

## **Table of Contents**

- I. Deliverance
- II. Divine Office
- III. Driving Force of Life
- IV. Enlightenment
- V. Eucharist
- VI. On the Eucharist
- VII. Eye-s
- VIII. Fear of the Lord
- IX. Freedom to love God
- X. Good Zeal
- XI. Heaven
- XII. Hell
- XIII. Humility
- XIV. Judas
- XV. Lenten Season
- XVI. Made to last forever

## **Deliverance**

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.”

-There are lots of testimonies in the Scripture which corroborate the facts that the Lord hears the cries of the poor who are His people. For instance, the book of Exodus tells us of the mission of Moses in liberating the poor Israelites who were in slavery in Egypt. The Lord said to him in the burning bush, “I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey....”

-It is amusing to note that in hearing the cry of His people and in intending to save them out of that land of troubles the Lord was also aiming to bring them “to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” The same is true too in how God is dealing with us. He saw the affliction of our souls in this world because of our own passions and because of the devil who is enslaving us; so, He sent His only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus, to deliver us and bring us “to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey,” that is to say, to the kingdom of heaven.

-This is to show how powerful the cry of repentance is; its sound is louder than a thunder for it is being uttered in the depths of the human heart which God condescended to be His dwelling place – the temple of the Holy Spirit, a house of prayer. With Solomon we too can cry out: “have regard to the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, hearkening to the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prays before thee this day; that thy eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that thou mayest hearken to the prayer which thy servant offers toward this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant and of thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, forgive.”

-For some of us who had been imprisoned in sin at some points in our lives knew by experience that a good number of our troubles were the consequences of our preferential option for unrighteousness. These kinds of troubles are, of course, unwholesome. These are the kinds of troubles which our Lord earnestly desired to save us because their ends are very detrimental to our well-being, to our souls.

-They even lead to death, of course, spiritual death, as it is pointed out by St. Paul when he says: "When you were slaves to sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But then what return did you get from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death."

-However, it has to be asserted that there are troubles which the Lord will not save us even when we cried out to be delivered from them, but will let us pass through them for in this way it will be clearly seen whether we are really determined to be humble enough to bow down to whatever the will of God is even though at present they seem to be very painful and discouraging.

-We have a crystal clear example of this in the agony of Our Lord Jesus in the garden. He Himself cried out plural times to be delivered from the unimaginable troubles that He has to undergo, that is, the cup of suffering that is waiting to be drunk, but the Father did not deliver Him on account of the expediency of the salvation of our souls. In doing so, Our Lord gave us an example that we may be able to follow in His steps, that is to say, it is licitly legitimate to pray and cry out to be saved from our troubles; for instance, a serious physical illness, lost of loved ones, or an embarrassing circumstances.

-The bottom line, however, is that we may have the grace to also cry out: "If this cannot pass unless I drink it, not as I will but thy will be done." We don't have to earn a doctorate in theology to know that any suffering, big or small, united with the suffering of the Lord Jesus has in itself an intrinsic value. God will use it for the conversion of sinners – thus opening the door of salvation to them.

-It can also be seen as a privilege of participating in the passion of Christ which engenders the strengthening of our faith; it nourishes our love and fuels our hope, for in so doing we may also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed, hence, saving us out of all our troubles in this present life and be with God and all the saints in heaven for all eternity.

## **On The Divine Office**

*"We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked (Prov. 15:3). But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office/work of God."*

-Here again, as in the exercise of humility, it is the omnipresence of God that inspires us in our choral worship, and at the same time encourages us to keep our unceasing struggle against distractions, against the sense of wasting time, against the dismay which we might feel at making no sensible progress.

-No doubt this chapter together with the next chapter "On Reverence at Prayer," outline the attitude with which to approach the whole duty of prayer, public and private. If St. Benedict can get his monks to bring to their interior exercise as well as to their choir attendance a disposition which combine awe, simplicity, compunction and purity of intention, he knows that he has nothing more that he need teach them about the spiritual life.

-If religion is nothing else but the human person's response to the drawing of God, then religion will find its fullest expression in the response of worship. Worship is the virtue of charity placed directly in relation to God who Himself is charity.

-Thus if it is charity that we seek above all to express when we pray, and if it is to the plenitude of charity that we address ourselves in our prayer, then charity is vitally present when we assist at the divine office.

-It is the presence of God, His beauty, His goodness, His being, and His truth that calls forth from His human creatures the moral virtue of religion. By our exercising the virtue of religion we orientate ourselves toward God: we dispose ourselves toward rendering ultimate Goodness, Truth, Beauty, the homage that is His due. What the philosophers may term Essential Being, what the mystics may term His sovereign eminence recognized only in union, remain always the formal object of our attempts at worship, His infinite excellence as it is in Him alone.

-The infinite excellence of God, independent of man, reveals itself in any number of ways: by nature, by study, by contact with others, by our experience, and above all by grace. Once the necessity of religion has dawn upon our souls, whether it has come by way of our human reason or

by the blinding light of faith, there suddenly appear many virtues, all to be directed along the channel of charity towards the one end, God.

-The document of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vat. Council on the Liturgy says, *"In the earthly liturgy, by way of foretaste, we share in that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, and in which Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle; we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory."*

-But in order our worship may produce its full effects, it is necessary that we come to it with proper disposition, that our thought match our words, and that we cooperate with divine grace lest we receive it in vain. Again, the council strongly encourages that we should participate knowingly, actively, fruitfully.

-In discovering the virtue of religion, our souls discover the real meaning of justice, fear, fortitude, humility, piety and the rest. We discover also the essential need to pray, and particularly to pray in sacrifice. Prayer and sacrifice, indeed, are seen as the logical and necessary consequence of justice: God must be served for His great glory, thanked for His great glory, atoned to for the outrages done to His great glory. The psalmist puts it beautifully, "Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving honors me." "A humble and contrite heart O Lord you will not spurn."

-Thus the monk, who knows about God's existence and who recognizes His sovereign rights over His creatures, must want to express this knowledge and this submission in the most immediate way possible. He will want to dedicate himself in a special way to the expression of these attitudes. He will want to use his physical faculties in the service of this expression: his eyes to see the beauty of the Lord, his mouth to taste the goodness of the Lord, as the psalmist says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good," his ears to listen to his voice: "Speak Lord for your servant is listening." He will know that in their exercise a still more immediate and intimate relationship with God is being realized: outwardly and inwardly he will be tending towards union with God.

-In heaven, says St. Augustine, satisfied love sings the hymn of praise in the plenitude of eternal enjoyment. Here below, yearning love seeks to express the ardor of its desires. It is in the *opus Dei*, the Work of God, that we particularly formulate this desire. It is in the Work of God that the

presence of God, known to be everywhere, is particularly recognized. No wonder St. Benedict wants us to prefer nothing to the *Work of God*. That our own work, our job, should not override the *Work of God*, that is to say that when the bell rings for the end of work, then we have to quit and prepare ourselves for the work of God, unless if the work has really to be finished at that very moment that to postpone it until the next work period will cause a tremendous damage to the work itself. But it really seldom happens.

-We should not be too workaholic so as to miss the other important work. We are caught here in two important duties: our own work responsibility, which we have to do and the work of God which we are also obliged to do. So, which shall we prefer? Again, the safest course to follow is that when our work is not really that critical that it has to be done at that very moment, then, we should let it go in favor of the *Work of God*, especially if we are here in the monastery.

-The Documents of Vat. II is very strong in saying that "communities obliged to choral Office are bound to celebrate the Office in choir every day in addition to the conventual Mass. In particular: a) Order of canons, of monks, and of nuns, and of other regulars bound by law or constitutions to choral Office must celebrate the entire Office (#95). On this ground, it is not good to miss any of the Office without any grave reason no matter how busy we are in our work, especially when we are within the monastery's property.

*-By tradition going back to early Christian times, the Divine Office is arranged so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is worthily rendered...then it is truly the voice of the bride addressing her bridegroom; it is the very prayer which Christ Himself, together with His body, addresses to the Father.*

-The Church did not give us any active ministry so that we can concentrate more on our service of praising the Lord. We are even protected by Canon law that "Institutes which are wholly ordered to contemplation always retain a distinguished position in the mystical Body of Christ, for they offer an extraordinary sacrifice of praise to God, they illuminate the people of God with the riches fruits of their sanctity, they move it by their example, and extend it through their hidden apostolic fruitfulness. For this reason, however much the needs of the active apostolate demand it, members of these institutes cannot be summoned to aid in various pastoral ministries" (Can. 674).

-On Dec. 8, 1968, Pope Paul VI wrote a letter to our Order. In that letter he said that the Church has entrusted to us a mission which we wish to fulfill by the response of our whole life: 1<sup>st</sup>, To give clear witness to that heavenly home which every human longs; and 2<sup>nd</sup>, To keep alive in the heart of the human family the desire for this home as we bear witness to the majesty and love of God and to the brotherhood of all people in Christ.

-It is really in our Liturgy or the Divine Office that we touch the hearts of the human family, opens to them the windows of our heavenly home, for it is the action of a people that wants to come into contact with God, the invisible One. It is the supreme expression on earth of the rhythmic law of God. There is no universal emotion that is not given a voice in the Divine Office; no individual experience that is not in it like words in a poem. Love, joy, mourning, contrition all have their expression, and so to the stronger passion of our souls, the longing for the descent of the Spirit and the adoration of God.

-It expresses every passion, every emotion, and every experience of the human heart. It is the song of the whole world; but it is much more: it is the love song of Christ in man, the voice of the Mystical Body of Christ lifted up to God. All our inarticulate longing and adoration, all our stammered, incoherent love, set in the tremendous rhythm of the Divine Office and lifted up on the voice of Christ to Our Heavenly Father.

-In his Confessions St. Augustine records how moving he found the psalm chants in use at Milan, observing that, while he felt guilty of a grave fault if he found the music more important to him than the words, he knew that the words were invested with a far greater power to come to the mind when they were associated with music of haunting beauty. St. Augustine observes that there is no emotion of the human spirit which music is incapable of expressing.

-Our constant participation in our Divine Office, especially when we are in proper disposition and participates fully, consciously, and actively will eventually gives tranquility to our souls, brings peace by mastering surging thoughts. It calms anger, tempers concupiscence. From a heart of stone it can draw tears.

-On the other hand, no matter how we try our best not to be distracted in the Divine Office, but still it happens whether we like it or not. But one thing to help us minimize this is that when during the psalmody we are distracted we should not entertained those thoughts, but rather we have to pay closer attention to the psalmody itself to gain strength from the words we utter. We have to make the words our own as though we are

the one who composed it. If the thought persists, then we have to exert ourselves in invoking the name of the Lord Jesus and the Lord will help us and will dissipates the wiles of the enemies.

-During psalmody, tender feeling comes to us when we make our mind attentive to the words we utter & receive in our souls the force contained in them.

*"We must always remember, therefore, what the Prophet says: Serve the Lord with fear, and again, Sing praise wisely; and, in the presence of the angels I will sing to you. Let us consider, then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels, and let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices."*

-Once more, we are reminded about the need in our spirituality of a holy fear. If St. Gregory makes irreverence one of the signs of a soul's deterioration, we would be on our guard against taking our choir duties too lightly. It is all too easy to discount the external aspect of the liturgy to the extent of contempt for monastic good manners. If our love of God is not strong enough to correct this weakness, our fear ought to be. We are not asked to show cringing servitude, in which there would be affectation, but a loving service. It is one thing to serve and it is another thing to be servile. Service does not exclude fear; indeed it assumes it. But the fear which love and service look for is filial rather than servile.

-Quoting the psalmist, St. Benedict would have us sing wisely, adding that we must consider our actions. It is a thoughtful as well as a reverential service that we must render. We have to devote all our efforts to penetrate the letter of the psalms in order to acquire the spirit. It is a formidable task. So also is it a formidable task to discipline our actions, bringing them together in proper coordination. The body and the mind, which means the voice, the eyes, the movements, together with the thoughts, desires, emotions, must be in harmony. Only so will the prayer of the Divine Office flow back evenly to Him from whom it comes. "So shall my word be which shall go forth from my mouth, it shall not return to me void," says the prophet Isaiah (55:11).

-The Divine Office is at the same time the word of God for humanity and the work of humanity for God. It is God's revelation of Himself in human accents; it is our debt repaid to Him in the medium of sacrifice.

-The document of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vat. Council puts it rightly when it says: *"Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all*

*ages in the halls of heaven. He joins the entire community of mankind to Himself, associating it with His own singing of this canticle of divine praise. For He continues His priestly work through the agency of His Church, which is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the whole world. This she does not only by celebrating the Eucharist, but also in other ways, especially by praying the divine office."*

-Thus for our encouragement in our work at the Divine Office, we know, though we perhaps seldom feel it, that participation in the Divine Office does not consider the glory of God to the exclusion of all else, because our work in choir not only strengthen our own souls but also benefit the whole mystical body of the Church. In other words, it is not only for ourselves, but also for all humanity.

-Liturgical prayer is also a medium/means in which we encounter the word of God as we did in sacred reading. Thus the atmosphere of our life is geared toward the encounter of the living God.

-The power of the liturgy to transform and to lead us to God depends on our ability in grace to immerse ourselves in the mystery of Christ, which is the objective content of the liturgy. Thus we are encouraged to participate fully, consciously, & actively in our liturgical prayer (e.g. by our singing & saying the responses, etc.).

-Liturgical spirituality orients us towards the paschal mystery as the model of our deepest spiritual transformation.

### **Liturgy and Living**

-Liturgical prayer should be seen in continuity with all our daily activities, not as something separate from the rest of our day or as a sacred moment stolen from profane time and unconnected with the practical business of living.

-As we come together to pray and worship we bring with us the concerns we carry throughout the day and we lay them before the Lord. Our concern is the adoration of God more than our own subjective experience of worshipping in a beautiful & reverent liturgical service.

-If we spend time making our liturgical prayer beautiful and meaningful to us, we do so not simply for our aesthetic enjoyment but for the honor and glory of God.

-On the other hand, monastic life resists being reduced to a single occupation, however sacred. Resistance rises whenever excessive time is

taken to achieve a technically perfect execution of the liturgical chants and ceremonies.

-Experience teaches us that we can pray and praise God even when the liturgy is not materially perfect, as long as the rendition is correct enough to avoid becoming a distraction and so long as it is done reverently.

-Yet an aesthetically beautiful rendition may be a powerful stimulus to our inward attitude of devotion in spirit and in truth, just as slipshod/careless liturgy may provoke frustration.

-Is monastic spirituality a liturgical spirituality? The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council taught that liturgical spirituality is the spirituality of the Church universal and the primary means of glorifying God and sanctifying the world in Christ.

-Liturgical spirituality means that the liturgy has a central and normative place, though not necessarily an exclusive place, in our lives. Monastic spirituality seems to integrate all the monastic practices together with the liturgy in a comprehensive style that is biblical, concrete.

-Within our diversified lives, the community liturgy has a central place. That's the only place that we gather seven times a day.

-We do not carry on esoteric cults or dabble in occult (secret, obtuse, mysterious) rites, but our communities are cultic communities because we are worshipping communities. We do formal religious veneration. A cultic spirit underpins our daily activities and manifest itself in reverence, silence, gentleness, courtesy, and general harmony.

-There are three traditional monastic themes that illustrate the cultic aspect of monastic communities, namely: Priestly people, Bride of Christ, and City of God.

-Priestly people is composed of ordained priesthood & the priesthood of the faithful. All the members of the mystical body of Christ share in the priesthood of Christ by reason of our baptism.

-As priestly people we have a spiritual worship to offer God, as St. Paul says: "By the mercies of God present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1). This offering of our body as a living sacrifice was sealed on the day of our solemn profession.

-When we gather for formal liturgical prayer our ritual is not merely formalism because we bring to it a lived attitude of worship in mind & heart, free personal response and involvement, a harmony of our words & acts, mind & voice.

-The second is the **Bride of Christ**. The divine office is truly the voice of the Bride addressing her Bridegroom. It is also the voice of the Bridegroom. Our Lord speaks through his words, and the community responds in praise, thanks, longing, intercession, & repentance.

-In the liturgical interaction the Bridegroom sanctifies his bride, that is, Christ sanctifies us. We cannot sanctify ourselves, because we are not the source of our holiness. We need the spirit of Christ to sanctify us. He cleanses us by the washing of water with the word, preparing us for the wedding, 'to present us to himself in splendor, holy and immaculate, without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort' (Eph. 5:27).

-In this life the bride is always somehow separated from her Bridegroom, seeking him, calling to him. "The Spirit & the Bride say, 'Come!' (Rev. 22:17).

-The third one is the **City of God**. Just as the earthly Jerusalem was the place where God was continually worshipped in solemn liturgy and daily sacrifice according to the model Moses had been shown on the mountain, so our monastic community is a place where the liturgy is celebrated day & night, the holy sacrifice of the mass is offered everyday. It's the new Jerusalem, the temple of God.

-In contrast to the monastic city, many cities of our modern world are becoming overcrowded yet lonely places where people are afraid to walk the streets. In the cloisters & choirs of monastic cities a different spirit prevails – a spirit of celebration, with singing, chanting, security, & fellowship

-There are also **Signs & Symbols** that we use in our liturgy. Our Liturgical services retain a number of symbolic elements. Besides the words of the psalms, reading, & prayers; there are music & hymns, the candles, incense, & flowers; and also the bodily postures: standing, sitting, kneeling, bowing, and turning.

-But it is useful to maintain a detached freedom with regard to all these signs, for the sake of peace of mind. The signs are provisional, relative, impermanent; they are made for us, not we for them.

-In the context of signs & symbols, our body is a sign & symbol of our human subjectivity, our inner attitudes, dispositions, intentions. Through our body we express and make visible what is in our heart, what lies at the spirit, center of our being. Through our body we communicate & interact with other persons and through it they can understand our meaning.

-But like every other sign, our body hides more of us than it reveals; sometimes we cannot communicate as much of our heart to another as we wish, because our body gets in the way and limits self-expression.

-The divine office likewise is a celebration involving both mind & body. We begin with a bodily gesture that can set the tone for the whole office – a sign of the cross made as we sing, 'O God, come to my assistance.'

-The more thoughtfully, carefully & reverently we perform this simple gesture, the easier we find it to maintain the inward devotion we express. Gesture itself, even without accompanying words or thoughts can be pure prayer, e.g., when we bow profoundly and reverently on entering the church, that's already a prayer.

-The divine office is dialogical in its character. The dialogue takes place between the two sides of the choir, and between the word of God and each individual as well as between God and the community as a whole.

-The interplay between call & response begins even before the office, as soon as the bell has been heard summoning the community together, "whatever they have in hand they have to leave it and hasten to the divine office," says St. Benedict. That's how important the divine office is in our life as monks.

-The opening hymn introduces the theme of the office or the season. The antiphon introduces the psalmody and is repeated after the psalmody. The psalms are God's word appropriated as our word of prayer. It records the story of God's saving works and we become part of it ourselves and speak of our own life history & destiny.

-The reading, whether scriptural or non scriptural text, can be heard as God's word to us here & now. Whether it is a word of comfort or of warning or of instruction, we submit to it that we may live by it. Reading at liturgy is a ministerial act that is why we have to read in such a way that it can be understood. The reading stops but the listeners personal encounter with the word continues in silent reflection. It is meant to transform us. The period of silence is meant to allow us to assimilate the word.

-The psalms are the heart of the divine office. The psalter is both our book of prayers and our school of prayer. The more we grasp the deepest meaning of these inspired prayers and make them our own personal prayer, the more our mind is lifted up to God and our heart opened to God's saving power.

-To be fruitful in our chanting of the psalms, we have to consider it as if we are the one who compose it in response to our needs. There are psalms to resonate with all our needs & emotions. If the office puts a psalm of praise on our lips when we are feeling depressed, it helps expand our horizon beyond the narrow limits of our present difficulty.

-The life history of God's chosen people, with all its ups & downs, is retold in the psalter. The mystery of Christ is also in the psalms, as Christ himself said: "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

-We may even read our own life story in the psalms as in a mirror that reflects what we have been, what we now experience, and what we aspire to.

-Distractions during psalmody have been an occupational hazard for monks & nuns since the beginning of monasticism. Evagrius said: "A great thing indeed to pray without distraction; a greater thing still to sing psalms without distractions." But whether we like it or not distractions happen, but we can always go back to the center, to focus our attention on the words we utter.

-Choral psalmody can lead to the kind of experience of God that Cassian called fiery prayer, prayer with fiery ardor: "Sometimes a verse of any one of the psalms gives us an occasion of ardent prayer while we are singing." Cassian is a good witness to the fact that communal liturgical prayer fosters rather than prevents the contemplative experience of God.

-These presuppositions are to be taken seriously. Praying the psalms fruitfully in choir depends on one's style of life outside choir. We cannot expect the savory knowledge of God while we chant the psalms if we neglect searching for God the rest of the day. "As we live, so we pray and so we sing the psalms," says St. Augustine.

-To conclude, then, there is a correlation between the quality of our monastic community life and the quality of our liturgical prayer. It's like cooking. If the cook is in good condition, the food tastes delicious even if

it is simple. But if the cook is grouchy the food is also affected. If the majority of the monks are at peace even before prayer, the office will also be beautiful even though it is simple.

-Life and prayer then are intertwined, mutually influencing one another. The test of the genuineness of our liturgical prayer as individual is not our performance during the office, and still less our theoretical understanding of liturgy, but the practice of our daily monastic life.

-The test is not how we behave in church but how we behave outside the church, and in particular how we relate to those whom we meet and with whom we interact during the course of the day. Do we them as Christ? Do we stop to help a brother in need or do we just pass by? Do we show others the forbearance, gentleness, & patience that is continually exemplified in the lives of the saints we commemorate throughout the year?

-Learning the full meaning of liturgical prayer & being transformed by it will occupy us for a lifetime, but it is worth pursuing.

# Driving Force of Life

-Ecclesiastes Ch. 4:4 says, "I observed that the basic motive for success is the driving force of envy and jealousy!" And the Scottish Philosopher and Historian, Thomas Carlyle pointed out that "the man without a purpose is like a ship without a rudder – a waif, a nothing, a no man."

-Undoubtedly, everyone's life is driven by something. Most dictionaries define the verb **drive** as "to guide, to control, or to direct. Whether we are driving a car, a nail, or a screw, we are guiding, controlling, and directing it at that moment. What, then, is the driving force in our life?"

-Right now we may be driven by a problem, a pressure, or a deadline. We may be driven by a painful memory, a haunting fear, or an unconscious belief. There are hundreds of circumstances, values, and emotions that can drive our life. Here are five of the most common ones:

- **1. Many people are driven by guilt.** They spend their entire lives running from regrets and hiding their shame. Guilt-driven people are manipulated by memories. They allow their past to control their future. They often unconsciously punish themselves by sabotaging their own success. When Cain sinned, his guilt disconnected him from God's presence, and God said, "You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." That describes most people today – wandering through life without a purpose.

-We are products of our past, but we don't have to be prisoners of it. God's purpose is not limited by our past. For instance, He turned a murderer named Moses into a leader and a coward named Gideon into a courageous hero, and He can do amazing things with the rest of our life, too. God specializes in giving people a fresh start or a second chance.

-Psalm 32, says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered....I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin."

- **2. Many people are driven by resentment and anger.** They hold on to hurts and never get over them. Instead of releasing their pain through forgiveness, they rehearse it over and over in their minds. Some resentment-driven people "clamp up" and internalize their anger, while others "blow up" and explode it onto others. Both responses are unhealthy and unhelpful.

-Resentment always hurts us more than it does the person we resent. While our offender has probably forgotten the offense and gone on with life, we continue to stew in our pain, perpetuating the past. Listen to this: those who have hurt us in the past cannot continue to hurt us now unless we hold on to the pain through resentment. Our past is past! Nothing will change it. We are only hurting ourselves with our bitterness. For our own sake, we need to learn from it, and then let it go. The book of Job says: "To worry yourself to death with resentment would be a foolish, senseless thing to do" (Job 5:2).

➤ **3. Many people are driven by fear.** Their fears may be a result of a traumatic experience, unrealistic expectations, growing up in a high-control home, or even genetic predispositions. Regardless of the cause, fear-driven people often miss great opportunities because they're afraid to venture out. Instead they play it safe, avoiding risks and trying to maintain the status quo.

-Fear is self-imposed prison that will keep us from becoming what God intends for us to be. We must move against it with the weapons of faith, hope, and love. The 1<sup>st</sup> letter of John says: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love" (4:18).

➤ **4. Many people are driven by materialism.** Their desire to acquire more is based on the misconceptions that having more will make them happy, more important, and more secure, but all these are untrue. Possessions only provide temporary happiness. Since things do not change, we eventually become bored with them and then want newer, bigger, better versions.

-It's also a myth that if we get more, we will be more important. Self-worth and net worth are not the same. Our value is not determined by our valuables, and God says that the most valuable things in life are not material things!

-The most common myth about possessions is that having more will make us secure. It won't. Possessions can be lost instantly through a variety of uncontrollable factors. Real security can only be found in that which can never be taken from us – our relationship with God. It's a treasure where no moth devours, no rust consumes, and where no thieves to break in and steal.

➤ **5. Finally, many people are driven by the need for approval.** They allow the expectations of parents or spouses or children or teachers or friends to control their lives. Many children are still trying to earn the approval of unpleasable parent. Others are driven by peer pressure, always worried by what others might think. Unfortunately,

those who follow the crowd usually get lost in it. We might don't know all the keys to success, but one key to failure is to try to please everyone. Being controlled by the opinions of others is a guaranteed way to miss God's purpose for our life. Christ said that "No one can serve two masters."

-There are other forces that can drive our life but all lead to the same dead end: unused potential, unnecessary stress, and an unfulfilled life. Nothing matters more than knowing God's purposes for our life; and nothing can compensate for not knowing them – not success, possessions, fame, or pleasure. Without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Without a purpose, life is a trivial, petty, and pointless.

-When St. Bernard of Clairvaux embarked for the monastic life, he used to ask himself from time to time, so as not to forget his goal: "friend, why are you here."

## **On Enlightenment**

-“Wisdom cried out in the streets; in the squares she raises her voice” (Prov. 1:20). Human development is a matter of shifts and changes, circles and turns. Certainty is rare in life; constancy is rarer still. So what is it that gives the kind of stability to life that enables us to withstand each phase of life with serenity?

-Indeed, life is a series of transformation, all of them normal, all of them wrenching. But some people survive them and more. Some people move through life light of foot and smiling. Most people only prevail. In fact, few of us ever really collapse under the strain of it all. We take each moment as it comes, shrug our shoulders and go on. And the question is, Why? How is it that some do it better than others? What is it, which if carefully cultivated, can possibly bring ballast to all the moments of life? The answer lies in the awareness that there is more to life than survival.

-Life has a meaning beyond what we do, above what we become, in addition to what we are or even to what happens to us in the course of it. Serenity is the by-product of enlightenment.

-Every major religious tradition speaks of some kind of enlightenment. To the Christian, it is union with God; to the Buddhist, desirelessness; to the Muslim, submission to the will of God. In all of them, in other words, lies the consciousness that there is in us a tension between two opposing poles.

-At one level of life we seek only the gratification of the self for its own sake. At that stage we struggle against every period of life. At the other level, we achieve the transcendence of the self to the point where no external changes can disturb the balance of what we call the soul.

-Enlightenment is not the characteristic of one kind of person only, the ancients teach. The Sufi tells the story of the disciple who asked the elder, “Holy One, why is it that the West got wealth and the East got wisdom?” And the Holy One said, “Because the West got to ask first.” No one is more disposed than another to reach enlightenment, in other words.

-Each of us can come to wisdom but only by virtue of the choices we make from moment to moment, from situation to situation. We start out at the lowest level of life and we choose our way to enlightenment. Then, once we become enlightened, whatever changes, whatever we lose in life, we lose nothing at all because things are not what control us.

-St. Teresa of Avila put it on this way: "let nothing disturb you. Let nothing frighten you. All things are passing. God never changes. Patience attains all things. He who has God wants nothing. God alone suffices."

-The awareness that we are meant to develop interiorly rather than exteriorly constitutes the beginning of enlightenment. Otherwise, we simply spend life chasing after things and positions and power and money. But none of them are either guaranteed or permanent. What could be more unenlightened than clinging to what is not permanent?

-In a society that ranks itself according to the amount of things a person can possess, we often confuse the wealthy with the wise. But it takes very little money to buy status. It takes a great deal of vision to gain enlightenment. "Wisdom," says Goethe, "is found only in truth."

-"One who acts with wisdom has nothing to fear, for fear lies in sin. Where there is no fear there is liberty; where there is liberty there is the power of doing what one wishes. Therefore, only the wise man is free" (St Ambrose).

-Our society tells us to feed our egos, our bodies and our social situation. Enlightenment says that only when we let all of them go, we can possibly ever free of our addictions to them. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and loses his soul in the process. What can a man give in return for his life?

-On the other hand, "there is nothing which is not the possession of the wise man except what is contrary to virtue, and wherever he goes he finds all things to be his. The whole is his possession, since he has it all as his own" (St. Ambrose).

-The one who is enlighten chooses consciously for altruism over profit, for depth of soul over the hoarding of things, for emptiness rather than a glut of superficial distractions that can only separate us from ourselves.

-When we seek enlightenment, we seek the understanding that what we have managed to become in life outlives, outlasts and outscores what we have managed to amass. Comfort seduces us into thinking that what we accumulate signals what we are, but we never realize how empty we are because nothing is enough for a person of whom enough is too little. The Book of Ecclesiasticus teaches, "Wisdom is the wealth of the wise."

-It is not difficult to become smart. It is difficult to become enlightened enough to be able to distinguish what is smart and what is wise.

-What we have managed to achieve in life is no measure of enlightenment. Enlightenment has to do with what we manage to do without and still be happy, for happiness does not consist in possessing & consuming much, but in having few needs & satisfying them at small expense. It is better to need less than to have more. The only happiness here below consists in always finding joy in whatever Our Lord gives us.

-Wisdom is to comprehend the whole. When we come to understand that the things of this world are only tools to help us find the Way we are looking for, which is the Lord Jesus, then we are enlightened. The way is not in the sky. The way is in the heart where a person can go in and out and find pastures and can pray to the Father in secret. The shortest distance to God is the less traveled road we take to the center of the self.

-It is really the world within, not the passing world around us that life is all about. We shape our experience of life by our physical responses, of course. Nevertheless, it is possible to make life simply a blur of empty experiences, as shell without a soul, a creature devoid of the substance that comes only from union with God.

-To live well, we must consciously reflect on the meaning of every facet of our lives. We must ask why are we here, why we are doing this, why we don't do something else, what of the spirit is this moment meant to give us, where is God in this for us now?

-To be enlightened, it is necessary to know how little enlightened we are. The doorstep to the temple of Wisdom is the knowledge of our own ignorance.

-It is when we come to question our own insights that we come closest to being enlightened. "It is unwise," said Ghandi, "to be too sure of one's own wisdom. It is healthy to be reminded that the strongest might weaken and the wisest might err."

-We must remain always alert to those moments of insight that raise the soul above the material and open to us an understanding of what is really real – the qualities that last. "The soul," wrote Emily Dickinson, "should always stand open, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience."

-Experience guides us through life at its dregs, and provides the final test of enlightenment. Who we are on the other side of pain and loss is who we are at our best. Pain makes us think. Thought makes us wise. Wisdom makes life endurable. Enlightenment, the mystics show us, makes life meaningful. In ever struggle there is a hidden blessing. Those who are

afraid of life and intent on avoiding it, however pious they may look, are not mystics; they are refugees from the purpose of life.

-Enlightenment is a choice. We can choose to pursue the things that disappear with the passage of time or we can choose to cultivate the qualities that transcend the vagaries of life.

-Enlightenment comes when we begin to sense the presence of God where once we recognized only the present in its most mundane of moments. Or, as someone said, "Inside yourself or outside, you never have to change what you see, only the way you see it." A constant awareness of God connects us to the totality of the universe. It raises us above and beyond our tiny little selves to become part of the heartbeat of the universe. It gives life meaning and light.

-Enlightenment comes when we begin to see all of life, and everything that touches us in it, in a new light.

-If you want to know if you are nearing enlightenment, simply ask yourself what you value in life, really value, can't even think of losing, would collapse if you no longer had it. What kind of thing is it? Is it something of the soul or something that's part of your social situation? The art of being wise, William James wrote, "Is the art of knowing what to overlook." What are you giving too much attention to now?

-A man Named Bernie stepped on one of those scales that tell you your fortune and weight and dropped in a coin. "Listen to this," Bernie said to his wife, showing her a small, white card. "It says I'm energetic, bright, resourceful and a great lover." "Yes," his wife nodded, "and it got your weight wrong too." Enlightenment comes when we know ourselves as well as we think we know everyone around us.

## **On the Eucharist**

-With the Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine* (Stay with us, Lord) of October 2004, Pope John Paul II dedicated this pastoral year to the mystery of the Eucharist. Pope John Paul wrote: "The year of the Eucharist has its source in the amazement with which the Church contemplates this great Mystery....May the Year of the Eucharist be for everyone a precious opportunity to grow in awareness of the incomparable treasure which Christ has entrusted to his Church (n.29)...." "In this Year of the Eucharist Christians ought to be committed to bearing more forceful witness to God's presence in the world. We should not be afraid to speak about God and to bear proud witness to our faith" (n.26).

-The Document *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (On certain Matters to be Observed or to be Avoided Regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament) gladly assert that "In the Most Holy Eucharist, Mother Church with steadfast faith acknowledges the Sacrament of Redemption, joyfully takes it to herself, celebrates it and reveres it in adoration, proclaiming the death of Christ Jesus and confessing his Resurrection until he comes in glory...."

-From October 2<sup>nd</sup> till the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year, 2005 there will be a Synod of Bishops which will treat the topic: *The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church*. There's a working Document entitled *Instrumentum Laboris* that provides general information on the situation of faith, worship and Eucharistic life in the particular Churches throughout the world and evaluates that situation in light of the faith of the Universal Church. This document is intended to be a faithful summary of the information which arrived at the General Secretariat. This information are the responses to the *Lineamenta* and its questions, and also the observations coming from bishops, priests, men and women religious, theologians, and the lay faithful.

-According to the teaching of the Church, the Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. The Eucharist contains the whole spiritual wealth of the Church. The reason is this: in the Eucharist we have the real body, blood, soul, humanity, and divinity of Christ. This is of course, a reality accessible only to the eyes of faith. The Catholic Church teaches that what was once bread is, after the words of consecration, no longer bread, but has become the real body of Christ, even though the "appearance" (color, taste, smell, feel and sound) of bread remains. What was once wine is, after the words of consecration, no longer wine

but has become the real blood of Christ, even though the “appearance” of wine remain. This change of inner reality, which is called “transubstantiation,” is not caused by any magical property of the words of consecration but by the power of the Holy Spirit and of Christ.

-The Church teaches that the whole Christ (body and soul, humanity and divinity) is present under the appearance of bread, and the whole Christ is present under the appearance of wine [communion under both kinds: so that the fullness of the sign may be made clearly evident]. Further, when the consecrated bread is divided, the whole Christ is present in each fragment, as he is present in each separated portion of consecrated wine.

-It would be the height of stupidity and idolatry to bow in adoration before what looks like bread if Christ Himself had not assured us that the Eucharistic bread is truly his body. [From the beginning the Church has insisted that the Eucharist was not only a symbol of Christ's presence and sacrifice but His true bodily presence and sacrifice.]

-St. Thomas Aquinas, who confesses in a beautiful poem that “Sight, touch, and taste all fail when it comes to Christ; it is only with the ears that one safely believes,” extols transubstantiation as the greatest miracle. It really is! Imagine what a marvel it would be to turn a puppy into a child? Yet what happens in the Eucharist is greater than that: bread and wine are turned into the real body and blood of Christ.

-And Christ works this miracle not once every fifteen years, but daily. And he works it for you and me, so that we may have access to him and be able to join in his sacrifice, which he accomplished almost two thousand years ago.

-The Eucharist as the mystery of faith, provides the setting & attitude for responding to God in our trials & temptations, in our thirst and hunger. In the Eucharist we are not alone but united with the entire Church. In the Eucharist we ask for forgiveness & we forgive others their offenses against us. Most of all, in the Eucharist we confess our faith that it is the Lord Jesus who cares for us each moment of our daily life.

**Eucharist and the Church** (John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Dominicae cenae*, February 24, 1980)

-Thanks to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican council we have realized with renewed forces the following truth: just as the Church “makes the Eucharist” so “the Eucharist builds up” the Church....The Church was founded, as the new community of the people God, in the apostolic community of those who,

at the Last Supper, became partakers of the Body and Blood of the Lord under the species of bread and wine. Christ had said to them: "Take and eat...take and drink." And carrying out this command of his, they entered for the first time into sacramental communion with the Son of God, a communion that is a pledge of eternal life. From that moment until the end of time, *the Church is being built up through that same communion with the Son of God, a communion which is a pledge of the eternal Passover.*

### **Eucharist and Charity**

-Pope John Paul reaffirmed the fact that Eucharistic worship constitutes the soul of all Christian life. In fact Christian life is expressed in the fulfilling of the greatest commandment, that is to say in the love of God and neighbor, and this love finds its source in the Blessed Sacrament, which is commonly called Sacrament of Love.

*-The Eucharist signifies this charity, and therefore recalls it, makes it present and at the same time brings it about.* Every time that we consciously share in it, there opens in our souls a real dimension of that unfathomable love that includes everything that God has done and continues to do for us human beings, as Christ says: "My Father is working still, and I am working" (Jn.5:17).

-Together with this unfathomable and free gift, which is *charity* revealed in its fullest degree in the saving Sacrifice of the Son of God, the Sacrifice of which the Eucharist is the indelible sign, there are also springs up within us a lively response of love. We not only love; we ourselves *begin to love*. We enter, so to speak, upon the path of love and along this path make progress. Thanks to the Eucharist, the love that springs up within us from the Eucharist develops in us, becomes deeper and grows stronger. It is a seed of immortality planted in our heart. When we rise from the dead we will be what we received.

-Eucharistic worship is therefore precisely the expression of that love which is the authentic and deepest characteristic of the Christian vocation. This worship springs from the love and serves the love to which we are all called in Jesus Christ. A living fruit of this worship is the perfecting of the image of God that we bear within us, an image that corresponds to the one that Christ has revealed to us.

-As we thus become adorers of the Father "in spirit and truth," we mature in an ever fuller union with Christ, we are ever more united to him, and – if one may use the expression – we are ever more in harmony with him.

-The doctrine of the Eucharist, sign of unity and bond of charity, taught by St. Paul, has been in subsequent times deepened by the writings of very many saints who are a living example for us of Eucharistic worship (e.g. St. Peter Julian Eymard, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc.).

### **Eucharist and Neighbor**

-*The authentic sense of the Eucharist becomes of itself the school of active love for neighbor.* We know that this is the true and full order of love that the Lord has taught us: "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples."

-The Eucharist educates us to this love in a deeper way; it shows us, in fact, what value each person, our brother or sister has in God's eyes, if Christ offers himself equally to each one, under the species of bread and wine. If our Eucharistic worship is authentic, it must make us grow in awareness of the dignity of each person. The awareness of that dignity becomes the *deepest motive of our relationship with our neighbor*. That is why it is lamentable that we receive Holy Communion every day and we also quarrel with each other.

-Let us learn, then, to discover with respect the truth about the inner self of people, for it is precisely this inner self that becomes the dwelling-place of God present in the Eucharist. Christ comes into the hearts of our brothers and visits their consciences. How the image of each and every one changes, when we become aware of this reality, when we make it the subject of our reflections!

-The sense of the Eucharistic Mystery leads us to a love for our neighbor, to a love for every human being. This is expressed by many prayers of the Roman Missal: the Prayer over the Gifts from the Common "For those who work for the underprivileged, which says, "May we who celebrate the love of your Son also follow the example of your saints and grow in love for you and for one another." Also the prayer after Communion of the Mass "For Teachers": "...may this holy meal help us to follow the example of your saints by showing in our lives the light of truth and love for our brothers."

### **Eucharist and Life**

-Since therefore the Eucharist is the source of charity, it has always been at the center of the life of Christ's disciples. It has the appearance of bread and wine, that is to say of food and drink; it is therefore as familiar to us human beings, as closely linked to our life, as food and drink.

-The veneration of God, who is Love, springs, in Eucharistic worship, from that kind of intimacy which *he himself, by analogy with food and drink, fills our spiritual being*, ensuring its life, as food and drink do.

-This "Eucharistic" veneration of God therefore strictly corresponds to his saving plan. He himself, the Father, wants the "true worshippers" to worship him precisely in this way, and it is Christ who expresses this desire, both with his words and likewise with this sacrament in which he makes possible worship of the Father in the way most in conformity with the Father's will.

-From this concept of Eucharistic worship there, then, stems the whole *sacramental style of the Christian's life*. In fact, leading a life based on the sacraments and animated by the common priesthood means in the first place that as Christians we desire God to act in us in order to enable us to attain, in the Spirit, "the fullness of Christ himself." [We have to give God a chance to work in us] God, on his part, does not touch us only through event and by his inner grace; He also acts in us with greater certainty and power through the sacraments.

-In the depths of Eucharistic worship we find a continual echo of the sacraments of Christian initiation: Baptism and Confirmation. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Hominis*, Pope John Paul has drawn attention to the close link between the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. *It is not only that Penance leads to the Eucharist, but that the Eucharist also leads to Penance*. For when we realize who it is that we receive in Eucharistic communion, there springs up in us almost spontaneously a sense of unworthiness, together with sorrow for our sins and an interior need for purification.

-We need always to take care that this great meeting with Christ in the Eucharist does not become a mere habit, and that we do not receive him unworthily, that is to say, in a state of mortal sin. The practice of the virtue of penance and the Sacrament of Penance are essential for sustaining in us and continually deepening that spirit of veneration which we owe to God himself and to his love so marvelously revealed.

-*In this Sacrament of bread and wine, of food and drink, everything that is human really undergoes a singular transformation and elevation*. Eucharistic worship is not so much worship of the inaccessible transcendence as worship of the divine condescension, and it is also the merciful and redeeming transformation of the world in the human heart.

-Our Lord spoke of the Eucharist as food and drink: "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:55). Our Lord wants us to draw a parallel between what food and drink do for us and what the Eucharist does for us. Food and drink nourish our body and become our body. The Eucharist nourishes us, but in this case we become what we receive. We are transformed into Christ! This is the object of the Eucharist – our own divinization. Be what you receive!]

-The Eucharistic meal joins us not only to Christ but also to one another. Those who receive Our Lord Jesus are one because they receive the one Christ: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1Cor. 10:16-17). We long for unity and peace. So does Our Lord: "I pray for those who believe in me that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" (Jn. 17:20-21). He even died "to gather into one the dispersed children of God" (Jn. 11:52), and at every Mass, Our Lord brings us all together.

### **Origins of the Eucharist**

-On the night the Israelites fled from slavery in Egypt, they were told to slaughter a lamb and smear its blood on the doorpost of their homes. This sign would cause the destroying angel to "pass over" their homes when he struck down the firstborn of the Egyptians. They then ate the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were to repeat this meal each year to commemorate their deliverance from slavery (Ex. 12:1-28; Dt. 16:1-8).

-The Passover meal became an occasion which fed the Israelites, body and soul. It nourished them and joined them to God and one another. It recalled God's saving deeds and celebrated their freedom. It anticipated the full redemption God would one day bring them through the Messiah.

-It was at a Passover celebration that Christ gathered his disciples for the Last Supper before his crucifixion. At this meal Our Lord "took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Mt. 26:26-28).

-The apostles could not have fully understood these words that night. But after Christ's death and resurrection, they realized that in some mysterious

way the bread and wine had become Jesus. Christ was their spiritual food and drink!

-We believe that when Christ said the words, "This is my body....This is my blood," he meant exactly what he said. For Jews, *body* meant the person, and *blood* was the source of life identifiable with the person. So the Lord was saying over the bread and cup, "This is myself," and we believe that the bread and wine truly become the very person of the Lord Jesus.].

-The traditional theological term for this miracle is *transubstantiation*. It means that the "substance" of the bread and wine becomes the "substance" of Christ's body and blood, while the appearances of bread and wine remain.

-When a priest says the words of Jesus – the words of consecration – over the bread and wine, they still retain the taste of bread and wine, but the bread and wine becomes Christ himself, who is then as truly present to us as he was to the apostles.

-The New Testament bears witness to the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. The Gospel of John devotes the entire sixth chapter to Christ as the "Bread of Life." First, Christ multiplies the loaves and fish, a miracle which foreshadows his ability to "multiply his presence" in the Eucharist. Then he walks on water, showing his divine power over nature, a power capable of changing bread into his body. Finally, he urges the crowd to work not "for food that perishes but for food that endures to eternal life" (Jn 6:27). This food is Christ himself: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn. 6:51).

-When his listeners objected Christ declared: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him on the last day, for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent had me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever" (Jn 6:53-58).

-These words stunned his disciples. "This saying is hard," they said "who can accept it?" (Jn. 6:60). Many "returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him" (Jn. 6:6). But Our Lord did not call out, "Wait a minute, you misunderstood. I didn't mean that the bread is my body,

but that it only *represents* my body." Instead, he asked his apostles, "Do you also want to leave?" Peter answered, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:67-69).

-Our Lord did not "water down" his statement in the least. They were hard to accept, and Peter did not claim to understand them. He simply accepted them on the authority of Christ, who had "the words of eternal life."

-St. Paul also believed in the words, "This is my body." After criticizing the Corinthians for their irreverence in receiving the Eucharist, he stated bluntly, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord" (1Cor. 11:27).

-We do not claim to understand how bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. We accept, as Peter did, the "words of eternal life." We believe, as St. Paul did, that the bread and wine are the "body and blood of the Lord." We express our belief that Christ is truly present in the "Blessed Sacrament" in many ways. For example, the Blessed Sacrament is kept in the Church in a tabernacle, meaning "tent" which reminds us of the tent of meeting where God and Moses had their encounters; and we make a profound bow as an act of adoration before the Real Presence of Christ.

-St. Alphonsus Liguori felt the need to communicate what he experienced and invited the faithful to share in this experience. This prompted him to write his book, *Visit to the Blessed Sacrament* (1745): "Pause for a while each day, at least a half quarter of an hour, before Jesus Christ in the Sacrament in some Church. If you do this, you will see the great benefit you will derive from it. Know that the time you spent in devotion before this most divine Sacrament will be the time in your life most fruitful to you; it will be of comfort when you die and in eternity."

-Many priests, Religious and lay people experience the truth and effectiveness of this practice suggested to us by St. Alphonsus Liguori, whom Pope John Paul II described as a "giant, not only in the history of the Church but of humanity itself," when they learn to bend their knees and kneel before the One who emptied himself out of love for us; it is only then that we will discover our greatness.

*Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who believes in me shall not hunger; and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me: and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up as the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

-This is one of the great passages of the Fourth Gospel, and indeed of the New Testament. In it there are two great lines of thought that we must try to see. First, what did Our Lord mean when he said: "I am the bread of life?" It is not enough to regard this as simply a beautiful and poetical phrase. Let us analyze it step by step.

-Bread sustains life. It is that without which life cannot go on. But what is life? Clearly by life is meant something far more than mere physical existence. What is this new spiritual meaning of life?

-Real life is the new relationship with God, that relationship of trust and obedience and love. That relationship is made possible only by Our Lord Jesus. Apart from him no one can enter into it. "No one can come to the Father but by me", he said. That is to say, without the Lord Jesus there may be existence, but not life. Therefore, if Christ Jesus is the essential of life, he may be described as the bread of life.

-The hunger of the human situation is ended when we know Christ in our personal lives and through him know God. The restless soul is at rest; the hungry heart is satisfied. Our soul is restless until it rests in Him.

-Second, this passage opens out to us the stages of the Christian life. We see the Lord Jesus. We see him in the pages of the New Testament, in the teaching of the Church, sometimes even face to face in the lives of holy men and women. Having seen him, we come to him. We regard him not as some distant hero, not as a figure in a book, but as someone accessible. We believe in him. That is to say, we accept him as the final authority on God, on human beings, and on life, for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

-That means that our coming is not a matter of mere interest, nor a meeting on equal terms; it is essentially a submission. This process gives us life. That is to say, it puts us into a new and lovely relationship with God, wherein he becomes an intimate friend; we are now at home with the

one whom we feared or never knew. The possibility of this is free and universal. The invitation is to all people of goodwill.

-The bread of life is ours for the taking. The only way to that new relationship is through the Lord Jesus. Without him it never would have been possible; and apart from him it is still impossible. No searching of the human mind or longing of the human heart can fully find God apart from Christ Jesus. At the back of the whole process is God.

-It is those whom God has given him who come to Christ. God not only provides the goal; he moves in the human heart to awaken desire for him; and he works in the human heart to take away the rebellion and the pride which would hinder the great submission.

-We could never even have sought him unless he had already found us. But since we were given freedom, there remains that stubborn will which enables us to refuse the offer of God. In the last analysis, the one thing which defeats God is the defiance of the human heart, as the prophet Jeremiah said: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it? I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer.17:9-10). Life is there for the taking – or the refusing. When we take, two things happen. First, into life enters satisfaction. We are contented. The hunger and the thirst are quenched. The human heart finds what it was searching for and life ceases to be mere existence and becomes a thing at once of thrill and of peace. "I found him whom my soul loves. I held him and would not let him go", said the bride in the Canticle. Second, even beyond life we are safe. Even on the last day when all things end we are still secure. "Christ brings us to the haven beyond which there is no danger, to the new Jerusalem our happy home.

-The offer of Christ is life in time and life in eternity. That is the greatness and glory of which we cheat ourselves when refuse his invitation.

*The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven?" Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever..."*

-This passage shows us the reason why the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus. They judged things by human values and by external standards. Their reaction face of the claim of Christ was to produce the fact that he was carpenter's son and that they had seen him grow up in Nazareth. They were unable to understand how one who was a tradesman and who came from a poor family could possibly be a special messenger from God.

-We must have a care that we never neglect a message from God because we despise or do not care for the messenger. God has many messengers. His greatest message came through a Galilean carpenter, and for that very reason the Jews disregarded it. They argued with each other. They were so taken up with their private judgments that it never struck them to refer the decision to God. They were exceedingly eager to let everyone know what they thought about the matter; but not in the least anxious to know what God thought.

-It might well be that sometimes in community meeting, when every brother is desirous of pushing his opinion down his neighbor's throat, we would be better to be quiet and ask God what he thinks and what he wants us to do. After all it does not matter so very much what we think; but what God thinks matters intensely; and we so seldom take steps to it out.

-The people listened, but they did not learn. There are different kinds of listening. There is the listening of criticism; there is the listening of resentment; there is the listening of superiority; there is the listening of indifference; there is the listening of the person who listens only because for the moment he cannot get the chance to speak. The only listening

that is worthwhile is that which hears and learns; and that is the only way to listen to God.

-The people resisted the drawing of God. The word which John uses for to draw is *helkuein*. The interesting thing about the word is that it almost always implies some kind of resistance. It is the word for drawing a heavily laden net to the shore. It is used by St. Paul and Silas being dragged before the magistrates in Philippi (Acts 16:19). It is the word for drawing a sword from the belt or from its scabbard. Always there is this idea of resistance. God draws people, but people's resistance can defeat God's pull, because of one's freedom.

-Our Lord Jesus is the bread of life; which means that he is essential for life; therefore to refuse the invitation and command of Christ is to miss life and to die. The Rabbis had a saying. "The generation in the wilderness had no part in the life to come." In the old story in Numbers the people who cravenly refused to brave the dangers of the promised land after the report of the scouts were condemned to wander in the wilderness until they died. Because they would not accept the guidance of God they were forever shut out from the promised land. The Rabbis believed that the fathers who died in the wilderness not only missed the promised land, but also missed the life to come.

-To refuse the offer of Our Lord Jesus is to miss life in this world and in the world to come; whereas to accept his offer is to find real life in this world and glory in the world to come.

*"The bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever.'"*

-Undoubtedly, there are people today, even in the Catholic Church itself that no longer believe in the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This may seem shocking and indeed it is, but it is not new.

-Controversy over the physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, that He truly gives us His Body & Blood in the form of bread and wine, has been with us since the beginning of Christ's ministry. For after his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, the people quarreled among themselves, saying: "How can he give us his flesh to eat? So Christ said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day, for my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

-After saying this, He lost most of his followers. They could not accept this saying. It would have been so much easier for Christ to call them all back, and say, "Wait a minute. I was not serious. I was just testing you." But He was serious. He could not compromise the truth.

-Christ was so firm on this point that He was even willing to lose the Apostles. This was the moment of decision for them. He asked the twelve apostles: "Will you also go away?" Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom we shall go? You have the words of eternal life?"

- Bishop Fulton Sheen, a 20<sup>th</sup> century prophet and staunch defender of the Eucharist said that when Christ made the first Eucharistic statement, Judas began his plot to betray the Lord. He could not accept the doctrine of the Eucharist.

-At the Last Supper Our Lord told his disciples to celebrate the Eucharist in his memory. From the beginning of Christianity the Church has been faithful to the Lord's command. Of the church of Jerusalem it is written: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...they partook of food with glad and generous hearts.

-From that time on down to our own day (so we have almost 2,000 years of unbroken tradition) the celebration of the Eucharist continued so that we encounter it everywhere in the church with the same fundamental structure. It remains the center of the Church's life.]

-There had been hundreds of miracles that were associated with the Eucharist & some of these had been carefully documented. For example, the one in France in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1226) when the Albigensian heresy spread like a wild fire. The Albigensians condemned all the sacraments, especially marriage but promoted sexual permissiveness. The Eucharist was completely rejected.

-Albigensianism was condemned by the church as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until the Albigensians began serious attacks on the secular governments, that the heads of the countries where they had their greatest stronghold denounced and outlawed them.

-As a means of combating their attack on the physical Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, King Louis VIII, father of King St. Louis IX, had a church built and ordered that the Blessed Sacrament be exposed at all times. This church was built near a river. The church was put under the custodianship of the Gray Penitents of the Franciscan Order.

-One time there came a mighty flood and the water level rose to a dangerous height that would submerge the Blessed Sacrament. So two of the superiors of the Order got into a boat and went to the church to save the consecrated Eucharist, but much to their surprise from the entrance of the church to the altar where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, it was completely dry with water on both sides like a wall and they beheld Christ in the monstrance in the figure of a man.

-To most of us the discourse of Our Lord at Capernaum is a very difficult passage. It speaks in language and moves in a world of ideas which are quite strange to us and which may seem even fantastic and grotesque.

-However, these ideas would be quite normal to anyone brought up in ancient sacrifice. The animal was very seldom burned entire. Usually only a token part was burned on the altar, although the whole animal was offered to the god. Part of the flesh was given to the priests as their perquisite; and part to the worshipper to make a feast for himself and his friends within the temple precincts.

-At that feast the god himself was held to be a guest. More, once the flesh had been offered to the god, it was held that he had entered into it; and therefore when the worshipper ate it he was literally eating the god. When people rose from such a feast they went out, as they believed, literally god-filled. We may think of it as idolatrous worship, we may think of it as a vast delusion; yet the fact remains these people went out quite certain that in them there was now the dynamic vitality of their god. To people used to that kind of experience a section like this presented no difficulties at all.

-Further, in that ancient world the one live form of religion was to be found in the Mystery Religions. The one thing the Mystery Religions offered was communion and even identity with some god. The way it was done was this. All the Mystery Religions were essentially passion plays. They were

stories of a god who had lived and suffered terribly and who died and rose again.

-The story was turned into a moving play. Before the initiate could see it, he had to undergo a long course of instruction in inner meaning of the story. He had to undergo all kinds of ceremonial purifications. He had to pass through a long period of fasting and abstention from sexual relationships.

-At the actual presentation of a passion play everything was designed to produce a highly emotional atmosphere. There was carefully calculated lighting, sensuous incense, exciting music, a wonderful liturgy; everything was designed to work up the initiate to a height of emotion and expectation that he had never experience before. Call it hallucination if you like; call it a combination of hypnotism and self hypnotism. But something happened; and the something was identity with the god.

-As the carefully prepared initiate watched he became one with the god. He shared the sorrows and the griefs; he shared the death, and the resurrection. He and the god became for ever one; and he was safe in life and in death.

-Some of the sayings and prayers of the Mystery Religions are very beautiful. In the Mysteries of Mithra the initiate prayed: "Abide with my soul; leave me not, that I may be initiated and that the holy spirit may dwell within me." In the Hermetic Mysteries the initiate said: "I know thee Hermes, and thou knowest me; *I am thou and thou art I.*" In the same Mysteries a prayer runs: "Come to me, Lord Hermes, as babes to mothers' womb." In the Mysteries of Isis the worshipper said: "As truly as Osiris lives, so shall his followers live. As truly as Osiris is not dead, his followers shall die no more."

-We have to remember that those ancient people knew all about the striving, the longing, the dreaming for identity with their god and for the bliss of taking him into themselves. They would know something of that ineffable experience of union, closer than any earthly union, of which these words speak.

-Now the flesh of Christ Jesus was his complete humanity. John in his First Letter lays it down almost passionately: "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God." In fact, the spirit which denies that Jesus has come in the flesh is of antichrist (1Jn.4:2-3). John insisted that we must grasp and never let go the full humanity of Jesus, that he was bone of our

bone and flesh of our flesh. What does this mean? Jesus was the mind of God became a person. This means that in Christ Jesus we see God taking human life upon him, facing our human situation, struggling with our human problem, battling with our human temptations, working out our human relationships.

-Therefore it is as if Christ said: "Feed your heart, feed your mind, feed your soul with my manhood. When you are discouraged and in despair, when you are beaten to your knees and disgusted with life and living, remember I took that life of yours and these struggles of yours on me."]

-Suddenly life and the flesh are clad with glory for they are touched with God. It was and is the great belief of the Greek Orthodox Christology that the Lord Jesus deified our flesh by taking it on himself. To eat Christ's body is to feed on his humanity & divinity until our own manhood is strengthened and cleansed and irradiated by his.

-Christ said we must drink his blood. In Jewish thought *the bloods stands for life*. It is easy to understand why. As the blood flows from a wound, life ebbs away; and to the Jew, the blood belonged to God. Now see what Christ Jesus is saying: "You must drink my blood, you must take my life into the very center of your being, and that life of mine is the life which belongs to God." When Our Lord said we must drink his blood he meant that we must take his life into the very core of our hearts.

-The blood of Christ is poured into our wounds and we heal, scarred over and mindful of the suffering, but able to understand the pain of those who suffer unjustly and to share in their struggle to be free and whole.

-Our blessing-cup is a communion with the blood of Christ. Our blessing-cup taken and shared proclaims that we trust in the blood that heals and reconciles the aches and wounds of the world caused by sin, evil, injustice, and violent hatred.

-When he told us to eat his flesh and drink his blood, he was telling us to feed our hearts and souls and minds on his humanity and divinity, and to revitalize our lives with his life until we are filled with the life of God. What God is by nature we will be by grace.

# Eucharist

-Hunger and thirst are two appetites that recur every now and then. Soon after children are born they let the world know they are hungry. A baby's cry for food is a dramatic expression of our human need for nourishment. But meals do more than sustain the body. When a mother holds her child to her breast, she satisfies not only the need for food but also the need for closeness and love.

-Meals bring people together when families gather around the dinner table or teenagers have a pizza or friends enjoy a meal at a restaurant. At meals we remember an anniversary dinner. We celebrate a birthday party. We anticipate a rehearsal meal.

-Through baptism, Christ gives us a share in God's life. This life requires spiritual food and drink, which Christ provides at the Eucharist, a meal that nourishes, unites, remembers, celebrates, and anticipates.

-The Eucharist is a meal, for Christ gave us the Eucharist at a Passover meal, and He chose food and drink as the elements to be changed into Himself. The early Christians saw the celebration of the Eucharist as a meal: St. Paul called it the "Lord's supper" (1Cor. 11:20).

-Our Lord spoke of the Eucharist as food and drink: "My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:55). Our Lord wants us to draw a parallel between what food and drink do for us and what the Eucharist does for us.

-Food and drink nourish our body and become our body. The Eucharist nourishes us, but in this case we become what we receive. We are transformed into Christ! This is the object of the Eucharist – our own divinization. What God is by nature we will be by grace.

-And Christ works this miracle not once every ten years, but daily. And He works it for you and me, so that we may have access to Him and be able to join in His sacrifice, which He accomplished almost two thousand years ago.]

-The Church teaches that the whole Christ (body and soul, humanity and divinity) is present under the appearance of bread or host, and the whole Christ is present under the appearance of wine.

-It would be the height of stupidity and idolatry to bow in adoration before what looks like bread or host if Christ Himself had not assured us that the Eucharistic bread is truly His body.

-Now the flesh of Christ Jesus was his complete humanity. John in his First Letter lays it down almost passionately: "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God."

-In fact, the spirit which denies that Jesus has come in the flesh is of antichrist (1Jn.4:2-3). John insisted that we must grasp and never let go the full humanity of Jesus, that he was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

-What does this mean? Jesus was the mind of God became a person. This means that in Christ Jesus we see God taking human life upon Him, facing our human situation, struggling with our human problem, battling with our human temptations , working out our human relationships.

-Therefore it is as if Christ said: "Feed your heart, feed your mind, feed your soul with my divinity & humanity. When you are discouraged and in despair, when you are beaten to your knees and disgusted with life and living, remember I took that life of yours and these struggles of yours on me."

-We do not claim to understand how bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. We accept, as Peter did, the "words of eternal life." We believe, as St. Paul did, that the bread and wine are the "body and blood of the Lord."

-We believe that when Christ said the words, "This is my body....This is my blood," He meant exactly what He said. For Jews, *body* meant the person, and *blood* was the source of life identifiable with the person. So the Lord was saying over the bread and cup, "This is Myself," and we believe that the bread and wine truly become the very person of the Lord Jesus.

## **\* Eye-s \***

-The infants see themselves mirrored in their parent's eyes, especially the mother. What her eyes tells us about ourselves, we believe and become. It's a mirror game. Prayer is much the same: receiving and returning the divine gaze.

-To admit (allow) light to the eye, music to the ear and food to the stomach is to perfect each of these organs; so too, to admit Truth to the mind and Power to the will is to make us more than a creature, namely, partaker of the Divine Nature.

-Faith is necessary for complete human living as light is for sight: we have the same eyes at night as during the day, but we are not able to see at night because we lack the light of the sun.

-This new light is to our reason what the telescope is to the eye. The telescope does not destroy the eye, nor does it create new worlds, but it enables the eye to see realities which, although they were there before, the naked eye could never reach. To a person who does not "believe in" telescopes, it would seem that the astronomer is merely imagining the things he says he sees – that in describing distant stars and planets he is the victim of a superstition. It is not uncommon for those who lack the gift of Faith to attribute all belief in the supernatural world to imagination or to fantasy.

-Bernard illustrates this correlation of likeness and vision through an analogy to physical sight. The human eye cannot gaze directly on the sun as it is, but only as it illumines visible objects such as the air, a mountain, or a wall. The eye alone among all the parts of the human body is capable of this partial vision of the sun on account of its natural brightness and clarity, its own partial likeness to the sun.

-Should the eye grow clouded and thereby lose its natural brightness and clarity, it would no longer be capable of even this partial vision of the sun on account of its lost likeness to it.

-Yet, if the eye were somehow raised above its natural condition and made perfectly like the sun in brightness and clarity, it would be capable of gazing on the sun as it is owing to this perfect likeness.

-The purer the eye of her attention, the more power the soul finds within herself...Strive, then, constantly to purify the eye of your attention until it becomes utterly simple and direct (Dag Hammarskjöld).

-St. Bernard's steps of pride are arranged according to one further tripartite pattern, namely the threefold vice of 1 John 2:16, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Though St. Bernard does not render this structuring principle explicit, it will become clear through a careful study of his steps and their relationships: his first six steps concern curiosity, or the lust of the eyes; his next four steps concern ambition, or the pride of life; and his final two steps concern concupiscence, or the lust of the flesh.

-In the specifically monastic context of the *Steps*, Bernard defines *curiositas* as the monk's tendency to allow his eyes and other senses to wander from their proper concern, the consideration of himself and his own behavior, to what is not their proper concern, the sensible behavior of his brother monks. Curiosity is, for Bernard, a "disease of the soul," a form of *incuria sui* or self-neglect which causes the monk to trade the pursuit of self-knowledge for a curious interest in the visible and otherwise sensible actions of his fellows.

-After all, David lifted his eyes with humility to the mountains to seek God's help (Ps 120:1), and Christ lifted his eyes with compassion over the crowds to see if there was anyone he might help (Jn 6:5). Yet if the monk raises his eyes for any other purpose, Bernard warns, if he lifts his eyes out of any motive other than humility or compassion, then "you imitate neither the Prophet nor the Lord, but Dinah, or Eve, or even Satan himself!"

-The anguished paralytic is, of course, the will, who has heard the complaints of her bodily servants and soon takes the stage to rebuke reason as a faithless husband. In a vivid, if predictably misogynistic, scene, the "furious old hag" fumes that by reason's neglect, she has been paralyzed by the triple illness of concupiscence, curiosity, and ambition (1 Jn 2:16): her palate and body are addicted to lust for sensual pleasure, her eyes to the curious search for pleasant sights, and her mouth and ears to the ceaseless pursuit of human praise. Even if she wished to deliver herself from this enslavement to sin, she declares, she finds herself powerless to do so. Though she must admit that she finds little rest in the satisfaction of these fleshly cravings, she chastises reason for presuming to take from her even these few, remaining consolations in her illness. "Is this how you keep faith with your spouse? Is this how you show compassion for me in my suffering?" will demands.

-Sacred Scripture is offered like a kind of mirror to the eyes of our mind, that we may see our interior face in it. For there we recognize our ugliness and our beauty. There we measure our progress; there we see how far we are from our goal.

-Satan answered, "Skin for skin! A man will give all he has for his life. Just reach out and touch his flesh and bones, and then watch his curse you to your face!" The ancient enemy resorts to purely extrinsic details to gather material with which to inflict Job's conscience. His exclamation, "Skin for skin," has reference to the frequently observed fact that when we encounter a blow in the face, we cover our eyes with our hands to protect them from the blow; we expose ourselves to possible wounds rather than endanger the more delicate parts of our bodies. Satan knows these are instructive actions; hence he says, "Skin for skin! A man will give all he has for his life."

-Thus it follows logically, "Let it wait for the light in vain; let it not see the glow of dawn in the east." However intent be its purpose, while yet a pilgrim the human mind cannot see the Light as it is, because the blindness of its condemnation hides from its eyes. The glow of dawn, on the other hand, is that new birth of resurrection, by which Holy Church, with the flesh also raised up, rises to contemplate eternal light. If the very resurrection of our flesh were like a kind of birth, Truth would not have said concerning it, "In the new world, when the Son of Man sits on his majestic throne." He saw this dawn as it is, and he called it new world. Yet however many be the virtues which the elect now glow, they cannot penetrate that glory of new birth that is to be, by which they will then ascend in the flesh to contemplate eternal light. On this theme Paul wrote, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared for his lovers."

-“She who bore me did not close the door of her womb, nor did she hide misfortune from my eyes.”

-This reality is nicely symbolized by Jacob in his rest along his journey; he put a stone under his head and went to sleep. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, the Lord leaning against the ladder, and angels ascending and descending on it. To rest along a journey certainly means to quiet the love of earthly things in this present transitory life. To rest along the journey means to close the mind's eye in the course of the passing days to the desire for visible things.

-The human soul was indeed cast out of the joyful state of Paradise because of the sin of the first human beings, so that it lost the sight of the

invisible and became totally enamored of the visible; the more disfigured it became with external wantonness, the more blind it made itself to internal contemplation. That is how it happens that it knows nothing but what it touches, so to speak, with its bodily eyes.

-So God's voice sounds like a light breeze, because God hardly imparts himself as he is to those who contemplate him, who are still present in this life; rather, he reveals his glory sparingly to the bleary eyes of our mind. This truth is symbolized on the occasion of the reception of the law, when we are told that Moses went up the mountain and the Lord came down. The mountain indeed is our contemplation in which we go up, that we may be raised up to see that which is beyond our capacity. The Lord comes down, because although we make much progress, he only reveals a meager amount of himself to our perception.

-After the gentle whispering sound the prophet hid his face in his mantle, because in that exquisite contemplation of truth he knew how completely humankind is blinded by ignorance. To cover one's face with one's mantle means to shield the mind out of consideration of its own weakness, lest it should dare to seek higher things. This we do so that we may emphatically not open the eyes of our intelligence rashly to what is above ourselves; rather, we should close our understanding reverently to that which we cannot grasp. The one who does this is described as having stood at the mouth of the cave. What is our cave if not this decaying house in which we have already been living so long?

-The consideration of the greatness of God, you see, teaches us how humbly we should fear his notice of us. One who tastes what is elevated freely puts up with the most ignoble situations, because such a one sees clearly with insight how to evaluate his external works. One who thinks he is right without knowing the highest standard of what is right is in error. We often think a piece of wood is straight without comparing it to a straight edge. When we do place a straight edge next to it, we see how bent and uneven it is, because the straight edge naturally cuts off and rebuffs what the eye mistakenly approved.

-Since the wicked desire only earthly goods, they scorn the knowledge of the good things that are stored for the elect in eternity. They see the affliction of the just, but they do not know about the recompense for this affliction, so they point the foot of their action toward the abyss, since by their own initiative they close the eyes of their understanding to the light. They are deceived by blind pleasure, since they love what they presently see; so they are cut off from themselves, and they do not see where they are headed in an eternal rush.

# **Fear of the Lord**

-There is worldly fear (wherein we fear some evil or threat from the world), and there is human fear (wherein we fear some evil or threat from others) (II Ilæ 19,2 & 9). Now neither of these fears concern us here since God is not the object of these fears. Our concern here is the "Fear of the Lord," wherein God is the object of fear.

-Now as to the Fear of the Lord, here too a distinction is to be made between servile fear (fear of punishment) and filial fear (whereby a son fears to offend his father or to be separated from him). Now it is not servile fear but filial fear that is the Gift of the Holy Spirit and which Scripture commends. Hence, when Scripture says we should "Fear the Lord" it does not mean that we should run and hide because God is going to punish us, but rather that we should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit wherein we dread to offend God or be separated from him.

-We speak of the fear of God or the dread of Him being a safeguard. Is that on the border of becoming a slavish fear? No, not if we rightly understand these verses. It is not talking of a servile or slavish fear, yet it says, "...let him be your dread." Then what does this word dread mean? The word dread is synonymous with the word "feared" with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ in Heb. 5:7, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." We know the Lord Jesus Christ did not have a slavish fear, yet that word is used by our Savior.

-There is a very important distinction between servile and filial fear. Filial fear is that humble, reverent respect which is due to a parent from a son or daughter; servile fear is a slavish fear or cringing for fear of a hard master.

-There is a filial fear of God, i.e., a holy reverence for God and His law, which draws His people unto Him. That filial fear is a holy reverence for God's law which draws one closer to Him. There is also a servile fear of God which drives the wicked away from Him. In Jn. 3: 19-21 we see a very clear indication of that. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. [That is a servile fear. They do not want to know the will of God because it condemns

them. It drives them away.] But he that doeth truth [through a filial fear] cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

-A filial fear, a holy reverence for God, will draw one to the Lord. This filial fear is not only natural to those who live under the Divine influence of the Spirit, but it is a command. We are commanded to fear God with a holy reverence for Him and His will. Take notice of Mt. 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." We are commanded to fear the Lord because we should have reverence for His almighty power. Knowing the law of reward or consequences, we will reap as whatever we sow, should instill in us a reverence for His law.

-The fear of man is a trap or snare; Prov. 29:25 says, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but [the fear of the Lord is a duty] whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." If you have a fear of men, living by what men might do to you, you are not walking in the fear of the Lord nor walking according to His will. Fear not those who are able to kill the body, but fear Him who is able to kill both body and soul.

-The fear of the Lord is one of our greatest safeguards against evil. We need to become acquainted with and know our own hearts and the evil inclinations we have. Then we need filial fear, a holy reverence for God and His holy will and His Word, because He says that if we sow in wickedness, the same will return to plague us; we will reap in full measure what we sow. A holy reverence for that principle will have a tendency to safeguard us from doing evil.

-St. Bonaventure says: "The fear of the Lord forbids a man to give his heart to transitory things which are the seeds of sin." And in the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Fear of the Lord is the root of happiness; fear of the Lord is the beginning of true joy and happiness."

-Fear of the Lord means a willingness and readiness to do the will of God, and this, in turn, generates feeling of security and trust.

-Servile fear should decrease as one grows in the knowledge of the love for God and as one is bound closer to the ultimate Ground of Being.

-“Filial” fear, however, doesn't decrease, but rather increases as one loves God more, because it fears sin itself, rather than the consequences of sin. Filial fear sees sin as more “evil” than the punishment that comes from sin, because sin is seen to be a turn to nothingness. This sort of fear increases

as one knows oneself and loves God for God's sake, because a turn towards nothingness, defecting from God is both always possible and more and more undesirable.

-Now as to the Fear of the Lord, here too a distinction is to be made between servile fear (fear of punishment) and filial fear (whereby a son fears to offend his father or to be separated from him) (II, IIae 19.10) Now it is not servile fear but filial fear that is the Gift of the Holy Spirit and which Scripture commends. Hence, when Scripture says we should "Fear the Lord" it does not mean that we should run and hide because God is going to punish us, but rather that we should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit wherein we dread to offend God or be separated from him. This, I hope you can see, is a very precious gift. And although the word "fear" tends to elicit negative reactions, I hope to show you that the Biblical world experienced the Fear of the Lord as a very great and highly prized blessing.

-But first we have to be clear to emphasize that the fear towards God comes in two ways but only one of those ways is considered the Gift of the Holy Spirit and rightly called "The Fear of the Lord." Scripture therefore has to be read with some sophistication. It is important to know which kind of fear is being discussed to understand the text. Consider a few examples from the New Testament:

1. *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 Jn 4:18)* – Here is described servile fear (fear of punishment). The text teaches us that Love puts sin to death. And, since we no longer sin, we no longer fear punishment. Servile fear of God is not evil or wrong but it IS imperfect since it has to do with the imperfection of sin. Ultimately we are to be free of servile fear and hence it is seen as a negative thing even though it can have some salutary effects. For example, fear of punishment can be a motive to avoid sin. But it is an imperfect motive since it does not come from our love of God but more from our love our self and our comfort or well-being. Servile fear is not therefore commended by Scripture but neither is it condemned.
2. *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father (Rom 8:15).* Notice again that servile fear is something to be freed of. This freedom comes by the Holy Spirit who replaces our servile fear with a filial fear, fear born in love of God that experiences him as Abba. So Holy Fear needs to replace servile fear.

3. *Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord. (Acts 9:31)* Obviously here, Holy Fear is described, not servile fear. The early Christians are being encouraged by the Holy Spirit and this elicits in them a Holy Fear, a fear born in love that dreads offending Abba, the Father they love.
4. *Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. (1 Peter 2:17)* Note again the connection of fear to love. In the context of our love for the brethren we are told to fear the Lord. But the context here clearly suggests that fear is being used as a synonym for a higher form of love. In other words, as much as we should love the brethren, even more so we should love God and that love is described as the "Fear of the Lord."

1. **The Fear of the Lord is rooted in our relationship to God as his adopted Children.** As we have already discussed, the Fear of the Lord is not servile fear (having to do with punishment) it is filial fear (the dread of offending or being separated from God).
2. **The Fear of the Lord is rooted in our love for God.** We really love God, with all our heart! He is Abba, Papa, Father. He has given us everything and we deeply love and reverence him. The thought of offending him fills us with dread! We cannot bear the thought that we have offended God in any way, we love him too much.
3. **The Fear of the Lord is rooted in our admiration for God.** Through this gift of Holy Fear we hold God in awe. We are filled with wonder as we contemplate his glory and all he has done. This wonder and awe, inspire deep respect in us for God and an aversion to offending him. We respect him too much to ever want to mar our relationship with him.
4. **The Fear of God is rooted in our desire for unity with God.** Love seeks union. We instinctively know that sin mars the union of love and can even sever it. We thus come to fear sin that creates distance between us and God. Because we desire union with God, the gift of Holy Fear causes us to fear ever losing the intensity of that union.
5. **The Fear of God is rooted in our appreciation for God's Holiness.** God is Holy and the gift of Holy Fear strikes within us a deep awareness of this holiness as well as a deep understanding that we must be made holy before coming into his full presence. The gift of fear helps us to appreciate that we do not simply walk into God's presence in the spiritual equivalent of jeans and a T-Shirt. Holy Fear inspires us to be clothed in holy attire, to get ready to meet God. Just as we might bath and wear fine clothes to visit a world leader,

we reverence God enough to be robed in righteousness by his grace before we go to meet him. Holy Fear makes us serious about this preparation.

-The gift of fear is, at least initially, a reverent fear of the divine justice.

-Traditionally, it has been divided into *servile* fear and *filial* fear. Servile fear inclines a person to reject sin out of a fear of punishment, whether temporal or eternal. Filial fear, on the other hand, inclines a person to reject sin more out of a fear of offending the beloved, namely God. Indeed, the latter is higher and nobler, but the latter does not displace the former. Filial fear does not supplant servile fear. Rather, the more a person grows in the love of God — and thus filial fear —, the more refined does servile fear become.

-The reason is that as we grow in the knowledge of God's mercy, we grow, simultaneously in the knowledge of our own frailty and proclivity to sin, for His mercy bears upon our sins. And as we grow in an understanding of God's pure generosity, we begin to appreciate more the seriousness of sin. Joined to an awareness of our own frailty and dependency upon divine grace, we are led to pray for the gift of perseverance within a spirit of hope, which includes a spirit of fear that recognizes what we truly deserve. Indeed, the saint really fears the damage that his sins will do to himself as well as to others.

-Indeed, the fear of the Lord is a kind of reverence, but such reverence cannot be understood except in light of fear. The more we reverence something, the more we fear losing it. The more a person reverences his salvation, the more he will fear losing it (servile fear), and the more a person reverences God, the more he will fear offending Him (filial fear).

-Awe towards God is not the beginning of wisdom, but a sign of wisdom acquired. But fear is the beginning of decisions that are wise and life giving.

-"There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." What proclamation can be louder? "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him." Let His voice be heard - "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me." (Jer. 33:8.) And again - "None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him." (Ezek. 33:16.)

-Our God is a God ready to pardon. He multiplies to pardon. Forgivenesses, in ever-flowing streams, roll down from the deep springs of His eternal love. His treasure-house is full of pardoning grace--the sinner, pleading the name of Christ, may enter in, and revel in the abundance of forgiveness. These mercies never fail--they never can be exhausted. They are large as Deity itself--they extend to every form and mode of iniquity. No mountain of transgression is so lofty that forgiveness cannot over-top it; no ocean of iniquity is so vast that forgiveness cannot exceed it. The heart of God, in Christ, ever beats with this forgiving love--His hands are ever open largely to dispense it. From everlasting His wisdom formed the scheme which gives free scope to this overflowing mercy.

**-Filial fear has banished slavish trembling.** The pardoned believer realizes his adoption into the household of faith and family of God. He is no more afar off--his desolation as an outcast is exchanged for citizenship with heaven, and fellow-heirdom with all saints. He exclaims, "This God is my God forever and ever!" This God is my Father while eternity rolls on! "I love Him because He has so loved me." With every faculty of mind and body I will serve Him, and show forth His praise. I will shun, as a viper, departure from His ways; I will reject offence as a poisoned cup; I will watch my every thought, lest any root of bitterness should arise; I will guard the portal of my lips, lest any evil sound should issue forth; I will strive to walk even as the Lord Jesus walked, and to abound with fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of His name. Thus he who lately trembled as a slave, warms into the loving child; and the criminal who sought concealment, now craves closer union. His ear is ever listening for directions; his lips continually cry, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" His loins are girt for daily service; his feet are shod with preparedness for work; his one pathway is sincere obedience.

-Hence the wisdom of constantly striving "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." The continuous charm of life should be to gaze on Jesus, and to study the full achievements of His work; the daily position should be beside His cross. Increasing knowledge of the purpose, aim, end, fruits of His dying love, should be the mind's pursuit.

-Thus assurance would flow like a river through the soul. The first voice from the cross should be ever resounding in enraptured ears - "Father, forgive them," bestow the mercy which this blood procures.

-Blessed, indeed, are they who rejoice in evidence that their iniquities are forgiven and their sins covered. They go from grace to grace; they enter

on paths of joyous service. Theirs is the fear that loves, and the love that fears.

-The eye of faith sees the beauty in God's ordering of the times. The key to this perception is in the redemptive purposes of God for his people. For every believer, the gracious purposes of the Lord shine through the darkest passages of these times and, far from being a source of gloom, these become a fount of encouragement and joy in the Lord. Eternity within. Being aware of our creaturehood carries with it a sense of the reality of the Creator. The suppression of this consciousness of God is at the core of sin and estrangement from God. This unfathomable life. Even though there is an awareness of eternity in our hearts, we cannot fully grasp its meaning. Indeed, we even resist the pull of eternal and spiritual matters. We look in the opposite direction for satisfaction. We imagine that secular knowledge and carnal pleasure will answer our deepest needs. We look for answers in the wrong places. How desperately we need to be found by the one whom we do not seek (Isaiah 65:1).

-Life is from God. Life is both a privilege and a pleasure for the friends of God. The pursuit of God-centered and God-honoring happiness is a legitimate goal for God's people. It is God's gift. And therefore it is our calling. Second, the works of God endure forever. They are complete and we can neither add to, nor subtract from, their ultimate perfection. Seeing how awesome his works are, **men should fear Him**. The practical fruit of God's sovereignty will be a worshipping people, exulting in the security of their Savior-God.

-It is very important to understand what it means to "fear God".

-Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man acts as a goad to us. It makes us sit up; to take notice. Here is the secret of life. Here is a fear which can deliver us from all other fears. It is a powerful divine immunization which builds up resistance in our hearts enabling us to reject and overcome the anxieties which plague our lives and destroy our peace. But what is this fear? And how does it make such a difference?

-The fear of God is not terror. Terror of God is the reaction of guilt in the face of his holy power. It desires only to run from him in despair. Through every aspect of his character God means to show us his glory. This he loves to do more than anything else. Moreover, he loves his people so much that he will let nothing stand in the way of them coming to share in this glory. The person who sees this learns what it means to fear God.

-It means to be filled with a sense of breathtaking awe at his character. It means to realize with shame that although we have been made to live as his image, we have forfeited by our sin our privileges and our destiny. It means also that we have begun to realize the costly way in which he restores that glory to us. The fear of God in some ways defies our attempts at definition, because it is really another way of saying 'knowing God'. It is a heart-felt love for him because of who he is and what he has done; a sense of being in his majestic presence. It is a thrilling awareness that we have this greatest of all privileges, mingled with a realization that now the only thing that really matters is his opinion.

-To fear God is to be sensitive to both his greatness and his graciousness. It is to know him and to love him wholeheartedly and unreservedly. To fear God, to trust God, to love God, and to know God – these are really one and the same thing. In fact, the fear of God about which the Pundit speaks arises from the discovery of God's love for us in our sin and weakness. It is the sense of awe that results from the discovery that he knows me through and through, means to destroy all that is sinful in me, and yet does so because he loves me with an intensely faithful love. That stretches my mind and emotions to their limit. At least, that is how fear is seen in the Bible. It is those who fear the Lord who say, 'His love endures forever'; it is only those who confess their sinfulness who discover that 'With you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared' [Ps. 118.4; 130.4].

They love Thee little if at all  
Who do not fear thee much  
If love is thine attraction, Lord,  
Fear is thy very touch. (F.W. Faber (1814-63) in 'My God, how wonderful Thou art').

-This is what Christians call 'filial fear'. It is different from 'servile fear', the terror of the slave who knows that his every wrong move will bring punishment. 'Filial fear' is the reverential love which a child has for his or her father. Thus the child who truly fears his or her father gains greatest joy and pleasure in his presence, and knows great security. If this 'filial fear' is the fear of God about which the Pundit enthuses, certain questions press themselves on our attention. Why did he – and why do we – fear it? What effect does it have? How can we come to experience it? The answer to the first question is this: we try to evade the fear of God because we want to make man great and God small. So long as the Pundit wanted to make 'man the measure of all things', he had to try to reduce God to manageable (and therefore non-fear-able) proportions. If we do not fear God we do not really know God. For to know God is to be stunned by his presence.

-Then we learn that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all true wisdom [Ps. 111.10; Prov. 9.10]. How is it that to fear God is 'the whole of man' as the Pundit says? Because it brings meaning, purpose and significance to a life which otherwise is ultimately brief, empty and meaningless. We have followed the Pundit's attempts to find satisfaction that would last: in the pursuit of knowledge, of pleasure, of work, of success. How does the fear of God make a difference? When we look at life 'under the sun', excluding God, something happens to our understanding and our learning.

-We try to explain the world without reference to the essential explanatory factor: God's creating activity and his sustaining presence. The result? An endless pursuit of learning which can never bring a knowledge that satisfies [12.12]. That is what Paul calls a 'futility' in our 'thinking' [Eph. 4.17]. But the fear of God reverses this, placing him at the center of our universe. He is at the center of life. We see everything in the light of his creating and sustaining activity. Then things begin to make sense: 'The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him' [Ps. 25.14].

-What difference does the fear of God make? It transforms everything we do, no matter how mundane, no matter how grand. How? Because it invests all work with the higher dimension of honoring God, seeking his glory, reflecting his character as the Original Worker in everything we do.

-The fear of God gives us courage to oppose what is wrong and do what is right, whatever the consequences. Because we have this promise: 'Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!' [Ps. 34.9]. But how can the child-like, loving fear of the Lord be born and grow within us?

-Filial fear is a characteristic only of those who have a filial relationship. You will never fear God until you know yourself to be his child. It is, first of all, essential that, like the Pundit, you see the truth about yourself and about your life: left to yourself, it will be meaningless and empty. The reason? You have lost all spiritual life. You have sinned against him and are actually under his judgment.

-Penitent faith involves seeing the truth staring me in the face: my sins are not out-of-character actions. They are revelations of the truth about my twisted, God-less heart. Thus the first step in learning the filial fear of God is to be brought into His family. God does this by his Spirit, in an act so sovereign and powerful that the New Testament calls it a new creation, a new birth, a spiritual resurrection.

-If the wisdom and knowledge of God has already become part of our life, a further question needs to be answered here. How can we grow in the fear of the Lord? Here are the biblical counsels we need to follow: (1) Use the helps God has given: worship with the family of God, prayer, the exposition of Scripture, the ongoing disciplines of a fellowship of God's people, the physical signs he gives – baptism and the Lord's Supper – to mark you out as his and to encourage you in faith. How do these help us? They keep our eyes fixed on God's glory. (2) Value the friendship and fellowship of others who fear the Lord. (3) Reflect on the providence of God in life. (4) Learn to live in the shadow of the cross of Christ. Here is a deep awe and fear of the Lord; but here, too, is the joy of forgiveness. At the cross of Christ both faith and fear begin and grow.

-The fear of God may be divided into two parts: there is a fear of God on account of which a man withdraws from the Lord and this is called either human fear if it is caused by fear of persecutions which others will inflict upon him, or worldly fear if it fears the punishment of God only insofar it means the loss of earthly pleasures.

-Yet there is another fear by which man turns to God and adheres to him. This fear is divided into three parts: first there is servile fear, then initial fear, and finally filial fear. By servile fear, man fears God because of the punishments he may inflict. By filial fear, man fears God lest he should offend him. By initial fear man fears God both on account of the future punishments which God will inflict upon the damned and also he fears lest he should offend God—this fear is mid-way between the other two (*ST II-II, q.19, a.2*)

-While worldly or human fear is always sinful, since by it we shrink away from God (*ST II-II, q.19, a.3*); filial, initial, and even servile fear are good, since they induce man to draw close to God.

**Servile Fear:** On account of its servility, servile fear may be evil, since servitude is opposed to freedom. Thus, insofar as servile fear moves a person not through love but through servility (moving one from without), servile fear is evil. Yet, servitude is not essential part of servile fear since, though a man fear God on account of the threat of future punishment, he may nevertheless direct himself to God as his last end, so that punishment would not be considered the greatest evil. Thus, so long as God is recognized as man's greatest good and, therefore, punishment itself is not considered to be man's greatest evil (for loss of God is the greatest evil to man), servile fear will co-exist with charity and aid in drawing a man closer to God (*ST II-II, q.19, a.4*).

**-Filial fear**, on the other hand, is the holiest type of fear, for it is directed not toward punishment, but toward fault. Hence, by filial fear, a man shrinks away from sin since he desires not to offend the God whom he loves, and because he desires to draw close to God which entails separation from sin (*ST II-II, q.19, a.5*).

-The fear which is a Gift of the Holy Spirit is certainly not worldly or human fear, but neither is it servile fear. For although servile fear is, according to its essence, good and given by the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless not the perfection of fear (moreover, servile fear is able to co-exist with sin, but the Gifts of the Holy Spirit do not exist in one who is in mortal sin). Therefore, we conclude that filial fear is the Gift of the Holy Spirit. As the Gifts perfect the soul's powers, rendering man more amiable to the movement of the Spirit, the Gift of Fear is considered as the first of the Gifts in ascending order. For by this Gift a man reveres God and avoids separating himself from him—in this way, Fear of God removes from man any resistance to the movement of the Holy Spirit (*ST II-II, q.19, a.9*).

**-Whether the fear of God co-exists with charity?** In this regard we must first consider servile fear and then filial fear.

-Because servile fear is given by the Holy Spirit, therefore it is not opposed to charity. For servile fear causes man to shrink from the punishments and this may be in any of three ways: a man may shrink from punishment because he places his own good as his supreme last end, and this would be contrary to charity; in another way, a man may shirk from punishment on account of self-love which is nevertheless directed also to God (as when he loves himself in God and for the sake of God), and this is not contrary to charity; finally, a man may fear punishment insofar as it entails separation from God, and in this respect it is included in charity. Hence, while it is correct to say that servile fear, considered as servile, does not remain with charity; it nevertheless remains as to its essence insofar as by servile fear a man fears the supreme punishment of the loss of God and so adheres to him all the more closely so that he should never lose his Lord (*ST II-II, q.19, a.6*).

-Filial fear, on the other hand, not only co-exists with charity, but in fact increases as charity increases. Since, by filial fear a man fears to offend God lest he should be separated from him whom he loves. Thus, as the love of God increases, so does man's desire to be united with him increase; and, thus, filial fear, by which a man fears lest he be separated from God through sin, increases with love (*ST II-II, q.19, a.10*).

-The prophet Jeremiah, speaking for God, clearly testifies that the fear of God, by which we may hold fast to Him, is poured into us by the Lord when He says: "And I will give them one heart and one way so that they may fear me all their days, and it shall be well with them and with their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and I will not cease to do good to them. And I will put my fear in their heart so that they may not depart from" (Jer. 32: 39-40) (Third Conference - The Conference of Abba Paphnutius: On Three Renunciation). p. 136

-He has not known the name of the Lord whosoever takes it in vain, whosoever says to Him, "Lord, Lord," and do not do the things which He says. And he has not known His name who neither honors Him as a Father nor fears Him as a Lord. He also has not know His name who attends to "vanities and lying follies."

-"He has cried to Me and I will hear him." This, my brethren, is the fruit of the knowledge of the Lord's name, the strong cry of fervent prayer. And further, the fruit of the cry is the hearing of the Savior. For how can anyone be heard by the Lord if he does not call upon Him? Or how can he call upon Him if he has not known His name? All thanks to Him who has revealed to men the Father's name, and in the invocation thereof constituted the fruit of salvation, according to what is written in the prophet Joel, "Every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" Amen (St. Bernard, Sermon on Psalm 90).

-Just as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom (Si 1:16), so pride is the beginning of all sin (Si 10:15); and just as the love of God is the perfection of wisdom, so despair is the consummation of all malice. And as the fear of God arises in us from knowledge of ourselves, and love of God from knowledge of God, so, conversely, pride arises from ignorance of ourselves, and despair from ignorance of God.

-"He feared God and avoided evil." To fear God is not to leave any good deed undone. That is why Solomon says, "He who fears God neglecting nothing." Since, however, there are those who do certain good deeds in such a way that they by no means keep themselves from certain evils; we are also told that Job avoided evil. It is certainly written, "Leave evil and do good." Good deeds are not acceptable to God when they are defiled in his eyes by an admixture of evil. Therefore Solomon says, He who commits one offense loses the value of many good deeds." Then James too asserts, "Whoever keeps the whole Law but disobeys one stipulation is guilty of the whole Law."

-“He feared God and avoided evil.” It is written of him, “He will be full of the spirit of the fear of God.” For the incarnate Lord exemplified in Himself all that he inspired us with, in order that his own example might persuade us to fulfill the injunction of the precept. In keeping with our human nature, therefore, our Redeemer feared God, since order that he might redeem proud human beings; he took upon himself a humble mien for their sakes.

-“His sons used to go and hold banquets in each other's houses, each one taking his turn.” Job's sons hold banquets in each other's houses, for all the virtues nourish the mind, each one according to its own measure. So he was right to say, “Each one taking his turn,” for the turn of each son is the light of each virtue. If I may briefly repeat here the seven gifts of grace, wisdom has its turn, then understanding, then counsel, then fortitude, then knowledge, then piety, then fear. For to be wise is not the same as to understand; many people are indeed aware of eternity, but they certainly do not understand it.

-Wisdom, therefore, holds a banquet in her turn, for she refreshes the mind with the hope of certitude of eternal life. Understanding too holds a banquet in his turn, for he penetrates what he hears, refreshes the heart, and light up the darkness in it. Counsel holds a banquet in his turn, for since he does not allow the soul the act forthrightly, he makes it reasonable. Fortitude holds a banquet in her turn, for since she fears no contradiction, she serves the food of confidence to the troubled mind. Knowledge holds a banquet in her turn, for she breaks the fast of ignorance inside the mind. Piety holds a banquet in her turn, for she stores works of mercy inside the heart. Fear holds a banquet in his turn, for since he keeps the mind from taking pride in the present, he comforts it with hope for the future.

-St. Gregory the Great in the *Moralia* (moral reflection on the Book of Job), points out that there is something else for us to ponder in these banquets of Job's sons, namely, the fact that they feed one another. For the virtues are all radically abandoned if one does not support the other. Wisdom certainly has less dignity if understanding is absent; understanding, however, is completely useless unsupported by wisdom, for although it reaches very high without wisdom's weight, its own weightlessness carries it to a point from which its fall will have dire consequences. Counsel is banal without raw fortitude, for it indeed finds scope for research, but it is not robust of itself and does not persevere to the completion of its task. Fortitude by itself is self-destructive unless upheld by counsel, because the more it knows its own strength, the worse ruin is in store for it if it is not guided by reason. There is no knowledge without the fostering of piety in view, for as long as it puts off the doing of a good action it has in mind, it

makes itself the more liable to judgment. Piety itself is useless without the discretion provided by knowledge, because as long as no knowledge enlightens it, it is unaware how to show mercy. And as fear itself, it will certainly never rouse itself to a good action as long as it does not have the other virtues, for since it worries about everything, its very fear will keep it indolent, and it will avoid all good actions. Therefore, since one virtue is nourished by another in a constant mutual service, we are rightly told that Job's sons were fed by one another in turn.

-“They would also invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” Since our virtues promote faith, hope, and charity in all that they do, Job's sons are somewhat like workers who invite their three sisters to a meal, so that faith, hope, and charity may rejoice at the good works that each virtue puts into operation. They wax strong a though by food, since good works give them confidence; after the meal they wish to be filled with the dew of contemplation, and so it is as if they became drunk with wine.

-“Rising early, he would offer a holocaust for each one.” For we rise early when we are radiant with the light of compunction, and we leave behind us the night of our humanity, opening the eyes of our mind to the rays of the true Light. In addition, we offer a holocaust for each of Job's sons when we offer our sacrifice of prayer for each virtue: lest wisdom stretch herself too much, lest understanding go stray in her subtle running, lest counsel become confused by too much advice, lest fortitude be forward in her confidence, lest knowledge become puffed up by knowing without loving, lest piety should become distorted by being drawn away from its proper object, lest fear fall into the pit of despair by worrying too much about justice.

-“Have you noticed my servant Job? There is none on earth like him. He is blameless and upright man who fears God and avoids evil.” When God inspires a person with strength against the enemy, it is as though he praised him in Satan's hearing. God's praise, indeed, is first of all the giving of his goodness and next the guarding of it once given. But just because he sees good people guarded and protected by God's power, the ancient enemy attacks them all the more fiercely.

-It is inside the four corners of the house that the sons of Job hold their banquet, for it is within the deep places of the mind, which is principally raised by these four virtues to its throne of high rectitude, that the other virtues, as companions of the heart, feed one another. It is indeed the gift of the Holy Spirit that forms prudence, temperance, courage, and justice before all the other virtues in the highest point of the mind, and later molds the mind with seven virtues, that it may learn the strategy to be

employed against every single temptation: wisdom against stupidity, understanding against dullness, counsel against premature action, courage against fear, knowledge against ignorance, kindness against hard-heartedness, fear of God against pride.

-Solomon is our witness when he says, "In the fear of the Lord there is confidence and courage." He says that confidence and courage are found in the fear of the Lord, because our minds reject the notion of being alarmed about passing events all the more courageously the more truly they are subjected by fear to the Author of passing events. Since they are settled in the fear of the Lord, they find nothing outside themselves to fear; they are joined to the Creator of all things by correct fear, so they are lifted up by a certain power above all things. Courage, on the other hand, is only revealed in adversity, and that is why Eliphaz places patience immediately after courage. The more stoutly, you see, that a person puts up with wrongs from other people, the more truly that person shows attainment of fortitude. He whom another person's evil deed strikes down is not personally very strong. He who is not strong enough to bear contradiction is slain by the sword of personal pettiness.

# **Freedom to love God**

The Test Of Our First Parents Adam & Eve

-Anyone who gives freedom to another assumes great risks. A father yearns for the day when his son will be independent and able to make his own decisions. That hope is not without its fears, for freedom can be used either for weal or for woe. In a certain sense, even God took great risk when He made man free, for the very freedom to become a son of the Eternal Father implied the possibility of becoming a rebel.

-God made a moral universe, a vale of character-making wherein there would be virtue, heroism, saintliness and patriotism, none of which is possible without freedom.

-Fire is never praised for being hot, nor ice for being cold. But men are praised for being virtuous because they could have been vicious; they are lauded for being heroes, because they could have been cowards; and they are extolled for being saints, because they might have been devils.

-God chose, therefore, to make moral universe, but morality is impossible without freedom. Since He made us free to choose what is right, we are also free to choose the wrong. The eternal idea of Justice makes no one just, as the eternal Right makes no one righteous. Before truth and righteousness and freedom can become mature, they require training, discipline, trial and the awful possibility of failing.

-The whole purpose of education is to train minds to use freedom rightly. We do not take away freedom of youths because they might abuse it. Hence, parents offer encouragement, reward or praise to their children in order that they might choose the good rather than the evil. This is what God did at the very beginning. He did not give man the frightening responsibilities of freedom without at the same time offering him incentives to choose right rather than wrong. God would not force His happiness on anyone.

-Regardless of how much you liked ice cream, you would not enjoy it if it were forced down your throat. You will never be happy doing things unless you want to do them. Hence, God gave man a free will with which he might choose the things he like, rather than be forced to accept them. As freedom implies choice, so choice implies alternatives. So, God gave our first parents a choice.

-In almost so many words, God said to Adam and Eve at the very beginning of history: As an inducement to choose what is best, I shall give you certain gifts. If you use your freedom in the direction of what is best for you, that is, for your perfection, I shall give you permanently the supernatural gift of sharing My Nature, that is, to be a child of God and an heir of Heaven. To this I add permanently some lesser gifts: You will never die, your passions will never rebel against your reason, and your mind will be exempt from error.

-What is rather difficult to understand here is the word, "supernatural." What does it mean? A stone is not constructed so as to grow. That is simply not its nature. But if the stone suddenly began to bloom, you would say it was possessed of supernatural powers. It would have done something which belongs neither to the powers, the capacities or the nature of a stone.

-In like manner, if a flower suddenly began to walk, and get out of the rain, and smell other flowers and to move to Florida or California in the winter, it would be something supernatural for the flower, something above and beyond its capacity and its needs. In order to do these things some new element and power would have to be added to the flower. So, too, if a dog began to quote Shakespeare, to read the market quotations and to build its own doghouse, you would conclude that something above and beyond the nature of a dog had been given to it.

-By nature, that is, naturally, we are just creatures of God's handiwork. We are not, in the strict sense of the term, God's children; we are only God's creatures. But suppose God gave us the power to being His children, of sharing His Divine Life, of being a member of the family of the Blessed Trinity, of being heirs of Heaven – that would be supernatural for us, more supernatural than for a marble to sprout, and for a rose to write music, or for a dog to speak.

-To preserve these gifts for themselves and posterity, one condition was imposed by God, on Adam and Eve, and it was very easy. They merely had to love God Who is their perfection. We must not think that this condition was equivalent to saying a child: "If you eat a wooly worm, I will give you a dollar," because a wooly worm is not the perfection of a child. Rather, it was like saying to the child: "If you drink milk and eat vitamins, you will be healthy." As obeying the law of health is the perfection of the child, so, too, obeying the will of God is our perfection.

-How do you know anyone loves you? Because he tells you? Not necessarily. Love proves itself less by words than by an act of choice.

Human love is not love unless it is free; it is only because of the possibility of saying "No" that there is so much charm in the "Yes." Love is not only an affirmation; it is also a negation. For instance, when a husband chooses a wife, he not only accepts one woman, he excludes as wife every other woman in the world.

-Our first parents were told that they must prove their love of God by an act of choice. This implied an alternative. The alternative was a choice between a fruit and a garden, the part and the whole. God said they could eat of all the fruits in the garden of Paradise, save the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

-Was there anything unreasonable about the trial? Is not life filled with abundant instances of receiving rewards on the condition of love? Imagine a wealthy man going away for the summer and telling the chauffeur and his wife that they may live in his house, eat his food, drink his wine, use his cars and ride his horses, but on one condition: that they must not eat the artificial apple he has on the dining room table. The owner well knows the artificial apple will give them indigestion. He does not tell them that. They ought to trust him in the light of all he has done for them.

-If the wife persuades her husband to eat the apple, she would not be a lady; and if he eats it, he would not be a gentleman. By doing the one thing forbidden, they would lose all the good things provided, and have indigestion besides and they even lose the opportunity of passing these things on to their children.

-To make light of the apple in the story of the Fall is to miss the point that it was the test of love. Eating of the forbidden fruit was a sign of contempt: the symbol of rebellion. God was imposing a single limit to the sovereignty of man, reminding him that if he did the one thing forbidden, he would imperil all the things provided. Like Pandora, he opened the forbidden box, and lost his treasures.

-Test your own experience. Have you ever fallen? Have you ever sinned? Did anyone ever tempt you to sin against your true self? You never fell unless there was something that attracted; a whispered doubt, a lie, and a dream of being happier than you are now. Such elements were in the Fall.

-Our first parents were enjoying the happiness of a sinless Eden, but very soon Satan, a fallen angel, appeared and, pointing to the forbidden fruit, which was delightful to behold, whispered the first doubt. It began with a

Why? "Why has God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of paradise"(Gen. 3:1)? The evil behind the question was: God cannot be good if He does not let you do whatever you please. Freedom to Satan is the absence of law and restraint. Satan, the father of lies, was saying: "God is a Fascist."

-Have you ever noticed that the first suggestion to do wrong always comes from someone who makes you think that you would be more free if you defied your conscience?

-Freedom, if we only knew it, is within the law of our nature, not outside it. Try to be so progressive and broadminded as to draw a giraffe with a short neck, or a triangle with four sides, and see where you end!

-The second stage is ridicule. When Eve answered that it was God's command that they eat not the forbidden fruit, for, if they did, they would die, Satan ridiculed the idea: "You will not die." God has lied to you! It is stupid to believe such silly superstition!

-Finally, comes the third stage, the false promise. Eve dwelt jealously on the one thing forbidden, rather than the many things permitted, until quite unconsciously she was ready to be convinced that Satan's promise was true. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

-The good she knows begins to become boring, the evil she does not know begins to allure. More and more she turns from conscience to the imagined sweetness of the forbidden fruit. There would be but one result. Swiftly the crisis is upon her, as all crises are. She eats the forbidden fruit, gives it to Adam to eat; and then the floodgates are open, and the tiny ripple of an illicit thought, ever deepening, swelling, broadening, burst into an irresistible floodwater which engulfed the world.

-When children, we were told not to play with matches. We disobeyed and burned ourselves. Then, when mother called, we hid. We had no fear of our mother before we burned ourselves, but only after. Adam had no fear of God before he disobeyed. After his sin, God seemed to be an angry God. To the bad conscience God appears always the God of wrath. The boy, who broke the vase by throwing a ball at it, says to his mother: "Now Mommy, don't get mad." Anger is not in the mother; anger is in the boy's projection to his mother of his own sense of justice. Anger is not in God; anger is in our disordered selves.

-You say: "It was very unjust of God to deprive me of friendship with Him, and of these other gifts, simply because Adam sinned." There would have been injustice if God deprived you of your due, but you are no more entitled to be a child of God than a razor has a right to bloom, or a rose has the right to bark, or a dog has the right to quote Dante. What Adam lost was gifts, not a heritage.

-The lost of supernatural gift of being a child of God weakened man's will and darkened his intellect without corrupting his nature. Man's nature was not made intrinsically corrupt and wicked by the Fall. Original sin does not mean that we are born in the state we are in, but that through Adam we have fallen into that state.

-The Fall disorganized man's normal human faculties, making him just as he is now, with a bias toward evil, with a will reluctant to do good, with a tendency to rationalize evil. But he is still man able to recover part of his former gifts. The disorder in us is like getting dirt in our eyes: we still have the eye as an organ of sight, but it now sees through tears. The result is we are disorganized; suffering and pain came into life; women had to bear children in sorrow, while men had to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow.

-Because man turned his will against God, so now his passions and desires are turned against man's will. It is this fallen nature which all men have inherited. That is why the sin is called "original" – it came at the origin of human nature, and represents a loss, the soul registering a much greater loss than the body; for Man still has natural life, but he has not supernatural life.

-We are called to freedom, only not to use our freedom as a pretext for doing evil.

## On Good Zeal

-By a series of complementary touches scattered throughout chapters 61-71, St. Benedict leads us to the summit formed the little treatise 'On Good Zeal.' In it is found not only the reciprocal honor that we should have for one another (Ch. 63), but also the 'love for the abbot,' and the 'mutual obedience' that we owe to each other.

-More remotely, 'Good Zeal' recalls several of the instruments of good works. With its eight maxims leading to eternal life, it is like a second list of tools for 'good works', but only nine times shorter than the first.

-From one end to the other, good zeal concerns relations among ourselves and with our abbot, in a fervent love of God and Christ. This second 'spiritual art' is purely monastic, indeed conventual. Its maxims are no longer phrased in the singular, but in the plural; and 'all together' the monks hope, in return, to be introduced by Our Lord Jesus into eternity.

-Several maxims which do not speak explicitly of charity describe attitudes whose relationship with this virtue is clear: what is patience, obedience, seeking another's good, preference for Christ, if not love?

-This triumph of charity at the end of the Rule makes us think of the finale of the great treatise on humility. As the ladder of humility rose from fear to love, so the last chapters of the Rule, starting from the order of the community and the rules of courtesy implied therein, rise to a general view of fraternal relations in which loving is almost the only activity. In each case charity is discovered at the end of the ascent.

-“In the monastic way of life,” says St. Bernard, “the course is easier the more quickly it is run.”

*As there is an evil zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from vices and leads to God. Let monks therefore practice this zeal with the most fervent love.*

-St. Benedict, like St. Augustine before him and St. Bernard after him, is fond of the device which contrasts two extremes and then follows up the one which is positive.

-Zeal is defined by Blessed Columba Marmion as “an ardor that burns and is communicated, that consumes and is spread abroad; it is the flame of love, or of hatred, manifested by action.” Zeal can be very contagious.

-The monk who is enthusiastic for reform but who forgets the purpose of reform will show signs of bitterness in the measure which he takes his reforms. Where self and not Christ is uppermost, the expression of the reformer's zeal must necessarily be according to nature and not according to grace. It will be savage, severe, unloving, unsympathizing. To love reform for reform's sake is a dead-end love, a love to no supernatural purpose.

-When a monk is possessed of true zeal he thinks neither of reform nor of himself - and still less of how unreformed his companions are - but thinks only of how God may be better served.

-Where there is no conflict between the zealous monk's judgment and the judgment of his abbot and of his brethren the zeal is according to God. It cannot help being so, since it is proved by humility and charity and obedience.

-The other kind of zeal may have an appearance of good, showing as it does the hunger for better things, but it is not which "is according to knowledge"

-Unless the zeal is enlightened by the wisdom of the spirit it is the outcome of private judgments all along the line. Following a false light, which in fact is darkness, the monk who trusts to a combination of emotional attraction and personal conviction is in considerable danger. So obstinate does he cling to his conviction that he refuses first advice and then submission. The more his abbot tells him to moderate his zeal, which expresses itself violently and in the wrong directions, the more convinced he is that he is the only zealous man in the monastery and that all others need to be reformed on the pattern which his way of life proclaims.

-St. Bernard must surely have in mind St. Benedict's contrast between the good and bad zeal where he draws a distinction between the fire that goes before the lord and the fire that is the Lord Himself.

-“Moses says of God that He is a ‘consuming fire,’ and the psalmist that ‘a fire goes before Him.’ But there is a difference between these two. For that fire which precedes the Lord has ardor but not love; it burns but it does not dissolve; it moves that which it touches but it does not carry wholly away.

-“But the fire which is God Himself,” St. Bernard goes on, “consumes indeed but causes no pain; it burns that which it possesses but with indescribable sweetness; it destroys, and destroying confers the supreme

felicity. It is truly a consuming fire. But though as a fire it burns up vices, it acts at the same time as a healing unction in the soul. Recognize, then, the virtue of the Lord which changes your heart and the love which fires it. For the right hand of the Lord worked virtue. But this change worked by the right hand of the Lord takes place only in fervor of spirit and in charity undisguised."

-It is thus a consolation to know that our eagerness to walk before the Lord and be perfect before the time may not be wholly wasted, may not be wholly bitter after all. Even if our zeal for reform is not according to knowledge to begin with, we can come by the wisdom which makes us right before God if we pray for it in fervor and practice charity undisguised. The roughness of our approach can be smoothed by grace until only the one way, the way which leads "to God and life everlasting," remains.

*Let monks therefore practice this zeal with most fervent love; that is, in honor preventing one another. Let them most patiently endure one another's infirmities, whether of body and character...let no one follow what he judges good for himself but rather what seems good for another. Let them tender the charity of brotherhood with chaste love.*

-The work of accommodating ourselves to one another in the community will have to go on while there is breath left in our body. Tolerance is constantly being put to the test in community life, and the only way to develop the virtue is to develop our life in Christ.

-The saint is no longer preoccupied by the thought of "what is good for himself"; his whole interest lies in providing "what is good for another." St. Benedict's words are an echo of St. Paul's words to the Philippians: "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." If this is the ideal of Christian charity in the world, it is all the more an ideal of fraternal charity in the monastery.

-If we attend to the best interests of others we attend to the interests of Christ. If we bear one another's burdens we bear Christ's burden

*Let them fear God and love their abbot with sincere and humble affection. Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ. And may he bring us all alike to life everlasting. Amen*

-We can go on for years genuinely believing that St. Benedict's words hold no hint of reproach for us; then something happens which shows us that

perhaps after all the first place (in our hearts, in our life) has not been occupied by Christ but by one or other form of self.

-Not always present where we vaguely hope Him to be, Christ tends to be overlooked in the times of decision as well as in the ordinary unfolding of life.

-Since the primacy of Christ's claim in our regard, to be recognized throughout life and especially to be adverted to when rival claims assert themselves, is the measure and test of the "good zeal" which we have as monks. It is important that we should know all about it.

-It is zeal which resides in the will and not in the emotions. But if our zeal is to be tested by our preference for Christ before all things, how in its turn is our preference for Christ to be tested? How do we know that Christ has not been chosen as our all, and that we truly mean to maintain ourselves in this state of constant self-oblation?

-St. Gregory the Great offered the following six signs:

1<sup>st</sup> is negligence in the duties of our state of life; the 2<sup>nd</sup> is day-dreaming & dissipation of mind; 3<sup>rd</sup> is cowardice in the face of sacrifice; 4<sup>th</sup> is disillusionment with life & despair of God's continued help; 5<sup>th</sup> is bitterness towards men; 6<sup>th</sup> is ridicule of holy things. If Christ means everything to us, not one of these will strike home.

## **\* Heaven \***

-In truth, no man ever began with making heaven a consideration of interest, who did not soon come to find it a consideration of love; and the thought of hell, which began with fear for ourselves, ends in devotion to the sanctity God.

-Heaven means the place, and especially the condition, of supreme beatitude. Had God created no bodies, but only pure spirits, heaven would not need to be a place; it would signify merely the state of the angels who rejoice in the possession of God.

-But in fact heaven is also a place. There we find the humanity of the Lord Jesus, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels, and the souls of the saints. Though we cannot say with certitude where this place is to be found, or what its relation is to the whole universe, revelation does not allow us to doubt its existence.

-“The souls of all the saints are in heaven before the resurrection of the body and the general judgment. They see the divine essence by a vision which is intuitive and facial, without the intermediation of any creature in that view. By this vision they enjoy the divine essence, they are truly blessed, and they have eternal life and repose.

-The saints in heaven, seeing God face to face, love Him above all things, because they see with the most perfect evidence that God is better than all creatures combined. This love will never pass away. Faith will give place to vision; hope will be replaced by possession: but charity never falls away.

-“The joys of the Kingdom of God no can tell, nor even conceive or understand, while he is yet clothed in the flesh. For they are greater or more wondrous than they are imagine or conceived to be. So it is written: ‘What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualize; all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’

-“For the kingdom of God is greater than all report, better than all praise of it, more manifold than all knowledge, more perfect than every conceivable glory. The miseries of hell, as they truly are, no tongue can tell; no mind conceive; for in their reality they are far more dreadful than they are thought to be.

-“And likewise the kingdom of God is so full of light, and peace, and charity, and wisdom, and glory, and honesty, and sweetness, and loving kindness, and every unspeakable and unutterable good, that it can neither be described nor envisioned by the mind. But the abode of hell is so full of darkness, of discord, of hate, of folly, of unhappiness, of pain, of burning heat, of thirst, of inextinguishable fire, of sadness, of unending punishment, and every indescribable evil that neither can it be told nor yet conceived by man...

-“In the kingdom of God every good abounds and there is nothing evil; in the prison of hell every evil abounds and there is nothing of good. In the kingdom of Heaven no one unworthy is received; but no one worthy, no just one, is brought down to hell. In the eternal kingdom there shall be life without death, truth without falsehood, and happiness without shadow of unrest or change, in Christ Jesus Our Lord, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen “(St. Patrick, Heaven and Hell, What no eye has seen and no ear has heard.... 1Cor. 2:1-10).

-It is the love for the heavenly homeland (patria) which ought to dominate our attitudes. Our thoughts should tend toward it each day, and firmly fix the anchor of our hope there. If we are animated by this prospect then our progress will be fostered and more fearless and we will be less dismayed by the hardships experienced in fighting for the heavenly king.

-If heaven is life with God, then we have it now, if we want it. “Yes, I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth. In heaven, the good Lord will do all that I want because on earth I never did my own will” (St. Therese).

-St. Gregory the Great recognizes that spiritual experience, which is like a foretaste of heaven, causes many earthly delights to lose something of their former savor.

-One who knows perfectly the sweetness of the heavenly life happily leaves behind everything he previously loved on earth. In comparison with this, everything is devalued. He abandons his possessions and scatters what he had amassed since his soul is on fire for heavenly things and he has no pleasure in the things of earth. The mind of the man who does not seek the beauty of his Maker is unnaturally hard and remains frigid within itself. But if that man begins to burn with the desire of following the One whom he loves, then he runs melted by the fire of love. Desire becomes restless, and everything in the world that previously made him happy, loses its value, now he takes delight in nothing outside his Maker, and

what previously brought pleasure to his soul subsequently becomes an intolerable burden.

-If we keep in mind what are the things which are promised us in heaven and how great they are, then everything which we have on earth is devalued for the soul.

-Seeing one another in God, the saints love one another. The degree of this love is measured by nearness to God. Each rejoices at the degree of beatitude which others have received. Yet each love with special attention those whom he has been united on earth.

-In this immense assembly we find harmonized the greatest variety with intimate unity, the highest intensity with the deepest repose. Each of the saints has his personal distinction. Each is himself, with all his natural gifts and supernatural privileges, all of them perfectly developed. St. Paul differs from St. John, St. Augustine from St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila from St. Catherine of Siena. Yet they resemble one another since each contemplates one and the same divine truth, each is on fire with one and the same love of God.

-Our senses will find a pure and ineffable joy in the humanity of the Lord Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, the choir of the Saints, the beauties of the renovated world, the chants of adoration and thanksgiving in the city of God.

-The love of God in heaven is nothing but the perfect act of charity, whereby the soul transcends itself, without cessation it loves God more than itself, it passes out beyond itself, and enters into a state of uninterrupted ecstasy. "Extasis" is an effect of love: "In the love of friendship, affection, simply speaking goes outside itself, because it wills and does good for a friend" (St. Thomas Aquinas).

-In the fatherland we shall see infinite Goodness as He is Himself. Our eternal act of love will never suffer the least shadow of weariness. Infinite Goodness, seen without medium, fill so perfectly our capacity of love that it attracts us irresistibly more than any ecstasy that can be had on earth, where love is still free and meritorious.

-We see the measureless depth of the soul, in particular our will, our capacity for spiritual love, which God alone, seen face to face, can satisfy. As God necessarily loves His own infinite goodness, so our love, arising from the beatific vision, can never be interrupted or lose its fervor.

-The elect in heaven belong to the family of God. The Blessed Trinity, seen clearly and loved sovereignly, dwells in them as in a living tabernacle, as in a temple of glory, endowed with knowledge and love. The Father engenders in them the Word. The Father and the Son breathe forth the personal love of the Holy Spirit. Charity renders them in a measure similar to the Holy Spirit; vision assimilates them to the Word, who Himself assimilates them to the Father of whom He is the image. They enter therefore in a sense into the cycle of the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity is in them, rather, they are in the Trinity, as the summit of reality, thought, and love.

-Beholding the three divine person, the saints understand likewise the personal union of the Word with the humanity of Jesus, His plenitude of grace and glory, His charity, the treasures of His Heart, the infinite value of His theandric acts, of His merits, the value of His passion, of His least drop of blood, the unmeasured value of each Mass, the fruit of absolution. They also see the glory which overflows from the soul of our Savior upon His body, and they see how He is at the summit of all creation, material and spiritual.

-In Him they see also Mary co-redemptrix, the infinite dignity of her divine maternity, her position in the hypostatic order, superior to the orders of nature and grace. They see the greatness of her love at the foot of the cross, her elevation above the angelic hierarchies, and the radiation of her universal mediation. This vision of Jesus and Mary belongs to the essential beatitude as its most elevated secondary object.

-In heaven the just will see God by direct intuition, clearly and distinctly. Here on earth we have no immediate perception of God; we see Him but indirectly in the mirror of creation. We get our first and direct knowledge from creature, and then, by reasoning from these, we ascend to knowledge of God according to the imperfect likeness which creatures bear to their Creator.

-In heaven, however, no creature will stand between God and the soul. He Himself will be the immediate object of its vision. Scripture and theology tell us that the Blessed see God face to face. And because this vision is immediate and direct, it also exceedingly clear and distinct.

-The blessed see God, not merely according to the measure of His likeness imperfectly reflected in creation, but they see Him as He is, after the manner of His own Being.

-The souls of all the saints in heaven have seen and do see the Divine Essence by direct intuition and face to face, in such wise that nothing created intervenes as an object of vision, but the Divine Essence presents itself to their immediate gaze, unveiled, clearly and openly; moreover, that in this vision they enjoy the Divine Essence, and that, in virtue of this vision and this enjoyment, they are truly blessed and possess eternal life and eternal rest.

-It is of faith that the beatific vision is supernatural, that it transcends the power and claims of created nature, of angels as well as of men.

-Higher way of seeing God by intuitive vision can but a gratuitous gift of Divine goodness.

-St. Thomas Aquinas seems to teach (I.12.1) that man has a natural desire for the beatific vision. Elsewhere, however, he frequently insists on the supernatural character of that vision (e.g. III.9.2. ad Sum). Hence in the former place he obviously supposes that man knows from revelation both the possibility of the beatific vision and his destiny to enjoy it. On this supposition it is indeed quite natural for man to have so strong a desire for that vision, that any inferior kind of beatitude can no longer duly satisfy him.

-To enable it to see God, the intellect of the blessed is supernaturally perfected by the light of glory. This was defined by the Council of Vienne in 1311; and it is also evident from the supernatural character of the beatific vision. For the beatific vision transcends the natural powers of the intellect, but permanent as the vision itself. This permanent invigoration is called the "light of glory," because it enables the souls in glory to see God with their intellect, just as material light enables our bodily eyes to see corporeal objects.

-According to the view commonly and perhaps most reasonably held, the light of glory is a quality divinely infused into the soul and similar to sanctifying grace, the virtue of faith, and the other supernatural virtues in the souls of the just.

-Theologians distinguish the primary and the secondary object of the beatific vision. The primary object is God Himself as he is. The blessed see the Divine Essence by direct intuition, and, because of the absolute simplicity of God, they necessarily see all His perfections and all the persons of the Trinity.

-Moreover, since they see that God can create countless imitations of His Essence, the entire domain of possible creatures lies open to their view, though indeterminately and in general.

-The blessed have a distinct knowledge of individual possible things only in so far as God wishes to grant this knowledge. Thus if God so willed, a blessed soul might see the Divine Essence without seeing in it the possibility of any individual creature in particular. But in fact, there is always connected with the beatific vision knowledge of various things external to God, of the possible as well as of the actual. All these things, taken collectively, constitute the secondary object of the beatific vision.

-The blessed soul sees these secondary objects in God either directly, or in as far as God is their cause. It sees in God directly whatever the beatific vision discloses to its immediate gaze without the aid of any created mental image.

-In God, as in their cause, the soul sees all those things which it perceives with the aid of created mental image, a mode of perception granted by God as a natural complement of the beatific vision.

-The secondary object of the beatific vision comprises everything the blessed may have a reasonable interest in knowing. It includes, in the first place, all the mysteries which the soul believed while on earth.

-Moreover the blessed see each other and rejoice with each other in the company of those whom death separated them. The veneration paid them on earth and the prayers addressed to them are also known to the blessed.

-Although the blessed see God as He is, they do not fully comprehend Him, because God is absolutely incomprehensible to every created intellect, and He cannot grant to any creature the power of comprehending Him as He comprehends Himself.

-The 4<sup>th</sup> Council of the Lateran and the Vatican Council enumerated incomprehensibility among the absolute attributes of God. The Fathers defend this truth against Eunomius and Arius, who asserted that we comprehend God fully even in this life.

-The blessed see the Godhead in its entirety, but only with a limited clearness of vision. They see the Godhead in its entirety, because they see all the perfections of God and all the Persons of the Trinity; and yet their vision is limited according to their capacity, because it has neither the

infinite clearness that corresponds to the Divine Perfections, nor does it extend to everything that actually is, or may still become, an object of God's free decrees. Hence it follows that one soul may see God more perfectly than another, and that the beatific vision admits of various degrees.

-The beatific vision is a mystery. Of course reason cannot prove the impossibility of such vision. For why should God, in His omnipotence, be unable to draw so near and adapt Himself so fully to our intellect, that the soul may, as it were, directly feel Him and lay hold of Him and look on Him and become entirely immersed in Him? On the other hand, we cannot prove absolutely that this is possible; for the beatific vision lies beyond the natural destiny of our intellect, and it is so extraordinary a mode of perception that we cannot clearly understand either the factor of the manner of its possibility.

-From what has been said thus far it is clear that there is a twofold beatitude: the natural and the supernatural. Man is by nature entitled to beatitude, provided he does not forfeit it by his own fault. We have also seen that beatitude is eternal and that it consists in the possession of God, for creatures cannot truly satisfy man. Again, the soul is to possess God by knowledge and love. But the knowledge to which man is entitled by nature is not an immediate vision, but an analogous perception of God in the mirror of creation, still a very perfect knowledge which really satisfies the heart.

-Hence the beatitude to which we alone have a natural claim consists in that perfect analogous knowledge and in the love corresponding to that knowledge. This natural beatitude is the lowest kind of felicity which God, in His goodness and wisdom, can grant to sinless man. But, instead of an analogous knowledge of His Essence He may grant to the blessed a direct intuition which includes all the excellence of natural beatitude and surpasses it beyond measure. It is this higher kind of beatitude that it has pleased God to grant us. And by granting it He not merely satisfies our natural desire for happiness but satisfies it superabundance.

-It is a dogma of faith that the happiness of the blessed is everlasting. This truth is clearly contained in the Holy Bible; it is daily professed by the Church in the Apostles' Creed, and it has been repeatedly defined by the Church, especially by Benedict XII. Even reason can demonstrate it. And surely, if the blessed knew that their happiness was ever to come to an end, this knowledge alone would prevent their happiness from being perfect.

-The blessed are confirmed in good; they can no longer commit even the slightest venial sin; every wish of their heart is inspired by the power of love of God. Moreover this impossibility of sinning is physical. The blessed have no longer the power of choosing to do evil actions; they cannot but love God.

-The ultimate cause of impeccability is the freedom from sin or the state of grace in which at his death man passes into the final state, i.e, into state of unchangeable attitude of mind and will.

-The blessed have a twofold joy; first, the joy of love in the strict sense of the word, by which they rejoice over the infinite beatitude which they see in God Himself, precisely because it is the happiness of God whom they love, and secondly, the joy springing from love in a wider sense, by which they rejoice in God because He is the source of their own supreme happiness.

-In heaven there is not the least pain or sadness; for every aspiration of nature must be finally realized. The will of the blessed is in perfect harmony with the Divine will. They delight greatly in the company of Christ, the angels, and the saints, and in the reunion with so many who were dear to them on earth.

-After the resurrection the union of the soul with the glorified body will be a special source of joy for the blessed. They derive great pleasure from the contemplation of all those things, both created and possible which they see in God, at least indirectly as in the cause. And, in particular, after the last judgment the new heaven and the new earth will afford them manifold enjoyment.

-The blessed rejoice over sanctifying grace and the supernatural virtues that adorn their soul; and any sacramental character they may have also adds to their bliss. Very special joys are granted to the martyrs, doctors, and virgins, a special proof of victories won in time of trial.

-Since eternal happiness is metaphorically called a marriage of the soul with Christ, theologians also speak of the bridal endowments of the blessed. They distinguish seven of these gifts, four of which belong to the glorified body: light, impassibility, agility, subtlety; and three to the soul: vision, possession, enjoyment. We may identify the gift of vision with the habit of the light of glory, the gift of possession with the habit of that love in a wider sense which has found in God the fulfillment of its desires, and the gift of enjoyment with the habit of love properly called which rejoices

to be with God; these three infused habits would be considered simply as ornaments to beautify the soul.

-There are various degrees of beatitude in heaven corresponding to the various degrees of merit. This is a dogma of faith, defined by the Council of Florence. The Bible teaches this truth in very many passages (e.g., wherever it speaks of eternal happiness as a reward).

-The various degrees of beatitude are not limited to the accidental blessings, but they are found first and foremost in the Beatific Vision itself, for the vision admits of degrees.

-These essential degrees of beatitude are that threefold fruit Christ distinguishes when He says that the word of God bears fruit in some thirty, in some sixty, in some a hundredfold.

-Ask Our Lord to make all earthly joy insipid, and to fill you with the constant desire of heaven. This desire will make labor easy and suffering light. It will make you fervent and detached, and bring you even here a foretaste of that eternal joy and peace to which you are hastening (from the reflection of the martyrdom of St. Cyril of Cappadocia).

-Now returning to this method of understanding, the position seems to me to be that the Lord's will is for the soul to have at any rate some idea of what is happening in Heaven, and, just as souls in heaven understand one another without speaking (which I never knew for certain till the Lord in His goodness willed me to see it and revealed it to me in a rapture), even so it is here God and the soul understand each other, simply because this is His Majesty's will, and no other means is necessary to express the mutual love of these two friends.

-“Just so, in this life, two persons of reasonable intelligence, who love each other dearly, seem able to understand each other without making any signs, merely by their looks (St. Teresa of Avila).

-“I will only say that, if there were nothing else in Heaven to delight the eyes but the extreme beauty of the glorified bodies there, that alone would be the greatest bliss. A most especial bliss, then, will it be to us when we see the Humanity of Jesus Christ; for if it is so even on earth, where his Majesty reveals Himself according to what our wretchedness can bear, what will it be where the fruition of that joy is complete?

-“I can say, then, that if I were asked whether I should prefer to endure all the trials in the world until the world itself ends, and afterwards to gain a

little more glory, or to have no trials and attain to one degree less of glory, I should answer that I would most gladly accept all the trials in exchange for a little more fruition in the understanding of the wonders of God, for I see that he who understands Him best loves and praises Him best.

-“I do not mean that I should not be pleased and think myself very happy to be in Heaven, even if I were in the lowest place there; for, as one who had merited such a place in hell, I should be receiving a great favor from the Lord if He were to grant me a place in Heaven at all: may it please His Majesty to bring me there and not to regard my grievous sins” (St. Teresa of Avila).

-To those who love God in truth and have put aside the things of this world death must come very gently. I think, too, that this experience has been of great help to me in teaching me where our true home is and in showing me that on earth we are but pilgrims; it is a great thing to see what is awaiting us there and to know where we are going to live.

-For if a person has to go and settle in another country, it is a great help to him in bearing the trials of the journey if he has found out that it is a country where he will be able to live in complete comfort. It also makes it easy for us to die if we think upon heavenly things and try to have our conversation in Heaven. This is a great advantage for us: merely to look up towards the heavens makes the soul recollected, for, as the Lord has been pleased to reveal some part of what is there, the thoughts dwells upon it (St. Teresa of Avila).

-There are many sins which we can no longer commit, and many which we have no temptation to commit. This is like a faint beginning of heaven. It is enough to be a joy to us that the mere possibilities of sin are on the move, that any capability of offending do has already become dead already. It cheers us on. It melts our hearts. It is a fresh spring of love within us. To be unable to offend God again is part of saint's desire of heaven.

-What kind of a life shall we lead in heaven? First of all, it is a life of inability to sin. There will be no more possible discomforts of conscience. It will be the joy of our life to be secure that all we do will be sweet music and beautiful worship in the sight of God. But this is not all. Our life will be one of facility in worship, of an endless unintermitting inundation of spiritual sweetness.

-It is hard to keep our thoughts up to God while still on earth. But in heaven no sort of effort will be required, but we shall enjoy a most delightful facility in the most sublime and ecstatic contemplations, with the keenest

sensations of delight, of which raptures of the world's most glorious artists, in the heat of their grand creations, is but an unworthy figure. All this will be continuous and unwearied, and yet ever gushing, as it were, afresh and anew from the glad soul, accompanied with such magnificent expansions both of intellect and heart as are beyond our present dreams, even when they are boldest and wildest.

-Then think of the life of peace in heaven. Imagination can hardly picture to itself a life without trouble or distrust, a life without a past to excite regrets, or a present to gall with a yoke, or a future all dim and misty in its uncertainty. The sleep of happy honest labor is an image of this delicious calm.

-The starry skies at soundless midnight give us a feeling which we cannot express, but which helps us to a notion of the utter peace of that blissful Hereafter. It is like no other; for it is a participation in that peace of God which overpasses human understanding. An ocean of heavenliest peace, bound in mysterious and glad tranquility, inviting us to sail upon its bosom, onward into brightness forever and forever.

-Then, after the resurrection, there are the pleasures of sense. Who can tell the power of enjoyment which there will be in the glorified bodies of the just, raised up in the likeness of Jesus? In this world, the senses seem stronger than God, because we do not yet see him. They lead all men captive with a passionate captivity. The world goes wild with the intoxicating enchantments of sensual pleasures. How exquisite they are!

-Think of the delight of the eye in contemplating the beauty of nature, and expatiating over magnificent scenery, or feeding itself on some fascinating work of art. Or, again, reflect how the ear revels in sweet sounds and entranced with the spells of music. Hours pass, and the lapse of time is all unheeded. Or, again, think with what exquisite tranquil encroachment the odors of sweet flowers and aromatic gums steal over us, and dislodge cares and weariness, and revive the drooping soul, and put a new life into us, and a life of such peculiar spell-bound gentleness and love. All these things will be in heaven. They will be unintermittingly. Only they will exist in infinitely higher degrees than are possible on earth.

-Yet all this is but a little thing to say of the senses of the glorified body. Countless kinds of new and unimaginable pleasures will be opened out to us there, each one far surpassing those of earth, pleasures worthy of the ecstasies of heaven, worthy of the magnificence of God.

-But the sweetest of all earthly joys is love; and the life in heaven is a life of love. Love, more than any human passion, has controlled the destinies of the world. It has been historically the greatest natural motive power on earth. Not to have God to love - is hell. Yet the love of all passionate lovers upon earth, thrown together, could not equal the love of the lowest and the calmest soul in heaven. Eternity will give us new powers of loving. We shall love with some great unconceivable love, of which parental, filial, conjugal, fraternal loves only represent some portions or some elements. The jubilee of this immense power of loving is inconceivable.

-Then consider that the whole of this ocean of affection will always be poured out gloriously in the immortal vehemence of a spotless love, unutterably blissful because unutterably holy. We all crave for love. Our whole nature expands under its influence. It gives new characters. It converts the deepest misery into happiness, and it makes heroes out of cowards.

-So far as our pleasure is concerned, there seem to be no limits to our capabilities of receiving love. What an amount of it we can drink in even now and here, while our souls are undeveloped, and our lives narrow, and our hearts shallow, compared with what they will be! Surely, then, in heaven we shall be able to absorb oceans of love; and as surely there will be oceans to absorb. **Each one of the Blessed will love us with a might of love far beyond all earthly love; and the Blessed are innumerable.**

-The wide, strong, fiery natures of the angels will be poured out upon us in love, a love which we cannot now define, but a love more deep, more beautiful, and more possessing than human love; and of these angels there are legions upon legions.

-Who can think of the bliss of that love with which the sinless Mother of God will endow us? No fond earthly mother, rapt in the exclusiveness of an excessive love, ever hung over her first-born and her only-born with a fondness like to that of which the Mother of Jesus will testify to each of the Redeemed. How we shall share in the love which Peter once enjoyed upon the shores of Gennesareth, or John when he leaned upon the Bosom in which the Sacred heart was beating? We have no measure for a bliss like that. Yet all this put together, saints, angels, Mary, Human Heart of Jesus, it is not such a love as the one which still awaits us.

-Glorified though we shall be, we shall still be little, finite, weak; and yet out of every perfection of the immense, omnipotent, all-knowing, all-holy, incomprehensible, jubilant God there will flow into us torrents of

bewildering love in perpetual inundations, overpowering us with thrills of a vast new life, taking away our breath, and suspending all the faculties of our souls far, far up amid unthought-of regions of light, in ecstasies of an incomparable beatitude, like the Beatitude of God Himself. We shall be eternally swallowed up in eternal love.

-The exceeding imperturbable contentment of heaven is another feature of its life. All the joys, whether singly or collectively, are more satisfying than we believed they could be. Widened, deepened, strengthened as our natures are, each joy fills our whole nature to the brim. Yet there is no satiety, even while there is no craving. A delightful hunger for more, and more, and always more, has possession of us; but it is only the joyous, fresh, vital feeling of hunger, and in no wise a sense of want.

-Each joy seems every moment as if it could not be surpassed, and yet every moment it is surpassing itself, and every moment being surpassed by some other joy. That immortality should be able to endure such vehement pulsations of gladness will be an eternal miracle. Eternal! This is the last feature of this blissful life. It is a bliss which shall have no end, because it is out of His bliss who had no beginning. It is a glory always in excess yet always equable, immutable yet not monotonous, exhilarating yet immortally calm, multitudinous yet simple and undistracting, an incredible ecstasy incredibly new for an incredible eternity.

-What a life to lead! It is the poor part of heaven. It is the minor joys of heaven. It is the secondary accompaniments of the real grand joy. It is heaven with the heaven left out, heaven without the Beatific Vision of our dear God. Yet what a life does even this faint, think, weak, overclouded, lower part of heaven present to our minds!

-If we were continually meditating upon it until we familiarized ourselves with it, would it not marvelously draw us onward toward God? Would it not exorcise many a spirit of worldliness which now dwells contentedly amidst the unrealities of our spiritual life? Above all, would it not breed in us a far deeper abhorrence of sin, a far more genuine spirit of inward repentance, a far more abiding sorrow for our miserable, ungenerous past? Who are they who have reached that fair haven of their peace? Those, and those alone, who on earth took up the Cross, and took it up daily, and so, and only so, and always so, have followed Christ.

-Heaven is not related to a good life as a medal is related to a school examination; it is related to a good life as knowledge to study. By the mere fact that we apply ourselves intellectually, we become learned (Bishop Fulton Sheen).

-Heaven has its beginnings here in true peace of mind in union with Divine Life, but it does not finish here either.

-St. Elizabeth of the Blessed Trinity once wrote to her sister, saying: "Heaven is in the inmost recesses of our soul. Is not this a simple and consoling thought? Come what may, in the midst of all your cares as the mother of a family." She wrote further: "You can always withdraw to the solitude, when you are distracted by your numerous duties; you can, if you will, refresh yourself at any moment, by descending to the depths of your soul where the Divine Guest has His dwelling."

-It may well be that our body is only a veil that prevents us from seeing God; between Grace in this life and the glory of Heaven, there is nothing but a thin curtain of the flesh. At the moment of death, this veil will be withdrawn; and then we shall see Him whom we unseeingly possessed on earth whenever we were in the state of Grace.

-And do you, O holy angels, honor the mother of your King whilst you adore the child of our Virgin, Him whom both you and we acknowledge as our Sovereign Lord, who is the Redeemer of our race and the Restorer of your city. To the same, therefore, so sublime with you in heaven, so humble with us on earth, let us all unite in showing the reverence which His Majesty requires, and the honor and glory which is due to His condescension both now and forevermore (St. Bernard).

-We live in hope, my brethren, and we do not lose heart in our present tribulation, because we are looking forward to the enjoyment of everlasting bliss (St Bernard, Sermon on Psalm 90).

-I tell confidently that the principal and surest approach to the longed-for haven is the manner of life you are living here. For a divine vocation and supernatural holiness form the necessary preparation for our entrance into glory (St Bernard, Sermon on Psalm 90).

-Nevertheless, just as "the wicked shall see and shall be angry, he shall gnash his teeth and pine away" (for the blessed shall be called up to heaven before the reprobate are cast down into the dungeons of everlasting fire, in order that the latter may be more fiercely tormented by the sight of the glory they have lost): so "the just shall see and shall rejoice," beholding the misery from which they have escaped (St. Bernard).

-For, plainly, the thanksgiving of the just would not be so magnificent, unless along with the inconceivable happiness which they enjoy, they also

beheld "the reward of the wicked," from a participation in which (as they faithfully and gratefully remember) it is only the pure mercy of the Redeemer that has saved them. Neither would the wicked be consumed with such envious rage, if they did not see the just ascending before their eyes to the kingdom of an unutterable bliss, while they groan to hear themselves condemned to the stench, the horror, and the everlasting fires of the infernal pit, and to all the long agonies of a death that is immortal (St. Bernard).

-Perfect charity desires nothing, thirst for nothing, save what is supreme, the sovereign Good, and exclaims with all eagerness of ardent love, "For what have I in heaven but Thee, and besides Thee, I want nothing on earth" (St. Bernard)

-Necessity, as I have remarked, proceeds from the weakness of the flesh, and cupidity from the hunger and forgetfulness of the heart. For therefore does the soul hunger after foreign bread because she has forgotten to eat her own: that is to say, the reason why she covets earthly delights is because she neglects to consider the heavenly (St. Bernard).

-Lord, it is good for me to be in tribulation, provided that I have Thee as my companion. Yes, it is better to be afflicted with Thee than without Thee to reign, or to feast without Thee, or without Thee to be glorified. It is better for me, O Lord, to embrace Thee in tribulation, better to endure with Thee the furnace of affliction, than without Thee to enjoy even the bliss of paradise. "For what have I in heaven but Thee and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth" (St. Bernard, Sermon on Psalm 90)?

-Worms though we are and vilest dust, yet is it not with us as with living stones that the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem have to be repaired? And what eagerness, think you, do these citizens of paradise yearn to see the integrity of their city restored? Oh, how anxiously do they await the arrival of the rational stones with which the fissures in their wall shall be built up! How they speed to and fro between God and us, most faithfully representing our groans to Him, and most lovingly bearing back to us His graces (St. Bernard, Sermon For Christmas Eve)!

-Therefore, my brethren, since all the court of heaven desires and expect us, let us run not as at an uncertainty. Let us run by holy desires and by our progress in virtue. For to grow in sanctity is to hasten forward (St. Bernard, Sermon For Christmas Eve).

-The happiness of heaven is called light because of its purity, peace because of its tranquility, a fountain because of its eternity and abundance (St. Bernard, Sermon For Christmas Eve).

-We must strive to find happiness that does not vanish every time a tragedy, or even a mild reversal in our expectations, occurs. We cannot surrender our souls as hostages to the whims of this world's waves, to float upon them like helpless corks. Jesus offers us a happiness and a joy grounded in trust in his Father and in the faith that, despite appearances to the contrary, He really is there with us, although His manner may be silent and discreet, there watching over our welfare and guiding our path toward "the other shore", the Kingdom of Heaven. The stakes are high, and the price in self-surrendering trust utterly worth paying.

-Curiosity for the things of heaven thus breeds ignorance of herself and this self-ignorance in turn renders her susceptible to pride, the presumption that she is greater than she truly is, that she is already in this life capable of that direct vision afforded only to those who have been purified by their gradual, graced conformation to the Word. While on her earthly pilgrimage, Bernard warns, the Bride must not, in the words of Proverbs, "investigate too curiously the things which are in heaven lest the searcher of majesty be overwhelmed by glory" (Pr 25:27).

-On St. Bernard's reading of St. Benedict's steps, the monk who has scaled this highest step of humility is the model of humble self-knowledge, one who has reached the first step of Truth by honest self-judgment. Ceaselessly judging himself in accordance with the Truth, in the sight of the divine Judge before whom he will one day be required to give an account of himself, he is fully and ever aware of his fallen sinfulness and weakness and therefore shielded against the temptations of *amor propriae excellentiae* and its delusions of superior holiness.

In contrast to the Pharisee of Christ's parable who proudly exalts himself, boasting of his own superior holiness and deriding all others as inferior to himself, this monk is like the Publican of the same parable who ceaselessly humbles himself before God, acknowledging and confessing his sinfulness and unworthiness of heaven.

-If they have allowed their eyes to wander over their brother, apprehended his curiosity, and therefore come to judge him less holy than they once supposed, they are guilty of the very vice they have seen and scorned in their brother. So, by a sudden reversion to the second-person, St. Bernard returns the charge against his readers: If you, oh man, would attend more diligently to yourself, I would be surprised if you found

time to ponder anyone else! Listen, O curious one, to Solomon! Hearken, you fool, to the words of Wisdom: "Guard your heart," he says, "with all your care" (Prv 4:23) that you may direct all your senses to protecting the source of your life! Where do you wander away from yourself, O curious one? To whom will you entrust yourself in the meanwhile? Do you dare to lift your eyes to heaven, you who have sinned against heaven? Look to the earth that you may know yourself! The earth will show you who you are, for you are earth and to earth you will return.

-Plainly, Bernard regards even the slightest relaxation of the bodily discipline Benedict enjoins as a matter worthy of the severest rebuke. Yet why should this be? What could possibly be so dangerous about an occasional, fleeting glance at one's brothers? Bernard's answer is to be found in his three biblical example of curiosity. It is not always wrong, the abbot allows, for the monk to raise his eyes from the earth, provided he recalls the true knowledge of his own sinful misery. If he raises his eyes humbly to heaven to seek God's aid in his own sinfulness and weakness, he does well. If, again, he lifts his eyes to see in his brother's heart the same misery he sees in his own, and therefore learns to help his brother in their shared weakness, he is to be commended, not condemned. Lifting his eyes in humility or mercy, the monk will not descend the first step of pride but rather ascend the first two steps of truth: "If, after considering the time, the place, and the reason, you lift your eyes to your own needs or those of your brother, not only do I not blame you, but I praise you highly!"

-Consequently, having deceived himself as to the truth regarding both himself and God, Lucifer exalted his self-will over the will of God and seized equality with God, only to be cast forth by the just judgment of God from the stable peace of heaven to a life of restless misery apart from his Maker. In this supreme, primordial, and paradigmatic act of creaturely pride, Satan's false knowledge of himself and his Creator drove him to the contempt of both himself and God.

-Exalting himself against the divine will, he despised the Most High as the rightful Lord of all creation, greeted his Creator's lavish generosity with ingratitude, and condemned himself to wander eternally in misery apart from the God who created him and in whom alone he could find his true and lasting rest. Yet, in this same act of pride, Lucifer also revealed his false knowledge of and contempt for his fellow rational creatures, both angelic and human.

-For in aspiring to rival the Son's lordship and to claim for himself the creaturely worship rightly owed him, Satan came to regard his fellow angels, and likewise future human beings, as creatures made to serve and

adore him rather than their Creator. In persuading some to join his vainglorious revolt, he moved them to turn their hearts from God to himself, and so to share in his own eternity of proud misery. For Bernard, that is, Satan could not see his fellow creatures as fellow citizens in the kingdom of heaven, but only as subservient subjects to be valued only insofar as they would mouth his praise and so feed his delusional self-understanding as the rival of the Most High. In the abbot's words, **Lucifer preferred to "reign over others in misery rather than to be subject with others to God in happiness" and "to rule over the sons of darkness rather than to share the lot of the sons of light."**

-Behind their rhetoric, the sophisticated Protestant and the humanist are quite aware that there is no room for Heaven, nor for eternity, in their universe; their thoroughly Liberal sensibility, again, looks not to transcendent, but to an immanent source for its ethical doctrine, and their agile intelligence is even capable of turning this *faute de mieux* into a positive apology. It is – in this view – both "realism" and "courage" to live without hope of eternal joy nor fear of eternal pain; **to one endowed with the Liberal view of things, it is not necessary to believe in Heaven or hell to lead a "good life" in this world. Such is the total blindness of the Liberal mentality to the meaning of death.**

-No sensitive observer is unaware that men, in the Nihilist era more than ever before, have made of earth an image of Hell; and those who are aware of dwelling in the Abyss do not hesitate to call their state Hell. The torture and miseries of this life are indeed a foretaste of Hell, even as the joys of a Christian life – joys which the Nihilist cannot even imagine, so remote are they from his experience – are a foretaste of Heaven.

-The world reproaches the Christian for believing in such an unpleasant reality as Hell; but it is neither perversity nor "sadism" that leads him to do so, but rather faith and experience. **Only he, perhaps, can fully believe in Hell who fully believes in Heaven and life in God; for only he who has some idea of that life can have any notion of what its absence will mean.**

-For most men today "life" is small thing, a fleeting thing of small affirmation and small denial, veiled in comforting illusions and the hopeful prospect of ultimate nothingness; such men will know nothing of Hell until they live in it. **But God loves even such men too much to allow them simply to "forget" Him and "pass away" into nothingness, out of His Presence which alone is life to men; He offers, even to those in Hell, His Love which is torment to those who have not prepared themselves in this life to receive it.** Many, we know, are tested and purified in those flames

and made it fit by them to dwell in the Kingdom of Heaven; but others, with the demons for whom Hell was made, must dwell there eternally.

-God has called us, not to the modern "heaven" of repose and sleep, but to the full and deifying glory of the sons of God; and if we, whom our God thinks worthy to receive it, rejects this call, - then better for us the flames of Hell, the torment of that last and awful proof of man's high calling and of God's unquenchable Love for all men, than the nothingness to which men of small faith, and the Nihilism of age, aspire. **Nothing less than Hell is worthy of man, if he be not worthy of Heaven.**

-The absurdist, though he denies human immortality, at least recognizes that the question is central one. It is possible to be indifferent to this question only if one has no love for truth, or if one's love for truth has been obscured by more deceptive and immediate things, whether pleasure, business, culture, worldly knowledge, or any of the other things the world is content to accept in place of truth. The whole meaning of life depends on the truth – or falsity – of the doctrine of human immortality.

-To the absurdist, this doctrine is false. And that is one of the reasons why his universe is so strange: there is no hope in it; death is its highest god. Apologists for the absurd see nothing but "courage" in this view, the "courage" of men willing to live without the ultimate "consolation" of eternal life; and they look down on those who require the "reward" of Heaven to justify their conduct on earth. It is not necessary, so they think, to believe in Heaven and Hell in order to lead a "good life" in this world. And their argument is a persuasive one even to many who call themselves Christians and are yet quite ready to renounce eternal life for an "existential" view that believes only in the present moment.

-Man's freedom has been given to him to choose between the true God and himself, between the true path to deification whereon the self is humbled and crucified in this life to be resurrected and exalted in God in eternity, and the false path of self-deification which promises exaltation in this life but ends in the Abyss. These are the only two choices, ultimately, open to the freedom of man; and upon them have been founded the two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man, which may be discriminated only by the eye of faith in this life, but shall be separated in the future life as Heaven and Hell. It is clear to which of them modern civilization belongs, with its Promethean effort to build a kingdom of earth in defiance of God; but what should be clear enough in earlier modern thinkers becomes absolutely explicit in Nietzsche. The old commandment of "Thou shalt," has become outmoded; the new commandment is "I will."

-Why do men disbelieve in Hell? It is because they do not believe in Heaven, that is to say, because they do not believe in life, and in the God of life, because they find God's creation absurd and wish that it did not exist. The Starrets Zossima, in the Brothers Karamazov, speaks of one kind of such men.

*There are some who remain proud and fierce even in hell....They have cursed themselves, cursing God and life....They cannot behold the living God without hatred, and they cry out that the God of life should be annihilated, that God should destroy Himself and His own creation. And they will burn in the fire of their own wrath for ever and yearn for death and annihilation. But they will not attain to death....*

-We must indeed choose between the Christian view of things, whose center is God and whose end is the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, and the absurd, the Satanic view of things, whose center is the fallen self and whose end is Hell, in this life and in the life to come.

-On Bernard's reading of the *Rule*, it is here, in the third step of humility, that one ascending this ladder enters the monastic enclosure for it is here that he submits in obedience to a superior. Conversely, Bernard suggests, it is in the tenth step of pride that the monk who has despised his brothers and scorned the rule of his superiors must be expelled from the monastic enclosure.

-Once more, the monk's pattern of descent imitates that of Lucifer. When Lucifer revolted against the rule of his Superior, Christ, and so violated the concord of the citizens of heaven, he was justly expelled from the paradise of heaven. In the same fashion, when the monk revolts against the rule of his superiors, and so disturbs the concord of the monastic community, he must eventually be compelled to leave the paradise of the cloister, either by his own decision or by that of his superiors.

-Consecrated virgins are mothers *par excellence*: i.e., those whose mission is to serve, to love, to suffer without ever exacting an earthly reward. They do not give birth to new human beings but they collaborate with God in bringing souls to heaven (By Alice Von Hildebrand, *The Mission of Women in the Church – The Treason of the Nuns, Inside The Vatican*, August-September 2015 issue).

-All who suffer in the present world and are in a hurry to meet their eternal destiny certainly have counseling. For there are who neglect their own lives by satisfying their transitory desires; they either misunderstand eternity or, even if they understand it correctly, scorn it; they have nothing to suffer, and they do not even know how to take counsel. They have lost

heaven and do not take it into account; woe to these sad ones who consider themselves happy. They never raise their minds' eyes to the light of truth for which they were created; they never allow their hearts to contemplate the eternal fatherland; it is themselves whom they abandon in the things that occupy them. Instead of the fatherland, they love the exile that is forced upon them, and they rejoice in the blindness that they suffer, as though it were the clear light of day.

-The chosen ones, however, know that all transitory things amount to nothing; their minds' eyes searches for the light for which they were created. Nothing but God can satisfy them; their thoughts are tired out with this search and rest in the hope and contemplation of their Creator, desiring to be numbered with the citizens of heaven. Every one of them who yet remains embodied in this world rises above it mentally, complaining of the dust of exile being suffered and desiring the heavenly fatherland with ever-renewed transport of loved. Tearfully they realize that they have lost what lasts forever, and they take comfort in the project of scorning the temporary things they are involved in. The more astute they become in this project of abandoning goods that do not last, the more sorrow they feel at not yet reaching that which remains forever.

-Job was the greatest of the Easterners. We too will become the greatest of the Easterners when we become united by means of the rays of our discretion, as far as it is possible for us, with the spirits who stay in the eastern light, forcing the clouds of fleshly decay to disperse. That is why St. Paul says, "Our conversation is in heaven." Anyone who goes after the defective things of time is riding for a fall, but anyone who desires heaven proves that he lives in the East. He is the greatest of the Easterners, not of the Westerners, for his ambitions lie not among the deeds of those who seek lowly and passing things but among the choirs of the citizens of heaven.

-"Satan answered and said, 'I have gone about the earth; I have walked upon it back and forth.'" The idea of a circle or ring is usually meant to signify anxiety or strain. Satan was therefore under a strain going about the earth, because he had scorned the condition of quiet in the heights of heaven. Since he implies that he did not fly through the earth but walked upon it back and forth, he demonstrates how heavy was the burden of sin that bore him down the depths. Therefore, he went about the earth, walking back and forth, for he had fallen away from the habit of flight belonging to spiritual powers; weighed down by the burden of his malice, he had come forth to circle and strain. Therefore, the psalmist says about his fellows, "The wicked go about in circles," for they do not like interior things, and they are exhausted by the strain of exterior things (From

the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.” Why are we told that Satan left the presence of the Lord? For how can anyone leave him who is everywhere? Is that not why we are told, “I fill heaven and earth”?

-Moreover, it is written of his Spirit, “The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world.” The Lord also said, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool.” Again it is written of him, “He holds heaven in his open hand, and the whole earth is shut up in his fist.”

-Therefore he is himself outside of all the things he has created in every place. For that which is grasped inside of him who grasps from the outside is held fast” (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-As often as he was hit he praised God with patient words, and in so doing he fly his darts at the adversary’s breast, and the wounds he inflicted were more serious than those he sustained. For in the wounds he sustained he lost earthly possessions, but by accepting these wounds humbly, he advanced his place in heaven.

-“Where did you come?” In broad daylight Satan is questioned about his conduct, because the subterfuges of the hidden enemy are uncovered in the light of revealed wisdom.

-“I have gone about the earth; I have walked upon it back and forth.” Indeed, from Adam until the coming of the Lord he made all the Gentile people follow him. He has gone about and walked back and forth; yes, he has left his evil footprints on the hearts of all the Gentiles. When he fell from the highest heaven; he took over legal possession of human minds, for they were willing, and he bound them with the chains of his own sin” (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“While he was still speaking, another came up and said, ‘The fire of God fell down from heaven on the sheep and herdsmen and burnt them up. I alone escaped to tell you.’”

-By the word heaven in this passage, therefore, we readily understand priests, or Pharisees, or teachers of the law, who, since they fulfill a heavenly function in the eyes of men and women, seem to shine, as it were, from above.

-They were exceedingly active against our Redeemer, however, and so it was as though fire fell from heaven when from these very ones who were thought to be teachers of the truth the flames of envy burst out to mislead

the unknowing people. For the gospels witness to the fact that they were envious of the Teacher of truth and they were looking for a chance to hand him over, but, fearing the people, they dared not let it be known what was afoot" (From the *Moralia*, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“We know too that unclean spirits that fell from heaven above wander about between the sky and the land. They are all the more envious of the fact that the hearts of men and women go up to heaven, knowing that they themselves have been thrown down from there because of the defilement of their pride.

-“Since, therefore, the flames of envy are enkindled by the powers of the air against the purity of our thoughts; fire fell down from heaven upon the sheep. For those powers often set the pure thoughts of our minds on fire with lust; just as the fire burns up the sheep, they trouble the pure impulses of the mind with temptations of going to excess. It is called the fire of God because, though not caused by God, it is enkindled by his permission. Since it is by a sudden burst of power that even the caution exercised by our minds is sometimes defeated, it is as though they put to the sword even the servants who were standing guard" (From the *Moralia*, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“Why is it that almighty God looks down so severely in this world on those whom he chose so ineffably before the world existed, unless, as is crystal clear to the faithful people, life is hard for them here below precisely because he knows how to reward them in heaven; they become outcasts and even contemptible, because he is secretly leading them to incomprehensible riches. Let us all gather from this what the enemies of God are to suffer in that world if his friends suffer so in this, how they are to be punished who will be accused at the judgment seat, if the life of those who are praised and defended by the Judge himself is made so bitter" (From the *Moralia*, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“Who would have thought how much he bears even until now, when he reigns over the hearts of his faithful ones from heaven? Every day, indeed, he suffers from all the hardships his chosen ones suffers from lawless people. Although he is the head of this body that, as you know, we are, and he freely lifts that head above all creation, he still feels the wounds inflicted on his body by lawless people, since he still keeps that body here below. But why do I speak of what people without faith do, when even inside the Church there are plenty of carnal-minded people who act like thugs and attack the Redeemer's life. Yes, there are those who, since they

cannot raise a sword, attack him with crooked actions" (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“The blindness of his act of pride weighs him down so heavily that he never again returns to those heavenly ranks of internal glory. Never again does he join the ranks of the dignitaries who stand about in the light, because the weight of his darkness always forces him down to the lowest regions. He remains an exile forever from that fraternity in the heavenly fatherland” (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“Let that night be all alone and deserve no praise.” It is as if he pled in these words, “Let the sin we have committed remain alone, lest it should be boasted of and defended and accuse us all the more in the judge’s eyes.” We certainly did not have to sin, but for heaven’s sake let us not add more sins, and let us leave those we have committed by themselves” (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-“The one who is eager to desire the eternal courts should indeed fittingly grow tired of the love of the things of time; the less acute one’s eagerness for the world becomes, the more ardent grows one’s love of God. Obviously, if one attains that love perfectly, one also totally leaves the world behind. One is fundamentally dead to things of time when wafted higher to the life of heaven by the inspiration of eternity” (From the Moralia, a Moral reflection on the Book of Job, by St. Gregory the Great).

-Since there is division of labor in this life for us, in the other there will certainly be various degrees of dignity. So when the merit of one exceeds that of another here below, in heaven the reward of one will transcend that of another. Therefore, Truth says in the gospel, “In My Father’s house there are many mansions.” Nevertheless, in some way even the variety of rewards in these many mansions will be harmonious, because the power that will associate us will be so great in that kingdom of peace that what each one does not receive himself he will rejoice in having received through someone else.

-The soul of the converted sinner is, however, affected by the memory of his guilt in such a way in heaven that he is not overwhelmed by shame on account of that memory.

-The quiet ones know that the mind is in no way attracted to thoughts of heaven if it is occupied continually with lowly thoughts, because of the distraction of duties.

-The apostate angel, of course, was thrust down to earth out of heaven; on earth he lies in wait for the minds of righteous people, who prepare their own banquet of good works; his ambush is set on the very path of their activity.

-“Furtively my ear sensed the passages of his whisper.” The ear of the heart furtively sensed the passage of a whisper from heaven, because the inspired mind instantly and secretly knew the subtle tones of the interior voice. Unless, you see, one distances oneself from external desires, one cannot grasp what is internal.

-It is important to notice that Jacob saw angels in his sleep, after he had put a rock under his head. Yes, indeed, he rested from external activity and got through to the internal, because his mind (the guiding principle of a person) was intent on the observance of the imitation of his Redeemer. To put the rock under one’s head certainly means to cling to Christ in one’s mind. Those you see who have made themselves distant from the activities of the present life but who are not absorbed in the love of heaven may sleep, but they cannot see angels, because they disdain the idea of having the rock under their head. There are those indeed who escape worldly actions but who do not practice any virtues. They do not see what is internal, because they do not put their head on the rock but on the ground. It often happens that no matter how effectively they distance themselves from external activity, in their idleness they accumulate so much the more clamor of impure thoughts.

-“I was overtaken by fear and trembling, and all my bones were shaken.” People often think that their actions are of some importance because they do not know how exacting the judgment of their interior Judge is. When, however, they are taken up into the contemplation of heaven, after what they see there, their secure presumption is somehow weakened. Their fear in God’s presence is all the greater the more they realize how unworthy even their good works are of the attention of him at whom they are looking.

-That is why Manoah became afraid when he saw the angel and said, “We shall certainly, because we have seen God.” His wife thereupon comforted him with the words, “If the Lord wanted to kill us, He would not have accepted a holocaust and libation from our hands.” How is it that the man grows fearful at the vision of the angel and the woman take courage, unless it be that whenever heaven is revealed to us, the soul indeed trembles for fear while hope takes courage? The reason hope is raised to greater courage when the spirit is troubled is that hope is the first

to see things that are above. So when the mind is raised up and sees the high secrets of heaven, all the solidity of human muscle is shaken.

-It often happens that while the soul's desire is for interior realities and it is searching only for heaven, it is struck without warning by the pleasures of the flesh, and it is cast down and cut off from itself. The one who boasted of having overcome the obstacles of human weakness lies prostrate from a sudden wound and groans.

-If there were no longer bond or free, it does not mean that, in freeing man from the Law by grace, the Church brought about an economic or social revolution.

-In fact, she ignores them, because her kingdom is not of this world. Although the Christian lives upon this earth, his life as a Christian is spent in a 'city' which is not the earth, but heaven. →→

-It affects at the same time both its foundation and its extent. It affects its foundation, because, if it rests on the common acceptance of a religious belief transcending reason, it can be made universal only through faith. But, the content of faith is not a knowledge which can rationally be made universal. Christian apologetics will, of course, bend all its efforts to place reason on the side of faith (Etienne Gilson, foreword from the City of God).

-Inasmuch as he believes in Christ, the Christian, we can say with St. Paul, lives not upon the earth but in heaven. Here, a new difficulty arises. For, if such is the faith of the Christian, the more intense it is, the more it will draw him away from a love of this world, and especially from a love of the city.

-Exteriorly, Christians differ in no way from the other men whose cities, language and customs they share. They are not men without a country.

-'They live, each in his native land – but as though they were not really home there. They share in all duties like citizens, yet suffer hardships like strangers (Etienne Gilson, foreword from the City of God).

-In every case it is neither the people nor the State which are condemned as such; rather, they are condemned because they define their end as on this earth and incorporate themselves into the city of the Devil, whose law they accept. They are evil only insofar as they aim at being exclusively of the earth; this is enough to exclude them from the City of God.

-The true definition of the earthly city is, therefore, entirely different. It is not a question of determining whether a man lives or does not live in one of the societies into which the world is actually and inevitably divided, but

whether he himself defines his last end as on earth or in heaven. In the first case, he is a citizen of the earthly city; in the second, of the heavenly City.

-Those which are organized toward the attainment of no more than earthly happiness are for that very reason incorporated into the earthly city, namely, the city of the Devil; those which are organized toward the attainment of heavenly happiness are incorporated thereby into the heavenly City, namely, the City of God.

-The exact meaning of the earthly city is, therefore, the city of the sons of the earth, that is, of the society whose members, bound as they are by their exclusive and preponderant love of the things of this world, consider the earth as their unique and true City.

-Just as human society as such is not identified with the earthly city, so the Church is not identified with the City of God. The City of God, as we have seen, includes all those predestined to heavenly happiness, and only those. This, however, is not the case with the Church. No matter how strictly we conceive of the Church, there can still be men who will one day enjoy the vision of God, but who do not, as yet, belong to the Church. St. Paul before his conversion is a typical example: he was not in the Church of Christ, but he was predestined citizen of the City of God. On the other hand, there are within the Church Christians who are not destined to heavenly happiness; these are members of the Church, but they are not citizens of the City of God. Nevertheless, just as certain people are incorporated into the earthly city because of their prevailing will, so the Church is, in fact and by right in the very essence of her will, the incarnation of the City of God (Etienne Gilson, foreword from the City of God).

-Where shall we find a society worthy of the name and sufficiently one to grant us peace? Shall it be the family? The city? The earth? Shall it be, for instance, the unification of the world under one empire? That has been tried and the failure is manifest. It is naïve to think that the unification of the world would suppress wars.

-Wherever we turn, this earth offers no refuge for peace outside the Christian hope of a peace which finds its fulfillment, not on this earth, but in the beatitude of heaven. That is the reason why Christians, even though still in this world, are already living in the next. They already share in its peace, but they can do so only by participating in the order from which all peace is derived. This order itself presupposes the knowledge of the truth, which one day the vision of God will bestow, a knowledge which is

already sufficiently assured in this life through faith alone. At any rate, it does assure it.

-That is exactly what St. Augustine says in one of those celebrated formulae of his wherein is contained the sum total of his doctrine: 'In order that the human mind, haunted by the desire of knowledge, might not lapse into the misery of error because of its weakness, there is necessary a divine teaching authority which it can in securely obey; there is also necessary the grace of God that we may truly obey.' Grace does not destroy liberty; rather, it is the cornerstone of liberty. Thus, in this land of exile, where the mortal body hides from man the vision of God, faith alone is the guide.

-'The peace of the heavenly City is the ordered and harmonious society of those enjoying God and enjoying one another in God.' This is the order and harmony, however, is due to the submission to and the acceptance of the eternal Law, brought about here below through faith (Etienne Gilson, foreword from the City of God).

-Nothing could be really lost on earth save what one would be ashamed to take to heaven (St. Augustine).

-God who gives the Kingdom of Heaven with its happiness only to those who believe in Him, while He gives the earthly city to both believers and unbelievers alike, according to His Will which can never be unjust (St. Augustine, City of God, Book V *Providence and the Greatness of Rome*, Ch. 21).

-The main reason for selecting the Platonists is the superiority of their conceptions concerning one God, Creator of heaven and earth, and, hence, their greater reputation in the judgment of posterity. It is true that Aristotle, a disciple of Plato, was a man of extraordinary genius and wide reputation (though in literary style inferior to Plato) who easily surpassed many others, and no less true that the Peripatetic school (so called from Aristotle's custom of teaching while walking) attracted many disciples even while his teacher, Plato, was alive (St. Augustine, City of God, Book VIII (Abridged edition) *Classical Philosophy and Refined Paganism*, Ch. 12).

-These immortal and blessed beings who dwell in heaven (holy angels), if they do not love us and desire us to be happy, then, undoubtedly, we owe them no service; but, if they love us and desire our happiness, then, indeed, they will wish our happiness to flow from the same source as theirs. For, how could our happiness have any other source than theirs (St.

Augustine, *City of God*, Book X *Christian Worship Contrasted with Platonic Theology* Ch. 1)?

-In the Gospel, the Truth promises the saints and the faithful that they will be 'as angels of God in heaven' and they will go 'into everlasting life.' Now, if we are assured that we shall never lose that immortal blessedness, whereas the angels are not sure, then we shall be better off than they and not their equals. However, since the Truth cannot deceive and since we are to be their equals, the deduction is that the angels have the certain assurance that their happiness is eternal.

-Now the evil angels could not have had this same assurance. Since their happiness was destined to end, there was for them no eternal happiness about which to be certain. Thus, we are left with the conclusion that the angels were unequal at the time of creation, or, if equal, that the holy angels were given foreknowledge of their eternal blessedness after the fall of the others. Of course, it might be objected that our Lord's words in the Gospel concerning the Devil, 'He was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth,' should be interpreted to mean not only that he was a murderer from the beginning of the human race - when a man was created whom he could destroy by deception - but, also, that he did not stand in the truth even from the beginning of his own creation (St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XI *Creation and the Two Societies of Angels*, Ch. 13).

-The specific gravity of a body is, as it were, its love, whether it tends upward by its lightness or downward by its weight. For, a body is borne by gravity as a spirit by love, whichever way it is moved.

-It is, therefore, because we are men, created to the image of a Creator, whose eternity is true, His truth eternal, His love both eternal and true, a Creator who is the eternal, true, and lovable Trinity in whom there is neither confusion nor division, that, wherever we turn among the things which He created and conserved so wonderfully, we discovered His footprints, whether lightly or plainly impressed. For, not one of all these things which are below us would either be, or belong to a particular species, or follow and observe any order, unless it has been created by Him whose existence, wisdom, and goodness are all transcendent. →

-When, therefore, we contemplate His image in our very selves, let us, like the younger son in the Gospel, return to ourselves, rise and seek Him from whom we have departed by sin. In Him our existence will know no death, our knowledge embrace no error, our love meet no resistance.

-The City of God, not as it is in the pilgrimage of this mortal life but as it is in the eternity of heaven. There it consists of the holy and faithful angels who never were nor ever will be deserters from God (St. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XI *Creation and the Two Societies of Angels*, Ch. 28).

-On the one side are those who live according to man; on the other, those who live according to God. And I have said that, in a deeper sense, we may speak of two cities or two human societies, the destiny of the one being an eternal kingdom under God while the doom of the other is eternal punishment along with the Devil.

-Now, the first man born of the two parents of the human race was Cain. He belonged to the city of man. The next born was Abel, and he was of the City of God. Notice here a parallel between the individual man and the whole race. We all experience as individuals what the Apostle says: 'It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The fact is that every individual springs from a condemned stock and, because of Adam, must be first cankered and carnal, only later to become sound and spiritual by the process of rebirth in Christ.

-So, too, with the human race as a whole, as soon as human birth and death began the historical course of the two cities, the first to be born was a citizen of this world and only later came the one who was an alien in the city of men but at home in the City of God, a man predestined by grace and elected by grace. By grace an alien on earth, by grace he was a citizen of heaven. In and of himself, he springs from the common clay, all of which was under condemnation from the beginning, but which God held in His hands like a potter, to borrow the metaphor which the Apostle so wisely and deliberately uses. For, God could make 'from the same mass one vessel for honorable, another for ignoble use.' The first vessel to be made was 'for ignoble use.' Only later was there made a vessel for honorable use. And as with the race, so, as I have said, with the individual. First comes the clay that is only fit to be thrown away, with which we must begin, but in which we need not remain. Afterwards comes what is fit for use, that into which we can be gradually molded and in which, when molded, we may remain (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XV *The Two Cities in Early Biblical History*, Ch. 1).

-Now, it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, while Abel, as though he were merely a pilgrim on earth, built none. For, the true City of the saints is in heaven, though here on earth it produces citizens in whom it wanders as on a pilgrimage through time looking for the kingdom of eternity. When that day comes it will gather together all those who, rising in their bodies,

shall have that kingdom given to them in which, along with their Prince, the King of Eternity, they shall reign for ever and ever (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XV *The Two Cities in Early Biblical History*, Ch. 1).

-A man who sins is just that much worse if he rejoices in the loss of holiness; but one who suffers pain, and does not benefit by it, laments, at least, the loss of his health. Holiness and health are both good things and, because the loss of any good is more a cause for grief than for gladness (unless there be some higher compensation – the soul's holiness, to be sure, is preferable to the body's health), it is more in accordance with nature that a sinner grieve over his punishment than that he rejoice over his offense.

-Consequently, just as a man's happiness in abandoning the good of wrongdoing betrays his bad will, so his sorrowing for the good he has lost when in pain bears witness to the good of his nature. For, anyone who grieves over the loss of peace to his nature does so out of some remnant of that peace wherewith his nature loves itself. This is what happens – deservedly, too – in eternal punishment. In the midst of their agonies the evil and the godless weep for the loss of their nature's goods, knowing meanwhile, that God whose great generosity they contemned was perfectly just when He took these goods away.

-God, the wise Creator and just Ordainer of all natures, has made the mortal race of man the loveliest of all lovely things on earth. He has given to men good gifts suited to their existence here below. Among these is temporal peace, according to the poor limits of mortal life, in health, security, and human fellowship; and other gifts, too, needed to preserve this peace or regain it, once lost – for instance, the blessings that lie all around us, so perfectly adapted to our senses: daylight, speech, air to breathe, water to drink, everything that goes to feed, clothe, cure, beautify the body. These good gifts are granted, however, with the perfectly just understanding that whoever uses the goods which are meant for the mortal peace of mortal men, as these goods should be used, will receive more abundant and better goods – nothing less than immortal peace and all that goes with it, namely, the glory and honor of employing God and one's neighbor in God everlasting; but that whoever misuses his gifts on earth will both lose what he has and never receive the better gifts of heaven (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XIX *Philosophy and Christianity on Man's End*, Ch. 13).

-While the homes of unbelieving men are intent upon acquiring temporal peace out of the possessions and comforts of this temporal life, the families which live according to faith look ahead to the good things of

heaven promised as imperishable, and use material and temporal goods in the spirit of pilgrims, not as snares or obstructions to block their way to God, but simply as helps to ease and never to increase the burdens of this corruptible body which weighs down the soul.

-Both types of homes and their masters have this in common, that they must use things essential to this mortal life. But the respective purposes to which they put them are characteristic and very different (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XIX *Philosophy and Christianity on Man's End*, Ch. 17). pp. 463-464

-The heavenly City, on the contrary, knows and, by religious faith, believes that it must adore one God alone and serve Him with that complete dedication which the Greeks call *latreia* and which belongs to Him alone. As a result, she has been unable to share with the earthly city a common religious legislation, and has had no choice but to dissent on this score and so to become a nuisance to those who think otherwise. Hence, she has had to feel the weight of their anger, hatred, and violence, save those in those instances when, by sheer numbers and God's help, which never fails, she has been able to scare off her opponents.

-So long, then, as the heavenly City is wayfaring on earth, she invites citizens from all nations and all tongues, and unites them into a single pilgrim band. She takes no issue with that diversity of customs, laws, and traditions whereby human peace is sought and maintained. Instead of nullifying or tearing down, she preserves and appropriates whatever in the diversities of divers races is aimed at one and the same objective of human peace, provided only that they do not stand in the way of the faith and worship of the one supreme and true God.

-Thus, the heavenly City, so long as it is wayfaring on earth, not only makes use of earthly peace but fosters and actively pursues along with other human beings a common platform in regard to all that concerns our purely human life and does not interfere with faith and worship.

-Of course, though, the City of God subordinates this earthly peace to that of heaven. For this is not merely true peace, but, strictly speaking, for any rational creature, the only real peace, since it is, as I said, 'the perfectly ordered and harmonious communion of those who find their joy in God and in one another in God (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XIX *Philosophy and Christianity on Man's End*, Ch. 17).

-The City of God does not care in the least what kind of dress or social manners a man of faith affects, so long as these involve no offense

against the divine law. For it is faith and not fashions that brings us to God. Hence, when philosophers become Christians, the Church does not force them to give up their distinctive attire or mode of life which are no obstacle to religion, but only their erroneous teachings.

-She is entirely indifferent to that special mark... so long as it connotes nothing shameful or unbalanced.

-Or take the three modes of life: the contemplative, the active, the contemplative-active. A man can live the life of faith in any of these three and get to heaven. What is not indifferent is that he love truth and do what charity demands. No man must be so committed to contemplation as, in his contemplation, to give no thought to his neighbor's needs, nor so absorbed in action as to dispense with the contemplation of God.

-The attraction of leisure ought not to be empty-headed inactivity, but in the quest or discovery of truth, both for his own progress and for the purpose of sharing ungrudgingly with others. Nor should the man of action love worldly position or power (for all is vanity under the sun), but only what can be properly and usefully accomplished by means of such position and power, in the sense which I have already explained of contributing to the eternal salvation of those committed to one's care.

-No man is forbidden to pursue knowledge of the truth, for that is the purpose of legitimate leisure. But it is the ambition for the position of dignity which is necessary for government that is unbecoming, although, of course, the dignity itself and its use are not wrong in themselves. Thus, it is the love of study that seeks a holy leisure; and only the compulsion of charity that shoulders necessary activity. If no such burden is placed on one's shoulders, time should be passed in study and contemplation (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XIX *Philosophy and Christianity on Man's End*, Ch. 19).

-Even if we should grant that the resurrection of the body was once beyond belief, the fact is that the whole world now believes that the earthly body of Christ has been taken up to heaven. Learned and unlearned alike no longer doubt the resurrection of His flesh and His ascension into heaven, while there is but a handful of those who continue to be puzzled.

-Now, what all these believers believed was either credible or it was not. If it was credible, then the incredulous should ask themselves whether they are not rather ridiculous. If it was not credible and yet was believed, then we have something really incredible, namely that something incredible should be so universally believed. We have then two incredible: one, the

resurrection of any body in eternal life; the other, the world's belief in this incredibility. But notice. The same God predicted both before the event. Now, one of these incredibilities has become a fact before our very eyes, namely, the incredibility of the world believing something incredible. pp. 509-510 →

-Why, then, should we doubt that the other will be fulfilled, namely, that the incredible truth which the world believed will come to pass as surely as the others agree incredibility has already come to pass, namely, the incredibility of the world believing as incredible a thing – particularly since the same Scriptures which led the world to believe predicted both the impossibilities, both the one we see realized and the other we know by faith?

-What is really hard to believe, for anyone who stops to think, is the way the world came to believe. The fishermen whom Christ sent with the nets of faith into the sea of the world were men unschooled in the liberal arts and utterly untrained as far as education goes, men with no skill in the use of language, armed with no weapon of debate, plumed with no rhetorical power. Yet, the catch of this handful of fishermen took was enormous and marvelous. They hauled in fish of every sort, not excluding those rare specimens, the philosophers themselves.

-We may add, then, if you please, this third incredibility to the other two; in fact, it must be added whether one like it or not, simply because there are three incredibilities which actually occurred. It is incredible that Christ should have risen in His flesh and, with His flesh, have ascended into heaven; it is incredible that the world should have believed a thing so incredible; it is incredible that men so rude and lowly, so few and unaccomplished, should have convinced the world, including men of learning, of something so incredible and have convinced men so conclusively.

-Of course, our friends, the skeptics, still shy at the first of these three incredibilities; but the second is a fact before their very eyes, which they are compelled to believe; and if they refuse to believe the third of the incredibilities, they have no explanation of a manifest fact (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 5). p. 510

-It is no less a fact that the Resurrection of Christ and His Ascension into heaven, with the flesh in which He rose, is now preached to the whole world and is believed. If it cannot be believed, then why in the world does the whole world believe it? Of course, the world could believe without

miracle if a multitude of senators, imperial courtiers, and famous scholars had declared that they had seen the Ascension and then took pains to publicize the fact, but the truth is that the world has believed a handful of unknown and unlearned nobodies who said and wrote that they had seen the miracle (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 5). pp. 510-511

-In heaven, as St. Paul assures us, 'the peace of God... surpasses all understanding.' Certainly, it surpasses ours. Maybe it surpasses that of the angels as well. Of course, it does not surpass God's 'understanding.' This much is sure. If the redeemed are to live in the peace of God, they are to live in a peace 'which surpasses all understanding.'

-Since we are to be sharers of His peace, in the measure of our capacity, we are to receive, within ourselves and in our relations to one another and to God, a supreme degree of peace – whatever that supreme degree for us may be. So, too, in the measure of their capacity, do the holy angels understand that peace. Men on earth, whatever the perfection of understanding they may reach, understand far less than the angels. For we must remember that not even St. Paul, for all his greatness, could say more than this: 'We know in part and we prophesy in part; until that which is perfect has come... We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, but then face to face.'

-Face to face – this is how the holy angels, who are called our angels, already see. They are our angels in the sense that, once we have been delivered from the power of darkness, have received the pledge of the spirit, and have been translated to the kingdom of Christ, we shall have begun to belong to the angels, with whom we are to be fellow citizens in that holy and supremely satisfying Communion which is that City of God.

-The angels, who are God's angels, are our angels in the way that the Christ of God is our Christ. They are God's, because they never deserted God. They are ours, because they have begun to accept us as their fellow citizens.

-Now, the Lord Jesus said: 'See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father in heaven.' In the way, then, that they see, we, also, shall one day see. But we do not see in that way yet. That is why St. Paul said what I have just quoted: 'We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, but then face to face.' This implies that there is in store for us a reward for our faith, that Vision which St. John had in mind when he said: 'When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him just as he is.' For, of

course, 'face' is to be understood not as the kind of face we now have as part of our body, but as a manifestation of what God is (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 29).

-And so it is that, when anyone asks me what the activity of the saints in their spiritual bodies will be, I do not tell him what I now see; I tell him what I believe. I follow the rule suggested by the psalm: 'I have believed, therefore have I spoken.' What I answer is: The saints will see God with their bodily senses, but whether they will see Him by their sense in the same way we now see the sun and moon and stars, the land and sea and all that they contain – that is difficult problem. It is difficult to admit that bodies in heaven will be such that the saints cannot open and close their eyes at will; on the other hand, it is still harder to admit that, if one closes his eyes in heaven, he will cease to see God.

-After all, the prophet Eliseus, when he was nowhere near his wicked servant, Giezi, secretly (as he thought) saw him receiving the gifts which Naaman the Syrian gave him, after Eliseus had healed Naaman of his leprosy. Why, then, should not the saints, in their spiritual bodies, be much more able to see all things, not merely with their eyes closed, but even when they are far away from what they see.

-Although, therefore, even in this life, Eliseus could see his servant, who was nowhere near, receiving gifts, such a vision even in the case of man who could work miracles was, in comparison with the Vision in the other life, what a child is to a mature man. Can we not argue, therefore, that, 'when that which is perfect has come,' and when there will be no burden of a corruptible body weighing down the soul but, rather, an incorruptible body that will prove to be no impediment, the saints will have no more need of their bodily eyes, when they want to see, than Eliseus had need of his eyes to see what his servant was doing, even though the servant was a long way off. Notice the words of the Prophet to Giezi. In the Septuagint version, they run: 'Did not my heart go with you when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee and thou didst take his money?' And, in the translation made directly from the Hebrew text by the priest, Jerome, the words are: 'Was not my heart present, when the man turned back from his chariot to meet thee?' Thus, it was with his 'heart' that the Prophet says he saw; and, of course, no one can doubt that we was miraculously helped by God.

-Now just think, when God will be 'all in all,' how much greater will be this gift of vision in the hearts of all! The eyes of the body will still retain their function and will be found where they are now, and the spirit, through its spiritual body, will make use of the eyes. After all, even Eliseus used his

eyes to see things near him, even though he had no need of them to see a man who was not present. And he could have seen things present by his spirit, even with his eyes closed, just as well as he saw things that were not present when he was a long way off. Hence, we should not dream of saying that the saints in heaven will be unable to see God with their eyes close, since they will see Him at all times with their spirit.

-If that immaterial Nature, which is circumscribed by no place but is everywhere wholly present, is to be visible to the eyes of a spiritual body, then these eyes will most certainly have to have a power altogether unlike the power of any eyes on earth.

-He is wholly in heaven and He is wholly on earth; and He is in both simultaneously, not merely successively – which is utterly impossible in the case of any material substance.

-When we speak of eyes in heaven having a more powerful vision, we do not mean the kind of sharper sight which snakes and eagles are said to have. For, however keen such animal vision may be, it is limited to material objects. What is meant is that in heaven eyes can see realities that are immaterial (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 29).

-It was the Divine Master who said: 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.' Hence, no Christian reading these words in a spirit of faith has any doubt that, when God is to be seen, it will be by the eyes of the heart. But, of course, the problem I am now dealing with is whether, in heaven, God will also be seen by the eyes of the body. p. 537

-The truth is that we shall draw near to God by faith, which is a power to see which is not in our body, but in our mind.

-As far as the reasoning of philosophy reaches, intelligible realities are so correlated to the vision of the mind, as sensible or material things are to the senses of the body, that the intelligible cannot be perceived by the senses nor material things by the immediate intuition of the soul.

-The revelation concerning Eliseus which I mentioned above is a clear indication that material objects can be perceived by the spirit, independently of the body. Certainly, what Giezi did in taking material gifts was a material action, yet the Prophet saw these material movements, not by the senses of his body, but by the eyes of his spirit.

-What, therefore, is possible and highly probable is that we shall be able to see the material bodies of the new heaven and the new earth in such a

way that, by means of our own bodies and of all the others which we shall see wherever our eyes are turned, we shall see God, and we shall see Him with the utmost clarity as being everywhere present and as regulating the whole universe, including material things. We shall see Him in a way different from the way in which His 'invisible attributes' are now seen, 'being understood by the things that are made,' for we see now through a mirror in an obscure manner' and only 'in part,' and we must rely more on the eyes of faith, whereby we believe, than on the eyes of the body, whereby we see the beauty of the material universe.

**-In heaven, wherever we shall turn the eyes of our spiritual bodies, we shall see the immaterial God, ruling all things, and we shall see Him by means of our bodies** (St. Augustine, City of God, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 29).

-Who can measure the happiness of heaven, where no evil at all can touch us, no good will be out of reach; where life is to be one long laud extolling God, who will be all in all; where there will be no weariness to call for rest, no need to call for toil, no place for any energy but praise. Of this I am assured whenever I read or hear the sacred song: 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever.' Every fiber and organ of our imperishable body will play its part in the praising of God, On earth these varied organs have each a special function, but in heaven, function will be swallowed up in felicity, in the perfect certainty of an untroubled everlastingness of joy....will swell into a great hymn of praise to the supreme Artist who has fashioned us, within and without, in every fiber, and who, by this and every other element of a magnificent and marvelous Order, will ravish our minds with spiritual beauty.

-These movements of our bodies will be of such unimaginable beauty that I dare not say more than this: There will be such poise, such grace, such beauty as become a place where nothing unbecoming can be found. Wherever the spirit wills, there, in a flash, will the body be. Nor will the spirit ever will anything unbecoming wither to itself or to the body.

-In heaven, all glory will be true glory, since no one could ever err in praising too little or too much. True honor will never be denied where due, never be given where undeserved, and, since none but the worthy are permitted there, no one will unworthily ambition glory. Perfect peace will reign, since nothing in ourselves or in any others could disturb this peace. The promised reward of virtue will be the best and the greatest of all possible prizes – the very Giver of virtue Himself, for that is what the Prophet meant: 'I will be your God and you shall be my people.' God will

be the source of every satisfaction, more than any heart can rightly crave, more than life and health, food and wealth, glory and honor, peace and every good – so that God, as St. Paul said, ‘may be all in all.’ He will be the consummation of all our desiring – the object of our unending vision, of our unlesening love, of our unwearying praise. And in this gift of vision, this response of love, this paean of praise, all alike will share, as all will share in everlasting life (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 30).

-The souls in bliss will still possess the freedom of the will, though sin will have no power to tempt them. They will be more free than ever – so free, in fact, from all delight in sinning as to find, in not sinning, and unfailing source of joy.

-By the freedom which was given to the first man, who was constituted in rectitude, he could choose either to sin or not to sin; in eternity, freedom is that more potent freedom which makes all sin impossible. Such freedom, of course, is a gift of God, beyond the power of nature to achieve. For, it is one thing to be God, another to be a sharer in the divine nature.

-God, by His nature, cannot sin, but a mere sharer in His nature must receive from God such immunity from sin. It was proper that, in the process of divine endowment, the first step should be a freedom not to sin, and the last a freedom even from the power to sin. The first gift made merit possible; the second is a part of man’s reward. Our nature, when it was free to sin, did sin. It took a greater grace to lead us to that larger liberty which frees us from the very power to sin. Just as the immortality that Adam lost by sin was, at first, a mere possibility of avoiding death, but, in heaven, becomes the impossibility of death, so free will was, at first, a mere possibility of avoiding sin, but, in heaven, becomes an utter inability to sin (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXII *The Eternal Bliss of the City of God*, Ch. 30).

-Beyond the physical beauty is the beauty of the community of heaven. There are cherubim and seraphim, choirs of angels who surround the throne of God and rejoice in Him eternally. How beautiful would they appear to our simple eyes? These pure spirits sing in endless praise, honoring God by their whole existence, spotless and glorious. To see them would be to see creatures whose whole existence is rooted deeply in praise of God that they never leave the heavens. They share with us a purpose – to exist for the praise of God’s glory – yet they spend their whole existence in God’s presence without interruption.

-“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other” (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior, The Cardinal Virtues, The Best of C.S. Lewis*).

-“Hope is one of the Theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world [Heaven] is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things a Christian is meant to do.

-“It is since Christian have largely ceased to think of the other world [Heaven] that they have become so ineffective in this” (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior, The Cardinal Virtues, The Best of C.S. Lewis*).

-“When men grow weary of studying spiritual doctrine and become lukewarm, when their spiritual energies are drained away, then they walked in sadness along the ways of the Lord. They fulfill the tasks enjoined on them with hearts that are tired and arid, they grumble without ceasing, they complain of the long days and the long nights in words like those of Job: “When I lie down I say: ‘When shall I arise?’ And then I shall be waiting for evening” (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermon 32, Song of Song II. 4, pp. 136-137*).

-“If when are subject to these moods, the compassionate Lord draws near to us on the way we are traveling, and being from heaven begins to talk to us about heavenly truths, sings our favorite air from among the songs of Sion, discourses on the City of God, on the peace of that city, on the eternity of that peace and on the life that is eternal, I assure you that this happy discourse will bear along as in a carriage the man who has grown tired and listless; it drives all trace of aversion from the hearer’s mind and weariness from his body” (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermon 32, Song of Song II, II. 4, p. 137*).

-“The voice of the Turtle Dove is heard in our land. Nowhere, I think, will you find him speaking like this of heaven, nowhere else like this of earth.

Notice then the utter happiness of hearing the God of heaven says: 'in our land.'

-“This is clearly not the language of domination but of fellowship and intimate friendship. He speaks as Bridegroom, not as Lord.

-“It is love that speaks, that knows no lordship. Love neither looks up to nor looks down on anybody. It regards as equal all who love each other truly, bringing together in itself the lofty and the lowly. It makes them not only equal but one.

-“Usually the voice of the Turtle-dove does not sound very sweet, but it suggests things that are sweet. If you buy the little bird she is cheap, but if you make her an object of discussion, her price is high. With her voice more akin to mourning than to singing, she reminds us that we are pilgrims.

-“I listen willingly to the voice of the teacher who does not stir up applause for himself but compunction in me. You really resemble the turtle-dove if you preach repentance: and if you want your words to be convincing you must depend more on your repentance than on your eloquence.

-“As in my situations but above all in this business, example is more effective than preaching. You will stamp your preaching with authority if you are conscious of accepting for yourself the values you preach.

-“Actions speak louder than words. Practice what you preach, and not only will you correct me more easily but also free yourself from no light reproach. You will not be the target if someone says: 'They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger.' Nor need you be afraid to hear: 'You who teach others, will you not teach yourself?'

-“The turtle-dove is commended not only for its mourning but also for its chastity. For it was by merit of this that it was worthy to be offered up as a sacrificial victim for the virgin birth. Its chastity is acknowledged at any age. It is content with one mate; if he lost it does not take another, thus arguing against man's tendency to marry more than once.

-“It is shameful that reason cannot lead man to that uprightness which nature achieves in the bird. During its widowhood you may see the turtle-dove fulfilling with unflagging zeal the duties of holy widowhood. Everywhere you see it alone, everywhere you hear it mourning; you never see it perched on a green bough – a lesson to you to avoid the green but poisonous shoots of sensual pleasure. Rather it haunts the mountain ridges

and the top of trees, to teach us to shun the pleasures of earth and to love those of heaven.

-“One may conclude from this that the preaching of chastity is also the voice of the turtle-dove. From the very beginning this voice was not heard on the earth, but instead that other: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’ This call to chastity would have been to no purpose when the homeland of those risen had not yet been opened up, where men in a far happier state ‘neither marry nor are given in marriage,’ but are like the angels in heaven” (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 59, Song of Song III, III. 8, p. 127).

-“Can you mention anyone in authority who is not more concerned with emptying people’s purses than rooting out their vices? Where is the man who turns away anger by his prayer, and preaches the acceptable year of the Lord?

-“Would that they were found as meticulous in discharging their duties as they are eager in running after their dignities. Then they would watch over and take care of the bride who has found and entrusted to their cause.

-“It is well with you, mother Church, it is well with you in this place of pilgrimage: help comes to you from heaven and earth. Your guardians do not slumber or sleep. Your guardian are the holy angels, your watchmen are the spirits and souls of the righteous. Anyone is correct in feeling that you have been found by both alike, and by both alike you are guarded.

-“And they each have their special care for you: the saints because they will not themselves be made perfect without you; the angels because without you their full number cannot be restored, for, as you all know, when Satan and his myrmidons fell from heaven, the number of the heavenly host was greatly diminished.

-“Thus all things await their consummation from you, some the completion of their numbers, others the fulfillment of their desires. Who is faithful and true lover of the soul if not he through whom the truth is loved? I am endowed with reason; I am capable of receiving truth, but this would be vain if I lacked the love of truth” (St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Sermon 77, Song of Song IV, II. 5, p. 126).

## **\* Hell/ \***

**Dialogue** (By St. Gregory the Great)

**Peter:** I should like to know whether it is just to inflict an everlasting punishment for a fault which is finite.

**Gregory:** Your objection would be valid if the Supreme Judge were to consider only the deed men perform without looking into their hearts. To be sure, the sin that a wicked man commits comes to an end when he dies. But, would he not be willing to live on endlessly, if that were possible, in order to continue sinning? By not leaving off sinning during his lifetime, he shows his desire to continue to sin forever. The full justice of the Judge, therefore, demands that the wicked, who never wished to be rid of sinning during life, should never be without punishment in eternity. Bk 4. p. 255

**Peter:** What if someone should say: God has merely threatened sinners with eternal punishment to keep them from committing sins?

**Gregory:** If He makes use of empty threats to keep us from injustice, then the promises He makes to lead us to justice are likewise worthless. But no one in his right mind would entertain such a thought. If God threatened us without ever intending to fulfill His threat, we should have to call Him deceitful instead of merciful. Bk 4. p. 255

**Peter:** To what purpose, then, do they burn in hell forever?

**Gregory:** Almighty God, being a God of love, does not gratify His anger by torturing wretched sinners. However, since He is a God of justice, the punishment of the wicked cannot satisfy Him even if it continues eternally. All the wicked condemned to hell are being punished for their wickedness, to be sure. Yet there is another reason why they burn, namely, that the elect may see in God all the joys they experience and may see in the damned all the tortures they escaped. Seeing the terrible punishment for sins which they avoided with God's help, they become all the more conscious of the eternal debt of gratitude they owe to God for the graces they received. Bk 4. p. 256

-In truth, no man ever began with making heaven a consideration of interest, who did not soon come to find it a consideration of love; and the thought of hell, which began with fear for ourselves, ends in devotion to the sanctity God.

-“The joys of the Kingdom of God no can tell, nor even conceive or understand, while he is yet clothed in the flesh. For they are greater or more wondrous than they are imagine or conceived to be. So it is written: “What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualize; all that God has prepared for those who love Him.

-“For the kingdom of God is greater than all report, better than all praise of it, more manifold than all knowledge, more perfect than every conceivable glory. The miseries of hell, as they truly are, no tongue can tell; no mind conceive; for in their reality they are far more dreadful than they are thought to be.

-“And likewise the kingdom of God is so full of light, and peace, and charity, and wisdom, and glory, and honesty, and sweetness, and loving kindness, and every unspeakable and unutterable good, that it can neither be described nor envisioned by the mind. But the abode of hell is so full of darkness, of discord, of hate, of folly, of unhappiness, of pain, of burning heat, of thirst, of inextinguishable fire, of sadness, of unending punishment, and every indescribable evil that neither can it be told nor yet conceived by man...

-“In the kingdom of God every good abounds and there is nothing evil; in the prison of hell every evil abounds and there is nothing of good. In the kingdom of Heaven no one is unworthy is received; but no one worthy, no just one, is brought down to hell. In the eternal kingdom there shall be life without death, truth without falsehood, and happiness without shadow of unrest or change, in Christ Jesus Our Lord, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen“ (St. Patrick, Heaven and Hell, What no eye has seen and no ear has heard.... 1Cor. 2:1-10).

-What can be said, be thought, to be more dreadful than to incur the wounds of damnation, and never to cease from the pains of the wounds?

-The Holy Bible is quite explicit in teaching the eternity of the pains of hell. The torments of the damned shall last forever and ever (Rev. 14:11; 19:3; 20:10). They are everlasting just as are the joys of heaven (Mt. 25:46).

-Again, God says of the damned: Their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched” (Is. 66:24; Mk 9:43, 45, 47). The fire of hell is repeatedly called eternal and unquenchable. The wrath of God abides on the damned (Jn. 3:36); they are vessels of Divine wrath (Rom. 9:22); they shall not possess the kingdom of God (1Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21).

-We merely call to mind the testimony of the martyrs who often declared that they were glad to suffer pain of brief duration in order to escape eternal torments.

-The Church professes her faith in the eternity of the pains of hell in clear terms in the Athanasian Creed, and in countless passages of her liturgy; she never prays for the damned. Hence, beyond the possibility of doubt, the Church expressly teaches the eternity of the pains of hell as a truth of faith which no one can deny or call in question without manifest heresy.

-Just as God must appoint some fixed term for the time of trial after which the just will enter into the secure possession of a happiness that can never again be lost in all eternity, so it is likewise appropriate that after the expiration of that term, the wicked will be cut off from all hope of conversion and happiness.

-God has actually appointed the end of this present life, or the moment of death, as the term of man's probation. For in that moment there takes place in our life an essential and momentous change; from the state of union with the body the soul passes into a life apart. No other sharply defines instant of our life is of like importance. Hence we must conclude that death is the end of our probation; for it is proper that our trial should terminate at a moment of our existence as prominent and significant as to be easily perceived by every man.

-We may further admit that it is not intrinsically impossible for God to annihilate the sinner after some definite amount of punishment; but this would be less in conformity with the nature of man's immortal soul.

-Accordingly there is in sin an approximation to infinite malice which deserves an eternal punishment. Finally, it must be remembered that although the act of sinning is brief, the guilt of sin remains forever; for in the next life the sinner never turns away from his sin by a sincere conversion. The sinner perseveres forever in evil disposition.

-Besides punishment inflicted for correction, there are also punishments for the satisfaction of justice. But justice demands that whoever departs from the right way in his search for happiness shall not find his happiness, but lose it. The eternity of the pains of hell responds to this demand for justice.

-No one is cast into hell unless he has fully and entirely deserved it.

-We must not consider the eternal punishment of hell as a series of separate or distinct terms of punishment, as if God were forever again

and again pronouncing a new sentence and inflicting new penalties, and as if He never satisfies His desire for vengeance. Hell is, especially in the eyes of God, one and indivisible in its entirety; it is but one sentence and penalty.

-We may represent to ourselves a punishment of indescribable intensity as in a certain sense the equivalent of an eternal punishment; this may help us to see better how God permits the sinner to fall into hell – how a man who sets at naught all Divine warnings, who fails to profit by all the patient forbearance God has shown him, and who in wanton disobedience is absolutely bent on rushing into eternal punishment, can be finally permitted by God's just indignation to fall into hell.

-The damned are confirmed in evil; every act of their will is evil and inspired by hatred of God. In hell the separation from the sanctifying power of Divine love is complete.

-Hatred is the only motive in their power; and they have no other choice than that of showing their hatred of God by one evil action in preference to another.

-The last and the real cause of their impenitence is the state of sin which they freely chose as their portion on earth and in which they passed, unconverted, into the next life and into that state of permanence by nature due to rational creatures, and to an unchangeable attitude of mind.

-The reprobate carries in himself the primary cause of impenitence; it is the guilt of sin which he committed on earth and with which he passed into eternity.

-The damned can never divert their attention from their frightful torments, and at the same time they know that all hope is lost to them. Hence despair and hatred of God, their just Judge, is almost inevitable, and even the slightest good impulse becomes morally impossible.

-They deplore with the utmost intensity the punishment, but not the malice of sin; to this they cling more tenaciously than ever. Had they an opportunity they would commit the sin again, not indeed for the sake of its gratification, which they found illusive, but out of sheer hatred of God. They are ashamed of their folly which led them to seek happiness in sin, but not the malice of sin itself.

-The pain of loss consists in the loss of the beatific vision and in so complete a separation of all the powers of the soul from God that it cannot find in Him even the least peace and rest. It is accompanied by the loss of all supernatural gifts, e.g. the loss of faith. The characters impressed by the sacrament alone remain to the greater confusion of the bearer.

-The pain of loss is not the mere absence of superior bliss, but it is also a most intense positive pain. The utter void of the soul made for the enjoyment of infinite truth and infinite goodness causes the reprobate immeasurable anguish.

-Their consciousness that God, on whom they entirely depend, is their enemy forever is overwhelming. Their consciousness of having by their own deliberate folly forfeited the highest blessings for transitory and delusive pleasures humiliates and depresses them beyond measure.

-The desire for happiness inherent in their very nature, wholly unsatisfied and no longer able to find any compensation for the loss of God in delusive pleasures, renders them utterly miserable.

*-Moreover, they are well aware that God is infinitely happy, and hence their hatred and their impotent desire to injure Him fill them with extreme bitterness. And the same is true with regard to their hatred of all the friends of God who enjoy the bliss of heaven.*

-The pain of loss is the very core of eternal punishment. If the damned beheld God face to face, hell itself, notwithstanding its fire, would be a kind of heaven. Had they but some union with God even if not precisely the union of the beatific vision, hell would no longer be hell, but a kind of purgatory. And yet the pain of loss is but the natural consequence of that aversion from God which lies in the nature of every mortal sin.

-The pain of sense consists in the torment of fire so frequently mentioned in the Bible. This fire is not just a metaphor but a real fire. Scripture and tradition speak again and again of the fire of hell, and there is no sufficient reason for taking the term as a mere metaphor.

-If our soul is so joined to the body as to be keenly sensitive to the pain of fire, why should the omnipotent God be unable to bind even pure spirits to some substance in such a manner that they suffer a torment more or less similar to the pain of fire which the soul can feel on earth?

-The pain of sense is the natural consequence of that inordinate turning to creatures which is involved in every mortal sin. It is proper that whoever seeks forbidden pleasure should find pain in return.

-The demons suffer the torment of fire, even when, by Divine permission, they leave the confines of hell and roam about on earth.

-The pain of loss and the pain of sense constitute the very essence of hell, the former being by far the most dreadful part of eternal punishment.

-Just as the blessed in heaven are free from all pain, so, on the other hand, the damned never experience even the least real pleasure. In hell separation from blissful influence of Divine love has reached its consummation.

-The reprobate must live in the midst of the demons; and their outburst of hatred or of reproach as they gloat over his sufferings, and their hideous presence, are an ever fresh source of torment. The reunion of soul and body after the Resurrection will be a special punishment for the reprobate.

-The pains of hell differ in degree according to demerit. This holds true not only of the pain of sense, but also of the pain of loss. A more intense hatred of God, a more vivid consciousness of utter abandonment by Divine goodness, a more restless craving to satisfy the natural desire for beatitude with things external to God, a more acute sense of shame and confusion at the folly of having sought happiness in earthly enjoyment – all this implies as its correlation a more complete and more painful separation from God.

-The pains of hell are essentially immutable; there are no temporary intermissions or passing alleviations.

-Hell is a state of the greatest and most complete misfortune, as is evident from all that has been said. The damned have no joy whatever and it were better for them if they had not been born.

-Then the demons will never again be permitted to leave the confines of hell, but will be finally imprisoned for all eternity; and the reprobate souls of men will be tormented by union with their hideous bodies.

-The pains of the damned are equal as far as duration is concerned, since they are eternal, but they differ very much in degrees of rigor. God will render to each one according to his works.

-Already the Book of Wisdom (6:6) had said: "They mighty shall be mightily tormented."

-It is clear that punishment must be proportioned to the gravity of the fault. Faults differ in gravity and in number; hence the sufferings of hell must be unequal in their rigor. We may say that the most guilty are at the bottom of hell....

-Our Lord said to St. Catherine of Siena: "The first suffering which the damned endure is that they are deprived of seeing Me. This suffering is so great that, if it were possible, they would chose to endure fire and torments, if they could in the meantime enjoy My vision, rather than to be delivered from other suffering without being able to see Me. This pain is increased by a second, that of the worm of conscience, which torments them without cessation. Thirdly, the view of the demon redoubles their suffering, because seeing him in all his ugliness, they see what they themselves are, and thus see clearly that they themselves have merited these chastisements. The fourth torment which the damned endure is that of a fire which burns but does not consume. Further, so great is the hate which possesses them that they cannot will anything good. Continually they blaspheme Me. They can no longer merit. Those who die in hate, guilty of mortal sin, enter a state which lasts forever."

-Hell is primarily the permanent deprivation of the Beatific vision, inflicted on those who die in mortal sin.

-The Beatific Vision is the sight of God face to face. To have lost this end through one's own fault constitutes the very nature of hell. It is called damnation, from the Latin word *damnum*, which means simply "Loss." It is the Great Loss. It is a loss which nothing can replace.

-The sinner who loses the Beatific Vision loses his all, for his soul, though, endowed with never-ending existence, will never attain the end or purpose to which none the less it must by the force of his nature eternally end. It is the final and never-ceasing frustration of the craving of immortal being.

-The loss of the Beatific Vision is the greatest failure. On earth no failure is complete, because it is always retrievable, if not in itself, at least in some other way. Hell means total failure, failure of the whole of one's being, and failure without any hope of retrieving what is lost.

-The impulse to re-start after failure is almost instinctive during this life. There will be no re-starting life after this final disaster. All is over; the soul is forced to face utter ruin, beyond repair. All that is left is blank despair.

-In the life beyond the grave where all illusions about earthly goods have completely gone, where the turmoil of this material world has ceased, where the soul has outgrown the limitations of this mortal life, and realizes with mental keenness unknown on earth the inner truth of things, the loss of God is a disaster exceeding in extent all that we can now conceive.

-Man has come to his final state in which with all his mental power and the whole energy of his will he either possesses God or, losing Him, is aware of the complete and everlasting failure of his existence. Every fiber of his being tends toward God by inward necessity; God draws him as a magnet draws iron, and his innermost self thrills with longing for God, who is infinite goodness, beauty, and truth, yet he is intimately conscious that his nature is so warped, disfigured, and deformed that it can never be united to God. Between himself and God there is a gulf fixed which no bridge will ever span. Nor is God a distant object, which he might manage to forget. God is infinitely present to him, but this presence is a torment, not a joy, for holiness is both an object of horror and of desire to those that are in sin. Every instant of his never-ending life he wants God and he knows that he wants Him, yet every instant he feels an irresistible recoil, a disgust, a loathing, and a hatred, which turns him from that which he wants.

-To speak in a parable, he is like a shipwrecked mariner in a little craft on the open sea. He raves with maddening thirst, though surrounded by water. He lifts the sea water to his lips and then vomits it out, for it is salt. The salt is sin. His sin has turned even the sweet waters of God's goodness into brackish; it is a venom which he always tastes and makes him hate even God as poison, though at the same time he is mad with thirst for God.

-Christ speaks of hell as the losing of one's soul: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and suffers the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" This expression: "losing one's soul," does not mean cessation of his existence, for we know that the soul is immortal; but it does mean the complete cessation of that supernatural life of grace, which God intended for it, and without which man has utterly failed of the purpose of his being.

-If a man, an adult, who has had the choice between good and evil and with complete deliberation has chosen evil and died persisting in his

choice, fails to obtain the Beatific Vision, there is no substitute for it as the aim of his life. He has lost his soul in the fullest sense of the word.

-It is an asking never to receive, a seeking never to find, a knocking at a gate eternally closed, to hear for ever: "Amen, amen, I know you not."

-In hell nothing of the supernatural remains except the marks of baptism, confirmation, and the priesthood, nothing except the bitter memory of graces once received, and these things remain to enhance eternal sorrow, the sense of the greatness of what is lost.

-By creating us, God sent us on a journey, a journey towards Himself, a journey which was meant to end in a homecoming. The homeland intended is a nestling in the very bosom of God, the complete possession, the closest embrace by mind and will of God Himself. For the damned the journey will never end, home and rest will never be; they are lost forever. They are wanderers, idly, foolishly, hopelessly wandering hither and thither, never making headway toward God.

-The raving madman is on earth an object of pity and horror to the sane-minded, but the damned are madmen of their own making; deliberately they have drugged their minds with the poison of sin and their delirium is always upon them. Though God is so close to them and the natural forces of their intellect so keen in the world beyond, yet God is the maddening mystery to them, the tormenting problem which will never be solved.

-The man in a foul, dark fog which stings his eyes and blinds them, feels his gloom the more, if he recalls to himself that somewhere the sun shines and the sky is blue. So the damned grope and stumble along in mental mist that will never be lifted, though they know that somewhere the majesty and clarity of truth sheds its splendor and entrances beholder with its divine beauty.

-The difference between the pain of loss and that of the pain of sense consists in the fact that the former is caused by the absence of something, the latter by the presence of something.

-Hell-fire is something real, and it is something external to the sufferer, who undergoes its tormenting energies.

-The everlasting loss of God is the natural punishment for the rejection of God. What is called the pain of sense is the natural punishment for the abuse of created things, involved in turning to them, embracing them, endeavoring to possess them rather than God.

-Hell-fire, therefore, is not a metaphor for the intensity of mere spiritual or mental suffering; it is a reality, objectively present outside the sufferer, and objectively causes his sufferings.

-Fire, as we have it on earth, is produced by oxygen feed by carbon, and through the vibration of the atoms brings about disintegration of the body that burns. Such fire, hell-fire cannot be, for the bodies of the damned do not disintegrate, and we are not bound to believe that there will be an everlasting supply of oxygen and carbon.

-Moreover, "hell-fire" affects even the demons, who are pure spirits, and the damned, who until the General Resurrection are without their terrestrial bodies.

-In consequence, though hell-fire is a reality causing the pain of sense as distinct from the loss of God, and is some external agent whose action the demons and the damned undergo, yet this fire is only analogous to the fire we experience on earth.

*-The instrument of this suffering is referred to in the New Testament no less than thirty times by the word fire, which word must therefore be the nearest analogy in our earthly experience to that which torments the damned.*

-The urge in support of this view is the language of Holy Scripture in which hell is described as a lake of fire into which the damned are cast, described as a definite locality somewhere in the universe, a place which can be entered and left.

-Whether, then, the fuel of this fire be specially created for the purpose or whether it be the very matter of this universe, it is a fire which in its effects and mode of action differs greatly from earthly fire.

-Earthly fire can only burn bodies, hell-fire burns spirits. Earthly fire disintegrates and destroys what it burns, hell-fire does not dissolve what it burns, but is compatible with never-ending existence.

-Earthly fire needs a continual supply of new material fuel; hell-fire is everlastingly maintained by the will and the anger of God. Earthly fire is joined to some degree to light; hell-fire is compatible with outer darkness.

-Earthly fire is limited to some locality; hell-fire accompanies the damned wheresoever they are. Earthly fire burns equally all that is thrown into its

furnace; hell-fire burns unequally the souls of the damned according to the greatness of their sin.

-When we thus multiply the points of difference between the action of earthly fire and the fire tormenting the damned, we realize that we are face to face with a mystery which is beyond all our experience in this world.

-However, that may be, all that we can, all that we need say with regard to the action of hell-fire upon spirits, is that by God's omnipotence fire will directly act upon a pure intelligence so as to cause it to suffer a pain to which the only parallel we possess on earth is the sensation of burning.

-From what has been said it will be clear that the pain of loss, the chief punishment of hell, is far more grievous than the pain of sense. Nevertheless, it is these latter torments of hell that have most forcibly struck the imagination of men, and Our Lord, by speaking in the Gospels of "hell-fire," deliberately stressed this side of eternal punishment, for He knew human nature and knew that sensible imagination would be the strongest incentive to a horror of the dreadful fate awaiting the unrepentant sinner.

-The pains of hell exceed in horror all that men can imagine; it is therefore right and just that even the imagination should be called in to warn men against the supreme and last danger that besets all men. Passion and temptation to sin can be so blinding that nothing but an almost physical recoil from the punishment threatened can succeed in drawing the mind and will away from the false enchantment of evil.

-As in heaven there are different degrees of happiness, so in hell there are different degrees of punishment. The least degree of punishment will exceed in horror all we can imagine on earth, but even in hell there are depths below depths. The soul is alienated from God in the very measure of its deformity. The deformity caused by one sin can be greater than that caused by another, and according to the number of sins the deformity increases.

-There are therefore degrees even in the loss of God; the deeper the deformity the farther from God. The greater self-aborrence in the damned brings about the deeper aversion from God, whose infinite holiness holds up in the mirror to the monstrosity of the damned soul. →

-In the pain of sense likewise there must be degrees. The fiercer the sinful grip on creatures which the sinner had in this life, the more fiercely will the vengeful fires torment him in the house of his eternity.

-We have to keep before our mind that for the lost in some unique way the punishment will always fit their crime.

-In a discussion on which involves the appreciation of moral values, it is always difficult to construct an argument so compelling as to leave no loophole for doubt in those who strongly averse to a particular conclusion.

-No one suggests that the damned want hell because they enjoy its torments; the damned want hell because they have once for all decided that they do not want God, and there is no heaven without God. They need God eternally, but eternally they do not want Him.

-But this is madness, may be retorted, indeed it is, but all sin is madness, all sin is unreason, yet men commit it, and freely commit it. The mystery lies in the abuse of the power of self-determination, not in the necessary sanction subsequent to its abuse. If we fully understand what sin is, there would be no difficulty in understanding hell, for hell is only sin continued.

-What human reason itself suggests is made certain for us by Revelation, which teaches that the relation in which man stands to God at the moment of death is final, definitive.

-Granted an immortal being with free will, surely heaven and hell, eternal conformity or opposition to God, eternal happiness or sorrow seem necessary deductions, unless free will be robbed of its only dignity, of that which alone constitutes its connatural purpose and value.

-If we want to guess in any way who or how many go to hell, we must never forget that the lake of eternal fire is at the foot of the hill of Calvary, and that no one can go to hell without crossing the path that goes over that hill.

-God has left us no revelation concerning the number of the lost, and no guess of ours can take its place. If a man dies in mortal sin, if a man dies without sanctifying grace, he is eternally lost, so much we know; but who dies in mortal sin we do not know. Mortal sin requires full knowledge and full deliberation.

-No man goes to hell except he marches into it with his eyes open. Not, of course, that he must beforehand realize the awfulness of its pains, but he must fully realize that he chose evil and not good, and he must have persevered in his choice until death.

-Beyond doubt the power of the devils to be a source of affliction to the damned is real. This affliction will arise from the twofold source of their companionship and their dominion. Demons and damned are enclosed in the same hell, and the imagery of Holy Scripture leads us to believe that the perpetual and intolerable nearness of innumerable beings will be an added horror to the damned.

-Moreover, the devils, as angels, are mightier than the damned, who ever remain but men. These men, however, by sin have yielded to the temptation of evil spirits, and therefore chosen them as their masters rather than God. They have surrendered to their dominion, and in consequence remain under their tyranny for evermore. How this tyranny is exercised we have conception. Somehow, overwhelmed and mastered by giants in evil, the souls of the damned will be cowed and terrorized into everlasting submission.

-The question may be asked, what is the relation of the inmates of hell to those who still dwell on earth? Of the devils we know that they roam through the world for the ruins of souls. Until the last day in the providence of God the demons are allowed to tempt and to harm men.

-The fall in Paradise was caused by a devil from hell; no doubt many of the last sins committed before the final doom will still be the outcome of temptations from hell.

-The abyss will be closed only at the end of time. Do the damned similarly roam through the world for the ruin of their fellow men? No, the case of the devils is different from that of the damned. The devils by virtue of their higher nature as pure spirits, can come into contact with us and with the material world, and they can use this power to tempt and harm us. Such power is indeed completely under the control of God's supernatural providence, but it is natural to an angelic being.

-It is not so with the discarnate souls of men. These souls are by nature the life-principle of a human body, and through this body they come in contact with the material world. In their discarnate state they are incomplete beings. It is not natural to them to act on matter in this incomplete state. They can be active within themselves by thought and will, as they can subsist in themselves even without the body, but there is no connatural means of communication between them and the outer world.

-The blessed in heaven do not rejoice in the pains of the damned as such, yet they do eternally rejoice that they are saved, from so great an evil,

and the very greatness of the evil avoided adds to the enjoyment of the happiness secured.

-No one would deny that the doctrine of hell baffles the human mind, but it is a lesser mystery than the mystery of Bethlehem or Calvary. The human mind can understand more easily that God should punish everlastingly those that die in sin, than that God Himself should die upon the cross to save them from everlasting punishment.

-All that we suffer here in the strict observance of the religious life will seem to us nothing; for, however long it lasts, it lasts but a moment in comparison with eternity. I tell you truthfully that as wretched as I am I have never had fear of the torments of hell, for they would be nothing if compared to what I recall the condemned will experience in seeing the anger in these eyes of the Lord, so beautiful, meek, and kind (St. Teresa of Avila).

-The torments of the soul are so much more severe than those of the body, and the torment souls in hell suffer is incomparably greater than the suffering we have here mentioned, and must, it is seen, last forever and ever. What, then, will the suffering of these unfortunate souls be? And what can we do or suffer in so short a life that would amount to anything if we were thereby to free ourselves of those terrible and eternal torments? I tell you it would be impossible to explain how keenly felt is the suffering of the soul, and how different it is from that of the body, if one had not experienced these things.

-And the Lord Himself desires that we understand this so that we may know the extraordinary debt we owe Him for bringing us to a state in which through His mercy we hope He will free us and pardon our sins (St. Teresa of Avila).

-Here it becomes evident, my Jesus, how trifling is the power of all the devils in comparison with Thine, and how he who is pleasing to Thee can trample upon all the hosts of hell. Here we see with what reason the devils trembled when Thou didst descend into Hades: well might they have longed for a thousand deeper hells in order to flee from such great Majesty (St. Teresa of Avila)!

-In short, however skillful the imagination may be, it will not succeed in picturing or describing what that light is like, nor a single one of these things which I learned from the Lord with a joy so sovereign as to be indescribable. For all the senses rejoice in a high degree, and with a

sweetness impossible to describe, for which reason it is better to say no more about it.

-Once, when I had been for more than an hour in this state, and the Lord had shown me wonderful things, and it seemed as if He were not going to leave me, He said to me: "See daughter, what those who are against Me lose: do not fail to tell them of it" (St. Teresa of Avila).

-I saw truly one single mortal sin merits hell; it is impossible to understand how grave an offence it is to commit such a sin in the sight of such great Majesty and how alienated such things are from His nature. And thus His mercy becomes ever the more clearly seen, for, though He knows that we are doing all this, He nonetheless bears with us (St. Teresa of Avila).

-Just as the kingdom of the devil is gained by conniving at the vices, so the kingdom of God is possessed in purity of heart and spiritual knowledge by practicing the virtues. And where the kingdom of God is, there without a doubt eternal life, and where the kingdom of the devil is, there – it is not to be doubted – are death and hell (John Cassian's Conferences, The First conference of Abba Moses). p. 52

-In truth, no man ever began with making heaven a consideration of interest, who did not soon come to find it a consideration of love; and the thought of hell, which began with fear for ourselves, ends in devotion to the sanctity God.

-If men are rather frightened by the preaching of hell, it is certainly an index that the gift of faith is less abundant or less vigorous; but it is no argument against bringing forward a part of divine truth which will find souls to save, even though others may rebel.

-What sort of a life will the life in hell be, after the resurrection? It will be a life where every act is the most hateful and abominable wickedness. We shall understand sin better then, and be able more truly to fathom the abysses its malice. Yet every thought we think, every word we speak, every action we perform, we shall be committing sin, and committing it with a guilty shame and terror which will insupportable. Even the sins of others will be excruciating tortures to us.

-If we were awoken at midnight in our houses, and held by strong men in the lone darkness, while their accomplices were murdering before our eyes someone whom we loved most tenderly, how terrible, how desperate, would the torture be! Our reason would be not unlikely to give way.

-The agonizing moan, the wild inquiring eye so glazily fixed upon us, the pale contracted face of the sufferer, the fiendlike gestures of the murderers, and the staring red stain everywhere, these would hunt us all through life. Yet the sight of the hideous wickedness of hell must be incomparably more horrible than this. Nevertheless amid it all we have to live, as best we may, eternal drowned in shame and every misery and hopelessness.

-It is a life in which all possible kinds of bodily agony are united in the highest degree. Think of the countless diseases to which men may be subjected. Some of them kill with sheer pain in a few moments. Every limb, every deep-hidden nerve, every cell which life informs, has a cluster of torments belonging to itself. Think only of what the head, the teeth, the ears, the eyes, can suffer! Then consider all the variety of wounds which may be inflicted upon our wincing flesh and our tingling bones, whether upon a field of battle or in surgical operations. Consider also the exquisite ingenuity of the tortures of medieval prisons. All these, always at the highest stretch, always up to the point of the intolerable and beyond it, such is the life of hell.

-Nay, it is not such; for, besides these, there will be an excess of new, undreamed-of tortures of our flesh, which has lost even the poor mercy of being able to lie down and die.

-This is terrible; but to this you must add the mental agonies of hell. Envy, despair, weariness, loathing, oppression, grief, dejection, wildness, bitterness, all these are there, in all their kinds, and in unspeakable intensity.

-Think of a violent access of sorrow now; think of the rawness of lacerated feeling; think of a day's leaden load of dark oppression. Now, without pause, without alleviation, without even vicissitude of suffering, here is a blank, huge, superincumbent eternity of all these things, with an undistracting multiplicity of wretchedness far beyond the worst degrees they could ever reach on earth.

-The life in hell will disclose to us indescribable novelties of unhappiness. Our vast immortal spirits will become alive with a never ending misery and woe. New faculties of wretchedness will spring to life. We shall be forever discovering new worlds of intensiest sorrow, of most intolerable anguish. But is this to be endured? It must be endured. We must lie there in disconsolate helplessness forever. Our minds have lost their last poor mercy of being able to go mad.

-The life in hell is a life, also, from which there is a total absence of sympathy and love. This is an easy thing to say; but it is not easy to penetrate into its significance. The mind loses itself when it attempts to traverse an interminable desert of eternity, where no flowers of love, nor even their similitude, can grow. Shall a kind voice never speak to us anymore? Shall a kind eye never look at us again? Who can live without love? Our mind cannot think how it can be: but poor damned souls must live without it there. Nay, more than this: hatred will be around us. Every lost soul, every lost demon, will hate us, hate us individually with a concentration of rage and hatred which it is terrible to think of.

-There is something insupportable in being hated, something maddening. Even when we are hated – though few men are really hated with a genuine hatred, by only one man, and unjustly, and with love all around us, coming in from every other point of the compass, see how we run to God, and cling to him, that He may make up to us what we are suffering, and take our part, as a just Father, against our unjust brother! But in hell we shall be inundated with scorn and rage and hatred, and we shall one while cower in our shame as knowing how richly a confirmed enemy of God merits even more than this, and then another while we shall rave with equal scorn and rage and hatred against everyone else, even while we are being crushed by the hollow, vacant impotence of our unutterable fury.

-A life of universal hatred, sinking ever lower and lower in the depths of torturing shame, with screams of rage which are not madness, but a concentrated intelligent misery, this is the life of hell, the life that follows upon and over-estimate of earthly love.

-The life in hell is also a life of terror. Fear may be reckoned as one of the greatest tortures to which human nature can be submitted. It “betrays to succor of reason” without bringing also the unconsciousness of insanity.

-It is hard to say whether the visible approach of some great evil, or the agony of an uncertain evil, or the distracted fright of a present evil, may be considered as the worst to bear. But the whole life in hell is a life of fear, and of such exceeding fear as is not known on earth. It is a commingling of all unholy fears, and a commingling of them in the highest possible degree, and an addition to them of new fears of such terrific aspect and gigantic features as shall be in proportion with the fearfulness of hell.

-Our whole nature, keen, sensitive, immortal as it has become, will be saturated with fear. Its very pulses will be startling and quaking of horror,

horror never removed but ever new, to which we never grow accustomed, but will strangely magnify itself to all eternity. We can only picture our feelings by comparing them to the torture of a suffocated scream when we fear to betray ourselves, or to a terrified death-bed without death coming. One feature of hell will enable us to bring this home to ourselves. We shall be in the hands of devils, quailing under the cruel manipulation of those hideous, incorporeal, gigantic spirits. They will do what they will with us. It is their office to distress, to rack, to torture us, with a vindictive cruelty and a demoniacal skill of which we can form no conception.

-Mighty creatures! And yet their magnitude, their fury, their oppressive fiery natures, cannot crush the wretched life out of us, their trembling, awe-struck victims. To be thrown down amidst of herd of wild horses, to be confined for a night with an unchained frenzied murderer in his condemned cell, to be locked in, bound hand and foot, amidst a crowded ward of howling maniacs, all loose and free, what light and easy endurances these would be, compared with those who will be soaked with panics of terror in hell, a terror which can neither escape, nor hide itself, nor die!

-It is a life also without pauses, diminutions, or vicissitudes. No angel ever wings his way thither on an errand of consolation. All the united eloquence of hell could not bring one drop of water from earth's thousand fountains, to cool the torture for one lightning's flash of time. All is unintermitting. Our nature has become many-sided to bear its million agonies which are separately gnawing at it. It has become stronger than adamant, that it may not be shivered in pieces by the colossal tortures of those appalling monstrous executioners.

-To this unintermittingness should be added a threefold anguish, which may be considered as the permanent disposition of the sufferers in hell. There is the anguish of impotence. We cannot use any activities which might distract us, or put forth any energy which might give us occupation. We are helpless in a desperate intelligent paralysis.

-It seems a cruelty, enough to drive us wild to think of. Yet to this impotence we must add also an intolerable restlessness, but an unshifting restlessness. Every limb will throb with uneasiness, every nerve vibrate with restlessness. It will peck at the heart as a vulture pecks at its prey. The soul will thrill with unrest, until it makes every sense tingle, as with burning needles, because of the unbearable torture of this restlessness.

-Every moment, even an immortal soul, even a deathless body, will feel as if this nervous and mental agony of restlessness could be borne no longer; and yet it must be borne still, and it must be borne forever, and it must be borne without its ever becoming easier to bear. Oh, that scared tumult of eternal sleeplessness who shall endure it?

-Yet a third agony adds itself to the other two, growing out of them, out of the impotence and restlessness. It is the misery of an impatience which has no hope, an impatience which can only be a spirit of blasphemy, a loathsome burning abhorrence of God, which the lost creature is obliged himself to abhor, even while he inwardly raves with the fever of it.

-Its only future is the everlastingness of its intolerable present. We have sometimes a flash of pain, which just darts over the limit of what is bearable, and we utter a peculiar shriek. It is heard on the battle-field when the diaphragm is stabbed through. It occasionally accompanies the crash of apoplexy. It is the body's uttermost cry. Conceive an inward life of a deep broad soul, which shall be forever in itself the spiritual reality of which that corporal cry is the most inadequate expression.

-Yet this is the bright side of hell! How bitter the words sound! Yet it is not bitterness which prompts them, but the intense fear which pierces through us like splinters of ice as we think about this. This is hell with the hell left out, the crowning woe, that is, the loss of God. This is hell without fire, and the brimstone, and the darkness, and the discordant noises, and the weeping, and the wailing, and the gnashing of teeth. It is the minor adjuncts of hell, the torments to be thought least of, the miseries which come nearest to being bearable.

-Could we persistently meditate on all this, and still be what we are? Are we quite clear that this will not be our eternal destiny? Is there anything in life to be compared for importance with the barest possibility of this? Are our lives at all a sensible effort to avoid this? What is our inward repentance like? What are our mortifications, our tears, our cries, our alms, our unworldliness? How do we stand toward our past sins in the way of penance and contrition? How are we dealing with our present temptations and occasions of sins? What pains are we taking about our resolutions for the future?

-Even at the best, it is not clear of anyone of us that we shall escape hell. To all of us hell is an imminent possibility. The saints tell us that they who feel surest of not going there are the likeliest to be mistaken. Have we an attachment to any sin, however venial? Are we bargaining with God, and

trying to evade strictness? These are the beginning of hell already in our souls.

-But which of the dead have avoided hell? Those, and those only, who on earth took up their Cross, and took it up daily, and so, and only so, and always so, have followed Christ.

-Hell is not related to an evil life, as is generally supposed, as a spanking is related to an act of disobedience, for a spanking need not necessarily follow disobedience, and rarely does in juvenile circles. Rather, hell is related to an evil life as blindness is related to the plucking out of an eye (Bishop Fulton Sheen).

-Some say we have our hell on this earth. We do. We can start it here, but it does not finish here.

-If there is any subject which is offensive to modern sentimentalists it is the subject of hell. There are many reasons why the modern world has ceased to believe in hell, among which we may mention, first, a psychological reason. If a man has led a very wicked life, he does not want to be disturbed in his wrongdoings by harsh words about justice. His wish that there be no final punishment for his crimes thus becomes father to the thought that there is no such thing as hell. That is why the wicked man denies hell, whereas the saint never denies it, but only fears it.

-Another reason for the denial of hell is that some minds confuse the crude imagery of poets and painters with the reality of the moral order behind the doctrine. Eternal realities are not always easy to portray in the symbols of time and space, but that is no reason why they should be denied by anyone.

-A final reason is found in that the doctrine of hell has been isolated from the organic whole of Christian truths. Once it is separated from the doctrines of sin, freedom, virtue, redemption, and justice, it becomes absurd as an eye separated from the body. The justice of this reasoning is borne out in the fact that men become scandalized about hell when they cease to be scandalized about sin.

-The Church has never altered one single iota the belief in an eternal hell as taught by her founder, Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In adherence to His divine testimony, the Church teaches first that hell is a demand of justice, and second, that hell is a demand of love.

-First of all, once it is recognized that the moral order is grounded on justice, then retribution beyond the grave becomes a necessity. All peoples have held it morally intolerable that by the mere fact of dying a murderer or an impenitent wrongdoer should triumphantly escape justice. The same fate cannot lie in store for the martyr and the persecutor; Nero and Paul, the Judas and Christ. If there is a supreme good to which man can attain only by courageous effort, it must follow that the man who neglects to make that effort imperils his happiness.

-Once it is granted that eternal life is a thing which has to be won, then there must always be the grim possibility that it may also be lost.

-Even the order of nature itself suggests retribution for every violation of a law. There is a physical law to the effect that for every action there is an equal opposite reaction. If, for example, I stretch a rubber band three inches, it will react with a force equal to three inches. If I stretch it six inches, it will react with a force equal to six inches. If I stretch it twelve inches, it will react with a force equal to twelve inches.

-This physical law has its counterpart in the moral order, in which every sin necessarily implies punishment, for sin is an action against a certain order.

-There are three orders against which a man may sin: first the order of individual conscience, second the order of the union of consciences, or the state, and third the source of both, that is, the order of God.

-Now, if I sin or act against my conscience, there is a necessary reaction in the form of remorse of conscience which, in normal individuals, varies with the gravity of the sin committed. Secondly, if I act or sin against the union of consciences, or the state, there is contrary and equal reaction which takes the form of a fine, imprisonment, or death sentence meted out by the state.

-It is worthy of note that the punishment is never determined by the length of time required to commit the crime, but rather by the nature of the crime itself. It takes only a second to commit murder, and yet the state will take away life for such an offense. Finally, whenever I sin against God and this I do when I rebel either against the order of conscience or state, I am acting contrary to one who is infinite. For this action, there is bound to be a reaction. The reaction from the infinite must, therefore, be infinite, and an infinite reaction from God is an infinite separation from God, and an infinite separation from God is an eternal divorce from life and truth and love, and an eternal divorce from life and truth and love is – hell!

-It should be evident; therefore, that eternal punishment is not an arbitrary construction of theologians but is the very counterpart of sin. We are too often wont to look upon hell as an afterthought in the mind of God and regard it as related to sin in the same way that a spanking is related to an act of disobedience on the part of a child. This is not true. The punishment of spanking is something which does not necessarily follow upon an act of disobedience. It may be a consequence, but it need not be. Rather it is true to say that hell is related to a sinful and evil life in the same way that blindness is related to the plucking out of an eye, for the two are inseparable. One necessarily follows the other. Life is a harvest and we reap what we sow: if we sow in sin, we reap corruption; but if we sow in the spirit, we reap life everlasting.

-The teaching of Our Lord Jesus bears out this demand of justice, for His doctrine was not merely an amiable gospel of indifference as His own life was not one of sentimental good-naturedness. He very distinctly taught that men might do things which would prove their undoing. Never did He give assurance that He would succeed with everyone. The very fact that He poured out His life's blood to redeem us from sin could only mean that sin might have such a terrible consequence as hell.

-For, on the last day, the good shall be separated from the bad, and the sheep from the goats. Then "shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me ....As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me. And these shall go into...."

-These are the words of the Son of God who is truth itself, and it is difficult to understand why anyone, knowing and admitting this, should accept His words concerning heaven, and deny His words concerning hell. If He is worthy of belief in one instance, He must be worthy of belief in another.

-Not only is hell demanded by justice, but also by love. The failure to look upon hell as involving love makes men ask the question, "How can a God of love create a place of everlasting punishment?" This is like asking why a God of love should be a God of justice. It forgets that the sun which warms so gently may also wither, and the rain which nourishes so tenderly may also rot.

-Those who cannot reconcile the God of love with hell do not know the meaning of love. Love demands reciprocity; love seeks a lover; and when love finds reciprocity there is a fusion and a compenetration and a union to a sublime and ecstatic degree. And when it is a question of the love of

God and the love of the soul that is the happiness of heaven. But suppose that love does not find reciprocity; or suppose that love does find it only to be betrayed, spurned, and rejected. Can love still forgive? Love can forgive injuries and betrayals and insults, and divine love can forgive even seventy times seven. But there is only one thing in the world which human love cannot forgive, and there is only one thing in eternity which divine love cannot forgive, and that is the refusal to love.

-When, therefore, the soul by a final free act refuses to return human love for divine love, then divine love abandons it to its own selfishness, to its own solitariness, to its own loneliness. And what punishment in all the world is comparable to being abandoned, not by the lovely but by the love which is God?

-Love forgives everything except one thing, and that is the refusal to love. A human heart pursues another and sues for its affection with all the purity and high ardor of its being. It showers the loved one with gifts, tokens of sacrifice, and all the while remains most worthy of a responding affection. But if, after a long and weary pursuit, it has not only been spurned and rejected and betrayed, that human heart turns away and bursting with a pent-up emotion in obedience to the law of love, cries out: "Love has done all that it can. I can forgive anything except the refusal to love."

-Something of this kind takes place in the spiritual order. God is the great lover on the quest of His spouse, which is the human soul. He showers it with gifts, admits it into His royal family in the Sacrament of Baptism, into His royal army in the Sacrament of Confirmation, and invites it to His royal table in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Everlasting Bread, and countless times during human life whispers to it health and sickness, in sorrow and joy, to respond to His plaintive pleadings, abandon a life of sin, and return love for love.

-If, however, the human heart, after rejecting this love many times only to be re-loved again, after ignoring the knock of Christ at the door of his soul only to hear the knock again, finally, at the moment of death completely spurns and rejects that divine goodness, then the God of love, in obedience to the law of love, cries out: "Love has done all that it can. I can forgive everything except the refusal to love." And it is a terrible thing to be through with love, for once divine love departs at death, it never returns: that is why hell is eternal! that is why hell is a place where there is no love!

-The sorrow which takes hold of the heart that has sinned against love is more piercing than any other pain. It is not right to say that sinners in hell are deprived of the love of God...But love acts in a double way, as suffering in the reprov'd, and as joy in the Blessed (St. Isaac of Syria).

-Why do modern men deny Hell? Because they deny sin. If we deny human guilt, then we must deny the right of a state to judge a criminal and further right to sentence him to prison. Once we deny the sovereignty of law, we must necessarily deny punishment. Once people deny the sovereignty of God, they must deny hell.

-The basic reason why moderns disbelieve in hell is because they really disbelieve in freedom and responsibility. To believe in hell is to assert that the consequences of good and bad acts are not indifferent. It does make a tremendous amount of difference to our body if we drink tea or TNT, and it makes a greater difference if our soul drinks virtue or vice.

-The modern man also denies hell because he fears his own conscience. Have you ever noticed that saints fear hell but never deny it; and that great sinners deny hell but never fear it? The modern man is accommodating a creed to the way he lives, rather than the way he lives to a creed. The Devil is never as strong as when he gets man to deny there is a devil. So long as he succeeds in getting materialists and skeptics to paint him in red tights with an arrowed tail, carrying a long pitchfork, he has doped them to the forgetfulness of the great and overwhelming truth that he is a fallen angel.

-The modern man who is not living according to his conscience wants a religion without a Cross, a Christ without a Calvary, a Kingdom without justice, and in his church a "soft dean who never mentions hell to ears polite."

-Let not those who profess to be Christian, or who limit Christianity to the Sermon on the Mount, forget that Our Lord closed that sermon with these words: "Every tree that does not bear good fruit shall be cut down and shall be thrown in the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone who said to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name? And I will say to them, I never knew you, depart from me, you workers of iniquity" (Mt. 7:19-23).

-How often in this world the sight of moral beauty arouses indignation! The evil person incessantly wants a recasting of all values. Put one good boy in a gang of boys which spends its time in petty thievery or breaking school windows, and the chances are the gang will turn against that good boy, ridicule his moral principles, tell him he is a coward or old fashioned. Exactly that same mentality is present in adult life. Whenever a professor attacks morality and makes fun of religion before his pupils, you can be sure nine times out of ten that his life is rotten.

-Goodness is a reproach to such persons: they want everyone to be like themselves, so no one can reproach their conscience. This revolt against goodness and truth is the basic cause of the persecution and mockery of religion. Now if such things are possible to corrupt souls on earth, why should they not be possible in eternity? They will still hate Love because hate has nothing in common with Love. They reject the one remedy that could have helped them, the love of Someone besides themselves.

-You ask: "How can God be so wrathful as to sentence souls to hell?" Remember that God does not sentence us to hell, as much as we sentence ourselves. When the cage is opened, the bird flies out to that which it loved; when our body dies, we fly out, either to an Eternity of love of God or to a hatred of God.

-God has not a different mood for those who go to hell than for those who go to heaven. The difference is in us, not in Him. We attribute anger and wrath to Him only because we feel His justice as anger. Every criminal thinks that the judge has got something against him. The same justice of the judge could free him if the criminal were innocent. Then he would think the judge was kind. The sun which shines on wax softens it; the sun which shines on mud hardens it. There is no difference in the sun, but only in that upon which it shines. So there is no difference in the God of Love when He judges the wicked and the saved; the difference is in those whom He judges.

-The fires of hell will be enkindled from within the self. The unhappiness, the misery, the self-torture that the egotist feels is already a self-burning; hell may be described as a place where the ego eternally burns in its own loneliness. Egotism is anti-love, and hell is the place where there is no love; there is only one thing that the egotists have in common with one another in hell, and that is the hatred that they bear for one another. There, this hatred will be intensified, because each egotist will see in the other that which he hates within himself.

-Love either cherishes or consumes; it draws us to heaven, or flight from it delivers us to hell. For hell is not an experience that begins in the next life; it continues there, but it begins on earth.

-Is it hard to redeem with a very light and short-lived labor those pains and torments which shall endure forever, which no created mind is capable of conceiving?

-So shall you find out for yourselves that the yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light. For even if that yoke should not in itself appear sweet to you as yet, you certainly must esteem it very sweet in comparison with the bitterness of final reprobation (St Bernard, Sermon on Psalm 90).

-Nevertheless, just as "the wicked shall see and shall be angry, he shall gnash his teeth and pine away" (for the blessed shall be called up to heaven before the reprobate are cast down into the dungeons of everlasting fire, in order that the latter may be more fiercely tormented by the sight of the glory they have lost): so "the just shall see and shall rejoice," beholding the misery from which they have escaped.

-Consequently, in that terrible and final separation, on the one hand, the sight of the sheep shall fill the goats with most bitter jealousy; and on the other, the elect shall discover in the doom of the reprobate the most powerful motives for thanksgiving and praise (St. Bernard).

-For, plainly, the thanksgiving of the just would not be so magnificent, unless along with the inconceivable happiness which they enjoy, they also beheld "the reward of the wicked," from a participation in which (as they faithfully and gratefully remember) it is only the pure mercy of the Redeemer that has saved them. Neither would the wicked be consumed with such envious rage, if they did not see the just ascending before their eyes to the kingdom of an unutterable bliss, while they groan to hear themselves condemned to the stench, the horror, and the everlasting fires of the infernal pit, and to all the long agonies of a death that is immortal (St. Bernard).

-Perhaps we may suppose that the powers of hell have so divided among them the works of malice, the functions of iniquity, that, deriving their names from their particular offices, they are called – one an asp, another a basilisk, a third a lion, and a fourth a dragon: in other words, they are named asps, or basilisks, or lions, or dragons, according to their special invisible manner of injuring souls, whether by their bite, or by their glance, or by their roar and violence, or even by their breath.

-Do you desire to be able after death to walk upon this formidable asp? If so, be careful not to walk after him in life. Take care not to imitate him now and he shall have no power to frighten thee hereafter.

-It is said to be the custom of the asp to press one of his ears as strongly as he can against the ground, and to stop the other with the end of his tail, so as to prevent himself from hearing.

-The pressing of his ear to the earth would not be enough to cause complete deafness, unless his tail was also employed to stop his hearing. Now what does this tail signify? It signifies the evil end which the soul proposes to herself in her intentions. This it is which makes her deafness desperate.

-Now she is on the one hand bowed to the earth by her attachment to her own will, and on the other hand, by bending back her tail (if I may so speak), she assiduously contemplates and hold steadily before her mind the evil object which she wishes to obtain.

-Do not, my brethren, do not, I beg of you, ever stop the ear of your conscience, ever harden you hearts.

-The basilisk is the most baneful and abominable of all irrational creatures. It is said to carry its venom in its eye. Do you wish to know what this venomous eye, this evil eye, this fascinating eye, signifies spiritually? Believe me, it is the vice of envy. For what is it to be envious but to look with an evil eye? Were the devil that seduced our first parents not a basilisk, death would never have entered the world by his envy.

-Let no one looks with an envious eye upon his brother's spiritual prosperity. For by doing so he infects it with his poison, so to speak, and in a manner kills – as far as it depends upon him.

-In my opinion, by this dragon is to be understood the spirit of anger. The human passion of anger is a good natural affection: but the abuse of the gifts of nature brings heavy loss and lamentable ruin. Therefore, my brethren, let us exercise this passion in its legitimate sphere, lest otherwise it should begin to occupy itself with things illicit or unprofitable.

-And I counsel you, my dearest brethren, yet not I but the Lord, not I but truth: be not angry with them who take from you transitory goods, or who heap insult upon you, or who even perchance inflict upon you physical suffering, "and after that have no more that they can do." But I will show what you ought to be angry with. Be angry with that which alone has

power to hurt you, which alone can prevent all temporal evils from benefiting rather than injuring you. Shall I tell you what it is? It is your own personal iniquity. "Yes, I say to you," be angry with that. For no adversity shall have power to harm you if no iniquity reigns in you.

-He who is angry as he ought to be, with this evil, shall be found indifferent to all others, or he will even welcome them. "I am ready for stripes," he will say with the Psalmist; "Come reverses, come reproaches, come bodily pain: 'I am ready and am not disturbed,' because my sorrow (for my sins) is always in my sight.'" Why should we not esteem as nothing all external troubles in comparison with this domestic affliction? Shall I allow myself to be troubled by bodily discomforts?

-It is thus, my brethren, that we acquire not only the spirit of meekness which the dragons breath cannot injure, but also a magnanimity which the roaring of the lion cannot terrify, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion go about," says the Apostle Peter. Yes, he can roar, but thanks to the great "Lion of the tribe of Judah," he cannot hurt us. Let him roar as much as he pleases: but let not the flock of Christ flee from him.

-No sensitive observer is unaware that men, in the Nihilist era more than ever before, have made of earth an image of Hell; and those who are aware of dwelling in the Abyss do not hesitate to call their state Hell. The torture and miseries of this life are indeed a foretaste of Hell, even as the joys of a Christian life – joys which the Nihilist cannot even imagine, so remote are they from his experience – are a foretaste of Heaven.

-If the Nihilist has a dim awareness, even here, of the meaning of Hell. He has no idea of its full extent, which cannot be experienced in this life; even the most extreme Nihilist, while serving the demons and even invoking them, has not the spiritual sight necessary to see them as they are. The Satanic spirit, the spirit of Hell, is always disguised in this world; its snares are set along broad path that may seem pleasant, or at least exciting, to many; and Satan offers, to those who follow his path, the consoling thought and hope of ultimate extinction. If, despite the consolations of Satan, no follower of his is very "happy" in this life, and if in the last days (of which the calamities of our century are a small preview) there "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time" – still it is only in the next life that the servants of Satan will realize the full bitterness of hopeless misery.

-The Christian believes in Hell and fears its fire – not earthly fire, as clever would have it, but fire infinitely more painful because, like the bodies with which men shall rise on the Last Day, it shall be spiritual and unending.

-The world reproaches the Christian for believing in such an unpleasant reality; but it is neither perversity nor "sadism" that leads him to do so, but rather faith and experience. Only he, perhaps, can fully believe in Hell who fully believes in Heaven and life in God; for only he who has some idea of that life can have any notion of what its absence will mean.

-For most men today "life" is small thing, a fleeting thing of small affirmation and small denial, veiled in comforting illusions and the hopeful prospect of ultimate nothingness; such men will know nothing of Hell until they live in it. But God loves even such men too much to allow them simply to "forget" Him and "pass away" into nothingness, out of His Presence which alone is life to men; He offers, even to those in Hell, His Love which is a torment to those who have not prepared themselves in this life to receive it. Many, we know, are tested and purified in those flames and made it fit by them to dwell in the Kingdom of Heaven; but others, with the demons for whom Hell was made, must dwell there eternally.

-God has called us, not the modern "heaven" of repose and sleep, but to the full and deifying glory of the sons of God; and if we, whom our God thinks worthy to receive it, rejects this call, - then better for us the flames of Hell, the torment of that last and awful proof of man's high calling and of God's unquenchable Love for all men, than the nothingness to which men of small faith, and the Nihilism of age, aspire. Nothing less than Hell is worthy of man, if he be not worthy of Heaven.

-The absurdist, though he denies human immortality, at least recognizes that the question is central one. It is possible to be indifferent to this question only if one has no love for truth, or if one's love for truth has been obscured by more deceptive and immediate things, whether pleasure, business, culture, worldly knowledge, or any of the other things the world is content to accept in place of truth. The whole meaning of life depends on the truth - or falsity - of the doctrine of human immortality.

-To the absurdist, this doctrine is false. And that is one of the reasons why his universe is so strange: there is no hope in it; death is its highest god. Apologists for the absurd see nothing but "courage" in this view, the "courage" of men willing to live without the ultimate "consolation" of eternal life; and they look down on those who require the "reward" of Heaven to justify their conduct on earth. It is not necessary, so they think, to believe in Heaven and Hell in order to lead a "good life" in this world. And their argument is a persuasive one even to many who call themselves Christians and are yet quite ready to renounce eternal life for an "existential" view that believes only in the present moment.

-Absurdism is the last proof that Christian truth is absolute and uncompromising, or else it is the same as no truth at all; and if there is no truth, if Christian truth is not to be understood literally and absolutely, if God is dead, if there is no immortality – then this world is all there is, and this world is absurd, this world is Hell.

-Man's freedom has been given to him to choose between the true God and himself, between the true path to deification whereon the self is humbled and crucified in this life to be resurrected and exalted in God in eternity, and the false path of self-deification which promises exaltation in this life but ends in the Abyss. These are the only two choices, ultimately, open to the freedom of man; and upon them have been founded the two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man, which may be discriminated only by the eye of faith in this life, but shall be separated in the future life as Heaven and Hell. It is clear to which of them modern civilization belongs, with its Promethean effort to build a kingdom of earth in defiance of God; but what should be clear enough in earlier modern thinkers becomes absolutely explicit in Nietzsche. The old commandment of "Thou shalt," has become outmoded; the new commandment is "I will."

-Why do men disbelieve in Hell? It is because they do not believe in Heaven, that is to say, because they do not believe in life, and in the God of life, because they find God's creation absurd and wish that it did not exist. The Staretz Zossima, in the Brothers Karamazov, speaks of one kind of such men:

*There are some who remain proud and fierce even in hell....They have cursed themselves, cursing God and life....They cannot behold the living God without hatred, and they cry out that the God of life should be annihilated, that God should destroy Himself and His own creation. And they will burn in the fire of their own wrath for ever and yearn for death and annihilation. But they will not attain to death....*

-Every creature testifies, with or against his will, to the ultimate coherence of things. For this coherence is the love of God, and this love is found even in the flames of Hell; it is in fact the love of God itself which torments those who refuse it.

-We must indeed choose between the Christian view of things, whose center is God and whose end is the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, and the absurd, the Satanic view of things, whose center is the fallen self and whose end is Hell, in this life and in the life to come.

-“On the other hand, the doom in store for those who are not of the City of God is an unending wretchedness that is called ‘the second death,’ because neither the soul, cut off from the life of God, nor the body, pounded by perpetual pain, can there be said to live at all. And what will make that second death so hard to bear is that there will be no death to end it.

-“Now, since unhappiness is the reverse of happiness, death of life, and war of peace, one may reasonably ask: if peace is praised and proclaimed as the highest good, what kind of warfare are we to think of as the highest evil? If this inquirer will reflect, he will realize that what is hurtful and destructive in warfare is mutual clash and conflict, and, hence, that no one can imagine a war more unbearably bitter than one in which the will and passions are at such odds that neither can ever win the victory, and in which violent pain and the body’s very nature will so clash that neither will ever yield.

-“When this conflict occurs on earth, either pain wins and death puts an end to all feeling, or nature wins and health removes the pain. But, in hell, pain permanently afflicts and nature continues to feel it, for neither ever comes to term, since the punishment must never end.

-“It is through the last judgment that good men achieve that highest good (which all should seek) and evil men that highest evil (which all should shun)” (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XIX *Philosophy and Christianity on Man’s End*, Ch. 27).

-“If we may trust the reports of workers in the field of natural phenomena, the salamander lives in fire. Again, certain well-known volcanoes in Sicily have been continuously active from the earliest times down to our own day, yet, in spite of the fire, the mountains remain intact. Such facts should prove that not everything that burns is consumed; and, as we saw, the soul proves that not everything that is susceptible of pain is susceptible of death. What further evidence, then, do we need to prove that human bodies suffering the penalty of eternal pains, first, remain united with their souls in the fire; second, burn without being consumed; and third, suffer pain without meeting death?” (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXI *End and Punishment of the Earthly City*, Ch. 4)

-“Those who have no doubt that in hell there will be sufferings for both soul and body hold that the body will be burned in fire while the soul will be gnawed, as it were, by the ‘worm’ of grief. This is certainly probable enough view, since it is absurd to think that either pain of body or anguish of soul will be lacking there.

-“Suffice it to say that argument enough was given above to prove, first, that living creatures can continue in fire without being consumed and in pain without suffering death; second that this is in virtue of a miracle of the omnipotent Creator; and, third, that anyone who denies the possibility of this miracle is simply unaware of the Source of all that is wonderful in all natures whatsoever. This Source is God. It is He who made all the natural marvels, great and small.

-“And it is He who embraced all these miracles within a single universe which is itself the greatest of all these natural miracles” (St. Augustine, *City of God*, BOOK XXI *End and Punishment of the Earthly City*, Ch. 9). p. 504

**Question : Should one expect that nobody will go to hell?**

-We belong to a good parish, and my husband and I generally are pleased with its religious education program. Mrs. Green, who teaches the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine class attended by our daughter, Angela, seems to be a faithful and devout Catholic. But the class last week was on heaven, purgatory, and hell, and Angela told us the teacher said we should suppose that everyone but ourselves will go to heaven. I thought that could not be right, since we learned as children that unrepentant mortal sinners go to hell, and I wondered if Angela had misunderstood.

-So I went to see Mrs. Green. She showed me the book on which she based the class. It is by Hans Urs von Balthasar, who, she said, “is practically a Doctor of the Church.” It seems he was a famous Swiss theologian much admired by Pope John Paul II. Mrs. Green said the Pope named him a cardinal but that he died before receiving his red hat. She pointed out passages in the book that seem to say we should expect that nobody will go to hell, though he also says no individual should take it for granted he or she will not go there.

-I do not see how the two things can fit together. More important, it seems to me wrong not to teach our children to fear hell, both for themselves and for others. I said to Mrs. Green that, if we did not worry about our children's and other people's salvation, we would not work to build up their faith or make converts. She said it is selfishness, not real love of God, to want to avoid sin and do what is right out of fear of hell. The really important thing, she said, is to love God just for himself, with no thought of reward and punishment; if people loved God as they should, they would never even think about hell.

-I am pulled this way and that. Perhaps I have been teaching my children mistaken ideas. It surely is important to love God unselfishly, and I wonder

whether I do that. Yet I feel there is something wrong here. What Mrs. Green says is very different from what we were taught, and I do not see how we could have been taught mistakes about such important things. I need to find out what we ought to think and teach our children—and, above all, how to love God as we should. Since this question is so important, I hope you will not only answer but show that the answer is what the Church teaches us to believe. For I have concluded that we can no longer believe theologians, even those who seem faithful.

**Analysis:** [From Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*]

-“Though this question might seem to pertain to dogmatic theology rather than moral theology, at issue here are the true meaning and requirements of Christian hope and love. Having proposed von Balthasar’s theological opinion about hell to the CCD class, the teacher then went beyond that opinion in responding to the mother’s objection. The excessive authority attributed to the theologian must be denied, and both his opinion and the teacher’s further explanation must be criticized and rejected as erroneous on the basis of Scripture and the Church’s teaching. Drawing on the same sources, the real requirements of Christian hope and love should be stated.

-“**The reply could be along the following lines:** [From Germain Grisez]

Since only what the Church believes and hands on as pertaining to God’s revelation is worthy of belief in the strict sense, I agree that it is a mistake for the faithful to believe theologians, including me (see *LCL*, 43). Theologians can call attention to truths of faith and provide some insight into their meaning, so that their views often deserve thoughtful consideration. Still, the faithful should evaluate what any theologian says, primarily by the Church’s teaching but also by their own cultivated Christian insight and experience (see *LCL*, 55–61), and by other appropriate sources to verify historical statements and other claims about matters of fact. →

-“I agree that we should teach our children to fear hell both for themselves and others. If one does not fear hell, heaven seems a sure thing, so that one simply anticipates it rather than hopes for it. Anticipating heaven no matter what one does, a person cannot intend it as an end, since one can intend something as an end only if one thinks acting for it will make a difference. →

-“Not intending heaven as an end, however, a person will organize his or her life in view of some other end or ends. Instead of seeking the kingdom first of all, as Jesus told his disciples to do (see Mt 6.33), we will seek the same things nonbelievers do, and our lives will hardly differ from theirs (see

LCL, 89–92). Similarly, if one does not fear hell for others but anticipates that they will inherit the kingdom no matter what they do, one will tend to focus on their well-being and happiness in this world, while neglecting catechesis and evangelization. →

-“While John Paul II plainly had a high regard for Hans Urs von Balthasar, Mrs. Green exaggerated this eminent theologian’s status in saying he “is practically a Doctor of the Church.” Only certain saints have been named “Doctors of the Church.” The title is an authoritative commendation of their thought to the faithful (but even this commendation cannot be understood as an unqualified endorsement of everything they held, since sometimes different Church Doctors’ views conflict even on essential questions). By contrast, in appointing someone a cardinal, the pope does not authoritatively commend his thought. Besides, John Paul II’s thought regarding hell seems incompatible with von Balthasar’s view. But even if the Pope did personally agree with von Balthasar on this matter, his expression of a personal opinion would not be a teaching act. →

-“Can everyone be saved? Yes, in the sense that God’s saving work in Jesus is meant for everyone and excludes no one: Jesus overcomes original sin by establishing the new covenant (see Rom 5.12–21), calling everyone to enter into it (see Mt 28.19–20, Jn 12.32), and meriting for everyone grace sufficient so that all can answer that call and freely accept God’s mercy (see Rom 11.32, 1 Tm 2.4, 2 Pt 3.9). →

-“But will everyone be saved? The answer is in sacred Scripture, which has been interpreted authoritatively by the Church’s teaching. For example, Vatican II, basing itself on the New Testament, teaches:  
Indeed, since we know neither the day nor the hour, it is necessary, as the Lord has warned, to keep watch constantly, so that, having completed the one course of our earthly life (see Heb 9.27), we may merit to enter the marriage banquet with him and be counted among the blessed (see Mt 25.31–46) and not be ordered, as bad and lazy servants (see Mt 25.26), to go down into eternal fire (see Mt 25.41), into the exterior darkness where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 22.13, 25.30). For, before we reign gloriously with Christ, all of us will appear “before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor 5.10), and at the end of the world “those who have done good will go to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil will go to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn 5.29; cf. Mt 25.46). (LG 48) →

-“When the bishops of Vatican II approved *Lumen gentium*, Jesus' words quoted at the end of this passage had been officially explained to them as meaning that some will be damned—in other words, not all will be saved—so that hell is not a mere possibility that will go unrealized. Moreover, previous definitive conciliar and papal teachings already made it clear that, just as the good *will* enjoy everlasting life with Christ, so unrepentant sinners *will* receive perpetual punishment (see DS 801/429, 1002/531). →

-“In the book to which you refer, Hans Urs von Balthasar claims that, while it cannot be theoretically certain that all will be saved, we ought to hope, and so believe it to be possible, that no human being will ever go to hell. He appears to endorse the view that it is incompatible with hope and unreserved love of others to consider damnation a real possibility for them. Von Balthasar's position seems close to universalism, the view that every human being will be saved. Yet he seems to avoid universalism, because he also maintains that we should believe that damnation is a possibility whose realization one should fear for oneself. →

-“Now, von Balthasar certainly is right in insisting that I ought to fear hell for myself. But, as you point out, taking the attitude toward others that he commends is incompatible with holding that each of us should fear hell for ourselves. Consider two persons, Smith and Jones. Smith thinks Smith can be damned but damnation is not a real possibility for Jones; Jones thinks Jones can be damned but damnation is not a real possibility for Smith. Both persons are thinking as they should, according to von Balthasar. But the thoughts of Smith and Jones about Smith's salvation are contradictory, as are their thoughts about Jones's salvation. So, von Balthasar's view implies that different people can rightly think contradictory propositions true. →

-“Moreover, in calling into question that some will be damned so as to ground hope for universal salvation, von Balthasar offers arguments that prove nothing whatsoever if they fail to show that none will be damned. He regularly gives a universalist interpretation to those Scripture passages making it clear that God desires and makes possible everyone's salvation. For instance, he repeatedly interprets Jesus' word, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (Jn 12.32), as if this drawing were, not the powerful appeal of incarnate divine love that, nevertheless, can be refused, but an irresistible attraction. →

-“At the same time, von Balthasar claims that it is humanly impossible to synthesize such Scripture passages with those that speak about the damned in a form that is grammatically future. However, anybody who

accepts both sets of passages as God's word must try to synthesize them, and von Balthasar himself tries—precisely in a universalist sense. →

-“Von Balthasar also regularly refers to scriptural passages about the damnation of unrepentant sinners as “threats.” And he asserts that we cannot know “whether these threats by God, who ‘reconciles himself in Christ with the world’, will be actually realized in the way stated.” This claim that the Scripture passages which speak of the future damnation of unrepentant sinners are threats that may not be actually realized in the way stated implies that those making the threats—and, therefore, the Holy Spirit, who asserts whatever the human authors of Scripture assert (see DV 11)—may have been bluffing, that is, may have lied. →

-“Indeed, in suggesting that Jesus’ warnings—for example, those quoted by Vatican II—may have been empty threats, von Balthasar implies that Jesus himself may have misrepresented the Father, making him seem other than Jesus knew him to be. But the Holy Spirit cannot have lied, and Jesus cannot have misrepresented the Father. →

-“So, von Balthasar’s attempt to deal with those Scripture passages is unacceptable. Nor does he help matters by suggesting, as he sometimes does, that such Scripture passages can be understood as warnings that tell us nothing about what will actually happen in the future but are meant only to motivate present repentance and fidelity. For the very notions of threat and warning imply a reference—truthful or not, accurate or not—to what *will* happen if a certain condition is fulfilled, in this case if one dies in unrepented mortal sin. →

-“Still, ought we not hope for the salvation of everyone else as well as of ourselves? Yes, but this hope does not reduce Scripture’s warnings about hell to empty threats. →

-“To see the point, one must distinguish between ordinary human hope and theological hope. Ordinary human hope extends to all sorts of things, including our own future free choices; theological hope bears on God’s promises regarding heaven’s availability by his gift and help. With theological hope, we ought, indeed, to hope for everyone, including ourselves. But theological hope is in God, not in ourselves. By hope we have absolute assurance that God will keep his promises as we seek his kingdom, which by ourselves we are incapable of attaining. But theological hope for our own salvation does not bear on what we ourselves can and must do, considered precisely insofar as that is our own action; hope does not guarantee that we will be faithful (see DS 1541/806; LCL, 84–85). Given God’s grace, for which we confidently hope, we do

not theologically hope to do his will; rather, we either freely choose to do it or fail to accept grace and commit sin. Likewise, in theologically hoping for others' salvation, we rely on God to do everything he has promised. →

-“But at the same time we do not theologically hope they will do what they ought. So, we do what we can to teach, admonish, and help others to choose freely to do God's will. Therefore, theologically hoping for everyone's salvation is entirely compatible with taking Jesus' statement that some human beings will end up in hell to mean just that and believing that some will. →

-“But von Balthasar is not satisfied with such hope; rather, extending hope to our own acts and those of others, he repeatedly suggests, either in his own words or by quoting others, that sinful human free choices may in the end prove ineffectual, perhaps by being reversed after death. This suggestion is incompatible with definitive teachings, already referred to, which are summarized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1033: “To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell.’” →

-“Consequently, I share your misgivings about von Balthasar's view. I also think that, despite his desire to retain the moral impact of the Scripture passages that speak of hell, we cannot accept the arguments he offers and still regard eternal loss as a real possibility either for ourselves or for anyone else. →

-“In calling it “selfishness, not real love of God, to want to avoid sin and do what is right out of fear of hell,” Mrs. Green went beyond anything von Balthasar says. Indeed, in arguing that if one loved God as one should, one would never even think of hell, she contradicted his explicit position: it is “indispensable that every individual Christian be confronted, in the greatest seriousness, with the possibility of his becoming lost.”

-“Some seventeenth century theologians did hold that one should not think of reward or punishment, heaven or hell, death or eternity; the Church rejected that view as erroneous and likewise rejected the notion that real love of God excludes concern about one's own perfection and happiness (see DS 2207/1227, 2351–52/1327–28, 2354–56/1330–32).

-“Two propositions closely related to those errors had previously been solemnly condemned by the Council of Trent: “If anyone shall say that the fear of hell, whereby by grieving for sins we flee to the mercy of God or

refrain from sinning, is a sin or makes sinners worse: let him be anathema" (DS 1558/818); "If anyone shall say that the one justified sins, when he performs good works with a view to an eternal reward: let him be anathema" (DS 1581/841; cf. DS 1576/836).

-“In this teaching, the Church is true to the New Testament, which repeatedly encourages Jesus' followers both to love God and hope for happiness with him and to fear separation from him. The Scriptures also make it clear that we should do good works, and repent and avoid sins, both out of love for God and out of concern for ourselves. The two motives are by no means incompatible. In truly loving God one loves whomever he loves, including oneself, and so wills the blessed communion of love—the kingdom of heaven—for which God, generously desiring that there be others to share his happiness, created angels and human persons.

-“So, God does not arbitrarily award heavenly happiness as a prize for living a good life nor withhold it as an arbitrary punishment for dying in sin. Rather, he prepares a unique life of good deeds for each of us to live (see Eph 2.10) so that in living it each may cooperate with him and thus remain his friend.

-“How, then, do we love God as we should? Love of God is not our work but a gift we receive: “God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5.5; cf. *CMP*, 592–94, *LCL*, 132–33). Yet this gift of love requires good works. Jesus teaches: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love” (Jn 15.10; cf. 1 Jn 2.3–6). In revealing himself, God offers a covenant to a group of people—a form of association between them and himself that, like a blood relationship, is meant to be permanent and very close.

-“Those who accept the covenant, trusting God to keep his word, hope to enjoy the blessings he promises. For them, in turn, to love God is faithfully to keep the terms of the covenant to which they have committed themselves. In revealing himself in Jesus, God offers all humankind a new and perfect covenantal communion. Those who believe the gospel and enter Jesus' covenantal society, which is the Church, are united with God in a bond intimate and unbreakable, like the one-flesh union of indissoluble marriage.

-“Just as a good bride and groom hope for a happy marriage, relying on each other to be faithful spouses, so Christians hope for blessed intimacy with God in heaven, relying on his grace. But just as spouses know that

their own infidelity could prevent them from enjoying a happy marriage, so Christians know that mortal sin could prevent them from sharing in the unending marriage feast of heaven.

-“As fear of offending his or her spouse and spoiling marital happiness helps a husband or wife resist temptations to be unfaithful, so fear of hell helps a Christian resist temptations. And just as that concern on the part of husbands and wives, far from being merely selfish, is consistent with truly loving their spouses and, indeed, is a result of that love, so fear of losing one's intimacy with God is inseparable from really loving him.

-You should speak again with Mrs. Green. Take for granted her desire to be faithful to Jesus' word and the Church's teaching and be gentle. Perhaps you should call her attention to the sources I have pointed out, tell her you do not see how what she said can be reconciled with them, and ask her to reconsider. In this way, you can hope to help her purify her own faith and become an even better catechist, as she no doubt wishes to be” [From Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*].

-E. J. Fortman, S.J., *Everlasting Life after Death* (New York: Alba House, 1976), 157–81; esp. 175: “It may be true enough that the New Testament gives no clear-cut witness to any particular person being in hell. But the clear implication of the biblical statements is that there is a hell and it is not just an abstract threat, an ‘abstract possibility of perdition,’ but a concrete reality with actual occupants.”

-Damnation does not come about because God delights in punishing or inflicting pain. God wants nothing but our good, but He is a just Judge. By our freedom we are able to exclude ourselves from His goodness. The Church defines hell as the “state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed” (CCC, #1033).

-No laughter is ever heard in the streets of this city, only the sound of wailing, discomfort, angst, and anxiety. This city's name is Despair: Death would be a welcome end, but it has no place in this city. Worst of all, nobody in this city will ever leave.

-In all truth, our wildest imaginations cannot embrace the full terror of damnation. We grasp a glimmer of that state of being by cobbling together our own experiences to provide an imaginary taste of something so awful.

-In such a state of being, every sense would suffer, perhaps in proportion to the use that was made of that sense to enjoy the illicit pleasures of

sinfulness during earthly life. Our sight would be filled with terrifying and gruesome images from which we cannot turn our gaze. Our ears always open, would only hear weeping and screams.

-Our bodies would experience constant discomfort. We would always be hungry and never satisfied, always thirsty and never quenched. Sleep would not exist, though we would remember it and long for it. Any bodily comfort would be but a memory to remind us of the depths of this present and endless discomfort.

-As though bodily suffering were not enough, the soul would also suffer. Whatever our worst fears and most dreaded emotions may be, these would crowd our present forever: sadness, loneliness, self-loathing, paranoia, angst, despair. We would remember what it was like to be free of the burden of these emotions, and would recall the happiness we had in their absence. Such a memory would multiply the weight of our sadness.

-Far worse than emotional suffering would be spiritual suffering: "The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs" (CCC, #1035).

-Truth, goodness, and beauty in life lift us up out of ourselves and into God. For this reason, we call them "transcendental" – they help us to transcend the limits of our experience of reality and enter into contemplating and experiencing its eternal fullness. These, and our experience of them, would have no place in hell. Nor would there be a place for the peace they once brought. In fact, all peace would be gone. Any joy, tranquility, harmony, or communion would be shattered, leaving no rest whatsoever for the soul.

-If we could distill the terrible combination of the most awful experience of our lives and unite them with all of our worst fears, our greatest failures and our darkest emotions into a single experience of desolation, it would still be far too small to capture the pain of hell, because no matter what our suffering in this life, no matter how great the pain or sadness or fear, our afflictions are always tempered by the knowledge and the hope that, eventually, the suffering will pass.

-We can endure a lot of discomfort when we know it will eventually come to an end, but in the eternity of hell, no longer would the sufferings of our existence be punctuated by the joys of living. Only sadness and agony

remain. The deep knowledge that this state is eternal would torment the soul beyond imagination.

-By far the greatest sadness of hell would be the sadness of knowing that we will never see God, never know His love, never receive His embrace, and never know the peace of soul that comes from grace. Such sadness would be deepened by the awareness that we chose this eternal desolation for ourselves by rejecting His grace and by failing to repent.

-The delights we derived from our sinful pursuits would now appear so miniscule, and we would see that we traded the passing pleasures of earthly indulgence for the endless agony of eternal damnation. We would have to be mad to choose such an eternity!

-Given the opportunity to stand on the brink of hell, behold all we would undergo there, and make a choice, we would never choose it. Yet hell is not a one-time choice for us, at least not for most. Eternal damnation is generally a gradual choice, one made by a thousand smaller choices. Our deeds judge us.

-The gradual choice begins with the basic sinful movements of our lives: pride, envy, lust, anger, and jealousy; movements that creep into our hearts and lead us to break down the communion we are called to live. It grows in directional force as we fail to repent and as the conscience is hardened until it can no longer feel the twinge of guilt that sin brings.

-If we do not choose to break out of that miserable state, and as a result if we die unrepentant, our choice is final and our eternal destiny decided. Only our sin can lead us to hell; knowledge of our weakness strengthens our ability to avoid it.

-Every major rejection of goodness began in some small one. To put a foot on the wrong path is to risk arriving at the end of the path. Contemplation of the awful possibility of hell quickens our efforts to long more fully for the life of grace.

-It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to hell is the gradual one - the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts (C.S. Lewis, *Escrewtape Letter*, #12 To Wormwood). p. 50

-Again, Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live for ever, and this must be either true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live for ever. Perhaps my bad temper or my jealousy is gradually getting worse – so gradually that the increase in seventy years will not be very noticeable. But it might be absolute hell in a million years: in fact, if Christianity is true, Hell is the precisely correct technical term for what it would be.

-If individuals live only seventy years, then a state, or a nation, or a civilization, which may last for a thousand years, is more important than an individual. But if Christianity is true, then the individual is not only more important but incomparably more important, for he is everlasting and the life of a state or a civilization, compared with his, is only a moment (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior, Three Parts of Morality, The Best of C.S. Lewis*). p. 461

-If anyone thinks that Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and back-biting; the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worst of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to Church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither (C.S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior, The Cardinal Virtues, The Best of C.S. Lewis*). p. 483

-The faith in a future life, the hope of a future happiness, the belief that God is Love and that loyalty is eternal life, these things do not produce lunacy and anarchy, if they are taken along with the other Catholic doctrines about duty and vigilance and watchfulness against the powers of hell. They might produce lunacy and anarchy, if they were taken alone.

-Of course, the same would be true, if somebody took the other doctrines of duty and discipline alone. It would produce another dark age of Puritans rapidly blackening into Pessimists.

-The Puritans thought they were simplifying things by appealing to what they called the plain words of Scripture; but as a fact they were complicating things by bringing in half a hundred cranky sects and crazy

suggestions (THE THING Why I am a Catholic, The Optimist as a Suicide, By G.K. Chesterton). p. 221

## On Humility

*Brothers, divine Scripture calls us saying: Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (Lk. 14:11; 18:14). In saying this, therefore, it shows us that every exaltation is a kind of pride, which the prophet indicates he has shunned, saying: Lord, my heart is not exalted; my eyes are not lifted up and I have not walked in the ways of the great nor gone after marvels beyond me (Ps. 131 [130]:1). And why? If I had not a humble spirit, but were exalted instead, then you would treat me like a weaned child on its mother lap (Ps. 131 [130]:2).*

-It has been said that this chapter "is justly regarded as the finished expression of monastic spirituality" (Dom Delatte). Certainly it can be made to cover every aspect of Benedictine life, interior & exterior, and of all the chapters in the Holy Rule is the one that most clearly reveals the spirit of St. Benedict, just as the Sermon on the Mount reveals the spirit of Christ.

-After an introductory paragraph consisting of three quotations from Holy Scripture linked together with his own explicatory sentence to help them out ("teaching us that all exaltation is a kind of pride against which the prophet shows himself to be on his guard", St. Benedict makes his own specific opening in the following terms:

*Accordingly, brothers, if we want to reach the highest summit of humility, if we desire to attain speedily that exaltation in heaven to which we climb by the humility of this present life, then by our ascending actions we must set up that ladder on which Jacob in a dream saw angels descending & ascending (Gen. 28:12). Without doubt, this descent and ascent can signify only that we descend by exaltation and ascend by humility. Now, the ladder erected is our life on earth, and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven. We may call our body and soul the sides of the ladder, into which our divine vocation has fitted the various steps of humility and discipline as we ascend.*

-In this paragraph St. Benedict shows what is the most powerful force of religious behavior. The interaction of grace and the human will co-operating with grace is the generative principle (gives birth – transmit life) of charity, of Christianity, of monasticism. Where the human will is acting unselfishly, with confidence not in its own action but in the action of grace, we have the virtue of humility in operation.

-The theme of ascending and descending, which is repeated in his introduction, is only another way of expressing St. Benedict's doctrine of

true and false happiness. There are two sorts of exaltation, and if we are looking for the one which is realized only in the next life which God has promised to those who love Him, we must do without the one which is realized in this life. When we are really prepared to sit for the rest of our days at the bottom of the ladder, we find ourselves being carried up by it. This makes us flexible and can adapt to any kind of situation. With St. Paul we can say: *I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him who strengthens me* (Phil. 4:11-13).

-The difference between the good and the bad angels was the difference between humility and pride. The good go up Jacob's ladder, the bad come down. The humble mount upright, the proud drop headlong; it is the paradox of the unimportant looking dignified, and the important looking absurd. The same idea is expressed in the Magnificat of Our Lady: *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for he has regarded the humility of his handmaid....He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree....*

-Interpreted strictly, the ladder in Jacob's dream represents the movement to and from the earth of God's messengers. The angels are good angels, not some of them good and some bad. The idea is that God sends graces to men and that the use made of these graces is reported back to Him. "My words shall not return to me void," says the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 55:11). St. Benedict and others (for instance, St. Basil & St. John Climacus), interpret the ladder dream in an accommodated (allegorical) sense.

-It is the unwillingness to climb down and be like everyone else in subjection that constitutes pride, whether spiritual or human; so it is the willingness to stay small, and even look small, that gives its value to the performance of ordinary actions.

-The common life of the monastery is a discipline primarily because it is humbling. Obedience is always humbling, but is doubly so when offered together with everyone else and in connection with routine observances which afford no scope for ostentation and heroism. Although it is humbling, it offers beatitude if we prefer nothing to Christ, as our Constitution says, "Only if the brothers prefer nothing whatever to Christ

will they be happy to persevere in a life that is ordinary, obscure and laborious.”

-Spiritual pride has to be broken down by acceptance of ordinary ways of prayer, of doing humble and menial jobs, and of the fact that in religion one is no better than that of the very ordinary people living in the world, because the ordinary people in the world are also doing humble and menial jobs. The difference lies in our inner disposition and our consecration to God.

-Straightforward natural vanity such as wearing gold ring, gold necklace, gold watch, wearing flashy or dandy dress, and using perfume has to be broken down by following out the implications of St. Benedict's twelve degree of humility which has to do with one's behavior & attitude.

-St. John of the Cross says in the *Ascent of Mt. Carmel* that “the state of divine union consists in the soul's transformation in the will of God, so that there is nothing contrary to the will of God,” and that “when the soul rids itself totally of that which is repugnant to the divine will and which conforms not with it, it is transformed in God through love.” The soul's very movement is actuated by it – is indeed identified with – the will of God. This is the ideal proposed by St. Benedict, and as the means towards its realization he offers his twelve degrees of humility.

-The first thing that the novice master is instructed by St. Benedict to examine in the candidate for the monastic life is “whether the novice truly seeks God, is zealous for the *Opus Dei* (Divine Office), for obedience, and for humiliations.” In one of his letters, St. Bernard said: “Humiliation leads to humility and humility is the foundation of the spiritual life. Humiliation is the way to humility, just as patience is the way to peace, and reading to knowledge. If you want the virtue of humility you must not avoid humiliation. If you will not allow yourself to be humbled, you can never achieve humility.”

-One would only grow obdurate in pride if he indignantly rejected the humiliation, allowing himself to yield to murmurs & complaints.

-The living God, who died in the most degrading condition, has taught mankind to despise earthly values & to esteem those virtues of humility & sacrifice which the world disdains.

-Though St. Benedict nowhere says that his degrees of humility must be studied one at a time, and that we should not proceed to the next until we had mastered the one before, the whole point of its graded form is to

suggest order. Our soul is expected to attempt all degrees at once, seeing in their arrangement more of a challenge to serious effort in the acquisition of humility than an exact plan which leads inevitably to a crowning perfection.

-It's like the command to be perfect. We are commanded to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, so that we will begin even though we will not be perfect in this life, because if we have not been commanded to be perfect we might not even attempt to begin, but now, at least, we have to begin.

-The thought is expressed by John Cassian, who quotes Abbot Nesteros as saying: "There are in the world many arts and sciences, most of which are useless save for the conveniency of this present life; yet all have a method by which they may be acquired. If these arts and sciences have a fixed and established system by which they are to be learned, how much more should our religious life have its appointed rules and principles...? If you have a sincere desire to ascend to the higher and more excellent part of our spiritual science, not prompted by vainglory but by the wish to purify your interior, you will be inflamed with ardor to possess the sixth beatitude: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God...*so let me beg of you to be earnest in your application to whatever regards morality, or the practical part of the spiritual science, without which you can never ascend to that purity of contemplation which is given to those who have attained to perfection" (Conf. 14:1 & 9).

-For St. Benedict the monastic virtues of poverty, obedience, indifference to comfort, frankness with superiors, the willingness to sink one's theories and suppress one's singularities are all the outcome of the spirit of humility. Humility is the reason why they are reasonable. It makes them worth practicing, and perfect when practiced. A person who is humble has no need to invent reasons for being humble, but shows humility without effort or self-compelling. A person, who is truly humble, is not indignant when he is wrongly accused, and says nothing to justify himself against false accusations.

-By humility of understanding we know that we are nothing; and we learn this humility from ourselves & from the experience of our own infirmity. Humility of the will, or of the heart, enables us to trample underfoot the glory of the world. God wants humility of heart. We have perfect grasp of truth only when we love to see ourselves as we truly are in God's sight. Humility is truth. The only people who grow in truth are those who are humble & honest.

-If we want to grow in love we must grow in humility and the measure of our humility will be that of our progress. Divine grace is always found in intimate union with the virtue of humility, because God resist the proud and gives grace to the humble. Pride manifests itself as devaluing of others as we compare ourselves to those around us. In modern terms, it makes up an important part of envy. Self-righteousness is one of its more obnoxious characteristics, as its sufferer looks around to make sure the people around him or her are as good as they ought to be. Only humility is its antidote.

-No person is good unless he is humble; and humility is recognition of truth concerning oneself. Being able to look into ourselves deeply, often times with interior laughter, takes real humility.

-Cultivating humility means that we will begin to stop measuring ourselves continually against others. Having humility means that we will have no particular desire to do better than others, and we will not care if someone else does better than we. Pride hurts, but humility makes us courageous and strong. Humility makes us patient with ourselves & others and helps us to accept that the passions, feelings, attitudes, and certain kinds of behavior do not go away all at once simply because we have identified them.

-Humility enable us to hear what others tell us and will help us cultivate within ourselves a continuous attitude of listening to the signs of the times, to friends, and to those who are not so friendly. It makes us receptive of all that comes to us that might bring us to love of God and of each other. It is the only possible attitude out of which we can ever speak a word of truth to another person without doing terrible harm to ourselves and the others.

-Humility has nothing to do with low-self image. Real humility brings freedom and love to its recipients, not guilt and resentment. It accepts our human vulnerability and the fact that we sin. It is not so overwhelmed by human weakness that it is left paralyzed, thinking over its own inadequacy. It mobilizes and not immobilize.

-Feeling guilty has nothing to do with humility, for both real humility and repentance do not paralyze but rather free us to keep on going. It made us realize that to remain above reproach is not the fundamental task of the Christian. The idea tat we should at all times be above reproach makes a mockery of repentance and forgiveness as well as love because it suggests the need always to look good in the sight of the neighbor and never to be caught at fault, whereas in reality we all make many mistakes. We will be deceived, no matter how great progress we made in the

spiritual life if we think there is nothing in us that has to be removed. Hence, we must not allow ourselves to feel we have “risen above” temptation, nor allow ourselves to be shocked when we meet sin in ourselves or others.

-The recognition of one's inclination to sin was a powerful component in the humility of the desert fathers & mothers. St. Dorotheos of Gaza pointed out that very nearly the hardest temptation we struggle against is passing judgment on the actions and life of our neighbor.

-The Pharisee went away unjustified not because he gave thanks to God for the good things he did, for we too ought to give thanks to God when he helps us to do something good. He was condemned because he looked with contempt upon a particular tax collector's very being because of his sin.

-All of us have some Adam & Eve in us and no one of us is in position to judge someone else self-righteously

-Humility made it easy to repent or confess our wrongdoing and accept forgiveness, because the humble person know very well that all human beings, he or she included, are sinners. It has no problem believing that God loves us and will not reject us.

-Humility as the early monastics describe it has nothing to do with passivity, nor anything to do with deliberately cultivating a poor self-image. Part of the power of humility comes from letting go of the need to look good in our own eyes or of others.

-Humility itself is countercultural. If the world is to be changed, the promise of the Prince of Peace is that it will be by the adoption of a whole new set of values that stand in opposition to those of the world.

-This makes it easier to understand how St. Benedict's concept of humility closely resembles that of biblical conversion, *metanoia* – a change of mentality that includes ideas and concepts but goes beyond them to touch the very roots of our existence. The steps of humility and good zeal are really degree of conversion of heart, as expressed in the realities of cenobitic obedience, self-knowledge, self-sacrifice, and silence. Such a truly converted conscience is the precious fruit of a life of real self-renunciation.

-Thoughts, desires, will, and feelings have to come into harmony with the inner action of the Spirit, have to be integrated at the center of our being,

our heart. All growth in the spiritual life could be defined as a “return to the heart.” It is humility that guides us in this return journey, that uncovers the false instincts in the human heart and finds the truth written there by grace. This is the true self which the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of Peter describes as “the hidden person of the heart with imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.”

*The first degree of humility, then, is that a man keeps the fear of God always before his eyes (Ps. 35 [36]:1) and never forgets it. He must constantly remember everything God has commanded, keeping in mind that all who despise God will be burn in hell for their sins, and all who fear God have everlasting life awaiting them. While he guards himself at every moment from sins and vices of thought or tongue, of hand or foot, of self-will or bodily desire, let him recall that he is always seen by God in heaven, that his actions everywhere are in God’s sight and are reported by angels at every hour.*

-According to our catechisms fear of God is a moral virtue inclining the will to ease of action in the performance of a particular act; it disposes the human will to bow down before God in reverent submission.

-Fear of God is of two kinds, servile & filial, it is also known as preliminary & perfect depending on whether God is feared as a Master or as a Father. Our fear of Him is servile or preliminary when we fear Him because of His authority and power, by which He can punish us for our misdeeds. This is fear of torments/punishment. If we fear Him because of His goodness and kindness, which we would not abuse by sinful acts, then our fear is filial or perfect, like that of a son who is afraid of hurting his father’s feelings. While the motive differs in each kind of fear, the fruit or result of the ear in each case is the same, a sinless and virtuous life. We have to pass through servile or preliminary fear before we can attain filial fear or perfect fear. Thus the fear of God is a virtue inclining our will to embrace a mode of life in which vices are uprooted and virtues cultivated.

-Fear of God is a fundamental moral virtue, the fountainhead of Christian asceticism, the springboard of monastic discipline, in a word the source of true Christian wisdom. Scripture testifies to this when it call the fear of the Lord “the beginning of wisdom.” Wisdom here is not the erudition we acquire from learning, but it is the ability to live as to attain God as the last end.

-The monk, upon entering the monastic life, will intensify his fear of God, and as he grows in the ways of God, the fear will lose its servile character

and become increasingly filial, which, when perfect, is identified with perfect love.

-That this is St. Benedict's view is clear from the conclusion of this chapter 7: "Having climbed all these steps of humility, therefore, the monk will presently come to that perfect love of God which casts out fear. And all those precepts which formerly he had not observed without fear he will now begin to keep by reason of that love, without any effort, as though naturally and by habit. No longer will his motive be fear of hell, but rather the love of Christ, good habit and delight in the virtues which the Lord will deign to show forth by the Holy Spirit in His servants now cleansed from vice and sin."

-Fear of God, whether servile or filial, inspires a life free from sin in accordance with God's will. However, this result is more easily obtained by filial fear; what was once done grudgingly and with effort from fear of hell is now done out of "good habit and delight in the virtues."

-In the chapters on monastic mortification & renunciation of self-will, St. Benedict, in writing the Rule, hoped "to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome." When the monk has acquired a high degree of filial fear of God, this hope of St. Benedict becomes a reality and nothing whatever is any longer harsh or difficult.

-St. Benedict insists, with emphatic repetition of the idea in his formulation of the first degree of humility that fear of God is the root of a sinless and virtuous life. This point is so clearly a part of monastic tradition and has so strongly influenced the character of monastic spirituality that it is well to quote at length St. Benedict's own word: *Let him keep himself at every moment from sin and vices, whether of the mind, the tongue, the hands, the feet, or the self-will, and check also the desires of the flesh. Let man consider that God is always looking at him from heaven, that his actions are everywhere visible to the divine eyes and are constantly being reported to God by the Angels....Therefore, since the eyes of the Lord observes the good and the evil and the Lord is always looking down from heaven on the children of men 'to see if there be anyone who is wise and seeks God,' and since our deeds are daily, day and night, reported to the Lord by the Angels assigned to us, we must constantly beware brethren, as the Prophet says in the Psalm, lest at any time God see us falling into evil and becoming unprofitable; and lest, having spared us for the present because in His kindness He wants our reformation, He say to us in the future, 'These things you did, and I held My peace.'*

-From this we can say that the fear of the Lord is a basic force in the monk's life. Monastic life in its entirety is a law which by profession (solemn or simple) we freely accept. To this monastic way of life we are bound, and we cannot depart from it with impunity (freedom from punishment). Seclusion, solitude, silence, work, prayer, reading, abstinence, renunciation of the world through poverty, chastity, obedience, and conversion of manners, the various degrees of humility, the manifold duties of fraternal service: all these are elements in our manner of life which we have taken upon ourselves as the law by which we promise to live. What will keep us faithful day after day, until death, to the observance and fulfillment of this law? No doubt it is the fear of the Lord.

-This precise function of fear of God in our everyday life is described with uncommon eloquence by Abba Pinufius on the occasion of receiving a young man into the monastic life. He said: "You ought in the first instance to learn the actual reason for the renunciation of the world, and when you have seen this, you can be taught more plainly what you ought to do, from the reason for it.

Renunciation is nothing but the evidence of the cross and of mortification. And so you must know that today you are dead to this world and its deeds and desires, and that, as the Apostle says, you are crucified to this world and this world to you.

-Consider therefore the demands of the cross under the sign of which you ought henceforward to live in this life; because you no longer live but Christ lives in you, who was crucified for you. We must therefore pass our time in this life in that fashion and form in which He was crucified for us on the cross so that (as David says) piercing our flesh, with the fear of the Lord, we may have all our wishes and desires not subservient (under, subordinate) to our own lusts but fastened to His mortification. For so shall we fulfill the command of the Lord which says, 'He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.'

-But perhaps you will say, 'How can a man carry his cross continually? Or how can anyone who is alive be crucified? Hear briefly how this is, the fear of the Lord is our cross. As then one who is crucified no longer has the power of moving or turning his limbs in any direction as he pleases, so we also ought to fix our wishes and desires – not in accordance with what is pleasant and delightful to us now, but in accordance with the law of the Lord, where it constrains us.

-As he who is fastened to the wood of the cross no longer consider things present, not thinks about his likings, nor is perplexed by anxiety and care for the morrow, nor disturbed by any desire of possession, nor inflamed by

any pride or strife or rivalry, grieves not at present injuries, remembers not past ones, and while he still breathing in the body considers that he is dead to all earthly things, sending the thoughts of his heart on before to that place where he doubts not that he is shortly to come: so we also, when crucified by the fear of the Lord ought to be dead indeed to all these things, i.e., not only to carnal vices but also to all earthly things, having the eyes of our minds fixed there where we hope at each moment that we are soon to pass. For in this way we can have all our desire and carnal affections mortified.”

-This passage illustrates not only the role played by fear of the Lord in the life of a monk, but the Christocentric character of monastic asceticism. Monasticism during its first centuries evolved the moral and ascetical teaching of Christ in the Gospels into a carefully thought-out system in which identification with Christ in His mystery of the cross is seen as the term of a monk’s moral and ascetical labor. And fear of the Lord has the function of nailing the monk with Christ to the Cross and of making his life a sharing in this central mystery of Christianity. The monastic life is lived in the mystery of the Cross. It is the fear of the Lord by which a monk’s life is lifted up in this mystery of the Cross, as a dying with Christ to sin and a life unto God in virtue and grace.

-The first requirement, then, is an awareness of God’s presence, and that all we do is a participation in the paschal mystery of Christ who humbles Himself even unto death. The monk may never forget that God expects to be taken at His word. As Christ said in the Gospel of John: “He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.”

-Unless the monk is “mindful at all times” of the consequences of sin and vice, his false self-esteem will grow and ultimately get the better of him. It is only humility that can counter the continual pressure of self-assertiveness. St. Benedict’s idea is that when the arrogance of a man is kept under by humility, the positive attraction of the love of God will be free to make itself actively & effectively felt.

-Just as the works of natural creation are drawn by the law of gravity towards the earth’s center, so the works of spiritual creation are drawn by the law of charity towards the heart of charity itself. Once freed from its material weights, the soul responds according to its very nature to the gravitational drawing of charity. The soul can feel the pull of love even before the weights and shackles are struck off, but for the magnetic influence to take effect the life of the senses must be subject to the life of the spirit.

-In the language of St. Paul: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that set on he flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you" (Rom. 8:5-9).

-Almost all disturbances, displeasures, anxieties, and disputes arise from our concupiscences, so that by training and calming them we may establish a most gratifying concord with ourselves and with our neighbor. St. James, then is right in saying, "What causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly to spend it in your passion" (James 4:1-3).

-Our evil desires insofar as they are small to start with, we can, if we want to, cut them off with ease. If we neglect them as mere trifles they harden, and they grow to any degree of maturity inside us, we shall no longer be able to remove them from ourselves no matter how we labor unless we have the help of the saints interceding for us with God.

-Humility, keeping watch over the appetites & passions, surrenders "the thoughts, the tongue, the eyes, the hands" to the dominion of grace. So far as in him lies, the monk "cuts of the desires of the flesh" and keeps himself from the tyranny of "his own will." This is humility's effective contribution. It is as far as it can go. From here it must be God who takes over. Man humbles himself – so far so good, and this is our concern – and it is for God then to exalt him. In the language of St. Peter: "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you" (2Pt. 5:5-6).

-The more our soul yields to the grace of humility the more effectively and rapidly does the further grace of exaltation come into play. The submissiveness of the humble soul is caught up in the activity of grace.

-Raised thus to a level unattainable by mere human effort or by the force of discipline alone, the soul comes to the free exercise of a spirituality that transforms everything that it touches.

-St. Thomas Aquinas gives as the root and principle of humility the reverence which the soul has towards God. It is only the humble person who recognizes what is due to God, and who finds in every aspect of his life the means of rendering it. Community life suggests it to him, regular observances offers it to him, his prayer and his mortification are expressions of it.

-After some further exhortations to keep alive the sense of God's presence, St. Benedict enlarges upon a theme which is constantly recurring in the holy Rule, that is, the conflict between self-will and the signified will of God.

*We are indeed forbidden to do our own will by Scripture, which say to us: "Turn away from own will." And so, too, we beg God in prayer that His will may be done in us. Rightly therefore we are taught not to do our own will if we take heed to the warning of Scripture: "There are ways that seem right to men, but the ends thereof lead to the depths of hell."*

-Reason and Scripture together prove the wrongness of self-will and the rightness of humility. Humility is truth; self-will is the desire for something false. When the false is consistently sought, the self that seeks becomes confused and loses its true identity. It becomes a false self-seeking, a false good. What seems right and to be desired turns out to be wrong. Selfishness has distorted the judgment and laid the soul open to delusion.

-Whoever is solely guided by his judgment and decision will never climb up the summit of perfection & will not fail to be the victim of the devil's ruinous power to delude. Attachment to our own judgment is one of the most necessary things to abandon to attain true humility & perfection.

-Blessed Moses was very aware of the danger of following our own judgment. He said: "The devil drags a monk by way of no other sin than that of submission to private judgment and the neglect of the advice of our elders."

-St. Benedict's quotation from the book of Proverbs comes as a shock. But it is not so alarming when we realize the true nature of the threat. It does not mean that a man, having followed a course in all good faith, will wake up one day to find himself in hell. What it means is that the man who has chosen to call evil good and good evil has so misdirected his desires that inevitably he ends up where his desires take him. "Do not follow your base desires, but turn away from your own will" (Prov. 18:30).

*-Let us be on our guard, then, against evil desires, since death has its place close to the entrance of delight; wherefore the Scripture*

*commands us saying: 'Go not after your concupiscences.' Since therefore the eyes of the Lord behold good and evil, and the Lord is ever looking down from heaven upon the children of men to see who has understanding or is seeking God...we must be on our watch brethren, lest, as the prophet says in the psalm, God should see us at any time declining to evil and becoming unprofitable.*

-The presence of God must have been an abiding reality to St. Benedict: again & again he gives it as the element in which the monastic life is lived. The divine presence gives form to what are otherwise purely human acts. Performed under the eyes of God, every detail of religious observance is strictly a religious observance – is an act of worship.

-If form can be defined as principle made actual in outward symbols, then the outward symbols of obedience, of fidelity, of fraternal charity, of prayer and penance are notified by the principle of the divine presence. It is humility that recognizes this presence – as it is this presence that deepens and strengthens humility. What salt is for any food humility is for any virtue.

*The second degree of humility is that a man love not his own will nor takes pleasure in the satisfaction of his desires, rather he shall imitate by his actions that saying of the Lord: 'I came not to do Mine own will but the will of Him who sent Me.' Similarly we read, self-will has punishment, constraint wins a crown.*

-The first reference in the Rule to renunciation of self-will is the second paragraph of the Prologue: "To you, therefore, my words are now addressed, whoever you may be, who are renouncing your own will to do battle under the Lord Christ, the true King."

-St. Benedict thus explicitly directs his *Rule* to those who renounce their will. If a candidate has not already made the decision to renounce his will when he seeks entrance to the monastery he may as well not enter; life as a monk will be impossible; until he learns that the service of the Lord requires of him the complete renunciation of his will he can be a monk in name and habit only, not in fact.

-The *Rule* in its entirety, from Prologue to Epilogue, is a structure of life built on renunciation of self-will as on its only possible foundation. On this point, too, St. Benedict merely incorporates into his *Rule* earlier monastic teaching and practice. Just as St. Benedict in the opening words of the *Rule* demands renunciation of self-will as a condition for entrance into

monastic life, so the Eastern monks make it the “chief part” of the instruction which the senior was to give to his novices.

-For instance, when the novice is to be admitted into the congregation of the brethren he is handed over to another Elder, who is placed over ten of the juniors, who are entrusted to him by the abbot, and whom he both teaches and governs....And his anxiety and the chief part of his instruction – through which the juniors brought to him may be able in due course to mount to the greatest heights of perfection – will be to teach him first to conquer his own wishes; and, anxiously and diligently practicing him in this, he will of set purpose plan to give him such orders as he knows to be contrary to his liking, for taught by many example, they say that a monk, and especially the younger ones, cannot bridle the desires of his concupiscence unless he has learned by obedience to mortify his wishes.” If you see a young man climbing up to heaven by his own will, catch him by the foot and pull him down to earth: it is not good for him (saying of a desert father).

-The first lesson, then which we must learn in the school of the Lord's service which we are attending, is to mortify our desires. Without this no further progress is possible. It is safe to say that the whole range of our ascetical effort rests on renunciation of self-will. For instance, interior mastery of the passions and the emotions, living peacefully and in harmony with others, and even perseverance in the common life; these are all impossible without death to self which is achieved by renunciation of self-will.

-Tensions arise in community when we refuse to change & grow according to our vows of conversion of manners. But no community is free from challenges, and so we have to learn to live in peace amid difficulties. It is not a question of solving problems, but living with them creatively. The Holy Spirit can work through less-than-perfect superiors & community members. We need only to have confidence in Him.

-In the midst of frailty & brokenness, we can become holy, because our sins and failings prompt us to see our need to trust in God. The door to the heart must be open. The door that must be shut is the mouth. The work has to come from within, so that we don't blame things & people outside us. The saying, “If only you would change, I could become better,” must give way to, “I must become better, so everyone else can.” We love ourselves and hate our sins. We should be able to do the same with others. With patience, obedience, and renunciation of our own will, we share in Christ's joys & sufferings. Community life is always a joy if we live unselfishly,

if we control the itch to be self-assertive and are determined not to seek our own will.

-The monks of Scete were unanimous in the matter: "They lay it down that a man who has not first learned to overcome his desires cannot possibly stamp out anger or sulkiness, or the spirit of fornication; nor can he preserve true humility of heart, or lasting unity with the brethren, or a stable and continuous concord/harmony; nor remain for any length of time in the monastery." This is to say that sooner or later this monk will leave.

-In this passage John Cassian is evidently summarizing the eight principal vices against which a monk must do battle, namely gluttony, fornication, greed, anger, sadness, laziness, vanity, and pride. None of these can be stamped out unless we learn first to conquer our own wishes. And unless these vices are eradicated, we will not begin to possess the opposite virtues, namely, temperance, chastity, poverty, meekness, joy, industriousness, gratitude, and humility. Not possessing these virtues we cannot possibly live in peace and concord and harmony in the monastery. Without renunciation of self-will, which is a sign of humility, a monk will after a short sojourn in a monastery either leave it, or be expelled from it, or, if he remains, become a trouble maker and a disturber of the peace of the community till the day of his death..

-The conclusion is clear: the monk must renounce his own will. Therefore St. Benedict, having directed his *Rule* to those "who are renouncing their own will to do battle under Christ the Lord, the true king," spells out in its seventy-three chapter all the implications of his first and fundamental form of monastic asceticism.

-The cenobites, for whom alone St. Benedict legislates, are "those who live in monasteries and serve under a rule and an Abbot." The degree of renunciation of self-will required by such a life in common with others under the one roof of a monastery under a rule and an abbot is indicated in St. Benedict's condemnation of the Sarabites: "These, not having been tested, as gold in the furnace, by any rule or by the lessons of experience, are as soft as lead....Their law is the desire for self-gratification: whatever enters their mind or appeals to them, that they call holy; what they dislike, they regard as unlawful."

-This description of the "detestable" Sarabites is in sharp contrast to St. Benedict's description of true cenobites; who "do not live according to their own choice nor obeying their own desires and pleasures but walking by another's judgment and command, they dwell in monasteries and

desire to have an Abbot over them." Renunciation of our own will is one element in the monastic ascetical trinity, of which the other two are humility and obedience. Humility is the motive for death to self, which bears fruit in a life of obedience.

-Renunciation of self-will, as a disposition for a life of service under the *Rule* and of obedience to the Abbot and confreres, distinguishes the cenobites from the Sarabites; the latter "in twos or threes, or even singly, without a shepherd," live "in their own sheepfolds and not in the Lord's." No wonder St. Benedict can say of them, "in their works they still keep faith with the world, so that their tonsure marks them as liars before God."

-St. Benedict gives his monks the right and the duty to offer their opinion on matters under discussion in the Community Chapter Meeting; but he is careful to remind them to "give their advice with all the deference required by humility, and not presume stubbornly to defend their opinions; but let the decision rather depend on the Abbot's judgment, and all submit to whatever he shall decide for their welfare...."

-This is to safeguard the monk from the cunning of the devil, because the devil can drag a monk headlong to death by way of no other sin than that of submission to private judgment and the neglect of the advice of the elders. And whoever is solely guided by his own judgment and decision will never climb up to the summit of perfection & will not fail to be the victim of the devil's ruinous power to delude. Self-will is the root of all religious imperfection. Attachment to our judgment is one of the most necessary things to abandon if we desire to attain true humility & true perfection. We are free to express our ideas, but not to insist on it.

-In all things, therefore, let all follow the *Rule* as guide, and let no one be so rash as to deviate from it. Let no one in the monastery follow his own heart's fancy. The primary function of the cenobitical life, of the *Rule*, of the Abbot, and even of confreres, would seem to be to keep a monk from walking according to his own will and desires.

-As we have given up the world let us also give up passionate attachment to it. For through certain small and worthless things our inordinate (unregulated) desires bind us again to the world without realizing it. If, therefore, we desire to be set free and to enjoy perfect freedom, let us learn to cut off our desires and so, with God's help, in a little while, we shall make progress and arrive at a state of tranquility.

-St. Dorotheos of Gaza pointed out ways on how to cut our desires even little by little. He said: "In a short time a man cut off lots of desires. For

example, he takes a little walk & sees something. His thoughts say to him, 'Go over there & investigate,' and he says to his thoughts, No! I won't, and he cuts off his desire. Again he finds someone gossiping, and his thoughts say to him, 'You go and have a word with them,' and he cuts off his desire, and does not speak. Or again his thoughts say to him, 'Go up and ask the cook what he's cooking? And he does not go up but cuts off his desire. Then he sees something else, and his thoughts say to him, 'Go down and ask who brought it?' and he does not ask. A man denying himself in this way comes little by little to form a habit of it, so that from denying himself in little things, he begins to deny himself in great things without the least trouble. Finally he comes not to have any of these extraneous desires, but whatever happens to him he is satisfied with it, as if it were the very thing he wanted. And so, not desiring to satisfy his won desires, he finds himself always doing what he wants to. For not having his own special fancies, he fancies every single thing that happens to him. Thus he is found to be without attachments, and from this state of tranquility he comes to the state of holy indifference."

-Chapter 5 deals entirely with prompt obedience. Prompt obedience along with renunciation of self-will, openness of soul to the Abbot and complete voluntary poverty were the four "practices" by means of which the senior, in the deserts of Egypt, "hastened to impress and instruct those whom they are training with the alphabet, as it were, and first syllables in the direction of perfection." Great importance was placed on promptness and cheerfulness in obeying during a monk's early monastic training and St. Benedict incorporates this element of the traditional system of monastic training into his *Rule*. Prompt obedience depends on renunciation of self-will: it is the virtue of those who "immediately leaving their own affairs and forsaking their own will, dropping the work they were engaged in and leaving it unfinished, with the ready step of obedience follow up with their deeds the voice of him who commands."

-Renunciation of self-will is explicitly mentioned as a prerequisite for the practice of the first, second, and third degrees of humility. "As for self-will, we are forbidden to do our own will by the Scripture, which says to us, 'Turn away from your own will,' and likewise by the prayer in which we ask God that His Will be done in us.

-And rightly we are taught not to do our own will when we take heed to the warning of Scripture: "There are ways which to men seem right, but the ends of them plunge into the depths of hell; and so we trembled at what is said of the careless: 'They are corrupt and have become abominable in their wills.'"

-St. Benedict obviously elaborates at such length on the evils of self-will because self-will is diametrically opposed to the first degree of humility, which is the fear of God. Fear of God cannot coexist with self-will, a lesson simply stressed in Scripture. "The second degree of humility is that a person love not his own will nor take pleasure in satisfying his desires" and "the third degree is that a person for love of God, submit himself to his Superior in all obedience."

-If renunciation of self-will is not explicitly mentioned in the other nine degrees, it is the more necessary for their exercise because they are the mansion which arises on the foundation of the first degrees.

-Chapters 23-30 comprise the Major Penal Code and Chapters 43-46 the Minor Penal Code of the Rule. They deal with the major and minor faults against the monastic discipline and the satisfaction that must be made. The idea underlying all these chapters is that self-will in its various manifestations is the cause of all faults and infractions against the *Rule* and monastic discipline.

-Thus Chapter 23 lists obstinacy, disobedience, pride, murmuring, habitual transgression of the *Rule* in any point, and contempt for the orders of seniors, as the more serious faults a monk can commit, while Chapter 43 includes lack of punctuality for meals and Office among minor faults. Self-will, St. Benedict seems to say, as a manifestation of pride, is the only real fault against the monastic life, and so satisfaction must be made every time it manifests itself.

-The extent to which monastic profession despoils us of our freedom to do what we wish or as we wish is made clear in Chapter 58, "On the Manner of Receiving Brethren." "If (the novice) has any property, let him either give it beforehand to the poor or by solemn donation bestow it on the monastery, reserving nothing at all for himself, as indeed he knows that from that day forward he will no longer have power even over his own body."

-The monk is by definition one who gives up his will; not in the sense that the monastic life consists in such renunciation of self-will and in nothing more, but in the sense that unless we give up our will we will not, in fact cannot, win the perfection of any other phase of monastic discipline. We renounce self-will in order to obey God. We find God's directions in the *Rule*, in the Superior, and in our confreres. From them and through them we learn the extent to which we must renounce self-will: we are no longer free to use our body as we desire; we no longer have free disposal of our time, talents, energy, or leisure. We are free only to live as a cenobite,

serving under the *Rule* and an Abbot. We are free to follow the routine of the day, free to mold our lives on the directives of both the *Rule* and the Abbot. This task requires all the power we have; but no longer is it self-will, but conformity to God's will. Like Christ we now does always what pleases the Father.

-The practice of renunciation of self-will, then, brings us to that state of being in which we obey not our own desires and pleasures, but walks by another's judgment and command....

-The antithesis of the true cenobitical monastic spirit is represented by the Sarabites and Gyrovagues. We understand St. Benedict's severe words of condemnation. The Sarabites and Gyrovagues are still alive today, not as a separate kind of monk, but as a spirit within the cenobitic community.

-The modern Sarabite is the monk who, though residing in a monastery, continue to live as he desires, doing his own will, by his self-will showing loyalty to the world rather than to God. The Sarabaitic spirit is old-age enemy of monasticism.

-St. Benedict asks the monk to renounce his will but never to kill it. This distinction is important in view of notions of obedience young religious often profess. The will is always alive in us and can no more be "killed" than can the power of thought. The will is a power of the human soul, and so the goal in our ascetical efforts must not be to kill the will but to guide and train it for virtuous service.

-The purpose of monastic obedience I not to make us into non-thinking human machines. An obedient monk will have his own ideas, viewpoints, and opinions, all of which he will need to carry out his obedience with perfect virtue. To use his mind in the fulfillment of his assignments is one thing; to fulfill his own wishes and points of view when they are opposed to the clear directives or the known will of the superior is quite another.

-Monastic obedience is not to kill the human personality, but to develop and perfect it. The human spirit is one of the greatest creations of divine omnipotence, possessing a value greater than the entire material universe. It has endless potentialities and powers that stand in need of creative development. The function of renunciation of self-will is to free these hidden abilities from the shackles that prevents their development; the function of obedience is to direct the energies bound up in these undeveloped powers into worthwhile pursuits and endeavors. No man should possess more initiative and drive, more ambition for Christ's cause, more enthusiasm, inventiveness, and originality in promoting Christ's cause

than the monk, for he should know more clearly than others what is God's will.

*The second degree of humility is that a man love not his own will nor takes pleasures in the satisfaction of his desires, rather he shall imitate by his actions that saying of the Lord: 'I came not to do Mine own will but the will of Him who sent Me.' Similarly we read, self-will has punishment, constraint wins a crown.*

-From the beginning to the end of the *Rule* St. Benedict's demand for renunciation of self-will is relentless and uncompromising. The extent to which self-will must be renounced is very great, as many texts of the *Rule* clearly indicate.

-The directive in Chapter 3, "let no one in the monastery follow his own heart's fancy," shows how broad the area is for self renunciation. Self-will is by definition an anti-God frame of mind. Self-will cannot possibly seek either the monk's own welfare nor the welfare and peace of the community. No wolf is cleverer at assuming sheep's clothing than the wolf of self-will. The worst evil is to resist God's law and consent to one's own will.

-In the Gospel of John Christ told his disciples: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me." The great keynote of Christ's life is submission to the will of God. His uniqueness lies in the very fact that he was the only person who ever was or who ever will be perfectly obedient to God's will. It can be truly said that Christ Jesus is the only person in the world who never wanted what he liked but always what God liked. It is his great desire that we should be as he was. To do the will of God is the only way to peace.

-There can be no peace when we are in variance with the king of the universe. To do the will of God is the only way to happiness. There can be no happiness when we set our human will against the divine will of God. To do the will of God is the only way to power. When we go our own way, we have nothing to call on but our own power, and therefore collapse is inevitable. When we go God's way and do his will, instead of our own, we go in his power, and therefore victory is secure.

-One thing that we must be prepared to do if we are to live the Christian life is to renounce our own will; in other words, to deny ourselves. Ordinarily we use the word self-denial in a restricted sense. We use it to mean doing without something, giving up something. For instance, a week of self-denial is a week when we do without certain pleasures or luxuries, usually in order to contribute to some good cause. But that is only a small part of

what Our Lord meant by self-denial. To deny ourselves or to renounce our own will means in every moment of life to say no to self, and say yes to God.

-To renounce our own will means to dethrone the self and to enthrone God. It means to obliterate the self as the dominant principle of life, and to make God the ruling principle, the ruling passion of life. The life of constant renunciation of one's will is a life of constant assent to God.

-Therefore, renunciation of self-will is necessary for every degree of progress in monastic cenobitic perfection. The monks of Egypt said so wisely: "that man who has not first learned to overcome his desires cannot possibly stamp out anger or sulkiness, or the spirit of fornication; nor can he preserve true humility of heart, or lasting unity with the brethren, or a stable and continuous concord; nor remain for any length of time in the monastery."

-Renunciation of self-will is, then, the principal task of monastic asceticism. Verses 10 to 19 of the Tools of Good Works (Chapter 4) show us how the monk or the Christian is to fight the impulses to sin: "Renounce yourself." That sounds easy, but needs grace to be able to practice it. Lots of us start out on the path and are committed to renouncing ourselves and really want to renounce ourselves. But, one day along comes temptation and we give in. Then we have to try again. It is in that daily attempt to renounce ourselves that our personalities are forged and formed – either into a person who, while weak, is still committed to the spiritual life and monastic life or into a person who only pretends to be something what he is not. That is truly sad.

-The beginnings of this renunciation will be difficult, but we must not lose courage and "fly from the way of salvation." St. Benedict hopes, indeed he is certain, that a monk who advances "in the religious faith" will soon "run the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love."

-To abandon self-will is to adopt God's will. The patient practice of this renunciation brings us to the gracious joy of intimate union with Christ.

-St. Benedict calls us then to a life of divine sweetness, not to a life of burdensome worldliness. The key of success lies in how effectually we give up our will to embrace God's will in all its manifold revelations. No doubt to renounce self-will in favor of God's will is to experience the truth in Christ's words: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

-Abba Abraham, in the last of Cassian's Conferences, comments on this saying of Christ: *We can prove by the easy teaching of our own experience that Our Lord and Savior's saying is perfectly true, if we approach the way of perfection properly in accordance with God's will, and mortifying all our desires, and cutting of injurious likings, not only allow nothing to remain within us of these worldly goods...but actually recognize that we are not our own masters, and truly make our own the Apostle's words: 'I live, not I, but Christ lives in me.'* For what can be burdensome, or hard to one who has embraced with his whole heart the yoke of Christ, who is established in true humility and ever fixes his eye on the Lord's sufferings and rejoices in all the wrongs that are offered to him...? What effort, or what hard command of an Elder can disturb the peace of his bosom, who has no will of his own, and not only patiently but even gratefully accepts what is commanded him after the example of our Savior, who seeks to do not his will, but the Father's...? By what wrongs also, by what persecution will he be frightened, what punishment can fail to be delightful to him, who always rejoices together with the apostles in stripes, and longs to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ? But the fact that to us on the contrary the yoke of Christ seems neither light nor easy, must be rightfully ascribed to our perverseness, as we are cast down by unbelief and want of faith, and fight with foolish obstinacy against His command....How then is it that the wondrous sweetness of the Lord's yoke is felt to be bitter, but because the bitterness of our dislike injures it? How is it that the exceeding lightness of the Divine burden becomes heavy, but because in our obstinate presumption we despise Him by whom it was borne...? It is plain, therefore, that it is we, who make rough with the nasty and hard stones of our desires the right & smooth paths of the Lord...But whoever truly gives up this world and takes upon him Christ's yoke and learns from Him, and is trained in the daily practice of suffering wrong...will ever remain undisturbed by all temptations, and all things will work together for good to him.

-To deny oneself & to take up one's cross means to cut one's will in all things. We don't have to be afraid of our cross. In carrying our cross we are giving a personal service to Our Lord. We don't have to come down from our cross.

-In His conduct Our Lord was very attentive to such small things as little pieces of bread that fell to the ground when He multiplied loaves, to the widow's mite, to cups of cold water, to the mustard seed. Calls for little virtues are so many. They afford a training that is incessant. If we would profit by them we would be much prepared to meet our more serious duties. Why miss these little chances of glorifying God?

-Attention to smaller things is oftentimes tedious and distasteful. Yet we glorify God when nothing seems small to us that is connected with Him or His service, because he who is faithful in little things is also faithful in much. So, why not carry little crosses: our moods, our ailments; our duties & failures; our inabilities? Our Lord told us to take up our cross daily, and daily crosses are little crosses. Even if it is only a stabbing word, a teasing remark, a slamming door, a barking dog, a stumble in the dark; even though these crosses weigh no more than two crossed tooth picks, they will add up & really teach us how to carry our cross in imitation of Our Lord Jesus who came not to do his own will but the will of Him who sent him, and was obedient unto death even death on the cross.

*The third degree of humility is that a man, for the love of God submit himself to his superior in all obedience; imitating the Lord, of whom the apostle said: 'He was made obedient even unto death.'*

-In the fifth Chapter, that is, "On Obedience," St. Benedict says that "the first degree of humility is obedience without delay." The entirety of Chapter 5 is devoted to the quality of promptness in monastic obedience. Even a cursory reading of Chapter 5 shows that St. Benedict is demanding a very high ascetical ideal. As a result there may be tendency to consider obedience without delay the "first" degree of humility in the sense that it is humility's most perfect expression in the life of a monk.

-John Cassian listed such instantaneous obedience third among the four ascetical elements in the training of young men seeking entrance into monastic life. These four elements are renunciation of self-will, openness of soul to the Abbot, prompt obedience, and voluntary poverty. Cassian calls these four practices the "alphabet...the first syllables in the direction of perfection." They indicate whether the novices "are grounded in a false and imaginary or in true humility." Obedience without delay is then, one of the A-B-C's of monastic perfection, one of the very first points the monk as student in the school of the Lord's service must master if he wishes to advance in his spiritual art. Progress is impossible without mastery of this element.

-He describes promptness of obedience in this term: *And so, sitting in their cells and devoting their energies equally to work and to meditation, when they hear the sound of someone knocking at the door or striking on the cells of each, summoning them to prayer or some work (sound of knocking at the door or striking on the cells would be equivalent to the ringing of bell in our day), every one eagerly dashes out from his cell, so that one who is practicing the writer's art, although he may just began to form a letter, does not venture to finish it, but runs out with the utmost*

*speed, at the very moment when the sound of knocking reaches his ears, without even waiting to finish the letter he has began; but leaving the lines of the letter incomplete, he aims not at abridging and saving his labor, but rather hastens with the utmost earnestness and zeal to attain the virtue of obedience, which they put not merely before manual labor and reading and silence and quietness in the cell, but even before all virtues, so that they consider that everything should be postponed to it, and are content to undergo any amount of inconvenience if only it may seem that they have in no way neglected this virtue.*

-St. Teresa of Avila has a similar attitude. Hers was in the Divine Office. Whenever she hears the sound of the bell calling for the Office she will leave unfinished the word that she started in favor of the call of God signaled by the bell.

-In this seventh chapter St. Benedict puts obedience in the third degree. But there is no real contradiction in this; it is merely that in his earlier mention of obedience he is claiming its primary importance in relation to humility. In this present chapter, where he is splitting up humility into sections, he allots a particular place of obedience in relation to other expressions of virtue.

-In coming back time and again to the humility-obedience combination St. Benedict is followed by perhaps his most illustrious disciple in the history of Western monasticism, St. Bernard of Clairvaux. "No sooner did he ear than he obeyed me; again, he tells teachers: Whoever listens to you, listens to me." It is St. Bernard as for St. Benedict the foundation of the monastic life.

-Not only when he is dealing with the subject specifically, as in the "Steps of Humility," but also in the "Song of Songs," St. Bernard stresses the need for, and the connection between, the two virtues of humility and obedience. The monk who is expecting to find nothing but pure mysticism in the sermons on the Song of Songs will discover frequent injunctions to go back again to what might seem to him the elementary virtues.

-The argument is that once the human will is perfectly subject to the divine will, it must want what is willed for it by superiors. And this is humility as much as it is obedience. "The perfection of humility is seen in the absolute subjection of our will, as is only right and proper, to the divine will." There can be no other foundation to spirituality than this.

-In his "Steps of Humility" St. Bernard makes it clear at the beginning that the object sought is not one or other virtue as though it were as absolute,

but Christ. Christ is both the end and the way to the end. Christ alone fulfills our every desire and at the same time provides the sustenance required for the journey towards Him.

-St. Benedict is careful to insert the phrase "for the love of God," which makes the whole difference to obedience. Charity is the guiding consideration. When submission to a superior is given in charity, it no longer dictates terms. Lacking of charity both obedience and humility to a service which satisfies the obligation outwardly, but which cannot either advance the soul or please God.

-The monk obeys "for the love of God" when he gives up his own ideas/opinions and adapts himself to the immediate mold. The common good, a particular necessity, the trial of an individual's faith: any of these things or a dozen more may influence a superior to issue a command. The response goes straight to God when he monk, after dialoguing with superior, denies himself the luxury of holding to an opinion of his own. Nowadays we have this dialogue obedience. You are free to express your side, but the bottom line is always the decision of the superior. Only a man of prayer is able to enter into dialogue obedience.

-Thus in the terms of this third degree of humility, the monk must remain always flexible. St. Matthew listen nine beatitudes in his gospel. The 10<sup>th</sup> beatitude is: "Blessed are the flexible for they will not be broken when they are bent." Thus the monk must always ready to see the will o God in the unexpected call of authority, or even to each other (postulants, novices, juniors, & solemn professed) as St. Benedict said that we have to obey one another.

-The monk then must be willing to sublimate what he conceives to be a personal call to something higher if he learns through the word of a superior that the objectively lower cause is the one which God wants followed. The issue here is not really that the monk has the most brilliant ideas, so therefore to be followed, but whether he is willing to let go of his ideas in favor of those who are in authority, because if a monk does not know how to obey when he is still a monk (postulant, novice, junior professed, or even solemn professed) he will not know how to command when he becomes a superior. So we have to learn to obey, so that when our time will come to be in position of authority we will know how to command.

-Certainly we may cherish in our soul our ideas/opinions to even the most exalted degrees, but we need to know at the same time that perhaps God does not want us to proceed any further with them. God gives us

lofty aspirations, and we are meant to keep them, but if God gives directives through the medium of an external authority which suspend the realization of these holy desires, which even destroy the chances of their ever being realized in this life, we cannot go wrong in bowing to His will as signified in the word of the superior.

-If this were not the case, and if we had always the right to judge by our own light, would there be any point in obedience at all? WE might end up with no other voice to obey but our own.

*The fourth degree of humility is that if in this very obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape. For Scripture has it: 'anyone who perseveres to the end will be saved, and again, be brave of heart and rely on the Lord.' Another passage shows how the faithful must endure everything, even contradiction, for the Lord's sake, saying in the person of those who suffer, 'For your sake we are put to death continually; we are regarded as sheep marked for slaughter.' They are so confident in their expectation of reward from God that they continue joyfully and say, 'But in all this we overcome because of him who so greatly love us.'*

-St. Benedict allows that there may be occasion when what is commanded is not only repugnant to nature but impossible of accomplishment. But even in such rare cases, which are to be handled in a particular way, there must be serenity, resignation, & patience. St. Gregory the Great said that true patience consists in bearing calmly the evils others do to us, and in not being consumed by resentment against those who inflict them. Those who only appear to bear evils done them by their neighbors, who suffer them in silence while they are looking for an opportunity for revenge, are not practicing patience. Virtue in the sight of others is to bear with those who oppose us, but virtue in God's sight is to love them.

-The most difficult kind of perseverance is that which is required for interior matters, for in those which are material & exterior it is tolerably easy. The reason for this is that it costs us so much to submit our understanding, which is the very last thing we give up; and yet it is absolutely necessary that we should bring our thoughts into control with regard to certain objects, so that when certain commands or suggestions are marked out for, we may persevere in them and make our mind accept them.

-It is not a failure in perseverance when we occasionally fail & stumble in the exercise of obedience, provided that we don't abandon it

altogether. In the parable of the two sons, the first one was commanded to go to the vineyard and refuse, but later he went. Even if a brother may have absolutely refused to do a thing for us, or however much repugnance he may have shown, we must not hesitate to ask his services on another occasion, nor must we even be disheartened by his imperfection; for at present we have to bear with him, and very soon he will have to bear with us – just now he dislikes the thing, and another time he will do it willingly. If, however, we knew by experience that his was a disposition as yet incapable of acting in this manner, we would wait a while until he is more enlightened.

-All of us need to make allowance for one another's faults, and must not be at all put out when we come across them. If for a time we ourselves go on quietly without falling into any, another time will come when we shall find ourselves failing continually, and committing considerable imperfections.

-Even though we may obey with repugnance, and almost as if forced by the obligation of our state, our obedience remains intact by virtue of our first resolution.

-When our affections depend on so many little things they are subject to a thousand disorders. We must pay no attention to all dislikes & difficulties provided that in the higher region of our soul we cling always to our sovereign object, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

-Obedience is so excellent a virtue that Our Lord condescended to direct the whole course of His life on earth by it. He tells us often that He came not to do His own will, but the will of His Father, and the Apostle Paul says that He made Himself obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

-Christ was pleased to add to the infinite merit of His perfect charity the infinite merit of His perfect obedience. Obedience takes precedence of charity, because obedience comes under justice, as it is better to pay our debts than to give alms; hence it is better to obey than to perform an act of charity of our own choice.

-In the Rule we also give the chance to express ourselves sincerely and humbly and give the reason why the assigned task is too difficult for us, but even this if the superior will tell us to give it a try, we have to do it relying not so much in our own capability but in the grace of God.

-St. Benedict's phrase "his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape" speaks volume. No one is

exempted from suffering in this present life; however suffering or sorrow takes another meaning when it is seen in the eyes of God, that is to say, taken and accepted with faith in His goodness & mercy for us. Often when the first blow was heavy, the following brought calm & peace & loving gratitude. God has suffered and we, too, have our share in human suffering whether we wish it or not. If we suffer through love, in union with God, we will suffer less and will gain merit. But if we reject trial, we will suffer more, without gaining any merit.

-The interior smoldering of our nature which is not wholly sacrificed to the service of obedience must be stamped out before we can truly accept & endure suffering with quietness of heart. So also must the nervous agitation which, if indulged, can become a neurosis.

-It is not a question here of interpreting a superior's wishes in a heroic manner; it is a question of fulfilling the superior's wishes however uncongenial they are to self, as long as the command is not against the commandments of God. In this case, we are not wrong when we obey. The heroism lies not in the performance but in the fidelity. Silent endurance is worth more than any quantity of voluntary exhibition. The whole point of heroic obedience is that it is necessary and not optional. Like martyrdom, which cannot be refused under pain of apostasy, heroic obedience is a necessary obligation voluntarily approved in the act of taking the vows of religion: it cannot be refused under pain of disobedience.

-In the life of St. Pachomius one of his monks, having persevered all through his novitiate in the most exemplary humility & submission, came one day to St. Pachomius and told him in a state of fervor that he had a longing desire for martyrdom. He said that he could never rest satisfied till the opportunity for embracing it came to him and he humbly entreated the saint to pray to God for him that his desire might be fulfilled.

-St. Pachomius strove to moderate this desire, but the more he said, the more hotly did the young monk urge his petition. The saint addressed him, therefore, saying, "My son, it is far better to live in obedience, and to die daily to self by mortifying our own desires, than to suffer martyrdom in imagination. He who mortifies himself, dies a martyr's death as far as need be; it is far greater martyrdom to persevere in obedience all through our life, than to die in a moment by a stroke of the sword. Live in peace, my son, calm your mind, and do not dwell on this desire."

-The monk, who felt assured that this desire was really inspired by the Holy Spirit, abated nothing of his ardor, but continued to urge St. Pachomius to

pray for the fulfillment of his desire. In short time news arrived which cheered him greatly. A certain Saracen, captain of a band of robbers, had come to a mountain adjoining the monastery.

-St. Pachomius, hearing this, called the monk to him, saying: "Off with you my son! The hour which you so desired has come. Go out at once to the mountain & cut wood." The monk, almost beside himself with joy, and little imagining what he was really going to do, went forth, singing the praises of God, and thanking Him for having deigned to give him this opportunity of dying for his love. The robbers, seeing him, made straight for him, laid hands on him, and threatened him. For a short time he was most valiant. "You are a dead man!" they cried. "I desire nothing better than to die for God," he replied.

-The Saracen dragged him to the place where their idol was, to make him adore it. When they found that he persisted in refusing to do this, they prepared to kill him. Alas! This poor monk, so valiant in imagination, when he saw the sword at his throat cried out: "I entreat you, do not kill. I will do all that you desire. Take pity on me! I am still young; it would be a grievous thing to cut short my life so early!"

-Finally, he adored their idol; and then these savage men, heaping scorn & derision upon him, beat him soundly and let him return to his monastery. Arriving there more than dead than alive, pale and overwhelmed with grief & shame, he was met by St. Pachomius, who said to him: "Well, my son, what is the matter? Why are you so dejected?" Then the poor monk full of confusion & distress, because he was a proud man, and unable to bear the thought of his terrible sin, threw himself on his knees confessing his fault.

-St. Pachomius, desiring the brothers to pray for him, and making him ask pardon of God, restored him to his former state, and then gave him this good advice: "*My son, remember that it is better to limit your desires to living according to the laws of the community, and to wish nothing but fidelity in the observance of the Rules, than to undertake, or be anxious to undertake, anything not included in them, and to foster great desires to do imaginary marvels; these only serve to inflate our hearts with pride, and to make us hold others in little esteem, fancying ourselves far superior to them. Ah, how much better it is for us to live under the shelter of holy obedience, than to withdraw ourselves from that safe shelter, seeking something which seems to us more perfect! If you had only been satisfied, as I told you, with mortifying yourself thoroughly in life, instead of wishing for nothing less than death, you would not have fallen as you have done. Have courage! Remember henceforward that you must live in submission;*

*and be assured that God has forgiven you."* The young monk obeyed the counsel of St. Pachomius, and behaved himself with great humility all through his life.

-It is in situations of this sort that the monk will have to draw upon the patience of Christ and the stimulus provided by the Scriptures. "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in charity." Hearing these words should make us feel encouraged to persevere, whatever happens, in the service of charity which we have undertaken. We ourselves decided to be enrolled in the School of Charity. No one forces us. One of the subjects in this school is patience in carrying our crosses.

-Until we have made our own the verse quoted by St. Benedict from Psalm 43, and has got ourselves into the Messianic frame of mind where we too is under the shadow of death all the day long and live as a sheep destined for slaughter, we will always find ourselves trying to disengage from the burdens of religion. While there is nothing morbid about it, the ascetic side of the Rule aims at forming in our consciousness the idea that we sentenced for life: our life is a glad and voluntary self-conviction. We have been charged with sin, we have pleaded guilty, and is now under constraint for the rest of our life awaiting the final liberation. A monastic vocation then is a serious business. If this is the case, we can readily accept the trials that come our ways and not astonished by them. At the same time we would be highly grateful even in the little joy & consolation that are given to us by God through the kindness of our brothers, or through the beauty of creation.

-Always in the process, as St. Benedict says, the monk goes on in the happiness and security of hope, saying: "In all these things we are more than conqueror through Him who has loved us." Thus the monastic life is neither a matter of passive enjoyment nor a matter of melancholic acquiescence; it is something which for its fulfillment in the crowning happiness of charity requires serious determination and positive, active courage.

-To approach it with any other view is to approach it superficially. But nowhere did St. Benedict uses the superficial, the romantic or the comfortable to attract souls to the monastery, or to keep them there once they have entered it, but instead we find him constantly stressing the more serious aspects of the life. As a matter of fact he wanted that the new comer should be told the hardships of the monastic life. The attraction must be the cross, to Christ and Him crucified, or it cannot be guaranteed genuine.

-The words which follow in the text show this clearly enough: *Elsewhere Scripture says: 'O God, you have tested us, you have tried us as silver is tried by fire; you have led us into a snare, you have placed afflictions on our backs.'* Then, to show that we ought to be under a superior, it adds: *'You have placed men over our heads.'* In truth, those who are patient amid hardship and unjust treatment are fulfilling the Lord's command: *'When struck on one cheek, they turn the other; when deprived of their coat, they offer their cloak also; when pressed into service for one mile, they go two. With the Apostle Paul, they bear with false brothers, endure persecution and bless those who curse them.'*

-At least while in the purifying fires that temper our nature we have the knowledge that all this will one day give place to perfect peace. Our Lady said to St. Bernadette: "I do not promise you happiness in this world, but in the next." If all Christians are meant to take the long view and have confidence in ultimate happiness, certainly all monks should be habitually aware of this perspective. In the language of St. Paul, "The sufferings of this present life are not worth comparing to the glory to be revealed to us, because this slight and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison."

-Our constancy must be proved at every point or there is nothing to show that we are constant. The trial of our strength may make us feel weak and miserable, but without such a trial we would remain weak and deserve to be miserable.

-It is God, according to the psalmist, who has let us fall into the snare and who has burdened our shoulders with tribulations. "Very good," says the well-trained disciple; "not only it is what I deserved, but I keep my sanity & sense of humor. I can so use this present discipline as to provide me with the best possible preparation for eternal life; I can unite my afflictions with those endured by Christ."

-The further implications in St. Benedict's words is that if the worst comes to the worst in our trials of obedience, we can always comfort ourselves with the thought that over our heads now are men, but that this state of affairs will not last forever. God has placed them over our heads for a time, but eventually our heads will be free of them and will be under God alone. "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

*The fifth step of humility is that a man does not conceal from his abbot any sinful thoughts entering his heart, or any wrongs committed in secret, but rather confesses them humbly. Concerning this, Scripture exhorts us: 'Make known your way to the Lord and hope in him' (Ps. 36[37]: 5). And again, 'Confess to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy is forever (Ps. 105[106]): 1; Ps. 117[118]: 1). So too the prophet: 'To you I have acknowledged my offense; my faults I have not concealed.' I have said: 'Against myself I will report my faults to the Lord, and you have forgiven the wickedness of my heart' (Ps. 31[32]: 5.*

-John Cassian and St. Basil urge this practice as being part of the discipline of the monk. St. Benedict, coming later with his ideas of a patriarchal society, wants his monks, as members of a family, to be perfectly open about themselves with their father. It is not here a question of sacramental confession, but avowal of hidden faults to the abbot in private conversation.

-Because of the problems to which it gives rise, the practice of revealing matters of conscience to the superior is not viewed by the Church with the same enthusiasm as it was by St. Benedict. Religious superiors today are not allowed to exact manifestations of conscience, and even to act as regular confessor to members of his community is now forbidden to an abbot. But the subject is still free to gain the merit of the fifth degree of humility, and benefit by the advice he receives as the result of it, so long as he delivers himself of his disclosures in the mood envisaged by St. Benedict.

-In Statute 33.3 B of our Constitutions it says, "The brothers should approach the abbot with confidence and be able to reveal to him freely and spontaneously the thoughts arising in their hearts. Nevertheless, the abbot should in no way induce them to manifest their conscience to him."

-Many centuries of experience indicate that, in practice, the key to humility of Christ is *openness of spirit* or manifestation of conscience. We should take the initiative and make ourselves, our thoughts, our desires, and our experiences known to our spiritual guide, the novice master, the junior master, or the superior. Such openness takes a certain time and is seldom without some stress or strain, but its fruit is the joy of being known and loved as we are. Real purity of love or growth in prayer is very seldom achieved without, at least in our monasteries.

*The sixth degree of humility is that a monk is content with the lowest and most menial treatment, and regards himself as a poor and worthless workman in whatever task he is given, saying to himself with the prophet: 'I am insignificant, no better than a beast before you, yet I am with you always.'*

-In English the phrase "to be contented with" has come to mean "to endure without complaint." St. Benedict's meaning is that the monk is positively glad when occasions of living poorly present themselves. If the monk has learned the lessons taught by the earlier degrees, he will jump at the chance of proving his nothingness by enjoying the least rather than the greatest. He will even look out for the less favored position, the more menial occupation; he will avoid the platform; the limelight, the shower of honors.

-It is seldom that a monk belonging to a community that has been established for any length of time is called upon to endure "the meanest and worst" in the way of material things, so perhaps the degree of humility can be more suitably applied to the endurance of frustrating circumstances. To find oneself left with the most boring occupations, or to have to stand without recognition while others are advanced, can aptly fulfill St. Benedict's conditions. "I have been brought to nothing...yet I am always before you." I must always develop a liking for the lowest place.

-But there can be a snare in this. We can develop a taste for the lowest place as such, for the meanest and poorest articles because they are mean and poor. By the inverted snobbery to which the most devout are liable, we can wallow in the luxury of poverty: we can become aristocrat of neediness. It is thus that the degree of humility are turned the wrong way round, becoming steps of pride. In other words, we become proud of our own humility. We will be holy as an angel, but proud as the devil.

*The seventh degree of humility is that he should not only call himself with his tongue lower and viler than all, but also believes himself with inmost affection of heart to be so, humbling himself and saying with the prophet: I am a worm and no man...It is good for me that Thou has humbled me, that I may learn Thy Commandments.*

-When our whole trust is in the power of God, and when we are habitually aware of our powerlessness in His service, then we can begin to learn His commandments, because we will come to realize that any accomplishment that we achieve is not our own doing but owing to God's grace, and apart from Him we can do nothing. Then we can begin to taste something of true peace. True peace means freedom, and it is the commandments which make us free. "Take my yoke upon you and

learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your soul," said Our Lord.

-When humility has taught us trust, and trust has taught us humility, then we can move freely about Christ's law and enjoy peace in the peace which He enjoys. "Peace I give you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world give do I give it to you." This is the peace that surpasses all understanding, which the Lord gives to the humble of heart. Humility, law, trust, freedom, peace: they are all bound together.

-Humility is incomplete until the conviction, borne out by experience and actual humiliation, is arrived at that we are entirely despicable. God allows us this sense of being less than the dust so that we may have absolute confidence in Him.

-At the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday, in one of the two formulas that is used, we heard the awesome pronouncement of our earthly reality: "Remember man that from dust you come from and to dust you shall return."

-To speak of humility meant to speak of God, for God is primarily the One who is meek & humble of heart. God's humility was revealed to us in the Incarnation. He became what He is not while remaining what He is. So, in humility, we too are considered worm and no man. We became what we are not while remaining what we are, for we are made in the image and likeness of God.

-Our labor without humility brings no profit, whereas humility without any ascetic exercises is sufficient for adoption by God. Humility, even without works, gain forgiveness for many offences; but without it, works are of no profit to us and instead prepare for us great evils. What salt is for any food, humility is for every virtue, and it can mightily obliterate many sins....And if it becomes ours, it will make children of God, and even without apparent great works it will present us to God. For without humility all works, every virtue, and every righteous labor are vain.

-Humility is primarily an inner quality. It consists in trust in God, the sense of our own unworthiness & defenselessness, the presence of the Holy Spirit hidden in the depths of our hearts. At the same time humility reveals itself outwardly; it is expressed in gentle appearance & simple clothing, in lack of verbosity and aggressiveness, in giving respect to others, in trying to avoid privileges, in enduring offenses & afflictions.

-The inward & outward aspects of humility are inseparably linked. Outward humility is false unless a person humbles himself before God in his heart; and inward humility cannot be true if it in no way reveals itself outwardly, because humility is accompanied by modesty and self-collectedness; a behavior that is not ostentatious, a gaze directed towards the earth; superabundant mercy & understanding of the weakness of our brothers & sisters; undisturbed by anger; undistracted senses even by the noise around us; few possessions; moderation in every need; endurance; patience; fearlessness; patient endurance of trials; not entertaining bad thoughts; reverence, and above all, continually to be serene and always claim ignorance, because the more we know the more we know that we do not know.

-If we are to classify the signs of humility and to speak first of inner signs the first of them would be a deep sense of God's presence, out of which humility is born. In other words, to know who God is and who we are.

-We cannot be humble by ourselves, by means of our own efforts & external activities. We humble ourselves when, in encountering God, we perceive God's greatness and our own nothingness. Knowledge of God preserves us from despair, because even though God is great and mighty yet he is full of mercy, his nature is all good, and his action pity & pardon. Knowledge of self preserves us from pride. Nothing is more efficacious for acquiring humility than knowledge of ourselves as we really are. This twofold knowledge assures salvation, because seen in its light there appears the need for an encounter between our own misery/nothingness & God's mercy/greatness.

-The awakening of the voice of conscience in a person is yet another sign of humility. It teaches him not to accuse God or his brothers in anything, not to lay the blame on the occurrences of life to justify himself. The person who listens to the voice of his conscience will attain spiritual stillness and reconciliation with God.

-Inner serenity is also one of the characteristic signs of humility. It manifests itself in the absence of fear amid life's circumstances, in confidence in the divine providence which protects us from every evil. A humble person is never rushed, hasty, or agitated, never has any hot or volatile thoughts, but at all times remains calm. Even if heaven were to fall and cleave to the earth, the humble person would not be dismayed, because he anchored himself to the cross of Christ.

-When consider the external signs of humility, we need to speak in particular of the absence of any interest in earthly distractions & pleasures, of striving to avoid worldly cares & luxury.

-How can we acquire humility? One is by an unceasing remembrance of transgressions: "My sins are always before me. Against you, you alone have I sinned and have done what is evil in your sight, that you may be justified when you give sentence and be without reproach when you judged;" Another is by the anticipation of approaching death: "Let me know the shortness of my life that I may gain wisdom of heart;" Another one is by inexpensive clothing, by always preferring the last place, by always willing or even running to do the tasks that are most insignificant & distasteful, by not being disobedient, by desiring to be unknown, by abhorrence of material gain, and by not being a person whose hand is against everyone and against whom is everyone's hand, but rather someone who minds his own business with a gentle & quiet spirit which in God's sight are very precious.

-Another external manifestation of humility is the uncomplaining endurance of all sorts of humiliations. Someone who is able to suffer wrong with joy, though having at hand the means to rebuff it, has consciously received from God the consolation of his faith. The person who endures accusations against himself with humility is not far from the realm of perfection.

-There's a story of a disciple of an ancient philosopher. He was told by his master to pay people to insult him calling him names. He did it for 3 years. After 3 years he was told by his master to go to Athens to learn wisdom. When he arrived at the gate, a man sitting by started to utter verbal abuse, insulting him, mocking him, and humiliating him. The disciple just laugh, and so the man was surprised and asked, "Why are you laughing? I insulted you and you seem to pay no attention to it." "Well," answered the disciple, "I paid people to insult me for 3 years and now you give it to me for free."

-God acts towards us in ways he knows will be advantageous to us, whether by means of things that cause suffering, or by way of things that cause relief, whether they cause joy or grief, whether they are insignificant or glorious: all are directed towards the single glory of God.

-Thus a monk who has failed to absorb the spirit of this degree, who still thinks himself to be someone, will inevitably push himself forward as a bubble of air inevitably pushes its way to the surface of the water: it is in his nature to do so.

*The eight degree of humility is for a monk to do nothing except what is authorized by the common rule of the monastery or the example of the seniors.*

-By now St. Benedict supposes a monk who is so far independent of self as to be indifferent in the choice of what means are to be preferred in the pursuit of monastic perfection. The common custom of the monastery is to be his guide, the will of the brethren, the common will.

-There must be many who feel that this is the hardest degree of all to practice. They know that it means the sublimation of every personal conception of the monastic ideal, the resolute renunciation of every outlet that is not recognized by the community as usual – in other words without a trace of singularity.

-What St. Benedict wants in this degree is that the monk should plunge himself into the flow of community charity, not that he should paddle in it for the sake of appearances. Unless the monk allows himself to be carried by the current, he might just as well stay at home and have a shower on his own. Where the waters of charity circulate through the community, the brotherhood determines the current.

-What St. Benedict is looking for here is the individual monk's conformity with the best elements in the monastic family, not with the worst. In other words, to follow what is good and learn a lesson from what is not good. In this way, we will be safe guarded from being judgmental towards the brothers that do not give good example. We are told not to be too individualistic but to eliminate self-interest in looking to the highest interests of the whole. The highest interest of all is charity.

-The many are like to know more about charity than the one. Those who have matured in the religious life are likely to know more about charity than those who have lately joined. The Canticle of Canticles, which is all about charity, speaks of "three-score (sixty) valiant ones who surrounded the bed of Solomon, the most valiant of Israel and most expert in war...because of the fears in the night." Solomon felt safe among his many veterans. The monk has reason to fear the illusions which are magnified in isolation and in the dark.

-In fighting against the enemy he may be fighting against God. "It is not good for man to be alone." Left to himself he may see good things, but see them in wrong proportion. He is safer when he humbles himself, accepting "the valiant ones who surround him" – the bodyguard of tradition, example, and experience.

*The ninth degree of humility is that, a monk refrain his tongue from speaking, keeping silence until a question is asked of him, as the Scripture shows: 'In much talking thou shall not avoid sin,' and 'The talkative man shall not be directed upon the earth.'*

-St. James in his letter said: "If any one thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain." Here we can see how valuable silence is, so much so that St. Benedict told the disciples to refrain from speaking even from good words in favor of silence. Indeed, so important is silence that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciple, no matter how good or holy or constructive their talk may be, because it is written: "In flood of words you will not avoid sin, and the tongue holds the key to life and death."

-The connection between silence and humility is close. Indeed the two cannot but go together. The silence which is the sign of humility is not sterile and negative: it is positive enough to impose restraints. The first thing to be restraint is speech. If silence were nothing more than the painlessly delivered child of inertia, there would be no supernatural value about it whatsoever.

-The sequence of St. Benedict's thought is simply this: the humble person is the one who can distinguish between the real and the superficial, between the essential and the accidental; to him the necessary is so important that the unnecessary must be restricted. The humble monk, therefore, refrains from speech until necessity obliges him to use it. Even then he uses it sparingly, and with the desire to get back to the silence which is his proper element.

-But what constitutes necessary speaking? Clearly there are occasions when, even during times and places of silence, a monk has to speak. There are also occasions when it would be conceivably possible to put off speaking until a time allowed for it. It is here that the preceding degree of humility will come into play: he will decide by referring to the practice of the more responsible members of the community. This reminds us also of the injunction of St. Paul to the Philippians to mark those who so live as an example in the brotherhood. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

-In clinging obstinately to his interpretation of the letter of silence a monk may find himself in danger of losing the spirit of charity. If it is not good for a monk to be alone in his community, it is equally harmful for a monk to be alone in his idea of silence. His observance of silence should be such

that it attracts to others to silence. If it disturbs the recollection of others by making them want to break it, there is probably something wrong with it.

-The monk whose silence is so singular that it exasperates his brethren is defeating the end of silence. Such a monk will be the last to admit it, but his silence is being to him too a distraction and affectation, an obstacle to interior and exterior charity.

-Yet somehow, despite the exaggerations which threatens it, silence must be preserved; must, in charity and self-denial, be built up. The monk must make use of his leisure as to create the disposition for prayer. This is a positive work. It is the primary function of silence, to dispose for prayer or to allow the word of God to surface in our consciousness.

-Understood in this way, silence and recollection are so mutually assisting as to become convertible terms. The signal of silence is the summons to the practice of the presence of God.

*The tenth degree of humility is that he be not easily moved and prompt to laughter, because it is written: 'Only a fool raises his voice in laughter.'*

-An American humorist Josh Billings spelled horribly. But what he said made lots of sense. Here are his ideas on laughing:

**Anatomically considered**, laughing is the sensation of feeling good all over, and showing it principally in one spot.

**Morally considered**, a laugh is the next best thing to the Ten Commandments.

**Theoretically considered**, it can out-argue all the logic in existence.

**Pyrotechnically** (spectacular display) **considered**, a laugh is the fireworks of the soul. If a man can't laugh, there is some mistake made in putting him together. And if he won't laugh, he wants as much keeping away from as a bear trap when it is set.

-A genuine laugh is the vent of the soul, the nostrils of the heart, and is just as necessary for health and happiness as spring water is to trout fish. Laugh every good chance you can get. But don't laugh unless you feel like it.

-For there is nothing in this world as hearty as a good honest laugh. And there is nothing more hollow than a heartless laugh (Bruno Hagspiel).

-There is a German proverb which says: "A man shows his character by what he laughs at."

-All leaders and founders of religious Orders seem to be agreed that lightness of heart is a good thing, and that there should be an exchange of unserious matter between the brethren. Our Abbot General, Dom Bernardo Olivera, has a reputation of having a good sense of humor. Then what does St. Benedict mean? If his words do not forbid jokes, what do they forbid?

-The best way to answer these questions is to distinguish between different kinds of laughter, between different kinds of jokes. Probably what St. Benedict is trying to prevent is the kind of attitude which is interested only in entertaining others or in being entertained by others, those in whom the comedian-mentality if allowed to grow will give rise, either in themselves or in others, to the wrong sort of laughter and to the wrong sort of joke. We laugh but not hysterically, to such an extent that everybody can hear it. We don't giggle when we laugh.

-The gaiety expressed in a monastery should never reach the point at which a detached lay spectator would feel it was becoming worldly. When monastic hilarity strikes a note which is common to the club or the bar, it qualifies for St. Benedict's stricture "excessive."

-What St. Benedict, in the company of other saints whether monastic or not, is interested in is developing an appreciation of true joy. The soul who has learned the meaning of peace, of happiness in God, of joy in the service of religion, does not want to laugh excessively. Such a soul may feel as amused as any, may see jokes, may perfectly readily take his share in keeping the conversation from becoming too solemn, but he does not surrender himself to the luxury of immoderate laughter. He sees in uncontrolled amusement an indulgence which is on a level with any other indulgence, and he would rather not indulge himself.

-Thus to sum up this matter of laughter in the Rule, we can note the following principles. While joy is good, finding its origin in the unalterable happiness of God, it is also one of the passions. The human passions, if they are to reflect the pro-passions of Christ, must be subject to discipline, to be regulated.

*The eleventh degree of humility is that when a monk speaks he does so gently and without laughter, humbly and gravely, with few and reasonable words, and that he be not noisy in his speech as it is written: 'A wise man is known by his few words.'*

-After giving us two degrees that are the most part negative, St. Benedict gives us one that is most positive. Except for the concluding sentence, which tells us not to be loud in our talk, the passage makes concrete suggestions. The key word here is "reasonable."

-By reasonable speech we may understand two things: first, as already treated above, that there is reasonable cause for spending silence; second, that what is said is a considered statement and not the first thing that comes into the speaker's head. Without having to be melancholic in our utterances, we are expected to show a certain maturity in our conversation: our talk must not be wild and irresponsible.

-Allowing that to misread the eleventh degree might lead to the idea that the perfect monk in St. Benedict's opinion is the one who is either so gentle and soft in speech as to be quite without spirit, or else so grave and circumspect as to be quite without humor, it remains nevertheless that the words chosen by St. Benedict denote emphatically a subdued tone and a brief delivery. You may say that it does not apply to the modern idea of inter personal relationship, that it has been dispensed from, that St. Benedict surely never meant, etc. But we cannot say that the words as they stand do not demand the greatest strictures in the matter of verbal communication between brother and brother.

-In St. Bernard's thirteenth chapter on the degrees of humility there is a biting description of the monk whose proud spirit causes him to spurn the rules of silence. The talkative monk gives opinions unasked, has always something to say in every issue, anticipates with a ready answer unspoken questions, interrupts others in the middle of what they are saying, goes on talking after the signal has been given for a return to silence.

*-He is simply full of words, and one has the impression that he is being squeezed from within. He hungers and thirsts for listeners before whom he may show off his vanity, and to whom he can pour out every thought that comes into his head. He is quite unconscious of who may be listening, or what he is saying, or of the way he rambles on. It is sufficient for him to have found an occasion for talking, and he asks nothing more. If the conversation turns to literary topics he is full of things to offer, both old and new. His opinions fly in all directions in torrents of resounding eloquence. He desires neither to teach you nor to learn from you. All he wants is that*

*you should know that he knows what he does know. If the subject turns to religion, he will tell you all about his own visions....If the conversation should turn to some subject for amusement, you will find him even more talkative and well-informed."*

-One of the faults which we shall most often have to confess will be the failure to live up to the standards of religious silence set us by our monastic forefathers. We often wonder why talkative monk chooses the Trappist and not other religious orders where silence is not on the top scale of values, whereas in our Order, silence is one of the monastic values. If even useful talk, when it has no measure, produces darkness, how much more so does vain talk. A soul becomes worthless from excess of lengthy conversations.

-But so long as we do not condone our weakness, justifying the denial of St. Benedict's "gently and without, humbly and gravely, with few and reasonable words," we shall maintain ourselves in the authentic tradition. It is far better to admit inconsistency between ideal and practice than to wipe out the ideal and never try to put into practice what we learn.

*The twelfth degree of humility is that the monk, not only in his heart but also in his very exterior, always show his humility to those who see him: that is in work, in the oratory, in the monastery, in the garden, on the road, in the field, or whatever he may be, whether sitting, walking, or standing, with head always bent down, and eyes fixed on the earth; that he ever think of his sins...saying in his heart what the publican in the Gospel said with his eyes fixed on earth: 'Lord, I a sinner am not worthy to raise mine eyes to heaven.'*

-It would be important to point out the need for balance in this chapter, that is, when we walk we have our heads bowed down to allow us to think of the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father, but when we met someone along the way, we have also to raise our heads and offer a nod or some gesture either just by looking at the other brother. Our practice of bowing the heads while walking or the custody of the eyes should not make us snobbish or become like a robot when we meet someone, even if we don't like the brother because charity does not depend on our feelings but on our will. We don't have to talk, if it is not needed but a gesture that we are at least aware of the other's presence is important.

-St. Bernard has a reputation of exercising custody of the eyes to such an extent that he did not know there was a window high up over the choir where he had attended the Divine Office for years, did not know his

journey on horseback had taken him past a lake, did not know that the bottle in front of him in refectory contained oil.

-But it should not be thought that St. Bernard is against all joy or against healthy companionship which comes of a well-ordered community life. His argument is that self-discipline in external behavior makes for, and is the sign of true joy and peace.

-St. Basil has this to say about the training of the senses and religious behavior: "Souls, enclosed as they are in bodies, cannot communicate without accepting the services of the senses...it is thus that they see, hear, and talk; it is thus also, as if through windows, that one comes to see their nature. No one could judge the beauty of another's soul, because it is hidden in the body, unless he was able to divine from that other's action what good there is in the power which produces them; he is able to contemplate the soul as in a glass."

-From this passage, it is very clear that every outward gesture of the monk is an indication of his spirit. The two, outward and inward act, cannot be separated. What at first might seem to be equivocal – this simultaneous demand for religious seriousness and religious happiness – in fact provides no contradiction. We can be serious and at the same time happy. In other words, though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. The contradiction comes in where there is enforced seriousness or forced happiness.

*Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear. Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue. All this the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins.*

-This concluding paragraph reiterates the promise made in the Prologue. Love will take the place of fear; love will establish the soul in unbroken service. But it means a laborious climb. It is like an ascent to Mt. Carmel.

-Yet once the ascent has been made, the work is performed without effort as though naturally. This is so because by now God Himself is fully in the work and in the performance: "My Father is working still and I am working." The element of self has been eliminated. "I came not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me."

-By the gravitational attraction of grace, our soul, together with its very activity whether interior or exterior, is being drawn towards its center, towards its proper object which is God. It is St. Benedict's teaching that humility both allows for this action of grace, and, in that the virtue is itself a grace, brings it to perfection.

-The whole process rests, then, on our soul's ready co-operation with the grace of being humbled. Our unhealthy self-esteem must sink to nothing or we shall never be made capable of rising to meet the summons of love. But lifted by the power of grace we are able to explore the depths of our own inadequacy. It is thus that our two independent characters, the one naturally proud and the other supernaturally humbled, meet together on what St. Benedict calls the ladder of Jacob.

## **\* Judas \***

-“Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” Christians of every type who are familiar with Scripture and those who frequently attend Bible services and those who often go to Mass, would easily notice that this “bosom friend” refers to Judas Iscariot – one of the apostles.

-The Lord Jesus quoted this psalm the day before he died when He knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. He said to them: “I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’”

-It is not an exaggeration to say that betrayal is one of the most painful incidents that any person could experience: betrayal in spousal relationship, in friendship, in business, and in all kinds of relationships.

-If we are religious we can also betray our vows. Hence, all of us are capable of betrayal. It is true to say that we are a bosom friend of God because we are made in His own image and likeness. We are more intimate to Him than we are to ourselves because in Him we live and move and have our being.

-As religious we eat the Bread of Life daily and drink the cup of eternal salvation, and like Judas we too have the potentiality of perfidy. It is very likely that Judas had entertained the thought of the betrayal of Our Lord for a long time. It is right to assert that no one falls away from nearness to Christ on a sudden. It always starts in little things: little flirtation will eventually lead to sexual activity; little dishonesty will eventually tug one to treachery, as the Lord says: “...he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.” Hence, neglect in little things gradually leads to a serious fall.

-The fundamental cause was probably the shallowness, untrustworthiness, and superficiality of his character. He seems to have been a man of no depth or moral stamina. Thus it is very dangerous for a person to join the priesthood or enter the religious life if one is shallow, untrustworthy, and superficial in character; and above all, if one has no moral stamina

-The other cause of Judas' treachery was likely his ambition, worldliness, and avarice. He was probably under the influence of worldly spirit - the spirit which is so directly opposed to the spirit of the Lord Jesus, that St.

John declares: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1Jn 2:15).

-Christ Himself said that we are in the world, but we are not of the world, that is to say, though we live in this present world we should not conform ourselves to worldly values such as: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

-The world is the antithesis of the Lord Jesus and His Gospel. It is composed of those who center their happiness in earthly things, detest and shun poverty, suffering, and humiliation; while they love and worship wealth, pleasure, and dignity, esteeming these as the only treasures worthy of man's ambition; pursuing them with unrelenting ardor and deliberately sacrificing their souls to attain them.

-Judas is plausible, for it is true that waste is wrong, and caring for the poor is good, and zeal in their cause is good. But we are told of his hidden, perhaps not wholly conscious, motive: he was a thief; and so, from talking about selling the ointment, he will come in the end of selling Christ.

-The secret of character training is to strengthen this weak spot in our character in cooperation with God's Grace. The evil must be called by its right and ugly name when it is discovered. Judas missed salvation because he never called his avarice by its right name – he disguised it as love of the poor.

-The sin we most loudly and vehemently condemn in others may be the sin to which our heart is most addicted: Judas, again, accused Our Lord of not loving the poor enough. As Aristotle wisely remarked: "Every man judges of what is good according to the goodness or badness of his interior disposition."

-Greed, ambition, and worldliness had crept into his heart, and avarice had become his predominant demon. Perhaps he was tormented by the unbearable rebuke of the presence of Christ. It must have created a great tension in his unsterilized heart to be constantly in the presence of sinless purity.

-Nor will Judas be compensated with immunity from everlasting punishment because his betrayal profited the salvation of the human race. It is not the result of the deed that must be considered but rather the disposition of the doer (Sixth Conference, THE CONFERENCE OF ABBA THEODORE ON THE SLAUGHTER OF SOME HOLY PERSONS). p. 223

-Judas' downfall is a sad confirmation of the great principle, that is, the Lord Jesus and the world are mortal enemies. The Lord Jesus is light, and the world is darkness; and as light and darkness cannot exist together – one casts out the other – so neither can Our Lord and the world be one. When the spirit of the world gets entrance to our heart, Our Lord is cast out and rejected; and in proportion as the spirit of Our Lord gains ground in our soul, the spirit of the world is cast out.

-By generous persevering efforts to rid ourselves of everything savoring of the worldly spirit shall we make solid, genuine advance in sanctity.

-It is highly probable that the other cause of Judas' fall was unbelief; he gradually lost faith he had at first. Loss of faith is the usual result of worldliness and distaste of prayer.

-The Lord Jesus showed us the way of faith in our lives so that we might live a life of faith. Modern man wants to separate faith from life. This is observable: infidelity increases, betrayal multiplies, deceitfulness proliferates, and treachery amplifies. We move in a pagan environment – land of unfaithfulness and a meadow of perfidy in which spiritual ideals and all true sense of the meaning of life, of loyalty, are endangered.

-The Lord Jesus had often spoken of His crucifixion and death without such distress of spirit as He now perceived when He spoke of Judas' betrayal. However, we should not confine our attention to Judas because our sins and the sins of all people, especially of Christians are the agony of Christ.

-The foretelling of Judas' perfidy is also applicable to all who partake of the Lord's mercies but meet them with ingratitude and indifference. For instance, the freethinker who only browses at Scriptures with a desire to do away their authority and destroy their influence; the hypocrite who professes to believe the Scriptures but will not allow him/herself to be governed by them; and the apostate who turns aside from the Lord for the things of this world.

-Hence humankind, supported by Divine Providence, after eating bread with the Lord, lifts up the heel against Him! Judas was a paragon of an ultimate tragedy, the greatest tragedy that ever live, the greatest example of lost opportunity the world has ever seen. He became all the more terrible because of the splendid beginnings he had.

-He followed the same Christ as the others. He saw the same miracles; heard the same word; performed some of the same ministries; was esteemed in the same way the other disciples were – yet he did not

become what the others became. In fact, he became the very opposite. While they were growing in sanctity and becoming true apostles of the Lord, he was progressively forming into a vile, calculating tool of the Evil One.

-Perhaps, too, he began to sense that the eye of the Lord could see who he was and what he was. Or it may be that all these things had begun to nibble at him.

-What happened to Judas is possible to happen to us. Therefore, we have to watch and pray that we may not be led to temptation. The former is necessary before we can enter the kingdom of heaven, and the latter needs grace.

-To live in faithfulness and loyalty is not just to feel grateful every now and then, or to recognize God's intervention in some surprising occurrences or spectacular events that may brighten humdrum days.

-To live in fidelity really consists more in asking, with filial confidence and humility, for the supernatural good which we can extract from the many little things which form the texture of our every day existence which are the mediums by which we encounter our Lord.

-We begin to live fully in faithfulness when we become aware of the potentiality of our capability for betrayal and are mindful of the limitation of our human heart.

-Acknowledging our natural limitations, our weaknesses and miseries, and our capability for betrayal, we turn to the Lord Jesus and let Him take over our life completely. Hence, we are no longer our own, we were bought with a price.

## On Lenten Observance

*Although the life of a monk ought at all times to have about it a Lenten observance, yet since few have strength enough for this, we exhort all, at least during the days of Lent, to keep themselves in all purity of life, and to wash away during that holy season the negligences of other times.*

-Since not all can keep pace with this doctrine the whole year through, at least during Lent itself a program of self-denial can be drawn up and observed. It is now, during this season when the whole Church does penance, that the monk must keep the twofold principle of mortification clearly before his mind: there has to be atonement for past sin on the negative side, and on the positive side an endeavor to advance in the love of God. How this is to be done St. Benedict suggests in what follows:

*We shall worthily accomplish the same if we refrain from all sin and give ourselves to prayer with tears, to holy reading, to compunction of heart, and to abstinence.*

-St. Gregory in his account of how St. Benedict prophesied the destruction of the monastery, says that it was St. Benedict's custom in prayer mildly to weep. Not only did St. Benedict himself pray with tears, but the gift of tears seems to have been granted to many of his sons.

-Before we have mourned & shed tears we have no repentance, nor true desire to change, nor fear of God in our hearts. For we have not yet become conscious of our guilt nor judged ourselves, nor has our soul had the foretaste of the last judgment and eternal torment. For if we judge ourselves, if we had experienced such movement of the heart, if we had such feelings, we would have shed tears forthwith. Without this the hardness of our hearts cannot be softened, nor can our souls acquire spiritual humility, nor have we ourselves the power to become humble.

-If we want to strip ourselves of what is bad, we have to do so through tears, & if we want to acquire virtues we have to acquire them through weeping. If we have no contrition, we should know that we are possessed by vanity, for it prevents our soul from being contrite.

-As a man who has brought a great gift to the king is rewarded by a gracious look, so if our prayer is accompanied by tears, the great king of ages, God, forgives us the full measure of our sins and reward us with a benevolent look.

-Tears also are a natural relief from sorrow, because hurt pent up inside draws attention to itself and hurts more, whereas hurt poured out disperses the attention abroad, so to speak, and lessen our interior pain.

-Without the practice of constant weeping, it is impossible to bear the boiling cauldron of silence.

-Before all else we have to pray to be given tears, that weeping may soften the hardness which is in our soul, and having acknowledged our sin unto the Lord, we may receive from Him the remission of sins. We need to use tears as a weapon for the obtaining of every request; for the Almighty rejoices exceedingly when we pray with tears.

-Tears are the blood of the soul, they are the pearls of the soul, as St. Augustine would put it. God is quicker to hear our tears than the movements of our lips. Sin is the only evil that is cured by weeping, the forgiveness of sins is the fruit of these tears.

-Footsteps on the snow vanish, either by melting in the rays of the sun or washed away by rains; & memories of deed & objects of sensual pleasures are annihilated either by Christ, who shines forth in our hearts through prayer, or when the rain of tears, of sincere compunction comes with deepest tenderness & feelings.

-The moisture of tears cleanses the soul from stain and makes fertile the fields of the heart so that they may bring forth the seeds of virtue. The tears which come from God approach the judgment seat of the divine mercy with perfect confidence, and obtaining at once what they ask, are assured of the certain forgiveness of our sins. Tears are the trustees in the making of peace between God and our soul, and the true & wise masters amid the doubtings of our human ignorance. For if we are wondering whether or not we are pleasing to God, no better guarantee can be given us than that we pray with genuine tears.

-Any sacrifice of good works becomes sweet in the eyes of the heavenly Judge if it is sprinkled with the tears of a contrite heart. Tears of compunction increase the strength of heavenly desire. It flows from our love of God, and on the other hand, because of our tears our souls burn more fiercely with love of God.

-From shedding of tears comes enlightenment of heart, peace of spirit, and the desire for God. When this dwells in our hearts, rejection of all evil follows.

-Where there is deep humility, there also are copious tears; and where these are, thither too comes the Holy Spirit. When the grace of the worshipful Spirit comes, the person under its influenced is filled with all purity & saintliness; then he sees God & God too looks on that person.

-Tears during prayer are sign of God's mercy, granted to our soul in its repentance. It is a sign that prayer is accepted & through tears has begun to enter the field of purity. Like the fire that consumes the straw, so do real tears consume impurity of body & soul.

-Baptism washes off those evils that were previously within us, whereas the sins after baptism are washed away by tears. The baptism we received as children we have all defiled, but we cleanse it again with our tears.

-Tears mark the point of transition, the frontier between the present age and the age to come. The newborn child weeps on first coming into the world; in the same way the Christian weeps as he is born into the age to come. The fruits of the inner person begin only with the shedding of tears. Thus there is no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a person has the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer.

-The heart of compunction is the heart of Christ. When our soul has sought to live the life of Christ, to reproduce the mind of Christ, to walk in Christ, then whatever the immediate mood or sentiment experienced in prayer is the mood or sentiment of Christ.

-When Christ tells us in St. John's Gospel that we have no further need to ask Him to petition the Father for our needs, He surely means that if we live in Him and if He lives in us the petition already comes from Him to the Father. Through us but from Him. From us but through Him. It is the same in the case of our compunction. If our compunction is true, it is His. If it is not true, it is not worth experiencing or expressing.

-The fact that in Christ's sorrow for sin there was no element of guilt makes no difference to the fact that our sorrow for sin, occasioned by guilt and inspired by grace, can be united to His. Indeed in this lies the value of compunction. In this lies the value of Lent.

*In these days, then, let us add something to the usual measure of our service: as private prayers, abstinence from food and drink, so that everyone of his own will may offer something to God with joy of the Holy Spirit, something beyond the measure appointed to him, withholding from his body somewhat of his food, drink, and sleep, refraining from talk and mirth, and awaiting holy Easter with the joy of spiritual longing.*

-Lent is a period of moral, ascetical and sacramental preparation for the celebration of the Paschal mysteries, and is therefore meaningless without Easter. The Lenten character which our monastic way of life ought always to have is, then, a corresponding dedication to the pursuit of the monastic ideal. This means that we need to be seeking a richer possession of the new life of Easter, always making a fuller response to the glory of the Risen Lord.

-Such a monastic life, Lenten in observance because of its pursuit of the glory of the Risen Lord, is the ideal for us monks. But ideal are seldom fully realized. St. Benedict frankly confesses that most monks will not be able to live up to this ideal: "Few have the virtue for that," he says. But for St. Benedict the ideal remains valid and obligatory, and therefore monks should strive to achieve at least during Lent what is in fact our goal throughout the entire year.

-To the zealous monk it will be a point of honor to go, at least during Lent, beyond what his vows demand. Just how far beyond, it will be for the superior to determine. The area of mortification are the obvious ones – food, drink, sleep, talk to be curtailed, and private prayers together with serious reading to be increased – but twice in the paragraph St. Benedict reminds us of the spirit of joy in which the renunciation must be made, so that even if the outer man is wasting away the inner man is being renewed everyday.

-If talk is restricted for the love of God, the love of neighbor will be deepened rather than weakened. St. Thomas says that it is more meritorious to love one's neighbor for the love of God, than to love God regardless of one's neighbor. Charity is imperfect if it is unbalanced. The first is inclusive, the second is exclusive. We may not divide charity. Charity is God, and God is charity: and God is not divided.

*Let each one make known to his abbot what he offers, and let it be done with his blessing and permission. What is done without leave of the spiritual father shall be imputed to presumption and vainglory, meriting no reward. Everything therefore is to be done with the approval of the abbot.*

-So hazardous is this matter of external mortification voluntarily undertaken that it must be hedged about with safeguards. The first condition is that it is performed with gladness of heart. But it must also be performed in the spirit of submission.

-The clearest sign of the false ascetic is the independent way in which he goes about his ascetical practices: he admits no control, he displays his schedule of austerities, he is arrogant in defending his extreme thesis, he is intolerant of those who feel called to walk by another way. Pride and uncharity reveal the mistaken approach to penance.

-Voluntary penance must be conceived in relation to three things: prayer, unobtrusiveness, and other people. The penance that is not inspired in the light of prayer will not promote the spirit of prayer; so it might as well be dropped. The penance that is paraded as the most necessary of all virtues will only become an obstacle to the other virtues; so has need to defer to humility and charity. The penance that interferes with the liberty of other people, making them feel uncomfortable or angry or small, is not penance but singularity.

-In order to live religiously in community we need to meet our brothers more than half way by respecting them and their views. If necessary we must go so far in their direction as to shed ourselves and our own views. Greater love than this no man can show, whether in community or anywhere else. If this means anything at all it means avoiding singularity & independence. Though these qualities have sometimes the appearance of being strengths, they are in fact great weakness. Vainglory may have a look sometimes of force and bigness, but in fact it is enfeebling and mean.

-St. Thomas makes vainglory a sin against magnanimity. Magnanimity is a force because it is an aspect of fortitude. Acting from vainglory a monk is living on a superficial plane, is performing works which are unreal, is separating himself from truth.

-Thus singularity in the religious life is a weakness which draws away the will from its purpose, which is to find perfection in charity. Charity seeks not its own, but that which relates to others. The common good is the objective, and the more the common good is taken to be the criterion of action the

less room will be left for self-interest, for the desire to take the floor and instruct others, for thoughtless ostentation.

-Then the goal of the Lenten season will reach its perfection when we hear Our Lord say: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...Then, our hearts will rejoice and no one will take that joy from us."

## **Made To Last Forever**

-Surely God would not have created such a being as man to exist only for a day! No, no, man was made for immortality" (Abraham Lincoln). "God has... planted eternity in the human heart" (Ecc. 3:11).

-Our present life on this present world is not all there is. Life on earth is just the dress rehearsal before the real production. We will spend far more time on the other side of death – in eternity – than we will here. Earth is the staging area, the preschool, the tryout for our life in eternity. It is the practice workout before the actual game; the warm-up lap before the race begins. Our present life on earth is preparation for the next.

-At most, we might live 105 years old like St. Anthony of Egypt, but we will spend forever in eternity. Our time on earth is, as Sir Thomas Browne said, "but a small parenthesis in eternity." We are made to last forever. The Bible says, "God has...planted eternity in the human heart." We have an inborn instinct that longs for immortality. This is because God designed us, in His own image and likeness, to live for eternity.

-Even though we know everyone eventually dies, death always seems unnatural and unfair. The reason we feel we should live forever is that God wired our brains with that desire! One day our heart will stop beating. That will be the end of our body and our time on earth, but it will not be our ultimate end. Our earthly body is just a temporary residence for our spirit. The Scripture calls it a "tent," but refers to our future body as a "house." St. Paul says in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians, Ch. 5:1, "When this tent we live in – our body here on earth – is torn down, God will have a house for us to live in, a home he himself has made, which will last forever." St. Paul calls our body an earthen vessel.

-While life on earth offers many choices, eternity offers only two: heaven and hell. Our relationship with God on earth will determine our relationship with Him in eternity. If we learn to love and trust God's Son, Our Lord Jesus, we will be invited to spend the rest of eternity with Him. On the other hand, if we reject His love, forgiveness, and salvation, we will spend eternity apart from God forever.

-The Englishman C.S. Lewis said, "There are two kinds of people: those who say to God 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, 'All right then, have it your way.'" Tragically, many people will have to endure eternity without God because they chose to live without Him here on earth. When

we fully comprehend that there is more to life than just here and now, and we realize that life is just a preparation for eternity, we will begin to live differently. We will start living in light of eternity, and that will color how we handle our task and circumstance. Suddenly many activities, goals, and even problems that seemed so important will appear trivial, insignificant, and unworthy of our attention. The closer we live to God, the smaller everything appears.

-When we live in the light of eternity, our values change. We use our time and resources more wisely. We place a higher premium on relationships and character instead of fame or riches or achievements. Our priorities reordered. Keeping up with trends, fashions, and popular values just doesn't matter as much anymore, as St. Paul said in his letter to the Philippians, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse..." (Ch. 3: 7-8).

-If our time on earth were all there is to our life, we might start living it up immediately. We could forget being good and ethical, we don't practice any more modesty, and we don't have to worry about any consequences of our actions. We could indulge ourselves in total self-centeredness because our actions would have no long-term repercussions. But, and this makes all the difference, death is not the end of us! Death is not the termination, but our transition into eternity; hence there are eternal consequences to everything we do on earth. Every act of our lives strikes some chord that will vibrate in eternity.

-The most damaging aspect of contemporary living is short-term thinking. To make the most of our life, we must keep the vision of eternity continually in our mind and the value of it in our heart. There's far more to life than just here and now! Today is the visible tip of the iceberg. Eternity is all the rest we don't see underneath the surface.

-What is it going to be like in eternity with God? Truly, the capacity of our brains cannot handle the wonder and greatness of heaven. It would be like trying to describe the Internet to a chimpanzee. It's futile. Words have not been invented that could possibly convey the experience of eternity. St. Paul can only mumble few words, saying: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"(1 Cor. 2:9).

-However, God has given us glimpses of eternity in His Word. We know that right now God is preparing an eternal home for us, as Christ said: "In my

Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Jn. 14:2-3).

-In heaven we will be reunited with loved ones who are believers, released from all pain, crying, sighing, and suffering, rewarded for our faithfulness on earth, and reassigned to do the work that we will enjoy doing, as Christ said: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." Then, we will enjoy unbroken fellowship with God, and He will enjoy us for an unlimited, endless eternity, as a father enjoys his children. One day we will hear the Lord Jesus say: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..." (Mt. 25:34).

-God has a purpose for our life on earth, but it doesn't end here. His plan involves far more than the few decades we will spend on this planet. It's more than "the opportunity of a lifetime;" God offers us an opportunity beyond our lifetime, as the Lord says through the prophet Jeremiah: "For I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Ch. 29:11).

-The only time most people think about eternity is at funerals, and then it's often shallow, sentimental thinking, based on ignorance. Some people may feel it is morbid to think about death, but actually it is unhealthy to live in denial of death and not consider what is inevitable (see Ecc. 7:2). And St. Benedict advises the monk to keep death always before him. Only a fool would go through life unprepared for what we all know will eventually happen. We need to think more about eternity, not less.

-Just as the nine months we spent in our mother's womb were not an end in themselves but preparation for life, so this life is preparation for the next. If we have a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus, we don't need to fear death, but consider as a gain as St. Paul says: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." It is the door to eternity. It will be the last hour of our time on earth, but it won't be the last of our life. Rather than being the end of our life, it will be our birthday into eternal life. The Scripture says: "This world is not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in heaven" (Heb. 13:14).

-Measured against eternity, our time on earth is just a blink of an eye, but the consequences of it will last forever. The deeds of this life are the destiny of the next, as the Scripture says: "All will be judged according to

their deeds, to what they have done in the body." We should be realizing that every moment we spend in these earthly bodies is time spent away from our eternal home in heaven with the Lord Jesus and all the angels and saints.

-It would be wiser to live each day as if it were the last day of our life, for it will lead to true wisdom, as the psalmist says: "Lord, let me know the shortness of my life that I may gain wisdom of heart." "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day," for we are made to last forever.