicar destined to represent the Superior, and so, toward the Vicar, let her show special regard and attention just because when the Superior is either busy or cannot be present she will substitute for her.

The general and particular offices of the Secretary are:

When the Superior gives her order, she reads and answers correspondence, although it is desirable that the Superior General, as far as possible, review the letters herself. The Superior, or the Secretary in her name, gives orders for the respective answers and the relative needs.

As already mentioned before, the Secretary must write an exact account of the minutes of the Council, and have them signed by the General Superior. At every meeting the Secretary will read the minutes of the preceding meeting, so that all the workings of the Congregation may be put before the Superior Council as in a picture.

The gathering and safekeeping of originals and copies of contracts, and every kind of documents relative to the establishment of houses, rests entirely on the Secretary.

She will be careful to keep in order all documents so that the papers belonging to any house may be easily found, and all the different stages through which it has passed may be found, as in a mirror.

If these reports are made with wisdom and discernment, they may be later gathered and published, as the Servants of Charity have already done when they had printed the *Notes on the Congregation of Divine Providence*, which gives an exact idea to those who do not know them.

Another duty of the Secretary is that of arranging and keeping the archives of

the Congregation in order; therefore, where necessary, she may be assisted by a Sister chosen for that work by the Superior Council.

In keeping the correspondence with the different local Superiors alive, the Secretary will always seek to maintain the spirit and character of the Congregation.

We have always said that to the Secretary, besides the offices of real obligation, other offices also belong which can be called "extra," although they make up an integral part of her office.

She should make a list of benefactors devoted to the house and generous in their aid, and keep herself in good relations with them, whether they be ecclesiastics or lay persons, in order to know to whom to have recourse in need.

She will keep a record of those persons who have sent several residents to the house, or who in case of sickness have requested of the aid of our Sisters, so she can ask them for a favor, when the need arises.

She will inscribe in the book of benefactors the names of benefactors who have

made large offerings, and on the occasions of feasts of the House, send them a special invitation.

She will show special regard for the Ladies of the different Pious Societies and invite them to the festivities of the Congregation.

All of these attentions must be paid with simplicity and disinterestedness, leaving it to Providence to touch hearts and direct the beneficence given and received. Let the Sisters realize that all comes from God not solely from their own efforts.

The Spirit of the Congregation is not that of living on advertisements, but neither does it demand that lawful means of honest foresight be neglected, as is the custom in the marvelous institutes of Saint Cottolengo, which has a very special vocation we lack: to throw itself blindly in the arms of Providence.

According to the vocation of our Congregation a middle course is held, contenting ourselves, then, with the relative state of comfort or poverty which the Lord accords to our Houses and to us.

The Secretary will be greatly aided in her work by articles in the Periodical of the House which is already in existence for many years. If she knows how to spread it widely, she can call forth many new aspirants and considerable help to the Congregation.

For this work too, which doesn't lack hardships and difficulties, she will need help; but the General Council zealous and enlightened, will not hesitate to assist her in promoting the spread and establishment of the various communities which form the Congregation.

May Jesus and the Blessed Virgin, His Mother, inspire and help the Sisters of good will--and their works, glistening with the dew of divine grace, will be works of eternal life.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The General Econome (Treasurer)

The general Econome must ask the Lord with insistent prayers for the grace to acquire administrative tact, and ease of knowing persons, so that it won't happen that she let herself be tricked in the contracts and in the affairs in the midst of which she must live.

As a wise and prudent steward, she must know the secret of knowing, foreseeing, and providing for the needs of the Congregation with due interest, and at the same time, without letting anyone lack what is strictly necessary. A good Econome can ensure the prosperity of the House, as a careless or shortsighted Econome may throw it into ruin.

But the Econome in whom we already presuppose the good dispositions indispensable to her office, having been

chosen by the Council, will not fail in her calling if she will invoke the Mother of Good Counsel to guide her every action.

Let the local Econome like the General Econome think of Jesus, Who, seeing the hungry crowd, was not contented to exclaim: "I have pity on the multitude," but fed them to satisfaction with a miraculous bread which came forth from the tenderness of His Heart. She, too, will beg from that Divine Heart the daily manna for the whole Congregation, so that, bound in one will, with one voice they will sing the praises of the provident, merciful, Great God. If, working in the field confided to her, she lets herself always be led by faith, she will merit to hear her Heavenly Bridegroom address to her on the last day those sweet words, messengers of eternal happiness: *I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me to drink. Come, Oh blessed, come.*

The thought of this last blessing will lighten every burden of the Econome of good will, and will animate her to labor and agonize willingly just so she fulfills her calling faithfully. Far from her, every unnecessary preoccupation!

That Jesus Who every day feeds her with Himself in Holy Communion, happy to see her abandon herself to His Divine Providence, will not permit her to lack the necessities of life.

How many times a day we beg, in the prayer taught us by the Redeemer, for our daily bread! Is it therefore possible that Jesus will refuse us, if in our prayers, far from expecting the superfluous, we are satisfied with what is indispensable for life?

If Jesus, Spouse of chaste souls of good will, has chosen for Himself the greatest poverty, how then can a Sister of St. Mary of Providence desire to live in comfort? How can the words of the Savior be verified in her: *Blessed are the poor in spirit?*

Both the bread which nourishes the body and the bread of our souls, the Holy Eucharist, are gratuitous gifts of the Lord, and certainly no one has even merited them. Let us humbly beg for one and the other from Our Father Who is in Heaven.

For you, Daughters of Providence, the bread of the body represents Divine

Providence, and so must be very dear. Have great respect then, for that bread; it comes from your Divine Bridegroom, Who, after having miraculously multiplied it to feed the hungry multitude who had followed Him to hear His word, ordered His disciples to gather up the remaining fragments so that none go to waste.

So the wise and pious Econome will prevent the waste even of the small remains of bread, of food and wine, but knows how to make use of all with good judgment.

The same diligence must be used in making provisions, in expenses for repairs and building, for clothing, traveling, and in every circumstance, because poverty must be the inseparable teacher and sister of a true religious. A reasonable frugality must never be mistaken for avarice, because if the one provides for the necessities of the Community, so that health and decorum is not harmed, avarice directly harms the well-being of the Community, which needs healthy and active Sisters to correspond to their holy aims.

An Econome, who understands the true spirit of her vocation, will carefully avoid the intention of saving in order to

create a fund for the House. She will rather remember the recommendation of St. Theresa to her daughters, to keep themselves in Religious poverty: *So long as you are poor in the things of the world, Our Lord will make you rich in spirit.*

Nevertheless, in these times of strife and difficulties, it will not be contrary to wise prudence to put away a small sum, not in order to accumulate, but for the probable occurrence of persecution. Preserve, however, an unlimited confidence in God from which you will acquire the grace of a faith always more solid, and therefore a holy courage even in trials and contradictions.

In regard to creating a fund or not, the Econome will not always have deliberative vote, but it must depend on the Superior and the Council.

When instead, treating of simple administration of goods possessed, the Holy Rule already prescribes what is to be done regarding the Motherhouse, the local Houses, and Provincial Houses, when Divine Providence is pleased to extend the Congregation which bears its name to form different provinces.

It is not enough that the General Econome exert her business ability and prudence according to what is said above: she must conduct herself toward salesmen with religious dignity, and not be confused with excessive simplicity. Let her always adopt that respectful and charitable manner which the world has a right to expect from a person consecrated to God.

When poverty overtakes us and lack of necessities results, far from losing courage, let the Econome take it in both hands with filial and full confidence and trust in that God Who feeds the sparrows and dresses the lilies of the field.

Like the Saints, it is necessary then to redouble your prayers, fasts, and penance, if you wish divine mercy to come to your aid.

The greater the trials to which God wishes to submit you, the greater will be the graces which He will shower on you. You have never been, as were the martyrs, tried unto blood, and rarely have you been put to the trial of destitution; therefore, pray that the Lord will give you many opportunities to suffer and to confide in Him alone. Beg Him to sustain

you with His grace and commit yourself without ceasing to your heavenly Mother to your patron Saints and to the Guardian Angels, so that you are never unfaithful to the grace of your vocation and attachment to your holy Vows. Your fidelity in trials will give you the real assurance of divine blessings, from which alone proceeds every temporal and spiritual prosperity.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Mistress of Novices

The Sister assigned to this office must possess the highest gifts, because upon her the Religious of the Congregation must be modelled.

Naturally gifted with a fine intuition, she studies carefully the tendencies of her subjects, and will know how to guide them and with a holy foresight will know how to provide for their spiritual and temporal needs. But to be a good mistress, it is not enough to possess natural gifts, oh, no! To be successful in penetrating into hearts, and graft there the Spirit of God, she needs divine aid, and this will be given only if she knows how to merit it with intense prayers and an unlimited humility. And let us remind her of the expression already repeated and which we must repeat a hundred times: *Distrust yourself, confide wholly in God.*

From what has been said, it is very clear that no Religious will desire to be chosen and named to guide the novices. But when the Council appoints one for this office, she must accept it in the name of holy obedience, begging our Lord to supply what is lacking in her, that is, help in proportion to the burden.

First, the primary duty of the Mistress is to receive with motherly love the Postulants and Novices who, coming principally from the mountains or the country, will be timid and inexperienced and will need to be given culture.

Often these postulants do not know how to read or write, or at least every little, and it is necessary to start them out and instruct them; they may often be less instructed in Religion, much less in the ways which lead to perfection. It is necessary, then to make them know with a holy zeal, without unreasonable fanaticism, but with persuasion and sweetness, that the Religious Life to which they aspire is an altogether different thing than the life of the world in which they grew up.

Often, Our Lord, extraordinarily good to those who hear His Voice with a pure

heart and follow it, to these children of the earth, or of the common people, has been confessor and director of Spirit Himself. So it is not surprising to find good young women, simple and pious, purest in intention and life, desirous of uniting themselves forever to Jesus, their only teacher, even where there is no one to cultivate such vocations. Happy to draw near to these beautiful souls, taught by God Himself, the Mistress must guide them with charity and reverence, fearful lest she spoil the work begun.

The wise Mistress must above all guide the subjects with good example, because they always have their eyes on their mother to imitate her habits and ways. And certainly good example is the first and most eloquent of all schools.

To be obeyed, the Mistress must be loved, and to succeed in this, the Mistress must show her Novices that she has nothing so much at heart as their good. In a word, she must be to them mother and teacher. Simple, loving, sincere, she will form her charges with holy joy, to upright actions and intentions. She will be a living example of the Rule, and the Novices, imitating her, will become

polite in manners, prudent in words,
charitable in work.

The Mistress of Novices must be very pious, and must pray and teach the Novices to turn with love and faith to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Mother. If she is able to excite in herself and in her charges the spirit of prayer and union with God, she may be sure she will succeed in her office.

She must use her efforts so that the aspirants learn to express themselves in writing too, and she will aid them in a special manner to learn the Holy Rule and study the Guide in order to graft into these souls the true spirit of the Congregation.

The Novices must be instructed in Cathechism, so as to be able to teach the orphans and, at the proper time, the girls of the Sunday school.

She will not teach Cathechism dryly, but must illustrate doctrine by examples from Bible History, and to make it more meaningful she will insert some examples from Ecclesiastical History and the Lives of the Saints. The works of St. John

Bosco will be most useful for their practicality and clearness.

To these studies, that of Religious Catechism should be added, so that those who desire to make Religious Profession, may know the duties they have to encounter, and appreciate the privileges which they are about to enjoy.

In order that the Novitiate be a fitting preparation for profession, it is necessary that it be passed entirely as a time of Spiritual Exercises.

Consequently, the Novices will endeavor to live apart, so as not to be distracted in any way, and they will endeavor to learn how to put the Holy Rule in practice with love and profit. The knowledge they succeed in acquiring during this time of formation will follow them and will be their light during all their lives. If they think about this, they will find that the two years of Novitiate must be of great importance to succeed in changing a child of the world into an exemplary religious.

Too true it is that in our Congregation it is necessary that the Novices help the Professed in their work because

the number of Sisters is still small. But the Lord will make sure to fill in the gaps in their numbers with His grace, as long as the souls, not trusting themselves, trust entirely in Him.

The Mistress of Novices is not a member of the Superior Council; yet she must always be consulted in regard to the progress of the Novitiate and on the degree of development of vocation of her former novices.

The Mistress must reflect well on what she says, because her word has great weight and she must never permit doubts to dominate her. She must despise that doubt which has not a serious foundation, neither must she listen to the doubt that rests on a slight foundation, so as to avoid the danger of turning away a girl who is really called by God to Religious perfection. Remember always that profession is not intended for the perfect, but only for those who desire perfection.

After Religious profession, the Sisters remain for a year near the Mistress of Novices, who, not having them any more as subjects, will nevertheless counsel and guide them. In this way, the relation of Mother and daughter will bind together

the Mistress and those who go through the Novitiate under her, and from this will be born an ever greater union of affection and strength, thus, an ever increasing and reciprocal desire to acquire perfection.

The newly professed will keep themselves in prudent correspondence with their Mistress, and she doing likewise with the Superiors of the Houses where her former novices live, will cooperate to establish that perfect agreement of watchfulness and charity which is bound to produce flowers of virtue and always greater support and growth in the Congregation.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Sacristan

The office of Sacristan, seen with the eyes of faith, is sublime, because it obliges one to have care of the very house of God.

When the Bishop gives minor orders to the aspirants to the priesthood, he gives them first the faculty to open and close the House of God, which is our Paradise on earth. In the second Orders he orders them to cast out devils. In the third he permits them to serve at the altar and to read the holy books. It is only when they pass on to the Highest Orders that the Levites are admitted to divine service, to preach and baptize, and finally to consecrate the Bread of Life.

From this you will see how great is the honor and joy given you to spend yourself in all that concerns the Church and its worship.

St. Paul tells women to cover their heads when they enter into the temple, and in the first centuries the women were set apart in certain balconies which were called *matronee*.

The temple is holy, and there we must conduct ourselves holily, as the sanctity of the place requires. Around the Tabernacle are legions of angels in adoration; therefore, the persons who have the office of decorating the throne of the Most High on earth must be angelic. The holy water font placed at the entrance teaches us to purify ourselves with the sign of the Cross to cast out devils and cancel the venial sins of which we may be guilty. Let us purify ourselves there.

A woman is never a sacristan--you see that. Yet in Houses for Girls, and Convents, out of special regard for the souls consecrated to God, the Church permits a Sister of proven piety to function as Sacristan.

Her principal care is that of preparing the hosts and wine for the Holy Sacrifice. Next, that of keeping in order the linen necessary for worship; in case of necessity, serving Holy Mass, remainin however outside of the railing; keepin

the Church clean, keeping the lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament, and being zealous for the order and decorum in the house where Jesus resides in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Sacristan, on guard in her office, must be ready to call the priests for the spiritual needs of the faithful and must lend herself willingly to whatever pertains to the service of God and of souls.

In fervent centuries, a field and a vineyard used to be kept especially to raise the material which should be changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and the religious considered themselves highly honored to be able to prepare the wine and hosts for the altar, with their own hands.

Today, too, you are in the habit of preparing the hosts, and in some places to keep the dough more compact, a few drops of oil are mixed in so that when the consecrated Particle is broken, there will not be any crumbs.

The Sacristan must prepare in a spotless cruet the wine necessary to celebrate Holy Mass in the morning; not too much, however, to avoid abuse.

She must be careful to place everything necessary on the altar before the Priest ascends, and she must remember to stay outside the railing when she is supposed to serve Holy Mass. She will keep the altars clean and decorated if possible, always, however, in accordance with the poverty of the House to which she belongs. She must be careful to see that there is oil in the lamp in such a way as not to spill any on the altar cloth, nor on the railing which would be spotted forever.

Another duty of the Sacristan is to keep the holy water fonts clean and furnished with plenty of holy water adding when necessary a little plain water.

Some advise, as being more careful, the keeping of a little sponge in the holy water fonts so the Holy Water will not be spilled. Follow the custom of the place.

In caring for the linen and vestments, a special effort should be made so that nothing be wasted.

The bell regulates with precision the movements of the Sacristan so that the punctuality of the services be not

changed; carelessness in this matter might cause serious loss of time.

She should see to it personally that places be given to the faithful as required, and let these be increased as needed by the Sacristan for Confession or Holy Communion. Be careful, however, not to interfere in the Sacred Ceremonies nor in the functions which belong to the Minister of God.

It would be well, if not already printed, that a very clear book be made for her with reference to the common practices of the Community, with the schedule of time, at least approximate. This will help her greatly in the fulfillment of her duties.

The indicated material offices of the Sacristan correlate with her spiritual duties. Being almost continually occupied in Church and for the Church, she must endeavor to be a faithful guardian of the Heart of her divine Spouse, Who looks upon her and listens to her from His Tabernacle.

To correspond to the love of Jesus, the Sacristan will ask for permission to pass

all the time possible near Him in adoration, and for this and for her office she will thank Him without ceasing, recognizing a special love of God in desiring her so near Him.

Careful to treat with reverence the sacred vessels and all that is used for the worship of God, she will please by her kind manners all those who recommend themselves to her prayers and who ask her to light candles, etc., at this or that altar. She will accept with gratitude the offerings--even small--that are given for the poor of the House.

If the Sister Sacristan knows how to keep a pure intention in all and always and, at the same time have the amiability and reserve of one who serves a bridegroom of the Lamb without spot, many souls will be recalled to the faith and the Christian practices and great help will come to the Institutions of Divine Providence.

CHAPTER XL

The Sister Portress

The Sister Portress must be chosen by the local Council, because every office is great when it is willed by God, but this office is most delicate and important even on its own account.

To take care of the door signifies being a guardian of the House; therefore a sharp eye and intelligence to know well the persons who enter or leave, direct them to the proper persons or send them away, without offending charity or prudence.

The visitor often judges the House by the portress who meets them, and that first impression is cancelled with difficulty.

To be a good portress is difficult: only with the help of God will she learn

to admit those she should, and to refuse admittance when necessary. To do this she must cultivate in herself with the greatest care the following virtues: politeness, charity, simplicity, and prudence. Not all people can be admitted, and much less allowed to see the Superiors. But here great discretion is needed, patience and foresight; always the help of the Madonna from whom comes good Counsel.

The Portress must watch out not to buy or sell, not to introduce people to each other, and not to let suspicious persons in the House without the valid or previous permission of the Superior.

On the prudence of the Sister Portress depends in a large way the good order and discipline of the Community.

Besides observing well and remembering the persons who come and go, and fulfilling her duties as best she can, the Sister at the door must know the name and schedules of all the persons of the House so as to give prompt replies to those who have a right to ask.

She must be careful that the residents do not deceive and do not find a way to

send out or receive letters or communications of sorts.

As for all the Sisters who have a special office, it is useful to have a "note-book," so for the Portress a little notebook will be most useful in which will be entered the names of the Sisters and all the persons of the House.

Let her admit those who arrive, with a pleasant manner, in the waiting room, and be sure that the Magazine of the House is there and some little story of the Community, the life of some saint, of Sister Clare Bosatta, and others who belong to the Congregation. In that way the delay will seem shorter, and our Lord may avail Himself of the occasion to give a good thought to one who is not accustomed to them.

In the waiting room or parlor, the portraits of those who have worked for the House should be attractive, and there should also be a picture or statue depicting the aim of the Congregation. In this way the debt of gratitude will be paid and souls will be animated to the Charity of Christ.

With these dispositions it is intended, however, that the measure of prudence or holy poverty should not be passed, so as not to lose or alter the character of the House and give cause for criticism.

As the door must never be left unguarded, especially in busy times, so a substitute portress should be appointed, or if there are not Sisters enough, an experienced, pious, and prudent woman.

It would not be out of place if in the entrance there be a display of some examples of the handiwork of the House, so that the visitors may be pleased to get, in this fashion, some concrete information about what the orphans do in the House, and perhaps to bring home little pamphlets or postcards illustrating the House or its work. Who knows but what that little remembrance may not become the seed of gifts which will permit the House to extend its beneficent work further?

Amiable with all, the Portress must be careful not to have particular relations with anyone. In all and always, she must seek the triumph of charity, avoiding as a plague any familiarity which would not be in harmony with her Religious Profession.

When interrogated regarding the Congregation, she will speak with holy prudence in order to give edification to souls, and let her be very discreet because the one who interrogates may become her accuser.

In her free moments, after having said the prayers of the Rule and custom, let her keep busy with work for the House, or in reading the Holy Rule and the Guide, or taking the occasion whenever offered of reading some good book.

It is not good to leave a Sister in an office too long; neither is it good to change without a reason which justifies the change and makes it necessary.

All the Sisters and she, too, who has the office to remain at the door should fulfill their office with joy. The Portress should have a particular devotion to the Saint who holds the keys and should frequently invoke St. Peter, the Porter of Heaven. From him she will learn to be discreet, foresighted and above all, pious and fervent.

CHAPTER XLI

Obligations of the Holy Rules

Have great love and veneration for the Holy Rule, made by the Superiors and approved by the Holy Father for your sanctification. It is almost a summary of the Holy Gospel, and is the daily bread with which to feed your soul, fill your mind with good thoughts, your heart with holy affections, and at the same time it is for you the source of all good, urging you to live in meditation on the Life, Passion, and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is useless to ask whether the Rule binds under pain of sin. For you it is enough to know that it is your duty to observe it, love it, and follow it.

As you are daughters of Eve, therefore inclined to rebellion, it will not be out of place to distinguish these three cases:

I. First of all the Holy Rule teaches you to observe the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church with the same, or rather with greater exactitude than persons in the world. It is, therefore, obvious that no transgression will be without sin.

II. The Holy Rule teaches you further about evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. But if you, by your religious profession bound yourself by vows, you must be happy to feel that you are bound to God with chains of gold which human strength cannot break or weaken. Love these chains always then. They are your distinguishing mark, your joy, and they will be your glory in heaven.

We therefore derive from this that every fault, even slight, in the observance of the Holy Vows cannot be without sin, for the Vows by which you are forever bound, you pronounced of your own free will. Pray then that the Lord will not permit any diminishing in the observance of the Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, but that He let you die to avoid the danger of losing His grace and Holy Paradise.

III. The Holy Rule, almost a pious and discreet mother, tries to free you from faulty inclinations, and to infuse the virtues opposed to these faults, without threats, but by the strength of love. So when it commands something, there is nothing for you to do but to obey promptly.

Once the fire of love burns in your heart for the Holy Rule, this fire will feed the love of God, which destroys all weaknesses and brings the soul to a state where it desires nothing else but the Holy Will of God.

Arrived at this point you will permit yourself to be dominated by grace, a willing and happy slave of your Heavenly Bridegroom. Recognizing His well-known and dear voice in the Holy Rule you will follow it joyfully, willing to sacrifice yourself even to agony, until death, just so that you correspond to the divine call.

Blessed shall you be if you reach that point! It is the height of religious perfection to which you should aspire as a sailor does his port.

It is well, however, to note that God alone is perfect, and you will feel that you are imperfect in some part of the Holy Rule. Repent but don't lose courage; rather confess humbly, even if they be simple weaknesses and not real sins. Our Lord, if you really love Him, will inspire in you great horror even for that which has the appearance of sin.

The Congregation in formulating the Holy Rule, has only the glory of God and the sanctification of souls in mind; it excludes absolutely any new bonds which oblige under sin.

Confide in God: Distrust yourself always--let this be your strength, your guide.

If you have followed the Holy Rule with love, be sure you have followed the voice of God which called you to put on the Religious habit and to wear it as He wishes, and you will one day reach that peace and glory which lasts for all eternity.

For all the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, whether they direct, or are simple Sisters, Religious perfection doesn't consist in high offices, but in

the perfection with which they correspond to the divine call, that is, in the observance of the Holy Vows.

With the intention of making easier the practice of the vows, and therefore of the Holy Rule, the Congregation has established that that day of the Epiphany each year all the Sisters pronounce with renewed fervor their vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

Receive, oh Daughters of the Madonna, this holy practice as a special gift of Jesus and your heavenly Mother, and prepare yourself for it with a devout triduum.

We are attaching here a guide to accompany you on the way. Approach the holy altar humbly and pronounce with outbursts of faith and love the vows so dear to you and so precious and dear to the Heart of your Jesus.

They are truly the jeweled chain which, removing from your heart every base and worldly affection, will raise you up to holy thoughts and works, to introduce you one day into a joy without end.

Jesus, Divine Master, Immaculate
Virgin, Angels and Saints of Heaven,
increase in us the love of our Holy Vows
and our dear Congregation, so that when
our trials are over we may come to Heaven
to sing the Hosanna which lasts forever.

Triduum in Preparation

for the

Renewal of the Holy Vows

on the Feast of Epiphany

There where human blood was and is shed to gain new lands for Italy, for civilization and the Faith, once lived the Holy Magi, and they moved from there to go to Bethlehem to adore the Holy Child.

The relics of those Wise Men, taken from the Basilica of St. Eustorgious in Milan by Barbarossa, in our day, through the efforts of our Cardinal Ferrari, were partly recovered and restored to their ancient resting-place.

The Feast of the Epiphany is therefore closely united to the Church of St. Eustorgious, which for this reason is called the Church of the Holy Kings. We must venerate their precious relics, to

merit, through their protection, a share of that true wisdom which alone can lead us to the feet of the Divine Infant.

FIRST DAY

(Recite the Veni Creator)

How many souls live in the shadow of Paganism without any idea of the true God? So great a number that the human mind cannot understand. I, instead, by a free gift of God, at birth, was washed in the cleansing waters from original sin; then aided by a Christian education and the Holy Sacraments, guided by the loving hand of the Bridegroom of chaste souls, under the protection of the most pure Virgin, led to the security of this Privileged State.

If I consider the enormous number of those who live and die without the gift of faith; if I reflect how few are those fortunate souls who have the light and life of faith, how great should be my gratitude to Him Who has chosen me to impress His image on my heart.

Oh great God! How can I prove my gratitude for your great mercy in letting me be born in a Catholic country, of

Catholic parents, and for guiding me to this Congregation where my rebelling soul is forced to bend before truth and to practice justice. The gift of a Religious Vocation is a very special grace; human mind cannot understand it nor appreciate it enough. Give me the grace, O Lord, to comprehend something of its great worth.

The group of Catholics in the world is said to be small. Yet in this favored group, there are many who do not believe or who live as though they did not believe--they rebel at what the Church teaches and commands; they trample the Gospel and mistreat Sacred Things. Oh most merciful God, open the eyes of the blind, convert Christians, make all those who are baptized understand that outside of You there is no salvation.

I, instead, most unworthy creature, who innumerable times have violated the laws of God, led by the Hand of Divine Grace have been withdrawn from the corruption of the world, without any merit on my part. The human mind can never arrive at an understanding of the high privilege of the divine call. Because of it I find myself near the threshold in this Holy Congregation, where all concur to put me

on the path of virtue and perfection according to the words of Christ: *Be you perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.*

The thought that all Religious are not holy is a thought which frightens me. Nevertheless, this should not discourage me, because a great number of the Saints venerated on the altars were like me called to withdraw from the world.

Even those souls who are not perfect desire to be so, and despising their faults, endeavor to free themselves from them to gain perfection and God.

Oh God, You Who wish to withdraw me from the dangers of the world, I thank You. Grant, oh most merciful Bridegroom of my soul, that in gratitude for the gift of a religious vocation I may use all my life to glorify You in the exercise of charity and in the most intimate union with You, because You art the God of my heart.

The Lord, just, but always good, even to those who are born in paganism and in heresy, gives sufficient grace for salvation. He gives greater grace, however, to Christians and even more to Catholics who live in the world. But, how much

greater is the grace which God has given me calling me to follow Him, as an intimate friend, destined to live in Him, with Him, for Him! Oh Lord, how generous You are with me, a weak creature!

If I glance on the multitudes of unfaithful and on the scarcity of Priests called by God to dispel the darkness, I can well understand that this is deserved punishment for the lack of cooperation of the baptized.

Great God, I do not wish through my fault, to deprive so many souls of light, who, almost shipwrecked, are on the way to death of the soul! They need someone to save them. Grant that I may guide many to safety! Raise up, Oh Lord, souls who will serve you, grant that from the stones come forth Priests, capable of carrying the good news everywhere!

Enlighten me, Oh Lord, so that I may do my best for the salvation of souls. Give me the grace to prove my gratitude for the immense gift of a religious vocation, sacrificing myself for love of my suffering neighbor.

My Jesus, I thank You, I am Yours--make use of me today, tomorrow and always in your service. Jesus, I am Yours!

SECOND DAY

(Recite the Veni Creator)

On Holy Thursday in 1848 the very pious Cardinal Massaia, kneeling in Jerusalem at the Holy Cenacle, closed a triduum of Spiritual exercises, and prepared himself in weeping and prayer for his difficult Mission.

Raising himself with holy courage from his prayer, defying the tropical heat, and the savage beasts which threatened him in the deserts, he withstood hunger, thirst, insects, rain, obliged more than once to take refuge by climbing up in trees and urged on by the fixed thought of carrying the faith to the infidels, he went on fearless, among the hostility of men and the danger of the elements.

The pagans plot against his life and he converts them; and to convert the greatest possible number, the Holy Capuchin united other companions to himself and with them crosses deserts and sandy

wastes, crosses rivers, climbs mountains, just so they could reach their high goal.

Let us reflect, whether the lands crossed by Massaia, the Apostle, cannot be compared to the world and its dangers from which Our Lord has freed us and we will feel a great sense of gratitude.

Let us think too with holy envy of the great zeal of the Missionaries who, from the time of St. Francis Xavier until now, have spent themselves in order to gain souls for Christ, and humiliated, let us confess our unworthiness

As the star shone for the Holy Magi, so on my horizon God has made His divine calling shine. But am I as obedient as they were to the voice which invites me?

The Magi brought gold to the newly born Jesus, to acknowledge Him as Master of all, incense to adore Him as God, and myrrh because they saw in Him man united to divinity.

Do I imitate the constancy of the Magi, passing over and overcoming obstacles in order to bring to my Heavenly Spouse those gifts He wants from me?

My dear Jesus, from now on, I will serve you faithfully. I will not let a day pass without bringing to your cradle the warmth of my love. For love of You I will be diligent in the works of mercy to which I am assigned, and attached to the Congregation with all my heart, I will endeavor to imbue its spirit in my life, exercising myself with all my strength to relieve suffering.

The Holy Magi drew great comfort in their sorrow and in the difficulty of the long journey, from the miraculous star--truly a burning torch lit by God in heaven to give them light in traveling, to accompany them to the feet of Baby Jesus.

And why do I not recognize the star of Jesus in the voice of my Superiors, and in that other voice which speaks within me as a diligent warning which calls me to virtue and perfection?

Innocent souls ascend the holy mountain. Alas, I am so no longer. And yet Jesus sweetly invites me; Come, my friend, let penance be for you a saving bath. Never fear, child, I will be with you, if you wish to be dear to me. Accept oh Lord, all my strength and give it

value so that by penance I may regain my lost innocence.

Give me the grace to be generous in the fulfillment of my holy vows which alone will lead me to the desired perfection. I hear your voice, oh Baby Jesus, and I come to adore You. You weep for my sins, and smiling you invite me to follow you among difficulties and labors. Oh how good you are, Jesus I come, I come!

THIRD DAY

(Recite the Veni Creator)

Those whom we are accustomed to call the Holy Kings, were not real Kings. They were leaders of a small country, which they loved and governed with virtue and wisdom.

The Daughters of St. Mary, Brides of the divine Lamb, placed as leaders of small groups of orphans and residents must also proceed as did the Magi by virtue, invoking that wisdom which God grants to those who live under the light of faith, and work continually according to the charity of Christ.

The Magi had to make a long and difficult journey, disregarding and overcoming the cunning of King Herod to reach the feet of the newly born King of the Jews. And I also, dressed in the habit of a Daughter of Divine Providence, must avoid the evils which come forth from a worldly spirit, to become filled with the love which emanates from the Sanctuary, rather from the Heart of the Chosen Bridegroom of my soul, thirsty for heaven and heavenly things.

And when, as it did to the Magi, the star hides itself from me, I, with the practice of religious virtues and with fervent prayer, will invoke its return.

But only too true is it that the star hides itself when the Gospel is not believed, and when Christian practices are neglected or disregarded.

How many times have I also through my fault contributed to the lessening of faith in souls? Jesus, have pity on me! Grant that the sorrowful cry of our Holy Father may not come true, who prayed in his distress: Do not permit, oh great God, that faith leave our Italy.

Sweet Jesus, insulted and blasphemed, by those who know You not, or by a new Judas who betrays You, grant that I may love and praise You for sinners and for those who are unfaithful, and that I be Your companion on Your sorrowful journey and console You on Calvary.

The Magi, knowing that the future King of the Jews would be born at Bethlehem in a stable, were not afraid to disobey Herod, and following the star, set out towards that unknown place.

I, also, called by a religious vocation to follow Jesus in chastity, poverty, and obedience, will disregard human respect, I will overcome the flesh, I will despise the devil, and I will walk in the path followed by my dear Jesus from the Crib to the death on the Cross.

In doubts, in the fears which nature will raise up to withdraw me from good, I will take counsel from the man of God, whom God has placed as guide of the people of Israel. The Director of my conscience will point out to me the way to follow and will lead me by the hand to the crib where the King of heaven and earth cries.

When the Magi could no longer see the star, they did not lose courage, but had recourse to legitimate authority to have sure direction as to where they would find Him, Whom they sought. And God, Who is good to the pure of heart, thwarted the plans of Herod and lit up again in heaven the guiding star which accompanied the Magi to Bethlehem.

I, instead, hundreds of times through my own fault, have lost sight of my end, and if God had not grasped me with His grace I would have lost the way. From now on I will turn immediately to Him who represents Our Lord, and if I have good will and a firm purpose to do the Will of God, I will retrace my steps, and arrive at my end, the glory of God and my sanctification. Dearest Mother, Angels and Saints, support my unsure steps in the difficult journey.

So long as the light of divine love floods my soul, and I am convinced of the little I can do, I support with joyful heart all the sorrows that afflict me. But alas! as soon as I no longer see the star--God--a terrible discouragement overcomes me, and desolation attempts to impede my activity, paralyzes my capacities, darkens my mind, disturbs my heart.

I listen in sorrow, and a gentle voice tells me: -- Arise, poor one; do not seek the consolation of God, but the God of Consolations.

I hear your just reproof, oh my crucified Love, and I accept from your hands the cross, refusing every human comfort. I deliberately renounce all sensible consolations, ready to suffer with God, oh, Jesus, agonizing in the Garden, the weariness, the hatred of men, persecutions, death.

I renounce, oh my Jesus, all the consolations of religious life, and I attach myself to all in it that is difficult and heavy because I wish to be saved, journeying on the Way of the Cross with you.

And when around the cross flowers will grow, and they will be flowers of suffering, I will be anxious to adorn my head and my heart to be more than ever like to You, oh my Bridegroom, crowned with thorns.

Oh Jesus, with a heart ready to suffer all, just so I may serve You and be dear to You, I prepare myself as for a feast, for the renewal of my Holy Vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, renouncing

forever as on the day of my Baptism, the world, the flesh, and the devil and all their suggestions.

Holy Magi, obtain for me your humility and your wisdom and, at the Crib of Baby Jesus under the protection of the Blessed Virgin and her chaste spouse St. Joseph, I will make the offering of myself for today and always, for the life which ends, and for the other life which lasts forever.

Solemnity of Epiphany

Renewal of Vows

I

On the day of Epiphany the Holy Church commemorates the Holy Kings at the Crib of Jesus, which is to say, celebrates the call of Christ to the Gentiles, and the spread of the light of the Holy Gospel to men of good will.

To answer this call signifies for the Daughters of St. Mary of Divine Providence and for all chosen souls: to unite themselves to the Magi and recognize Jesus as their Master adore Him as God, serve Him as man, unite themselves to Him as to Brother and Redeemer.

At the feet of Jesus, my Spouse, and with Jesus in my heart, I consider in the first place my great fortune in having become a Christian through Holy Baptism;

the greater fortune of being called to the religious life; lastly, the fortune which is reserved for me in Heaven if I am faithful to my Holy Vows.

Chosen without any merit on my part, from the great number who live and die outside of the Church, only in the light of His Wisdom in Heaven will I succeed in understanding the greatness of the divine benefit which has taken me from the power of the devil to redeem me in the Blood of Christ.

O my God--was that not enough.

Among baptized Christians, many are led astray by passion, the world, and error. By what privilege have You withdrawn me, oh holy Providence of God, from the enticement of the world to call me to belong to the souls chosen to follow the Lamb Who takes away sin?

Oh my Jesus, I hold my holy habit to my heart, ~~and~~ I kiss You crucified Savior, resting on my bosom, armor of sorrow and of love, and I thank You with all my heart for having bound me forever to You by my Holy Vows.

Dear Jesus, for the fidelity with which so many Sisters of my Congregation have served Thee, they are reigning with You above where there is no danger of transgressing Your laws. I recommend and confide myself to those dear souls; they will help me to renew and then practice my Holy Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, which are my joy and comfort on earth and will be my glory and me everlasting happiness in heaven.

II

How great is my fortune to be called with so many good souls to follow God--to show Him my gratitude by my work, and my continual acts of faith, hope and charity! And what an immense grace to have made me understand the deceitfulness and the emptiness of earthly goods, and to have invited me to pronounce my Holy Vows, from which alone my weakness receives strength and inspiration.

Oh, blessed Jesus, oh, my Immaculate Mother, oh my glorious patron, St. Joseph, teach me to worthily appreciate my Holy Vows, help me to keep them.

By the vow of Poverty, I renounce with deliberate will, all worldly goods and desire only heavenly goods, and I await from You alone, oh my God, that which is necessary in this life.

I renew my dear Vow of Chastity, happy to preserve for You alone my body, my heart, my mind. Oh, would that I were a lily to send forth perfume at the foot of Your altar, oh my Jesus.

I will never be tired of repeating my vow of obedience, renouncing forever my own will, and promising to obey my Holy Rule and my Superiors in whom I will see God Himself.

Holy Angels, who announced peace to men of good will, obtain for me the grace to die to myself, and to live only of God, in God, and for my God.

I renounce all the goods of the world, the deceits of the flesh, my own will, and I renew with holy enthusiasm the Holy Vows of my religious profession.

III

Too often have I promised and then failed, and too often, depending on the

value of the Holy Vows, I was satisfied to pronounce them without endeavoring to put them in practice! O my Jesus, pardon my carelessness.

To thank my loving Savior for the privilege granted me, calling me without any merit on my part to follow Him in the House in which He lives, I firmly promise to cooperate with the grace of religious vocation, putting forth all the powers of my intelligence and will to save my soul, while saving others. And what is the way to save others? The spirit of my Congregation answers: Souls are saved by giving them help in all temporal needs. When with real charity, you take care of children, the sick, and the mentally handicapped person, you have all the possibility to reach the soul and save it.

Jesus, Spouse of my soul, I beg of You to enlighten the spiritually blind, to give fervor to the tepid, and sanctify the just. Do not permit, however, oh my Jesus, that being zealous for the sanctification of my neighbor, I should be lost. Make resound within me that sentence which urged on so many virgins even to heroism: whoever saves a soul saves herself.

Thank you Jesus, for Your consolations. With You and for You I go to the altar to renew my Vows with a new fervor, as though You were before me agonizing in the garden, scourged at the pillar, hanging from the cross, encouraging me with Your divine voice.

Bless, oh Lord, my soul, bless those of my Superiors, my Sisters, and all in our care.

O Jesus, in Your hands, leaning on Your divine Heart as St. John, as St. Margaret May Alacoque, as the Blessed Virgin, Your Mother, with all the strength of my will, with all the fervor of my desire, I renew my three vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, because I wish to be Yours, and Yours forever.

To these dear Vows I cling as to an anchor of salvation, as to a prelude of Heaven.
Recite--Te Deum Laudamus.

Thursday Evening at Holy Hour

PREPARATION

As chosen daughters, you are called on Thursday evening to assist in spirit with tenderness and love at the sorrowful agony of Jesus in the Garden. What picture is more touching? Daughters gather around their father, spouses around their spouse, suffering and weeping with Him, and praying with Him for poor sinners.

We are so burdened by sin, and yet the Blood of Jesus flows from His Body drop by drop to redeem us. Granted that the sins of men are incredibly great, yet the merit of that precious Blood is infinitely greater.

We, Sisters of Divine Providence, thank God for this great privilege and joy of adoration! With humility at the thought of our misery, let us get ready to

meditate and adore Jesus during this Holy Hour asked of us, or rather given to us, and considering this, our duty, as a privilege of love, let us offer thanks to the thrice holy God.

First Quarter Hour

Let us consider above all the Agony of Jesus as an effect of sin. Not only the sins of all humanity have reduced the most beautiful of men to such a state, but also our particular sins. Yes, our sins have placed on the heart of Jesus that unheard of suffering which forces from His innocent Body abundant tears of blood.

Meditating profoundly on the terrible moral agonies of the Nazarene, it will be easy for us to understand the infinite gravity of sin, and will produce within us thoughts of disgust for all that wounds the Heart of the God Man; but above all sorrow and confusion, and a firm purpose never more to offend God by even the smallest venial sin. Venial sin, it is true, does not wound Jesus mortally, but nevertheless it is always a blow which wounds Him to the point of bleeding. And would you prick Him with a hundred little failings? No, no, never

again serious sins, not even venial sins, never again!

Let us meditate on Jesus suffering for the sins of men!

How many sins, and how many men in the world commit sin! Who could enumerate them?

And yet Jesus, offering Himself to the Divine Justice to expiate the sins of men, knows them all, and counts them all, one by one; He feels the bitterness of each one, and for each one sheds His Blood. What can we say then of grievous and repeated sins?

What a depth of iniquity on the part of man, what a depth of mercy on the part of the Man-God!

Let us consider attentively the malice there is in sin--the horrible accumulation of hatred, rebellion and ingratitude in one single mortal sin. And have I committed any? And with so many graces received, have I offended my God?

Nothing less than the infinite love of Jesus was needed to assume our human flesh and become our mediator with God in

order to redeem sinful man; of Jesus, the voluntary victim in the agony of the garden, as later He will be in the betrayal of Judas, in the flagellation and in the death on the cross.

It will be well if we examine our conscience and search our soul from youth to adolescence, from maturity to today. Before Jesus agonizing in the Garden, let us examine the faults of which we have been guilty in all the years of our life, and let us conceive for them a lively, profound and universal sorrow!

Let us mingle our tears with the tears and sweat of Jesus and, sincerely repentant, let us console Him by our promises of amendment.

An outburst of love to Him Who expiates our sins with His Blood, will give us courage to assume our part of the reparation.

Expiating, let us love. Love, and loving, we will find mercy.

AN ACT OF REPARATION

Most sweet Jesus, whose overflowing charity for men is requited by so much forgetfulness, negligence and contempt, behold us prostrate before you, eager to repair by a special act of homage the cruel indifference and injuries to which your loving Heart is everywhere subject.

Mindful alas! that we ourselves have had a share in such great indignities, which we now deplore from the depths of our hearts, we humbly ask your pardon and declare our readiness to atone by voluntary expiation, not only for our own personal offenses, but also for the sins of those, who, straying far from the path of salvation, refuse in their obstinate infidelity to follow you, their Shepherd and Leader, or, renouncing the promises of their baptism, have cast off the sweet yoke of your law.

We are now resolved to expiate each and every deplorable outrage committed against you; we are now determined to make amends for the manifold offenses against Christian modesty in unbecoming dress and behavior, for all the foul seductions laid to ensnare the feet of the innocent, for the frequent violations of Sundays

and holydays, and the shocking blasphemies uttered against you and your Saints. We wish also to make amends for the insults to which your Vicar on earth and your priests are subjected, for the profanation, by conscious neglect or terrible acts of sacrilege, of the very Sacrament of your divine love, and lastly for the public crimes of nations who resist the rights and teaching authority of the Church which you have founded.

Would that we were able to wash away such abominations with our blood. We now offer, in reparation for those violations of your divine honor, the satisfaction you once made to your Eternal Father on the cross and which you continue to renew daily on our altars; we offer it in union with the acts of atonement of your Virgin Mother and all the Saints and of the pious faithful on earth; and we sincerely promise to make recompense, as far as we can with the help of your grace, for all neglect of your great love and for the sins we and others have committed in the past. Henceforth, we will live a life of unswerving faith, of purity of conduct, of perfect observance of the precepts of the Gospel and especially that of charity. We promise to the best of our power to prevent others from offending you and

to bring as many as possible to follow you.

O loving Jesus, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mother, our model in reparation, deign to receive the voluntary offering we make of this act of expiation; and by the crowning gift of perseverance keep us faithful unto death in our duty and the allegiance we owe to you, so that we may all one day come to that happy home, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, God, forever and ever. AMEN.

Second Quarter Hour

When we have completed the meditation of sin as a cause of the agony of Jesus, let us proceed to meditate His sorrowful vision of all the unheard-of sufferings of His Passion and Death on the Cross when abandoned by men.

Let us picture the sorrowful scene of the traitor's kiss, of Jesus scornfully dragged in chains before Annas and Caiphas, Herod and Pilate, through all the tribunals of Jerusalem. Let us follow Him in the sorrowful journey shocked at the thought that our sins made Him suffer so much.

Let us consider the Jews who were misled--God's chosen people. Let us consider the maliciousness and cruelty of the leaders of the people, the harshness of the soldiers, and search our souls to see if we are really free from sin, or if we have not rather, by our sins and past life participated in the cruelty of the Jews in this horrible deicide.

Filled with thoughts of our unworthiness, let us go on meditating on the enormous torments of the flagellation, the crowning with thorns and the crucifixion.

Pause

In view of such unheard-of sufferings of the Man-God shall we yet refuse to suffer? Oh let us unite our pains to the pains of Him Who gave Himself to restore to us all, and to each in particular, the grace of God and Paradise, and let us thank Him for desiring to make us participants of His Divine Sufferings.

With a generous outburst let us all pronounce together our FIAT. Let us cling to the arm of our Holy Mother, and with her follow her Divine Son on the sorrowful journey. How great was the

torture of that pure and sweet maternal heart! How the strokes and the insults which are heaped upon her Son, the Son of God, re-echo in her! The words, pronounced on the cross by the Immaculate Lamb, the tortures of Calvary are so many arrows in the heart of the Mother, and will we remain insensible?

Let us unite ourselves with the Blessed Angels to the sorrows of Mary, and beg her to make us participate in her sorrows and those of Jesus.

Holy Mother, pierce me through,
In my heart, each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.

(3 times)

And when, overwhelmed with the realization of our misery, we would desire the sweet bitterness of the cross, let us repeat with St. Paul, "Oh, God, do not permit that I glory in other than in my Lord Jesus Christ and in Him Crucified."

Through the intercession of the Virgin, let us pray to her Divine Son to make us know how precious the cross and suffering are, then mistrusting ourselves entirely and relying solely on God, let us cling to the cross and sufferings of Jesus crucified.

Litany of the Passion

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

Christ graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven,
have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

Have mercy on us

is repeated after each invocation.

God the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, one God,

Jesus, the eternal Wisdom,

Jesus, conversing with men,

Jesus, hated by the world,

Jesus, sold for the thirty pieces of
silver,

Jesus, prostrate in prayer,

Jesus, strengthened by an angel,

Jesus, agonizing in a bloody sweat,

Jesus, betrayed by Judas with a kiss,

Jesus, bound by the soldiers,

Jesus, forsaken by your disciples,

Jesus, before Annas and Caiaphas.

Jesus, struck by a servant on the face,

Jesus, accused by false witnesses,

Jesus, declared worthy of death,

Jesus, spit upon in the face,

Jesus, blindfolded,
Jesus, smitten on the cheek,
Jesus, thrice denied by Peter,
Jesus, delivered up to Pilate,
Jesus, despised and mocked by Herod,
Jesus, clothed in a white garment,
Jesus, rejected for Barabbas,
Jesus, torn with scourges,
Jesus, bruised for our sins,
Jesus, regarded as a leper,
Jesus, covered with a purple robe,
Jesus, crowned with thorns,
Jesus, struck with a reed,
Jesus, demanded for crucifixion,
Jesus, condemned to death,
Jesus, given up to your enemies,
Jesus, laden with the Cross,
Jesus, led as a lamb to the slaughter,
Jesus, stripped of your garments,
Jesus, fastened with nails to the Cross,
Jesus, wounded for our iniquities,
Jesus, praying for your murderers,
Jesus, reputed with the wicked.
Jesus, blasphemed on the Cross,
Jesus, reviled by the malefactor,
Jesus, giving Paradise to the thief,
Jesus, commanding St. John to your Mother
as her son,
Jesus, forsaken by your Father,
Jesus, given gall and vinegar to drink,
Jesus, testifying that all things written
concerning you were accomplished,

Jesus, commanding your spirit into the
hands of your Father,
Jesus, obedient even unto death,
Jesus, pierced with a lance,
Jesus, made a propiation for us,
Jesus, taken down from the Cross,
Jesus, laid in the sepulcher,
Jesus, rising gloriously from the dead,
Jesus, ascending into heaven,
Jesus, our Advocate with the Father,
Jesus, sending down the Holy Spirit,
Jesus, exalting your Mother,
Jesus, who shall come to judge the living
and the dead,

Be merciful, spare us, O Lord.
Be merciful, graciously hear us, O Lord.
From all evil, deliver us, O Jesus.
From all sin,
Deliver us, O Jesus

is repeated after each invocation.

From anger, hatred, and every evil will,
From war, famine, and pestilence,
From all dangers of mind and body,
From everlasting death,
Through your most pure conception,
Through your miraculous nativity,
Through your humble circumcision,
Through your baptism and fasting,
Through your labors and watchings,
Through your cruel scourging and crowning,

Through your thirst, and tears, and nakedness,
Through your precious death and Cross,
Through your glorious resurrection and ascension,
Through your sending forth the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,
On the day of judgment, we sinners, we beseech you, hear us.
That you would spare us,

We beseech you, hear us

is repeated after each invocation.

That you would pardon us,
That you would bring us to true penance,
That you would pour into our hearts the grace of the Holy Spirit,
That you would defend and propagate your Church.
That you would preserve and increase all societies assembled in your holy Name,
That you would bestow upon us true peace, humility, and charity,
That you would give us perseverance in grace and in your holy service,
That you would deliver us from unclean thoughts, the temptations of the devil, and everlasting damnation,
That you would unite us to the company of your Saints,
That you would graciously hear us,

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world; spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world; graciously hear us, O Lord!

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of
the world; have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Y. We adore you, O Christ, and we bless
you.

R. Because by your holy Cross you have
redeemed the world.

Prayer: O LORD, for the redemption of
the world, you willed to be born among
human beings, subjected to the rite of
circumcision, rejected by the people,
betrayed by Judas with a kiss, bound with
cords, led like an innocent lamb to
slaughter, shamelessly exposed to the
gaze of Annas as well as Caiaphas,
Pilate, and Herod, accused by false
witnesses, tormented by scourges and
insults, spat upon and crowned with
thorns, struck with blows of hand and
reed, blindfolded and stripped of your
garments, affixed to the wood and lifted
high on the Cross, numbered among

thieves, given gall and vinegar to drink, and pierced by a lance.

Lord, by these most holy sufferings which we, your unworthy servants, devoutly call to mind, and by your holy Cross and death deliver us from the pains of hell, and be pleased to take us where you took the penitent thief who was crucified with you. You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever.

Amen.

Third Quarter Hour

But it is not the fear of suffering which makes Jesus sweat blood, it is the ingratitude of man. Notwithstanding his infinite sufferings, many, many souls will continue in their sins, and treading that divine Blood under foot, will fall into hell, where there is no love, and where hatred reigns supreme.

These considerations will give birth in our hearts to a lively and mighty yearning to enlighten many souls with heavenly light, and to snatch them from sin and from the power of the devil, and convert them to God. With sincere words we will then promise Jesus to be always faithful

in His service and in zeal for His glory; and moved to tears of sorrow we will beg Him with all our fervor to permit all the souls in the world to have a share in the merits of His infinitely precious agony.

A loving father willingly sweats, works, suffers, and even dies for the health and well-being of his children. Jesus, Whose sufferings are infinitely more numerous than any human being, has no comfort whatever, since he is aware that many of His sons and daughters for whom He shed His precious blood to the last drop will voluntarily refuse His divine assistance and be lost forever.

This thought increases a thousand times the suffering of the Savior, who immersed in a bath of Blood, begs His Divine Father for sinful humanity. The prayer of Jesus is heard, and a great number shall return to His grace. But Our Lord does not wish to force free will, and many senseless men, taking advantage of this privilege, will continue obstinately and foolishly in rebellion and throw themselves headlong into hell, treading under foot foolishly and obstinately the holy laws of God and of the Church.

St. Monica weeps and prays for her guilty son, and Augustine is converted and becomes a saint. Let us pray, too, and those persons whom we love will be saved.

Jesus offers all His blood for the salvation of men, and yet He sees that a great number of His children will persist in offending Him, will deny Him, and continually refuse His call, and throw themselves into hell.

The sorrowful Heart of Jesus, pierced by a thousand swords, stricken by Divine Justice which demands reparation, seeks compassionate souls who will help Him drink the bitter chalice, to the last drop, and He finds no one.

At least, let us, Daughters of St. Mary, desire to share the pains of the innocent One, to console our Heavenly Bridegroom! For the sorrows of today, He prepares for us joy without end. Come! Let us tell Him we desire to be His companion in love and in His ineffable sufferings, and we will merit to hear His Divine voice one day exclaim with infinite sweetness: Today you will be with Me in Paradise.

Chaplet of Mercy

On the large beads:

Oh Jesus, Who canst do all things, have mercy on us, and on all poor sinners.

On the small beads:

My Jesus, mercy. (5 decades)

Most clement Jesus, Lover of our souls, we beg You, by the agony of Your heart, and by the sorrows of Your Divine Mother Mary, to wash in Your precious Blood, all the sinners who are now in agony and will die during this night. O suffering heart of Jesus, Who suffered mortal agony in the garden, have mercy on us, and all the dying.

a Lamb of God, etc...like during Holy Mass. For the Holy Church--Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said to your Apostles, "I leave you peace, my peace I give you,"...etc. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

Fourth Quarter Hour

Before withdrawing from the altar and leaving off meditation, let us look at the disciples who slept at the sorrowful

moment in which the Master agonized and seeing our own lukewarmness mirrored in their sleep, renew our sorrow, and our ardent and earnest promises of fidelity, repeating, "Help us, Oh Jesus! Do not permit us ever to fall into temptation."

The favorite disciples of Jesus, Peter, James and John, at a stone's throw from where Jesus prays and sweats blood, indifferent and lazy, permit sleep to overtake them. When Jesus calls them, they respond indifferently and then turn calmly again to sleep without paying attention at all to the Master, Who suffers intensely because of this shameful abandonment. Would we imitate those cold disciples?

All of a sudden are heard the steps of the soldiers led by Judas. Jesus turns again to Peter, James and John and says to them with infinite sorrow: "Sleep--keep on sleeping. Do you not know that this is the hour of darkness? You should have prayed and watched so as not to be overcome by temptation."

And we, who have many times claimed to belong only to Jesus, can we consider ourselves freed from the weariness

and lukewarmness of which the disciples of the Savior were guilty?

Let us meditate to find out what our fervor in prayer, and meditation, is. What is our love of mortification, and how do we act when we have to suffer?

Pause

When it is necessary to overcome human respect, are we ready to defend Jesus in His glory, in His Gospel, in His ministers? Can we truly say that we have always done our duty even in the face of ridicule and criticism? Have we ever betrayed Jesus with a kiss, as did the traitor Apostle?

Lord, sorrow and confusion take possession of us and tell us of our misery and of our wickedness; Jesus agonizing in the garden and on the cross, cleanse us with Thy Divine Blood from past sins, fill us with the fire of Thy love, and grant that we place all our delight in uniting our sorrows to Yours. By the merits of Your Divine Blood, save us and make us saints. By praying and agonizing with You, strengthened by Your merits, we will become perfect Sisters as You wish us to be.

Let us accept generously to be victims for the glory of Jesus, and for the salvation of souls, and Jesus will accept our offering, the Blessed Virgin will shelter us underneath her mantle, and the angels will carry us to the height of Christian perfection.

Having finished this Holy Hour let us take our place near the Sorrowful Mother, as faithful and loving daughters. Let us tell her and her angels to watch over our souls day and night, and always so that the enemy may never again tempt us against our eternal salvation.

Let us resolve again to console the agonizing heart of Jesus with our fidelity and tender love, and place in our mind and heart the holy aspirations received during the meditations of this hour of prayer.

Oh Holy Virgin help us now and forever!

Before leaving Your presence, where the meditation of Your agony, Oh Jesus, has given us good thoughts, we look forward to the privileged Hour of the coming week, the hour of night adoration before You, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us prepare with fervor and love for that

hour, when we will find ourselves again in prayer with You, the Spouse of our Heart.

Every day too, in the practice of the Way of the Cross we will renew the affections and resolutions awakened in us during this hour of prayer before Jesus.

We offer our work too, to Thee, Oh Divine Agonizing Lord, so that it too may become a prayer of continual adoration.

Oh agonizing heart of Jesus, let the pious exercise we have just finished be pleasing to you, in memory of your agony in the garden. If it was granted to us to remain awake one hour with You, it was our grace and consolation, and we thank You for it. Forgive us, if we seemed lukewarm or distracted.

Oh Jesus, your agony recalls to mind our own. What, will it be for us? Yes, it is true: past guilt frightens us. But you, Oh Jesus, will generously give us your love, and will make it so that we go towards death with tranquility and faith.

In that moment, we hope, the works of your disciple Mary will be a comfort to us: "How sweet it is to die after having

professed a constant devotion to the heart of Him Who must guide us!" Imploring your grace for those last moments upon which eternal salvation depends, we implore also the graces of your Most Holy Mother and of St. Joseph, patron of a good death; we do this not only for ourselves, but also for our fellow Sisters and for our residents, as we do also for all our families.

For the glorification of the members of the Congregation: Pater, Ave, Gloria.

For the gaining of Holy Indulgences: Pater, Ave, Gloria.

For the souls of the members of the Congregation who have died: Pater, Ave, Gloria.

For the souls of those who have died: Pater, Ave, Gloria.

For the souls of the members of the Congregation who have died: Pater, Ave, Gloria.

Nocturnal Adoration

Those who live in the world rarely think of the Lord and much less do they think of Him during the night dedicated entirely to rest or pleasure.

But Jesus, Who watches lovingly night and day in the Tabernacle, suffering from such abandonment has chosen little groups of generous souls, who would sacrifice their rest, and consecrate themselves to Him in fervent nocturnal adoration, made more beautiful and meritorious because of this very sacrifice. You are fortunate, for the Lord has wished to number you in this group of adorers.

Reflect on the groups of cloistered religious, who arise every night to adore together, and then one by one they gather round the altar. Acknowledge your weakness, then humbly yet fervently unite your prayers to theirs, being alert, and waiting for the Lord to make you know the mysteries of His Divine Love.

The Lord is great and good; even in these times so disastrous for Religion and morals, He knows how to call faithful hearts, docile to His Voice and full of love for His Eucharistic Heart.

Jesus, charity by essence, saddened by your unworthiness, has generously forgiven you everything. Touched by your sincere repentance, by the good will with which you have so often vowed to consecrate your entire life to Him, He has blessed your vocation and has called you and calls you again to approach His altar not as handmaids, but rather as loving Spouses.

There is no doubt but that, after having passed the day in continual work, perhaps heavy and tiresome, in the works of spiritual and temporal charity for the relief and redemption of your needy neighbor, you may feel the need of reposing your tired body quietly in your bed. But if your body has need of rest, the soul has a far greater need; and so once a week you will give up an hour of sleep in turn to consecrate it to your Sacramental Spouse. In this manner the Congregation has established a chain of adoration which will multiply good,

redouble fervor, and renew strength.
(Above not in original.)

Hour of Adoration Before

Jesus in the

Blessed Sacrament

How beautiful and fruitful the steps of the virgin who runs to meet her Spouse! On her way a thousand flowers of the most elect virtues spring up, and in her heart is rooted that divine charity which makes the timid virgin strong and courageous against the attacks of the enemy, against the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil.

What will the handmaid of the Lord say in that fortunate hour in which she is called to keep her God company? Great ladies consider themselves highly honored when they can render services to the King or Queen, and to succeed, make little account of humiliation, and prepare themselves with the greatest attention to appear before their Sovereigns as they should.

And we--what shall we do before Jesus,
King of Kings, Sovereign Ruler of earth
and of all hearts?

The Lord loves to conceal His grandeur
so that we might approach Him without
fear: and we, understanding as much as it
is possible for our limited minds to
understand, convinced of the distance
between ourselves and Him--but more
convinced of His goodness--listen attentively
to the words of life which He will
deign to instill into our hearts, while
we sit near Him--adoring.

Perhaps it will be useful for you to
divide your Hour of Adoration in four
parts, in order to gain greater profit.

In the first part--Let us kneel and
adore.

In the second part--Let us beg pardon.

In the third part--Let us ask for
graces.

In the fourth part--Let us offer
thanksgiving.

1. Let us use the first quarter of an
hour adoring the Most Holy Sacrament, and

to do this we can use to good advantage the ejaculations which the Priest recites with the people after Holy Mass. Let us recite with our heart the Blessed be God, and sing hymns to God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier with all those prayers which we are able to draw from our hearts and our minds. Let us tell the Lord of our nothingness and adore His greatness, His power, and His bounty, His infinite love.

The High Priest of the Old Law entered into the Sanctuary in the temple of Jerusalem and prostrated in profound adoration, invoked Jehovah, the Most High God, and for a whole year remained under the blessed impression of that fortunate moment.

Prostrated in the acknowledgment of our nothingness, let us also adore the thrice Holy God.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts. The heavens and the earth are full of Your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He that come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Let us adore Jesus Christ, true God and true Man; and to be able to do so, let us ask the Immaculate Virgin, that she help us to meditate on the life of the Nazarene, just as though it were being enacted before us, touching Bethlehem, Judea, Galilee, Jerusalem, and Calvary.

Pause

All speaks to our hearts of Jesus, who for thirty-three years lived miserably, suffered and died on the cross for our love. Let us listen to the teachings which the Divine Savior gave to those men who followed Him.

Blessed are we, if, studying the words of the Divine Master, we store them in our hearts.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Let us go in thought to the Last Supper. The first Communion that Jesus gave to His disciples and to Holy Mary will afford us impulses of faith, humility, and tenderest love.

Recall to mind the morning meditation.

Jesus said to His Apostles: "That which I have done, do you also, until the end of the world." These omnipotent words give us an idea of His infinite mercy.

Admiring, let us recall to our minds the breaking of the bread at Emmaus, the Holy Communion of St. John to the Blessed Virgin, the Holy Communion from which the faithful derived nourishment and strength to suffer martyrdom with desire and joy. How many millions of virgins, widows, and priests have become Saints in Holy Communion! How many millions of adoring souls!

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the sun of the earth, and this sun will enlighten souls of goodwill until the end of the world.

Oh Sacred Banquet in which is given to guilty but repentant man, the Immaculate Body of the Lamb for nourishment! It reminds us of the sorrowful Passion of the Divine Savior. Let us approach it with faith and we will obtain the necessary strength to fulfill the duties of our vocation and to become Saints.

O Sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur; brecolitur memoria passionis

ejus; mens impletur gratia, et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur.

II. If we turn our eyes upon our conscience, how much reason we find for confusion and sorrow.

Our mind is ruled by useless and harmful fantasies of vain thoughts.

Our heart is an abyss of misery, and inconstancy and frivolity thrive or flourish within it.

Our body is a vessel filled with dust and ashes, and already broken by sins.

Our memory recalls the pettiness of our childhood, and the whim of our youth, and what hurts most, the coldness of our religious life.

And yet many, many times we have confessed, and promised to amend ourselves of our sins and defects, and as many times we have miserably returned to sin again. We have fallen, and we feel sure that we shall fall again, and who knows how many times through our own fault, through our fault, through our most grievous fault. Oh yes, we know we are, as the Prophet sings, conceived in sin!

What right have we then to that pride which dominates us? Oh Jesus, without your grace we are nothing but sinners. Oh Blessed Virgin, Blessed Archangel Michael, and you Angels and Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the Saints, intercede for us and obtain for us, we pray, pardon and mercy from the Lord.

I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael, the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech blessed Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the Saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

May the Almighty God have mercy on me, and forgive me my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen. May the Almighty and merciful Lord grant me pardon, absolution, and remission of all my sins. Amen.

Alone and covered with confusion, we confess our sins, and strike our breast, repentant and sorrowful, promising amendment. But how many miseries cloud our souls as yet, though our eyes cannot see them! For these too, sincerely sorry, we beg pardon, Jesus. If, Lord, You will look upon our sins how do we dare appear before You? Sustain us, oh Jesus, with your grace and convert our weakness into a holy desire to observe your holy laws faithfully and sanctify us.

If we withdraw from You, Lord, where shall we find life? Away from You, Fountain of all good, we would abandon ourselves to sin, and would become a victim of Satan. No, we desire to remain near You until death, because You alone, Who has redeemed man, loves Him really, and has words of love for him. In hell, instead, there is no love, and hatred reigns supreme.

O Jesus, You will not despise a contrite and humble heart. Take ours, therefore. Wash us in the most pure waters of your mercy and we shall be made clean of every sin. Save us, Lord, in your Blood, shed for the salvation of man, and make us live and die in your grace.

Pause

III. Convinced of our unworthiness, Lord, we know that in order to be born and live in your grace, we must, without doubt, die to ourselves. Just as the butterfly must die and be consumed, if we wish to be transformed into heavenly butterflies which feed on You and live in You, we too must die to ourselves, to the world and to our passions.

Give us, oh Jesus, the faith of those holy souls who have overcome temptations resolutely in order to adore You alone, and remain faithful to You. Give us, we pray You, the hope of the Patriarchs who waited patiently for years and centuries, confident of the future redemption. Give us the charity of the martyrs, that charity which made them so vastly superior to all worldly charms as to look down on them with scorn and joyfully lay down their lives for your love. Give us a sorrow for our sins like that of Magdal- len, St. Paul, St. Augustine, and we will endeavor as they did to make amends while we live.

Oh Lord, when You will have confirmed in our souls the holy theological virtues, with your grace, it will be easy to

enrich us with the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance which are so pleasing to You, so that we may live as our vocation demands and the graces received from You require.

If it be true that whosoever asks shall receive, kneeling at the foot of your altar as faithful servants, we beg for the grace of the Holy Ghost to destroy in us every inclination to the capital sins which threaten at every hour to lure us to eternal ruin.

Instill into our hearts, oh Blessed Jesus, the seven gifts of the Spirit, as you did instill them into the holy Apostles after your Resurrection, so that in every circumstance of life we may be governed as becomes souls created by God, redeemed by Jesus, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

We beg of Thee, oh Divine Master, the holy gifts of Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. And we do not beg these gifts for ourselves alone; we ask them for our Sisters in Religion, for our dear children, for our families, for all our aged so that they may all arrive at a blessed eternity with many, many good works.

Nor will we exclude from our prayers the Priests who are for us and for the house the channels of divine grace. Could we but work as they do for the glory of God! Increase, Lord, their activity and ours.

Send, send oh Lord, many laborers into the House of Divine Providence, which is your vineyard; multiply and strengthen vocations in seminarians so that they may enter, elect and numerous, into the holy apostolate of the Priesthood.

We thank You, oh good God, for having called us to do your will under the protection of our holy vows and holy Obedience. But in order that our works and our prayers may ascend to you as a precious perfume, grant to that all my Sisters and myself, fulfilling our duty conscientiously, we may become a source of edification to our neighbors who see us, and imitate our conduct. Grant that we may increase works of mercy with such generosity and virtue that we will merit to shine as a beacon, become salt of the earth, and correspond to the mission you have confided to us of saving our own souls by sacrificing ourselves for others, by healing the corporal and

spiritual ills of those entrusted to our care. (Our Father.)

IV. As though you had already granted us all the graces of which our souls stand in need, we prostrate ourselves to adore and thank You, oh great, omnipotent, and merciful God.

Strengthened by your graces, we prepare ourselves to take up the chalice of our daily trials and calling upon your holy name, we shall follow the path of apostolate and suffering which You have traced for us out of love for souls redeemed by your divine Blood.

We know it well: to demonstrate our profound gratitude for your innumerable benefits, empty thanksgiving is not enough as long as it remains sterile. We wish to express our gratitude by loving You with all our strength and by obeying You blindly, promptly, and perfectly in all that you ask of us.

In thanksgiving for the immense favor of being called to serve You under the protection of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in a house over which hovers Your spirit, oh Jesus, we willingly declare ourselves Your victims

of love, desiring to remain Your victims forever.

Let us call to memory one by one the temporal benefits with which God has blessed us; but especially let us meditate on the number of spiritual benefits with which we were enriched from the day of our Holy Baptism and up till this present day.

Let us renew our thanksgivings to the Lord as we are accustomed to do in the ceremonies of the end of the year, extending them also to the graces given to every person in this house, to our families, to our benefactors, and to our Superiors.

Let us thank God also for the good thoughts and good desires with which He inspired us during this hour of adoration, and throughout all our lives. If we had to count all the graces received from God, our minds could never even distantly conceive that enormous number which exceeds all power of human calculation.

Let us humble ourselves in our nothingness and acknowledge that if for all eternity we should express our thanks to

our Lord for the benefits received, we would still be at the beginning. Let us draw out of the Tabernacle a prayer of infinite value and, offering Jesus to Jesus Himself, we will find abundant ways of paying all our debts.

At the end of the world, Jesus, shining with majesty and beauty, armed with the Cross, will call the elect to His right side.

Call us, Jesus, in that awesome hour. Call us to Your side, call our Superiors, our Sisters, our residents, our benefactors, all those we know or have benefitted, all those who have believed that you are God.

Call us all to your right hand in that hour, oh Supreme Judge, and with angelic choirs we will rejoice and raise up our voices to sing that canticle of praise which will never end.

At the divine summons: *Come and possess the kingdom which My Father has prepared for you for all eternity*, our souls will rejoice and will thank God for having been permitted to take part in the sufferings of the Cross of Jesus on earth, and for having accomplished Your will.

In that Alleluia which will last for all eternity, this hour passed in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament will come back to us, that sweet hour which has poured into our souls many holy inspirations and many good resolutions.

In that blessed moment we will understand how very great is the grace of a religious vocation, and we will praise God. Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts.

THE MISTRESS OF NOVICES

(from the Rules of 1899)

1. The importance of this office.
2. One must direct the novices to the practice of the Rule.
3. How the Mistress must deport herself with the novices.
4. With regards to Superiors.
5. With regards to spiritual direction.

1. The Importance of this Office.

It can be deduced from the following observations.

- a) They must distinguish if the novices are truly called by God.

- b) This knowledge is of extreme importance to the Glory of God, for the sanctity of the novice, for the prosperity of the Congregation.
- c) It would be the wrong to exclude those souls who are called by God from intimacy with Him, and it would be a mistake to force those whom God has not called to enter.
- d) One must, however, have an absolutely upright intention in this, and not be guided by evil souls who, often appear angelic.
- e) A trial period of one or two years in a matter of such importance is not too much.
- f) This trial must be administered *fortiter et soaviter*--that is with strength and gentleness--without force.
- g) The emotions of doubt, fear, trepidation, timidty and confusion are certainly not good signs; they are signs of the evil one, who fears souls which tend towards perfection, and attempts everything to hold them and to bring them to an evil end.

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2. One Must Direct the Novices to the practice of the Rule. The Mistress, in order to safeguard herself and the novices:

- a) Must place as guardian of her novices the Divine Heart of Jesus, and with Faith and fervor make Him the guardian and teacher. She must surround herself and her novices with the goodness of the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin, and she must remain effective in her office.
- b) Blessed is the soul which listens to the Lord Who speaks through her, and from His voice, hears the word of consolation! After the Lord's Word, which must penetrate through the intellect, let her confide in the practice of the Rule, which speaks to her heart and to that of her novices. She must confer often with the Sisters of the Superior Council; she must get inspiration from the Rule, according to the needs of souls and of the society, to the needs of the present times, and let her thus work in frankness.
- c) Let prudent persons be chosen with whom one may intimately converse.

She should take suggestions from the Spiritual Director, or from a prudent and expert priest whom Divine Providence will send; from him she will accept those practical suggestions which are useful to man. This is to be done, however, only in cases of need and she must move quickly, speaking briefly.

- d) She should read good books and, above all, books written by saints who are our contemporaries.
- e) The Mistress must commence then teach: example is the best teacher. She must be virtuous in order to be able to impart it to others.

3. How the Mistress Must Deport Herself with the Novices.

- a) She must be simple and of good spirit.
- b) She must know how to win over the souls of the novices.
- c) She must immediately make herself known to the new arrivals, so that they not lose time, and that they feel immediately confident and happy.

- d) She must be like their guardian angel without being seen.
- e) She must observe the novices from the beginning so that if they are not in their true vocations they can return home without undue stress to themselves and their families.
- f) In doubtful cases, she must be consoled--that it is better to err because of excessive zeal rather than too much kindness. In any case, it is true that God wants the sanctification of all, and that the practice of religious life is the highest means for sanctification.

4. With Regards to the Superiors.

- a) She must candidly expose with respect and faith all she feels in her heart, and then be resigned to their decisions.
- b) When referring matters to the Superiors, let her not waste time in telling of the defects and of the imperfections which are part of human frailty.

- c) Let her not lose heart over many defects which spring from a lack of education and ignorance rather than from malice.
- d) Let her be on guard for defects springing from a sensitive personality, one which complains easily, which only disturbs the peace of the community. These types of personalities are very dangerous; but sometimes they can be overlooked, because in every convent, one bothersome person is necessary in order to exercise the patience of others.
- e) When the time comes to tell one's opinion about the abilities of a novice, let her always be guided by a spirit of charity, and let her invoke with all her heart the light, and let her always confide in God.
- f) Let her love and she will be loved. Let her love the Lord and for the Lord, and He will fill both the Mistress and the novices with happiness in all they undertake.

5. With Regards to Spiritual Direction.

- a) Let her keep in mind the directives of the Holy See, proclaimed in Canon Law and subsequent Decrees.
- b) Let her not presume that she can read the conscience of her novices nor should she desire to read in their hearts to win their affections--which would be dangerous. Let the Mistress introduce herself only when she is asked to do so, when the heart is spontaneously opened to her; the Lord does no differently with His souls.
- c) In the monthly dialogues, let the Mistress not speak to the novices, other than regarding their health, their state of soul, the difficulties they encountered, their defects, their complaints and the like.
- d) Let her encourage, with the advice of the Confessor, the reception of the Holy Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
- e) Let her teach them reliable methods of prayer and meditation.

- f) Let her always be cheerful, approachable, and let her educate her novices with the spirit of charity; as the Psalmist says: *Exultate justi.*
- g) If she is asked, let her dispel the temptations that the devil puts in the minds of young girls who want to dedicate themselves to divine service.
- h) Let her comfort greatly those who are tempted to leave the Congregation.
- i) In case of illness or physical disturbances, let the Mistress observe with maternal care the symptoms of the illness.
- j) When the good of the soul is involved, put aside all human respect.

After all, the Mistress must know how to respond to God, to herself, and to the Congregation for the welfare of the novices. Let her entrust herself and her novices to the goodness of the Divine Heart and to Immaculate Mary. Let her proceed with firm faith and equal confidence.

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