

REFLECTIONS FOR EVERY
DAY OF THE MONTH



MOTHER MARY JOSEPH BUTLER, R.S.H.M.

Reflections for Every Day of the Month

From the writings of

VERY REVEREND MOTHER
MARY JOSEPH BUTLER, R.S.H.M.

With concluding prayers from
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FOREWORD

Since the Protestant Reformation the world has lived a philosophy of activism that has sapped its spiritual strength and brought it to the brink of destruction. No one can deny that the modern age has produced great and noble things but all its victories are conquests over matter. "There is perhaps no point," writes Max Scheler "on which modern minds are more in accord than on this one, viz., that nature and machinery, things which man should control, have come to dominate him more and more; that things are constantly becoming more powerful, more beautiful, more noble; and that man is constantly becoming smaller and more insignificant, a mere cog in the machine he has built."

Two world-wars of the present century should teach us that man lives not on bread alone but on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The confusion that fills the world today points to the desolation with which a whole world is laid desolate because "there is no one who thinks in his heart."

It is time for us to enter into ourselves

like the prodigal and reflect in our hearts on the truths that have made man great, beautiful, noble, and strong in the past. Every morning we begin a new day that will lead us closer to the eternal shores. Why not begin it by meditating for a short time on those truths that have guided so many to peace and happiness in life?

Mother Butler of Marymount followed this precept and each day found her pondering more deeply the teachings of Eternal Truth. She has a message for souls in all spheres of life. An exemplary Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, she lived to accomplish pre-eminent works for the Church and for her congregation. Her dependence was on God alone, and her trust in Him was the source of the tremendous courage which carried her projects to success.

“Reflections for Every Day of the Month” drawn from the rich mine of Mother Butler’s spiritual treatises should be in the hands, in the hearts, and on the lips of everyone. They are a spiritual delight for the soul that hungers for the justice of God.

E. K. LYNCH, O. Carm.,
Prior General



I

THE desire of love is already love itself.

. . . knowledge of God leads naturally to love for Him.

A great hindrance to our spiritual advancement is the persuasion that for some reason or other God could never admit us to intimacy with Him.

We shall never be really intimate with God until we believe in His infinite love for us.

The more we are filled with Divine Love, the more we shall be immune from sin, for how can we love and yet wound and sadden the object beloved?

Love is so noble that it is the desire and the longing of a God: it is the height of perfection, the bliss of earth, and one day it will be for us that of Heaven; in a word, love is God Himself . . .

. . . but who will give us this love unless it

be the One Who is its source and plenitude, the most loving and tender Heart of Jesus?

We shall go to Jesus, to the fountain and the spring of eternal life in order to draw from it Divine Love.

May our every breath, every beating of our hearts and all our aspirations and respirations cry out to Jesus: "I love You!"

PRAYER: Keep me ever from being afraid of Thy eye, from the inward consciousness that I am not honestly trying to please Thee. Teach me to love Thee and then I shall be at peace, without any fear of Thee at all.

Amen.

II

LET us meditate on the acts of God's love for us since childhood.

Let us reflect on the goodness of God . . . and in return let us love Him more ardently each day.

The more we suffer the more love will take possession of our souls.

Our labour of love must continue until the whole world is on fire with love.

Both effort and suffering are necessary for the attainment of perfection.

. . . There is so much to correct, to mortify, and to overcome in our poor human nature!

If through laxity we neglect to mortify ourselves, then we refuse to carry the cross, we refuse to be victims with Christ, we refuse to follow His call.

The words of our Lord are eternally true:
"The Kingdom of Heaven "suffereth violence and the violent bear it away."

PRAYER: To whom should I go but to Thee? Who can save me but Thou? Who can cleanse me but Thou? Who can make me overcome myself but Thou? Who can raise my body from the grave but Thou? Therefore I come to Thee in all these my necessities, in fear, but in faith . . . The more I refuse to open my heart to Thee, so much the fuller and stronger be Thy supernatural visitings, and the more urgent and efficacious Thy Presence in me. Amen.

III

“**A**SK and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Joy is love satisfied.

Hearts that are divided cannot taste spiritual joy; their attachments to creatures, to their different occupations, to light or frivolous reading interfere with the pleasure they should find in God.

They cannot know the happiness of those who love God intensely and who realize how immeasurable is His love for them; thus they lack courage to make the sacrifices which God asks of them.

. . . those who love **little**, suffer **much** both in their nature and in their will when trials come; to them resignation is a tremendous effort and affords them no joy. The peace enjoyed by virtuous souls is unknown to them.

What better cure for the wounds of love than Love itself?

Oh, if men would only love each other! It is this want of love that is responsible

for the revolt of the masses and the injustice of the classes. It is our duty to pray ardently and to teach the world again how to love as in the days of the early Christians.

To love God with our whole heart and with all our strength, and to implant this Divine Love in the hearts of all — this is our heavenly vocation . . .

By His gift of love of the Cross, in place of grief and desolation He secures for us profound peace of soul.

PRAYER: All Thy acts of Providence are acts of love. If Thou sendest evil upon us, it is in love. All the evils of the physical world are intended for the good of Thy creatures, or are the unavoidable attendants on that good . . . I acknowledge with a full and firm faith, O Lord, the wisdom and goodness of Thy Providence, even in Thy inscrutable judgments and Thy incomprehensible decrees. Amen.

IV

WHAT we mistake for crosses are often blessings of the future.

Our Lord asked His Apostles when He sent them on His mission: "Can you drink the Chalice that I shall drink?" Our Lord asks you too: "Can you drink of the Chalice? Can you bear your part in your Master's sufferings?"

What answer shall you make?

Devoted souls would not wish to be rid of sufferings, for they know that suffering increases their love for God.

Crosses detach us from earth and attach us to God.

The true friends of Jesus must share in His Cross, but their detachment and humility will soften for them all contradictions, humiliations and disappointments.

Trials, though they may affect poor hu-

man nature, will not disturb the will, for it is absorbed in the Will of God and finds happiness in enduring whatever contributes to His Glory.

Without suffering we cannot really love God . . .

PRAYER: O my great God, Thou hast humbled Thy self, Thou hast stooped to take our flesh and blood, and hast been lifted up upon the tree! I praise and glorify Thee tenfold the more, because Thou hast shown Thy power by means of Thy suffering, than hadst Thou carried on Thy work without it. It is worthy of Thy infinitude thus to surpass and transcend all our thoughts. Amen.

V

HOW many Christians, otherwise intelligent and experienced in the ways of God, are far from realizing all the supernatural resources hidden in holy desires! They fall back sadly on themselves, saying: "I can do nothing at all; I can neither love nor serve God."

"Daniel," says Holy Scripture, "found favor in the sight of God, because he was a man of holy desires."

It is only when calm and peaceful that the soul begins to understand that God alone can satisfy her desires.

In this enlightened calm, the soul sees God and His infinite goodness; she sees the world and its nothingness; she sees God in His immensity, infinity, supreme goodness, eternity; she sees also creatures who pass away like grass of the field.

Overcome by the simple vision of faith,

she exclaims: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity. God alone is good. God alone is desirable!"

According to the measure in which God reveals Himself to the soul, so its desires become enkindled and she longs to possess Him more and more.

A creature is aware of her daring in presuming to desire the possession of God — she feels the need of humbling herself in order to attract Him to her; she understands the need of purifying herself in order to be worthy to possess Him . . .

PRAYER: My Lord Jesus, I confess and know that Thou only art the True, the Beautiful and the Good. Thou alone canst make me bright and glorious, and canst lead me up after Thee. Thou art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and none but Thou. Earth will never lead me to Heaven. Thou alone art the Way; Thou alone. Amen.

VI

THERE is in the human soul . . . a profound desire for intimacy with God . . . to see Him as He is.

In the depths of every human soul there is a refuge which nothing can disturb and which nothing exterior can penetrate.

. . . the moment we enter into this exterior retreat of the soul we find there an Invisible Presence.

The moment we think ourselves alone He Who created us and redeemed us, He Who loves us with more than a mother's love, He Who is occupied with our interests, our welfare, our life, is there with us.

We know where we shall always find Him even when engaged in the most active and arduous duties . . . There He is, waiting to give us His light and His grace . . .

Almighty God is so indulgent that He deigns to accept our simple desire of pleasing Him, loving Him and serving Him, as

though we had attained to perfection in this matter.

Let us not refuse Him this simple praise. Good-will and desire are linked in harmony, and it is their union that inspires the words: "Peace! Peace to men of good-will!"

... what exercise is easier or more accessible to all? "My God, I feel no love for you, but at least I desire to love!"

PRAYER: O my God, whatever is nearer to me than Thou, things of this earth, and things more naturally pleasing to me, will be sure to interrupt the sight of Thee, unless Thy grace interfere. Keep Thou my eyes, my ears, my heart, from any such miserable tyranny. Keep my whole being fixed on Thee. Let me never lose sight of Thee: and while I gaze on Thee, let my love of Thee grow more and more every day. Amen.

VII

THE good that we accomplish is in direct proportion to the depth of our interior life.

If we wish to be veritable apostles, we must convince ourselves that without sanctity, without the interior life, and without the grace of God we shall accomplish nothing.

It is only by living a supernatural life that we can communicate to others a desire for sanctity.

Let us form the habit of looking at everything with the eyes of Christ.

With what joy and tenderness will not Our Lady help you to live the interior life!

Silence and sanctity are inseparable.

What a model is Mary in her prayerful silence!

. . . we shall find in the Sacred Heart of Mary strength and grace and holiness.

PRAYER: O make my heart beat with Thy Heart. Purify it of all that is earthly, all that is proud and sensual, all that is hard and cruel, of all perversity, of all disorder, of all deadness. So fill it with Thee, that neither the events of the day nor the circumstances of the time may have power to ruffle it: but that in Thy love and Thy fear it may have peace. Amen.

VIII

LET us not rest satisfied with a tepid interest in our own perfection.

How happy and how prudent is she who would strive to live each day prepared for death!

. . . there is a life-long martyrdom more agreeable to Almighty God than the swift glory of sanctity purchased by the sword. To perform our task we must have a great spirit of faith and love.

Show light by your prayers, works, sacrifices . . . Everything in Jesus is light.

Those who estrange themselves from sacrifices estrange themselves in proportion from perfection.

. . . grace comes from Calvary, from suffering, from the Cross.

. . . if God should add . . . other trials, destined to purify us still more, to give us the opportunity of acquiring greater merit,

let us accept them from His Hand with love.

Who knows what the future holds for us!

PRAYER: O my God and Savior, who wentest through sufferings for me with such lively consciousness, such precision, such recollection, and such fortitude, enable me, by Thy help, if I am brought into the power of this terrible trial, bodily pain, enable me to bear it with some portion of Thy calmness. Obtain for me this grace, O Virgin Mother, who didst see thy Son suffer and didst suffer with Him; that I, when I suffer may associate my sufferings with His and with thine, and that through His passion, and thy merits, and those of all saints, they may be a satisfaction for my sins and procure for me eternal life. Amen.

IX

OUR Divine Lord stamped us with the seal of His love to show that we are His property.

He has engraved on our hearts His image and His character as authentic signs of our adoption, ineffaceable titles of our nobility which we shall carry with us until the great day of eternity.

St. Paul assures us that all those who are predestined to Eternal Glory bear in themselves the Image of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Let us try to gain all the spiritual benefits which are destined for us, but which will be given only in proportion to our devotion.

Never believe perfection to be beyond your reach.

. . . our own unaided strength may be powerless to gain its summit, but God can lift us there if we struggle courageously

with a steadfast hope. He will admit us to the ranks of His intimate friends.

The radiant light on the faces of the Saints is a reflection of the pure delights which result from the triumph of grace over nature.

. . . we too have been chosen by God . . . to live always with Him, and to make His interests our own. Our Lord, then, expects us to . . . become Saints and Apostles,

PRAYER: O my God, suffer me still—bear with me in spite of my waywardness, perverseness, and ingratitude! I improve very slowly, but really I am moving on to heaven, or at least I wish to move. Only give me Thy grace—meet me with Thy grace, I will through Thy grace do what I can—and Thou shalt perfect it for me. Then I shall have happy days in Thy Presence, and in the sight and adoration of Thy five Sacred Wounds. Amen.

X

LET us ask Mary to make our hearts like hers . . .

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.” It was Mary’s humility which earned for her the privilege of being the Mother of God.

By her virginity she pleased God, by her humility she conceived God.

Ask her with all the ardour of your humble soul to make your heart like that of her Divine Son—meek and humble.

Let us banish from our heart and mind all proud thoughts and actions which give great scandal to others . . . Nothing is possible . . . without humility.

There will be no room for pride in our hearts if we meditate seriously and constantly on the instructive and consoling words of our Divine Lord—“Without Me you can do nothing.”

Is it not perhaps because we have not

reflected, as we ought, on these words of our Divine Lord that our perfection is still far in the background, that our soul is so tepid and our supernatural life so unfruitful?

. . . let us take as our Model, the loving Heart of Mary. From this salutary contemplation we shall derive an ever increasing desire of surrender to divine love.

PRAYER: . . . thy very face and form, dear Mother, speak to us of the Eternal, not like earthly beauty, dangerous to look upon, but like the morning star, which is thy emblem, bright and musical, breathing purity, telling of heaven and infusing peace. O harbinger of day! O hope of the pilgrim! Lead us still as thou hast led; in the dark night, across the bleak wilderness, guide us on to our Lord Jesus, guide us home. Amen.

XI

... **M**ARY'S Heart was also a suffering Heart. It was pierced with seven swords.

Her extraordinary sacrifices are incapable of comprehension without a special grace. All human words are powerless to express them adequately. They surpass all that a created intelligence can imagine.

The sacrifices of the soul—renunciation of self, readiness to submit to judgments we dislike and distrust, to suspicions and ridicule, are far more painful than those of the body.

Sacrifices win souls by force of example. They are the jewels that God gives us to ransom others unto sanctification. Upon their number and their quality depends the building of the Kingdom of God.

The life of the Sacred Heart of Mary was a life of sacrifice.

She stood at the foot of the Cross, assisted at the death of her Son, was united to Him in His sufferings, and offered them to God for our salvation.

She will help you to correspond to your graces if you are faithful . . .

. . . have constant recourse to her loving Sacred Heart, and you will be other Christs.

PRAYER: Let us say then with all holy souls, Virgin most pure, conceived without original sin, Mary, pray for us. Amen.

XII

REPARATION is repairing with our love and sacrifice the neglect, the black ingratitude, and the outrages committed against our Lord and Master.

Mary is our great Model in the life of reparation which she lived while on earth. Let us invoke Her powerful intercession.

We find the Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross, not only as collaborator in the work of Redemption, but also to gather from the Blood of the Adorable Victim a source of grace . . .

The Humanity that Christ had on earth, that He still has in heaven and in the Holy Eucharist, He received from Mary who is also the Mother of His Mystical Body.

The loving Heart of Mary, overflowing with love of God, is also a maternal heart. God made it so loving only because it was

to be the heart of a Mother—Mother of Christ, Mother of men.

. . . work after the example and with the aid of our Blessed Mother so justly named “Queen of Apostles” . . .

This blessed perfect union of the Sacred Heart of Mary will, I fervently pray, be one of the chief glories of the Church in her hour of need, and console the sad heart of our dear holy father, the Pope, in his battle against Communism.

PRAYER: Shine on us, dear Lady, with thy bright countenance, like the sun in his strength, O stella matutina, O harbinger of peace, till our year is one perpetual May. From thy sweet eyes, from thy pure smile, from thy majestic brow, let ten thousand influences rain down not to confound or overwhelm, but to persuade, to win over thine enemies. O Mary, my hope, O Mother undefiled . . . **Amen.**

XIII

... ONLY recollection is able to produce
... calmness and peace in the soul.
Before intimate union with Christ can
take place there must be something in
common between the soul and God to per-
mit the free interchange of love.

An exact knowledge of God is necessary
as He reveals Himself in the Gospel with
His Sacred Heart burning with love, His
unbounded charity to the sinner, and His
profound pity for the weak and miserable.
This knowledge of God leads naturally to
love for Him and in turn produces in our
soul an ardent desire for a more intimate
union with Him.

... pray very earnestly that we all may
be firmly and lovingly united in God ...

Now, who indeed can teach us better to
live for God and in God and to love our
neighbour as ourselves, if not she whose
life was an uninterrupted act of Divine
Love and worship?

Let us contemplate as our Model the loving
Heart of Mary, and we shall draw from
this salutary reflection an ever-increasing

desire of giving our hearts completely to Divine Love.

The flames that surround the Sacred Heart of Mary symbolize fervour, and the crown of roses—love! Let us imitate the roses and encircle Her Heart with our love.

. . . let us resolve to imitate the charity of the Heart of Mary.

PRAYER: . . . and so, great Mother of God, as far as a creature can be like the Creator, your ineffable purity and utter freedom from any shadow of sin, your Immaculate Conception, your ever-virginity — these your prerogatives — are such as to lead us to exclaim in the prophetic words of Sacred Scripture, both with awe and with exultation. “Thou art the glory of Jerusalem and the joy of Israel; thou art the honor of our people; therefore hath the hand of the Lord strengthened thee, and therefore art thou blessed forever. Amen.

XIV

THE enemies of religion are in power now, and they hate even God Himself.

Strength of character is diminishing, the will is too weak to overcome obstacles either great or small, with the result that the enemy of our salvation is often victorious in the combat.

The present degeneration of manners and morals has aroused the righteous indignation of all self-respecting people . . .

We must take a firm stand against this breaking down of our Catholic civilization by a militant service when necessary.

“You are the salt of the earth.” Salt preserves from corruption.

Let all who approach us see and feel that we have the divine power to preserve souls from corruption.

Let us imitate the Saints in their gener-

osity and love of mortification. Like them let us fight and conquer the enemies of our salvation . . .

Let us multiply our holy desires, and we shall see the realization of them some day.

PRAYER: My Lord, my only God, let me never go after vanities. All is vanity and shadow here below. Let nothing allure me from Thee; keep me wholly and entirely. Draw me to Thee morning, noon, and night for consolation. Let me love Thee, O my Lord Jesus, with a pure affection and a fervent affection! Let me love Thee with the fervor, only greater, with which men of this earth love beings of this earth.

Amen.

XV

GOD'S love for us is in proportion to our charity.

Where the mind is tainted with unkind thoughts, God's love is hindered in its work . . .

How many graces have we abused . . . ?
How many times have we offended against the charity we owe our neighbour?

The Queen of all the virtues—Charity, or the love of God—was the fairest flower which blossomed in the Heart of Mary. Her love for God and her neighbour had no parallel in human life.

God will give everything to those who refuse Him nothing. He will grant them the gifts of prayer, mortification and zeal. Give yourself to God cheerfully with all your heart, and He will keep His promise, and put into your heart His spirit of perfect confidence and love.

If you do not live the life of Christ, a life of charity and self-denial, you will have no influence for good.

Let us not be discouraged. If the task is difficult the reward is glorious.

PRAYER: I cry out to Thee, and entreat Thee, first that Thou wouldst keep me from myself, and from following any will but Thine. Next I beg of Thee, that in Thy infinite compassion Thou wouldst temper Thy will to me, that it may not be severe, but indulgent to me. Visit me not, O my loving Lord — if it be not wrong so to pray—visit me not with those trying visitations which saints alone can bear! Still I leave all in Thy hands, my dear Saviour — I bargain for nothing. Only, if Thou shalt bring heavier trial on me, give me more grace—flood me with the fullness of Thy strength and consolation, that they may work in me not death, but life and salvation.
Amen.

XVI

IF we search our soul shall we find there-
in sufficient generosity, self sacrifice
and devotion to work, to suffer and die
for Him, and thus to extend His Kingdom,
and to console His Sacred Heart?

Oh! how strenuously should we endeavour
to acquire a closer union with Christ!

Jesus, seeing that you use His grace with
such exactitude, will not refuse you any-
thing you ask.

He is more eager to give than we are to
receive, but, if He sees that we make no
use of His grace He judges it better to
withhold it.

Do we love Him enough to deprive our-
selves of our ease and comfort in order
to help Him carry His Cross?

One of the sighs of the holiest of souls
is indeed this: "Alas! I desire so ardently

to love our Saviour, and I am so cold in His Presence!"

We think we do not deserve His favors because we have rejected so many graces in the past. Such thoughts show great want of confidence.

Let us not complain further of our incapability of doing good.

PRAYER: My God, how far am I from acting according to what I know so well! I confess it, my heart goes after shadows. Rouse me from sloth and coldness, and make me desire Thee with my whole heart. Teach me to love meditation, sacred reading and prayer. Teach me to love that which shall engage my mind for all eternity. Amen.

XVII

“**I**, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.”

The great Apostle, St. Paul, addressed these words to the first Christians who were chosen by God to form a part of the Church. We can take them as addressed to ourselves . . .

. . . we from whom God expects so much cannot save ourselves or others by folding our arms, by living an easy, soft, or self-indulgent life.

We must be generous in the service of God, we must conquer self by fighting continually and constantly against the spirit of the world. It was God Who ordered it thus, and His words shall never pass away.

Jesus left the Apostles to carry on His work: “You are the light of the world.”

We also are all apostles no matter what work we may be given to accomplish.

Never before . . . were we in such sad need of ardent, zealous souls to help in the overthrow of the powers of evil.

We must resolve at any cost to bring light to souls, to bring love to souls.

Exercise this apostolate in your particular environment or sphere of action . . .

PRAYER: God grant that we too may do our own work, whatever it may be . . . God in His great mercy grant . . . us, with unselfish hearts and pure love of Him, ever to aim at His glory and to seek His will, and to ask for His grace, and to obey His word, laboring according to our strength, laboring to the end—laboring to the very end, in humility, diligence and love! Amen.

XVIII

IS there one among us who does not wish to be an apostle?

Begin then with an earnest resolution to walk more closely in the Footsteps of Christ.

. . . copying Him . . . adding each day some act of virtue as a mark of resemblance between our souls and that of our Divine Master . . . This is the real aim of our lives. Do we always think seriously about it?

Jesus, meek, humble, poor, patient, charitable, and merciful is our Model.

As the soul presses onward . . . she feels that she is utterly incapable and unworthy of reaching the goal of her desires, by herself. From this sentiment arises the need of prayer.

By prayer we cooperate in the redemption of souls.

. . . we should render to God the homage of our worship, love Him, plead with Him for ourselves and for sinners . . .

Like the Magi of old, offer Him the gold of your love, the incense of your fervent prayers and the myrrh of your penitential actions.

PRAYER: Make me like Thyself, O my God, since in spite of myself such Thou canst make me . . . Thou hast shown it to be possible in the face of the whole world by the most overwhelming proof, by taking our created nature on Thyself and exalting it to Thee. Let me be partaker of that Divine Nature in all the riches of Its attributes, which in fullness of substance and in personal presence became the Son of Mary. Amen.

XIX

IS it not just and right that we contribute our share to the general well-being?

God, the Divine Author of the apostolate, did not at first send His Apostles to convert the heathen, but to those of the faith who were tepid in the service of God . . . Engrave this truth in your heart and conscience, for it outlines your special field of action.

Enkindle in the hearts of others an ardent zeal for souls by communicating to them light, love, joy, peace, grace . . .

We should be light to souls.

All spiritual writers agree that the best means of exercising an apostolate is by example.

How happy we shall be at the end of our life if we can say: "There are many souls in Heaven because of me."

We are bound . . . to cooperate with God in spreading His light and love in the souls of others.

Each time that we have the happiness of bringing a soul nearer to Almighty God by word, example, or by prayer, we can claim the just title of Apostle.

PRAYER: My Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast given me this great gift, that I am allowed, not only to pray for myself, but to intercede for others . . . I pray for all the sick, all the suffering, all the poor, all the oppressed—I pray for all prisoners—I pray for all evil-doers . . . I pray for all who are in peril and danger. I pray for all who have benefited me, befriended me, or aided me. I pray for all who have asked my prayers—I pray for all whom I have forgotten. Bring us all after the troubles of this life into the haven of peace, and reunite us all together for ever, O my dear Lord, in Thy glorious heavenly kingdom. Amen.

XX

WHAT a spiritual fortune can be gained by investing in the interests of Christ!

St. Therese of the Child Jesus wrote in her Journal: "From the age of three years I never refused God anything." Can we wonder at her sublime influence, at the numberless souls she has saved, and will continue to save as long as the world lasts?

St. Gertrude in her writings says she greatly feared to refuse God anything, while of the great St. Teresa God could not ask enough to satisfy her whole-hearted abandonment to the Divine Will. Let us not be content with ordinary virtue, with conventional piety.

Joy and cheerfulness in the service of God are an absolute necessity. Sadness and moroseness do great harm.

What are the arms that God places at our

disposal to do the work of an apostle?
Good advice, prayer, sacrifice.

If we obstinately abuse the graces which have been especially lavished upon us, we are alas, in a state of tepidity lacking in virtue and piety.

. . . if we love God, we should love the souls He cherishes.

PRAYER: O my Saviour, Thou shalt be my sole God! — I will have no Lord but Thee. I will break to pieces all idols in my heart which rival Thee. I will have nothing but Jesus and Him crucified. It shall be my life to pray to Thee, to offer myself to Thee, to keep Thee before me, to worship Thee in Thy holy Sacrifice, and to surrender myself to Thee in Holy Communion. Amen.

XXI

WHEN we refuse nothing to God He will give us grace . . .

The greatest graces are attached to generosity with God. If we refuse Him something He asks, the greatest consequences may depend on this refusal.

To surrender oneself body and soul to God, to keep nothing back, to cast oneself upon Him as a child hastens to embrace its mother, that is the secret of the Saints, that is what delights the Heart of God.

May self lose itself in the Will of God, and lead us to carry out, not only His orders, but even His smallest wishes . . .

Renounce your will in receiving contradictions humbly.

Renounce your self-love in giving up your desires, your point of view, your judgment, your tastes, to follow the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Renounce your love of ease and comfort to carry in you the mortification of Christ Who gave His life for the redemption of the world.

For what will it profit you to have done your own will for a short time, followed your own judgment, and indulged your appetites, if after death you have to suffer the consequences?

PRAYER: O my God, I will put myself without reserve into Thy Hands. Wealth or woe, joy or sorrow, friends or bereavement, honor or humiliation, good report or ill report, comfort or discomfort, Thy presence or the hiding of Thy countenance, all is good if it comes from Thee. Thou art Wisdom and Thou art Love—what can I desire more?

Amen.

• • • **E**MBRACE every opportunity of practicing mortification.

God has endowed our souls with magnificent possibilities: intelligence, memory, will. Our bodies are adorned with the most delicate senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. Our Saviour has made us the rulers of this kingdom on earth. We may either reign supreme over it by use of these brilliant faculties or we may promote disorder by scattering them about wastefully!

The mind is occupied with the latest news, the memory filled with agreeable souvenirs, the imagination plays with a hundred trifles; the body yielding to sloth, seeks for ease, comfort and repose, and lives a natural, selfish life with little regard for the true life, the life of the soul.

• • • we must increasingly learn to combat nature as opposed to grace.

The battlefield of this deadly and perpetual warfare is in our soul, where the fight for an eternity of glory takes place.

The sad consequences of want of sacrifice and mortification are becoming daily more apparent in society, in the home, and even in religious houses.

Those whose courage carries them valiantly through the struggle against natural inclinations enjoy their reward even here below. Their happiness will far exceed that of the less generous souls who endeavor to combine the service of God and that of nature.

If we watch over ourselves and deny ourselves we shall have the happiness of seeing the soul commanding and the body obeying.

PRAYER: My God, Thou art doing penance. Thou art making confession. Thou art exercising contrition, with a reality and a virtue infinitely greater than that of all saints and penitents together; for Thou art the One Victim of us all, the sole Satisfaction, the real Penitent, all but the real sinner. Amen.

XXIII

ONE day our Lord addressing the crowd that followed Him cried out: "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." The whole principle of mortification is contained in these Divine Words.

It is through the spirit of mortification that the soul reigns, dominates and commands. Let us therefore put our "shoulders to the wheel."

Each hour of the day must register a victory over self; in overcoming bad humour, critical or uncharitable words, an impatient gesture, a repugnance to persons or things . . .

There is nothing sweeter than fruit gathered from the thorny tree of mortification, because Almighty God is never outdone in generosity to those who give themselves to Him without reserve.

We must mortify ourselves—we must die to self. This is a hard saying, but death to self is a gain since it is the condition necessary for the development of the supernatural life of the soul.

What a vast conquest is offered . . . A whole world of vain satisfactions to repress if one wishes to conquer self and to make room for the reign of Christ in the soul.

The mortification of the eyes which are curious to see everything, of the ears which wish to hear everything, and of the tongue which has not learned either silence or restraint.

He gives Himself without measure to the soul as the reward of her victories over self.

PRAYER: My God, teach me so to live, as one who does believe the great dignity, the great sanctity of a temple of the Holy Ghost! Should I not venerate that which Thou dost miraculously feed, and which Thy Co-equal Spirit inhabits? My God, Who was nailed to the Cross, "pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear;" crucify my soul and body in all that is sinful in them, and make me pure as Thou art pure. Amen.

WHAT the Sun, King of Stars, is to our material universe which it illuminates, beautifies and renders fruitful—all that, and much more, is the Holy Mass in the spiritual world of souls.

One Mass gives more glory to God than all the re-united acts of virtue of angels and of men. It obtains more graces for a soul than all other exercises of devotion.

. . . let us form the resolution of esteeming the Holy Mass as a priceless treasure, valuing it more than any other devotion, assisting at it daily in the most reverent and fervent manner possible.

And when we are unable to assist in person, let us send our good angels to replace us at the Feet of Jesus—and let us unite ourselves in spirit to the Priests who continually offer up the Holy Sacrifice through the universe.

Let our cry to the Eternal Father be: “My God! I am unable to pay my debts to you, but I shall go to the Altar, I shall take

the Host of Propitiation and the Chalice of Salvation. I shall offer you your own Divine Son who has become a Victim in my stead, and for the love of Him, you will cancel my indebtedness and bless me."

If our faith were sufficiently vivid, we could see with spiritual vision, at the solemn moment of the Consecration, the Word of God become again Incarnate in the hands of the priest . . .

Since our Saviour could not remain on the Cross to the end of time, it was a consolation to His loving Heart to perpetuate His Sacrifice on our Altars . . .

All grace flows from this great Sacrifice.

PRAYER: O my God, holiness becometh Thy House, and yet Thou dost make Thy abode in my breast. Thou, Who didst first inhabit Mary's breast, dost come to me. When I say, "Lord, I am not worthy"—Thou Whom I am addressing alone understandest in their fullness the words which I use. Amen.

LET us make energetic efforts to put fervour into every one of our exercises of piety, especially into our assistance at Holy Mass . . .

More especially during the solemn time between the Sanctus and Holy Communion, let us banish every distracting thought, forming around us an atmosphere of Adoration, Gratitude and Love.

After the Elevation, let us offer the Precious Blood to Our Eternal Father and place our souls in the Wound of the Sacred Heart, so that they may be purified by the Blood which flows from it.

“One fervent Communion,” says the St. Curé d’Ars, “is sufficient to make a saint.” Let us approach Holy Communion in the company of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Our Guardian Angel and the Saint of the day.

How are we to assist at Mass efficaciously? Certainly the most appropriate place for us is beside our Blessed Lady, who holds the same place near the Altar which she once held on Calvary.

Standing at the Foot of the Cross, our

Divine Mother united herself to the Perfect Victim, clothed herself with His adorable dispositions, and, by, with and in Jesus Christ, gave glory to God, thanked Him for His benefits and offered the Blood of Jesus to the Eternal Father in expiation for the faults of all . . .

To her perfect correspondence to grace is due her place in Heaven at the right hand of Jesus sharing with Him the empire of the world.

Let us try to imitate Our Lady while assisting at Mass.

PRAYER: O Holy Mother, stand by me now at Mass time, when Christ comes to me as thou didst minister to thy infant Lord — as thou didst hang upon His words when He grew up, as thou wast found under His cross. Stand by me, Holy Mother, that I may gain somewhat of thy purity, thy innocence, thy faith, and He may be the one object of my love and my adoration, as He was of thine. Amen.

GIVE to God without reserve, and He will return you full measure.

The divine fire is only enkindled and retained in the heart when it is nourished by incessant little sacrifices.

The feature of the life of Saint Joseph, model of the interior life . . . is his complete forgetfulness of self. He lived only for Jesus and Mary, thus reflecting a special aspect of the divine beauty.

All the miseries of . . . life arise from pride and self-love.

Whatever talents or powers we possess, they will contribute nothing to our salvation or that of our neighbor if we use them apart from Jesus.

We depend on God for everything, and yet we can sometimes give ourselves an air of importance and independence and even of arrogance. What folly!

Our innumerable weaknesses, alas! do they not often sadden us? A good means of

purifying ourselves of them is to make frequently a fervent act of love. It will consume, as fire does straw, those many imperfections which the fires of purgatory must otherwise purify.

He asks only our love. He gives us all His love, and ungrateful men only repay Him by coldness, forgetfulness and indifference.

Give all to Jesus through Mary, not only the fruit of the tree, but the tree itself.

PRAYER: Make me what Thou wouldst have me: I bargain for nothing; I make no terms; I seek for no previous information whither Thou art taking me; I will be what Thou wilt make me. I say not, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, for I am weak, but I give myself to Thee, to lead me anywhither. **Amen.**

XXVII

WHAT is recollection? We gather together and pick up that which is scattered, and then make of it an entire whole. We pick the ears of corn and tie them into sheaves: we gather fruit and store it in a fruit loft.

To recollect oneself is to do exactly the same thing.

Recollection produces prayer, which must eventually put the soul in possession of God.

When we meet a recollected soul, we feel the presence of God. To know her, to converse with her inspires respect and confidence. She seems to bring us nearer to Heaven.

Our Lord, one day, said to one of His faithful . . . "A recollected soul is another Heaven, in which I delight as much as in My glory."

What is the effect of holy recollection on a soul who practices it? It animates her interiorly; she draws therefrom the source of all good. She becomes self-possessed; she acts with mature wisdom, she edifies others, she wields a marvelous influence over all those with whom she comes in contact.

It is evident that a recollected soul will profit by every occasion, even the smallest acts of virtue will not escape her. She naturally guards herself against the snares of self-love and worldliness; she is attentive, self-controlled, recollected, and advances rapidly along the path of perfection.

What a contrast to those who are futile, light, swayed by every passing emotion; who spend themselves on everything, but do not learn how to live an interior life.

PRAYER: My Lord, I offer Thee myself in turn as a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Thou hast died for me, and I in turn make

myself over to Thee. I am not my own. Thou hast bought me; I will by my own act and deed complete the purchase. My wish is to be separated from everything of this world; to cleanse myself simply from sin; to put away from me even what is innocent, if used for its own sake, and not for Thine. I put away reputation and honor, and influence and power, for my praise and strength shall be in Thee. Amen.

XXVIII

GIVE yourself up to your duty joyously.

God never gives a work to do and then takes away the means of doing it.

It is true that our power is limited, and when relying on our own resources our poor nature proves most unproductive. But let us console ourselves, divine grace supplies for our weakness in the most fruitful manner possible by exciting within us the desire of producing if not heroic acts, at least the fruits of fervent and holy desires.

When fervent . . . souls have fully decided to help Christ—then the Redemption of this poor, distracted world will be fully accomplished.

We tried to work alone, to overcome alone, to pray alone, and the result was want of success and discouragement.

“Without Me you can do nothing.” These

words of our Divine Lord prove that our works are of no value in His sight unless they are done in Jesus and for Jesus.

If our deeds with their merits be united to the deeds and merits of our Redeemer, then their worth becomes inestimable.

. . . then obedience will be easy, humility will be easy, and the cross accepted with joy and thankfulness.

PRAYER: Almighty God, strengthen me with Thy strength, console me with Thy everlasting peace, soothe me with the beauty of Thy countenance; enlighten me with Thy uncreated brightness; purify me with the fragrance of Thy ineffable holiness; give me to drink of the rivers of grace which flow from the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

XXIX

... **I**N a thousand ways the pious and loving soul may formulate holy desires . . . may offer increasing praises to the Infinite Beauty, grow in merit, aspire towards perfection.

In order to understand the true value of these desires, we must remember that they revivify the soul, ennoble it, and sanctify it in accordance with their sincerity, strength and multiplicity.

Having aspired to love and desired it, and having formed in our hearts ardent acts of love, we shall try to produce it even in our smallest actions.

The true apostle will join prayer to example as did Our Divine Lord Himself.

. . . there is very little spiritual life where there are failings against Charity.

. . . let us speak kindly of the absent one, and above all let us banish gossip . . .

An act of kindness, a gracious manner, a word of holy encouragement inspires confidence and good-will . . . ”

Jesus Christ said: “What you do to the least of My little ones, you do to Me.”

PRAYER: I know, O my God, I must change, if I am to see Thy Face! . . . Body and soul must die to this world. My real self, my soul, must change by a true regeneration. None but the holy can see Thee . . . Oh, support me, as I proceed in this great, awful, happy change, with the grace of thy unchangeableness. My unchangeableness here below is perseverance in changing. Let me day by day be molded upon Thee and be changed from glory to glory, be ever looking toward Thee, and ever leaning on Thy arm. I know, O Lord, I must go through trial, temptation and much

conflict, if I am to come to Thee. I know not what lies before me. I know that if Thou art not with me, my change will be for the worse, not for the better. Whatever fortune I have, be I rich or poor, healthy or sick, with friends or without, all will turn to evil if I am not sustained by the unchangeable; all will turn to good if I have Jesus with me, yesterday and today, the same and forever.

Amen.

WE read in the Gospel that Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John left all things to follow Christ. Centuries have passed since then, and Christ continues to draw to Himself the precious friendship of those who have left all to follow Him.

He extends His hand to us to lead us on the path of perfection and do we not ignore Him sometimes and try to walk without Him?

Man has withdrawn his heart from God and has placed his confidence in self, in his own power, and in his new inventions

• • •
Pity and pray for such feeble souls who have forgotten the teaching of our adorable Master—"Without Me you can do nothing."

Ask Him to give you strength of will to overcome your special weakness, whatever it may be, and to give you the heroic courage so characteristic of the Saints.

In everything, both little and great, abandon yourself to the Will of God which will be manifested to you in different circumstances . . .

Make it a rule to say fervently after Holy Communion and many times during the day: "I promise, O my God, to refuse Thee nothing today."

The thought that He is with us in all our actions will lend us wings to soar heavenwards.

PRAYER: . . . O Emmanuel, O Sapientia, I give myself to Thee. I trust Thee wholly. Thou art wiser than I — more loving to me than I myself. Deign to fulfill Thy high purposes in me whatever they be — work in and through me. I am born to serve Thee, to be Thine, to be Thy instrument. Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see—I ask not to know — I ask simply to be used. Amen.

The devotions to angels and saints as little interfere with the incommunicable glory of the Eternal, as the love which we bear our friends and relations, our tender human sympathies, are inconsistent with that supreme homage of the heart to the Unseen, which really does but sanctify and exalt what is of earth.

Cardinal Newman.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, deign to show that our beloved Mother Joseph Butler is dear to Your Sacred Heart and worthy to be honored on Your altars. Amen.