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Final Perseverance

Bishop Giles, OFM

The most important part of our entire life is the very last moment when we breathe our last breath. It is this moment that determines our eternity. We will pass out of this life as either God's friend or His enemy. After we pass through that last moment, there is no turning around. There is no time left for repentance and penance. If we have lived our life here on earth without God, we will then continue into eternity without Him. If we have lived our life with God, then we will continue with Him into eternity. God is good and just in giving Himself to us if we love Him and truly desire to be with Him, and He denies Himself to those who have not desired or loved Him.

It is theoretically possible for someone to truly repent in the last few moments of their lives here on earth and then pass on as friends of God. We witness this with the Good Thief hanging on a cross next to Our Lord. Practically, however, we are told that we will most likely die in the manner that we have lived. Those who live by the sword will perish by the sword. Those who live in sin will most likely die in sin.

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We can say with some certitude that the person who plans on putting off his conversion until his last moments or his last days is a fool that will end up eternally damned. The longer our repentance is put off, the harder it becomes. It will, therefore, be the most difficult in our last moments when we are consumed with so many other thoughts and cares from our entire life. Not only will this be the most difficult time to repent, it will also rob us of all opportunity for penance. Without penance, the punishment due to sin remains to be satisfied and the only place left to make satisfaction is in Purgatory or eternally in Hell.

This final repentance is also made practically impossible because we have added to it the sin of presumption (Presuming that we will have the opportunity to repent in the end and will then desire and do it.) Presuming upon the Holy Ghost in this manner is a very grave sin that deprives us of grace, and places greater obstacles in the way of any further graces. Having insulted the Holy Ghost, we have no right to assume (presume)

that He will then shower us with His gifts and flood our hearts with love for Him. In all justice, such souls as these deserve to be eternally deprived of all they have despised during their lives. St. Paul reminds us that we must not put off until later our conversion – now is the acceptable time.

Another thought, that we should consider, is that in the last moments the devils will be doing their best to secure our damnation. They will be pulling out all the stops in these last moments. The difficulties for our conversion at this time will be made even more difficult because of this. Even if we have lived a good life in the love of God, all may be lost in these last moments. It is unlikely that one who has lived well should then die as an enemy of God, but it is still possible. It is, therefore, imperative that we put our lives in order now and pray that we may persevere to the very end in loving God. We should daily beg of God the grace to persevere to the end. Our eternity hinges on those last moments.

The grace of final perseverance is the most important because without it we are lost for eternity. It is the seal that finalizes everything. It is useless to run in a race if we never cross the finish

line. A life that is run without ever crossing into Heaven is a useless or wasted life. St. Paul tells us that we should run in the race to win; we should discipline our bodies so that we remain strong and may not fall along the way from weakness. Our lives are not a game, but are most serious. We have often heard that it does not matter whether you win or lose the contest, what matters, is how you played. In life, however, it is imperative that we win. We are not in competition with one another, but we are in competition with our fallen natures. In sports, we often see the players seeking to harm or undermine their opponents to give themselves a better advantage. Human judges may not care or see the injustice in this and still give the prize to such “winners.” God is not blind. Far from rewarding such actions, He will punish them. In life, it is possible for everyone to win. There does not have to be any losers. In order for us to obtain eternal life, it is imperative that we seek not only our own salvation but also that of all those with us. The rules of life are simple: We must love God above all things, and we must love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Our love of God inspires us to seek Him so as to be with Him forever in eternity. In this, we truly love ourselves, and in this measure, we must love

others. We must desire that they should obtain the glory of being eternally united to God. Thus any harm or hindrance that we place in the way of our fellow men in obtaining eternal happiness is actually an obstacle that we put in our own path. In the same manner, any help or aid that we give to others in obtaining their salvation becomes a most powerful help to us. What we do to others, we actually do to ourselves.

If we are to persevere to the end in loving God, it is essential that we do our best to help those around us reach the same goal. We, then, create an environment where we are surrounded with others who are striving for the same goal. We aid them, and they aid us; we encourage them, and they encourage us. Saints seldom enter into Heaven alone, but enter with their friends and relatives.

Tragically, the opposite is also true. Those who are on the path to Hell, often surround themselves with others of like mind. They essentially hate themselves, and so of necessity, they hate others. They encourage each other to greater and greater offenses against God. In an insane (unhealthy) way, they vie with one another for the deepest pit of Hell. It is sad that in the eyes

of this world such souls appear to love one another. The souls living in adultery, fornication, or any other sin; tell the world and themselves that they love each other. The reality is, however, just the opposite. They hate themselves as they are ensuring their eternal damnation, and they hate their consorts as they work to lead them in the same damnable direction.

We are not alone, but we rise or fall together. However, this is not absolute. It is still possible for one to be saved even though all around him are lost. It is also possible for one to be lost while others are saved. The imperative thing is that we first love God with our whole being. In this, we truly love ourselves because we love, desire, and work for that which will make us eternally happy. We must strive to aid those around us; but if they will not love God, then we must labor that we are not influenced by them to shift our love of God and ourselves; to hatred of God and the destructive love (hatred) of ourselves and others. It is very hard to persevere in loving God under these conditions; however, with God all things are possible. We must not lose hope, we must not give up – we must work and pray to persevere to the end.

Question for the Editor

Bishop Giles, OFM

Dear Editor,

My sixteen-year-old son has stated that once he is eighteen, he will no longer go to Mass. What can I say to him? His mother does not go to church and he has a lot of influence on his younger siblings. What can I say/do for the younger children to help minimize the damage? Is it too late? Should I still insist he attend now?

This situation is a very common occurrence in the world today. The Church seems to have no relevance to today's youth. This is not something new, we find that St. Monica suffered the same dilemma with her son, St. Augustine. From her example, we must learn to beseech and pray without ceasing. We must, like the shepherd in Christ's parable, go in search of the lost sheep, until we find it. Aside from this obvious solution, we come down to the practical application. Should we punish, and if so, how? Any solution that we may present will probably work for some, but not all situations. Each person has unique personalities and dispositions. We must be

able to tailor our instructions, encouragement, etc. to the particular situation at hand.

Before suggesting courses of action for others, we should begin with ourselves. It is necessary that we are living the life that we should be. We cannot give what we do not have. It is essential that God and the Church (His Bride) have an important part in our own lives. If we are nothing more than "Sunday Catholics", or "Christmas and Easter Catholics"; then, we can have little hope that our children will be even that. God and the Church are not really part of the lives of "Sunday Morning Catholics." We must be Catholic each and every day, not just once a week. If we want God to hear our prayers for our children then we must be in a state (grace) that will make our prayers acceptable to Him. We must live a life of grace if we desire or expect this from our children.

Daily prayer needs to be part of our family life. The Rosary is a simple and very easy place to start. If we are living the life

that God expects of us, we create a very healthy environment for our children. When the parents love God, it happens most naturally that children most often will love God, too. Sadly, the opposite is also true: when parents are indifferent to God the children, most often, are likewise indifferent. In short, if you want your children to be saints, then you should be working on becoming one yourself.

Once this essential element is put into place, we may now consider what can be done with our children. Today's youth culture is very self-centered. They are looking to get something out of whatever they are involved in. Self-sacrifice is only given when there is an obvious, direct, and fairly immediate reward. This has come about because we have cultivated self-indulgence, rather than love. We have cultivated immediate pleasure, rather than delayed happiness. The "problem" with the Church is that our children do not find it relevant to their present lives. However, the "problem" is not with the Church but is with our children. With just about everything in this life, (religion included), we get out of it what we put in it. Life is like the old saying with computers: "garbage in, garbage

out." We need to inspire our children to put more into their religious lives than garbage. God does not want us to give to the Church our refuse. He deserves and demands our best.

When children see the community around them putting in as little effort as possible for God and the Church, they tend to follow, and thus they obtain few if any graces. Their lives remain empty and dissatisfaction darkens their hearts and minds. Rather than finding the cause in their own lives (being responsible), they childishly try to put the blame on their parents, the Church, and even on God. The Church is in this manner like other things. We do not appreciate those things that have not cost us anything. Whatever is given to us for nothing, we treat as if it were nothing. This is a very common problem parents face. They work hard to obtain something for their children, and their children take it for granted. They never truly appreciate or value what is given to them gratis. Children who have not put forth any labor or sacrifice for God and His Church, never appreciate the graces that are there for them. Graces are thus, ignored, despised, and rejected. Their souls are then left empty and they blame the Church when it is their own doing.

An important part of the solution is to inspire our children to put forth an effort for the Church. They need to put some of their own time, labor, etc. into the Church. The Church really does not belong to them because they have not invested anything into the Church. They have not made it their own. A good place for this to begin is in having children put something into the Offertory collection. However, money is often very distant and cold, it does not really seem to cost them to put a little something in the collection. To really make the Church their own, we suggest that they give of their time and labor. Perhaps they could: join the choir, volunteer to clean the church, to help in various church activities, to even get involved in various corporal works of mercy. We should encourage participation in any special events at the Church – novenas, Eucharistic adoration, vespers, etc. – even finding the time to visit our Lord when there is no Church function at all. To have special people or situations to fervently pray for also helps to get us involved in the Church. Once we have invested something of ourselves, then it becomes ours. We have a greater appreciation for it, and it has greater meaning for us. What St. Francis suggests

to us is very true: “It is in giving that we receive.”

While we cannot force anyone to receive the grace of God, we must do all that we can to direct them to this life. It is our belief that children who are still living in their parents’ home should attend church and religious functions with them. If they are of age and do not wish to comply with this rule, then they should be looking for other housing accommodation. (Again, the particular situation may require a different action. Parents should use the grace of their vocation and act according to reason regarding personalities, temperaments, and circumstances.) Parents should not encourage or support indifference or coldness to God or His Church. Having said this, we feel the need to admonish parents to always act with the love of God in their hearts. These children belong to Him first and foremost. We do not want to completely alienate them from ourselves, the Church, and God. We must always strive to leave them a clear and obvious welcoming path to return. God created them for Himself and Heaven; as long as they are alive, that remains His desire for them. We do not want to ever become an obstacle to His grace for them. To this end, let us

pray and do penance for them. Let us plead constantly to Mary and the saints to take our cause in their hands.

God is very patient with all of us sinners. He does not put an ultimatum before us until the very last. He promises rewards to those who love Him and suffering to those who hate Him. He puts up with countless abuses while He waits for us to return to Him. He offers countless graces and opportunities for the sinner to return. It is only in the end after we have abused Him to the limit that He says: “to Hell with you.” This is the example that He gives to parents. This is the example that we need to follow.

Where we may have failed with our older children, let us redouble our efforts in this area with the younger ones. They should be brought to the sentiment of pity for those who are without the grace of God – especially those of their own family. The more that they love, admire or emulate the older sibling the more they should strive to pray for them and make sacrifices for their return to God. While the outward faults of this older sibling are observed and become points of instruction and admonition to others, we must refrain from leading them to

hate or despise this sibling. They should love him all the more as they pray to God for him. They should understand that the same or even worse temptations, snares or traps await them also. They should strive that they may help him up. They must carefully avoid pride and vanity, and understand their own weakness through observing others, and thus ever maintain a truly humble spirit.

Sadly, what is here said of older siblings can also be applied to a non-Catholic parent. There are many mixed marriages. The Catholic spouse is bound to work and pray for the conversion of the non-Catholic spouse. The children should be encouraged to join in this work for the conversion of their non-Catholic parent. In doing so, however, we must strongly insist that the respect and honor due to the parent from the child must always remain. It is delicate and should be approached with caution and care, but it should never be forgotten or abandoned. For those, we have the closest ties to here on earth, we owe the greatest efforts for their conversion and eternal happiness.

The Tragedy of Catholic Europe

Fr. Joseph Noonan, OFM

The history of Catholic Europe is two-thousand years old. There has been an unknown number of saints that lived in Europe. The continent has been converted or reconverted a number of times. Great cathedrals, basilicas, and churches, in general, have been built for the honor and glory of God. The intended transformation of civilization two-thousand years ago through the Catholic Church resulted in what is called Christian or Western Civilization. This effort, a combination of civilizing barbaric tribes and converting them to the Catholic Faith, transformed Europe and later, the Western Hemisphere. The effects of Catholic Europe had as great of an effect on the world over a long period of time as had any other movement or cause.

In the first centuries, the pagan Romans attempted to wipe out the first Christians by killing them. The blood of these martyrs provided the supernatural grace through which the Church grew. Godless men do not understand the works of Almighty God. The decisions of the Caesars and the military might of the Roman Empire could in no way overcome the new Christian Faith. In fact, over the first few centuries, the

once-pagan empire became the center of the Christian Faith with St. Peter establishing Rome as the residence of the Catholic Popes.

The period after the fall of the empire saw much of Europe fall back into barbarism. Through the efforts of the Catholic monks from Ireland and the East, Europe was reconverted. Notice the link between the conversions and the elimination of barbaric tribes. This is a sad development in the present time.

Over the next several centuries preceding the Middle Ages, the work of the Church continued to develop. Gregorian Chant was promoted and taught; the teaching of the Faith continued at different levels; Scholastic philosophy was being developed.

The Golden Age of the Church is generally considered to be the Middle Ages. The reasons for this are numerous. A few of them include the increased development of Scholastic philosophy and the doctrines of the Church; the willingness to express the faith of the Catholic by helping to build large monasteries, cathedrals, etc. which were unparalleled in their beauty, art, architecture

and engineering; the founding of the university systems; the cooperation of Church and State to further develop the Catholic society; the founding of numerous religious orders and the construction of the monasteries, convents and religious houses associated with them.

The world began to see the concrete development of the Kingship of Christ within Catholic Europe and locations beyond in the 12th and 13th centuries. There were many spiritual fruits coming forth from this period because of the many good works of the Church. This period was an example of the desired goal of the Church, i.e., the salvation of souls by being the spiritual guide for all of society and to elevate the influence of the Church beyond any worldly concerns.

Unfortunately, Satan has many ways in which to undermine the Church. Beginning in the 14th century, humanism began to affect the Divine Mission of the Church. A century later, the Church suffered another blow with the heresies of the Protestant Revolution. Christendom had been fractured, never to recover from these attacks. Catholic Europe had to fight against an enemy that it had not seen before – multiple Catholic clergymen who promoted different heresies. Arianism denied the divinity of Christ, but Protestantism

denied several doctrines of the Church (the Real Presence, Transubstantiation, no salvation outside the Church, religious indifference, the Catholic priesthood, five of the Sacraments, infant Baptism, etc.).

These errors brought about an erroneous manner of thinking among those who were once Catholic and opened the door to worse errors. Protestantism, with its heresies, ushered in Freemasonry two centuries later. Never before had the Church faced an enemy so formidable. One of the stated goals of this Satanic religion was to destroy the Holy Roman Church. Several popes understood the dangers and condemned Freemasonry through official papal documents of various types, culminating in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Humanum Genus*.

Through the French Revolution, Freemasonry was able to root itself in a national government (France) from which it has never fully been expelled. In fact, Masonry spread throughout Europe and beyond, leaving in its wake a path of destruction that further undermined the Catholic Church and the Kingship of Christ.

This Satanic revolution produced errors from which society continues to suffer today. Communism, Socialism, Liberalism, and Modernism are

the principal errors of the Masonic Revolution of France in 1789. These errors further eroded the influence of the Catholic Church. Truth had now become relative instead of eternal. It was obvious to the educated and informed that the Church's enemies were working to drive a stake through the heart of the Church.

Sadly, a growing number of Catholics, and especially the clergy were seduced by the errors of these evil men. When clergy fall, a greater number of Catholic laity fall, also. The Catholic monarchies of Europe were attacked and mostly overcome in a short period of time. By the dawn of the 20th century, Catholic monarchies in Europe were already in the minority. Their influence was waning among the masses as the errors of the Protestants and Masons continued to spread.

Already in the middle of the 19th century, Pope Pius IX stated that religious indifference was the predominant spiritual poison of the time. That poison has spread into the very veins of society and openly promoted among the Modernistic heretics of the present time.

As the Catholic monarchies fell and the hierarchies succumbed to Modernism and Freemasonry, the life of Catholic Europe continued

to quickly disappear. The two World Wars of the 20th century quickened the destruction of the Church in Europe, once the heart of the Church.

Beyond the typical history books in schools everywhere, you will find an opinion which states the first purpose of World War I was to destroy the remains of the Holy Roman Empire. This opinion is quite plausible when one considers the goals and efforts of the Freemasons.

By the end of the Second World War, the Church and its members were seriously wounded. The effects of fighting for the Faith against the Protestants and Freemasons and two wars brought about a Catholic populace that was weakened to its knees. But how many understood this?

There was but one more blow needed. This time it would come from within the Church. An anti-Council, with enough influence from Modernist heretics, Freemasons and Jews to undermine: the Mass, Sacraments and the Church's doctrines, along with a need to update the Church and please our Protestant brethren.

It apparently did not take much time before the churches of Europe began to empty. Catholics in the United States have watched hundreds of churches close over the past 50 years and tens

of millions of Catholics leave the Church. The fact is that the destruction of the Church in Europe is worse and ahead of the Church in the U. S.

This year (2017) marks 300 years since the organization of Freemasonry in godless England. This Satanic sect nearly destroyed Europe without the help of the Modernists. Today, Masonry rules in every once-Catholic country of Europe. Although all things are possible with God, it would seem as though an act of God is necessary to overcome these godless, evil men bent on destroying every last sign and symbol of Christianity.

In Europe, you will find an attraction to relics of the past, i.e., the cathedrals and churches of this continent which seem to be for the most part no longer used. Whether it is the religious community which still owns the structures or the state, they have turned these beautiful churches into museums. It was observed that it didn't make any difference whether the church is still being used, they would charge a fee to tour the church. I suppose they can have a clear conscience because, in the churches which were seen that are still being used, they have a sign posted "No tours during the Divine Liturgy."

This was particularly noted in St. Vita Cathedral in Prague, Czech

Republic. The cathedral is a beautiful church and is a testament to the faith of Czech Catholics which began construction of the present church in 1344 and was not completed until 1929 when it was consecrated.

As a side note, twenty years (1948) after the completion the Communists took over the country. Twenty years later (1968-70), the Modernists would ensure the cathedral will one day become another relic of the past.

The church officials charge a fee to tour the entire cathedral. One of my hosts told me they collect 100 million Czech Krowns a year which converts to about \$4.5 million U. S. dollars. The native Catholics have apparently complained aloud, wondering where the money is being used. Tourism is alive and well in Europe and the Modernists have made it all possible when it comes to seeing the beautiful relics of the past.

The churches of Europe today are nearly all empty. It is indeed a clear sign the Faith has been lost by most Catholics of Europe. A more serious situation now exists. Where do those few True Catholics go to find a priest who says only the True Mass and rejects Modernism and all of its tentacles? From the outside looking in one would think these Catholics would be able to find at

least a few priests to administer to the faithful, after all, this is Europe where the Catholic Faith has mostly thrived for two-thousand years. It seems as though there have been a few until recent years. The Europeans deal with the same pretenders that exist in the United States, from the Lefebvrites to the heretics and schismatics who call themselves traditionalists.

This truly is a sign of the Great Apostasy, when True Catholics in Europe find it necessary to contact Catholic clergy in the New World. Five-hundred years ago the Church sent many missionaries to the Western Hemisphere to convert the native Indians. Today, the New World is being sent a spiritual SOS by the few Catholics who wish to remain wholly Catholic.

Europe is being torn apart by the Freemasons who want a socialist super-state known as the European Union. Small numbers of people are fighting back against the enemies of Divine and Natural Law. The Moslems whom the Catholics defeated several times on land and sea are now being allowed to enter through “the front door” of different countries (Germany, England, France, Italy, Sweden and others) and are proceeding to change the face of the European culture. Fortunately, at least a small number of countries and people refuse to

allow the Moslems, enemies of the Christian State, to enter. One wonders aloud if the invasion of the infidels is God’s way of punishing this once-Catholic continent.

This present situation goes beyond any natural disaster or terrorist attack. This is the destruction of souls on a scale never before seen. The enemies of the Church, from within and outside it have not left a stone unturned, having destroyed every aspect of the Faith. Herein lies the real and true tragedy of Europe. They have spiritually gutted the Faith from a land that was the shining but imperfect example to the world. The large, beautiful churches were built in a time when the Faith was expressed through art and architecture. Now, they are little more than museums and relics of the past.

The True Church and the few faithful clergy and laity are called upon to make great sacrifices. All must work for the salvation of souls in general and at the same time be willing to perform acts of supernatural charity for the sake of our fellow True Catholics.

One must look to our dear bishops to guide us through these treacherous spiritual waters, knowing the need to always be faithful to Holy Mother Church. Pray for each other, whether you live in the United States, Mexico or Europe.

Perseverance in Prayer

Bishop Giles, OFM

Jesus has admonished us to persevere in prayer. He gives us several parables to consider: the man begging three loaves of bread in the middle of the night (St. Luke 11, 5-8); the woman seeking justice from the judge (St. Luke 18, 1-8); the Canaanite woman seeking help for her daughter (St. Matthew 15, 21-28). We also find great perseverance in prayer in the lives of the saints. For example, St. Monica prayed for the conversion of her wayward son – Augustine. She persevered in this prayer for seventeen years.

God knows what we need and He knows what we want – however, He requires us to ask it of Him. This is for our benefit – not His. In turning to God with our wants and needs, we acknowledge that all things come from Him, and we humble ourselves in the understanding that we can truly accomplish nothing without Him. Without faith in Him and profound humility in ourselves, our prayers are rendered inefficient and empty.

In order to increase in us the virtues of faith and humility, God often requires that we consistently persevere in our prayers before He answers them. If we give up easily or quit too readily, it is a testimony that we do not truly desire what we pray for. The fickleness and indecisiveness of children are often excusable. However, God demands consistency and stability in our prayers – He requires us to obtain a spiritual maturity.

Children often do not know or understand what they are asking for, and frequently ask for things that are harmful to them. Good parents refuse to give these children such things – no matter how much they may demand, cry or plead with them. The spiritually immature often are guilty of the same thing, and God treats them in the same manner. It is imperative that what we ask of God in prayer be truly something good. It should be something that is in conformity to the Will of God – it should conform to or increase the honor

and glory of God. It should also work for the salvation of souls (which is the Will of God).

Once we have determined that our need or desire is in conformity with the Will of God then, we must pray consistently and perseveringly. We should take confidence in the words of Jesus as He explained to us in the above-mentioned parables. We may have to further humble ourselves as the Canaanite woman and acknowledge our unworthiness, but with even greater faith know that God cannot refuse those who have such firm faith and trust in Him. We find similar instruction from St. Ambrose to St. Monica – it cannot be that a son whom you have prayed for with such tears, intensity, and consistency should be lost. He basically promised her that God would eventually hear her prayers for her son.

Even if we are to go to our graves without seeing the answer to our prayers, we should continue in hope that we may see them from eternity. The patience of God in this life often seems unbearable for us. It is only from the perspective of eternity that we see and understand the goodness, appropriateness, and justice in God's ways. Here and

now, it is imperative that we not lose hope or trust in God.

What takes a long time in coming often gives us a greater appreciation for it when we receive it. This also impresses upon us that this is truly a gift of God – as all other human or natural means have proven ineffectual in obtaining what God has given us. In this manner, we find that our prayers and God's answer to them give greater honor and glory to Him, as well as work for the salvation of souls (If no one else's, then at least our own).

St. Augustine suggests to us that the prayers of his mother for him were not only necessary for his conversion, but that they were necessary for his mother's salvation. It was St. Monica's duty to pray for her son – even if her son would still have been lost. Even if her prayers were to be ineffectual for her son, they were nonetheless effectual for her own salvation. If she had failed to pray for Augustine, Augustine would never have been converted, but beyond this, it is doubtful that St. Monica, herself, could have been saved.

Once again, we find truth in the prayer of St. Francis – “it is in

giving that we receive.” As St. Monica gave; in sacrifice, in penance, and in perseverance in prayer for her son; so she received the many graces which obtained her own salvation. Our payers are, therefore, never without merit. Good will always come from them. If it does not appear that the good we desire is ever to be obtained, we need to understand that at least we will benefit from our faith-filled humble prayers.

Another consideration is that if the person that we pray for makes himself uncooperative with the graces from God that we seek for him; then, at least, this grace may be applied by God to some other soul that is more worthy. Nothing is ever wasted in the spiritual life. Our good and holy prayers will never be lost, but will always produce some good.

When we are seeking the salvation of one we love, as St. Monica was, we can also look to the Good Shepherd. He went in search of the one. We are not told that he searches for an hour or a day, but we are told that he searches until he finds the lost sheep. We should keep searching and praying until we

obtain the answer to our good and holy prayer – or die to this world in performing this holy and pleasing work.

We must, therefore, always strive to make sure that our petitions are pleasing to God (conformity to His Will and the salvation of souls) and that we ourselves are as humble and pleasing to God as we can be. After this, it is imperative that we not lose hope or give up; but rather persevere to the end.

The Sunday Sermon

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3376 Mount Read Blvd.
Rochester, New York 14616

A Chance to Live

Monsignor John P. Carroll-Abbing

IV

THE LOST CHILDREN OF THE WAR

“... They had no longer any wish for play ... for anything ... all they wanted was a miracle that might make them warm again ...”

With the arrival of the Allies in Rome and with their advance to the Gothic Line in the North, the existing problems were solved, or rather there seemed to be a good chance for their solution. But the liberation of the capital produced other problems far from simple. Among the most important was the repatriation and rehabilitation of the refugees who crammed the cities and the concentration camps.

I knew the problems well as I had had the full opportunity of following the saga of these unfortunates. Conditions were tragic, rendered more so by the refugees themselves. These people were anxious to go back to their native towns, to their small homes, to the fireplaces they had been forced to abandon.

The long lines of wanderers of months ago started once again. More tattered and torn than ever,

worn, undernourished. They moved slowly, painfully toward the South from Rome in spite of orders by the Allied Command, which was doing its utmost to keep this exodus down to a minimum.

An old man, a very old man follows his small grandchild with feeble, halting steps. He holds in his hand a stringless guitar. He walks in silence. The little boy shoulders a long stick. At its end hangs an empty can, which with the aid of a bit of wire has been turned into some kind of crude cooking utensil. This is their only baggage. The two have only each other. The child's hair is matted. It has had no acquaintance with a comb for months. His father, a village clerk in one of the occupied zones, lost his life in Albania. His mother died of blood poisoning in a concentration camp.

I question the old grandfather. He answers me and his voice trembles.

“Is it possible that I, the oldest, must be the last one to die?” he queries at the end of our short talk.

Strange to say, there is a certain amount of gaiety in the air. There are women who can still sing,

young girls who smile, and little children who are again learning how to play jokes on one another.

A car rolls by. The foot-weary travelers wave and shout their greetings and the riders shout and wave in return. Down the road, far down, home is waiting, home, hope, life. Every heart tends toward it to begin once more, to forget the past.

“I have lost my house and my furniture, everything. But as soon as my son returns from prison camp . . . there'll be enough of us to rebuild. . . .”

Most of them are from the Cassino region and each one knows that town and village and hamlet are gone.

“Who cares? I was born there and I want to die there,” and they struggle on.

In Rome, it was being said that there were at least a million refugees. In the first few weeks of the summer of 1944, many of these returned to their homes. Only those remained who had lived in Sicily and in other zones not easily accessible from the capital.

The refugees started out in high spirits, but upon arrival at their destination, they found only misery staring them in the face. Those especially who lived

in the Casino and Frosinone regions were stunned to find nothing but scorched land, as the typical phrase well described the aftermath of the war.

To me this condition was, of course, familiar. I had traveled those roads so often. I remembered well the ruined houses, the burned-out forests, the villages wiped out, the absence of life.

And yet, before the war, these centers had been exuberant with life, the fields luxuriant. Each small plot of ground had been made use of, and the landscape had been green, filled with trees, vineyards, fruit groves.

Against the craggy rocks of the background, tall and gray and bare, the picture had been one not easily forgotten.

Now . . . hunger, thirst, sickness. No water, no electric light, no food, no clothing. All was gone and men and women and children felt lost, alone, abandoned, for the war was still going on and it was hardly possible to think of bringing aid to mere man.

At a time when civilization and technical progress were at their highest, people lacked even the barest of necessities. Life had swung back to the cave era.

There was an abundant supply of unexploded mines, however, of

bombs, of grenades, in village and road and hillside. Their invisible presence prohibited much activity of any kind.

The spectacle was terrifying. Skeleton houses rose stark against the blue. The streets had disappeared under piles of rubble, rocks, bricks . . . graveyards, unrecognizable as once-thriving communities. All power gone, all the logic of living.

This is what destruction lacks: logic.

Holes, here, there, everywhere, too many of them pools of swampy black water, gray-green foam floating on their surfaces. The only sound, the gloomy croaking of frogs.

Not an animal around. They might have been swallowed by the man-made earthquake.

From useless wooden poles hung the broken wires of world communication.

Life had been lived here? It seemed hard to grasp.

The province of Littoria had undergone a similar fate. This was the province that in years past had been redeemed, this the place where swamps had been turned into fertile fields. The Germans had knocked down the banks of the canals and reduced the whole

area to its former status. It was now an immense boggy land.

Farmhouses built with so much care and labor lay half submerged in the slimy waters, the trees bent to show their discontent at finding themselves in such unusual surroundings.

Miles and miles of pestilential waters were anew the happy hunting ground of the mosquito, the deadly scourge of those regions. Nothing to stop the insidious work of the almost invisible foe lurking in every inch of water and in the grasses that stretched up and out for a breath of fresh air that was not there. Desolation and hopelessness!

And yet there, even there, the lost people went by the thousands. A few months later, malaria broke out. From reports received, I learned that 30,000 people in the province of Frosinone were stricken by the dread disease.

One of the local doctors wrote:

“Malaria has invaded our province, has penetrated our homes. It is striking us hard. Whole families are ill. We see them in every house, we meet them on every road, white, weak, listless. In Zone — once completely redeemed, and where malaria was only a faraway, sad memory, we have had 9,000 cases in the last four months.”

Millions of mosquitoes breeding in the swampy region invaded the homes, if such they could be called, unprotected as they were from outside interference. No doors, empty windows, roofs caved in. What a paradise they found!

Thus did malaria complete the mowing down of the last shred of physical or moral endurance of whole populations, already reduced to a minimum of strength by lack of food and the fatigue of long, uninterrupted, weary journeys. In many towns it caused more harm, even, than the war.

“What’s the use of trying to fight this battle?” men and women asked.

A certain spirit of fatalism began to be felt. I saw men suddenly fall to the ground, shivering from fever, dragging themselves to the side of the road to lie there helpless and spent. Mothers unable to raise a hand from sheer weakness, watching their young ones with desperate eyes as the little ones begged for help.

When the children were stricken, hundreds of them died, unable to withstand the deadly disease, anemic and badly nourished as they were.

On the heels of one of my many visits to the scourged areas, I set

up an anti-malaria committee and invited a number of doctors and specialists to form part of it. The Vatican put at our disposal its valuable supply of quinine and, through the great interest shown by H. E. Myron Taylor, the Allied Command provided me with a great quantity of atabrine.

The doctors made a thorough examination of all the children in the afflicted zones and confirmed our fears that the majority of them had contracted the disease.

These examinations were often carried on under the weirdest of conditions and in the strangest of places. In one village, I recall, there was not a house standing. Only parts of walls, arms lifted up to heaven to shout their uselessness. The children huddled together out in the open. We had luckily found a space cleared of rubble. Some crouched on the ground, too far gone to stand. Their mothers awaited in silence the result of our work.

Teeth chattering in spite of the mild weather, the youngsters approached the doctor’s table, fearful and anxious of the consequences.

Joe, about eight years of age, trembled more than the others. Enormous eyes, thin to emaciation, belly big and swollen,

he stood, watching, and waited his turn. As the doctor called him, he burst into tears and refused to move. He had to be lifted onto the table. The doctor proceeded with the examination and the weeping never ceased. In heavy silence, the others watched.

Four brothers followed Joe, aged from six to twelve, holding on tight to one another, afraid that this might mean another separation. They were orphans. Their parents had both died in an air raid.

Toward the end came a small tot as high as a grasshopper, brighter than the rest. Everyone looked at him and began to smile. No sooner was he on the table than he began to joke, make faces, and entertain the whole assemblage . . . a born clown. The heavy atmosphere lifted as if by magic.

We finished our work and started toward our next stop. The road was difficult to find as it led through fields gutted with holes.

Our car was a tiny Topolino (a small Fiat car, somewhat like an Austin). Soon we ran into trouble. To make matters worse it began to rain and night was not too far away.

On we jogged until suddenly . . . mud! Down we went, deep. The back wheels refused to budge. Now what? Where could we go?

No one around, nothing. Only holes, mud, rain, and more clouds rushing across the sky toward us. “Wish we could get a horse,” said one.

“A horse . . . in this area?”

Gloom, darkness, solitude. What weight of silence! Where are those branches of trees that might help us get the car out and that must be lying around? Hard questions to answer.

We got out. A Topolino is supposed to be the lightest of cars. It had always seemed so to us. That night it weighed as much as a truck, loaded with guns.

For two whole hours we struggled. Two long hours with bare trees standing guard, knee deep in mud. Around us the field had turned into a swamp. The few branches we had been able to find cracked under the wheels.

At last, however, we won the battle. And at last we were on our way toward shelter and sleep.

Suddenly we burst out laughing. We had looked at one another and realized that our appearance was not of the best.

“Monsignor, you have mud even in your ears,” one of my companions said.

In the fall of 1944, I witnessed

more horror. No matter where I went, in a few moments my car would be surrounded by a crowd of people, pleading for medicine — men, women, and little ones, trembling and shaking.

Yet, amid all this desolation I thought I could see a spark of life. We saw group after group working in rubble and broken-down walls busily trying to rebuild what once had been a home. In a few months the work of reconstruction had taken a great step forward. And yet, even those who could be called the luckiest lived in pitiful circumstances.

In one town, a community of nuns could boast of only one room. Only one, as the whole building had been practically destroyed. Here in the midst of scattered, broken glass, the windows protected only by pieces of canvas, they lived ... somehow. Whenever it rained, they crowded in a corner, where part of the roof still existed.

Nearby they had discovered a large abandoned barn, half of it in ruin. There they organized four classrooms and there the children went, attracted by the lunch distributed to them at noon, far more than by the love of learning.

One night I lay in my bed in a room on the ground floor of an old ramshackle place. The bed

was an army cot with a mattress I could not say was soft. Neither could it be said that the room was full of the comforts of life. At the windows the usual canvas. No glass and the cold of mid-autumn blew in, whistling merrily around my ears. On the floor a number of tin cans gathered in the rain drop by drop as it came seeping through the ceiling.

Toward midnight it began to snow. The wind blew the thick flakes into the room, piled them high on the floor and around my bed. In spite of my blanket — I actually had one — the cold soon became unbearable. I could not sleep and I got busy trying to find the meaning of all this misery. To understand another's pain we must suffer. That had been said often. I thought of a line I had read from Veuillot's writings: "Certain things are not seen with understanding, unless with eyes that have known tears."

I was cold, but after all, my condition might still be an object for the envy of many. I had a bed, a mattress, a blanket. Best of all, the snow was not falling on my bed and the canvas did give a certain amount of protection. I really had a great deal, when I compared it with the children of Cassino.

To be continued.

Sister Agnes' Favorites

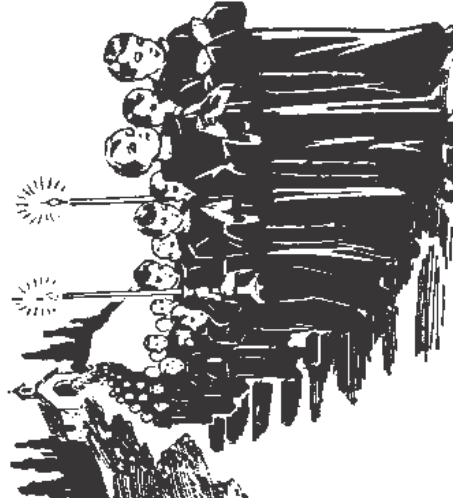
The Blessed Virgin on Calvary

“The Crucifixion was not only the Sacrifice for sin; it was also the new birth of mankind to the spiritual life, frustrated by the sin of Adam, and deferred till the day of Calvary. It was the great vital action that completed the creative work of God in the world. Mary was necessarily present and bore a share in it; this was part of her work. The Nativity and the Crucifixion were one action. The Sacrifice of Christ began at Bethlehem; the new birth was completed on Calvary. Mary was concerned in both; and on each occasion she is present as Mother of the human race. Our Lord declared this in His word to St. John from the cross, “Behold thy mother” (John xix. 27). This was not a mere private and temporal provision for His Mother’s future; it had a spiritual signification, and concerned all of us. The Blessed Virgin was declared to be spiritually “the mother of all the living” (Gen. iii. 20); and on this occasion she bore her share in that consequence of sin, “in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children” (Gen. iii. 16). See the beautiful parallelism that there is throughout between the scenes in the garden of Eden and the scene on Calvary. Honour the Blessed Virgin for her share in counteracting the effects of the fall, and consider her as your second mother.

Meditation on Christian Dogma

By Rev. James Bellord, D.D.

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Franciscan Saints

NOVEMBER 24

THE SERVANT OF
GOD MARGARET
SINCLAIR

Virgin, Third Order

We are here concerned with a most charming mystery of divine grace. The cradle of this venerable servant of God was in the house of a simple but devout workingman's family in Edinburgh. Her whole being was marked with simple ways and childlike sentiment. In her solicitude for the salvation of the soul of a wayward boy, Margaret kept company with him for nearly three years, always declining his proposals of marriage with the remark that she had no mind to marry.

Life in a large city is always attended with particular dangers for youth, but Margaret armed herself against them by intimate friendship with Our Savior in the tabernacle and in Holy Communion. Her associates in the furniture factory where she

worked for several years kept a careful guard over their language when Margaret was about, for they said, "she is a saintly girl".

But this does not mean that she was long-faced and forbidding in manner. The contrary is the case. She possessed the real Franciscan disposition, which is always cheerful and spreads sunshine everywhere. She enjoyed games, she danced, she loved music and attractive clothes, and took the greatest delight in making other people happy. Withal her conversation, her letters, and her diary manifested a depth of thought and knowledge surpassing that of educated girls of her age. To a friend whom she was trying to attract to the practice of daily Holy Communion she said: "You should not go to

Holy Communion because you are good, but because you are striving and want to be good.”

At last this working girl yielded to the attraction she had always felt for convent life and joined the Poor Clares. “O yes,” she said to her confessor, who was sounding her, “Matrimony is a great sacrament, but I wish to be alone with my Saviour.” On July 21, 1923, she was received as a postulant at the Poor Clare convent in London, and the following year she was clothed with the holy habit. A year later she was espoused to her Lord in profession. She had now entered upon her life’s career, but little did she dream that it would be short-lived.

Margaret had contracted tuberculosis of the throat, and shortly after profession, she was obliged to go to a sanitarium. This was a sore trial for the young Poor Clare. She said in her own simple way: “The life of a Poor Clare is made of up prayer and penance. That is exactly what I have here: prayer and penance.” And so, despite her sufferings, Sister Mary Frances, as she was known in religion, was always cheerful, happy, and contented. Those about her drew

inspiration from her fortitude. A visiting priest remarked: “If she belongs to the slums, she is only another example of the miracles of God’s grace, which we priests are privileged to witness in the souls of those who, though materially poor, are rich in the things of the spirit.”

She suffered untold agony for more than six months, but she retained a clear mind to the very end. Her one desire was to be with God. Her confessor reports that she suffered a veritable purgatory in a certain thirst of the soul which baffled description, and which sometimes poured itself out in the whisper: “I want to see Him!”

Margaret’s beautiful death was the echo of the life of a beautiful soul. She was filled with joy at being permitted to go to God. She died on November 24, 1925. Although she had spent but twenty-five years of life on earth, she was rich in merits and ripe for heaven. Her body, at first buried at Kensall Green Cemetery, Notting Hill, was later brought back to her hometown and now rests in Mt. Vernon Cemetery at Liberton. The process of her beatification has begun.

THE DUTIES OF OUR VOCATION

1. The duties of our state of life and the Christian religion harmonize well with each other. Those who read the life story of Margaret Sinclair will probably ask: “What did she do that is so extraordinary?” But neither sainthood nor religion requires anything extraordinary; they are found rather in the simple, ordinary fulfillment of the duties of our state of life. The Apostle writes: “Endeavor to be quiet, and do your business, and work with your own hands as we command you” (1 Thess. 4:11). — Simple, ordinary, and faithful, let that also be your motto.

2. Cheerfulness and religion are also compatible with each other. This, too, was evidenced in the life of Sister Mary Frances. She was always cheerful. She spread sunshine everywhere by her straightforward and unaffected cheerfulness and good humor. And why not? It is written: “Serve ye the Lord with gladness” (Ps. 99:2). And Christ commanded His disciples: “May my joy be in you and your joy be filled” (John 15:11). How foolish are they, then, who believe that religion and joy are opposed to each

other. — Let us also manifest to the world with a truly genuine spirit of cheerfulness that we are good Christians.

3. Joy and religion are also compatible with each other. Let us again look at the life of Margaret Sinclair. She took great pleasure in attractive clothes, in dancing, in music, in games, and yet she became a saint. All that is necessary is that we strive to elevate these things with the right intention. “Wine and music rejoice the heart; but the love of wisdom is above them both” (Eccclus. 40:20). We should not be too absorbed in these things but should use them in order to serve God better and more cheerfully. — Let us, then, be sensible in our sentiments.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

O God, the protector of those who hope in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing holy, pour forth Thy mercies in us, so that under Thy guidance and direction we may so pass through the things of time, that we may not lose those of eternity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRUDENT CHRISTIAN

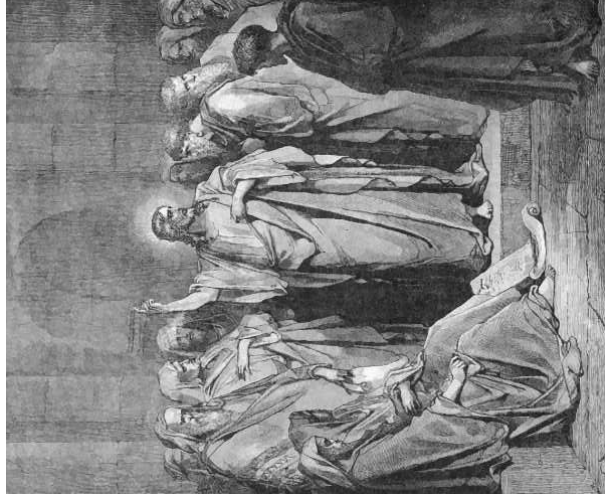
OR,

CONSIDERATIONS ON
THE IMPORTANCE, AND
HAPPINESS, OF ATTENDING
TO THE CARE OF OUR
SALVATION.

BY THE REV. J. FLETCHER, D.D.

“Give me understanding, and I
shall live.” — PSALM cxix.

1834.



CONSIDERATION XVI ON THE NECESSITY OF COMBATING OUR PASSIONS.

Besides the faculties of our reason, or the powers of our understanding, it has pleased the Divine Wisdom to confer also upon us certain affections of the will — which we usually allot to the province of the *heart*. Such are the feelings of love and aversion; the sentiments of joy, sorrow, fear, etc. Their end and design is to promote and facilitate the work of our salvation; — to be the wings, as it were, of the soul, enabling it to soar to the heights of virtue and to fly *away* from the bowers of vice. When

properly directed, they become the chief instruments, both of our present comfort, and of our future happiness: — insomuch that it is upon the prudent or imprudent use and regulation of our affections that our everything depends, not only in the next life but almost equally so in this.

It is, however, a misfortune which is alike prevalent as it is deplorable that, although these qualities have been thus bestowed upon us for the most beneficent purposes, they are still everywhere, perverted; and instead of being made as in the designs of God they should be, the principles of our salvation and the conductors to present

happiness, — they are on the contrary, converted into the prolific sources of vice, and into the instruments of our misery. It is when they are thus misapplied and degenerated that we give them the appellation of “our *Passions*.”

In the great business, therefore, of our salvation what beyond every other consideration, demands our care, is the proper direction, and the enlightened government of the dispositions of our heart. These, when neglected and once debased into passions, become the very tyrants of the soul — exercising over it the most despotic power; weakening its best faculties; extinguishing, not infrequently, the light itself of the understanding; — in short, rendering their unhappy victims little else than so many sensual slaves. It is hence, that, in the Sacred Scriptures the individuals who are given up to their passions are compared to the beasts of the field and placed on a level with them.

I. If we trace the effects of the passions — whether it be on the great theatre of public life; in the private walks of domestic society; or in the breasts of individuals, — we shall, in each case find that their invariable operation

is to produce wretchedness and distress. Thus, referring to the great theatre of the world — if we take a view of their consequences there we find, that the whole history of the misfortunes which have at any time scourged and afflicted nations are but the history of the workings of the passions. These alone were the causes and the instruments of all the crimes and disorders; of all the discord and confusion; of the wars, rebellions, tribulations, etc. which have so often rendered the world an *Aceldama* of blood, and a vale of sorrows.

In the *private* walks of domestic life — although the evils here are, of course, less striking yet they are often truly awful and afflicting. It is the passions which here again and alone disturb the harmony and destroy the peace of families — poisoning their comforts and embittering their enjoyments. Experience everywhere proves that wheresoever these enemies prevail, — no real happiness resides. Contentment and all real satisfaction fly away from the unhallowed roofs; and in their place there enter cares, anxiety, and fears — and not infrequently poverty, disgrace, and shame.

II. Neither is it the united concert of a multitude of passions that

is required to produce these evils. Often, the operation of a single passion will suffice to do it. Thus, let us only consider the long train of miseries and mischief which the passion of *lust* alone brings daily upon its unhappy victims. This is the passion, which now reigns with tyrant sway in all the avenues of society — corrupting every age, sex, and condition; tainting the purity of infancy itself; and degrading the decrepitude of old age. — The first entrance into the paths of this fatal disorder appears often to its unthinking slaves pleasant and bestrewed with flowers. Whence, urged on by the ardor of their feelings, they rush forward heedlessly into its inviting bowers; and there eagerly seizing as they conceive the cup of pleasure — greedily drink off its poisoned beverage. It may be that for a time, whilst the intoxication lasts, they experience little or no uneasiness. But, oh what soon is the case? Soon, like the visions of a dream, their imaginary satisfactions fade away. The paths become strewn with thorns, and the flowers have lost all their incense. The charm has vanished. Disgust comes on: and a frightful void takes place of that fullness of sentiment; which the force of passion had

created. The conscience becomes alarmed, and remorse — a long deep remorse — succeeds filling the soul with distress, and uttering groans through every recess and cavern of the heart. It is true — the feelings of the unhappy victims are by no means always similar, or alike. They must, of course, vary in different characters, ages, and situations. Still, such as the above are its frequent, if not general, consequences. And in particular, they are almost invariably such in the case of those individuals, who possessed of well-formed minds and trained once to virtue in the schools of piety have either by accident or the effects of bad example been unhappily drawn into the indulgence of this disorder. These experience all the horrors just alluded to. But, at all events, if we only look around us, and contemplate the public walks of society, we cannot but remark that wherever this passion prevails there are seen attending it a long train of miseries and afflictions — distress, poverty, and care; — reputations lost and fortunes squandered away; — pains, sickness, and infirmity — youth fading in its bloom and millions perishing under its terrible indignation. Whence, a distinguished worldling has made

this observation: “There exists, I believe a hell. But, if there were no hell to punish the vice of lust, what I have seen in the world — what I have witnessed in our hospitals and asylums is more than sufficient to inspire any thoughtful mind with a *deep* horror of this disorder.” Such as these — to say nothing of the prospects of future misery and of the sacrifice of eternal happiness — are the effects and trophies of one single passion.

III. In order, therefore, to preserve ourselves from the evils and miseries of our passions, it is consequently both our duty and our interest to adopt every expedient that religion prescribes and that prudence dictates. We must, in the first place, be watchful. Watchfulness is here peculiarly necessary because there is nothing, in reality, that is so artful and insidious; so flattering and treacherous as our passions. They insinuate themselves by so many artifices; they steal in upon us by so many inlets; they seduce us by so many wiles, and stratagems, — that it is only by means of the most constant vigilance that we can preserve and secure our hearts against them.

To this spirit of vigilance, we must be careful also to unite the spirit of fortitude and *resolution*. This indeed is a duty at least equally essential as our vigilance. It is a duty, it is true, that is sometimes trying to our weakness, and painful to our self-love: because our passions are portions of ourselves — dear to our vitiated tastes — and pleasing to our sensual inclinations. They are domestic enemies that we love. It is for these reasons, therefore, that it behooves us to fight so much the more generously against them. But above all, this fortitude is then the most particularly requisite, whenever it so happens that our passions in consequence of our *having* indulged them are formed in a *habit*. In this *case*, our fortitude must be bold, stern, and determined. For then the very principles of our liberty are changed into the principles of our slavery, and we are bound fast in chains stubborn as so many bolts of steel: but which still because we have forged them ourselves and wear them with satisfaction appear to us light and easy.

There is here, too, another circumstance in relation to our passions, which still more than any other, should seem to require our most serious care and

consideration. It is this: — We, each of us, inherit or experience within ourselves, *one* leading disposition, — one darling and favorite, propensity. It is this that principally rules our feelings; regulates our desires, and forms the chief feature in our character. It is what we call our “ruling, or master, passion.” It is, therefore, against this; and to its wise and proper government that both all the prudence of our watchfulness and all the energy of our resolution ought most essentially to be directed. It is upon the art and fortitude, with which we do this, that the success of our spiritual warfare and the prospects of our eternal happiness almost wholly depend. For, should it ever be our lot to have our portion with the damned, it is our ruling passion — as it is the chief source of our sins — that will prove the chief source of our condemnation. Impressed, therefore, with this awful truth, let us consider *this* passion as our mortal; and most formidable enemy. Let us look upon it, as a monster — a serpent — whose head we must strive to crush. Without this, its venom will infect and corrupt our hearts; — will even in death itself, poison our last sighs and taint our expiring breath.

IV. We often complain of the violence, and importunity, of our passions. We perhaps even pretend that it is in vain to attempt, at all events at present to subdue them. These pretenses are very frequently in the minds and mouths of a multitude of sinners. However, reasons such as these are only the apologies for our corruption and excuses for our indolence. They are opinions and judgments which we do not in reality entertain. We know and feel that *we* have a power within us by which we can if we please, not only resist but conquer our very strongest passions. If such were not our conviction we should then be reduced to deny both the efficacy of grace and the first law of human morals. We, therefore, can if we but choose to do so, restrain and subdue our worst and most dangerous inclinations. Ah! Let us only think how often and even how easily we do this when there is a question of obtaining the benefits and honors or those distinctions of this world that we deem important. On such occasions, we find little or no difficulty in sacrificing our very dearest passions. We can then combat every obstacle; renounce every pleasure, and give up our will to the will of others. But if so — if we can thus conquer ourselves for

the sake of the trifling advantages of this world — we surely cannot with anything like consistency pretend that we cannot do the same for the blessings of our salvation. However unhappily so it is: — we can do a great deal for this world, but we are all weakness for the next. We find everything difficult that relates to God; or to our future happiness. Did we only put half the restraints upon ourselves to preserve our virtue that we do to purchase the satisfactions of this life — with these precautions the victory over our passions would surely be complete and our salvation certain.

But, admitting that the conquest of our passions is a painful and arduous task — still we know that we have always at hand the means — and even if we seriously apply for it — the easy means of overcoming them. Grace, this is the powerful instrument, is far stronger than our passions, and this is always granted to our requests. It is the property of grace to change our inclinations; — to exalt our weakness into strength; and our timidity into courage. It even converts our very passions into virtues, — making our sensibility the principle of divine love; our ardor, holy zeal; our obstinacy, resolution.

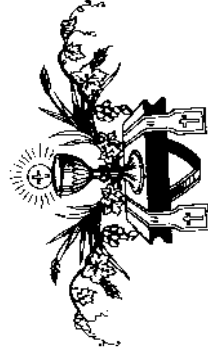
St. Cyprian tells us that he was no sooner renewed by grace, than all his difficulties vanished and his perplexities died away; inasmuch that what had before appeared to him insurmountable became at once easy and agreeable. It was so too, with St. Austin. He informs us, that, after he had become fortified by grace, what had seemed to him, but ten days before, impossible, he now performed without any difficulty whatsoever. It was so again, with the sensual and sinful Magdalene. She but cast herself at the feet of Jesus; and she quitted them, victorious *over* her passions, her habits and herself. Thus then, it will be likewise with us, provided only that we follow the example of these saints — applying, like them, for aid at the throne of grace. In this case, soon our weakness, like theirs, will be converted into strength and our slavery into freedom. The old heart will be broken; and a new one created: and our inclinations, which are now perhaps so sensual, and corrupted — reformed in their tastes and feelings will begin to cherish and pursue what alone is innocent and pure.

Religion does not, of course, require anything from us that

is impossible. It but requires of us that we should do for God and for our salvation, what the generality of us do for this world and its trifling interests. Nay; it even in most cases requires less. For what we are commanded to do for God and for our salvation is neither so painful nor so fatiguing as what we constantly undergo in the service of the world and under the slavery of our passions. It is not equal to the labors of trade; to the hardships of war; to the toils of the sailor; nor yet to the fatigues and watchings of pleasure, and dissipation. Surely, then, to ask for God and our salvation, what we daily give to the benefits and satisfactions of this life, ought not to appear unreasonable. It should, on the contrary, appear rather an insult to reason and a violation of the Christian law. However, let us but do this, and we may be pretty confidently assured that both the justice of God will be satisfied and our passions conquered.

Wherefore, if we wish to secure our salvation and to enjoy in this life true peace of mind, let us learn to govern our passions and to give a right direction to our feelings. Thus if we love pleasure, let us pursue that which is real; — if riches, let us seek

those which never fade; — if honors, let us aspire at such as are worthy of our ambition; — if joy, let us exult in the testimony of a good conscience. With our hearts thus regulated, we shall enjoy what the sinner never tastes — contentment without bitterness and satisfactions without alloy. — Or, should it so chance that our passions notwithstanding our exertions still give us pain; or that we sometimes think it hard to do violence to them — let us on such occasions — calling in the spirit of prudence — remember how much harder it is and how much more cruel to endure the torments of the world to come. It is hard and cruel to cut off the mortified limb; — but, it is still worse to die for want of the operation which alone can preserve life and give back health. — With our passions subdued, both our comfort here and our happiness hereafter are secure. Let us but generously take the first step towards the conquest; and the very next — the second — will prove easy.



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